

UK Belleek Collectors' Group

Number 26/3, October 2005



Newsletter

50th Meeting Issue

An Anniversary to celebrate! The UK Belleek collectors' Group was founded in 1989 by Marion Langham and Brian Scott, who planned it over many cups of coffee at Marion's stand in the Portobello Road. This led to the Group being recognised by the Belleek Collectors' International Society as their 15th members' group. It has blossomed into a current membership of 57 households with shared interests in collecting and researching Belleek. The plate in the picture is a limited edition (one will be presented to each household on the membership list on 1st October 2005), specially designed by members and for members, to acknowledge our 50th meeting in October. Congratulations to everybody involved.

- Gina Kelland

Contacts:

Gina Kelland is the Newsletter editor. Please let her have your contributions for future Newsletters, comments, suggestions, letters for publication, criticisms etc. If you want, Chris Marvell is also happy to receive material for the Newsletter. **If you are sending published articles please either get Copyright clearance yourself or enclose the details of the publisher so Gina can ask for permission.** Gina's email editor@belleek.org.uk

Chris Marvell publishes the Newsletter and he and Bev Marvell distribute it. Chris is also setting up a database which will form the Group's "digital" archive, keeping a record of relevant publications and photographs (including photos etc. gathered at meetings and not published in the Newsletter). Some or all of this information will be available on the Internet as our website develops. Contact Chris by email at publisher@belleek.org.uk

The Group's Chairman is **David Reynolds**, email chairman@belleek.org.uk

Our Treasurer is **Francis Kiddle**, contact him by email at treasurer@belleek.org.uk

The position of Group Administrator is vacant at present so email to administrator@belleek.org.uk will come through to Chris Marvell who will pass it on to the most appropriate person.

Our website is administered by Simon Whitlock and can be found at <http://www.belleek.org.uk/>. To contact Simon, the Webmaster, send email to webmaster@belleek.org.uk.

There is now a separate email address to make contact with researchers within the group. This is research@belleek.org.uk. For information on the annual raffle or to buy tickets, contact Eddie Murphy at raffle@belleek.org.uk.

Credits

Photographs: Chris Marvell, Eddie Murphy, Brian Russell.
Articles by: Gina Kelland, Bev Marvell, Paul Tubb and Chris Marvell
Other material: Gina Kelland, Jan Golaszewski, David Reynolds

Thanks to members and others who have helped in many ways, and for their contributions and most encouraging comments.

Forthcoming Events

15 th /16 th October	Worcester – the Group's 50 th Meeting.
10th/11th December	2005 Christmas Party Weekend, (coincides with Stafford Antiques Fair)
March 2006	Stoke-on-Trent, (Date to be finalised)
15th/16th July 2006	AGM, Bourne End/Amersham

As always, members will receive notification and details of meetings 2-4 weeks before the actual meeting in question.

Future Plans

October 2006	Kent
December 2006	2006 Christmas Party, Draycott, Derbyshire
March 2007	Coventry
July 2007	AGM, Portsmouth

Newsletter Deadlines

Spring 2006: Deadline February 14th, Publication March 1st

Summer 2006: Deadline June 24th, Publication July 1st

Autumn 2006: Deadline September 24th, Publication October 1st

Cover Picture... is the UK Belleek Collectors' Group 50th Meeting Plate

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Group Announcements

From the Chairman

Well how quickly the publication of a newsletter seems to follow the last, it feels like only a couple of weeks since I wrote my last message, yet since then so much has happened in the UK Collectors Group. The International Convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan from 8th to 10th September was a great success and more details will be written in the next newsletter, however I would just like to report on the successful presentations to the convention by Paul Tubb and myself both of which created a lot of interest and had good positive feedbacks.

This year, the Belleek International Collector's Society Hall of Fame Honoree is Roland Glendinning from Canada who many will remember from the 1997 Convention in Stoke on Trent, and from other conventions in the US, Roland received the Belleek chain from last years Honoree, Joan Crowe. (pictured on the right)

I am pleased to report a successful take up of Associate Membership from overseas collectors, following the decision at this years AGM to introduce this additional level of membership, we now have 10 Associate Members.

We will soon be meeting up for our 50th meeting in Worcester over the weekend of 15th and 16th October, and a good turn-out is promised from all the acceptances I have received, we will also be welcoming some members attending for the first time.

