

Ornamental or Useful: A Cut Steel Chatelaine by Boulton and Wedgwood

Sinty Stemp

A craze for cut steel jewellery - made from small pieces of steel, faceted and polished to imitate the scintillation of diamonds - swept Britain and Europe during the late eighteenth century. The buckles, buttons, clasps, chatelaines and sword-hilts that survive from the period indicate the popularity of this jewellery for both men and women.

Far from being a cheap substitute for precious stones, cut steel jewellery was expensive and highly fashionable in its own right, attracting such customers as Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, and Napoleon Bonaparte, who presented cut steel parures to his two wives, Empress Josephine and Empress Marie Louise. In England cut steel was worn by several Queen consorts, among them Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, and also by 'Prinny', the extravagant Prince Regent who became George IV. During the late eighteenth century, cut steel jewellery appealed to royalty, the aristocracy, the gentry and, importantly, the new and rapidly growing ranks of the acquisitive middling sorts, the vast majority of whom could afford to wear real gems.



Fig. 1 Chatelaine, cut steel, probably made at Matthew Boulton's Soho factory and set with jasper plaques made at Josiah Wedgwood's Etruria factory, Birmingham, ca. 1785 (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. M.25-1969)

Fig. 2 Chatelaine, cut steel, probably made at Matthew Boulton's Soho factory with jasper fob and scent flask made at Josiah Wedgwood's Etruria factory, Birmingham, 1787-88 (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. M.23-1969)

Fig. 3 "Miss Linley, the celebrated Maid of Bath in the Dress of the Year, 1771" (Private collection)

This was also the period when Josiah Wedgwood's revolutionary ceramic wares, especially jasper, were recognised internationally as signifiers of fashionable style and taste. Consequently, the chatelaine that is the subject of this paper is particularly significant (Fig. 1). As the composite product of two of the era's most influential manufacturers, Matthew Boulton and Josiah Wedgwood, it demonstrates two of the most distinctively fashionable materials - cut steel and jasper - and two of the most popular forms - the chatelaine and the cameo.

The chatelaine is currently on display, with other items in cut steel attributed to Matthew Boulton set with Wedgwood jasper plaques, in the British Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum. It was part of the Pfungst-Reavil Collection, bequeathed by Miss R.M. Reavil in August 1968 in memory of her father, Henry Joseph Pfungst. The bequest, much of which was deemed to be of outstanding importance, was immediately recognised as a key addition to the museum's holdings of eighteenth-century jewellery. The acquisition papers note that one of the most significant groups in the collection is the cut steel jewellery set with plaques by Wedgwood, which includes this chatelaine. At the time of the bequest, the museum possessed only a few documented examples of the joint work of Boulton and Wedgwood. Not only did the bequest mean that the museum would have, and be able to represent, a far

more complete range of cut steel jewellery than it had previously possessed, but in addition it hoped to establish the joint Boulton/Wedgwood provenance of a number of the Pfungst-Reavil pieces by comparing them with the Boulton pattern books housed at the Birmingham City Archives, thus extending its holding of this important genre of joint work. Another Matthew Boulton chatelaine, of around 1787-1788, from the Pfungst-Reavil collection featuring a Wedgwood jasper fob and a Wedgwood jasper scent flask, now forms part of the permanent display of cut steel in the museum's recently opened *William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Galleries* (Fig. 2).

The Chatelaine's Decorative Evolution

The word 'chatelaine', originally described a person, rather than an object; the medieval French derivation, castellane or châtelaine, referred to the mistress of a castle, and her role in charge of the keys of the castle in the absence of its male castellan, the governor or keeper. These keys would have hung from the waist of the woman's leather girdle, symbolising her rank and elevated role. In an echo of this symbolism, perhaps in keeping with the Victorian Gothic revival, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the word chatelaine came into common usage to describe a cluster of useful adornments suspended from a number of short chains worn at the waist. As the object became interchangeable



Miss Linley, the celebrated Maid of Bath, in the Dress of the Year, 1771.

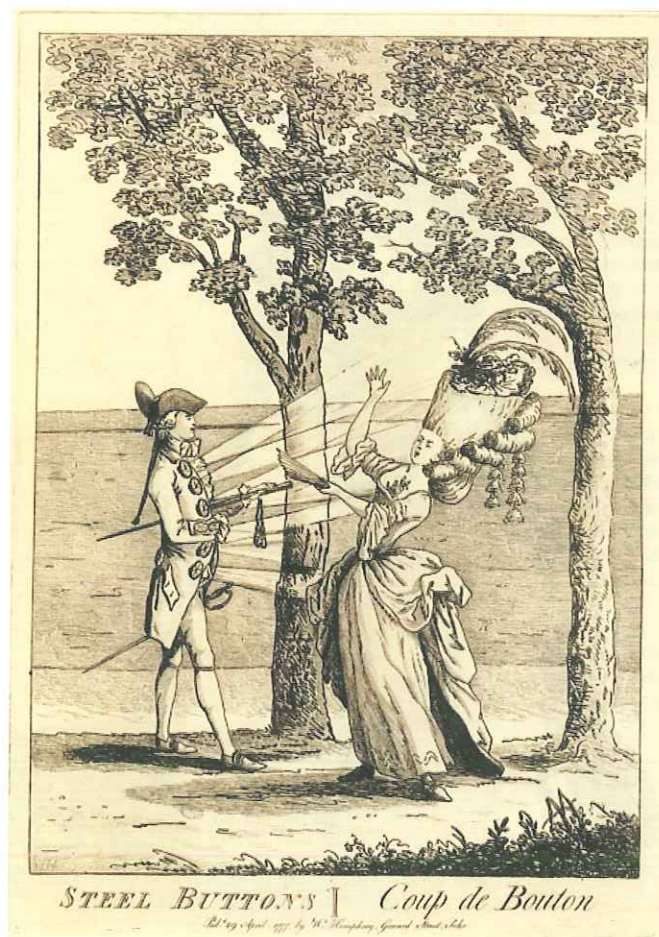
with its wearer, the term *chatelaine* was also used to refer to the mistress of a country house or a fashionable urban household.

