THE BEILBY DECADE 1760-1770

Enamelled glassware, England and the business acumen of the Ingenious Beilbys.

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For Nancy.

ABSTRACT

The lens through which we, in the Twenty First Century, view the businesses of 250 years ago has been shaped a system of research and learning whose best attempt at understanding material culture is to look at objects, modes of consumption *or* systems of making. While this is not inherently wrong, it doesn't necessarily afford us the complete picture of how businesses in the Eighteenth Century truly operated. Many historians have come close, and all work contributes to the broader understanding of Eighteenth Century consumption but, as of yet, there has been very little done to combine these fields of knowledge.

In as much, the Beilby family operated their business in such a way that encapsulates the synergistic nature of design and consumption, and this research performs a deep dive into that business, aiming to understand the interactions between market and maker in a more empirical and meaningful way than before. The combination of object analysis, data collection, theoretical understanding and historiography employed here goes on to elucidate the true creativity of the Ingenious Beilbys throughout their most prolific decade (1760-1770) and delivers a more comprehensive and nuanced view of product design in the Eighteenth Century, all contributing to a better realised image of the Beilbys, consumption and English taste in the Eighteenth Century.

The outcomes of this research are primed to inform a much larger study of Eighteenth Century practises, using the Beilby family and the research methodology employed here as a barometer, and shifting our academic perceptions of makers in the 1700s.

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This body of work marks the culmination of nearly two years on the History of Design and Material Culture MA at the Royal College of Art- a program run in collaboration with the V&A Museum, London, and one that has been a supremely enjoyable rollercoaster.

It is my hope that the quality of the following thesis is representative of the phenomenal faculty of tutors and collaborators I have had the pleasure of meeting during my time on the course, and who have all in some way inspired me to make something of the research I somehow stumbled into.

It was never my predilection to study Eighteenth Century glassware, nor did I have any special attachment to the Beilby family- the desire to study them was borne of a passion I discovered having been advised simply to choose a subject whose archives were close to home. This advice uncovered a fascinating topic, one which has surprised both me and many acquaintances as to the intrigue of the Beilbys.

As an ex-industrial designer, the values of design for manufacture that are embedded in my practice are ever-present and interwoven throughout this thesis- it is my hope that the rarity of my insight into this topic paves the way for new appreciation of the Beilbys and their objects from a new perspective.

My special thanks go to a number of people and institutions who have helped me on this journey- firstly, Dr. Spike Sweeting who has been my tutor throughout the duration of my Masters and has yet to steer me wrong. His encyclopaedic knowledge of Eighteenth Century

stuff is largely creditable for a lot of the secondary sources used and the methods with which they are interrogated.

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As it stands, the following writing is owed to all the above, along with the Beilby family themselves whom, I hope, would enjoy this alternative exploration of their history, design, and objects.

Introduction

Imagine its 1780. You are the most prolific enameller of glassware in the world and have completed commissions for multiple members of the Royal Family, both in England and in the Netherlands. Business is booming and, around you, your family is reaping the rewards of their endeavours. You move in haughty circles and have privileged access to several aristocratic homes. You have spent years carefully building networks, amassing an auspicious clientele, and forging an inimitable reputation. Then, one day, you decide 'I quit.'

It is hard to imagine, but entertain the thought that there was a day when William Beilby, potentially the most virtuosic and prolific glass enameller in history uttered those words to his brother, Ralph. The mystery of quite why a maker as prominent as William Beilby would down tools somewhat out of the blue is tantalising, I'm sure you'll agree. This paper will go some of the way to exploring the fullness of the circumstances in which he made the decision to do so but, ultimately, we may never know quite why he made the choice. For a design historian, however, the more exciting prospect is not understanding the stimulus for one decision, but rather unpicking the formulaic design and business activity that led to the generation of the empire he relinquished.

Had an unknown, unremarkable maker chose to quit their day job and elected to take up teaching it would hardly be worth writing about and, I dare say, there probably was quite a few who did so. But to really appreciate the implications of the decision we need to systematically explore the magnificence of William Beilby's venture across the better part of a very active decade. All the innovation, market insight, influence, identity, and novelty (these terms will become more relevant in the fullness of reading this paper) William Beilby used resulted in a business that was, by and large, peerless.

The problem is that, with such an auspicious and interesting clientele, remarkable back-catalogue of items and the engaging and detailed memoirs of Thomas Bewick, existing histories concerning the Beilbys have a habit of paying rather more attention to the family's social circles, and less attention to frankly astounding innovation deployed by the family in service of reaching a wider audience[1].

Much historiography concerning the Beilby family also dwells heavily on the complex familial dynamic within the siblings or their network of prominent customers[2]. Rarely do works attempt to unpick their unusual business practices or to understand the phenomena which created one of the most dynamic networks of consumption in Eighteenth Century England, even the most famous titles[3].

The Beilbys are representative of an undercurrent in Eighteenth Century market often unexplored by traditional academia; figureheads of the overlooked and truly innovative businesses supplying the contemporaneous market[4]. Ingenious as they were though, the Beilbys essentially leveraged an abundance of talent, voracity for growth and willingness to capitalise on whatever they possibly could turn their hand to in the pursuit of growth[5].

[1] Thomas Bewick, *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick Written by Himself: Embellished By Numerous Wood Engravings, Designed And Engraved By The Author For A Work On British ... Library Collection - Art and Architecture)*, Illustrated edition (Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[2] James Rush, *Beilby Odyssey*, First Edition (Imprint unknown, 1987).
[3] Neil McKendrick and others, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England*, New edition (London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 1984).
[4] Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (Routledge, 2015). P.12
[5] James Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*, 1st edition (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1973).

The type of growth the Beilbys pursued, however, extended beyond the financial- voracious learners and educators with a real desire to showcase their talents in as many media as possible, there are many more sides to the Beilbys than those typically portrayed. Indeed, the usual depiction of the family is that of high-class socialites, flitting around the upper classes and touting their craft wares. The reality, I propose, is much more complex, and the Beilbys were much more formulaic in their understanding of design as a business.

What this research proposes is a strategic breakdown of the facets of the Beilbys' business and interrogation of each in the pursuit of building a more nuanced and representative image of their enterprise. The aim of this is not to rewrite the histories of the Beilby family, those which currently exist are ostensibly accurate if somewhat patchy, the aim instead is to reframe the way in which we regard the family. There will be varying terms used to describe the entirety of the family hereafter: craftspeople, artisans, virtuosos, artists etc. However, the most important way to describe them would be designers.

This designation doesn't seem unreasonable on face value, but it is with specificity to one definition of designer that this assertion is made. Asking 'What is a Designer?' Bruno Munari, designer and art theorist, replies, '*a planner with an aesthetic sense… [they give]*[6] *the right weight to each part of the project at hand, and [they know] that the ultimate form of the object is psychologically vital when the potential buyer is making up [their] mind'*[7].

In this instance we can read 'form' to include decoration, as for the objects this research observes form and applied decoration are inseparable. But the crucial point to take from

[6] N.B. quotation has been edited to remove gendered pronouns
[7] Bruno Munari, *Design as Art: Bruno Munari*, Illustrated edition (London? UK: Penguin Classics, 2008). P. 29

Munari's definition is the duty of the designer to apply logical planning, prediction and forethought into the marketability and desirability of their objects[8]. In this sense, such application of designerly skill has never graced the histories of the Beilbys. This research aims to rectify this underestimation and position the family in a broader analysis of Eighteenth Century consumption and marketing.

And therein lies the rationale for my interest in this research- I am, myself, an industrial designer at heart. Having spent nearly a decade embedded in the practice of designing products to bring to market, I have recognised from afar the uncanny and untimely innovation of the Beilbys and know that their practice could only be properly elucidated by another designer- someone sensitive to the iterative procedure and someone aware of how designers interact with their market, albeit in the Twenty-First Century. It is this point of view, and its inherent juxtaposition, which marks this body of research as something unlike those carried out before by historians.

The Beilbys also are close to my heart for geographical and social reasons. The family attended one of the schools I once called home- Durham Choristers School (let's gloss over the fact I only attended for one year, due to ill health). Their journey from Durham to Gateshead to Newcastle closely mirroring my own. Their transition from designers to makers to academicians is one I aspire to. They are overlooked local heroes, overshadowed by Thomas Bewick, and underappreciated by local museums.

I feel a strange affinity with the Beilbys, William in particular, and I believe this research is owed to that family, owed to myself, owed to an industry of academics who have focused

[8] Munari.

elsewhere and owed to the field of design history and material culture as it proposes a newer approach to historical analysis. An approach grounded in empiricism and experience, reliant on comparable values but devoid of assumptions without evidence.

THE HISTORIES

Historians including Dr Florian Knothe and Simon Cottle have gone into considerable detail in exploration of the relationships between Ralph Beilby's printmaking and engraving, William Beilby's apprenticeship under John Haseldine and the family's royal connections with regards to the brothers' variety of exceptional armorial goblets[9]. Indeed, Simon Cottle's work forms the most comprehensive insight into the Beilby family we have, as his ruthless and ceaseless exploration of the family's activities enlightens more of the dark crevices of their histories than most other published texts[10]. Unfortunately, much of what has been written by such scholars is dwarfed by the popular, pulpy works of James Rush[11]. That being said, even Rush's contribution to the Beilby histories cannot be ignored as they serve as vital underpinnings when researching the Beilby family as both members of Eighteenth Century society and enterprising businesspeople.

[9] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.Florian Knothe, 'European Eighteenth-Century Glass: The Revival of Heraldry in England and the Extraordinary Production of Finely Enameled Glasses by the Beilbys of Newcastle', *Art Hongkong*, no. 102 (2015), 206–15; Simon Cottle, 'Family Connections: The Formative Years of Beilby Enameled Glass, 1760-1765', *Journal of Glass Studies*, 2015 <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1736921849/citation/455DDE877B9C4EADPQ/1> [accessed 19 April 2022].

[10] Simon Cottle, 'Family Connections: The Formative Years of Beilby Enameled Glass, 1760-1765', *Journal of Glass Studies*, 2015 <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1736921849/citation/455DDE877B9C4EADPQ/1> [accessed 19 April 2022].

[11] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*; Rush, *Beilby Odyssey*.

By and large, it is more prevalent for articles and literature discussing the Beilbys to focus on the majesty of their armorial goblets. Indeed, pick up any number of books discussing Eighteenth Century English or European glass and you may discover a fly leaf sporting an image of one of these goblets (*English, Scottish and Irish Drinking Table Glass*[12], *The Collector's Dictionary of Glass*[13], *An Illustrated Guide to Eighteenth Century English Drinking Glasses*[14] are among the prominent non-Beilby-specific works to feature Beilby glass predominantly on their covers, frontispieces, and flyleaves).

However, I have not yet read a piece of literature which succinctly examines the design choices of the Beilbys and their glassware as a homologous and considered market offering, positioning the family not as reactive to the demands of their clientele, but rather in very clear control of their product offering.

This of course will require broader research into the modes of consumption and network management principles that were prevalent from ~1740-1780 via observation and juxtaposition of the works of Stobart, Hahn and other important works[15]. Without an underpinning of the societal mechanisms prevalent at the time, a body of research such as this would be subject to the same scrutiny and shortcomings of other such studies, and it is the main goal of this body of work to allow better integration of the Beilby histories into a larger picture of Eighteenth Century society and consumption.

[12] G. Bernard Hughes, *English, Scottish and Irish Table Glass from the Sixteenth Century to 1820*, First Edition (Bramhall, 1956).
[13] E. M. Elville, *The Collector's Dictionary of Glass*, 1st edition (Country Life, 1961).
[14] L. M. Bickerton, *An Illustrated Guide to Eighteenth-Century English Drinking Glasses* (South Brunswick: Great Albion Books, 1972).
[15] Jon Stobart and Andrew Hann, *The Country House: Material Culture and Consumption* (Historic England, 2016); Jon Stobart, 'Gentlemen and Shopkeepers: Supplying the Country House in Eighteenth-Century England', *Economic History Review*, 64 (2011), 885–904 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0289.2010.00562.x>.

THE OBJECTS

Unfortunately, the popularity and impact of the more elaborate and entertaining armorial objects produced by the Beilby workshop often obfuscates a much larger and more ephemeral body of work produced by the family. Hundreds, if not even thousands of more plainly enamelled glasses left the Amen Corner workshop during the family's prolific years, and these objects are often overlooked as somewhat less interesting being that they bear no noble patronage or complex polychromic decoration.

The attraction of the armorial pieces is such that, when considering the Beilby family, historians have often found greater merit in exploring the more detailed primary sources available which tend towards the social aspect of the Beilbys and their enterprise. Thomas Bewick's diary does a lot of the heavy lifting with regards to this, as do the letters of John Brand, and so it is relatively comfortable for researchers and historians to leverage these documents in differing fashions in order to create hypotheses of the Beilbys which often tread similar paths, with new research seeking to add further clarity to a corpus of already scant or unsubstantiated knowledge[16].

In this stead, analyses of the applied decoration the Beilbys perfected has often been relegated to opinion pieces on their artistic virtuosity and the like, occasionally in an attempt to drive sales in a thriving collectors' market or to drive bodies into regional museum spaces, or like Cottle, further our insight into the complex social network the Beilbys forged[17].

[16] 'History of Newcastle by Brand, First Edition ; Bewick.
[17] Cottle, 'Family Connections'.

It seems less attractive to the historian to try and observe the Beilbys as entrepreneur designers when the evidence goes further to demarcate them as socialites, educators and with noble aspirations. Indeed, the fact that the family produced the majority of their body of work in the space of approximately 15 years also tempts one to ignore the notion of any seismic design change resultant from the endeavours of the family. It is also off-putting to consider the Beilbys as great change makers when considering the glass industry in Britain during the Eighteenth Century would have produced numbers close to millions of glasses- the painting of a few hundred glasses in a market of millions seems insignificant. Also, considering the difficulty and esoteric skill involved in the production of such artwork, replication of the Beilby technique would have been wildly prohibitive to those keen to ape any success the Beilbys achieved resulting in a body of work that stands largely as the only example of its sort.

It may even be true that the real market for the painted glasses produced by the family was so small that there was no space for anyone else to enter the market. It is quite probable that the Beilbys already had the market for armorial glass cornered due the being socially bound to the few members of their clientele able to afford such expensive objects[18] (ref item C.621-1936 V&A collections). But these kinds of concocted hypotheses cannot be substantiated without a body of research present and substantial enough in scope to underpin them with any observable fact.

It is my belief that in the applied decoration there lies the key to understanding the Beilbys' business *and* their socio-political network a lot better than we did before. The method of achieving the appropriate perspective needed to observe these patterns will require

[18] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.

implementing a methodology which other historians will have doubtless talked about, indeed I have had one such conversation with Simon Cottle about the need for such a body of work, but as of yet it remains unpublished – perhaps due to the scale of the effort involved or perhaps due to the knowledge being of little value to the buoyant collectors' market.

The method: a holistic study which captures all (read: as many as possible) examples of surviving Beilby glasses and meticulously categorises them in such a way that they can be filtered by multiple, key criteria. This type of document would allow the historian to observe the remnants of the Beilby empire with a kind of bird's eye view, allowing the easy identification of patterns in decoration, glassware, production periods and styles. Doing so looks, in real life, like finding and cataloguing as many Beilby pieces as possible into an enormous Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which can be viewed alongside this paper.

Being able to easily see the objects' shapes, sizes, colours and styles of the glassware and the enamel change will, hopefully, illuminate the design intent of the Beilbys in an innovative way with the ultimate goal being the ability to understand *why* the family made some of the decisions they did.

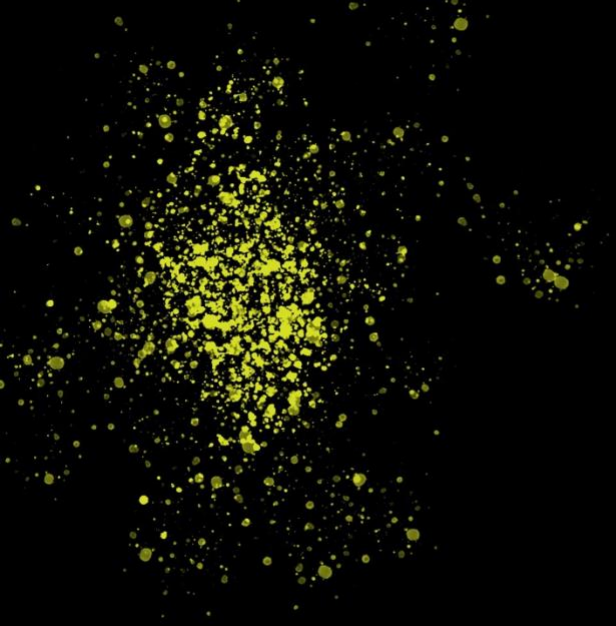
The rationale for this is greater than simply understanding the comings and goings of a relatively small Newcastle firm- the Eighteenth Century in England saw seismic changes in manufacturing and marketing of art and design objects. If we can understand through the design language the way the Beilby workshop process their decisions, how the market shaped their choices and where their impetus for iteration came from, we can, in the future, potentially use this as a future framework by which to measure the activities of similar

contemporaneous businesses and situate our knowledge of the Beilbys in a larger and more informed understanding of Eighteenth Century glass.

