Walton Figures: A Photo Index

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A. FEATURES

John Walton is believed to be the potter responsible for the "WALTON" mark found on so many glorious figures. It is thought that he was a manufacturer by about 1806. His name first appears in trade directories in 1818, the year in which "Earthenware Manufacturers in the Potteries" was first listed as a distinct group. By that year he was a well-established manufacturer with diverse enterprises. Around 1835, he ceased working. For details of his life and career, see *Staffordshire Figures 1780-1840*, volume 1.

This publication is intended primarily as a photo reference to Walton's models. Notably, Walton produced around ninety marked models, more than did any other manufacturer of his day.

The Walton marks are shown below. Usually, the mark is on the reverse of the figure, but sometimes it is beneath. Note that the letters always have serifs, a feature not present on later reproductions. If you line up an array of identical figure models, the mark is always in the same position. That's because the mark was integral to the mold used in manufacturing each figure or figure group.

Flowers on bocages are of assorted types, none of which is specific to Walton. However, a large rosette impressed into the center of the decorative scrolls on some bases is specific to marked Walton figures.

Walton sometimes used black motifs in the dress patterns, mostly on his larger figures. This unusual feature, while far from definitive, may assist in attributing an unmarked figure to Walton.

Walton used six leaf forms on the bocages of his marked figures. The first five below also occur on unmarked figures other potters may have made. In other words, their presence alone cannot support a Walton attribution. The sixth leaf appears to be specific to one potter, namely Walton.

- 1. Five-leaflet frond. This is the most common Walton bocage frond, but many other potters used it. Sometimes, the fronds are arranged in an arc instead of in a tree form. And sometimes only the edges of the leaflets are painted green.

- 2. Large, broad leaf. Such leaves are known on a handful of marked figure forms, all of which Walton also made with five-leaflet fronds.

- 3. Anthemion-like leaf. This has been recorded on even fewer marked Walton figures.

- 4. Modified anthemion-like leaf. This has been recorded on only Walton deer. It is a modified version of the previous leaf.

- 5. Three-leaflet frond. Each leaflets has pointed tips. This frond has been recorded on a handful of figures of a cherub, all of the same form.

- 6. The sixth leaf, the largest of all, is particularly rare. Such leaves are on five figures/figure groups all apparently from the same pot bank, but only recently have I been able to attribute them to Walton. That came about thanks to the discovery of two examples with these leaves and Walton's mark. Those figures (a widow and a lion) are from the same molds as marked Walton figures with more common bocages. At this point, I attribute all figures with this leaf to Walton.

B. WALTON MODELS

Air. See Elements.
Archer
Autumn. See Seasons.
Beggar with Children
Birds
Birds with People
Castles
Contest, Scuffle
Cows
Deer
Diana
Dogs
Dogs with People
Earth. See Elements.
Elements
Elijah and Widow
Faith
Fire. See Elements.
Flight to Egypt, Return from Egypt
Friendship
Gardeners
Hares
Harvesters
Lions. Also see Royal Supporters.
Lost Coin
Musicians
Putti
Reading
Return from Egypt. See Flight to Egypt.
Royal Supporters
Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
Saints Peter and Paul
Scuffle. See Contest
Seasons
Sheep
Shepherds and shepherdesses
Spring. See Seasons.
Spring and Langan
Sportsmen
Summer. See Seasons.
Tenderness
Toby jugs
Unicorns. See Royal Supporters.
Vendors.
Water. See Elements.
Widow. See Elijah.
Winter. See Seasons.

Archers

This lady archer is marked. The companion model is a sportsman. Image courtesy of Case Antiques.

Beggar with Children

This large group is unmarked, but, because of its distinctive bocage, there is no doubt in my mind that Walton made it. See Dogs with People for the companion model.

Birds

This marked group, with extensive restoration to the pheasants, is a component of Walton's sporting garniture. (See Sportsmen.)

Birds with People

Walton made two slightly different bird nester girls, but hitherto I have identified only one version of the boy. These figures are all marked. Images courtesy of Peter Flemans (bottom) and RTS Antiques (top).

All these groups are marked. The group below is known to me only from a sales record. Images courtesy of Andrew Dando (top left), Brighton and Hove Museums (top right).

