

HB-Henriot Quimper Faience

Three Centuries of History, Passion and 'Savoir-Faire'



The oldest manufacturer of Quimper Faience is the Grande Maison HB-Henriot, which has continuously produced country pottery, specialising, in tobacco pipes made of white clay. But, at the end of the 15th Century, the arrival of Jean-Baptiste Bousquet in Locmaria (originally from the Moustier region) truly marked the beginning of "three centuries of Faience".

He could not have found a better environment to set up the factory – large timber promising combustion, an easily navigable river and low-cost labour. The first piece of faience was brought out in 1708, when his son, Pierre, master 'faïencier', came to join him in Quimper. In 1731 Pierre Bousquet gave his daughter in marriage to Pierre Bellevaux from Nevers. Following Bellevaux's death, Pierre Clement Caussy from Rouen was called and brought with him the polychrome decoration which was very fashionable in the 18th century.

In 1771, Caussy's daughter married Antoine de la Hubaudiere. This marked the beginning of a long dynasty that lasted until 1917 and was the period in which the trademark HB (la Hubaudiere) was born. HB was however, going to have to set up with the competition. In 1776 and 1791 two other faïenceries joined this historic site : DUMAINE, who became the HENRIOT factory and ELOURY the PORQUIER faïencerie. Each of these three manufacturers created their own distinct identities. All three of them survived the many difficulties of the 18th century by creating domestically-used items such as salt tubs, platters, bowls and pipes. Not all the pieces were decorated and when they were, the method consisted of finger-painting and was essentially composed of very simple floral designs.

In 1872, the widow Porquier, who had inherited Eloury, became associate with an artistic director, Alfred Beau. With great originality, he painted scenes on faience, imitating art on canvass. It was during this period that the famous design of the little Breton man and woman in their traditional headdress was created and it is still reproduced today.



In 1906 Henriot bought out Porquier, leaving just two faiencerie in Quimper. Between 1920 and 1940, the two companies became mercilessly competitive and called upon more than 100 artists to produce exceptional pieces such as the HB Odetta stoneware by artists such as Griot, Bazin, Berthe Savigny.

Meanwhile, Jules Henriot became very interested in Rene-Yves Creston, a key figure in Ar Seiz Breur. This artistic movement was founded in 1923 and aimed to revive the Breton arts by joining together tradition and modernity. He also became interested in Mathurin Meheut who had his own workshop in the factory and was working with artists such as Jim Sevellec, Geo Fourrier and Micheau-Vernez, some of whose designs are still being reproduced in our workshops today.

At the end of the 2nd world war, fierce competition between HB and Henriot forced HB to update their tools to keep pace with progress and they equipped themselves with electric ovens. Financial difficulties experienced by Henriot in 1968 culminated in the merger of the two companies. During the middle of the 70s, and with the help of the economic crisis, sales began inexorably to fall. In 1983, the Quimper Faience experienced serious financial difficulties and was under threat of liquidation.

In March 1984 a dutchman Paul Janssens, the sole importer of Quimper faiencerie in the United States, took over and relaunched the company under the banner 'The New Quimper Faience'. At the time, there were 59 employees. After undertaking a very successful expansion programme, most notably in exports – between 10 and 15% of production is exported to the United States – Paul Janssens sold the company in October 2003 to Pierre Chiron (himself originally from Quimper) and to 14 other Breton shareholders. Since this time, Michel Merle has undertaken the management of the company.

Today, more than 100 people work at the Faiencerie – all perpetuating the original 'savoir-faire' with the common objective: **Tradition, Creation, Innovation.**