Finally, although the title of this work highlights the decade of 1760-1770 as the Beilbys' most prolific years, it is of note that this work cannot possibly situate its research solely within this decade and will, instead, loosely encompass affairs of glass production in England from the start of the Eighteenth Century to around 1782. The reason for this is after this date we see a downturn in activity in the Beilby workshop or, rather, we see far fewer examples of Beilby glass dating from the years succeeding 1782. I will attempt to appease this disappearance, offering some possible conclusion for the reason the Beilby workshop all but dissolves, but these conclusions will be drawn more from hypothesis than empirical fact owing to a dearth of late-Eighteenth Century sources regarding the Beilby family, with the exception of Bewick's memoirs[19].

It is my intent that this essay goes some way to providing greater perspective on the Beilby enterprise, by elucidating the scarcity, quality and beauty of the surviving Beilby glasses whilst serving as a kind of blueprint for analysing Eighteenth Century businesses involved in design and using the Beilby family as a kind of archetype for the Eighteenth Century entrepreneur.

[19] Bewick.



CHAPTER 1

Influence and Innovation

WHO WERE THE BEILBYS AND WHAT DID THEY DO?

It may be overdue to a reader of this thesis, but it would be remiss to not take the time to, at least cursorily, speak to who the Beilbys were and what they did. This includes answering the question, what does it mean to enamel glassware.

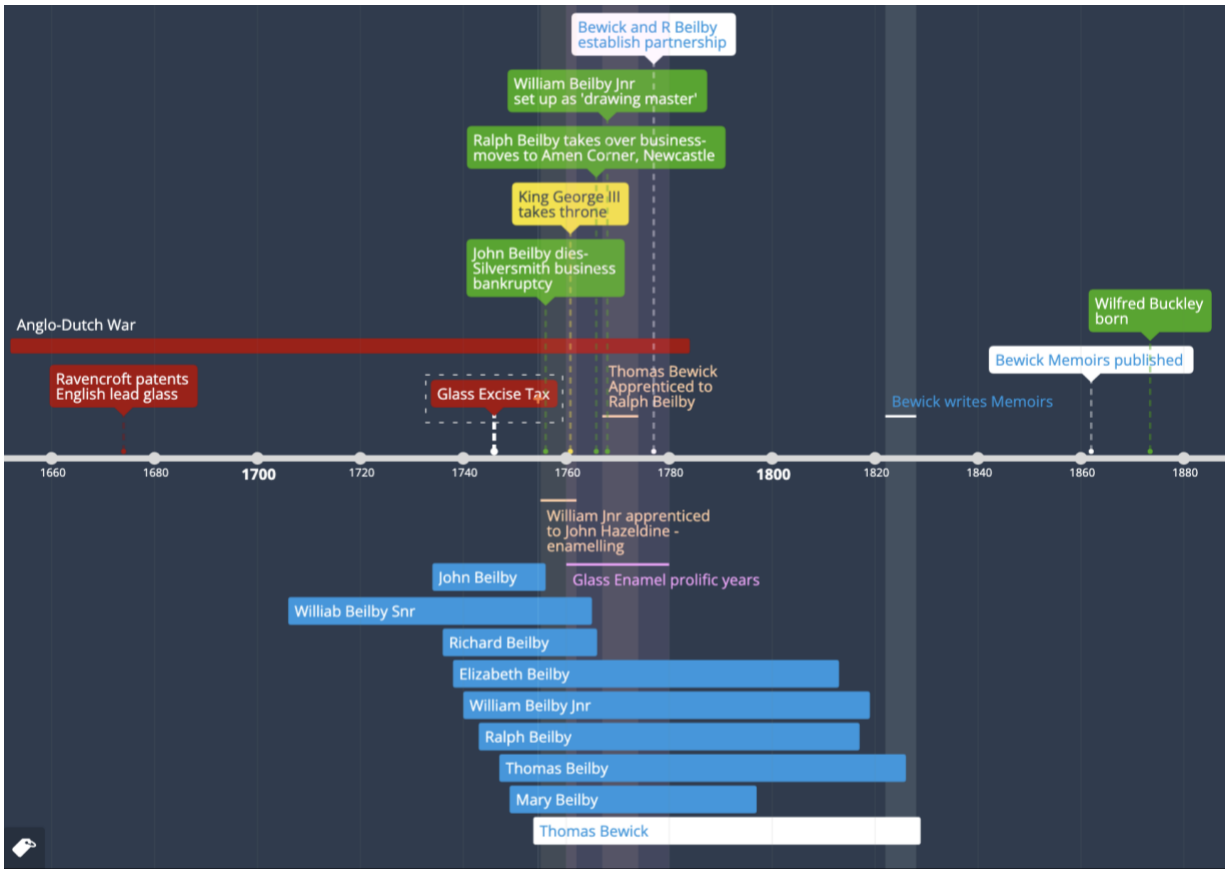


Figure 1 Timeline created by author detailing key dates of family members and other notable points in the history of the Beilby family

Based in Newcastle upon Tyne, a North East port city in England, the Beilby family as referred to in this research consisted of William, his brother Ralph, sisters Elizabeth and Mary, and lesser-known brothers John and Thomas[1]. Their father, William Beilby Snr. was a

[1] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.

Durham-born gold and silversmith, and engraver. By all accounts and looking at the examples of his work which survive in collections to this day, he was a prolific and talented engraver, at that. It is surprising, then, to learn that he went bankrupt in 1756, the same year in which eldest son and heir to the Beilby family business John died. There is no evidence, it seems, that links these two events however any human reading this thesis can appreciate the impact that a death in the family may have had on the engraving business and the patriarch of the family.

There also seems to be little mention of the Beilby mother in accepted histories- we can perhaps attribute this to the stereotypical family archetype in the Eighteenth Century, whereby, unfortunately, the matriarch of the family was separate from the business, pigeonholed as a 'homemaker', and forgotten.

Just one year prior to the death of John, namesake of the family patriarch, William Beilby Jnr. was apprenticed to John Haseldine, a watch enameller based in Birmingham- with William away, and Thomas, Mary and Ralph still in their infancy, it would have been no doubt a herculean task for William Snr. to keep his business above water having just lost his son. However, what becomes of William Snr. after this incident is unclear. What *is* clear is the action taken by Ralph to perpetuate the legacy of his father by pursuing his own career in engraving. Rather interestingly, though, this endeavour seems to come *after* William Jnr. has already returned from Birmingham, replete with burgeoning enamelling skill and starts painting decorative scenes onto glasswares in or around 1760. Indeed, the earliest dated example of his work seems to be 1765 and little evidence of development is evident across his catalogue of work- rather, the quality remains outlandishly exquisite across all years he

was actively producing- a result of having perfected his technique prior to the business' inception[2].

Whether or not Ralph's decision to follow in his father's footstep and start engraving metalware and bookplates was as a result of witnessing his younger brother's burgeoning start up flourish, or whether it was simply making use of a familial skill is unclear, but what is clear is this was a family of entrepreneurs.

This research is especially interested in the glassware painted by the family and therefore we must question, *why did William choose to enamel glass?*

(At this point it is briefly important to note that neither William nor Ralph Beilby were involved in the manufacture of any glassware. It is likely that they were involved in commissioning quantities of it from the nearby factories but William in particular was solely decorating pre-made objects. What the family were doing, then, was ostensibly adding value to plain objects.[3])

Newcastle, the home of the family, was conveniently situated on the country's second busiest port river, the Tyne[4]. It was also abundant with natural coal and silica, making it perfectly equipped, both with the resources and fortuitous geography, to be an industrial titan[5]. Indeed, it was a city born to be a glassworks, and the glasshouses of Ouseburn (a tributary of the

[2] Bewick; Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*; Cottle, 'Family Connections'.
[3] Leslie de Chernatony, Fiona Harris, and Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley, 'Added Value: Its Nature,Roles and Sustainability', *European Journal of Marketing*, 34.1/2 (2000), 39–56 <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560010306197>.
[4] Catherine Mary Ross, 'The Development of the Glass Industry on the Rivers Tyne and Wear, 1700-1900' (unpublished Thesis, Newcastle University, 1982) <http://theses.ncl.ac.uk/jspui/handle/10443/192> [accessed 19 April 2022].
[5] Michael Barke, Brian Robson, and Anthony Champion, *Newcastle upon Tyne: Mapping the City* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2021).

Tyne river) housed some of the most skilled and prolific glassworkers in all of Europe[6]. In fact, prolific as they were, and as high quality as the glass they produced was, Ouseburn even attracted a cohort of European migrant workers from Venice, Belgium and the Netherlands, all keen to capitalise on their specialist skills. This resulted in glass table wares being produced in Newcastle in numbers surely approaching the millions and, incidentally, those glasses were probably some of the highest quality and most desirable glasses in Europe.

So, there was plenty of glasses available to enamel, but what inspired the choice to apply enamelled decoration to simple drinking glasses and decanters, to name but a few? Having been apprenticed to the watch enameller in Birmingham, Haseldine, William Beilby could have easily plied his trade in a more staid industry- remaining true to his master's vocation and enamelling watch and clock faces. (Incidentally, primary evidence shows Ralph regularly took commissions for engraved watch and clock cases, so there would have been some synergy there between the two brothers' endeavours.) [7]

Alternatively, he could have followed a similar route to that of James Giles (who also strayed into glass enamelling) and pursued a career in enamelling ceramics[8].

Certainly, the decision to enamel glass was not taken on its technical merits or ease of completion. The process, involving pulverising glass powder (or frit), suspending it in a proprietary substrate, painting it onto a vitreous or metallic surface and firing it at extreme temperature (800-900°C) was not something done at home by an amateur[9]. Nor was it

[6] Wilfred Buckley, *European Glass*, 1st Ed. (London: Ernest Benn, 1926., 1926); Ward Lloyd and Dan Klein, *The History Of Glass* (Little, Brown, 2000).
[7] Tyne and Wear archives item no.
[8] Gerald Coke, *In Search of James Giles by Gerald Coke* (Micawber Publications, 1782).
[9] Lloyd and Klein.

something that would have been successful every time. Breakages would have been frequent and failed designs would have been common, with enamel running or discolouring.

Additionally, it is likely that some level of close collaboration between the glasshouses' expert migrants and the family occurred, with the Beilbys likely making use of one of the factories' kilns to fire their works as it is unlikely the city of Newcastle would have allowed the installation of a kiln reaching close to 1000 degrees in a residential area, next to the city's St. Nicholas' Cathedral. (The graveyard of the Cathedral can be seen in Figure 2.)

Figure 2 A later image (C19th) depicting the workshop of Bewick and Beilby, located at Amen Corner. Newcastle Libraries/Newcastle Local Studies. Accession Number: 003388

Rush suggests this close collaboration between maker and decorator occurred with the Dagnia family, Italian owners of a glasshouse that was later the famed Airey Cookson factory, stating *'Disboursements of Newcastle Common Council of Xmas 1764' £7/10/0 was paid to Onesiphorus Dagnia III Glafsmaker'*[10]. However, it was suggested by Simon Cottle that there is considerable doubt surrounding assertion, being that the cited Dagnia was not alive at this time, as per his understanding. Available records aren't exactly clear on this, as multiple Onesiphorus Dagnias were recorded at this time. It is, however, certainly true that the Beilbys would have needed some close collaborators within the glasshouses and, as one of the most prolific, to suggest it may have been the Dagnias is not unreasonable, if somewhat unsubstantiated[11].

Glass enamelling in the manner William perfected was a technique which only those with his level of extreme expertise could replicate and he existed in a (mostly) uncontested market space throughout his most prolific years, most likely due to the difficulties mentioned herein. Such a delicate mode of decoration would have been prohibitive to most considering this adopting a similar style as their niche, being that it relied on a very specialist skillset and the appropriate training therein. It is also worth mentioning that there would have been many easier substrates to enamel than glass, with its delicacy, non-porous nature, and complex compound surfaces.

But glass is a mystical material- as Baudrillard puts it, glass *'is less a recipient than an isolator'*[12]. And perhaps therein lies its appeal to William as the decorator: the glass objects William decorated were not simply a canvas to demonstrate the image- the glasses' form

[10] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*. PP.98
[11] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*; Rush, *Beilby Odyssey*.
[12] Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (Verso, 2020). PP.43

factor not simply the frame around the painting- but, in their transparency, glass became an actively disappearing canvas, further heightening the viewer's focus on the exceptional artwork, or associated armorial. And it was, ultimately, this artwork that the consumers of Beilby glasses were buying in to, and the name associated with it- William Beilby.

TASTE AND IDENTITY

The objects disseminated by William Beilby were ostensibly luxury items and the consumers of them were notably well-to-do. Indeed, much can be made of the clientele of the Beilbys, which includes names like William of Orange and the Prince of Wales, among many others. The Beilbys were a well-connected family and fortified these connections by strategically targeting the upper classes with extraneous ventures such as drawing classes for the ladies of wealthy households, and mapmaking and city planning for local government. But what they tapped into specifically, was a vein of high taste that was emerging in the Eighteenth Century for items that could adorn the homes of the wealthy and demarcate their status as important, influential individuals[13].

Concerning this taste, Jane Whittle goes some considerable way to debunk the notion that the gentry were not particularly innovative in their domestic purchases at this time, instead painting the picture of the upper classes as newly interested in the buying of clocks, curtains and upholstery and generally more adventurous than previously thought in the Seventeenth Century.[14] Observing the gentry, the most attractive and lucrative consumers of the Beilby's pieces, as progressive and innovative in their consumption habits may explain why the

[13] Florian Knothe, 'European Eighteenth-Century Glass: The Revival of Heraldry in England and the Extraordinary Production of Finely Enameled Glasses by the Beilbys of Newcastle', *Art Hongkong*, no. 102 (2015), 206–15; Cottle, 'Family Connections'.
[14] Jane Whittle, *The Country House: Material Culture and Consumption* (Historic England, 2016). PP.31

Beilbys were able to capitalise on this market segment when they did. As the well-to-do innovated in their buying, there would have been a steady evolution of impactful purchases to be made for the aspirational home. Starting with large items such as drapes, wall hangings and furniture, the most interesting objects would have become smaller and smaller as the Seventeenth became the Eighteenth Century[15].

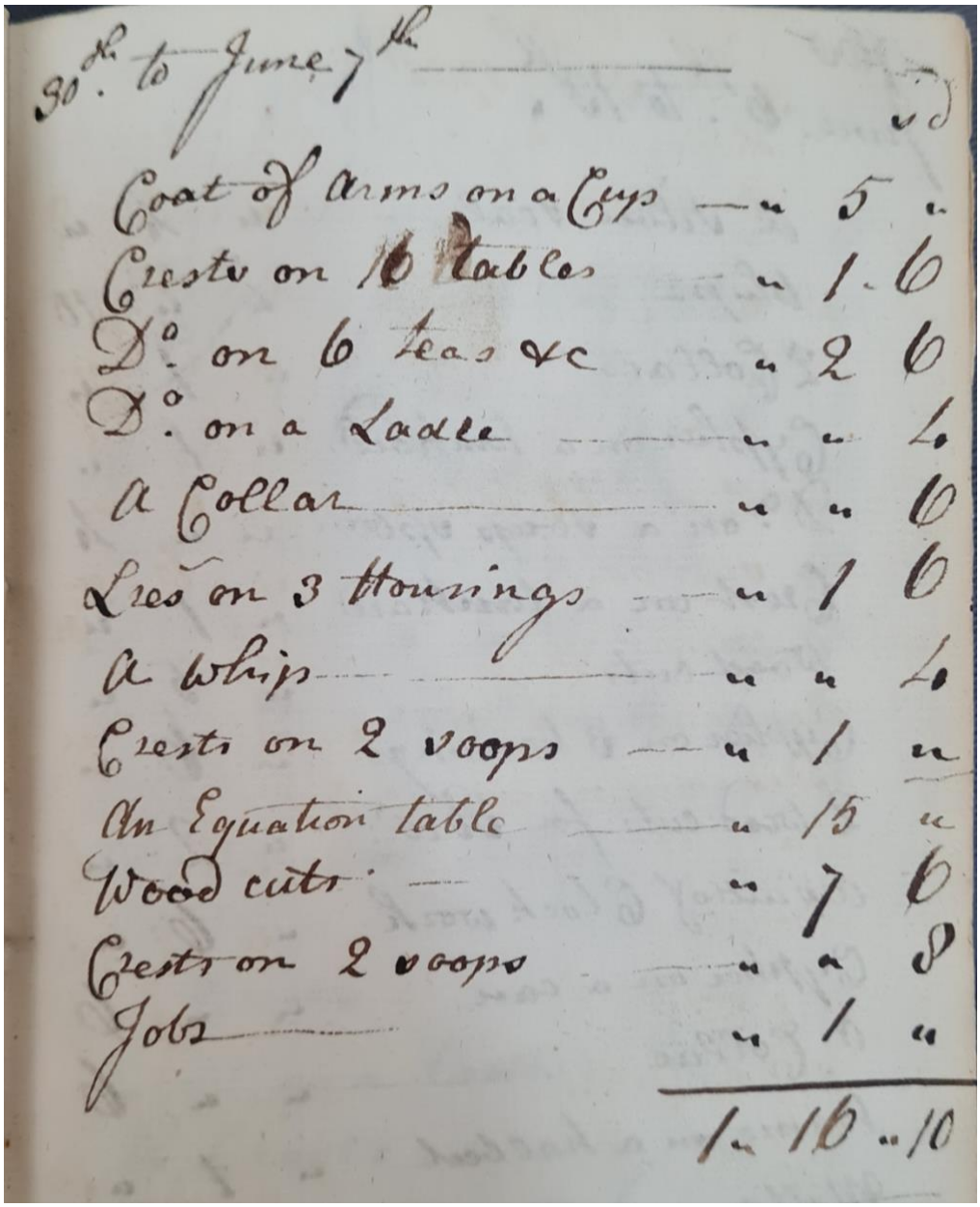
In fact, we see this phenomenon replicated elsewhere in the record of the Beilbys' activities captured by Thomas Bewick. In the records he kept detailing his activities as apprentice to Ralph, there is an observable progression in Thomas' responsibilities throughout the years 1767-1768, simultaneously charting Ralph's growing trust in the young apprentice's ability and Bewick's developing skills. As his responsibilities evolve from that of engraving dog collars and whip handles to more upmarket and intricate objects, we can see some window into the sorts of wares being engraved by the shop. One page (fig. 3), charts Bewick's jobs from May 30th to June 7th 1767. This page alone demonstrates in microcosm the taste for customised tableware during the period and, elsewhere in his records, we can also see the amount of household goods increasing as time goes on[16].

