

CONTENTS

Page 1:	Carlight Tuscan China
	A Brief History of the
	Tuscan China Works
Page 2:	Variants in the manufac-
	ture of Carlight Tuscan China
Page 3:	China Body
	Baseware shapes
Page 4:	Artwork and Design
Page 5:	Backstamps
Page 6:	Originality
Page 7:	Price Guide
Page 8:	Further information

Carlight

Carlight Tuscan China Information Sheet

Researched & compiled by Dr W. Atkin and R. Hodgson,
with thanks to David Rachel for further information and advice

A Brief History of Tuscan Carlight China



Tuscan side plate depicting the first known artwork

Carlight Tuscan China

Tuscan made personalised china for a number of companies, one of which was Carlight. The 'Carlight' China was originally offered in the 1950s through to the early 1970s as an optional extra for inclusion with the Carlight range of caravans. It is believed that the sets were originally offered in both peach bloom (pink) and white, but after a few years the peach bloom option was dropped and all further sets were produced on a white background.

The china was decorated by a transfer process: the water-slide transfers were applied by hand onto a glazed and first-fired ware, the colour and gold banding then being applied by hand, and the item was then glazed and fired for a second time to protect and guard the transfer.

There were four different sets of artwork produced, but all three remained broadly similar throughout the production period.

Most of the china was of conventional design, apart from the sandwich plates. Originally these were approximately 8⁷/₈" square. The square shape was rather unusual because it was very difficult to make, as it tended to distort when fired. There was typically a very high wastage rate, sometimes up to 50%. This, when combined with the inevitable glazing and colouring defects, meant that it was an expensive item to produce, and the sandwich plates changed from a square to a circle of 9³/₄", but having approximately 3³/₈" 'cut off' from the top and bottom sections towards the end of production.

A butter plate was also offered throughout the production period.

The Tuscan China Works

There is a wonderful history of manufacturing in the Potteries, and Tuscan was only one of a number of famous names, including Wedgwood, Shelley, Royal Albert, Coalport and Susie Cooper, operating in that area.

It is interesting to see how the companies evolved, some taking over others, some being swallowed up, some finding the increasing competition from imports too much to bear.

Tuscan was typical of this ebb and flow of fortune. It gained success through innovation, later its capacity proving to be too big a lure for another manufacturer to resist.

And eventually the Tuscan name became part of the larger Wedgwood empire, and the Tuscan name has now disappeared from modern china production.

The path the company trod from the eighteenth century to date is fascinating, showing the type of evolution and adaptation necessary in the Potteries.

The original Tuscan China was manufactured by brothers R. H. and S. L. Plant Ltd in Longton in the heart of the Staffordshire potteries from c.1898 to 1967. Longton, together with the township of Lane End, formed one of the six towns that now make up Stoke-on-Trent. Although the recorded history of the firm only goes back to 1898, there is evidence that ancestors of the Plant family had been manufacturing pottery at Longton since at least 1775. An old diary has survived belonging to Benjamin Plant, a potter from Longton, inscribed "Benjamin Plant – his book, 1775". Among the entries is one giving the average prices of meat at that time – veal 3d a pound, lamb 6d a pound, and pork 6½d a pound. It also contains several receipts for coloured bodies (including yellow and black) and for glazes (including one for a deep violet colour). William Chaffers, in his *Hand Book of Marks and Monograms of Pottery and Porcelain*, records the name of B. Plant, Lane End, as appearing on a jug in the form of a lioness. There are also a white glaze basket, made about 1780, in the possession of James Plant of Salford, and a pair of lions inscribed "Benjamin Plant, Lane End" in the possession of a Mr Hailstone.

R. H. and S. L. Plant originally occupied the Carlisle Works, but later moved to a new location at Longton, which they named the Tuscan Works. The firm amalgamated with Plant Bros in c.1906 and the business was formed into a limited company in 1915 (R. H. & S. L. Plant Ltd), still running under the aegis of the Plant family. S. L. Plant and his son, F. S. Plant, directed the Sales Department, while

brothers H. J. and A. E. Plant were in charge of the production side. Early pottery marks of the company include the initials "RH & SLP" and "Plant". In 1936 they started using the trade name "Tuscan China".

