

# The Belleek Wishing Cup – further deliberations

– by Tony Fox

In the article published in the UK Belleek Collectors' Group Newsletter Number 26/2, July 2005, I indicated that it was not possible to establish the date of the catalogue from the information received from Fergus Cleary under cover of the Belleek Pottery Limited letter dated 3 August 1984, i.e. photocopies of four pages comprising cover, title page, section headed Novelties, and a sheet showing the Wishing Cup designated by the letter L. Hence my appeal in the article, quote: "Has anybody out there got a copy I wonder?"

It is sometimes the case that events take place over which one has no control but which lead to a positive outcome. Now some fourteen months following the publication of the aforementioned article I have had the good fortune and opportunity to examine in detail a complete illustrated catalogue containing the information previously supplied by Fergus Cleary. The question which this now raises is how can the date of this particular catalogue be determined with any degree of confidence? One fact which is not in dispute is that unlike other Belleek pieces the design and manufacture of the Wishing Cup can be attributed to a relatively short timescale.

In order to clarify matters it may prove helpful to list chronologically the present known information in respect of catalogues produced during the years 1930 to 1930.

- 1) 1922 to 1930. Belleek Pottery Limited. Fergus Cleary has suggested that the pages he sent appertaining to the Wishing Cup art part of a catalogue which seems to pre-date the 1930 catalogue. The content of the catalogue particularly the "Celtic Ware" range might indicate that it was published sometime between 1922, when Mr. K.E. Lloyd came to Belleek, and 1930, the date of the later catalogue.
- 2) 1924. The Story of Belleek by John Cunningham first published in 1992. Page 62 illustration No. 42 shows the cover of the Belleek Pottery catalogue of 1924 ostensibly produced under the auspices of the new pottery manager, Mr. Francis Joseph Dolan, for the Wembley Exhibition of May 1924.
- 3) 1928. Belleek The Complete Collector's Guide and Illustrated Reference, Second Edition by Richard K. Degenhardt published in 1993. Page 203 is headed The 1928 Catalogue and shows several examples of Shamrock ware together with the title page. Also there is a statement, quote "The 1928 catalogue has also become a collector's item, as it is believed to be the first illustrated catalogue to follow the 1904 catalogue".

Thirteen years after the publication of the Degenhardt Second Edition substantial evidence is now available to suggest that an earlier illustrated catalogue (or catalogues) was produced following the issue of the 1904 catalogue and prior to the 1928 catalogue. The following reasons are given in support of this proposal, viz:-

- a) It is not possible to differentiate and hence date any of the illustrated catalogues produced during the years 1920 to 1930 from the covers since they all appear to be identical to the 1904 illustrated catalogue cover notwithstanding the company name change from the Belleek Pottery Works Co., Limited to the Belleek Pottery Limited as and from 1920. All the catalogues appear to have been printed by W & G Baird Ltd., Belfast. Figure 1 (right) refers.

