Inset: Curt Totten repaired this glazed bone china owl after a serious break.
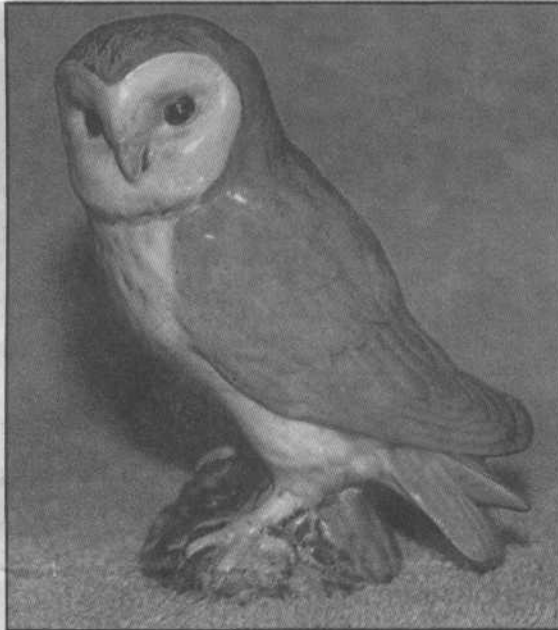

greater Quinte area, Totten gets calls not only from local customers, but across Canada.

"I basically have more work than I can handle, partly because there are very few people around who do this kind of work, and partly because many repairs and restorations take anywhere from several weeks to several months."

On the wall of Totten's shop hang before and after photographs of items he's worked on in the last 15 years.

Curt Totten, owner of Waljac's Restoration in Belleville, repairs and restores fine china, porcelain and ceramic ware, such as this porcelain shepherdess made by Lladro in Spain approximately 40 years ago.

He's had many customers comment that had they not seen the original item in several pieces, they would never have known it was damaged.

"These pictures are really helpful when I'm showing people the kind of work that can be done," he said.

In his studio, Totten works with glazes, clays, moulds and paints to carefully restore an item so that its repairs are "invisible.

"That's easier to do with a china or porcelain item, as you can use fillers to reconstruct a piece that might be missing. With crystal or glass, it's more difficult to make a break look invisible. In terms of strength, however, I can ensure the item is back to 100 per cent."

The most difficult aspect of Totten's job is to match the colours on an item that may have been crafted more than 100 years ago.

"As you can imagine, some of the paints used a century ago simply don't exist today. So I have to begin a mixing process that can take quite some time before I can match the original colour."

Totten's usually charges an hourly rate for restoration work; he will estimate the cost up front so customers know whether they want to proceed with a repair.

"In terms of what an item is worth, the repairs can exceed that by quite a bit. But much of what is brought to me has a sentimental value, such as a plate that's been handed down from generation to generation. In those cases, it's worth it to go ahead with the work."