Louise Irvine, the renowned Royal Doulton expert and author, highlights a treasure from the Pascoe & Company Collection.

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The British Bulldog

The patriotic British bulldog has become an icon once again thanks to his desk appearance in the James Bond movie Skyfall. He is the prized possession of M and survives a bomb to be bequeathed to Bond. Royal Doulton’s new Jack Bulldog DD007 was inspired by early wartime bulldogs symbolically draped with the Union Jack, which were produced in three sizes. During the First World War, the breed symbolized the dogged determination of the British people under duress and one of Royal Doulton’s earliest models features a khaki colored bulldog wearing a helmet and haversack (HN146). During World War Two, Winston Churchill’s uncanny resemblance to the bulldog was exploited by Royal Doulton and Charles Noke modeled cigar-smoking bulldogs wearing a Derby hat or Trinity Cap in the manner of the great British war leader. These humorous bulldogs were made in three sizes for only a year and are extremely rare today.

Bulldog with Trinity Cap, 1942. Height: 5 inches.
Highly realistic representations of white and brindle bulldogs were introduced to the HN collection in 1931 and enjoyed huge popularity, with the smallest of three sizes remaining in production until the mid-1980s. These were the work of the celebrated animal artist, Frederick Daws who set new standards for Royal Doulton’s dog sculptures with his accuracy of color and conformation for the individual breeds. Most of his portraits are in typical championship show pose, although he also modeled occasional seated dogs. A very rare colorway of the Daws’ bulldog, featuring a brown patch on a white body, was given an ex-catalog number, X1176 during the 1930s.
A naturalistic miniature bulldog and puppy were the first issues in Royal Doulton’s K series in 1931 and remained in production until 1977. Occasionally bulldogs can be found in Royal Doulton’s famous rouge flambé glaze but these models are very rare. Model 38, which is featured here, was one of the earliest dogs to join the animal collection in 1912. In all, 35 bulldog variations are featured in the Charlton Standard Catalog of Royal Doulton Animals creating a collecting challenge for lovers of the breed. There are also entertaining models by other leading manufactures, such as the Sailor Bulldog perched on an ashtray by John Beswick.
The 50th anniversary of the D-day landings during World War II prompted a revival of interest in the patriotic British bulldog and a new limited edition design was introduced by Royal Doulton in 1994 (DA228). Other potteries took advantage of the bulldog’s renewed popularity in the 1990s, notably the toby jugs by Kevin Francis and models for UKI Ceramics. Bulldogs also abound in portraits of Winston Churchill, as with the Royal Doulton character jug of the year from 1992 by Stan Taylor.