The various articles, including keys, a watch and seals, on an eighteenth-century *chatelaine* represented a version of the medieval *chatelaine's* bunch of keys. The *chatelaine* was one of the most popular and, according to the eminent jewellery scholar and collector, Dame Joan Evans, 'the most important kind of daytime jewellery in the eighteenth century'.¹ This contemporary prestige is evident from the illustrations to Francis Nivelon's courtesy book, *The Rudiments of Genteel Behaviour*, published in 1737.² Advising the courtier or the would-be man or woman of society about the rules of deportment and etiquette, six of its illustrated plates show a young woman in formal dress, appropriately accessorised with a rococo-style *chatelaine* (Fig. 3). At the same time, the distinction between daytime and evening jewellery implicit in Evans's statement suggests the *chatelaine's* practical aspect may have made it less suitable for evening dress, compared to other more purely decorative forms of contemporary jewellery, such as stomachers, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and hair ornaments.

The eighteenth century term for a *chatelaine* was an *equipage*, a collection of articles for personal ornament or use.³ This hung from the belt or waistband and initially took the form of a decorated hook-plate below which descended a series of similarly-decorated linked

panels or chains in gold, silver, steel, gilt metal, or pinchbeck. Suspended from the lowest panel were items such as a cased watch, watch key, seal, or étui. The quality of decoration of these objects was extremely high, even in less expensive metals like gilt or pinchbeck (Fig. 4). Gold examples with chased or enamelled figurative scenes framed by ornate rococo scrolling were the height of luxury up to the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The transition from rococo styles to the restraint of neoclassical design first introduced in architecture and interior decoration by James 'Athenian' Stuart in the late 1750s and by the Adam brothers in the 1760s and 1770s was also reflected in dress, as lighter, softer shapes and fabrics became fashionable. In jewellery design, fine cut steel items set with Wedgwood plaques were emblematic of this transition. The *chatelaine* which is the subject of this paper exemplifies the symmetry and classical iconography of neoclassicism, and expresses the prevailing fashion for cameo and intaglio reliefs fuelled by the interest in discoveries of sites like Herculaneum in 1738 and Pompeii in 1748. When compared to earlier, more elaborate and heavier gold chased and enamelled *chatelaines*, its lightness of form and decoration would have been acknowledged as undeniably modern. In ornamental terms, its neoclassical principles were reassuring, blending innovation with imitation, antiquity with modernity, and luxury with restraint.



The V&A Chatelaine: Cut Steel and 18th-Century Jewellery

While cut steel was an expensive and modish form of jewellery with a great deal of impact, as a contemporary cartoon illustrates (Fig. 5), unusually for jewellery, its value came not from intrinsically precious materials but from the quality and novelty of design and craftsmanship that transformed a functional metal into a faceted and sparkling 'jewel' (Figs. 6 and 7). In the case of the *chatelaine* the appeal of cut steel was heightened by the addition of highly fashionable Wedgwood jasper ware decoration, whose neoclassical style echoed classical hardstone cameos.

The search for substitute materials and goods to supply demand, particularly from the elite and the burgeoning ranks of the middle sorts, was no more apparent in the late eighteenth century than in the world of jewellery, and cut steel was one of the most popular and fashionable. While it simulated the sparkle of diamonds, cut steel had more mundane origins. It was said to derive from the resourceful recycling of discarded horseshoe nails; blacksmiths historically insisted on a soft malleability for these, and after they had been 'tempered' by use on roads and lanes, and melted down again into bars the metal was easier to cut and facet. The cut steel craft originated in England, in the sixteenth century and possibly even earlier,⁴ in Woodstock, near Oxford, which had a consistent reputation for producing the finest quality cut steel goods.⁵ By the eighteenth century, the main centres of the trade were in Woodstock, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, and Clerkenwell, London.

Cut steel, like Wedgwood's jasper ware, was used for a wide variety of expensive, high-fashion goods and appealed equally to men and women. Highly polished and faceted to create gem-like beads or studs resembling the sparkling glitter of diamonds, cut steel elements in various shapes were often set closely together to reflect as much light as possible. Unlike gemstones, which are mounted in claws or other settings, cut steel studs were riveted or screwed onto a

Fig. 4 Pinchbeck chatelaine incorporating scissors case, needle case, étui and two thimble cases, England, 1730-35 (Victoria and Albert Museum, given by Dame Joan Evans, No. M.275-1975)

Fig. 5 *Steel buttons/Coup de Bouton*, 29 April 1777, engraving published by W. Humphrey of Gerrard Street, Soho, London (copyright the Trustees of the British Museum)

Fig. 6 Button, cut steel, the outer rim of beads individually riveted in place on a cast plate, probably made in Birmingham, 1790-99 (Victoria and Albert Museum, given by Mrs Barbara Gooddy, No. M.30-1997)

Fig. 7 Hilt from a child's sword, faceted steel and copper wire, Matthew Boulton, Birmingham, 1770-79 (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 141-1889)





base plate, usually made of steel or brass, or tin. Classed as jewellery, it was neither made from precious metals nor precious stones, but melded metalworking and jewellery-making skills. Ironically it became so fashionable it was even imitated in silver, a more precious metal, though its very title and material, steel, is redolent of the industrial (Fig. 8).

