

**COADE STONE ARTEFACTS AND  
THE W. CARY SUNDIAL  
AT COLEORTON HALL**



**BY SAMUEL T STEWART - SEPTEMBER 2022**

**Numerous complimentary articles on the history of Coleorton Hall and its occupants over the years are free to download and read on the author's website**

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# COADE STONE

## INTRODUCTION

At Coleorton Hall, when the author last visited in 2015, a number of Coade Stone artefacts still existed. Many had disappeared, some due to changes in garden design etc, although it has been possible to identify some through old photographs. However, why these were not displayed elsewhere is a mystery, although it is quite likely these were sold off during the time when the Beaumonts' were experiencing financial difficulties. Fortunately, at least two fine examples of vases had survived in 2015, together with some important busts.

## COADE STONE

Coade stone was a remarkable new building material which first appeared on the market in the 1770s. In fact, using a mix of materials and a manufacturing process kept secret and not fully understood till the 1990s, its makers claimed it to be the first ever artificial stone which was tough and hard wearing and enabled finely detailed decorative artefacts to be produced. Tough and hard-wearing, it offered new opportunities for fine-detailed decoration. **An example from Coleorton Hall is shown on the front cover and is described later.**

It was extraordinary that c.1770, a woman by the name of Eleanor Coade would be one of the few women of her time to be acknowledged as a major contributor both through the development of coade stone and employing artistically skilled craftsmen and sculptors to carve it into intricate shapes.

Eleanor Coade, was born in Exeter in 1733, the daughter of a wool merchant. In the 1760s she is recorded as living in London as a seller of linen goods.

How she became to go into partnership in 1769 with a maker of artificial stone in London named Daniel Pincot is not known, but she was clearly a strong woman with business acumen and available finance, most likely inherited from her father. She dominated her company till her death in 1821. She must have entered the business as a senior partner as by 1771 she had taken control and sacked Pincot. She employed the twenty one year old British sculptor John Bacon whose brilliant designs and workmanship helped establish the Coade Artificial Stone Company as the leading firm in the field. Bacon was presented with gold medals by the Royal academy in 1770 and 1771 for his sculptures. He died following an affliction in 1799.



**BACON'S SCULPTURE OF FATHER THAMES IN COADE STONE IN THE GROUNDS OF HAM HOUSE (From wikipedia)**



## **ELEANOR CODES SECRET RECIPE**

Attempts to produce a new building material with the sculpturable characteristics / qualities of stone had been carried out for at least one hundred years, but it was not until around 1770 that the material produced by Mrs. Coade which was tough enough and malleable enough to be sculptured became available. This gave architects a greater freedom in their design work as It proved not only suitable for all sorts of architectural detailing, but also for monuments, sculptures, ornaments and garden furniture.



The material which Mrs. Coade developed was a ceramic mix of clay, terracotta, silicates, and glass which was fired for several days at a time in their high temperature kilns at Lambeth. The rediscovery of the recipe has meant that new Coade stone objects have begun to be produced again, allowing us to replace sculptures like the Gothic Cross at Stowe which once seemed lost for good.

By the 1760s, architects like Robert Adam were looking for a way of applying ever-more delicate decoration to their buildings. Mrs. Coade offered the most reliable way of achieving this and her stone was soon used by the leading architects of the day, including Adam, Sir William Chambers, Sir John Nash, Sir John Soane, and James Wyatt.

## **THE LEGACY OF MRS. ELEANOR COADE**

Mrs Coade's death in 1821 left the firm without its energetic, entrepreneurial leader, however, she had not been in complete control of the company for a number of years as her cousin W. Croggan had taken on the position as manager after her partner ? Sealy had died, and later purchased the business after her death. The company still continued in production till c.1833 and William Croggan's son Thomas John Croggan refounded the business, but changing tastes after Victoria became Queen also meant artificial stone began to fall out of fashion. The company limped on till c.1840 and the moulds were apparently sold off in 1843.

**The two coade stone vases at Coleorton Hall featured later are recognised as being historically important and are valuable artefacts. Both the vases are indented Croggan Lambeth 1827 for the reason given above**

The company was wound up by 1840 and the secret of Coade stone was lost

Eleanor Coade was a pioneering businesswoman who sold an artificial stone to the front-rank architects of her day. Examples of this work can be found all across England – from the Georgian terraces of London to the great country houses of the late-eighteenth century, from Buckingham Palace to Brighton Pavilion.

