

## The Belleek "Wishing Cup"

Or... BELLEEK 'IRELAND'  
MARK Genuine or not? continued.

by Tony Fox

At the conclusion of the second article published in Newsletter 25/2, I mentioned that I first came across this particular mark (the "Belleek Ireland" mark) some 10 ½ years ago. Having now had the opportunity to check my records I have established that the first piece of Belleek purchased by my late wife and I which carried this mark was a small size green tint Toy Shell cream (D309) obtained from a local antique shop on 23 February 1990 some 15 years ago. Just shows how important it is to keep records since as the collection grows you tend to lose track of the details. This purchase was made only a year after we had started to collect Belleek and although the mark was different to those we had previously seen it was not of any great significance at that time. It was to be some 3 ½ years later before we were to see this relatively rare mark again, this time on a rare and exciting piece of Belleek.



*View of the piece showing Belleek Ireland Mark and Close-up of Mark*



During late summer 1993 we received a telephone call from a dealer, from whom we had previously purchased various items of Belleek for our collection, concerning an item of Belleek which he had acquired from a country auction in Norfolk. He described the item as a small two handled cup mounted on a pedestal base and stamped with a non-standard mark. When we first met him he told us that sometime in the past he had been an avid Belleek collector but for reasons which he never divulged, he stopped collecting Belleek and changed to selling it. His knowledge of Belleek was quite extensive but during the time he was a collector he had not seen anything remotely like the two handled cup. It was agreed that he would keep the item until the next Newark Antiques Fair in October when we would have the opportunity to examine the item in question and consider the purchase of same. Suffice to say, when we visited the fair we had no hesitation in purchasing what was then, and still remains, a very rare piece of Belleek.

On returning home we carried out a close inspection of the latest acquisition. The two handles appeared to comprise, on each side, three palm stems/leaves or similar, supporting a seated figure in a shallow boat. Around the rim externally was a band in which there appeared to be a continuous run of impressed hieroglyphs. On one side of the cup was a rectangular cartouche which, if you consult the dictionary regarding the derivation of this word, it states "an emblem containing hieroglyphics that give the birth-name and coronation name of an ancient Egyptian king". We perused all the books and literature we had appertaining to Belleek but drew a blank. The only piece with Egyptian connotations manufactured by Belleek which we were able to find was the Sphinx napkin ring (D1551) which was made only in the first period and itself is a rare piece. We then decided to take the piece to the Christmas party at Maureen and Graham Munton's flat to seek the UK Belleek Collectors views. This proved inconclusive, there was even a suggestion from one quarter that due to the subject matter and the mark it was not Belleek! It was now obvious that we would have to try and find the answers to the many questions elsewhere, such is the nature of research.



*The Actual Chalice from Tutankhamen's Tomb*

# Tutankhamun's Alabaster Chalice

The strategy for the research programme was organised in three separate and distinct sections, viz.:

- a) establish what the piece purported to represent in terms of the design and hieroglyphics.
- b) check whether the Belleek factory has any records and/or information concerning this specific item.
- c) Attempt to ascertain whether there were other examples of the piece in Belleek collections world wide.

## Representation

I initially telephoned the Ceramics & Glass department of the Victoria & Albert Museum for assistance/information. They were unable to assist but recommended that I contact the British Museum Department of Egyptian Antiquities. I subsequently sent a letter and photographs to the British Museum requesting their help. Within one week I received a reply, the letter numbered *sheet 1* (on next page) and the inset descriptions of the cup on this page, refer and are self-explanatory. The lesson learned in this instance is if you direct your questions/queries to the right people you can be assured that you will have a reasonable chance of obtaining the correct information.

So what we had was a copy of the Wishing Cup discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamun by Howard Carter in 1922 and published by him in 1923. Important to remember these dates, more of that later. The original Wishing Cup is 18cm high, our copy is smaller at 8cm.