For the chatelaine there is no information on the history of ownership contained in the V&A's acquisition or departmental files. However, from its decoration and materials we can surmise that this chatelaine would have been regarded as an object of some luxury in 1785. Measuring 28.6 centimetres in length overall, the scale of the various elements and the quality of finish are very fine. The top of the chatelaine has a central swivel clip attachment from which three separate graduated chains descend. Each chain is made from sections of small double-looped lengths of miniature cut steel faceted beads, strung on wire or thread and joined at intervals by three slightly larger circular ring links. Halfway down, as the scale of the chains increases more perceptibly, each one is strategically interspaced with two faceted Wedgwood blue jasper ceramic beads with white surface decoration. Below these is set the main decorative element, a single Wedgwood blue jasper cameo plaque depicting a classical scene, the cameo mounted within a setting of minute cut steel beads fashioned to resemble tiny rose-cut diamonds.⁶ From the base of the cameo, the original three chains now form three primary chains, each set with two slightly larger jasper beads and each ending in a tassel formed by four loops of cut steel beads, the middle

chain now double-looped. Between the two outer tassels and the middle tassel hang two slightly shorter secondary fine chains, each set with a single jasper bead and ending with a swivel clip.

The flourishes of the earlier baroque- and rococo-style chatelaine have given way to a lighter, more refined neoclassical elegance, as asymmetry was replaced by symmetry, in the form of a sequence of ascending and descending scale in a similar manner to that which Robert Adam used in his architectural and interior schemes.⁷ The design is an exercise in balance and relative proportion through the interplay of a number of geometric elements, classical and renaissance forms and motifs. Appropriation and imitation of the antique, seen here in the clipped corners of the plaque, the cameo form and iconography, the echoes of Venetian glass beads, the trio of chains (the tripod was an important antique form, which Boulton experimented with in his ornate work in ormolu), became a distinguishing feature of the new fashionable modernity.

Thus far, the chatelaine has been described in purely decorative terms but it would also have had a practical aspect. It reconciles the distinctions between what Josiah Wedgwood termed the 'Ornamental' and the 'Useful'⁸ and is as interesting in terms of what is no longer there as it is in terms of what remains. The chatelaine is incomplete as the two pendant swivel clips would have held a fashionable lady's necessary and serviceable items, which may have included two or more of the following: a watch, watch key, seal, key or keys, an etui, needle case, thimble, bodkin, pin cushion, pomander, vinaigrette, nutmeg grater, ear scraper, tongue scraper, toothpick, stay hook, tweezers, scissors, penknife, small looking glass, quizzing glass, hinged ivory tablets for writing, or a pencil. Such trinkets were generically termed toys. The relative value of certain practices was reflected in the selection of these miniaturised objects. Thus we see an emphasis on tools relating to the toilette, hygiene, comfort, and convenience, as well as needlework and letter-writing, and these tools often had more than one application: the wax from an ear-scraper was used to facilitate threading a needle, nutmeg was used to flavour drinks and meat. These were goods suited to the new notions of feminine gentility and polite society.

The toyman's skill was to offer and constantly update an expanding range of goods suitable for this utilitarian jewellery, including chatelaines, watch chains, and toys, as we can see from the extensive product lists of the toyman's warehouse trade cards and handbills. These illustrate the surprisingly diverse number of outlets where this type of chatelaine could have been purchased, ranging from cutlers to goldsmiths and jewellers, as well as the astonishing array of consumer goods on offer in different materials and at varying price levels. The availability of so many varieties of chatelaines, watch chains, and toys is symptomatic of the wide-ranging demand that these toyman were supplying. The hierarchy of the materials given in the product lists is also illuminating. The first column of

Riccard and Littlefear's Manufactory lists: "Ladies and Gentlemen's [sic] Steel, Gold, Metal and Gilt Watch Chains." There are also "Fine Steel, Silver, Metal Gilt, and all sorts of Stone shoe and Knee-Buckles" (Fig. 9). Toyman knew the financial rewards of novelty and endlessly exploited materials to provide it. They also worked tirelessly to promote their wares - trade cards had French translations to cater to foreign visitors (Fig. 10), while William Whalley even went to the extraordinary length of rhyming his entire bill of wares (Fig. 11). This variety and novelty in turn allowed for customisation and an element of individuality. Chatelaines could be bought complete with the choice of toys suspended from them, or these could be added to, or changed, over time.

Chatelaines to modern eyes symbolise feminine luxury and utility but in their day they were also used to subvert social norms. By the early 1770s the phenomenon of the Macaronis, men influenced by their travels on the Grand Tour who affected extremes of fashion, was at its height, and the macaroni chatelaine, a form of double-ended hookless watch chatelaine, worn draped over a belt and often in cut steel was

introduced. The Macaronis were viewed with curiosity and distaste, "Such a figure, essenced and perfumed, puzzles the common passenger to determine the thing's sex", commented *Town and Country Magazine*.⁹ Such affronts to British masculinity were a bi-product of travel on the continent and produced much anti-Gallic feeling. French affectations were a sign of corrupt foreign taste, a threat to British culture and to the 'natural' gender balance. In this context, the chatelaine symbolises not female autonomy but (Gallic-style) male effeminacy.

Materials, Makers and Marketing

This chatelaine combines two very different materials, cut steel and jasper ware, contrasting metallic with ceramic, polished reflective surfaces with matt surface textures. Fusing two materials associated with the technological innovations that had produced so many of the new consumer goods, from buttons to vases, this chatelaine is a fine example of the entrepreneurial flair and vision of two of the most influential manufacturers of the eighteenth century: Matthew Boulton (1728-1809) and Josiah Wedgwood (1730-95).