16 tablespoons, 6 teaspoons, 4 soupspoons, a ladle and one cup were among the objects engraved by Bewick in the 7-day period pictured (fig. 6). Indeed, other records show 18 blades engraved between 15th-22nd 1766, 4 dozen such blades the following week. January 12th-19th 1767 saw further increases in table and kitchenware ordered including 8 tablespoons, 2 candlesticks and a tea kettle and the following weeks, a punchbowl, a teapot and 16 more table and soup spoons[17].

[15] Stobart; Stobart and Hann.
[16] Thomas Bewick, *Daybook No.1*, 1767-1768, Tyne & Wear Archives Item DT.BEW, Acc. 1269.34
[17] Bewick, *Daybook*

These are the sorts of small, incidental jobs that would have been tasked to the apprentice, however, should Ralph have also been involved in completing similar wares, the outfit were likely producing close to one hundred sets of engraved flatware per year, albeit the years in which they were most prolific are short.

Figure 3 - A page from Thomas Bewick's daybook detailing the works completed by himself during the week of May 30th to June 7th 1767[18]



[18] Bewick.

This increased detail in Bewick's records does not necessarily reflect an increase in the societal popularity of these objects, only that *he* was tasked with more instances of engraving said items. However, the prevalence of these items in his records surely reflects the larger demand on the business for customised tablewares, as it is definite (from looking at other, contemporaneous objects and records) that Ralph was also involved in the engraving of grander pieces of tableware.

The popularity of these accoutrements associated with eating and drinking would certainly have also seen an increase in demand for William's finely decorated twist-stem glasses as a wonderful accompaniment to a suite of engraved flatware. Certainly, the proliferation of Beilby glasses during the confluent time period, ~1767, indicates some reciprocity between the brothers' two businesses. It stands to reason that, when taking commissions for silverware and the like, Ralph would be extolling the virtues of his siblings' glassware, leading to a boost in sales for the sister, or should that be 'brother', business.

This logic is borne out in some sense when observing the production of sets of glasses during the time period. A wealthy land-owner seeking to outfit their dining room would not be in the market for a sole goblet but, rather, a suite of 12 or 16 drinking glasses suitable for toasting. There are few surviving examples of full sets of Beilby glasses, and of those that do still exist, we see no distinct pattern in their commissioner. Some sets feature simple, classical designs in plain, white enamel reflective of Kuiper's categorisation of *country life as a state of purity, set apart from the city, with its dirt, stink and pestilence*[19]. Other surviving sets reflect larger trends in the way in which the upper classes drank and dined, with punchbowls and decanters often being accompanied by a small suite of matched glasses. The third

[19] Stobart and Hann. Yme Kuiper P.11

example of set composition are those commissioned by organisations such as the freemasons, lodges, local government (mayors and governors) and clubs.

It is also crucial to consider the taste for domesticity in the contemporaneous market, fuelled by a distaste for reminders of the empire. Where it would have once been the fashion to adorn the home and, specifically, the dinner table with specimens of exoticism, laden with imagery reflective of Britain's colonial exploits. As Tillman Nechtman observes, this phenomenon was at its zenith during the years of 1760 and 1785 when fleets of English colonisers, or Nabobs, were returning to England to an atmosphere of disdain for the ill-gotten exotic[20].

Why is this significant? Albeit out of their control, the Beilbys were also incredibly fortunate to be at their height of productivity during these years. Serendipitous it may have been, but it left the brothers (and sisters) in a fortunate position- able to capitalise on the growing taste for English objects. We see this to a large extent in the decoration of the objects existing in the fat, underwater bit of the Beilby iceberg, or the hundreds of simple, white enamelled glasses. It is without doubt that the most common sorts of decoration observable in the cataloguing of this bracket of things was that of pastoral or classical imagery. Sometimes birds and bees, sometimes hops and grain, yet all with a distinct Englishness about them[21]. Indeed. The *least* English design trope utilised by the brothers could be seen as the fruiting vine, grapes not having been traditionally grown in Britain during the Eighteenth Century. But there is definite evidence in the absence of colonial influence that the Beilbys were, again, identifying market trends and capitalising on them.

[20] Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Illustrated edition (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[21] Nechtman.

It would be sensible to ask, though, "why ought the Beilbys have produced wares featuring colonial imagery in the first place?". It should be well established that this was an outfit of adaptive businesspeople, unafraid of targeting specific demographics and, in the interest of maximising profit, would there have been a more lucrative personage than the Nabobs so publicly shunned? Perhaps the Beilbys were just happy to stick with the clientele they were already ingratiated unto but eschewing the opportunity to *expand* into a new customer base would have been out of character for the brothers, had they not been acutely aware of how they would have been perceived had they not done so[22].

It is also likely that, wealthy as they were, these nabobs living in homes replete with Indian, Chinese and Japanese spoils were sufficiently well equipped to have no need of the Beilbys' services to begin with. For the Beilbys, it was a simple case of "know your market"[23].

Nabobs, nobility or neither, the objects commissioned by the great and good as displays of prominence were not solely representative of their owners and their taste. Returning to the observations found in the matrix, there is one more notable fact to dwell upon. Of all the pieces definitively signed by the late William Beilby, each one can be considered as having been made for a member of the gentry, political elite, or monarchy. This is not a coincidence, and further build on those identological subcurrents in the privileged household.

Whether or not an object in the middling household was clearly attributable to the hand of William Beilby was, in a sense, immaterial to the continuing reputation of the business. However, it was, conversely, of immense importance that commissions such as that of

[22] Nechtman.
[23] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.

William V were accredited to their firm. The Beilbys needed to be known as the enamellers to royalty.

In *The Country House: Material Culture and Consumption,* Dr. Jon Stobart places clear links between consumption and identity, suggesting an idea of constructed self in the upper classes forged by their buying habits- this can be easily typified by the desire in this demographic to have any and every household item personalised[24]. But this constructed self also is reflected by the Beilbys' business technique- not so keen to be recognised as purveyors of sweet little decorated glasses, but much keener to be seen as suppliers to royalty. The Beilbys were, yet again, shrewd in their decision making and acutely aware of their perception in the market and, once more, the miner's goblet is indicative of their desires. The construction of the armorial, if it is such, is something I have suggested was a business card for the continental buyer or, in another breath, an edifice of proto branding, not unlike the swoosh or a certain little green crocodile more familiar to us now. But, more than this, in indicates the Beilbys' insight into consumption of identity.

It, seemingly, was the duty of an Eighteenth Century lord to purchase as many objects as possible adorned with their own coat of arms, monogram, or crest. At this time, then, it could be said that the consumption occurring in this very small, crowded market space was not that of objects, but rather of identity. An identity constructed through the purchase of adornments. The Beilbys understood this phenomenon acutely and constructed their own identity, making themselves their own endorsees, endorsees known to have lofty patronage and to have been *part* of their customers' society, not merely outside traders passing goods into the banquets hall of high society via the dumb waiter of third-party sellers or stockists.

[24] Stobart and Hann. P.2

NOVELTY

When considering the notion of the taste for the Beilbys' unique brand of tableware, we must also consider the novelty of said objects. These are things which, in their basic form, had not existed prior to William Beilby. The closest analogue would have been the engraved glasses coming from Netherlands and Germany.

Toshio Kusamitsu elucidates a recurring theme within in this essay- that traditional notions of some historiography have a *"tendency to neglect other aspects of economic activity such as circulation and consumption"*[25]. This includes the idea of novelty, as Kusamitsu goes on to explain, being a key motivator in creating the link between supply and demand in the eye of the customer. And, although Kusamitsu chooses to focus their exploration on fashion, the principles they outline remain applicable here- namely, that Eighteenth Century market demand was driven be taste for fashionable objects. However, Kusamitsu does fall into the trap of aligning the concepts of 'fashion' and textiles. In this case perhaps it is easier to categorise the Beilbys' work as 'fashionable objects', rather than *the* contemporaneous fashion in tableware. However, it is Kusamitsu's ultimate categorisation of novelty and fashionability which strikes the keen reader as, taken out of context, it could have quite easily been written about the Beilbys:

[25] '*Novelty, Give Us Novelty':London Agents and Northern Manufacturers* by Toshio Kusamitsu, from *Markets and Manufacture in Early Industrial Europe*, ed. by MAXINE Berg, 1st edition (London New York: Routledge, 2013). PP.114

> *They tried to catch the signs of changing taste in the market and to create new demands by responding to it. Those with sound judgement and the ability to adjust themselves to changing fashions produced new designs and products every year … Their reaction to fashion changes were closely connected with their marketing strategy.*[26]

Framing the enterprise of the Beilbys in this way is important when, later on, observing the patterns of their work as the tendency is to assess their corpus as one homogenous portfolio of designs from which customers could choose. The limitations arisen from the lack of clearly dated objects within the Beilbys' work forces us to assess their catalogue this way. But it is worth considering that the different subject matters of William's enamelled illustration *may* not be optional, but rather the flavour of the month, so to speak, as tastes changed from that of pastoral imagery, to classical, to something else entirely. Indeed, it is only really the fruiting vine and hop decorations that we may say with any certainty were perennial as we know the taste for beer and wine was largely constant.

Neil McKendrick also offers some insight into contemporaneous matters of entrepreneurial marketing with research focused on, what may have been one of the Beilbys' operating models, Wedgwood[27].

McKendrick posits of Wedgwood 'such fabulous success is not easily explained' yet goes on to make a very fully realised supposition at the reasons for such success[28]. Allies in business, changing modes of consumption, taste and a growing, aspirational middle class are all

[26] Kusamitsu (Berg.) PP.135
[27] N. McKendrick, 'Josiah Wedgwood: An Eighteenth-Century Entrepreneur in Salesmanship and Marketing Techniques', *The Economic History Review*, 12.3 (1960), 408–33 <https://doi.org/10.2307/2590885>.
[28] McKendrick.

pointed to as creditable for Wedgwood's contemporaneous success in McKendrick's work[29]. This research is keen to agree with these estimations as, by-and-large, they will all become very familiar to you, reader, as the foremost contributors to the success of the Beilbys' endeavour. However, McKendrick points to one important factor which the Beilbys were not able to capitalise upon, that Wedgwood was- a growing population in need of tableware. It is this determining factor that is possibly the reason for Wedgwood's *enduring* popularity, compared to the Beilbys' flash-in-the-pan enterprise, but it is not a factor the Beilbys chose to ignore, by any means, instead they chose the market that was most lucrative and accessible to them. In this, they were perhaps more successful than Wedgwood in the cultivation of a more precise market sector, to which they offered optimised products

Briefly, this calls into question the criteria by which we measure success- enduring fame, monetary prosperity or international expansion are all common denominators in 'success' and, for the most part, the Beilbys cultivated each of these things rather well. However, it is possible that the family held themselves to a more personal evaluation of success, in as much as measuring their prosperity not in monetary gain, but rather in good will and name recognition, with a very clear end goal in mind. A goal which we will come to shortly, and does not involve glassware, but *does* rely on a carefully cultivated sphere of influence.

INFLUENCE

To use the term 'influencers', either about the Beilbys themselves or their most prominent clientele, is something of an anachronism. However, even though the term itself is derived from social media, the notion that an individual has, by way

[29] McKendrick.

of their visibility, an influence over the buying power of the wider market is a premise the Beilbys employed to great advantage.

The Beilbys were, as any small Eighteenth Century business would have been, beholden to complex market factors, stimuli, and contemporaneous drivers of consumption out of the family's immediate control. How the family not only navigated these concerns but actively exploited sociological factors within their control is representative of what we may consider a very modern sensibility. Indeed, one glaring similarity between how the Beilbys manipulated their, and their customers', social influence can be seen in the present age with the proliferation of social media influencers. Influencer theory as outlined by Pei, Morone and Maske is, in abstract, thus:

> *In social and biological systems, the structural heterogeneity of interaction networks gives rise to the emergence of a small set of influential nodes, or influencers, in a series of dynamical processes. Although much smaller than the entire network, these influencers were observed to be able to shape the collective dynamics of large populations in different contexts. As such, the successful identification of influencers should have profound implications in various real-world spreading dynamics such as viral marketing, epidemic outbreaks, and cascading failure.*[30]

In the sense of this notion regarding influential nodes, the Beilbys' clientele offers easy identification of these influencers via the objects they created. The predominance of armorial decoration allows one to easily pinpoint who the influencers associated with the Beilby firm

[30] Sen Pei, Flaviano Morone, and Hernán A. Makse, 'Theories for Influencer Identification in Complex Networks', in *Complex Spreading Phenomena in Social Systems: Influence and Contagion in Real-World Social Networks*, ed. by Sune Lehmann and Yong-Yeol Ahn, Computational Social Sciences (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), pp. 125–48 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77332-2_8>.

were. We can interrogate these networks starting at the top and working down quite easily from the likes of the Prince of Wales goblet (matrix item 65). This, however, assumes that at least a portion of the sales of armorial glasses made was as a direct result of the patronage of the then Prince Frederick. How effectively we can identify a direct correlation between business performance (commissions taken) to royal patronage is questionable, but royalty aside, the financial autonomy and buying power of the gentry during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century cannot be overlooked.

However, keen to capitalise on their royal affiliations and self-constructed brand, the Beilbys would have also sought to position *themselves* as influencers on the market. This self-promotion would have elevated what might have been seen as a small, parochial business to the same esteem as that of other royally patronised industrial empires such as Sèvres, or at least that is what the Beilbys might have hoped. One key factor in establishing their influence in the market, we assume, is the role of Elizabeth Beilby in London.

It has long been thought that Elizabeth was instrumental in bringing the family's business(es) to the capital and that she acted on behalf of the brothers as a sort of pseudo-ambassador. The way in which she did this, however, is largely unknown as there exists no readily available advertisements, business cards or other correspondence which names Elizabeth as a customer facing agent in London, but it was not uncommon for extraneous businesses to employ the services of an agent in the capital- because of this, it is not outlandish to assume the Beilbys would have done so as well[31].

[31] Simon Cottle, 'Family Connections: The Formative Years of Beilby Enameled Glass, 1760–1765', *Journal of Glass Studies*, 57 (2015), 183–95; Rush, *Beilby Odyssey*.

Incidentally, employing the services of a family member to act as an agent would have been beneficial for the business, mitigating some large risk factors. Gone was the need to trust an unknown party with large quantities of expensive, untraceable stock. Gone was the risk of an unscrupulous sort disappearing with your client book or, worse, a fat stack of cash taken as deposits for commissions. Whether or not there is some any precedent for familial is a case-by-case basis, but there was well established practise for the commission business model of the sort employed by the Beilbys. According to Haasis:

> *'Such business was conducted regularly by wholesale merchants in long-distance trade. Most often, it was conducted by either a factor, who was permanently employed by a merchant firm to conduct commission trade on their behalf in another city, or by a commission agent, who was acting on [their] own behalf and in [their] own name while offering [their]commission services to and conducting business for a greater number of different customers.'*[32]

The assumption that Elizabeth was acting as such an agent for the Beilbys is purely logical and further corroborated by two more facts: one, we know the Beilbys were taking commissioned work from London, and two, there is no existing record for another person suitably linked to the Beilby family in a position to perform these duties.