Castles

This spill holder is marked. Note the small boat on the river flowing under the arch.

Contest, Scuffle

These groups are marked. Image courtesy of Elinor Penna (right).

Cows

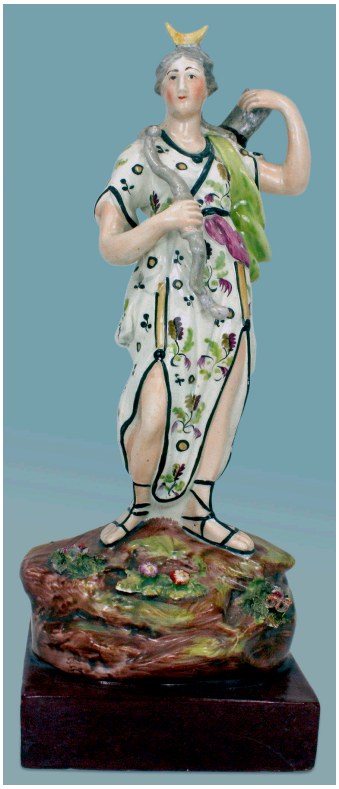
Images courtesy of John Howard.

All marked.

Deer

These small deer are the only marked Walton deer models. I know of no other example of the doe, but I have seen a few stags, each with this bocage. Walton apparently used these anthemion leaves (modified versions of the anthemion leaves he sometimes used on other figures) only on deer. Image courtesy of the National Trust.

Diana



These figures are all marked Walton. Image courtesy of Elinor Penna (right).

Diana is atypical in that she is

- the only classical figure marked Walton
- the only marked Walton model on a brown base
- one of only three marked Walton models occurring on a base decorated in a vermicular pattern
- one of only three marked Walton models found on a square/rectangular base
- one of very few Walton models occurring without a bocage.

I suspect that Diana was one of Walton's earliest figures, and the examples shown trace the evolution from a free standing figure to a figure with bocage, and from a figure on a rectangular base to a figure on the familiar green mound base.

Dogs

These two figures group, both marked, were intended as components of a hunting garniture. See Sportsmen. Image courtesy of Jonathan Horne (right).

Dogs with People

The large bocage group is unmarked, but the unusual leaves establish the attribution. For the companion model see Beggar with Children. Both spill vases are marked. The same small figures occur together on a larger vase that was almost certainly another potter's work. Image courtesy of the William Herbert and Nancy Hunt Collection (top).

Elements

These marked figures symbolize Air, Earth, Fire, and Water. That the bases on these models never match suggests the figures were intended to be sold separately rather than in sets. Image courtesy of John Howard (top left).

Elijah and the Widow

All marked. Images courtesy of The Potteries Museum (top left), Peter Flemans (top center), Golding, Young, and Mawer (bottom).

Faith

Marked. This model uses the same molds as Walton's Lost Coin. I have not recorded companion Walton models of Hope and Charity.

Flight to Egypt, Return from Egypt

All marked. Images courtesy of John Howard (top, bottom left).

Friendship

Marked. In the same style as Tenderness, Contest, and Scuffle and perhaps intended to stand with them.

Gardeners

Walton made three pairs of gardeners. Figures comprising the last pair are most likely to be found, and those in the first pair are the rarest. These examples are all marked.

Hares

This figure is a component of Walton's sporting garniture. (See Sportsmen.)

Harvesters

All are marked. The scanned image is from a Christie's catalog, June 1993, lot 194. The harvester is described as flat on the back with a Walton mark. Note the vermicular decoration on the base, as on a two other marked Walton models (see Diana, Royal Supporters).

Lions

All marked. The last lion, its bocage lost, is, to my knowledge, the only Walton figure decorated in underglaze colors. See also Royal Supporters for lions paired with unicorns. Image courtesy of the William Herbert and Nancy Hunt Collection (bottom).

Lost Coin

Marked and from the same molds as Walton's Faith. No companion figure is recorded. Image courtesy of Michael J. Smith.

Musicians

All marked. Images courtesy of Nick Burton (top left), Doyle (bottom).

Putti

The first five putti, all marked, are essentially from the same figure molds, but details, such as the baskets, vary, and perhaps the heads differ slightly--certainly the hairstyles do. Images all courtesy of Peter Flemans.