Fig. 8 /left. Comb, silver, cast and bright-cut, Henry Adcock, Birmingham, 1809-10 (Victoria and Albert Museum, Croft-Lyons Bequest, No. M.820-1926)

Fig. 9 right. Riccard and Littlefear's cutlery, plate and jewellery manufactory handbill, 1782 (Private collection)

Made at RICCARD and LITTLEFEAR'S MANUFACTORY,

At the Upper MEWS-GATE, CASTLE-STREET, London,

The neatest and newest Fashion of all Sorts of

CUTLERY, PLATE, and JEWELLERY,

With many New and Useful Improvements on each, namely;

THE greatest Variety of Table Forks and Carving Knives and Forks mounted in Silver, Metal, white and green Ivory, Wood, Horn, &c. from 2s. to 20s. per Dozen	Curious Steel-mounted Swords, Sil- ver ditto Silver and Steel-mounted Hangers Forks of all Sorts The best German Sword and Hanger Blades Scabbards made of all Kinds Swords repaired, cleaned and polished, equal to new	Cheese-Toasters and Plates Lemon-Strainers Turnip Scoops, ditto for Peas, Aspa- ragus and Carrots, Apple-Corers, Lemon-Scrapers, and all Sorts of Instruments for Cookery Silver, Plated, and Mother-o'-Pearl Bottle Labels Silver Top Corks Etween-Cases, and Morocco Pocket- Books of all Sorts Ladies' neat Morocco Housewives, &c. Tooth-pick Cases and Snuff-Boxes Court Plaiffer Tweezers Steel Snuffers and Stands Nail-Nippers Sugar ditto Sword-Chains and Swivels Cucumber-Cutters Cork-Screws, Pencils and Cases Instruments for cleaning the Teeth Pen-Engines Curling-Irons Cock-Spurs and Saws Plated Stirrups and Bridle Bits Steel, Silver, Plated, and Chain Spurs Blue and Black Buckles Dog-Collars Tortoiseshell, Ivory, Box, and Horn Combs Money-Weights and Scales Silver, Steel and Metal Pencil-Cases Walking-Sticks and Canes Silk and Silver Purfes Curious japanned Tea-Tables and Waiters Ditto Quadrille Boxes and Bread- Baskets Ebony, Silver, & Plated Writing-Stands Back-gammon Tables, Dice Boxes and Men Medicine Chests, and Chirurgical Instruments of all Sorts
Neat Mahogany and Fish-Kin Cases, ready fitted up with any of the above Sorts Razors on a New Construction, made of Cast-Steel, and tempered with such Care and Exactness as to make them shave with more Ease and Safety than any other Sort Straps prepared with Diamond Pow- der, which will keep Razors to a fine and strong Edge, without the Use of a Hone Gentlemen's and Ladies' Dressing- Boxes Roll-up Pouches and Travelling Cases, which contain every Necessary for Shaving, Dressing, Writing, &c. in the smallest Compass A New-invented Instrument for Bleeding Horses, Dogs, &c. with	Diamond and all Sorts of Oriental Stone and plain Gold Rings Ear-rings and Necklaces Crosses and Broches Hair-pins and Egrets Gown and Sleeve Buttons Mourning Rings Hair Cypher ditto Hair wrought in Sprigs, Cyphers, or plaited, &c. in the neatest Manner Gold Locketts Gold, Silver, Tortoiseshell, Inlaid, and Metal gilt Snuff-Boxes Seals neatly engraved and set Silver and plated Tea-Kitchens Bread-Baskets and Terrines Dishes and Plates Waiters and Canisters Cruet-Frames and Castors Bottle-Stands and Soy Frames Candlesticks Coffee-Pots Cups and Tankards Butter and Sauce-Bowls Fifth Trowels, ditto knives Snuffer-Pans Salts, Punch-Ladles Silver, Table, and Dessert Spoons Gravy and Ragout ditto Terrine and Butter-Ladles Gravy-Pots Cream-Ewers and Pails	

Ladies and Gentlemen's Steel, Gold,
Metal and Gilt Watch Chains
Watches made and carefully repaired
Fine Steel, Silver, Metal Gilt, and
all Sorts of Stone Shoe and Knee-
Buckles

N. B. The PATENT ENGINE for CUTTING STRAW, MADE and SOLD here only.

Printed by H. REYNELL, No. 21, near Air-Street, Piccadilly.

Boulton was the most famous manufacturer of cut steel jewellery and 'toys'. Hailed as 'the father of Birmingham' at a time when Birmingham was known as 'the toyshop of Europe'¹⁰, Boulton was one of the key industrial figures to come out of the Enlightenment. A man of entrepreneurial vision and ambition, he was a keen innovator who not only extolled the merits of diversification, but also quality manufacturing at all levels of the market. A member of the Lunar Society, along with his friend and business rival, Wedgwood, his interests encompassed the sciences, the fine arts, and the classics. Wedgwood called Boulton 'the most compleat Manufacturer in Metals in England'.¹¹

The son of a Birmingham toymaker specialising in buttons and buckles, Boulton's vision of his own enterprise was holistic - he expanded the family business by cutting out the middle men and incorporating design, production, marketing and distribution under one roof and introducing new production methods and machinery. In this he was

helped by two successful partnerships: with John Fothergill and the engineer, James Watts. His Soho manufactory, opened in 1762, became a popular tourist attraction for the higher ranks. British and Continental aristocrats, friends and patrons like the bluestocking, Elizabeth Montagu, foreign princes, ambassadors - and industrial spies - flocked to see the novelty of industrial application and the scale of the workforce. By 1770 it was employing 700 people.¹² In Boulton's business we have a fascinating insight into industrial organisation and innovation on a new scale, presaging the era that would make Britain the workshop of the world.