Irrespective of her function, we can be certain that Elizabeth *was* in London as of 1766- as per ancestry records and as corroborated by Cottle who, in personal discussions between himself and the author, confirmed that he was able to pinpoint Elizabeth as the wife of one

[32] Lucas Haasis, *The Power of Persuasion: Becoming a Merchant in the 18th Century* (Bielefeld, GERMANY: transcript, 2022) PP.199 N.B. gendered pronouns removed once more- the assumption that all commission agents were male is illustrative of academia's dismissive nature of individuals like Elizabeth and ignores the important roles women played in Eighteenth Century business, especially the Beilbys'.

William Watson, who held the post of Ranger of Books at the Treasury, and sister-in-law to Frederick Watson who worked in the Stationers' office[33].

Some of the detail surrounding Elizabeth's movements is ongoing research and informs more keenly the work of Simon Cottle. Cottle's ongoing research cannot be claimed in this thesis nor referenced due to its infancy, however, it is worth bearing in mind that what we know about the agency of Elizabeth may change in the very near future, and that the image portrayed of the Beilbys in *this* research may be further supplemented in the coming years.

It is also interesting to note that Elizabeth and William's son, Frederick Beilby-Watson (1773-1852), went on to hold the position of Assistant Private Secretary to the Prince Regent from 1815[34]. It is notable that Frederick maintained the Beilby name, and we can only suppose that the familial reputation carried with it some weight in the acquisition of this position. It is also fun to consider Frederick may have been the real-life Edmund Blackadder, of *Blackadder the Third*[35].

GOING DUTCH

The enterprising Beilbys, were not simply contented by the captivation of their domestic market- no- they were keen to set sail to the continent and capitalise upon a booming Dutch market, predominated by engraved glassware[36].

[33] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*; Cottle, 'Family Connections'; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (A. Dodd and A. Smith, 1852). Vol. 192, 193
[34] George IV (King of Great Britain), *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales, 1770-1812: 1810-1811* (Oxford University Press, 1963).
[35] *Blackadder the Third* (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 1987).
[36] Tinkler

So, what would inspire this small organisation from Newcastle to attempt to break into the Dutch market? Without some sort of influential standing in the trade, there would have been no grounds to incur the expense of an international incursion. However, with the plaudits of having completed work for British royalty, the Beilbys would have acquired the brand credentials necessary to impactfully penetrate a foreign market, albeit a small, well-educated one. The Beilbys were also able to lean on the trade networks afforded to them by their coastal situation- shipping product to and from the Netherlands would have been an order of magnitude easier for those located in Newcastle than Liverpool or even London[37].

Unfortunately, we cannot say quite how much of their business was accounted for by Dutch customers, indeed examples of their work we can point to as having been definitively made for Europe number perhaps only in the dozens exported to the continent, so it was a small success but, for a firm of 2 or 3 operating 300 miles from the capital, it was a world-shattering achievement.

By contrast, their largest contemporary, Wedgwood wasn't even considering such an endeavour currently, instead remaining relatively local. McKendrick's research on Wedgwood posits that in 1730 *Staffordshire potters sold their wares almost solely in Staffordshire*[38]. Similarly, Stobart's assessment of the Stoneleigh family[39] draws similar conclusions- local producers were largely resigned to supplying local audiences.

In comparison with Wedgwood, the Beilbys' successful assault on the continent may be attributable more to their smaller size allowing for greater mobility in their operating

[37] Ross.
[38] McKendrick.
[39] Stobart.

protocols, however, even other like-minded and comparably scaled businesses weren't engaging in this type of risky behaviour[40]. Eventually, however, Wedgwood would cotton-on to the lucrative possibilities of selling abroad, however, as McKendrick puts it, *to sell in London was rare, to sell abroad, virtually unknown. Yet by I795 Wedgwood had broken through this local trade of fairs and pedlars to an international market* [41] . The Beilbys- they were selling in Netherlands prior to 1770.

Of course, the scale on which Wedgwood and the Beilbys operated is vastly different- one a true industry, producing thousands of objects per firing and, the other, an ostensibly one-man operation producing in unknown batch quantities and on a commission-by-commission basis.

However, the fact remains: the Beilbys achieved something, be it through virtue of their acumen or beauty of their objects, that only the largest, most innovative businesses in Europe were able to replicate in the Eighteenth Century.

What made their glasses popular on the continent can largely be attributed to larger fashions at the time, such as the abiding popularity of the Newcastle light baluster form, available to the Beilbys quite easily. Indeed, Frans Greenwood, a UK born, Dutch-based glass engraver was also partial to applying decoration to this ground, and there is an argument (for another paper) to be made that is in fact Greenwood who may be responsible for the Dutch taste for the Newcastle Light Baluster form[42].

[40] Stobart.
[41] McKendrick.
[42] F. G. A. M. Smit, *Frans Greenwood 1680-1763. Dutch Poet & Glass Engraver* (F.G.A.M. Smit, 1988); Buckley.

INFLUENCERS TO EDUCATORS

So, what became of the Beilbys and why aren't we talking about them today in the same way we do Wedgwood or Sèvres[43]? Considering the evidence gathered for the family as influencers of their market, keenly aware of the market perception of themselves and able to position themselves in the most lucrative spot possible, it is therefore no surprise that the brothers, ultimately, ceased their decorative endeavours. The choice to do so was, it seems, not primarily driven by financial motive. There is no record to show either brother's business suffered at the hands of the market; sales didn't dry up in any measurably recorded way and the popularity of their work didn't particularly appear to dwindle.

The brothers were riding on the crest of a wave but took the unexpected decision to abandon their creative pursuits and take up the mantle of educators. The desire to do so would have been instilled in them as children- their father, William Beilby Sr. believed wholeheartedly in the benefits of education ensuring the brothers attended the prestigious Durham choristers' school and ensuring William was apprenticed to Haseldine not for financial gain, but for development of skills (skills that would go on to become the foundation of their most lauded enterprise)[44].

Indeed, in the light of the Beilbys' business choices it is possible, plausible even, to suggest that William Beilby may have had the notion of becoming an educator in mind long before he

[43] Joanna Gwilt, *Vincennes and Early Sevres Porcelain: From the Belvedere Collection*, 1st edition (London : New York: V&A, 2014); Sassoon, *Vincennes and Sevres Porcelain: Catalogue of the Collections of the J.Paul Getty Museum* (Malibu, Calif: Getty Publications, 2006); McKendrick; 'OBJECTS OF DESIRE : Design and Society from Wedgwood to IBM by Forty, Adrian: Very Good Hard Cover (1986) First American Edition | Karen Wickliff - Books' <https://www.abebooks.co.uk/first-edition/OBJECTS-DESIRE-Design-Society-Wedgwood-IBM/13615978710/bd> [accessed 27 December 2021].
[44] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.

found success with his enamelling trade. We have already examined the family's nascent propensity for education and indeed the brothers' history of teaching drawing to well-to-do ladies[45]. However, what has never been considered is the notion that the admonishment of trades in lieu of teaching may have been the ultimate goal for William. And if we consider this possibility, we may be able to suggest that the risk his business took, although innovative and fruitful, were ultimately fuelled by a fearlessness of failure. Should the enamelling not work out, he would simply adopt his desired trade sooner. Any financial success may have even been seen as secondary to the building of an inimitable artistic reputation.

Ever aware of their influence and able to capitalise on their prodigious skill, they identified a new way to capitalise on their expertise and esteem in the marketplace- sell their skills.

The brothers in fact set their own precedent for teaching when, as recorded by Bewick[46], the pair spent a summer teaching the ladies of aristocratic households the art of painting and drawing. Indeed, some examples of the paintings created by William and Ralph during this endeavour still reside in the private collections of country houses such as Alnwick Castle in Northumberland.

We can find examples from as early as 1769 of the Beilbys marketing their academic skills, albeit, in this instance, their brother Thomas. Existing as something of an outlier in this story, Thomas never apparently engaged in either of the brothers' businesses, certainly not in the way that Mary or Elizabeth reportedly did[47]. Yet, he was obviously in possession of the same skillset as his siblings, endeavouring to open a drawing school in Leeds. We know this from

[45] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.
[46] Bewick.
[47] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.

newspaper advertising (fig. 5) surviving from the time, however the success of this venture is largely unknown.

What may be interesting about Thomas' career is potentially how it may have influenced Ralph and William. A surviving advertisement from 1785 for *Mr Beilby's Academy, Battersea, Surry* (fig. 6) shows that some members of the family were pursuant of the career in education. Despite no obvious attribution to any brother, we can note that the image in the advert was drawn by William Beilby himself. It is unlikely that he would offer this service to Ralph, himself being a master engraver. However, we know from both Rush and Cottle, that this was indeed William's endeavour. This is supported by a notable absence of any enamelled objects attributable to William post 1782[48].

What we do not know is what happened in the intervening years. Perhaps an unrecorded illness drove William out of enamelling and a prolonged convalescence invited him to seek out a more leisurely career in his latter years. Or perhaps, enamelling was a means to an end, ultimately in service of establishing his name sufficiently in order to open the academy he desired. This draws into question something integral to all businesses, motivation. To whit, we can look no further than Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* to perhaps ascertain some of the motivation for change[49]. In the core operation of his enamelling trade, it is certainly safe to assume that William had more than made a comfortable life for himself, meeting Maslow's *Physiological* and *Safety and Security* criteria[50]. He was supported by a dedicated family and seemed to be content with the social circles he orbited, likely meeting the needs for *Love and Belonging* and *Self-Esteem*, too[51].

[48] Rush, *Beilby Odyssey*; Cottle, 'Family Connections'; Knothe.
[49] A. H. Maslow, *A Theory of Human Motivation* (Simon and Schuster, 2013).
[50] Maslow.
[51] Maslow.

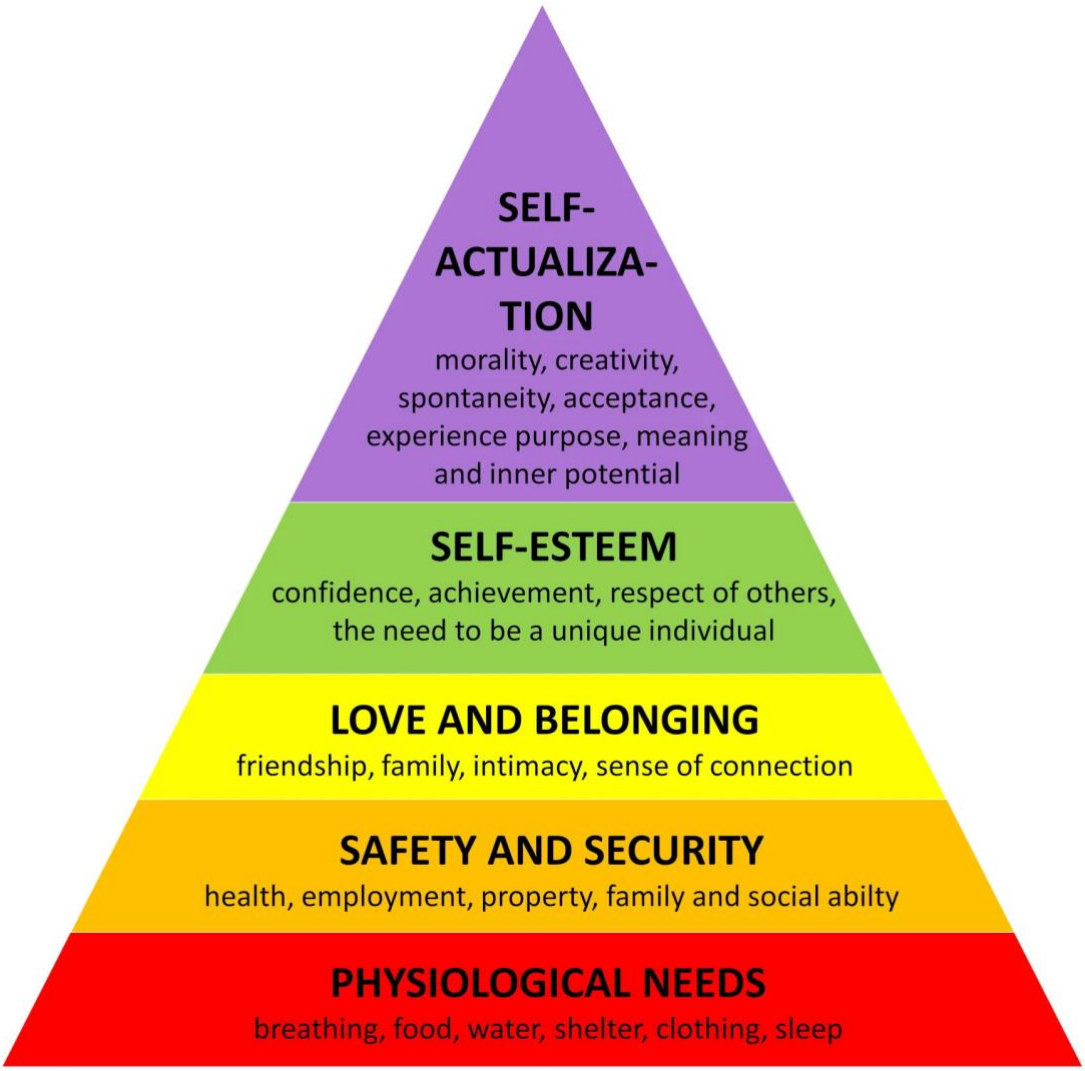


Figure 4 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs[52]

However, perhaps his choice to leave the practice of making in favour of a career in the humanities was his effort to reach the top of Maslow's pyramid- a drive for *Self-Actualisation*. If William saw himself solely as entrepreneur patron of his own business, then this need would be met, but the choice he made speaks more succinctly to a concerted effort to meet a personal goal.

[52] Maslow; 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs', 2022 <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html> [accessed 2 May 2023].

In this sense we can observe William Beilby as something of a social entrepreneur- an investor in the betterment people via the instilment of artistic sensibility. We see examples of other social entrepreneurs today in the likes of Bill Gates, Warren Buffett and Richard Branson. However, it is striking that this categorisation has the gall to call itself new. The Stanford Social Innovation Review describes to notion as 'nascent' in 2007 and, indeed, attributes the term 'social entrepreneur' to Bill Drayton[53].

> *Ashoka founder and CEO Bill Drayton first used the term "social entrepreneurship" in the early 1980s, and it continues to inspire images of audacious social change—the kind that sweeps away the old approaches to solving intractable social problems such as disease, hunger, and poverty.*

While Beilby's drawing school, of course, doesn't meet the mandate of 'solving intractable social problems', it did what any good art school does: offer education and inspiration to the next generation of young creatives[54].