Research and product development always played a strong part in the firm's ethos. By the 1950s, they had achieved two notable technical developments. One was the discovery of a very fine china body suitable for hotel ware, which owing to its strength and finish was named 'Metallised Hotel China'. The fracture-resisting strength of this body had been tested and found superior to all others, so that after a quarter of a century it still held its own in world markets. Its introduction did much to relieve the economic situation caused by the importation of foreign hotel wares. The other notable event was the discovery of a china body with a slightly pink shade, which was given the name of Peach Bloom. As it lent itself to particularly pleasing decorative schemes and colourings, it was regarded as a great asset to the reputation of the firm.

Tuscan China was brought to prominence in the 1950s, when the firm merged with Susie Cooper, who needed spare bone china capacity. Both firms were taken over by the Wedgwood Group in 1967, when they started to use the mark "Royal Tuscan China". In 1986 Wedgwood merged with Waterford Crystal to form the Waterford Wedgwood Group, but in 2007 the Group went into administration, and was eventually purchased by KPS Capital Partners LP, a New York investment group.

Variants in the manufacture of Carlight Tuscan China

At the time of writing, nine variants of Carlight china have been identified, including two colours of baseware (peach bloom and white), four changes in design of the baseware, four different designs of

transfers (with one variant of application) and five different designs of backstamp.

The obvious difference with the above variants are the colours of the baseware. Apart from this, the other changes are subtle enough that items can be mixed within a set with no obvious detriment to

the set as a whole.

The following tables give details of the variations referred to earlier, ie the colour of the china body, the baseware shapes, changes in artwork and design and the different backstamps used through the production period.

China Body

There were two types of body used, both fine bone china with around 50% bone content, but one had a distinct pink colouration and was referred to as Peach Bloom. As far as we are aware, both colours were initially offered, with the Peach Bloom being dropped shortly after the Early Continental design began to be produced.

Baseware shapes

The earliest china was a relatively lightweight ware, with shallow plates and saucers.

After the initial production, some later sets were made of a slightly heavier ware, and very slightly deeper profile to plates and saucers. This shape is interchangeable with the above and the inclusion of odd items of this shape does not detract from a set.

Later sets, introduced around 1970, were similar to the first lightweight ware, but the plates increased to 10^{7/8}" diameter, and the sandwich plates changed from square to round, with cropped top and bottom edges.

In the very latest sets the teapot design changed substantially, but the baseware shapes for the remainder of the items remained as above with the larger dinner plates.



Early sandwich plate (left) and the later style c.1970 (right)

Artwork and Design

Early Colonial design (possibly design no. 530H), showing a Carlight Colonial. This design is identified by the caravan door being ahead of the axle.



Early Continental design (design no. D3024), showing a Carlight Continental. This design is identified by the caravan door, which is now behind the axle, and the front of the lower side panel of the caravan is not shaded.



Early Continental design variant: the design of the artwork is exactly the same as above, but there are two clouds applied to the dinner plates.

Mid-period Continental design (again called design no. D3024), showing a Carlight Continental. Can be differentiated from the Early Period Continental design because the lower panel of the caravan is shaded and the front of the caravan shows the moulding lines of a fibreglass (rather than aluminium) front panel.



Late Continental design: confusingly, this is still shown as design D3024 (the design number was sometimes hand-written on the reverse of some items), but the drawing is new. It still shows a Carlight Continental, with the door behind the axle, but curtains have been included to the windows of the caravan, and also the caravan has a revised front panel from that of the Mid-period Continental design.



Backstamps

EARLIEST ALL GREY BACKSTAMP

Grey "Tuscan" above grey "Fine English Bone china" above a grey wings-and-crown logo, with two flights of feathers on the wings. "Made in England" in grey below the logo, and "Carlight Trailers Ltd" in grey below that.