# COADE STONE ARTEFACTS AT COLEORTON HALL

## TWO COADE STONE VASES

Two Coade Stone vases are set at the southern and northern corners of the terrace which ran along the eastern elevation of the hall as shown in the photograph below, which was taken in 2015.



PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR IN 2015

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**A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE COADE STONE VASE AT THE SOUTHERN END OF THE TERRACE WAS TAKEN IN 1982 FOLLOWING CLEANING OPERATIONS c.1982, AND SOME DAMAGE IS EVIDENT**



**THE BASE OF THE VASE IS IMPRESSED "CROGON LAMBETH 1827"**



**THIS PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR IN 2015, IS OF THE VASE AT THE NORTHERN END OF THE TERRACE AND IT IS IN MUCH BETTER CONDITION THAN THE OTHER ONE.**

**Note the extremely fine carvings and decoration**



## COADE STONE BUSTS AT COLEORTON HALL



MILTON AND SHAKESPEARE



RAPHAEL

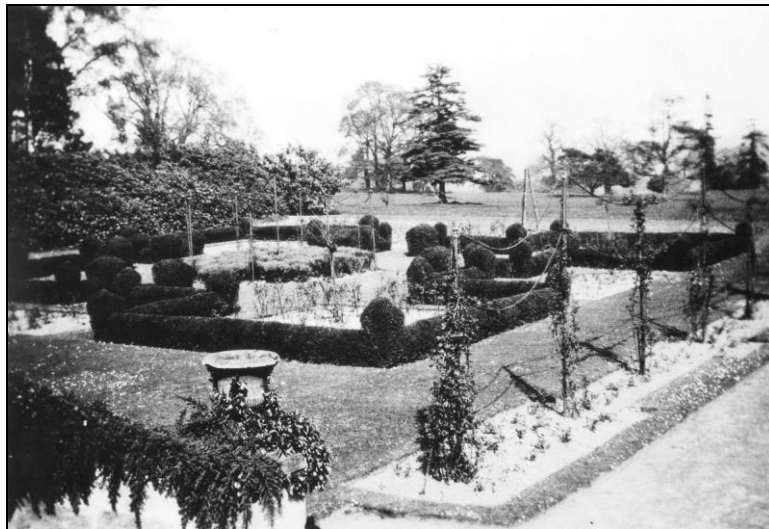
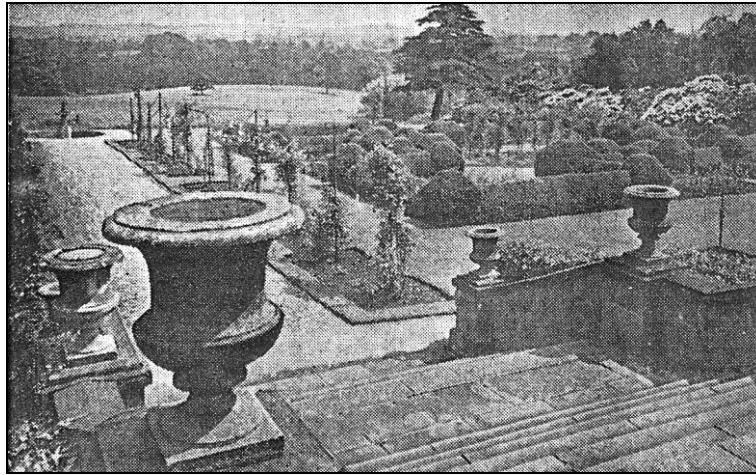


**MICHAELANGELO**



This photograph is of Sir George Howland William Beaumont, 10<sup>th</sup> Baronet, sitting on the steps which lead in a northerly direction, up to the memorial tablet in memory of the dramatist and poet Francis Beaumont. To the left, on a stone pier, is the coade stone bust of William Shakespeare. To the right, hidden by the bush, is the bust of Milton, again on a stone pier. These are reputedly dated 1817. The Coade Stone vase to the left of the photograph was not there in 2015.

