

# Dorothy Doughty

## 1892 – 1962



Dorothy Doughty was born in San Remo, Italy in 1892. Her father was the explorer and poet, Charles Doughty. Dorothy studied at Eastbourne School of Art and became a keen naturalist and ornithologist. In 1933 the American publisher, Alex Dickens, encouraged Royal Worcester to make large, bone china models of birds to sell in limited numbers. Dorothy Doughty designed a series of birds for the American market working from the studio in Cornwall, which she shared with her sister, Freda. Dorothy had never worked in clay before, but was determined to make the birds as life-like as possible.

She wrote, “My work with the birds has been a joyful thing. In this tortured world one of the happiest ways of spending a life is to work closely with nature. Although the miraculous perfection of birds and flowers, and indeed all wild things, is beyond the power of man to portray in any medium, he or she who strives towards it, learns to see even more deeply, to glimpse something of the Infinite, and to feel a privileged and very humble person.”

In the 1930's, china models of this complexity had never been made before. Technical innovations and new skills were developed in mould-making, casting, propping and decorating to reproduce the birds. Special mat colours were developed to give the birds a life-like appearance. Flower making was supervised by Antonio Vassalo and after 1938, by Mary Leigh. Bob Bradley was in charge of casting and fitting up the first standard models, which were painted by George Evans and Harry Davis. On her visits to the Worcester factory to keep an eye on the production of her models, Dorothy made a deep impression on the staff. She was very firm about what she wanted and highly critical of anything she didn't like, but she always insisted that the birds were the result of a team effort. Dorothy was ultimately dependent on the many anonymous craftsmen and women who translated her models into permanent ceramic form and she never tired of paying tribute to their skill and patience.

During the War years production of the Doughty Birds continued (alongside resistors and spark plugs), as it was vital for Britain to earn dollars through the sale of luxury goods to the American market. After the war Dorothy and her sister moved to Falmouth to a cliff-top house with a garden studio, whose walls were lined with birdcages.

Dorothy made two visits to America, in 1953 and 1956, to study birds in their natural habitat, making sketch models in paper, wire and twigs, to spontaneously capture their character. In 1957 the Queen presented a pair of Parula



Warblers to President Eisenhower and Dorothy was greatly honoured at this Royal seal of approval.

Thirty-six pairs and three individual models of American Birds were designed between 1933 and 1960. A full account of the production of the birds is given in the book by George Savage, *The American Birds of Dorothy Doughty*, which was published by Royal Worcester as a limited edition of 1500 copies in 1962.

Towards the end of her life Dorothy also designed a series of twenty-one British birds, which were not put into production until after her death in 1962, and a set of twelve collector's plates that were modelled in relief.

1. **American Birds** Each of the American Birds was sold with a polished wooden plinth and a numbered certificate. All were made in full colour, unless otherwise stated.

Shape number	Date designed	Name	Date issued	Edition	Size (inches)
3112 & 3113	1935	Redstarts on gorse (pair)	1935	66	7.75
3134 & 3135	1936	Goldfinch & thistle (pair)	1936	250	6.5
3136 & 3137	1936	Bluebirds & apple blossom (pair)	1936	350	9.5
3190 & 3191	1937	Virginian Cardinal & orange blossom (pair)	1937	500	11.5
3223	1937	Indigo Bunting on plum twig (single)	1936	6	9.5
3268 & 3269	1938	Baltimore Orioles & tulip tree (250 white pairs & 250 coloured pairs)	1938	500	9.5
3241	1938	Chickadees & larch (pair)	1938	325	9.5
3328 & 3329	1940	Crab Apple sprays & butterfly (pair)	1940	250	10.00
3326 & 3327	1940	Mocking Birds & peach blossom (pair)	1940	500	10.5
3323 & 3324	1940	Bob White Quail (pair)	1940	22	6.00
3357 & 3358	1941	Apple Blossom sprays (pair)	1941	250	6.5
3368	1942	Indigo Bunting & blackberry (pair)	1941	500	8.5
3378 & 3379	1942	Orange Blossom sprays (pair)	1947	175	7.25
3438 & 3439	1949	Humming Birds & fuchsia (pair)	1950	500	9.25
3431 & 3432	1947	Mexican Feijoa & ladybirds (pair)	1950	125	10.75
3429 &	1947	Magnolia Warbler & magnolia	1950	150	14.75