- David Reynolds.

From Jan...

My dearest Belleekers.

Having been overwhelmed at our Group's AGM by a galaxy of emotions, I am still dazed by your wonderful presentation and from your countless messages of affection. Your generous gifts (First Black Period Convolvulus trio and Thorn cup & saucer) serve as a treasured life-time memory of you all. Both wares are truly stunning examples of Belleek's finest craft. They sit proudly in my collection which is greatly enhanced by their outstanding beauty.

A million special 'Thank You' hugs and kisses to each and every one of you, Jan xxx.



Above: Roland with friend Mary and Evelyn Twiss (Honoree in 1992)

News from the World of Ceramics

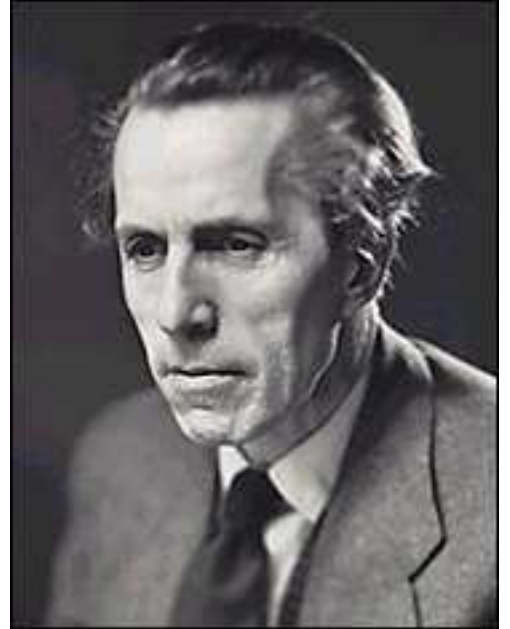
Reginald Haggar Exhibition



The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery



Potteries Museum & Art Gallery
Bethesda Street
Hanley
Stoke-on-Trent
ST1 3DW
Staffordshire
England



Reginald Haggar

Reginald Haggar was born in Ipswich in 1905 and studied at Ipswich School of Art and the Royal College of Art.

In 1929 he became Minton's Assistant Designer, becoming Art Director 6 months later. He held this post until 1939, designing modernist shapes and patterns. Reginald Haggar was an accomplished artist, working in water colours as well as ceramics. His designs reflected both the radical and lyrical elements of Art Deco.

After leaving Minton, Reginald Haggar turned to teaching, becoming Master-in-Charge at Stoke School of Art from 1935 to 1941, and at Burslem School of Art from 1941 to 1945.

After leaving this post he became a freelance painter and lecturer. He died in 1988.



Plate

c. 1936

Under glaze printed & painted earthenware
D : 228 mm

Earthenware plate. Decorated with a black printed design with overglaze painted details. With a lobed border.
Designed for W. H. Grindley, Tunstall.



Mug

1930

Over glaze printed & painted earthenware
H : 74 mm

Earthenware mug. Decorated with over glaze printed motifs of flowers, waves, a building, birds, a cow, and a woman carrying a basket upon her head. With over glaze painted details.
Designed for Minton, Stoke

The Exhibition starts on 15th October and continues until 15th January 2006. Admission is free of charge and is open during the normal opening times of the Museum.

Pictures and information from the Potteries Museum (or http://www.thepotteries.org/people/haggar_reg.htm)

More Information on the Wedgwood Museum

The Wedgwood Museum contains the world's greatest collection of Wedgwood ceramics, ranging from a unique collection of Josiah Wedgwood's original trials for the perfection of Queen's Ware, later delivered in the form of a 900+ piece dinner service to Catherine the Great of Russia in 1774, to a rare 5 foot high Exhibition Vase, decorated by Emile Lessore, the only one of its kind in Britain.



Josiah Wedgwood I
(1730-1795)

In total more than 8000 rare ceramic items are held in the Trust by the Wedgwood Museum Trustees - together with a huge range of historically important manuscripts and correspondence about social, political and business life in the 18th and 19th centuries, including letters from Charles Darwin (Josiah I's grandson), Coleridge and many others.