## Belleek Factory Information: Phase One

At the same time as I sent the letter and photographs to the British Museum I repeated the process to the factory and marked them for the attention of Fergus Cleary, Head of Design. I did not mention the approach made to the British Museum, only that I was interested in anything he could tell me about the piece and also the 'IRELAND' mark. Again within one week I had received a reply! Attached copy numbered *sheet 2* (next page) constitutes the reply. From what we now know the piece could not possibly have been included in the 1904 catalogue. Due to other reasons which I shall explain later I sent Fergus a reply in July 1994 thanking him for his assistance and summarising what my research had revealed about this particular piece.

## Availability/Knowledge of Other Examples of the Piece

In an attempt to retain the chronological order of the research programme it is important to outline the next step. Following the receipt of the replies from the British Museum and Belleek factory and the purchase of the second edition of the Belleek Collectors' Guide I decided to write to the late Richard Degenhardt with a view to establishing whether he had seen the piece and the 'IRELAND' mark before in his extensive travels carrying out the research for his two books. It was 2 ½ months before I received a reply, attached copy numbered *sheet 3* (next page)\_refers. Interesting to note that he did not assign a "D" number to the similar piece seen in Enniskillen since it was not marked and therefore he did not include it in his second book. However, he appears to have had no hesitation in declaring that it was crafted by Belleek! It begs the question why the piece was not marked since the Belleek philosophy states "without which none is genuine".

The translucent white drinking cup takes the form of a white lotus. Lotus buds with stems form a handle on two sides. On top of the buds the god Heh sits holding the hieroglyphs for years and life in each hand, above the signs for 100,000 and eternity, all together symbolizing eternal life. The hieroglyph for Heh stands for millions, seen above in the wish inscription. The hieroglyph for the heavens surmounts a square on the front of the chalice's bowl. Three columns give the king's names and titles. Beginning with the middle column containing a cartouche, the hieroglyphs read from top to bottom:

"King of Upper and Lower Egypt,  
Neb Kheperu Re, given life."

The left column and cartouche read:

"Son of Re, living image of Amun,  
ruler of Thebes forever and ever."

The right column says:

"Beloved of Amun-Re lord of  
thrones, and of the two lands, lord of  
heaven."

### A more poetic interpretation of the hieroglyphs gives the following interpretation...

An inscription carved within a rectangular outline gives the throne and personal names of the king and also refers to him as:

"Beloved of Amon, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, and Lord of Heaven."

The hieroglyphs along the rim are divided into two parts: one, giving the titulary of the king, begins with the falcon and reads left to right. The other inscription records an eloquent wish for long life:

"May your ka (essential nature of an individual) live; May you spend millions of years, Oh, you who love Thebes, sitting with your face toward the north wind and your eyes beholding happiness".

This request led Carter to designate the piece as the "Wishing Cup". The message is carried further, however, extending even to the decoration of the handles.

On either side an open flower is flanked by two buds. Atop the central element of each is the god of eternity, Heh, who also signified the number "one million". In each hand, he grasps the notched palm branch, the hieroglyph for "year" that rests on the tadpole ("one hundred thousand") and the sign for "infinity". Carved and filled with pigment, the hieroglyph *ankh* ("life"), is held in the god's hands, and the composition symbolizes life eternal.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Department of Egyptian Antiquities

Sheet 1

Mr A E Fox

EA/MLB/JAC

22 February 1994

Dear Sir

Thank you for your letter of the 18th February and the enclosed photographs which I am returning to you.

Your chalice is in fact a copy of the chalice discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922 and published by Howard Carter in 1923. The cartouches are those of the king. Your cup was obviously produced as part of the excitement following the discovery of this important tomb. I suggest that you check the mark again as the cup would have been made in the mid to late 1920's rather than the 1890 date which you suggest, as of course the original was unknown at that time. I enclose a photocopy of the original and a brief comment on it from a more recent publication on the tomb.

Yours faithfully



Morris L Bierbrier  
Assistant Keeper

Sheet 2



Belleek Pottery Limited, Belleek, Co. Fermanagh, Ireland.  
Telephone: (036 56) 58501 Fax: (036 56) 58625

PMC/RMK

28 February 1994

Mr A E Fox

Dear Mr Fox

Thank you for your letter. It is indeed strange that you should enquire about this particular piece, because only a week or so ago, I discovered a reference to it here at the Pottery.