Boulton's description of Soho (where the chatelaine was made and may even have been sold), refers to its modern neoclassical façade: "The Front of this house is like the stately Palace of some Duke. Within it is divided into hundreds of little apartments all of which like Bee hives are crowded with the Sons of Industry [...] The very air buzzes with the variety of noises."¹³ Apart from the workshops, the Soho Manufactory also contained



Fig. 10 left 'Joseph Gibbs, CUTLER', trade card, ca. 1755 (Private collection)

Fig. 11 right 'WHALLEY, Toy-man, Jeweller, Umbrella and Parasol Manufacturer, MARKET PLACE, MACCLESFIELD', handbill, ca. 1780 (Private collection)

W H A L L E Y,

Toy-man, Jeweller, Umbrella, and Parasol Manufacturer,
MARKET-PLACE, MACCLESFIELD.

Bugs leave to shew his numerous friends,
The Goods he sells, or makes, or mends;
That may be had in full display,
Near ready goods for ready pay.
To speak of all I've no intention—
They are too tedious for to mention;
Nor shall I use the common cant,
Of asking what you please to want:
For we're not pleas'd or fatisht'd,
Unless our wants are well suppli'd.
I'll shew my goods, and by the bye,
May ask you what you please to buy.

Here's various kinds of wedding rings:
Those all-important little things,
That swell the throbbing bosom high,
In hopes of long expected joy.
Pins, Thimbles, Needles, Cushions,
Locketts,

Books of all kinds for Ladies pockets.
Combs, made of Ivory and Bone,
And curious Toys of Bristol-stone.
Pencils, with, or without Cases,
Rules, Scales, and handsome Compasses.
Brushes of Bristle, Wool, or Hair,
To make your Teeth both White & fair.
Smelling-Bottles, ready fill'd,
With strong burnt-scent that can't be spill'd.
Watch-paper-prints, strong Chains, and
Keys,

Of any sort or size you please.
Glas, Stone, or Metal Seals, & Hooks;
Variety of Leather Books.
I've curious Petrifications here,
Of various kinds from Derbyshire;
And other sorts of Ornaments,
Useful and as well as Instruments.
Wafers, as good as e're were seen;
Red, Yellow, White, Black, Blue, and
Green.

Trifles, Perpetual Almanacks,
Port-folios, Desks, and Sealing Wax.
Basons, Bowls, and Cribbage-boards:
Bread-pins, Sleeve-buttons, fit for Lords.
Totums, Cricket-bats, and Bows,
Hand-boards, Trays, and Dominos.
Magic-lanterns, Prospect Glasses;
Nice Toys, for pretty Lads and Lasses:
Here's little curious Wooden Fellows,
Tumblers, Punches, Punchinello.
Boxes, that hold a curious farse on—
You touch the snuff—forth springs a
Parson.

Here's Parasols, and Umbrellas;
Walking Canes for swag'ring Fellows.
Tasels, Hat-bands, Knots, and Ties,
Buckles, of every make and size.
Pictures, in Plain, and Gilded Frames,
Looking Glasses, Lancets, Fleams.
Knives, Forks, Steel-yards, and Table
Spoons,
Fifes, Fiddles, Flutes, Jews'-harps, Baf-
foons.

Balls, Battledores, and Shuttlecocks;
Shell, ornamented Combs and Locks.
Sugar-nippers, Bows, and Purfes;
Suction-horns, for tender nurfes.
Fine Ivory leaves for Portraits,
Puzzles, for little poring Wits.
Diamond, Steel, and Mourning Rings;
With various kinds of such like things:
Some fit for Beggars, some for Kings.
Magnets, Inkstands, Horns, and Knives,
Strong Padlocks, fit for Scolding Wives.
Quadrants, Telescopes, and Globes;
Scissors, Snuffers, Surgeon's probes.

Bodkin's Lines, and Fishing-hooks;
Pens, Quills, Slates, Slides, and Tinsel-
books.

Variety of Essences,
In Bottles, with or without Cases.
Fine Lavender, and Honey Waters,
Spurs, Leathers, Whips, Chains, Hand-
some Gaiters.

Wash-balls, Benzoin, Palm, and Windfor
Soap,

These won't offend you one would hope.
Possess ye e'er such squeamish noses—
They smell as sweet as fall blown roses.
Here's scented French, & English Powder,
That now in use I grant is louder.

But this is better to the light—
More harmless is and far more white.
Such Powder, and such Balls as wine
Accost you with no bad design.
Silk, and Swandown Puffs, and Beads;
Handsome covered curling Leads.
Neat Powder-bags, and Dressing Cases,
Shaving-brushes, Pins and Braces.
Powder-knives, and Lemon-squeezers,
Nail Brushes, Skipping-ropes, and
Tweezers.

Wig-cauls, Curling Irons, and Waiters;
Cushion-vices, Tunbridge Graters.
Weaving Silk, Net Caps, and Caddies
Varnish'd to suit the taste o' th' Ladies.
Wash-ball-boxes, Pocket Boot-jacks,
Tambour Needle Cases, Nutcracks.
Gentlemen's Bretties—York and Patent:
O let me see your Cash—long latent—
I sit surrounded here with Wares,
Waiting your Orders, Worthy Sirs,
Glad to obey—a servant willing,
And truly grateful for a shilling:
Then come my Friends, I've several
Goods yet;

Some set in Gold; and some in wood set.
Pomatum, French and English both—
To lose a Customer I'm loth:
Accordingly, as suits the Times,
I purchase Goods from various Climes.
And mind to keep a due proportion
With every Ladie's whim and notion,
Nail, Cloaths, Comb, Hair, and Bonnet
Brushes,

Work-baskets, both of Twigs, & Rushes.
Bone Caps, Lift Slippers, Table Reels,
Children's Carriages, and Wheels.
Jeweller's Brushes, Thimble Cases;
Carv'd, & Wax Dolls, with pretty Faces.