Figure 1: Cover of 1904 Catalogue

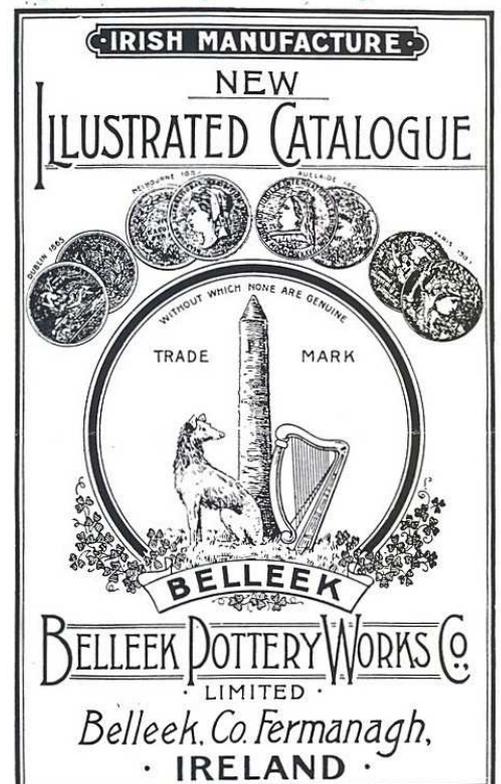


Figure 2: Title Page of 1904 Catalogue

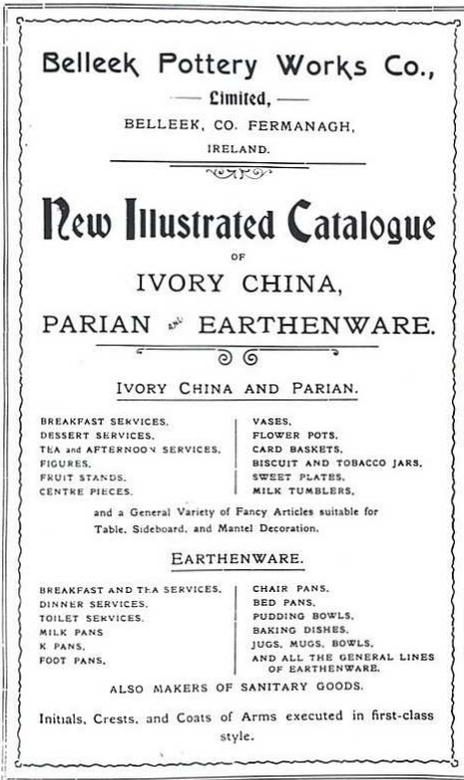


Figure 3: Title Page of "Wishing Cup" Catalogue

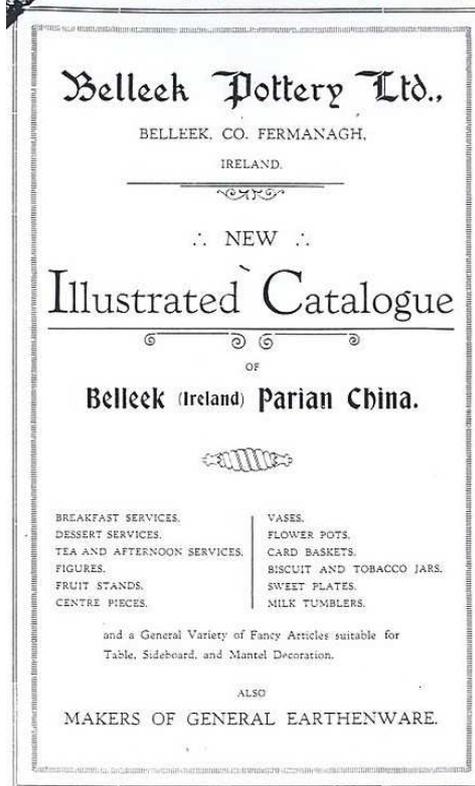
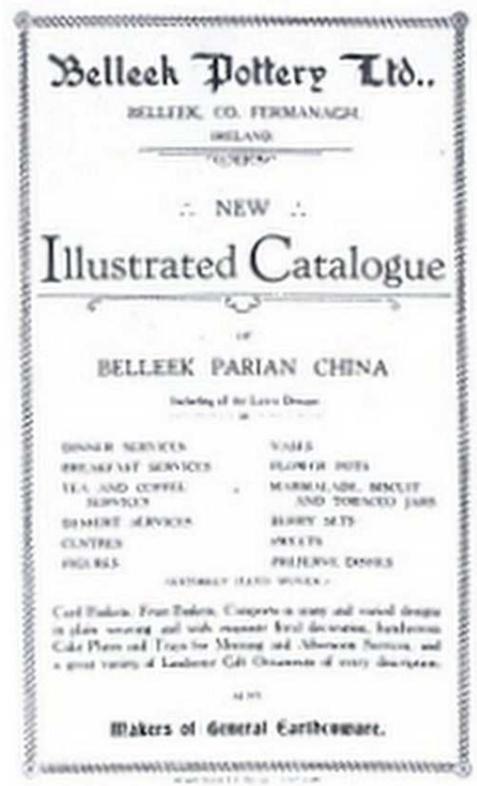


Figure 4: Title Page of 1928 Catalogue



b) Without reference to the contents it is possible to differentiate between the catalogues and date them between 1904 to 1920, and 1920 onwards, by close examination of the text comprising the title pages. Figures 2, 3 and 4 (above) refer.

c) The content of the 1928 illustrated catalogue is more extensive when compared with the catalogue showing the Wishing Cup. However, the Wishing Cup does not appear in the 1928 catalogue.

d) The fact that the Wishing Cup is neither described or priced in the catalogue leads one to the conclusion that it had a very short life, perhaps it was never put into full production for the reason outlined in Trevor Roycroft's excellent article entitled The Belleek Wishing Cup – The Tutankhamen Chalice which appeared in Volume 16 Number 3 2005 of The Belleek Collector magazine.

e) Since the timescale for the introduction of the Wishing Cup can be determined with a reasonable degree of accuracy it is logical to consider 1924 to be within the realms of credibility which would certainly concur with the specific information in John Cunningham's book.