The Wedgwood Family Portrait
by George Stubbs (1780)

The collections also contain an internationally significant fine art section, including paintings by Stubbs (1724-1806), Sir Joshua Reynolds P.R.A. and George Romney American artist John Singer Sergeant, as well as 19th and 20th century watercolour design sketches by artists such as Lessore, Thomas Allen, Graham Sutherland and David Shepherd.

The Museum Galleries are closed to the public at the present time whilst major new galleries, a research area and educational facilities are constructed. This has been made possible through a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant of £5.85m towards the total cost. It is anticipated that the new Museum will reopen in 2006. A public appeal for the funding gap was launched on 28th January 2004.

For further details please see the press release on this website under 'Breaking News'

Written and verbal enquires: The Wedgwood Museum Office
The Wedgwood Museum Trust Limited

Barlaston
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire

ST12 9ES

Tel: 01782 282818, Fax: 01782 223315



Special Exhibition Gallery where annual displays were held

The above information from: <http://www.wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk/>

The Fleet Weekend



Saturday at "Punch Tree House" with Máire and Francis...

The UK Belleek Group members are extremely lucky to have such a range of fascinating venues that are provided for our get-togethers and meetings.



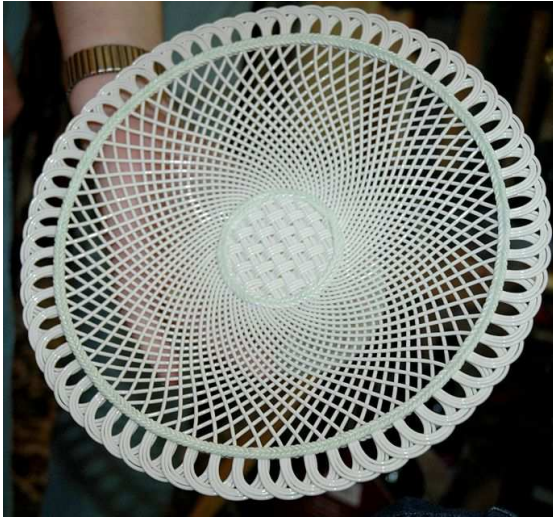
Máire and Francis came up with one of the best yet – their amazing and character filled "Punch Tree House". The "Punch Tree" is a giant Sequoia, or Wellingtonia as it was called to celebrate the Duke of Wellington's successful campaigns against Napoleon... indeed, this very tree (shown on the right) was planted in the early 19th century – one of few remaining now – as part of the commemoration of Wellington's victories.

By the way, the tree is a "punch tree" because it has very soft, thick bark – it doesn't hurt (much) if you punch it!

So you can see that Máire and Francis's house and garden is pretty special. It was also a perfect sunny summer's day. During the morning as the Belleekers arrived for the start of the weekend, we were all looking forward to yet another session of intense Belleek activity, socialising, relaxing and generally enjoying ourselves – we were certainly not disappointed. Special entertainment for our younger members

(and others) was provided by two goats (Katie and Pepsi) belonging to Máire and Francis....





This is a beautiful comport, made, not by Belleek, but "Celtic Weave" whose establishment is just outside Belleek Town on the main Ballyshannon road – it is especially inscribed for Máire... on what the Chinese would think a very auspicious date indeed!



Máire and Francis have specialised in collecting named or crested pieces of Belleek – these are some of the items from their collection.



As well as these pieces, they have some exquisite and very rare items – like the Echinus pepper pot shown below.



As well as Belleek, Francis has an abiding interest in philately. His stamp collections and reference books fill a huge purpose-built bookcase in the hallway. Máire and Francis also have an extensive collection of ruby glass and many items of ceramic interest. In particular, Francis presented a Coalport Loving Cup as a competition item to win a bottle of wine: why was the loving cup made? - that was the question!



A further assembly of pictures from our great day at "Punch Tree House" – the competition loving cup and Bev and some of the glass collection.

We also have Francis looking up a reference, members enjoying themselves in the garden and part of the fantastic spread for lunch. Someone even managed to get a picture of your photographer...



Competition
Why was the Coalport Loving Cup Produced?

...the answer to the competition: it was produced as a Coronation Cup 1901 (King Edward VII). An unusual Royal item!