As an alternative point of view, however, this research does a lot of hard work in the service of presenting the Beilbys as highly responsive to market change and demand- so, perhaps, William simply noted a shift in the market; a greater demand for the acquisition of skills than object, and perhaps he was simply responding to this new demand. Unfortunately, we have

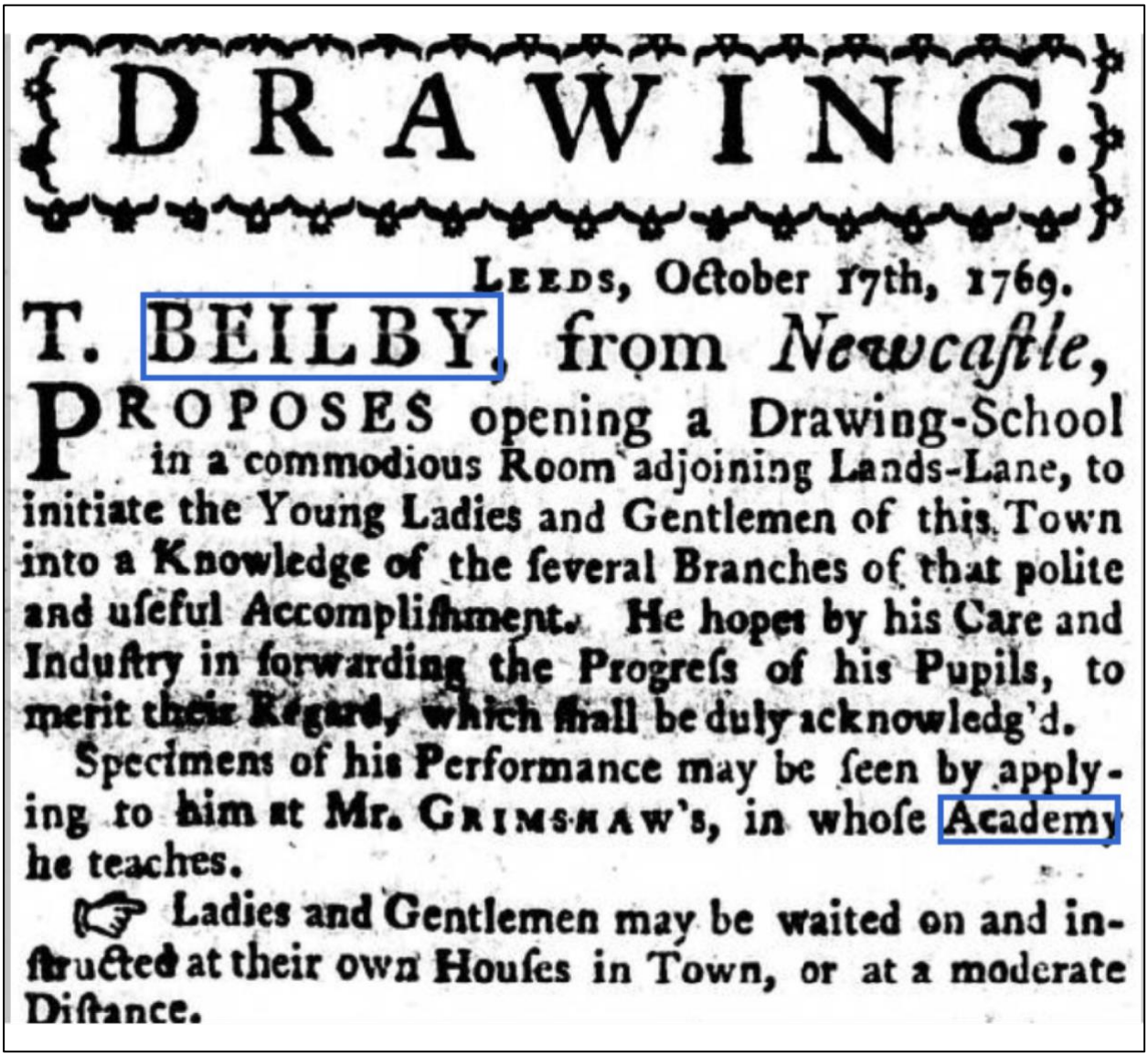
[53] 'Social Entrepreneurship: The Case for Definition (SSIR)' <https://ssir.org/articles/entry/social_entrepreneurship_the_case_for_definition> [accessed 2 May 2023]; 'Social Entrepreneurship Revisited (SSIR)' <https://ssir.org/articles/entry/social_entrepreneurship_revisited> [accessed 2 May 2023].
[54] 'Social Entrepreneurship'.

no evidence to support this notion- no letters detailing demand for tuition, no records of notable patronage and no alumni as significant as Bewick to emerge from the academy.

For whatever reason, he downed tools around 1785, to pursue a career in educating which he apparently kept with until his death in 1819[55].

What is interesting to note of the Beilbys, is the mobility with which they exercised their ventures. Stobart's presentation[56] of parochial businesses as largely static, existing in microcosms of regionality and serving local customers, seems substantial- however, the Beilbys seem to have been an exception to this rule. We see their objects being shipped around the UK and Continent, and we see themselves as highly mobile, spanning operations in Birmingham, Leeds, London, Scotland and, of course, Newcastle. And much as their objects exhibit a portability, so does their educational bent. William's academic ventures casting their Novocastrian locus aside in favour of Leeds and Surrey respectively (fig. 5 and fig. 6).

[55] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.
[56] Stobart.



DRAWING.

LEEDS, October 17th, 1769.

T. BEILBY, from *Newcaſtle*,

PROPOSES opening a Drawing-School in a commodious Room adjoining Lands-Lane, to initiate the Young Ladies and Gentlemen of this Town into a Knowledge of the ſeveral Branches of that polite and uſeful Accompliſhment. He hopes by his Care and Induſtry in forwarding the Progreſs of his Pupils, to merit their Regard, which ſhall be duly acknowledg'd.

Specimens of his Performance may be ſeen by applying to him at Mr. GRIMSHAW's, in whoſe Academy he teaches.

☞ Ladies and Gentlemen may be waited on and inſtructed at their own Houſes in Town, or at a moderate Diſtance.

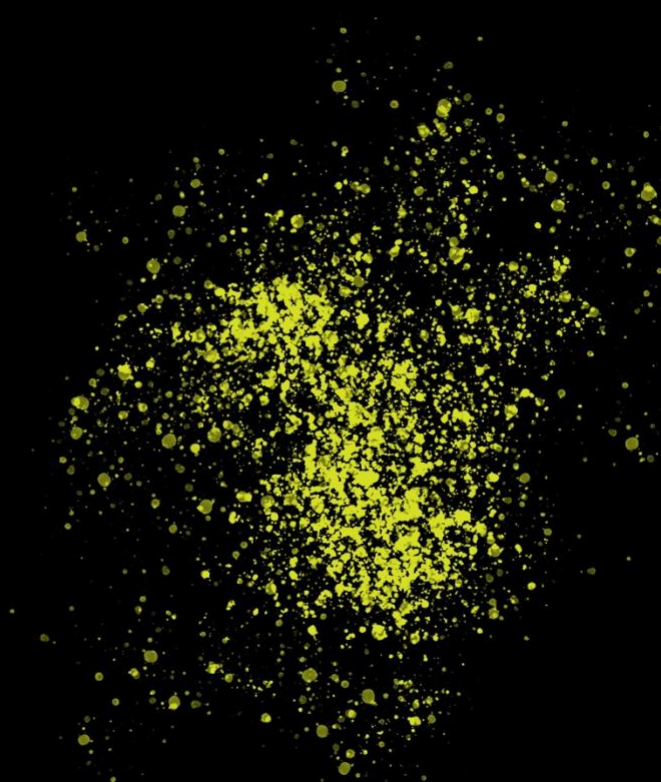
Figure 5 T. Beilby advertising to open drawing school in Leeds, 1769, from BNA[57]

[57] '(Drawing.j Leeds, October F7th, 1769. T. Beilby, From Ncwcaflle, Proposes Opening A Drawing-School I° Commodious Room'Adjoining Lands-Lane, To Initiate | Leeds Intelligencer | Tuesday 31 October 1769 | British Newspaper Archive'

Figure 6 Trade card of Mr Beilby, schoolmaster, and his academy for young gentlemen in Battersea, London, with a view of the establishment https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_D-2-3618

CHAPTER 2

Object(ive) Analysis



THE BEILBY MATRIX

Traditional analyses of Beilbys glassware tend to bifurcate the Beilbys' chosen mode of decoration from the object itself, either choosing to focus on the applied enamel decoration or the glass object it is applied to- the result of this is a body of knowledge that positions Beilby pieces as just one part of a larger, homogenised category of "Eighteenth Century glass". Of course, this is not to suggest that the Beilbys are the be all and end all, as it were, but rather to point out there has not been a study carried out which accurately charges the change over time of the Beilbys' output.

The reason secondary literature typically separates these key traits of the objects is often down to the focal point of the research or, rather, the target audience. Texts including *European Glass* by Wilfred Buckley[1] or *The Ingenious Beilbys*[2] and *A Beilby Odyssey*[3] by James Rush were written by eminent enthusiasts and largely intended to support a burgeoning collectors' market by furnishing readers with terminology and empirical information around the form of glasses. By contrast, Simon Cottle's excellent *Family Connections: The Formative Years of Beilby Enameled Glass, 1760-1765*[4] casts a closer focus more on the Beilby family and their complex network of social ties and myriad business ventures. Most of this exposition places Ralph Beilby at the centre of the family, most likely because of his relationship with Thomas Bewick- a relationship which affords academics a robust body of primary information to draw from thanks to Bewick's memoirs. However, it is a commonly held belief that William, Mary and Elizabeth Beilby[5] were equally instrumental in the

[1] Buckley.
[2] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.
[3] Rush, *Beilby Odyssey*.
[4] Cottle, 'Family Connections'.
[5] Cottle, 'Family Connections'.

Beilbys' endeavours in glass, yet they are less often written about simply due to there being less information available regarding them.

But why is it important to understand the change over time in the Beilby workshop's output? The aim here is to try and understand whether Beilbys were indeed Eighteenth Century tastemakers at the forefront of their craft or, more simply, reactive to the market created by their affluent clientele. However, there are other conclusions we may be able to synthesis from this investigation, namely we can start to understand prevalent trends in the broader market in the form and function of Eighteenth Century glassware and, also, possibly afford an opportunity to understand the relationships the Beilby workshop had with their suppliers.

Of course, there stands in the way of this research one rather large hurdle – the Beilbys were not always so kind as to sign or date their work. There exist some key pieces which can act as milestones in the evolutionary timeline, giving firm dates around which to position other alike objects, but, by and large, this will be an exercise in caution, attempting to navigate spurious museum and auction dates and attributions, hoping to paint a more accurate picture of the actual history of the Beilby workshop.

Of particular interest will be the opportunity to examine the type of decoration applied to objects and how it changed throughout the operating years of the workshop- did the complexity and ambition of decorated scenes grow as the family's technical abilities developed? Did the demand for armorial decoration or classical decoration peak in line with any key events? And did the taste for size, scope and type of decoration change throughout the century?

In order to understand this, the research comprises a cataloguing matrix which attempted to capture as many examples of Beilby glassware in publicly accessible collections, auctions and records as time would allow. This cannot ever hope to compile *every* piece to ever leave the Beilby workshop and to have survived into the Twenty-First Century, but it is my hope that in this collection of knowledge there will be sufficient specimens to be able to draw some substantial, supported hypotheses about the family's activities and as stated already, their design changes over time. Being able to see these trends in the data relies of categorisation in a number of key areas, namely:

- Type of decoration (fruiting vine, classical scene, armorial, others)
- Colour (white, full colour, gilt)
- Object (goblet, chalice, firing glass, baluster glass, decanter, bowl, others)
- Date
- Attribution (signed, not signed, spurious)
- Collection and accession number
- Descriptive analysis

These categorisations will allow swift identifications of patterns, if there are any to be found, but they rely on a foundational knowledge of extraneous factors which would have been at play in the effervescent Eighteenth Century.

Important considerations when interrogating the collections in question include that of attribution to the Beilby family themselves. Very few pieces, and we will explore exact numbers of which quite soon, are definitively signed '*pinx't Beilby*', or similar. Therefore, there are some instances where attribution to the Beilbys may be spurious or under suspicion.

However, ignoring those pieces without signatures would be tantamount to negligence to the subject matter and the family- their mode of decoration, quality of brushwork and uniqueness of virtue in their field essentially leaves any contemporaneous examples of enamelled glass outside the possibility of another maker's hand. Yes, we cannot say that *all* enamelled English glass from the Eighteenth Century is from the Beilby workshop, but there is a specific bar of quality set by the Beilbys that few makers could ever hope to clear, and simple examination of the delicacy and artistry of most pieces is sufficient to attribute a piece to the Beilbys.

In further consideration of the matter of attribution, there stands the incorporation of a butterfly motif into the enamelled artwork. This became something of a trademark of William Beilby and is often treated as a secondary maker's mark of sorts, however, not every piece in this investigation bears this motif. This may be, as has been posited[6], due to the use of the butterfly as a surreptitious reference to Jacobitism, referring to the exchange of glasses between the Jacobite Beilbys and another likeminded customer. But, as these applied butterflies are as few and far between as explicit signatures, is it suitable to ignore all pieces which do not bear the butterfly motif?

[6] Cottle, 'Family Connections'.

Figure 7- A Beilby enamelled decanter in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum. Here we can see the archetypal white enamel 'fruiting vine' artwork. Clearly visible is a butterfly, centre, painted in a style synonymous with the Beilbys. It has been pointed out that the buttefly itself is not very well obeserved, yet perhaps this inaccuracy is artictic license, ensuring its recognisability as a Beilby construct.

Doing so would again render the data set so small that there would be no meaningful outcome from the investigation but, in and of itself, these issues do bear some interesting questions- why didn't the Beilbys sign every piece? Was there a design decision which drove them to leave some pieces unbranded? And what is the correlation between pieces which are signed and those which are not?

There are myriad questions which will be generated by the simple yet leviathan task of cataloguing the known Beilby pieces in this way. There are also limitations which must be considered, namely those of time and scope- while it would be ideal to perform an exhaustive cataloguing of *all* known Beilby glass it is simply not possible. There are far too many objects which exist outside of the public view, catalogued without imagery, or secluded in the racking of private collections. Some exploration of past auction history may illuminate some of the latter rarities but, by and large, there will inevitable be an unfortunate wealth of Beilby stuff floating around in unobservable space.

Therefore, it is at this point, that the expectations and scope for this cataloguing must be set in order to avoid too much criticism of the method. Setting out the scope of this work is also critical to explain that the points at which a scarcity of information proves problematic could indeed be negated by further research- however it is unlikely that this necessary research is feasible at this time.

The matrix sets out to capture the most prominent public collections of Beilby articles in full detail, however any entries without images and not on public display must be excluded for reasons obvious when considering this is an analysis of visual attributes. There has also been an attempt made to capture some of the noteworthy pieces passing through auctions in recent

years, however, this body of information cannot claim to capture every auctioned Beilby piece in time immemorial due to scant or inaccessible records.

The justification for allowing these gaps in information is simple: even with this limited scope (if one can call 100+ objects limited) there is sufficient visual information to start to draw numerous conclusions when grouping and interpreting the data by the criteria mentioned earlier in this chapter. There comes a point at which adding more data points does not clarify the image we hope to see. In addition to this fact, there is also the matter of date specificity.

Brain and Dungworth suppose that the market for imported drinking glasses coming from Venice and the continent, characterised as the birth of this style of ornamented glassware, encompassed an import market of over 500,000 glasses by the end of the Seventeenth Century[7]. How this number changed to accommodate the domestic production methods established in the early Eighteenth Century and feeding the English market during this time is unmeasurable. However, it is far from unreasonable to assume considerable growth within the market as industrial processes exploded in popularity in the Eighteenth Century. Combined with an influx of migrant labour, English glasshouses would have been producing tableware in the millions[8].

Another keystone when considering change over time is the element of accurate temporality- this is surely tantamount to the validity of the research. However, even in the sizable collection of objects explored, the number of pieces we can unequivocally attribute to a

[7] David Dungworth and Colin Brain, 'Late 17th-Century Crystal Glass: An Analytical Investigation', *Journal of Glass Studies*, 2009 <https://www.proquest.com/docview/195126001/citation/EE4322D373F44B26PQ/1> [accessed 25 April 2023].
[8] Lloyd and Klein.

single year is extremely small. It is likely then that adding more pieces into the matrix would simply muddy the water even further and simply add to the vast pool of glass emanating from "1760-1770" or 'the Beilby decade' as categorised here.

Why so much of the Beilby glass is tagged in this date range is simple, those were the years in which the family were most prolific, but it does nothing to add to an accurate understanding of taste, trend, or design to the wider analysis of the family. All hope is not lost, however, as it may become evident that, even in the vaguery of the Beilby decade, patterns emerge which may allow us to draw lines through the iterative process of the family and hopefully narrow the range of dates down to smaller periods within the decade and century.

This document is accompanied then by a so-called Beilby Matrix. This matrix sets out to do all of that which is above outlined, capturing as many Beilby pieces surviving in collections to this date and which are accompanied by images. It can be filtered by the criteria outlined earlier in this chapter and will be used to support the following conclusions drawn about the Beilby family while observing and analysing the data it collects and presents. However, there is more required than simply relaying statistical or quantitative information about the output of the Beilby workshop- these statistics will be used to draw conclusions regarding the design process implemented by the Beilbys and, hopefully, present their operating procedures in a less quaint and more formulaic light.

THE BEILBY ICEBERG

Observing the data presented in the matrix starts with a cursory overview of the objects captured by the document and, even before filtration, an interesting trend become apparent. Simply casting an eye down the collection of nearly two hundred images it seems as though there is a very distinct distribution appears. We can see at a glance that there appears to be significantly more twist stem glasses featuring non-armorial, or "standard", decoration than any other type.

Indeed, applying some simple filters to the document, we can discern that of 129 objects, 65 of them are twist stem or 'serpentine' glasses. Diving a little deeper and ignoring, for now, less common silhouettes such as bowls, dram or firing glasses and decanters, we can see there are some 18 goblets and only 5 baluster style glasses. This presents a very clear hierarchy in the product line of the Beilby workshop.

This observation also bears out in microcosm if we explore instances of items excluded from the matrix proper, specifically 15 Beilby attributed pieces located in the Fitzwilliam Museum. These objects were, as previously explained, among a subset ignored due to them being in museum storage and therefore inaccessible and without images on the respective museum's online collection. However, if we examine just the object descriptions of these objects, we see the rend observed in the matrix repeated in smaller scale. Of the 15 items held by the Fitzwilliam, 11 of those are described as twist stem glasses with white decoration.