Boxes of various kinds and uses;
Bone Yard Measures, Muslin Pierces.
Netting-needles, Bone and Box,
Bottle Labels, Patent Cocks.
Alphabet Boxes, made of Bone,
And various Articles of Stone.
Four Thieve's Vinegar in Silver Boxes;
And Boards, to play at Geese and Foxes.
Ear-rings, various kinds of Cases,
Letter Frame, Quadrats, and Spaces.
Dog-whistles, Clock and Larum Cords,
Chocolate Mills, and Crimping Boards.
Neat Bone, Salt, and Mustard Spoons,
Children's first Books, Weighs, Weights,
Galloons.

Silk winders, Catgut, Horns for Beer,
Sweet scented Bags, & Sheaths fold here.
Best Queen's Garters too I sell—
Though Cotton ones may suit as well:
For some things have no other merit,
Than what they in their names inherit.

Handsome Foreign Trav'ling Caps,
Willis' Superior Razor Strops.
Cosmetics, to improve the Skin;
Bells, made of Copper, Brass and Tin.
Silver Bodkins, and Yard Measures,
Silk Purfes to contain your Treasures.
Lip Salve, fold in Boxes Sirs,
Court Plaster, and Extinguishers.
Silver, & Tortoiseshell Tongue Scrapers,
Pistols, Fire-works, wrapt in papers.
Neat Fans, and Candle-screens to elip
The Candle, or the Candlestick.
Boot-top Liquid, Fruit Knives, Brooms,
To sweep your Carpets, or your Rooms.
Mathematical Instruments,
And Sportmen's Shooting Implements.
Guns, Powder Flasks, Shot-bags & Flint:
You'll kill, or else there's mischief in't:
Only be sure to hit the Mark—
(No matter whether light or dark)
'Tis death to Pheasant, Snipe or Lark.
Double and Single Shot-belts, Laces,
Leather Priming Flasks, Flint Cases.
Dram Bottles, covered neat with Leather,
Nothing more useful in cold weather.
Heath Rugs, handsome Royal Matting,
Some Plain, and some of curious Plaiting.
Door Mats, Rope, and Spanish both,
And Table Mats, to save the Cloth.
Trunks, Portmanteaus, Spunges, Mane
Combs,

A Horse looks quite deform'd when rain
comes.

His Mane and Tail one clotted mass,
And Hob must ready it out, (alas!)
For want of having better combs.)
Betwixt his fingers, and his thumbs.
Here's Butter Printers, Pats, and Knives,
For Dairy maids, and Farmer's Wives,
And further, to complete my toys,
I've Humming-tops for humming boys.
Here's one thing to make out my list,
That should bring to my mill some grist;
Though it implies a contradiction;
(Indeed my friends, this is no fiction.)
For 'though this Article must crown all,
Yet it portends the Barber's downfall!
This paradox is very plain—
They're Pacific Razors that I mean,

That pass with such an easy grace,
Across the most uneven face,
O'er every red protuberant place.
These Razors Sirs, have a sure guide
Impossible to slip or slide:

That mounted on a courting steed,
And riding o'er the hills with speed,
You may, (nor dread the noisome grave)
With cleanliness, and quickness shave.
Ye, who by lux'ry have deform'd
That beauty which kind nature form'd,
And mar'd your face with hills and holes,
At th' hazard of your precious Souls,
Will find in these an acquisition,
Fitting your mezz'd fall'n condition:
Then my Pacific Razors buy;
Or lay your vile intemperance by.
Yet if the public do not cho. se,
This harmless Instrument to use;
Attend my Shop on any day,
I'll shave you in the common way,
Or Powder, Curl, or Cut you fair,
And make you smart and debonaire.
I fit to wait upon you daily,
Your humble Servant

WILLIAM WHALLEY.

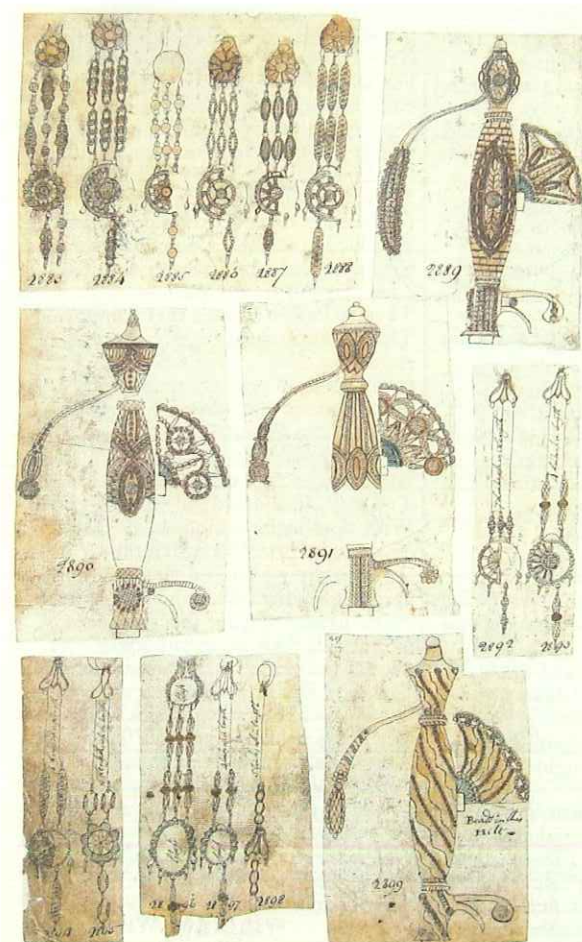
Printed by Rowland, Macclesfield

design offices, stores, showrooms, and workers' accommodation. The workers were skilled craftsmen, and their traditional hand skills were combined with labour-saving techniques and devices as well as powered equipment. Specialisation was key. Goods passed through a number of different hands during the manufacturing process and this division of labour increased productivity. "Each workman has only a very limited range, so that he does not need constantly to change his position and tools, and by this means an incredible amount of time is saved. Thus for example, each button, [...] passes through at least ten hands."¹⁴ As Boulton himself commented, his commitment to technical and technological improvements gave him a vital edge; increased levels of productivity underpinned the commerciality of his cheaper goods in competitive export markets, "by the superior activity of our people and by the many mechanical contrivances and extensive apparatus, which we are possess'd of, our men are enabled to do from twice to ten times the Work that can be done without the help of such Contrivances."¹⁵ Hence, this chatelaine would have been made partly on traditional craft workshop lines, and partly on modern industrial, mass-production metalworking lines by a manufacturer, not a jeweller. Pieces as fine as this would have been prized and were as expensive as similar work in precious metals.

