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Evidence for Brolliet’s Source

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Jacques Brolliet’s testimony was recorded by Jean Hellot of the Vincennes factory in January and February 1759. Brolliet had previously worked for Hellot for two years, but had gone with the French forces to Canada in 1756 and had been taken prisoner when the British captured Louisburg in July 1758. Brolliet was brought to England but managed to escape to France after only a few months, with the help of the French engraver Simon Francois Ravenet. Brolliet’s debriefing by Hellot took place immediately upon his return to France. Brolliet was then employed at Sevres: a factory memorandum in February 1760 records that his salary ‘must not be reduced; he brought the factory the secret of printing.’

Brolliet had been in England previously, in 1755, but the timing of his debriefing by Hellot suggests that Brolliet’s knowledge of printing was acquired in 1758. Brolliet told Hellot that he worked at the Chelsea factory, but Chelsea was not known for printing on porcelain. Ravenet however had been a key figure in the Battersea enamel factory between 1753 and 1756, and Battersea printed not only on enamels but also on white salt-glazed stoneware. His known assistance to Brolliet makes him the most likely source of Brolliet’s information about printing.