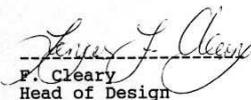
While an old stone-room was been cleared out, some of the original half tone printers and blocks of the 1904 catalogue were discovered. One of these showed the piece in your possession (I have enclosed a photo-copy of it). What puzzled me was that it was along with the 1904 pieces but obviously not used for the catalogue. It is a piece odd in shape and design and does not readily fit in with other pieces of the time. Ordinarily I would have said that it perhaps was an experimental piece which never reached production. However at the time, it was obviously considered important enough to be included in the photography of the 1904 catalogue. The second mark found on your piece would tie in with the period that it was photographed.

Any trade mark with 'Ireland' on it, would probably indicate that it was made after 1890, when the Mckinley tariff act came into operation. I agree with your observation that there is a 'grey' area concerning the second mark.

Perhaps I can offer a possible explanation. Maybe after the McKinley tariff act Belleek continued to use the original trade-mark with the 'Ireland' mark separately added. Obviously this was awkward and later a proper new mark was engraved. I have seen pieces here at the Pottery with both first and second marks. In this particular case what we think might have happened was that the pieces were made prior to 1890 but only sold after that date and to fulfil the tariff requirements had the second mark added before they were shipped to the U.S.A.

I hope that the above is of some interest to you. I think what we have to remember is that then, as can sometimes happen now, is that things do not always go exactly to plan and sometimes interim solutions have to be introduced, then when we stand back and place these events chronologically we tend to forget the blips!!

Yours sincerely



F. Cleary  
Head of Design

Sheet 3

RICHARD K. DEGENHARDT  
124 CYPRESS POINT  
SUGAR HOLLOW FARM  
HENDERSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA  
28739

Rec 17/6/94

June 10, 1994

Mr. A. E. Fox

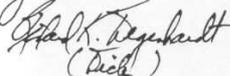
Dear Mr. Fox,

Your letter of March 25, 1994 - sorry I add day in knowing - raises some very interesting questions! I find myself very seldom in disagreement with Fergus Cleary, however, if the piece from which yours was copied was not discovered until 1922 - no way it could have been crafted in 1st Mark period. Incidentally, I saw an example of this same piece, which was crafted by Belleek ~~in~~ while visiting in a private home in Enniskillen, N. Ireland about 1980. Can't recall that it was marked - sure it was not and I think back on it, - thus a reason not to assign it a D number and include it in my new book.

Regarding the 1st MARK with the word IRELAND thereunder - I have never come across this mark, but would not question its authenticity.

Agree I could not be of more assistance.

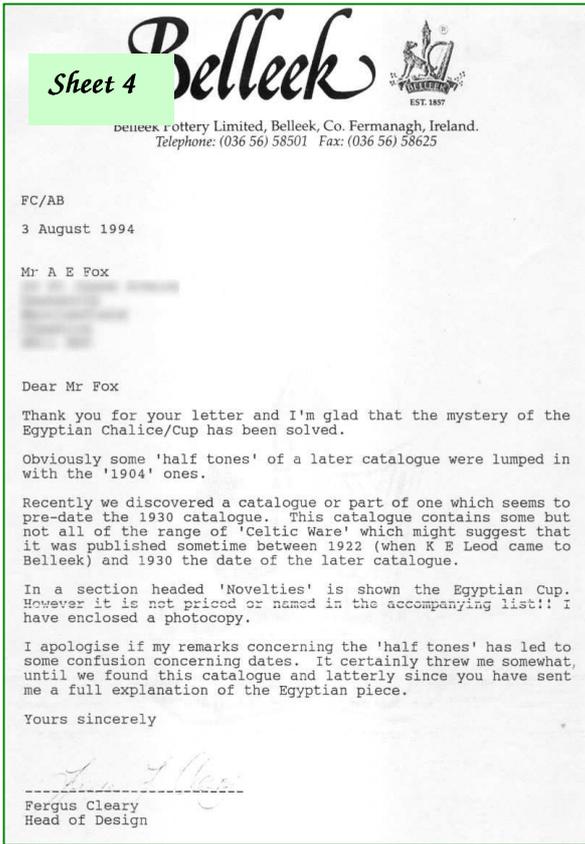
"Happy Belleeking!"