EARLY GREEN & GREY BACKSTAMP

Green "Tuscan" above green "Fine English Bone china" above a green wings-and-crown logo, with three flights of feathers on the wings. "Made in England" in green below the wings-and-crown logo, and "Carlight Trailers Ltd" in grey below that.



MID GREEN & GREY BACKSTAMP

Green "Royal Tuscan" above a green "Made in England" above a green wings-and-crown logo, with one flight of feathers on the wings. "Fine Bone China" in green below the logo, with "Carlight Trailers Ltd" in grey below that.



LATE GREEN & GREY WITH WEDGWOOD BACKSTAMP
Green "Royal Tuscan" above a green "Made in England" above a green wings-and-crown logo, with one flight of feathers with inset line on the wings. "Fine Bone China" in green below the logo, "Member of the Wedgwood Group" in green below that, with "Carlight Trailers Ltd" in grey below that.



LATEST BLACK BACKSTAMP

Black "Royal Tuscan" above a black "Made in England" above a black wings-and-crown logo, with one flight of feathers with inset line on the wings. "Fine Bone China" in black below the logo, with "Carlight Trailers Ltd" in grey below that.



Originality

For originality do not worry about the backstamps not matching within a set. Brand new sets supplied directly from the factory often had different backstamps, presumably as the items were made in batches of variable quantities there would have been some variation in backstamps as different batches of different items proceeded through the Tuscan factory. We have seen several sets bought as a complete new set from the factory, where the front designs matched but the backstamps differed, and it is not unknown for the front artwork to also differ within the same set, although it is preferable if the front artwork is of the same design.

A typical set comprised six dinner plates (approx, 9¼" diameter), six side plates (approx, 6⁷/₈" diameter), six cereal bowls, six cups and saucers, and one each of a tea pot, a sugar bowl and a milk jug. A square sandwich plate (8⁷/₈") and small butter plate (around 4¼" in diameter)

were also offered.

With later sets (introduced around 1970), the dinner plates changed from 9¼" to 10⁷/₈" (so if you are looking for replacements for an existing set, it is worth checking the size of the dinner plates - see also the later notes about pattern design).

In the very last sets produced, not only were the dinner plates larger, but also the teapot design was changed to a more contemporary style.

The tables on the previous pages show the main changes that we are aware of to the baseware, artwork and backstamps, but there may be more, as these items were hand made, and the thickness of the ware was often determined by the moulding procedure as much as the mould itself. Also, it should be borne in mind that the application of the transfers and colouring was to some extent governed by the individual painter, so some variation is to be expected.



Left: Teapot design from the 1950s through to around 1970. Right: c. 1970-1 teapot design (with latest artwork)

Price Guide

Prices have risen slowly but steadily over the years. The supply side is helped because, as some of the older caravans become uneconomic to repair and are scrapped, their contents are removed and sold on. However, there is now a growing interest in historic caravans for their own sake (rather than just being seen as an inexpensive route into the hobby), and well-maintained original examples are now very sought after, as are the period contents that go in them.

White background Carlight china made by Tuscan

Individual items	Each £	Qty	Total £
Dinner Plate	15.00	6	90.00
Side Plate	12.00	6	72.00
Cereal Bowl	15.00	6	90.00
Cup and Saucer	12.00	6	72.00
Milk Jug	15.00	1	15.00
Sugar Bowl	15.00	1	15.00
Tea Pot	75.00	1	75.00
Complete set price			429.00
Also:			
Sandwich Plate			50.00
Butter Plate			50.00

Peach Bloom (pink) background Car-

Individual items	Each £	Qty	Total £
Dinner Plate	20.00	6	120.00
Side Plate	15.00	6	90.00
Cereal Bowl	20.00	6	120.00
Cup and Saucer	15.00	6	90.00
Milk Jug	20.00	1	20.00
Sugar Bowl	20.00	1	20.00
Tea Pot	95.00	1	95.00
Complete set price			555.00
Also:			
Sandwich Plate			65.00
Butter Plate			65.00

The values shown above are auction or negotiated sale prices, and have been averaged over the last year. Figures have been rounded for the sake of simplicity but are, we believe, a reasonably accurate reflection of the values attributable to these items. But, as always, ultimately it is the buyer who determines values and there have been instances of individual items selling for both more and less than the prices shown. Please bear in mind though that, whilst there is normally good demand, it is a shallow market so there can be fluctuations in price. You may therefore choose if selling by auction to set a sensible reserve, and wait if necessary for a suitable buyer, re-entering the items for sale if at first they do not sell.

