

Spode Status
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Questions about Spode crop up here from time to time, so I thought this summary might be helpful. In essence there is nowhere to currently direct queries about Spode patterns and wares from the past.

All the Spode "bodies" listed below are separate, independent entities.

Spode China

This is the china producing company based at the historic pottery at Church Street, Stoke on Trent. Manufacturing has now ceased there and in the company's own words: "We carefully select a number of high quality worldwide partners who manufacture product to our exacting standards. The exact location of production is identified on the product packaging / labeling." The Spode warehouse is now at Newcastle and some administration departments, including Customer Service, have relocated to Royal Worcester. Customer Service can only answer queries about current products.

Spode China continues to offer guided tours at Church Street, Stoke on Trent, but today these are limited to the Hand Painting and Modeling Studio, Spode Museum and Blue Room and Art Gallery. There are still Spode shops, but otherwise everything else has gone.

Best contacted via its website www.spode.co.uk

The Spode Museum

The Spode Museum is owned by The Spode Museum Trust, which is a registered charity and independent of Spode China. The Trust has negligible income and in the past was supported financially by Spode China, which is no longer able to provide this financial support.

The Museum is housed in buildings at Church Street owned by Spode China, which has negotiated to sell the entire site and it is possible that the Spode Museum will find itself homeless or it may, by working with the developers, find a new home as part of the re-development, presumably at a price!

The Museum comprises five main collections:

1. Porcelains (early Bone China, later Felspar porcelains) and other ceramic bodies
2. Blue and White Earthenwares currently housed in the Georgian "Blue Room"
3. Pattern & Shape Books starting from around 1800
4. Copperplates - thousands of original copper printing plates, some over 200 years old
5. Other Archive Material

If you visit the Spode Museum, what you see is only a tiny portion of the Museum collection as the reserve collection is far greater than the items you see on display.

The Spode Museum has no staff, since the last and wonderful Curator, Pam Woolliscroft, left on 28 April 2008. There is currently nobody to offer research or respond to requests for information.

The pattern and shape books and paper archives (Collections 3 and 5 above) were earlier this year placed by the Spode Museum Trust on long term deposit with the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service and are held at Stoke on Trent City Archives. The Spode archives are huge and took seven months to pack and transport to the Archive Service, which is currently cataloguing the collection. Until the work of cataloguing is complete the Spode Archives are not available for inspection nor can the Archive Service offer a search service at this time. Information about the Archive Service may be found at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/archives.

The Spode Museum has a website, which includes many pattern histories compiled by the last Curator Pam Woolliscroft. This is part of www.spode.co.uk although it is less well publicized than it was and is now found under “useful links”. The Museum website is no longer maintained or added to. One hopes that it will not one day suddenly disappear, along with all the pattern histories!

Friends of the Spode Museum

The Friends are independent of both the Spode China company and the Spode Museum Trust and were set up last year to raise funds and help preserve the collections of the Spode Museum Trust and enable them to be housed in the future. The Friends do NOT offer a research or information service. They exist purely as fundraisers and helpers to ensure the Museum survives and welcome donations and new members.

Contact is best made through their website www.spodefriens.org.uk.

The Spode Society

This is a grouping of people interested in the history of Spode China and its wares. It is independent of Spode China, the Museum and the Friends. It is financed by its members' subscriptions, holds meetings and publishes a regular Review.

The Society does NOT offer a research or information service, as that used to be provided by the Museum, and the Society does not have access to any unique records or archive, other than its own past publications. It may be able to refer enquiries to particular members known to have an interest in a specific aspect of Spode's history, but any response would be voluntary.

The Society does not have its own website, although mention is made of the Society on the Spode Museum website, but the address given there is c/o The Spode Museum, which is no longer staffed. Applications for membership should be made to the Secretary Mrs. Mollie Field, 7 Bulwark Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6PB, England.