Richard K. Degenhardt  
(Dick)

**Belleek Factory Information: Phase Two**

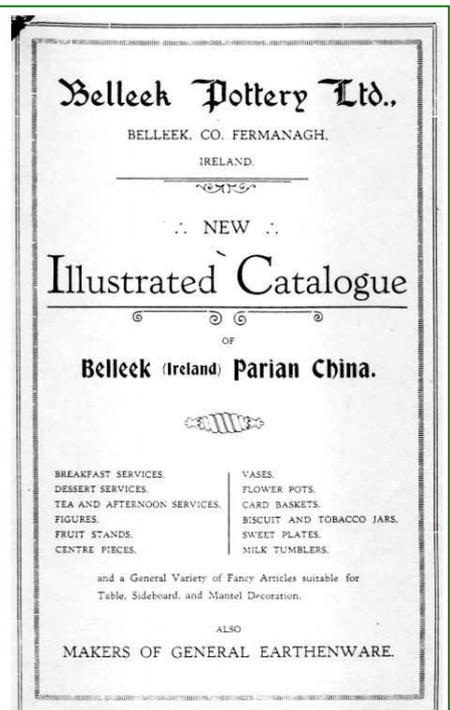
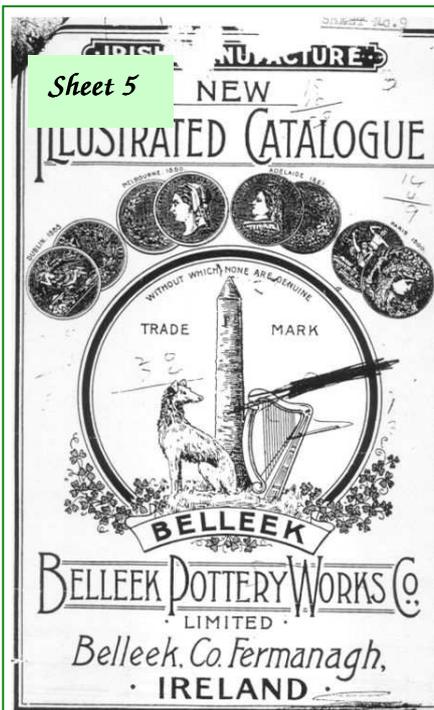
I included a copy of Richard Degenhardt's letter in my previously mentioned reply to Fergus Cleary so that he was aware of all the information my research had uncovered regarding this piece and to a lesser extent the 'IRELAND' mark. I received a reply from Fergus in early August 1994, attached copies numbered *sheets 4 and 5* (next page) constitute the reply (Sheet 5 has the catalogue pages sent by Fergus combined together onto one page). This is the final incontrovertible proof that the Egyptian Wishing Cup copied from the tomb of Tutankhamun is a Belleek piece. Just a pity we do not know the date of the catalogue. Has anybody out there got a copy I wonder?



## Belleek 'IRELAND' Mark: Summary

a) Since the Wishing Cup piece could not have been produced prior to 1923 (ref. sheet 1), which is almost at the end of the second period, it is further evidence that the 'IRELAND' mark was used in tandem with the recognised second period ribbon mark. Fergus Cleary puts the date of the catalogue (ref. sheet 8) showing the Wishing Cup piece between 1922 and 1930. At the time the Wishing Cup would have been produced, the pottery was managed by K.E'Loyd and latterly by J.F. Dolan with Madame Boroniuxz being responsible for design.

b) Fergus Cleary's comments (ref. sheet 2) are a very plausible explanation for the 'IRELAND' mark, i.e. the use of the original trademark with the word 'IRELAND' added underneath. However, as raised in the previous article it was not a short term interim measure. Those pieces having both the first and second period marks is an entirely different matter which should be the subject of separate research. Here we go again!



Novelties.

HAND-WOVEN - BASKETS AND OTHERS.