As you can see, tea cups and saucers are valued together for obvious reasons.

Peach Bloom sets tend to sell at a premium to the white sets, as you can see from the prices above.

Usage

If you have a period Carlight caravan, nothing sets it off better than a set of Carlight China. It can be used and transported in the original china racks in the caravan, BUT if you are putting a set of china into your caravan for the first time, make sure the racks have not been modified by a previous owner for different-sized crockery, AND — this is the important bit — consider fitting a turn-buckle-style 'anti-rattle' catch, as we know one instance where a crockery cupboard door has flown open on a bumpy road and the entire contents have spilled out and been broken. These catches were standard equipment on many of the caravans and were used for all sorts of things, from travelling catches on the toilet door to retainers for various partition flaps etc, so you will not, as such, be compromising the originality of the caravan. Details of where to find these are given on the following page.

Further information

Carlight History and Newsletters

We are always interested to hear anything about the history of Carlight, so if you have any information about this or any other topic relating to the company and its products, or would like anything publishing in our Newsletter, please let us know.

Our Newsletter also carries information about the latest regalia etc that is available.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the Carlight Newsletter (free of charge if requested and sent by email), please email your name to us at mail@carlight.co.uk.

(The usual small print applies, i.e. we will not pass your details on to anyone else, and we will endeavour to keep you up to date with any Carlight news and information unless, of course, you ask us not to.)

Catches

For anti-rattle catches, contact Classic Caravans at Heath Farm, North Rauceby,

Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 8QR. Tel. 01529 488837.

Can you help us?

If you can help us track down the items of missing Carlight China we need (see below), we would be very grateful. Please email us at robert@carlight.co.uk or phone Robert Hodgson on 07977 415767 anytime.

Improving this Guide

We would like to hear from you if you have any more information about Carlight china. We will be pleased to acknowledge any further information, and will update the guide and send you a new copy.

We have tried our best to ensure the information contained in this guide is as accurate as possible, but please let us know if you notice any errors or omissions, as we would like to build this guide up to be as informative as possible. We are sure you will understand when we say the information in this publication is given in good faith, and we cannot be held responsible for any errors etc.

Please help!

We are always looking for items of Carlight china and crockery to complete the Carlight Collection,* especially peach bloom (pink) cereal bowls. We offer top prices and immediate payment.

Replacement and Exchanges

If you have a Carlight caravan and need odd items to make up a complete set, or need to swap items to make up a matching set, we will endeavour to help when we can, and supply items if we have them available. This service is offered on a not-for-profit basis. The price is whatever the current costs are to us, plus a donation to charity. Please email us your requests.

*The Carlight Collection

This is the collection of vintage and classic Carlight caravans and memorabilia, built up over the last 25 years by the family of Bob Earl, the founder of Carlight. The collection now comprises one caravan from every decade of the company's manufacturing history, the earliest being the 1935 Carlight Light Four and the newest being the last Carlight Commander 132 to roll off the production line in 2003. The collection also includes a wide range of brochures, documentation and photographs etc relating to Carlight.

Sources

www.thepotteries.org/mark/p/plantrhsl.html; www.fgurines-sculpture.com/tuscan-tableware.html;
www.thepotteries.org/features/plant1956.htm; William Chaffers, *The Hand Book of Marks and Monograms of Pottery and Porcelain*, 13th edn (2008); C.E.G. Bunt, *British Potters and Pottery Today* (1956).

mail@carlight.co.uk www.carlight.co.uk ☎01529 415056

© Carlight No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the copyright holders. v.4 June 2010