Only 2 goblets seem to be present in this group, however rather vague descriptions occlude whether these are true goblets or baluster style glasses. For example, item C.82-1975 is

described as: *Lead glass painted in green and white enamels. Rounded bowl with enamelled vine decoration in green and white, straight stem, swelling knop in centre.*

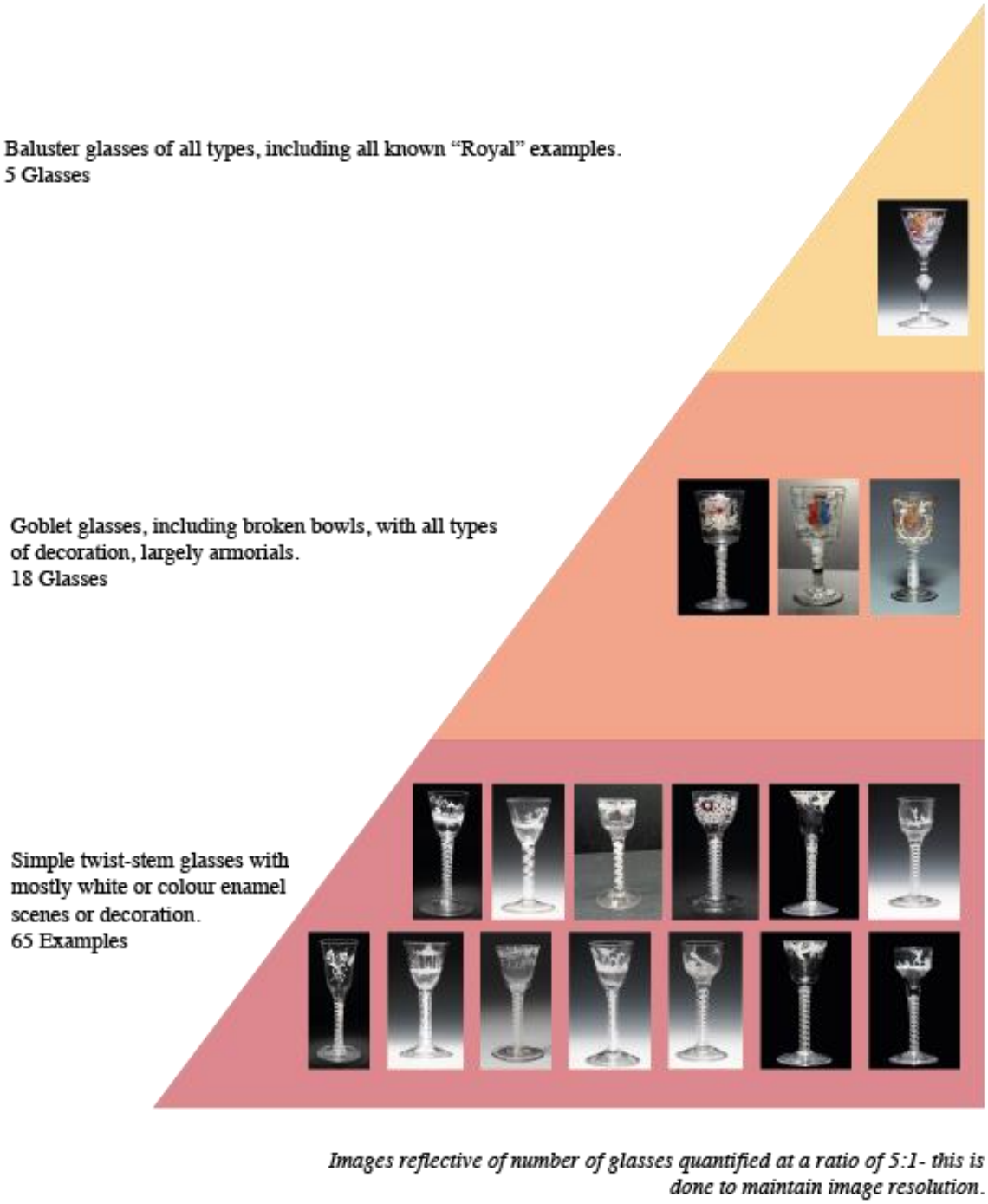


Figure 8 A visualisation of the form factors most associated with the Beilbys' enamelled glassware. The pyramid depicts the respective quantities of each form in the conglomerated pool of surviving examples.

This description of a glass with a knopped stem presents more as a baluster style, however the balusters recorded by the matrix all fall between 18.3-19.7cm in height- at least 3cm larger than the Fitzwilliam glass here[9]. For this reason, we cannot be certain of the exact style of a few objects in this collection, however, we *can* be certain that the number of 'standard' twist stem glasses outnumbers their more elaborate cousins by a factor of 5:1. This small subset correlates almost exactly with the distribution shown in the much larger matrix and achieves two things: a) the decision not to include items without images in the matrix is vindicated here because b) the same patterns of distribution are observable in this micro set.

The reason this type of staggered product offering is notable is that it may be a demonstration of what are, in effect, clear price bands within the offerings of the Beilby catalogue. There is no real way of empirically knowing that goblets were more expensive than twist stems, however, this conclusion can be drawn by observing the types of decoration applied to these items and the simple notion that larger, more elaborate designs were more costly to produce.

The twist stem glasses observed here feature, by and large, simple monochrome decoration, often without any personalisation. Several examples do exist such as the Kitson glass (matrix item 88) and a few monogrammed glasses with clearly commissioned decoration, but of the 65 twist stem glasses exemplified here these possibly commissioned pieces only number 11. Most twist stem glasses feature more 'typical' pastoral or classical scenes widely consumed by the market, or a fruiting vine decoration demarcating the pieces as wine glasses. Indeed, this is again represented blind by the Fitzwilliam collection as of the 11 twist stems detailed, only 2 appear to have colour or non-standard designs applied to them.

[9] Elville; Bickerton; Buckley.

By comparison, the goblets and baluster glasses considered in this first observation are almost exclusively armorial or some form of commission. However, even in the isolation of goblets and balusters, we can observe important differences in the decoration of both. Goblets, while mostly having armorials of important or noble families apparently tended to be more popular with the landed gentry as we can see no examples of this form bearing royal patronage. However, the least common baluster style glasses do feature some more exclusive decoration owing to royal commemoration of the marriage of William of Orange. Other examples of the few baluster glasses we see include one I, myself, consider bearing the constructed armorial of the Beilby workshop and two bearing fruiting vine decoration more characteristic of twist stem variants.

This clear distribution of form factors throughout the core offering of the Beilbys' glassware catalogue, in my opinion, demonstrates a clear business decision to offer different pieces at different price points to accommodate a breadth of customers. It could be argued, however, that this is not the case- rather, that this distribution speaks to greater trends of fashion and that the smaller, twist stem glasses were simply more in demand. However, there are further considerations to make which I believe supports the notion that different pieces were offered to different levels of client.

Predominance of the twist stem cordial glass, an evolution of the 'serpentine', or drawn trumpet form of 1702, certainly speaks to the Beilbys capitalising on the taste for this form factor, however instances of these glasses which feature dual decoration (white, 'standard' decoration on one side, personalisation on the other) could be seen as an after-the-fact

application of bespoke decoration ordered by a client unable to afford larger style glasses[10]. This speaks to a possibility that the white decoration was applied to glasses en-masse and kept by Beilby stockists, or the Beilbys themselves, as an 'off-the-shelf' option which could be enhanced with personalised artwork on a commission basis. This is a business model we can still see today in the Twenty-First Century, when one thinks of personalised merchandise model, whereby a surly teen will adorn a plain t-shirt or ceramic mug with the dates of your special occasion, while you wait.

More to the point, the fact that this organic shape, replete with ornate twist stem, is the most common in the data almost certainly illustrates that the Beilbys understood taste in their market and made a point of keeping the market serviced with a best seller option which was both on trend and easily decorated. Of course, a counter argument could be made that this form factor was the most readily one available from the glassworks of Ouseburn. In and of itself, an abundance of this factor would indicate its popularity in the wider market, however the Beilbys would have had some autonomy in choosing the ground on which they applied their decoration, so we cannot simply write this occurrence off as being a product of market determination.

Considerations of contemporaneous glass production methods also inform the proliferation of this style- being shorter, stockier, and featuring a 'drawn out' bowl, these twist stem glasses contained less glass making them cheaper to produce and buy but also stronger than their larger counterparts. Whereas the more imposing goblet style glasses feature a bowl which is manually joined to the stem by way of a blob of molten glass, the twist stem style features no such weak spot being that it is drawn from a single piece of glass using tongs.

[10] Bickerton.

This mode of production means that the twist stem proved much more economically viable as a core offering, affording greater ease of transport due to breakage resistance and more glasses per case owed to its smaller size. Crucially, this more resilient construction would have also made these glasses likely more able to withstand the rigours of repeated firing in the enamelling process. Combined with the relative speed of applying white decoration compared to full colour and the multiple firings that would require, these twist stems present the perfect canvas for a mass-market option.

In fact, this breakage resistance might also be a consideration in how many of these glasses survive intact compared to goblets and balusters. We even see the goblet's weak spot highlighted by item C.787-1936 (*Bowl of a Goblet)* in the V&A's collection (fig. 9).

By contrast this hypothesis also goes some way to answering the question of the suitability of different form factors as a ground for their decoration, especially when considering the goblet glasses. Compared to smaller twist stem glasses, the goblet affords the decorator and customer a much larger surface area to apply decoration to, resulting in a greater suitability for armorial designs, higher resolution in rendering and a greater show of familial splendour for the aspiring aristocrat.

Figure 9 Bowl of a Goblet, broken from its stem. Taken from V&A museum: Originally a bucket-shaped goblet on a straight stem with a spreading foot, stem and foot have been broken off and the underside of the bowl ground smooth. On one side is painted the Royal Arms of Great Britain and Ireland; on the other, the Three Feathers badge and the motto "Ich Dien". Under the base names have been scratched with a diamond, after the stem had been broken and the stump ground down - "Mrs. Ashley 1803", "J.G. Johnston 1866", "Daniel J.".

Applying complex heraldic imagery to a bowl as small as that of a twist stem would surely be immensely difficult even for artisans of the calibre of William Beilby, but also underwhelming to the client, presumably keen on demonstrating their standing with the most grandeur affordable to them, making goblets and baluster style glasses more suitable for this work. It is also a fair assumption that the work involved in enamelling an armorial on a glass would have been more significant investment of the artisan's time, resulting in a higher cost, again potentially indicating why goblets appear to be less common in the data. These points all lead to the conclusion that a decorated goblet would have been both more difficult to create and more expensive to buy than a twist stem- a hypothesis which positions this style as one echelon higher than that of its smaller counterpart.

Indeed, this difference in scale is reflected should one have the rare opportunity to handle any number of these glasses or, at least, view them very closely. Once in hand, the minutia of detail applied in Beilby's brushstrokes is staggering, and there is a three-dimensionality that is ill-reflected in two-dimensional image. It is only when one can view one of the Beilbys' twist stem glasses in the context of their own hand that it becomes irrefutably obvious. Painting an armorial on one of the smaller twist stem glasses would be both incredibly difficult and visually illegible. This points, once more, to the agency of the artisan being core to a well-curated offering. Yes, William could have enamelled fruiting vine on larger glasses, but he was consciously selecting media which supported and reinforced the hierarchy of cost in his product line.

This, of course, does not preclude the possibility of some twist stem glasses existing with applied armorial decoration (see fig. 10 for one example) however these are much, much less common on the collected data and we can only assume from patterns of consumption,

Bewick's daybooks and surviving collection examples that an object of this nature would have been a commissioned set of, perhaps, 10 or 12 alike glasses, specifically to be used for toasting.[11] Indeed, the auction house themselves are aware of this glass being one of a set of three surviving examples from the commemoration of the Right Reverend John Thomas' marriage to Anne Clayton on 19th August 1742.

> *The present glass is one from a set of three discovered in the Portsmouth area in 2011 and sold at auction in Chichester later that year. Two others were recorded prior to the discovery, including one sold by Christie's on 6 October 1990, lot 162 and now in in the Durrington Collection, see Peter Dodsworth's catalogue (2006), p.38, no.33 and one sold as part of the Chris Crabtree Collection by Bonhams on 19 May 2010, lot 62. It is likely that the set was commissioned prior to Anne's death in 1772, perhaps to celebrate Thomas' new position of Dean of Westminster and of the Order of the Bath in 1768. A comparable set of four Beilby enamelled armorial glasses bearing the arms of the Surtees family was sold by Bonhams on 23 June 2021, lots 9-12.*[12]

[11] Bewick; 'Early Modern Consumption History. Current Challenges and Future Perspectives | Wouter Ryckbosch; Stobart and Hann.
[12] 'Bonhams : Fine Glass and British Ceramics' <https://www.bonhams.com/auction/27667/fine-glass-and-british-ceramics/> [accessed 26 April 2023].

Figure 10 A small twist stem glass, lot 144, decorated by the Beilbys. Picture taken by author at Bonhams Fine Glass and Ceramics auction, November 30th, 2022, London. The armorial depicts Thomas impaling Clayton and represents the marriage of the two houses.[13]

When we consider *this* glass and the set from which it hails there is, however, two wrinkles unique to this design which are notable when considering this singular item (and its siblings) in the context of the larger body of work. Point one, the armorial design is not the sole decoration on this glass- the reverse features typical fruiting vine decoration. This lends great credence to the notion that William Beilby had a stock of simple off-the-shelf glasses ready which could be further decorated upon request, furthering the estimation of the business as highly considered. Point two, looking closely at the armorial, we can see much of the gilding has been lost, and there are some considerable losses to the black/dark red areas too. This could be for one of two reasons, perhaps these smaller glasses didn't lend themselves to such intricate work and sloughed off some enamel, however, this seems highly unlikely as plenty of other small examples exist without such issue. The second option is that this glass is a very early example, completed whilst William was still honing his craft and perfecting his formulae.

Figure 11 Close up detail of the Thomas glass, clearly showing the less than perfect enamel. Taken by author.

The temptation would be to categorise this example as having been completed in 1742, the year of the Thomas/Clayton nuptials, however, this simply does not fit with the timeline presented elsewhere[14]. Much more likely, this set of glasses was commissioned for an anniversary of the marriage- likely the twentieth, which would have occurred in 1762. Anne

[13] 'Bonhams'.
[14] Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.

Thomas died in 1772 so it is highly unlikely these glasses were commissioned after this date, with Thomas going on to remarry in 1776.[15]

What we can discern from within this confusion of dates, however, is that this glass was indeed earli*er* in the Beilby Decade but, more importantly, it was likely an example which influenced the commission of multiple goblets for the royal household (see Fig. 9 and Fig. 12). Why?

> *Thomas was appointed chaplain in ordinary to King George II on 18 January 1749, a post which he retained under King George III.*[16]

The Royal Goblet in question is deemed to be from around 1762, so it is more than conceivable that a highly positioned chaplain within the royal household, having just received a fantastic bespoke set of glasses commemorating his anniversary, might have shown these to the then king who, in turn, commissioned his own goblet, not wanting to be outdone by his underlings. Likewise, the converse may also be true- inspired by the King and aspiring to upward mobility, Thomas may have commissioned these glasses in homage to the monarch. In either case to think that, even in our imagination, we might be able to trace the strings of influence pulled by the Beilbys in the acquisition of new business is frightfully exciting and goes some considerable way to supporting the principles of influencer manipulation outlined earlier in this research.

[15] 'Bonhams'.
[16] 'Bonhams'.

To deter any notion that these observations are coincidence we can, of course, observe the detail of the decoration once more- most specifically the gilding. Of the objects collected by the matrix only some twenty feature the addition of gilding, including the twelve royal goblets. All these gilt examples appear to be from the earlier half of the Beilby decade (<1765) but, of particular note, the Thomas glasses are some of the earliest.

It is fairly safe to assume that gilding was standard issue on Royal commissions as per the cultural associations between gold and royalty, however, we must interrogate those few outliers which feature gilding as to whether its application was taste or influence. In the case of Thomas' glasses and other notables such as the Partis goblet (matrix item 17) we can almost certainly deem the individual owners as aspirational to upward mobility. Certainly, what we know of Thomas, via Jim Peake, corroborates this[17].

I, personally, love the idea that a monarch could have been so enamoured with the William Beilby's work on Thomas' glasses that he would have rushed to commission his own and, indeed, there is a possibility this may be true. It is, however, unknowable without some diary from Thomas, the King himself or one of his subordinates who recorded the influence, none of which we have. But it is demonstrative of the virality of aesthetic influence, or conspicuous consumption, and the cultures of social mobility and status at play[18].

[17] 'Bonhams'.
[18] Thorstein Veblen, *Conspicuous Consumption*, UK ed. edition (Penguin, 2005); Dean Rapp, 'Social Mobility in the Eighteenth Century: The Whitbreads of Bedfordshire, 1720-1815', *The Economic History Review*, 27.3 (1974), 380–94 <https://doi.org/10.2307/2593380>; 'The Middle Classes: Etiquette and Upward Mobility', *The British Library* (The British Library) <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-middle-classes-etiquette-and-upward-mobility> [accessed 2 May 2023].

Figure 12 Royal Goblet in Fitzwilliam Museum collection, item C.570-1961, could this goblet have been commissioned as a direct result of stimulus from an influencer?