Finally, the goats (Pepsi above, Katie below) and a view of the beautiful wooded garden with Paddy and Ollie



Saturday's Dinner at the Manhattan Ristorante Pizzeria Italiano in Farnborough



Well, guess what – Saturday evening and it's another one of our famous Belleek Dinners!

This one is at the Italian restaurant, just a short walk from our hotel base at the Farnborough Holiday Inn....



...and what is David doing with this candle in his dessert?



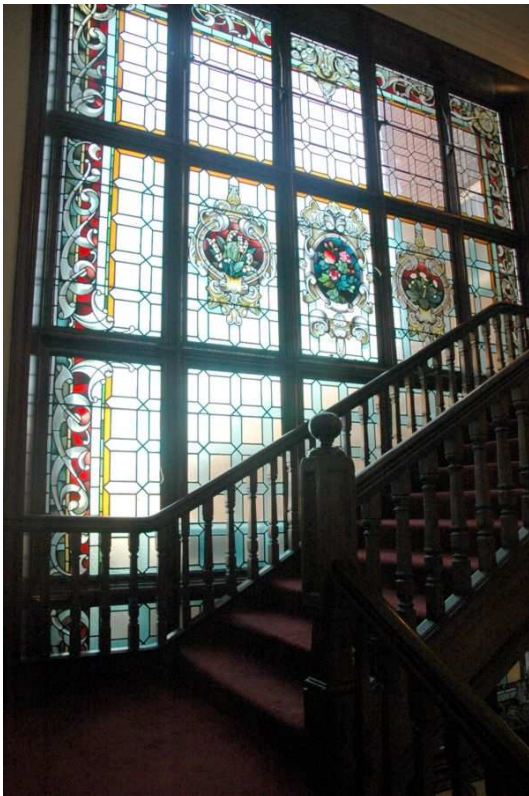
...but these desserts *do* look splendid!



...and yes, it looks like a great evening was had by all!



Sunday: Meeting at the Holiday Inn, Farnborough



Our Summer meeting and AGM was held at the magnificent building that is now the Holiday Inn in Farnborough. The picture above is the front of the Hotel: Eddie and Linda's vehicle with Belleek Logo can just be seen in the picture. The other picture (left) is a fantastic stained glass window which is just off the main foyer of the hotel on the main staircase. The hotel is an impressive Edwardian building and it made a comfortable and convenient place to stay and to hold our meeting.

As the morning meeting began with coffee and very nice snacks, there was frenzied activity – it was Silent Auction time again!

The Silent Auction

Here we have a first period beaker and a view of one of the tables of Belleek and some other items entered into this Summer's Silent Auction.

As usual, our auctioneer was Graham Houghton, ably assisted by Bev Marvell and her helper Georgina Reece.





(Left) This lot seems to have been offered for free – there were however no takers for it – only the contents of it....

This brooch (below) was much more interesting!

Here we have Colin and Simon (right) discussing some of the items in the sale... below right we have Eddie and Bev, also debating the merits of one of the items.



There was a very good entry of items into the auction but it seems that there are now fewer bids and we achieve fewer sales than in former years.

Later in the AGM, Graham proposed a change to the system of bidding for future sales so that the high bidder would pay only the amount needed to outbid the next highest bidder – the same system as used on Ebay.



Up until now we have operated a system where a bidder would pay the full amount that they had bid if they won the item, regardless of any lower bidders.

The change was later accepted by a vote in the AGM, so let's hope the Silent Auction will now go from strength to strength!

Here we have the stalwarts of the Silent Auction, Graham and Bev - and Graham advertising a beautifully decorated American Belleek vase to the assembled members.



While the activity of the Silent Auction continued in the background, the Chairman, David Reynolds, called the meeting to order and Linda Murphy stepped forward to make an important announcement – this was...

A Presentation to Jan



As Linda's story unfolded, in her words, speaking "as a Pottery Girl" – it dawned on Jan that he was in for something!

His gift from Group members was two cups and saucers...



...Thorn pattern and ring handle convolvulus (Limoges) pattern. These items were presented to him in recognition of Jan's hard work and good friendships over the many years that he had been the Group's chairman. Jan truly deserves this recognition and the group most warmly applauded him.