In addition, designs depended on a relatively small number of components from which one could produce a

great repertoire of forms that could be efficiently manufactured in quantity and to certain standards of quality. Cut steel jewellery was one of the earliest Boulton and Fothergill manufactures to be made in this way, a high-fashion luxury and semi-luxury trade with endless variations for jewellery, buttons, buckles, cane heads and sword hilts, as the Boulton and Fothergill pattern books show (Fig. 12). It was Boulton's idea to mount Wedgwood's jasper cameos in cut steel decorative items (Figs 13-15), and chatelaine designs in the pattern books reveal blank roundels labelled 'W-d camios' into which the cameos would be mounted. The trade continued to blossom under the next partnership with Watt's steam engines turning the lapidary drums which gave the cut steel its high quality sparkle.

This trade confounded normal patterns. It was a case of the Midlands leading London in a luxury and semi-luxury trade, and of English luxury goods leading those of France, reversing two traditional, historical trends. Rather than being dependant on French influence, craftsmanship, or imports, conversely, it was British innovation, British manufacturing skills, and British consumer products that impressed and were exported to Europe, including Paris. The export trade was vital to Boulton's business; the home market alone was not sufficient in commercial terms for his extensive output, consequently he exported cut steel buttons and toys, including chatelaines such as this one, all over the world via a network of agents overseen by Fothergill;



the trade was a source of national pride and international envy.

There was, however, a downside to all this meritorious Midlands commerce and that was the aspersions cast by the association with *Brummagem*, the vulgar term for Birmingham. Brummagem had become a byword for fakery and untrustworthiness due to a scandal concerning counterfeit groats coined there in the seventeenth century. There is a certain irony in the fact that while Birmingham cut steel was internationally prized, bought and displayed by royalty, aristocrats and the middling sorts alike, for its fashionable style signalling polite taste and respectability, there were quite contrary, unsavoury connotations and an underlying sense of vulgarity, sham and showy imitation. This lingering adverse association may account in part for the fact that Matthew Boulton campaigned so hard to establish Birmingham's assay office, and was keen to uphold a sense of quality in his manufactured goods.

Josiah Wedgwood's jasper ware was the triumphant result of over five thousand experiments, proof as Wedgwood termed it that "everything yields to experiment" (Fig. 16).¹⁶ Jasper, a white stoneware body of almost the same properties as porcelain, was a revolutionary new ceramic. The jasper cameo mounted in the chatelaine was made at Wedgwood's Etruria works in Staffordshire, largely modelled in design and organisation on Boulton's Soho, which Wedgwood had

visited and admired. Initially, the white ceramic body was coloured throughout, a process known as 'solid' jasper. After 1777 it was frequently 'dipped' in a coloured jasper slip which had the advantage of coating only a desired area, thereby saving on the amount of expensive colouring agent (cobalt) required and effectively reducing manufacturing costs. Since the chatelaine was made around 1785 it is probable that the plaque featured is blue jasper dip with white relief. Jasper ware is largely associated with blue tones but Wedgwood experimented with a variety of colours including green, lilac, yellow, brown and black. The first decorative articles made in jasper were cameos, medallions and plaques, of the type that feature in this chatelaine, and these remained a large part of Wedgwood's jasper output. The international success of jasper ware cemented Wedgwood's reputation as the leading potter of his day.¹⁷

According to the 1779 Wedgwood and Bentley Catalogue, the cameo used in the chatelaine was "exactly taken from the finest antique Gems,"¹⁸ and it was this aspect of Wedgwood's output which had the greatest appeal. Incorporating the antique conferred a sense of nobility and prestige, and invited the owner of such items to enter the world of the connoisseur. Connoisseurship was traditionally associated with precious materials, the rare and the exclusive. It implied a particular level of education and sophistication, or sensibility, epitomised by figures such as Lord Hamilton, who

Fig. 12 far left: Cut steel designs for chatelaines and hilts from Matthew Boulton's Soho Manufactory pattern books, 1765-85 (Birmingham City Archives)

Fig. 13 left: Button, cut steel, by Matthew Boulton, set with a jasperware plaque by Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd, incorporating the signs of the zodiac based on a relief that Wedgwood bought in a London plaster shop in 1774 (Victoria and Albert Museum, Pfungst Reavil Bequest, M.4-1969)

Fig. 14 right: Buckle, one of a pair, cut steel, possibly by Matthew Boulton, mounted with jasperware plaques by Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd., ca. 1800 (Victoria and Albert Museum, Pfungst Reavil Bequest, No. M.2-1969)





Fig. 15 *left*. Sword-hilt, cut steel by Matthew Boulton, set with jasperware plaques by Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd., ca. 1790 (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 1735-1888)

Fig. 16 *right*. Jasper ware cameo portrait medallion of George III, inscribed 'Health Restored' and made to celebrate the King's temporary return to sanity, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd., Etruria, Stoke-on-Trent, (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 478-1890)

provided Wedgwood with material from his famous collection of antiquities. The tension between antiquity and modernity was cannily exploited by both Boulton and Wedgwood. Paradoxically, it was used to make their modern products more palatable and fashionably appealing to the market, to make progress appear less startling to potential consumers. Boulton, like Wedgwood, collected, and sometimes borrowed antiques from noted collector patrons. He also studied rare works in metal at the British Museum and was consciously 'desirous of cultivating Adam's taste in his productions.'¹⁹