The last putto, also marked, is the only Walton model with its particular bocage form. A companion figure is not known.

Reading

These figures are all marked. The model pairs with a seated sportsman. (See Sportsmen.)

The last figure is porcelain. It is the only marked Walton porcelain model that I have recorded. It was made without a bocage, and the mark is very poorly impressed. I suspect another potter made it using Walton's molds after Walton ceased working. Image courtesy of Andrew Dando.

Royal Supporters

The first pair is marked WALTON. The lion alongside, also marked, was made without a ball beneath the paw. I have encountered a few such lions and assume that they too were intended to pair with unicorns

The second pair is unmarked but has a bocage specific to Walton. A **marked** single lion with that bocage is alongside. Image courtesy of Woolley & Wallis (bottom right).

Walton's royal coat of arms vase is flanked by the royal supporters and is almost always on a black marbled base. The exception is the example in the Fitzwilliam Museum, above, which is on a base with vermicular decoration. Only two other marked Walton models have bases decorated thus (Diana, harvester). Both also have rectangular/square bases, a feature not found on other marked Walton figures. Both these vases are marked.

Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

All marked. Image courtesy of Madelena (top right).

Saints Peter and Paul

The pair of figures above is vexing in that St Paul is marked but St. Peter is unmarked. While I have encountered a number of Walton's marked Paul figures, I have yet to encounter his marked Peter. On the other hand, in many instances the figures clearly are a pair. Images courtesy of Wisbech and Fenland Museum.

The explanation lies in the fact that Walton's mark was integral to the molds for St. Paul, but it was, for some reason omitted from the molds for St. Peter. Inevitably then, Paul would always be marked but Peter would not.

The last three figures of Peter are unmarked, but I am confident that Walton made the first, and he very probably made the other two too. Image courtesy of Mallams (left).

Seasons

This is the only documented full set of Walton Seasons.

This figure of Spring is, to my knowledge, the only marked Walton figure with this quasi-bocage structure.

Sheep

All marked. Image courtesy of Andrew Dando (bottom left).

The four spill holders are all marked. Image courtesy of John Howard (bottom right).

Shepherds and Shepherdesses

The figures on these marked groups are the same. The first bocage group lacks a dog, which was lost in firing and the small rough patch on the base was covered during the enameling process.

Walton made three pairs of shepherds and shepherdesses. These figures are all marked.

Spring and Langan

Sportsmen

All marked. The first sportsman pairs with Walton's lady archer. (See Archers.) The seated sportsman pairs with a lady reading, as shown above. He is poorly marked, but the Walton banner is visible. However, I have also recorded a well-marked example, albeit with a restored bocage. Images courtesy of Biddle & Webb (top), Richard and Susan Cann (below).

These two marked sportsmen are the lynchpins of Walton's sporting garniture. Although such garnitures (as above) potentially comprise six figures, I have yet to see one with that many. I have noted unmarked versions of one or other of these sporstmen that I am convinced were also Walton's work.

Tenderness

All marked. Images courtesy of John Howard (below).

Toby Jugs

Both marked. Images courtesy of Christie's (left), Lyon & Turnbull (right).

Vendors

Both marked. Image courtesy of Michael Goodacre (left), Brighton and Hove Museums (right).

C. WALTON LOOK-ALIKES

Unfortunately, Walton is generously credited with a prodigious array of unmarked figures, so much so that "Walton," has almost become almost synonymous with "bocage figure." But plausible explanations exist for Walton look-alikes, so attributing most unmarked figures to Walton is likely to be incorrect. Nonetheless, close similarities between some marked Walton figures and their unmarked look-alikes invite tantalizing questions. A few such figures are below. Did Walton make them? Probably, but there can be no certainty.

Note the unmarked Tenderness has a smooth pink circle on its base. The marked Tenderness has an impressed design on the pink rosette on its base. Images courtesy of John Howard (top left), Barbara Gair (middle row, first figure), Elinor Penna (middle row, last figure).

Images courtesy of Hansons (middle, left), Susan and Richard Cann (middle, right).