See Jan's response in this Newsletter

Other members followed on with announcements. Brian Russell (left) updated us on his ongoing research into R.W. Armstrong's family tree – he had discovered quite a bit of useful information during his latest trip to Ireland. A future Newsletter will contain Brian's updated information. Neville Maguire then updated us on the important McElroy Auction (see Newsletter 26/2).

Francis Kiddle introduced pieces of Crested ware from his collection and as supplied by other members. There were some extremely interesting and rare items there.

Here we have some of the fine crested ware that Francis presented...



... as an aside, the Hotel provided excellent rooms, snacks and a good meeting room, however they weren't so hot when it came to getting our name right on their announcement board...

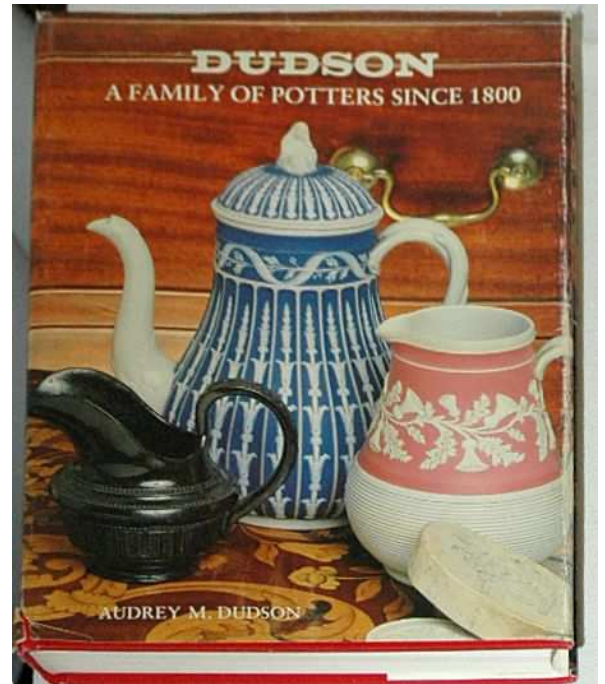


Alan Huggins' Talk



We all listened with rapt attention – as can be seen in this picture of Georgina and Julia (with Francis in the background) to the talk given by Alan Huggins on his experiences collecting what we would call “Jasperware” – his collection contains Wedgwood but his main interest is the ware with applied decoration made in Stoke on Trent by Dudson. His talk is described by Gina in more detail later in this Newsletter.

At this point, it is only necessary to say that the talk was extremely interesting and well received. Here is David presenting Alan and his wife Mary with a Belleek UK Convention Plate as a token of our appreciation. The book, below, is one of Alan's recommended texts.



Lunch followed: the setting was lovely, in a very pleasant and light conservatory-like space. Here we see Paul, Pat and Patrick enjoying the setting and the sunny day before their lunch.



Lunch was an excellent carvery... I found the desserts particularly good - it seems that Simon agreed with me: here we see him taking advantage of my being distracted by the photographer to attempt to snaffle one of my profiteroles!

After lunch, the Silent Auction came to a end – the time period for bidding came to a close. Graham and Bev went into a huddle to determine the results – meanwhile members continued their conversations until it was time for the more serious part of the get-together, the Group Annual General Meeting.



The Group AGM



The discussions and votes that make up the AGM are not reported in the Newsletter. Group Members will already have received the full minutes of the meeting. Gina acted as minutes secretary in the absence of a Group Administrator.

Here we see David, the Chairman and Francis, the treasurer during the AGM. Both David and Francis were re-elected unopposed and will continue in their roles.



One other item, reported on during the meeting was from Simon, our Webmaster. He reported that the take up of the new Website had been most encouraging since the changes that he had made to its format. Simon received the group's warm congratulations on the phenomenal progress that the website had made due to his sterling efforts.

Conclusion of the Day's Events

The AGM having been concluded, David turned to the concluding part of the meeting. It only remained to thank our very able and generous hosts, Máire and Francis Kiddle. David also thanked Bev for her efforts in looking after the group's records.