No.	DESCRIPTION	Height in inches	Flat base	Round base	Stock and feet
AB	Shamrock shape, small size	8 1/2	18 0	18 0	...
AC	" " " " middle	8 3/4	18 0	18 0	...
AD	" " " " large	16 6	22 6	22 6	...
AE	Round Low, 4 inches diam	9 0	18 0	18 0	...
AF	" " " " 7	10 6	18 0	18 0	...
AG	Henshall, small size, 7 1/2 in.	12 6	18 6	18 6	...
AH	" " " " large, 9 in.	16 6	22 6	22 6	...
AI	Hexagon, 8 1/2 in. diam.	16 6	22 6	22 6	...
AJ	Boston, 10 1/2 in.	16 6	22 6	22 6	...
AK	Covered, 6 1/2 in.	22 6	20 0	20 0	...
AL	Oval, 6 1/2 in.	10 6	18 6	18 6	...
AM	Round Tall, 6 1/2 in. diam.	9 0	18 6	18 6	...
AN	" " " " 7 1/2 in.	10 6	18 0	18 0	...
AO	Oval, 10 in. diam.	16 6	22 6	22 6	...
A	Celtic small Vase, painted and gilt	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
B	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
C	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
D	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
E	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
F	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
G	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
H	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
I	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
J	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
K	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
L	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
M	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
N	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
O	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
P	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
Q	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
R	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...
S	" " " " " " " "	3 1/2	...	2 0	...



- c) The late Richard Degenhardt's letter (ref. sheet 3) is very positive. One of the recognised leading authorities on Belleek although never having seen the 'IRELAND' mark would not question its authenticity. I now regret not having taken this matter further with him but eleven years on I like to think that we have and are continuing to advance our knowledge and understanding of Belleek and its history. Such is the reward for careful research.
- d) I trust that this research programme has now provided sufficient evidence to accept and confirm that the 'IRELAND' mark is genuine and was used alongside the recognised second period ribbon mark albeit on an infrequent basis.

N.B. For the sake of clarity I have omitted copies of my letters to the British Museum, Belleek Pottery, and the late Richard Degenhardt. In the event that anyone would like to see this information in order to complete the circle I can furnish copies.

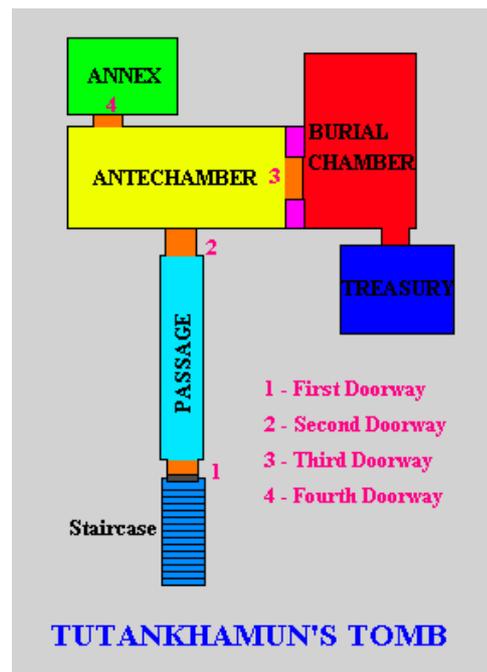
*In a future issue - a different third period mark, ..*

## Background Information: King Tutankhamen's Tomb

In 1922, Howard Carter discovered, the almost complete tomb of the boy King Tutankhamen, Now the most famous of the all the pharaohs, because of this discovery. Tutankhamen died at the age of 19, possibly he was murdered by the very man that appears on the walls of his tomb, his chief vizier, Aye. Howard Carter had spent many years as an archaeologist working in Egypt. For six years he had worked in the temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahri using his artistic skills to make copies of the wall paintings. Carter became the Supervisor of the Excavations funded by Carnarvon in Thebes and by 1914 Carnarvon owned one of the most valuable collections of Egyptian artifacts held in private hands. He sought out King Tutankhamun's tomb. After various clues to its existence had been found, Carter tore up the Valley of the Kings looking for Tutankhamun's burial place, but season after season produced little more than a few artifacts. Carnarvon was becoming dissatisfied with the lack of return from his investment and, in 1922, he gave Carter one more season of funding to find the tomb.