Subsequent to the receipt of the four pages from Fergus Cleary I sent a reply, photocopy refers, however a response was not forthcoming and I therefore assumed that the Pottery did not have the complete illustrated catalogue appertaining to the Wishing Cup. It is worth noting that even in 1994 the question was posed regarding the possibility of the existence of an earlier catalogue (See letter, figure 5, right).

Figure 5: 1994 letter to Fergus Cleary

Belleek Pottery Ltd.,  
Belleek  
Co. Fermanagh  
Att: Mr. F. Cleary  
Head of Design

24 August 1994  
Your Ref: PG/AB

Dear Mr Cleary,

Thank you for your letter dated 3 August 1994 together with enclosures i.e. part of a pre 1930 catalogue which you have recently discovered.

The information is very interesting and is fitting confirmation to solve the mystery of the Egyptian wishing cup. As you indicate this part catalogue would appear to have been produced between the 1904 catalogue and the 1928 catalogue, reproduced in Degenhardt's latest book. A close check of the front sheets of the recently discovered document and the 1928 catalogue shows them to be virtually identical in format and content except in the former the most important difference is Belleek (Ireland) Parian China. Since the chalice was not discovered/information published until 1923 and assuming the mark was discontinued at the same time as the normal second period mark then the recently discovered document must have been produced during the period 1923 to 1926. If the printers W & G Baird Ltd. Belfast are still in business do they have any old records to collaborate same.

In conclusion would it be at all possible to photocopy the full contents of the recently discovered part catalogue in order to supplement the existing Belleek information I have in this particular context. I would be willing to pay for this service/privilege.

Yours sincerely  
*F. E. Fox*  
A.E. Fox

I have had to wait twelve years for the opportunity to examine this earlier document.

In the circumstances I am confident in submitting the proposal that it is indeed the 1924 illustrated catalogue which by the very definition is another important step in our understanding of the fascinating history of the Belleek Pottery.

The pages which refer to the wishing cup are reproduced here as figure 6 (below), along with the most detailed possible rendering of the Wishing Cup itself from the catalogue (right).

Acknowledgement to Linda and Eddie Murphy who allowed me to peruse the pristine issue of their 1924 catalogue at my leisure.



Figure 6: Page from the "Wishing Cup" Catalogue showing the Item as "L"

**Novelties.**

HAND-WOVEN—BASKETS AND OTHERS.

Nos.	DESCRIPTION.	Height or Measurements.	Flat Rod.		Round Rod.		Black and Gold.
			s.	d.	s.	d.	
AB	Shamrock shape,, small size ...	...	8	3	10	0	...
AC	" " " middle " ...	...	10	6	18	0	...
AD	" " " large " ...	...	16	6	22	6	...
AE	Round Low, 6 inches diam. ...	...	9	0	15	0	...
AF	" " " 7 " " ...	...	10	6	18	0	...
AG	Henshall, small size, 7 1/4 in. ...	...	10	6	18	0	...
AH	" " " large " 9 in. ...	...	12	0	19	6	...
AI	Hexagon, 8 3/4 in. diam. ...	...	16	6	22	6	...
AJ	Boston, 10 3/4 in. " " ...	...	16	6	22	6	...
AK	Covered, 6 1/2 in. " " ...	...	22	6	30	0	...
AL	Oval, 6 1/2 in. " " ...	...	10	6	18	9	...
AM	Round Tall, 6 1/2 in. diam. ...	...	9	0	13	6	...
AN	" " " 7 1/4 in. " " ...	...	10	6	18	0	...
AO	Oval, 10 in. d'am. " " ...	...	16	6	22	6	...
A	Celtic small Vases, painted and gilt	3 1/4	...	...	2	0	...
B	" " " " " " "	3 1/4	...	...	2	0	...
C	" " " " " " "	3 1/4	...	...	2	0	...
D	" " " " " " "	3	...	...	2	0	...
E	" " " " " Cob only	...	...	...	2	3	...
F	" " " " " " "	...	...	...	2	3	...
G	" " " " " " "	...	...	...	2	3	...
H	" " " " " painted and gilt	...	...	...	3	9	5 3
I	" " " " " " "	...	...	...	2	6	...
J	" " " " " large " " black and gold	6 1/2	...	...	10	6	...
K	" " " " " " "	7	...	...	10	6	...
M	Saints Spill ...	4 1/4	...	...	6	0	7 6
N	Celtic Fruit Dish width	10 1/2	...	...	11	0	15 0
O	Celtic Spill, painted and gilt	6	...	...	5	0	7 6
P	Celtic Ash Tray	...	...	...	3	0	4 6
Q	Leprechaun	5 1/4	...	...	6	0	...
R	Celtic small Vase	3 1/4	...	...	2	6	...
S	Celtic Honey Pot	...	...	...	11	0	14 6