Speaking of royal commissions, though, it is finally time to address the least common item of the lot in the data, the Newcastle light baluster glass, and its lofty associations. We see yet another increase in difficulty in decoration when considering this final form. Unlike the relatively straight sided bowl of most goblets, the archetypal Newcastle Light Baluster features a thin walled and heavily fluted bowl. The added organic curves of the baluster style bowl surely added another axis to consider when applying enamel to this form factor which, in-turn, added another element of difficulty and cost to the design.

One interesting mode of analysis which may further demonstrate how the Beilbys were supremely cognizant of their market offering would be to contextualise what was happening in their glass making endeavours by what Ralph and Thomas Bewick were up to in, what could be referred to as, the 'core business'. This information is available in the day books kept by Thomas Bewick and is something I have analysed before.

> *Bewick's daybook from the inception of his apprenticeship with Ralph Beilby in 1766 meticulously catalogues every piece of work the nascent apprentice was tasked with engraving, giving us useful insight into the Beilby workshop's day-to-day efforts … in this one book, we find detailed* ***141 individual instances of Bewick engraving an object or plate with an armorial, crest or coat of arms****- indeed many of these jobs include multiple objects but between September 1766-December 1768 we can see the predominance of armorial decoration in both of the brothers Beilbys' work.*

My previous analysis of these documents illustrated that a clear emphasis was put on the importance of servicing an auspicious clientele with a strong taste for armorial decoration and was made in the service of highlighting how important this sector was to the Beilbys'

business model. However, in this instance, the salient point is not thus- rather we can take a step back and observe the totality of the objects Ralph and Thomas were engraving in order to comprehend a better picture of their business.

Let us not forget, these are multi-talented and ambitious craftspeople with irons in many fires. Ralph's passion, it seems, was printmaking and engraving, perhaps with a secondary interest in education (which will be relevant to remember later). Yet, during this time of 'The Beilby Decade', we see Ralph, to an extent, forgoing his aptitude and passion of printmaking in favour of producing items which seem to contribute towards a nebulous tableware business.

Bewick's daybooks chart the commission of engraved objects such as napkin rings, plates, bowls, spoons, and general cutlery items throughout the period, which will be of further relevance a little further on. However, it is very tempting to bifurcate Ralph and William's activities at this time, effectively drawing a line between an engraving business and a glass enamelling business, however, I would argue, this does the family a great disservice and obfuscates the true genius of the cohort.

What the juxtaposition of William and Ralph's individual works demonstrates is that, more than simply contributing income into a family business pot, Ralph and William were actively working together to provide a full-service bespoke tableware service. William could source and decorate high-quality glassware and drinking paraphernalia and Ralph, with Bewick in tow, provided engraved flatware, silverware, and incidentals.

What this speaks of is a much more sophisticated business operating practice that has previously been credited to the family, and something which can offer greater insight into the

buying practices of the elite in Eighteenth Century England. Indeed, if we observe the pattern we see here as representative of the consumer more than the artisan, then we could treat the Beilbys more as a yardstick, by which to measure modes of consumption in the upper classes in the Eighteenth Century.

This might seem spurious, but when we consider that the collated data seems to present a proliferation of small sweetmeat glasses, toasting glasses or firing cups, and a much smaller proportion of larger goblet style glassware it could be possible that this pattern is more representative of market demand, rather than maker autonomy.

A reliance on the customer or consumer is not uncommon or unpredictable bearing in mind the family were actively constructing a portfolio of marketable skills. Rather, this was something wholly necessary as without any steady demand for their wares the Beilbys' business would have crumbled. The Beilbys knew this fact, as is demonstrated by the breadth of different designs offered by the family, and their understanding of market principles certainly speaks to the period in which they were most prolific- a period notoriously formative for the practice of formulated shopkeeping.

This was a family operating in the time of the "birth of capitalism", in a period interstitial to Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776)[19]. It is presumptuous to assert that the Beilbys would have been fans of Smith's particular brand of microeconomics, but it is also foolish to assume that they were not. After all, this was a family of highly literate, enterprising scholars (first and

[19] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments: To Which Is Added, a Dissertation on the Origin of Languages* (G. Bell & sons, 1875); Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (W. Strahan; and T. Cadell, in the Strand., 1776).

foremost) and artificers who were clearly taking calculated risks in order to grow their business. That their business seems to have boomed (in relative terms) in the years directly following Smiths first treatise is surely no coincidence.

It is my feeling that, as Smith described it, the 'invisible hand' that guides the economy is an altogether too fanciful term for what Steuart would go on to coin as 'supply and demand' in 1796[20]. Steuart's description of the phenomenon became canon that even most non-economists are accustomed to, but it would not have been terminology plucked out of thin air- crystallised phenomena such as this would have been carefully observed in the burgeoning marketplace by any keen economist, not dreamt up in the isolation of a hypothetical petri dish, and so the term itself is indicative of the observable market manipulation by contemporaneous manufacturers such as the Beilbys[21].

This supply/demand manipulation would likely have been most acutely notable in much larger businesses than the Beilbys, Wedgwood and the like, but in microcosm the analysis I have made here of the matrix seems to point to the phenomena as something the Beilbys implemented themselves.

[20] James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy (Vol. 1 of 2) Being an Essay on the Science of Domestic Policy in Free Nations. In Which Are Particularly Considered Population, Agriculture, Trade, Industry, Money, Coin, Interest, Circulation, Banks, Exchange, Public Credit, and Taxes*, 2019 <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/60411> [accessed 26 January 2023].
[21] Steuart.

THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

When considering the idea that the Beilbys were trying to construct distinct product offerings within their range, it is inevitable that we must examine the objects sitting at the top of that pyramid or tip of the iceberg, if you will. This metaphor was chosen as it not only reflects the loftiness and singularity of this segment of their offering, but also, importantly, the visibility of these objects both then and now. The objects existing today that fit within this segmentation are the most impressive and famous, partly due to their inimitable design and inexorable quality of brushwork but, mostly, due to their associations with lofty patrons.

The contemporaneous demand for these objects was, without a doubt, small. The pool of surviving examples goes some way to corroborating this as does some modicum of common sense- these were the Beilbys' most expensive offerings and were reserved for sociopolitical elites, of which there were not many.

They had proven their ability to meet the demands of the mass market by developing a relatively high output option in their variety of plain white twist stem glasses, therefore meeting the needs of a few important commissioners would have surely been effortless.

Afterall, the family, and Ralph in particular, were experienced in the art of designerly collaboration- letters between noted mathematician, historian and diarist, John Brand[22], and Ralph, talk in detail about design feedback, changes and the reception of Ralph's commissioned engravings.

[22] 'History of Newcastle by Brand, First Edition - AbeBooks'.

However, producing the objects to a high quality and managing client expectations would have been secondary in this scenario to the act of simply finding the demand for such niche objects. Ever the innovators, the Beilbys sought out ingenious ways to generate their own demand through the intelligent creation and marketing of both themselves and their products.

One first example of this attempt to manipulate the demand cycle is the ‘Miners’ Goblet’, an object I have previously written about as one which demonstrates a calculated attempt to infiltrate the Dutch market.

This is an object that will be referenced multiple times throughout this paper and, while I think the reasons for this speak for themselves, it is hopefully sufficient to say that this one object encapsulates the ambitions of the family in the most concentrated package.

> *Signed 'Beilby pinxit'. For similar figures of coal miners with pill-box hats and plumes, heavy boots with knee-pads, picks and hanging iron grease-lamps, see the German glass and ceramic vessels made for miners' guilds. It seems possible that this goblet was made for some miners' or mine-owners' organisation.*[23]

Above is the description of the goblet, taken directly from the website of the V&A Museum. The notion that this goblet was painted for some unknown miners’ guild, yet conveniently takes a form most widely popularised in the Netherlands is unusual. The artwork itself raises question, when considering that the style of the armorial is more closely related to

[23] Victoria and Albert Museum, ‘Wine Glass | Beilby, William | V&A Explore The Collections’, *Victoria and Albert Museum: Explore the Collections* <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O5419/> [accessed 19 April 2022].

contemporaneous Dutch heraldry, than that of the English nobles. The figures depicted, I propose, not two miners with hammer and chisel, but rather two Beilbys with engraving tools, accompanied in the armorial by a golden goblet, engraved and similar in form to the Beilbys' most notable royal commissions.

This was an object that was made to showcase the brothers' prodigious skills to a non-domestic market. It illustrates the family heritage of engraving and metalwork, their ability to enamel glassware, their access to glassware of the highest quality and even their familial traits and organisational structure (William possibly being portrayed inside the armorial, with brother, Ralph, above, pulling the strings).

The notion that they may have designed the armorial themselves as a kind of brand armorial, long before any modern notion of businesses having a logo, also demonstrates their innovative potential and, more practically, their affinity for heraldic design and knowledge of armorials. On the rear of the glass, plain white decoration in the form of a classical obelisk scene rounds off the collection of Beilby skills and demonstrates the characteristic of their best-selling white enamelled glasses. This glass presents the makers as uncommonly innovative, but in the terms of this discourse, it presents as a disruptive device, created to stimulate demand for their services. (I say services more so than simply glassware as, in this object, we see more than one skill demonstrated with its multiple references to engraving.)

Figure 13- The 'Miners' Glass', from the collection of the V&A Museum, item C-623.1936. Side visible shows invented armorial, closely observe the form of the cartouche, and the style of the glass' stem.

Briefly disregarding the influence and logistic clout required to even get this object in front of wealthy Dutch nobles, it is evident that this object paid dividends in the stimulation of the demand they would have wanted, in the form of at least one notable commission from the Tilly family of Haarlem.

Figure 14- The Tilly Glass, 'decorated in polychrome with the coat of arms of the Tilly family of Haarlem, a yellow dove perched on an olive branch with a white stem and green leaves, within an ouroboros, the yellow serpent picked out in iron-red'[24]

[24] 'A Very Rare Beilby Enamelled Armorial Light Baluster "Tilly" Wine Glass, circa 1765-69 - Nov 30, 2022 | Bonhams In', *LiveAuctioneers* <https://www.liveauctioneers.com/en-gb/item/140598931_a-very-rare-beilby-enamelled-armorial-light-baluster-tilly-wine-glass-circa-1765-69> [accessed 26 January 2023].

When this piece was commissioned, and indeed when many of the most important pieces of Beilby glass were also, there was struck up a conversation between parties unknown. Modern scholarship, Cottle and Rush in particular, gives some credit to Elizabeth Beilby as a kind of London-based agent for the North-Eastern situated brothers, but this is largely based on the knowledge that she married and moved to London and the notion that, without some capital-based representative, trade in England's most important city would be impossible[25]. We have no real insight into the true comings and goings of Elizabeth to the purpose of drumming up trade, or instigating demand, among the London elite, however Prof. Jon Stobart does go some way to explaining how the relationship between creator and client *may* have looked for the Beilbys, albeit through the lens of the Leigh family of Stoneleigh Abbey[26].

Of note, Stobart highlights the potential motives responsible for domestic purchases in the elite classes and includes useful breakdowns of the locality of tradespeople and merchants, albeit only those relevant to the Leigh family. Unfortunately, we see no mention of the Beilbys, indeed while Stobart's table of merchants' locations elucidates the reliance on more parochial tradespeople their pocketbooks do not extend as far as Newcastle. However, that does not preclude Beilby wares from being categorised as London based if Elizabeth was as instrumental, as some posit[27].

It would at this point be beneficial to explore comparable Northern families' records to perhaps ascertain whether the same patterns of consumption present themselves albeit with the Beilbys having been patronised, unfortunately I have not been able to find nor access any records as substantial or insightful as Stobart. Regardless, what this does present is the picture

[25] Cottle, 'Family Connections'; Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.
[26] Stobart.
[27] Stobart. P.5

of a saturated market- a market in which artisans like Ralph and William (et al) would have to clearly differentiate themselves from their competitors in some way. It is apparent that glass was available in massive quantities and, despite taxation, procured relatively cheaply compared to pewter or silver tableware and so a complex understanding of market principles was necessary to remain relevant and profitable.

MODELS AND SERIES: IN THE MATTER OF BAUDRILLARD VS. BEILBY

The idea of fitting the Beilby's products into some formalised structure or series is one that is ostensibly impossible without considering the theory of the relationship between model/series. Handily, Baudrillard proposes that '*one cannot exactly speak of 'models' or 'series' in connection with any time before the industrial era'*[28]. He purports that the notion of a series of objects, as devised by the artisan(s), is a symptom of industrialisation- a phenomenon intrinsically impossible in the age of handcraft. He goes on to suggest that in the past there were no extrinsic links between object *values* and function[29]. A table was the same in a peasant's household as in a royal court, or so he suggests. The assignment of value, especially the value added by the association of the maker is a modern phenomenon, and one which he supposes lies in the *nobility* of the object[30].

Much like socioeconomic nobility, Baudrillard states that an object's '*grace [is] bestowed [by] ultimate distinction… in the realm of objects the equivalent of this transcendent idea of nobility is what we call the 'style' of an object'*[31]. This sort of notion imposes upon an object

[28] Baudrillard. P.147
[29] Baudrillard. P.148
[30] Baudrillard. P.148
[31] Baudrillard. P.148

a kind of embedded nobility upon its creation, and the factor from which this nobility is derived stem from lack of seriality.

Here is the problem or, rather, the wrinkle: trying to fit the Beilbys' glassware into this archetypal model/series framework forces us to appreciate the reality that they were neither one, nor the other. The Beilbys are so interesting when examined in this light as the objects they created were both mass-produced *and* handcrafted or, as Baudrillard might prefer, both pre and post-industrial. This hybridity forced the Beilbys, knowingly or not, to operate their business in a space where there was little marketing precedent, effectively allowing them to embrace multiple routes to their customers, including those exclusive to one model or the other, simultaneously.

Baudrillard approaches a solution to this problem in his consideration of 'personalized objects', however, the Beilbys seem to wriggle free of Baudrillard's categorisation that '*the object's function tends to very largely absorb differences of status'*[32] . The Beilby's product line were inherently functional, and, by Baudrillard's estimation, their function was no different than that of the drinking glass of a peasant.

However, this measurement of function completely disregards the social purpose which these glasses fulfilled. However, when considering personalisation as a differentiator of model within series, it is perhaps John Stuart Mill[33] who finally elucidates whereby the personalised glasses of the Beilbys functioned within the social hierarchy of objects- '"*personalisation", far from being a mere advertising ploy, is actually a basic ideological concept of a society*

[32] Baudrillard. P. 150
[33] John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010).

which "personalises" objects and beliefs solely in order to integrate persons more effectively'[34].

The notion, then, that the Beilbys were in fact creating objects as mediators to perform the function of integrating owners of said objects into upper-class social circles could be revelatory. In theoretical terms, considering the *series* of objects the Beilbys created left space for the aspirational classes to purchase them may have encouraged some social mobility within their customer base.

As ever, the Beilbys were not blind to this phenomenon; despite having never been subjected to Baudrillard they were cognisant of this phenomenon and, in fact, used it to aid in their own, upwards social mobility via the construction of an image of the family as *part* of their customers' society.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON THE BEILBY MATRIX

So, when re-examining the findings of the Beilby matrix, perhaps the real reason why we see such a clearly divided product line from the Beilbys is their desire to cater to three carefully curated demographics. In as much, the Beilbys demonstrated understanding of the needs of their market and its inhabitants and it is somewhat immaterial to fuss over whether the Beilbys demonstrated this market understanding through product offering or whether they curated a product offering based on market demand- the takeaway remains that the Beilbys demonstrate themselves to be reactive

[34] Baudrillard. P155- Baudrillard explains that personalisation, in the model sense, extends beyond the commission of specific designs, armorials or customer-determined features and, instead, encompasses any feature that is selected by the customer as a differentiating factor from another within the same series, e.g. selecting the paint colour of a car.; Baudrillard. P.152

to their market, and it is their reactivity which was key to their successes. Indeed, their commission-based model could be seen as entirely reactive- but it is also demonstrative of flexibility and willingness to change.

This willingness to change is something which can be observed frequently throughout the lives of the Beilbys, as evidenced by their fluid relationship with their 'trade'. Seemingly far from the norm, William and Ralph had a propensity for learning new skills and transitioning were fearless in moving their skills to new ventures.

Indeed, this relationship between the family and their plied trade could, as Latour puts it, be more indicative of the relationship between the human and non-human in the process of manufacturing than anything else[35]. The Beilbys share a sort of synonymity with the objects they created, a synonymity that was seen as an asset to be traded upon, and certainly something the family would have relished. It is also a characteristic reflective of the time period, in which the name associated with the design or production of an object was, in some cases, more valuable than the object itself. This notion tends to directly counteract the more staid theories of consumer cultures as being driven by consumers and trends set out by the likes of Plumb[36], as described by Ross Wilson[37].