Boulton and Wedgwood went to great lengths to keep abreast of fashionable taste and endeavoured to pre-empt and dictate it whenever possible. Both men consulted their wives, relying upon them to keep them in touch with feminine taste and new fashions. Both were conscious of the immense buying power of the middling sorts and the power of emulation triggered by elite example. To establish the success of their products across a range of markets, Boulton and Wedgwood assiduously courted a network of elite royal and aristocratic patrons through individual commissions and gifts, as in the steel chatelaine presented by Boulton to Queen Charlotte in 1767. The resulting

associations with the 'arbiters of taste' established their reputations and gave an unmistakeable cachet to their goods, ensuring the overall fashionable appeal of their designs throughout the wider echelons of eighteenth-century society, thereby maximising their commercial reach. They did not wait for the emulative effect but, actively engineered it through the novel use of salubrious London and provincial showrooms, prestigious sales, the use of catalogues and pattern books, advertisements and puffs.

The material elements of this chatelaine represent Boulton and Wedgwood's success: it was a success based on new materials, new techniques and technologies, new decorative finishes, novel application and combination of materials, new working practices, and distinctive marketing and selling tools which led late eighteenth-century fashion and style. As a product of two of the era's most innovative and internationally significant manufacturers, this chatelaine's pedigree would have conferred upon its wearer a level of fashionable prestige quite apart from the flashy glamour of cut steel. Such associations undoubtedly would have given this chatelaine an added cultural currency and would have made it a significant object to design, produce, sell, purchase, give, own and wear.²⁰



Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Dr. Angela McShane of the Victoria and Albert Museum for pointing me in the direction of the *Coup de Bouton* cartoon and advising on content. I would also like to thank Ann Eatwell for assistance at the start of this work and Angus Patterson for images and advice in creating this shortened version of an essay written in my first term on the joint V&A/RCA History of Design MA course.

Author:

Sinty Stemp is currently in the final year of an MA in History of Design at the V&A/Royal College of Art. She worked for many years for the British fashion designer, Jean Muir, on whose work she has lectured, and is the author of 'Jean Muir: Beyond Fashion' (2006) and 'The Glamour of Belville Sassoon' (2008).

Notes:

1. Dame Joan Evans, *A History of Jewellery 1100-1870*, Faber & Faber, London, 1953, p. 179
2. Francis Nivelon, *The Rudiments of Genteel Behaviour*, 1737, facsimile edition, Paul Holberton Publishing, London, 2003, plates 1-6
3. Misleadingly, however, this contemporary term more commonly, referred to an elegant horse-drawn carriage especially one equipped and attended by liveried servants. Alternative eighteenth-century terms for chatelaines were chains and watch chains. However these are wide generic terms, unspecific about material, form and decoration. Steel chains may refer to more basic polished, perforated or undecorated forms than the faceted style with which this paper is concerned. Since the Victoria and Albert Museum classify this object, and similar eighteenth-century examples in other metals and materials, as a chatelaine, I will be referring to the object of this paper as a chatelaine throughout.
4. Shirley Bury, *Jewellery 1789-1910 The International Era*, Vol. II, Antique Collectors' Club, Woodbridge, 1991, p. 702
5. Woodstock cut steel also distinguished itself by being removable from its base-plate, facilitating cleaning.
6. I have consulted two definitive works, Robin Reilly, *Wedgwood*, 2 vols, MacMillan, London, 1989, and Robin Reilly, *Wedgwood Jasper*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1989, updated 1994 but have not been able to positively identify this plaque.
7. Wedgwood's use of white relief on coloured grounds with classical motifs also mirrors the plasterwork and painted decoration of Robert Adam's interiors.
8. Letter from Josiah Wedgwood to his business partner, Thomas Bentley, 3rd September 1770 in Ann Finer and George Savage eds., *The Selected Letters of Josiah Wedgwood*, Cory, Adams and Mackay, London, 1965, pp. 94-97
9. C. Willet Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, Rev ed., Faber & Faber, London, 1972, p. 23
10. Shena Mason, *Jewellery Making in Birmingham 1750-1995*, Phillimore, Chichester 1998, p. 1
11. Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 23 May 1761, quoted in Eric Robinson, 'Eighteenth-Century Commerce and Fashion: Matthew Boulton's Marketing Techniques', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1963, pp. 39-60, p. 56
12. John Styles, 'Design for Large-Scale Production in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *The Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1988, pp. 10-16, p. 12
13. Matthew Boulton, 1767, unattrib. quote, which echoes Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*.
14. Nicholas Goodison, *Ormolu: the work of Matthew Boulton*, Christie's Books, London, 1999, p. 13
15. Matthew Boulton correspondence to the Earl of Warwick, 1770
16. Robin Reilly *Josiah Wedgwood*, 2 vols. MacMillan, London 1989, revised edition 1992, p. 516; Wolf Mankowitz, *Wedgwood*, Barrie and Jenkins, London, third edition, 1980, p. 93
17. This chatelaine would have operated in much the same way as a Wedgwood vase, 'there was an opportunity for people to purchase new types of wares which could perform both functional and ornamental purposes [...] when not in use it was an attractive article on display and could revert to its decorative capacity.' Sarah Richards, *Eighteenth-Century Ceramics: Products for a Civilised Society*.
18. Wolf Mankowitz, *Op. Cit.*, p. 198
19. Samuel Smiles, 'Life of Boulton and Watt', cited in H. Avray Tipping, 'English Eighteenth Century Ormolu', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 38, No. 216, p. 119
20. This year Birmingham commemorates the bicentenary of Boulton's death. January 2009 also saw the sad announcement that Wedgwood's company, feted throughout the last two and a half centuries, was going into administration.