## LOST COADE STONE VASES

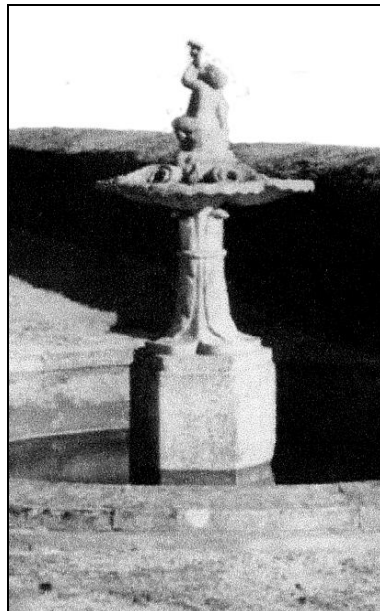


**THE "ROSE GARDEN" AT COLEORTON HALL IN 1930.  
MOST OF THE FEATURES OF THE ORIGINAL DESIGN HAD BEEN  
MAINTAINED AT THAT TIME**

The above photographs are looking in an easterly direction down the flight of fifteen steps from the eastern terrace of the hall which runs along the top in a north / south direction. The six valuable Coade Stone vases shown in the photographs have now disappeared unfortunately, but there was still evidence in 2015 where they were located on the pillars. The rose garden was partly lawned, and geometrically laid out with roses, flower beds and conifers, with the use of yew hedges, and lavender edging, as per the Goldring design plan. It was approximately 50m from east to west and 80m from north to south, and flanked by banks of rhododendrons on the north and south sides.



The above photograph, taken from the eastern terrace walk at the northern end of the rose garden has been included to give an idea of the view over the former parkland to the northern ridge of Charnwood Forest in the distance. Running along the centre of the photograph is a yew hedge behind which is the walled Ha Ha which replaced a sunk fence with a sloping bank of soil down to the park which was filled with roses, during the time it was a Flower Garden. The original ornate coade stone fountain shown below was replaced by a new fountain, not worthy of inclusion here.





## **THE W. CARY SUN DIAL AT COLEORTON HALL**



**THE W. CARY SUN DIAL IS SITUATED AT THE SOUTH FACING SIDE OF THE HALL. THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR IN 2015 VIEWD IN AN EASTERLY DIRECTION.**

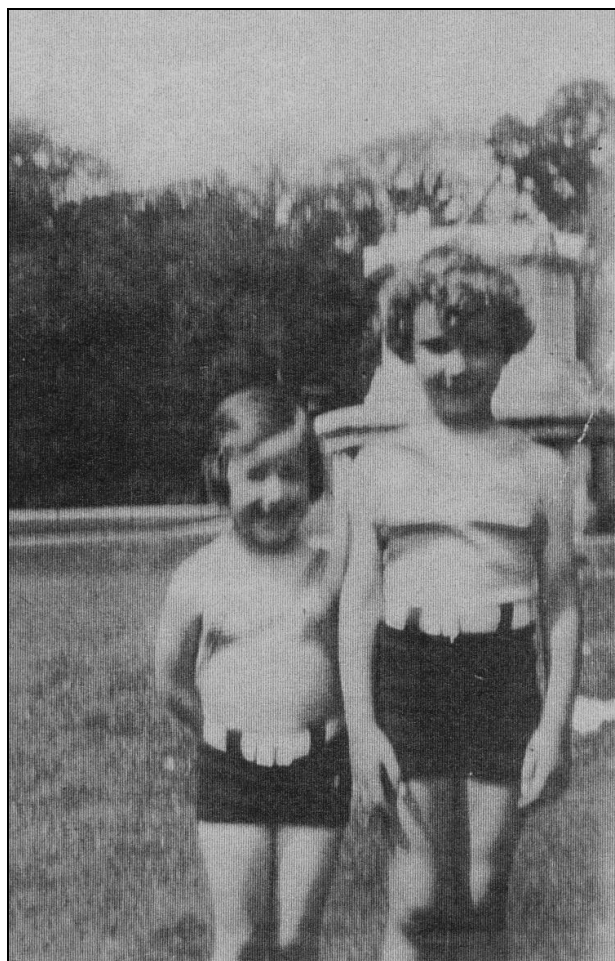
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The Sun Dial was depicted on the 1885 O/S map in the same place where it now stands. The author has found no other reference to this engraved brass or copper Sun Dial at Coleorton Hall elsewhere. We are very fortunate, that on inspection a manufacturer's name W Cary (William Cary), Strand, London is revealed.

The reader will appreciate from the following that it is difficult to date the Sun Dial, although one can presume it must be over 150 years old, as the 1885 map shows that it was there at that time. It is sitting on an ornate plinth over what appears to be a circular bricked "well", through which passed a pipe which carried hot water for heating from the hall to St. Mary's Church at one time.