What of these figures of the Seasons, all from molds that Walton used? (See Seasons) All have quasi-bocages, as on Walton's marked figure of Spring. Quasi-bocages of this form are only on figures of Seasons, and I suspect Walton made them all.

The four examples below all have bases decorated in a vermicular pattern, as is on other Walton figures (Diana, harvester, royal supporters vase). Note the unusual use of black in some of the dress patterns, as found on some marked Walton figures. I suspect that, like Diana, these Seasons were among Walton's earliest productions, and he later adopted a green mound base as his house style. Images courtesy of William Herbert and Nancy Hunt (bottom row, left), Elinor Penna (all others).

Unmarked

Unmarked

Unmarked

Unmarked

Unmarked

These Seasons, again from the same molds as marked Walton figures, are on bases not encountered on marked Walton figures. Again, note the unusual use of black in some of the dress patterns. I strongly suspect Walton made these figures. Images courtesy of Elinor Penna (first row, center), second row (all images), the Potteries Museum (final two images).

D. IN WALTON'S STYLE

Many unmarked scream "Walton," yet they have no marked look-alikes. Attributing them starts us down a slippery slope. The three unmarked gardener groups below are stylistically similar to Walton's marked shepherds groups. Although all use typical Walton bocages, there is no justifiable basis for an attribution. Images courtesy of Saffron Walden Museum (right), Brighton and Hove Museums (center).

The spill vase below is typical of Walton but, again, the lack of a mark makes attribution impossible.

Similarly the figures below are very much in Walton's style. Although the boy is rather like Walton's sportsman seated beneath a hoop bocage, he is not from the same molds.

I cannot prove it, but my gut instinct suggests that Walton made the figures on this and the preceding page.

E. A CONUNDRUM

The only unmarked figures that I attribute to Walton with a high degree of confidence are those bearing the large bocage leaves numbered 6 at the start of this document. This rare bocage is on only the following unmarked subjects:

- St. Peter
- Widow of Zarephath
- Lion and Unicorn (pair)
- Dog with people group, Beggar with children (companion groups).

Because figures with these bocage leaves are encountered particularly infrequently, it seems reasonable to conclude that they were all the work of one potter.

Recently, I recorded these bocage leaves on MARKED examples of the lion and the widow. I now attribute all figures with these leaves to Walton.

I attribute the group on the left to Walton. (Note too the unusual use of a black dress pattern, as seen on some other Walton figures, and, in particular, on some of his Seasons.) But what of the group on the right? Each bocage frond has only three leaflets, so they are not the fronds Walton used on his marked work. I long to establish a link between these three-leaflet fronds and Walton, but, so far, no luck. Yet I cannot dismiss the possibility that Walton used them on some of his unmarked figures.

These two Tenderness groups have three-leaflet fronds, and the little figures are from the same molds Walton (and others) used. Bases with vermicular and brown painting occur on Walton figures.

If the three-leaflet bocage frond is ever linked to Walton, it will open up a very large can of worms. A distinct group of fine figures uses these fronds (as well as a few other fronds). We don't know who made these figures, but a friend of mine has dubbed the group "TGTBW"-- an acronym for Too Good To Be Walton. I take issue with this naming because I think the TGTBW figures are no better than Walton figures. Possibly Walton made them at a time in his long career when he did not mark his figures.

F. WALTON?

This leopard vase bears all the hallmarks of a Walton figure, including Walton's mark. The bocage is appropriate, the enameling is typical, and vases of this sort are seen on Walton's ram. But if you think Walton made it, think again.

Once upon a time, a ram was on this base. That animal apparently was lost, so a wily restorer filled the space with a leopard taken from a (probably broken) figure made by the "Sherratt" pot bank). Then the restorer made a tiny leopard to replace the small sheep that was originally on the base. On the right is an intact Walton ram, of the sort that provided the base. Below it is an intact "Sherratt" leopard.

How do we know that a ram rather than a sheep once stood on this base? The ram faces to the right, and his head would have been in front of the middle right bocage frond. Notice that frond is partially unpainted. That's because the ram's head blocked the painter's brush from reaching that area.

At the end of the day, the restorer had created a "rarity" that is of no value to a collector. Image courtesy of W. W. Warner Antiques (genuine leopard, lower right).