3430					
3467 & 3468	1950	Golden Crowned Kinglets (pair)	1952	500	7.75
3469 & 3470	1950	Red-eyed Vireo & swamp azalea (pair)	1952	500	7.75
3464 & 3465	1950	Yellow-headed Blackbird & spiderwort (pair)	1952	350	11.00
3506 & 3507	1953	Blue-grey Gnatcatcher & dogweed (pair)	1955	500	11.5
3508 & 3509	1954	Myrtle Warblers & weeping cherry (pair)	1955	500	11.5
3512 & 3513	1954	Bewick Wren & yellow jasmine	1956	500	10.0
3525 & 3526	1954	Scarlet Tanagers & white oak	1956	500	11.0
3532 & 3533	1954	Oven Bird, crested iris & ladies slipper (pair)	1957	250	11.0
3536 & 3537	1954	Parula Warblers & sweet bay (pair)	1957	500	9.0
3539 & 3540	1955	Yellow-throats & water hyacinth (pair)	1958	350	11.0
3548 & 3549	1955	Phoebes & flame vine (pair)	1958	500	9.75
3617	1957	Elf owl & saguaro (single)	1958	500	11.0
3618 & 3619	1957	Cactus Wrens & prickly pear (pair)	1959	500	10.5
3639 & 3640	1958	Canyon Wrens & wild lupin (pair)	1961	500	8.0
		Hooded Warbler & Cherokee rose (pair)	1961	500	10.5
3627	1957	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (single - 75 white & 250 coloured)	1962	325	24.0
3657 & 3658	1958	Vermillion Flycatcher & pussy willow (pair)	1962	500	9.25
3669 & 3670	1959	Audubon Warbler & Palo Verde (pair)	1963	500	7.5
3686	1959	Lark Sparrow & Red Gila flower (single)	1966	500	4.5
3665 & 3666	1958	Mountain Bluebird & Spleenwort Niger (pair)	1964	500	9.0
3659 & 3660	1958	Cerulean Warbler & Red Maple (pair)	1965	500	8.5
3592 & 3593	1958	Lazuli Bunting & Choke Cherry (white & coloured pairs)	1962	500	10.0
3632	1957	Extinct Carolina Paroquets (single – 75 white & 250 coloured)	1968	325	15.0

## 2. British Birds

Shape Number	Date modelled	Name	Date issued	Edition	Size (Inches)
3690	1959	Grey Wagtail & celandine (cock)	1968	500	6.5
3692	1959	Redstarts & gorse (cock)	1968	500	11.25
3693	1959	Redstarts & gorse (hen)	1968	500	7.75
3694	1959	Lesser Whitethroat & wild rose (cock)	1966	500	10.25
3695	1959	Lesser Whitethroat & wild rose (hen)	1966	500	10.5
3696	1961	Wren & Burnet rose (cock)	1966	500	5.75
3701	1960	Nightingale on honeysuckle	1971	500	10.25
3703	1960	Goldcrests on larch (cock)	1973	500	10.25
3704	1960	Goldcrests on larch (hen)	1973	500	10.5
3707	1961	Robin in the autumn woods	1966	500	7.25
3708	1961	Blue Tits & pussy willow (cock)	1966	500	7.75
3709	1961	Blue Tits & pussy willow (hen)	1966	500	6.75
3713	1961	Meadow Pipit & silverweed	1975	500	6.00
3723	1961	Chiff Chaff on hogweed	1966	500	17.75
3726	1961	Moorhen Chick & water lily	1970	500	3.75
3727	1961	Wren & Burnet rose (hen)	1966	500	7.25
3734	1966	Kingfisher & autumn beech	1966	500	12.25

## 3. The Birds of Dorothy Doughty Dessert Plates

Dorothy Doughty designed this series of plates illustrating her American Birds in 1959, and her original hand painted plates were exhibited at the Royal Worcester showroom in Curzon Street, Mayfair in 1961.

One bas-relief dessert plate was issued each year from 1972 with production limited to that year only. The subjects illustrated were;

- 1972 Redstarts & beech
- 1973 Myrtle Warbler & cherry
- 1974 Blue-grey Gnatcatchers
- 1975 Blackburnian Warbler & Western Hemlock
- 1976 Blue-winged Sivas & bamboo
- 1977 Paradise Wydah
- 1978 Blue Tits & witch hazel
- 1979 Mountain Bluebird & pine
- 1980 Cerulean Warblers & beech
- 1981 Willow Warbler & cranes bill
- 1982 Ruby-crowned Kinglets & aubutylon
- 1983 Bewick's Wren & yellow jasmine



In the mid 1980's a set of 8 relief plates based on Dorothy Doughty's British Birds series were marketed through the mail order company, Compton & Woodhouse. The first four plates were made as a limited edition of 7,000 and included Chaffinches on May Blossom, Goldcrests on Larch, Kingfisher and Autumn Beech and Cock Robin in the Autumn Woods. The second set of four were never made.

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