Of course, Plumb and his contemporaries were operating at a time when this kind of inoffensive, anecdotal archaeology was on trend, as the flavour of his work tends to lend

[35] Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[36] J. H. Plumb, *GEORGIAN DELIGHTS.* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980).
[37] '(99+) "The Mystical Character of Commodities: The Consumer Society in Eighteenth Century England", Post-Medieval Archaeology 42(1) (144-156). | Ross Wilson - Academia.Edu' <https://www.academia.edu/7968763/_The_mystical_character_of_commodities_the_consumer_society_in_eighteenth_century_England_Post_Medieval_Archaeology_42_1_144_156_?auto=download&email_work_card=download-paper> [accessed 2 February 2023].

itself to similar critique as that of Rush[38]. It could be said that the modes of analysis being used here are, themselves, indicative of Twenty-First Century trends in academia, lent more towards empirical or qualitative modes of analysis than the haughty storytelling of past histories, but the conclusions drawn simultaneously corroborate existing estimations but also add new insight into both the Beilbys and Eighteenth Century interaction between design and consumption[39].

What is achieved by observing trends from a large body of evidence is the opportunity to identify patterns and the anomalies which prove the preconceptions of existing knowledge and push the boundaries of design histories into more empirical modal analyses. In this sense, the research completed here is both successful and insightful.

[38] Cottle, 'Family Connections'.
[39] '(99+) "The Mystical Character of Commodities: The Consumer Society in Eighteenth Century England", Post-Medieval Archaeology 42(1) (144-156). | Ross Wilson - Academia.Edu'; Stobart and Hann.

Conclusion

From the outset this research planned to do quite a bit- to elucidate the true ingenuity of the Beilbys in a tangible, measurable sense, to develop a better understanding of the objects produced during William Beilby's tenure as enameller extraordinaire and to establish a fuller picture of the Beilby back-catalogue. What this research offers the design historian, however, is a proposition for a more holistic research methodology and a replicable framework for the *combined* analysis of objects and data. Although somewhat limited in scope, my research only proves that to an Eighteenth Century consumption and production are very much more within the control of the designer and maker than existing literature would like to acknowledge.

METHODOLOGY

It has become the custom to interpret singular objects and build a tapestry by stitching together the fragmentary stories of insular things. The holistic research framework employed here proposes the opposite; a methodology whereby the tapestry is created simply by the collected histories, and we observe the story through a macro lens, zooming in when we need greater resolution and zooming out when we need greater context. In this, there is no better subject to explore than the Beilbys- there is so much complexity to the picture that my criticisms of secondary histories as too focused on either the family or the objects is completely understandable. It's simply very hard to do justice to the magnitude and innovation of the Beilby business in its entirety using traditional methodologies. But it is precisely because of this fact that the Beilbys are the perfect case study on which to deploy this holistic analysis.

Katsushima highlights the need to abandon thinking about matters of design on isolation from matters of business and, as far as the Beilbys are concerned, treating their body of work with this sort of homogeneity resolves a fuller and more empirical picture than was previously popularised by James Rush[1].

This research also hopes to inspire the historical treatment of 'local' makers with the same reverence that we give London makers. Too often the businesses of cities like Newcastle, Birmingham and Liverpool are shoehorned into the 'parochial' category, without real justification based on primary evidence. This is largely due to the absence of a global market place in which these local marketeers operated. However, Beilby, and surely others, *were* able to transcend the limitations of their marketplace and operate in the continent or consumer-base and highlights the need to more carefully interrogate such businesses to build a better picture of the contemporaneous business landscape.

When we think of the businesses of Eighteenth Century merchants, especially those considered marginalised by geography or economies of scale, we rarely consider the intricacies of how they approached designing their product lines, branding, and marketing. Indeed in 1765 (some would say thankfully) marketing managers weren't a thing. Therefore, the temptation is to assume they were all provincial artisans, crafting into the wee hours with as little regard for business strategy as they likely had for health and safety.

Unfortunately, this research has not captured the regional flavour that I had hoped. The significance of Newcastle to the Beilby story, and vice versa, simply did not emerge in the manner in which I had hoped. Regardless, this is perhaps beneficial to the arguments in play-

[1] Katsushima (Berg); Rush, *Ingenious Beilbys*.

namely, that businesses like the Beilbys, typically hemmed into their home city or county, *were* able to extend their influence far beyond the bounds of their regionality[2].

What this research does demonstrate is that there were businesses in Eighteenth Century England who deployed methods of brand construction, product segmentation and marketing which would not be out of place today. Indeed, I have addressed the anachronistic definition of the Beilbys as influencers, but this is not the only way in which we could observe the family as ahead of their time[3]. And, while their traits were certainly innovative and unexpected, I make no assertion of certainty that the Beilbys were an anomalous entity in the application of these principles, merely that they were exceptionally good at them.

In as much, this presents a tantalising opportunity to build upon this research, observing the practices of many more businesses than simply that of the Beilbys in the pursuit of developing a picture of Eighteenth Century commerce that is far more data driven and pushes the bounds of academic knowledge on the time period. We may even learn a thing or two beneficial to contemporary industrial design practice.

The constant comparison made in this research to 'contemporary' or present-day principles is not intended to minimise the complexity of Eighteenth Century design businesses in a landscape absent of billboards and cookies ads, rather it serves to illuminate the cyclical nature of consumption of goods and the methods deployed by entrepreneurs to capitalise upon it. The complex multi-tiered product lines of Apple, and the influencer marketing and social construction of Instagram are not, as is easy to assume, anchored temporally in their

[2] Stobart.
[3] Pei, Morone, and Makse.

dependence on technological products and services[4]. Businesses such as the Beilbys and, it is certain many others, were implementing similar strategies to sell glass, ceramics, wool, and furniture over 200 years ago[5]. The terminology we use to describe the practices employed then, as now, is simply very different. And the lens through which we view these practices is also skewed. We want to view the age in which we live as *the* most innovative and progressive time, as it justifies the drive for future innovation. Unfortunately, this is simply not true.

While the products and services on offer have changed immeasurably in that space of 260 years or so, consumers have not. Nor have the methods used by enterprising businessfolk to capitalise upon them.

Candidly, perhaps the greatest disappointment in this research is the inability to have collated a complete matrix, collecting *all* known pieces of Beilby glassware. Thankfully, the quantity of objects collected and observed does not in any way undermine the findings- on the contrary, this is perhaps the largest collected study of Beilby glasses that has yet been conducted, made publicly accessible and, critically, analysed in detail.

However, there as yet does not exist one central library for Beilby objects. I had hoped this research could rectify this but was left disappointed; limitations on time, information, access and the simple fact that new Beilby pieces are still emerging from clandestine collections made this goal an unachievable one. However, this does not in anyway mitigate the

[4] Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, 10th Anniversary edition (Fourth Estate, 2010).
[5] Berg; Ileana Baird, 'Introduction: Peregrine Things: Rethinking the Global in Eighteenth-Century Studies', *Eighteenth-Century Thing Theory in a Global Context: From Consumerism to Celebrity Culture*, 2014 <https://www.academia.edu/40376137/Introduction_Peregrine_Things_Rethinking_the_Global_in_Eighteenth_Century_Studies> [accessed 8 February 2023]; McKendrick.

observations I have made or the conclusions I have drawn. It simply highlights the unending nature of the historian's work and presents further opportunity to build upon the new picture of the Beilbys set forth by this paper.

Indeed, the findings of this research are primed wonderfully to fit into a much larger study of Eighteenth Century consumption. This is the foundation of a study which truly focuses on the symbiosis between maker and market and one which synergises the fields of design *and* history beyond the bounds of typical "design histories". The outcomes of this research only strengthen and clarify our understanding of what it meant to be an Eighteenth Century consumer and add to a field of knowledge populated by Berg, Ryckbosh et al, that is burgeoning with interest as innovative routes to market via sphere of influence, have once again become essential differentiators in modern businesses[6].

With regard to the specific case of the Beilbys, the fact that a lot of the nuance surrounding their practices has been lost or ignored speaks to the gap in academic understanding of at least that family but perhaps (more damningly) an entire market of peripheral businesses that were breaking ground a quarter of a millennium ago, unbeknownst to Twenty-First Century eyes.

[6] Berg; Wouter Ryckbosch, 'Early Modern Consumption History: Current Challenges and Future Perspectives', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, 130 (2015), 57 <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.9962>.

THE BEILBYS

It is my hope that this thesis goes some of the way to illuminating the family as being much more complex than the highfalutin-yet-parochial glass decorators from Amen Corner, and ushers in a new appreciation of the family as innovators in their field. The decorated glassware of the Beilbys is, in my belief, a triumph of ability, aptitude and virtuosity which innocuously belies the complex network of factors which led to its inceptions. From William's apprenticeship under Haseldine, to Ralph's unerring commitment to the business and, finally, to Elizabeth's subsequent marriage and position as capital-based brand ambassador, the family's production of inimitable objects was the product of much more than simply applying enamel on glass[7].

The complex interplay of social navigation, upward mobility and aspiration ushered the Beilbys into the auspices of fortunate patrons- this primordial porridge of Downton Abbey romance and hardcore business stratagem gave rise to a dynasty that ought to be household names in the city of their birth, at least.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. The reputation of the family currently rests on links to other parties- the association with the prolific Bewick perhaps the most fundamental, but the arguments and observations this body of research proposes, both empirical and emotional, is that the Beilby family deserve rightly to be lauded as pioneers of both industry and art[8]. In Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, the family's home, there is a Blackett Street (famous Beilby patron),

[7] Cottle, 'Family Connections'; Bewick.
[8] Bewick; *Bewick Studies, Essays in Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the Birth of Thomas Bewick 1753-1828*, ed. by David Gardner-Medwin (Stocksfield, Northumberland : London : New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Pr, 2004).

a Brand Avenue (diarist and Beilby correspondent), a Bewick Street (Beilby Apprentice), but no Beilby Street[9].

This is unfortunate as it is clear not only from this research but from all that has been written about them that the objects they supplied were original and outstanding; the skills they employed- virtuosic and ephemeral. The Beilby air was indeed a rarefied one. This was a family, a business, at the cutting edge 260 years ago, and one we can still observe today as exemplars of innovative business practice and market manipulation in the field of product design, albeit a business forgotten by time, overshadowed by its own objects and apprentices.

Finally, concerning the family's choice to renounce industry and focus on education as teased in the introduction to this essay (Ralph's suspect History of Quadrupeds notwithstanding), we may never know the true influence behind this segue[10]. If, as I have suggested, the brothers held themselves to particular and personal standards of success, striving for job satisfaction at all costs, then their abandonment of industrial production was no consequence of their business' success or not. It is simply a lesson to us all: do what you need to do in order to do what you love.

[9] 'History of Newcastle by Brand, First Edition; Barke, Robson, and Champion.
[10] Ralph Beilby, *A General History of Quadrupeds* (S. Hodgson, R. Beilby, & T. Bewick, 1792).

APPENDIX A – LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover Image- Wine Glass from V&A museum, item C.623-1936. Image courtesy of https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O5419/wine-glass-beilby-william/ Image has been edited to extend background space. Ref: English Glass - R. J. Charleston, (1984) pl.41a. English Glassware to 1900 - Charles Truman, (1984) pl.19. The ingenious Beilbys - James Rush, 1973 The decorated glasses of William and Mary Beilby 1761-78 - Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, 1980 p.13, no.59 Cf. Meisterwerke bergbaulicher Kunst vom 13. bis 19. Jahrhandert - Rainer Slotta, Christoph Bartels, catalogue of exhibition organised by Deutsches Bergbau-Museum and held at Schloß Cappenberg, Bochum, 1990

Figure 1 P.20- Timeline created by author detailing key dates of family members and other notable points in the history of the Beilby family. Created using time.graphics for education (online). The dates and information used are pulled from the memoirs of Thomas Bewick, Rush' Ingenious Beilbys and Cottle's Family Connections.

Figure 2 P.24- A later image (C19th) depicting the workshop of Bewick and Beilby, located at Amen Corner. Newcastle Libraries/Newcastle Local Studies. Accession Number: 003388. Image courtesy of TWsitleines.info (https://twsitelines.info/SMR/11323%20#lightbox-popup-1) Described as: The Beilby family (seven children of a silversmith) were born in Durham. William Beilby became one of the world's finest glass engravers. William and his brother rented a flat in Gateshead in 1759 but failed to find work as engravers. In 1760 they moved into the former workshop of Jameson, in Amen Corner in Newcastle. William and his sister Mary engraved for local glass makers and banks, and Ralph Beilby was the businessman. In 1761 William Beilby became the first person to engrave enamel onto glass. He used a small butterfly as his signature. George III commissioned William and Mary to engrave a series of crystal goblets. Thomas Bewick, wood engraver, became Ralph's apprentice in 1767 and a full partner in the Beilby business in 1776. He began a romance with Mary Beilby which caused a rift between himeslf and Ralph. The romance ended when Mary suffered a stroke in 1774. The Beilby's mother died in 1778 and William and Mary moved to London, leaving Ralph in Newcastle to run the business. Ralph died in 1819. William died in Hull in 1819. The Laing Art Gallery owns several Beilby pieces. P. Winter, D. Milne, J. Brown and A. Rushworth, 1989, Northern Heritage - Newcastle upon Tyne, pages 128-129; Jenny Uglow, 2006, Thomas Bewick - artist and engraver in Tyneside's Finest, 2006, pp 120-121; Gill, M.A.V., 1976, The Potteries of Tyne and Wear, and their dealings with the Beilby/Berwick Workshop, Archaeologia Aeliana Fifth Series, Vol. IV

Figure 3 P.28- A page from Thomas Bewick's daybook detailing the works completed by himself during the week of May 30th to June 7th, 1767. Photograph taken by author, courtesy of Tyne & Wear Museums archive, Discovery Museum, item number Acc1269, incl. Acc3538, DT.BEW

Figure 4 P.45- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as typically visualised. Image courtesy of www.simplypsychology.org

Figure 5 P.48- T. Beilby advertising to open drawing school in Leeds, 1769, from British Newspaper Archives, using search terms 'Beilby' 'Glafs' https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

Figure 6 P.49- Trade card of Mr Beilby, schoolmaster, and his academy for young gentlemen in Battersea, London, with a view of the establishment https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_D-2-3618

Figure 7 P.55- A Beilby enamelled decanter in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum. Here we can see the archetypal white enamel 'fruiting vine' artwork. Clearly visible is a butterfly, centre, painted in a style synonymous with the Beilbys. It has been pointed out that the buttefly itself is not very well obeserved, yet perhaps this inaccuracy is artictic license, ensuring its recognisability as a Beilby construct. Courtesy of Fitzwilliam Museum, item C.509 & A-1961

Figure 8 P.60- A visualisation of the form factors most associated with the Beilbys' enamelled glassware. The pyramid depicts the respective quantities of each form in the conglomerated pool of surviving examples. Image created by author, based on qualitative research. Image created using Adobe Illustrator.

Figure 9 P.65- Bowl of a Goblet, broken from its stem. Taken from V&A museum: Originally a bucket-shaped goblet on a straight stem with a spreading foot, stem and foot have been broken off and the underside of the bowl ground smooth. On one side is painted the Royal Arms of Great Britain and Ireland: on the other, the Three Feathers badge and the motto "Ich Dien". Under the base names have been scratched with a diamond, after the stem had been broken and the stump ground down - "Mrs. Ashley 1803", "J.G. Johnston 1866", "Daniel J.". Item number C.787-1936, vam.ac.uk

Figure 10 & 11 P.68-69- A small twist stem glass, lot 144, decorated by the Beilbys. Picture taken by author at Bonhams Fine Glass and Ceramics auction, November 30th, 2022, London. The armorial depicts Thomas impaling Clayton and represents the marriage of the two houses. Figure 10 depicts the armorial in close detail, original photo cropped by author.

Figure 12 P.72- Royal Goblet in Fitzwilliam Museum collection, item C.570-1961

Figure 13 P.80- The 'Miners' Glass', from the collection of the V&A Museum, item C-623.1936. Side visible shows invented armorial, closely observe the form of the cartouche, and the style of the glass' stem.

Figure 14 P.81- The Tilly Glass, 'decorated in polychrome with the coat of arms of the Tilly family of Haarlem, a yellow dove perched on an olive branch with a white stem and green leaves, within an ouroboros, the yellow serpent picked out in iron-red'. Image courtesy of Bonhams auction catalogue for November 30th, 2022, Fine Ceramics and Glass. Lot 40. Described as: The round funnel bowl finely decorated in polychrome with the coat of arms of the Tilly family of Haarlem, a yellow dove perched on an olive branch with a white stem and green leaves, within an ouroboros, the yellow serpent picked out in iron-red shown biting its tail, within an elaborate rococo scroll cartouche painted in shades of pale purple, inscribed 'Tilly.' in opaque white beneath, the reverse with the crest of a white dove in flight above a helmet in yellow and red, traces of gilding to the rim, on a stem with triple-annulated knop above a beaded inverted baluster and small teared basal knop, over a conical foot, *17cm high*

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SEE ATTACHED APPENDIX C

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