It is quite likely that the Sun Dial could have been made by John Cary (1754-1835) or Francis Cary (both engravers) at the time the business was still being operated under the William Cary name, even after William died in 1825.



**The above photograph taken c.1930, in front of the sundial, is of George Howland Francis Beaumont (RH side), and his younger sister Eleanor Brienne. They were the children of the Sir George Arthur Hamilton Beaumont, 11<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Stoughton and his wife Lady Renee Muriel.**

**The following was taken from an article on the internet by Brian Stephenson, for which he owns the copyright, on the basis that the content seems to confirm that the William Cary Company were the likely suppliers / manufactures of the sundial. However, this is still open to further research.**

William Cary was the youngest of four sons of George and Mary Cary. His eldest brother, George (c. 1753-1830), later operated a haberdashery. The second brother, John Cary, became a mapmaker. John and William also operated a joint venture to make globes, compasses and other such tools. The other brother, Francis (c. 1756-1836), became an engraver, and lived in Chelsea.



William served an apprenticeship as a maker of philosophical instruments (i.e. scientific equipment) with Jesse Ramsden (1735-1800). Ramsden was a highly regarded instrument maker. Through Ramsden, Cary would have learned considerable skill in working with brass, glass and other materials.

William established his independent business c. 1785, at 182 The Strand. He produced a wide range of scientific instruments and was well known for his quality workmanship. The Dictionary of National Biography especially noted that, "*He constructed for Dr. Wollaston in 1791 a transit circle - the first made in England - two feet in diameter and provided with microscopes for reading off. In 1805 he sent to Moscow a transit-instrument described and figured in Pearson's "Practical Astronomy", for the safety of which Bonaparte provided in 1812 by a special order. A circle of 41 centimetres, ordered from Cary by Feer about 1790, is still preserved at the Zurich observatory. He was, besides, the maker of the 2½ foot altitude and azimuth instrument with which Bessel began his observations at Königsberg, and of numerous excellent sextants, microscopes, reflecting and refracting telescopes, &c.*" William was a charter member of the Astronomical Society, and produced monthly meteorological reports for *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Brother John's mapmaking shop was next door, at 181 Strand. Globes produced by William and John are marked "*181 Strand*". George's hat shop was nearby, at 63 Strand.

The January, 1820 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* reported, "*The houses numbered 181 and 182 Strand, occupied respectively by the brothers John and William Cary, were completely destroyed by fire on Monday, January 17th, 1820*". The Carys then moved their businesses to 86 St. James Street.

The 1823 *Kent's Original London Directory* listed "*Cary Wm. optician, 277, Strand*". The 1825 list of members of the Royal Astronomical Society also gave William's address as 277 Strand. However, *Kent's* listed "*Cary John, optician, 182, Strand*", as well as "*Cary John, engraver & mapseller, 86, St. James's-street*". The 277 Strand shop appears to have closed after William's death.

William Cary died as a moderately wealthy man on November 16, 1825. In his will he left "*To three brothers John Cary, George Cary and Francis Cary £1000 each. To Mrs. Penelope White, of Queen Street, Southwark, £500, and to her children, John White, Susanna White and Penelope Dare £200 each. To wife Elizabeth £500 a year for life. Residue to said three brothers for life equally and then to George Cary and John Cary, sons of brother John Cary*". The significance of Penelope White and her children is not apparent. The properties on the Strand were rented, and so not mentioned in the will.

Nephews George Cary and John Cary Jr. continued to operate the optical and scientific instrument business at 182 Strand. They retained the business name "*William Cary*" for some time. George and John Jr. do not appear to have produced optical instruments. All accounts indicate that Charles Gould was the manager and head machinist for the Cary business. This would have been a logical arrangement, since Gould was an experienced optician,



whereas the Carys were map and globe-makers, who would have had very little practical knowledge of glass or brasswork. In 1828, the William Cary business moved next door, to 181 Strand, possibly merging with John Cary Sr.'s mapmaking operation. An 1830 publication described the optician's business as "*J. Cary*". Upon John Cary Sr.'s death in 1835, he left the 181 Strand lease to sons George and John Jr. The 1841 *Kelly's Directory* referred to the optical business as "*William Cary*", suggesting that the boys returned to their uncle's name. The business remained at 181 Strand for many decades and through several ownership changes.