Carter was confident and the challenge went on as work began on November 1, 1922. It took only three days before the top of a staircase was unearthed. On November 4th, 1922 Carter's workmen discovered a step cut into the rock. Then they found fifteen more leading to an ancient doorway that appeared to be still sealed. The rumor of an ancient curse didn't stop this archaeologist from opening the tomb of King Tut.



(below, outside the Tomb before it was opened)



Inside the final one was the mummy of the boy-king, Pharaoh Tutankhamen. The day the tomb was opened was one of joy and celebration for all those involved. Nobody seemed to be concerned about any curse.

A few months later tragedy struck. Lord Carnarvon, 57, was taken ill and rushed to Cairo. He died a few days later. The exact cause of death was not known, but it seemed to be from an infection started by an insect bite. Legend has it that when he died there was a short power failure and all the lights throughout Cairo went out. On his estate back in England his favorite dog howled and dropped dead.

Even more strange, when the mummy of Tutankhamun was unwrapped in 1925, it was found to have a wound on the left cheek in the same exact position as the insect bite on Carnarvon that led to his death.

By 1929 eleven people connected with the discovery of the Tomb had died early and of unnatural causes. This included two of Carnarvon's relatives, Carter's personal secretary, Richard Bethell, and Bethell's father, Lord Westbury. Westbury killed himself by jumping from a building. He left a note that read, "I really cannot stand any more horrors and hardly see what good I am going to do here, so I am making my exit." The press followed the deaths carefully attributing each new one to the "Mummy's Curse." By 1935 they had credited 21 victims to King Tut. Was there really a curse? Or was it all just the ravings of a sensational press? Perhaps, the power of a curse is in the mind of the person who believes in it. Howard Carter, the man who actually opened the tomb, never believed in the curse and lived to a reasonably old age of 66 before dying of entirely natural causes.

The artifacts were sent to the Cairo Museum and the corpse of the young king was studied and laid back to rest. After his work was done with King Tutankhamun, Carter no longer worked in the field. He retired from the archaeology business. He took up the pursuit of collecting Egyptian antiquities and, indeed, became a very successful collector. Often, toward the end of his life, he could be found at the Winter Palace Hotel at Luxor, sitting by himself in willful isolation. He returned to England and in 1939, at the age of 65, Howard Carter died.

Of the "Wishing Cup" itself, Carter reported that he had to step over this cup, which lay in the doorway, in order to get into the Antechamber. The cup, in the form of a white lotus, has petals carved in delicate low relief around its surface.

**Death Shall Come on Swift Wings To Him Who Disturbs the Peace of the King**

...was supposedly engraved on the exterior of King Tutankhamen's Tomb.

On the doorway was the name Tutankhamen. Almost three weeks later the staircase was entirely excavated and the full side of the plaster block was visible. By November 26, the first plaster block was removed, the chip filling the corridor was emptied, and the second plaster was ready to be taken apart. At about 4 P.M. that day, Carter broke through the second plaster block and made one of the discoveries of the century, the tomb of King Tutankhamun.

When Carter arrived home that night his servant met him at the door. In his hand he clutched a few yellow feathers. His eyes large with fear, he reported that the canary had been killed by a cobra. Carter, a practical man, told the servant to make sure the snake was out of the house. The man grabbed Carter by the sleeve. "The pharaoh's serpent ate the bird because it led us to the hidden tomb! You must not disturb the tomb!" Scoffing at such superstitious nonsense, Carter sent the man home. Carter immediately sent a telegram to Carnarvon and waited anxiously for his arrival. Carnarvon made it to Egypt by November 26th and watched as Carter made a hole in the door. Carter leaned in, holding a candle, to take a look. Behind him Lord Carnarvon asked, "Can you see anything?"

Carter answered, "Yes, wonderful things."

The tomb was intact and contained an amazing collection of treasures including a stone sarcophagus. The sarcophagus contained three gold coffins nested within each other (right).