An Alternative to Wedgwood

A talk by Alan Huggins



Members of the Group were greeted by a splendid display of sprigged ware – mostly Blue & White – from Alan and Mary Huggins' collection. Alan said that they had a number of collections covering various fields but it was the first time he had addressed a group interested in ceramics. This particular presentation illustrated the links between Wedgwood and other potters, especially Dudson. Blue & White Jasper ware has been around for nearly 230 years – mostly a blue base with white sprigging. An early memory was that his Grandmother had a biscuit barrel in this ware which was now in their collection. They had brought a range of items to display - mostly ornamental rather than useful ware, and with neo-classical designs.

Alan explained that Josiah Wedgwood is credited with many things and he developed the stoneware body that he called Jasper. When Wedgwood died his pottery went into decline and in the 1820s their moulds for sprigging were sold off.

As a result other factories made similar products – and used

the name Jasper. In the 1850s and 60s things improved again at Wedgwood. Impressed Wedgwood marks with 3 letters usually identify the potter, the month, and the year – though not necessarily all 3 are impressed so exact dating can often be difficult.



DUDSON
36 L W
INCISED
667

BLUE DIP + WHITE
TWISTED ROPE HANDLE
'FERN & BELL'
JUG 1850s

A selection of wares from manufacturers who were in business from 1800 to 1825/30 were displayed. He said there were at least 50 or 60 potteries making stoneware at this time, examples being Spode, Turner, and Adams (who were in business until the early 20th century). Another good factory was Neale – but their ware was confusingly marked Wilson! Alan also showed a jug with a white pad, known as a chrysanthemum pad mark.

The Dudson pottery started about 1800 and they made figures and Jasper ware. Whilst Wedgwood was nearly always marked, Dudson was not, which can make identification difficult as the quality of the ware was so good.

A system of incised numbers on Dudson was introduced in the 1850s, the numbers relating to the sprig ranging from two digits up to 3000, although





not all numbers were used. Alan speculated that the reason other factories did not mark their Jasper ware was that they hoped it might be mistaken for Wedgwood.

There is a Dudson museum (in a bottle kiln) in Hanley, and members of the family are alive and involved in the business. Audrey Dudson has written two books (see list of relevant literature at the end) and Alan particularly recommended her “A Pottery Panorama” which is interesting because she writes about the impact of world events on the pottery industry.



In the 1890s there was another downturn in the Potteries and Dudson decided to run down Jasper and relief moulded ware and go into ware for catering – for railways, liners, hotels, etc. – for which they developed a vitreous stoneware. They are now a multi-national company still based in the Potteries though much of their manufacturing is done in Canada and the United States.

Literature:

Wedgwood (general) – many books are available, from the 19th century on.

“Wedgwood Jasper Ware” by Robin Reilly, 1989 and 1996

“English Dry-Bodied Stoneware: Wedgwood & Contemporary Manufacturers, 1774 – 1830” by Diana Edwards and Rodney Hampson, 1998

“Dudson: A Family of Potters since 1800” by Audrey Dudson, 1985

“A Pottery Panorama, Dudson Bicentenary 1800 – 2000” by Audrey Dudson 1999

Pictures in this article:

*Alan introducing his talk
Dudson Fern and Bluebell Jug
A Selection of Dudson ware
Dudson Figures and Scrolls Claret Jug
Alan with a cream coloured vase .*

Will the real William Henshall please stand up?

By Paul Tubb



As most of you know by now, I have an interest in census returns arising from the use I can make of them whilst pursuing our family history. My wife Pat suggested that we use our current subscription to ancestry.co.uk to look for information on the various people who went over to Belleek from Stoke in the early years of our pottery. This website allows searches to be made of all the UK census returns from 1861 to 1901 inclusive, through an index which, in spite of some quite peculiar spellings engendered by the indexers, should enable us to follow a person or family through these fifty years at ten year intervals, provided of course that they remain within England or Wales. This availability saves us from having to visit the Family Records Centre in London to wind on the microfilm in the hope of finding the entries we need, which is how we have found most of our family history records in the past. The index, even given its quirks and inaccuracies, enables the kind of searches we have made about the Stoke potters to be done much more quickly and inexpensively.

We used the list of names from Lady Marion Langham's book and the brief details of their lives that we could glean from that and other sources. We have not yet exhausted all such names and decided to firstly concentrate on the better known names such as Henshall, Gallimore, Slater, Poole etc. It is with the first of these that this article is concerned – there will be more about the others later. Suffice it to say that we have found some references to William Gallimore, Frederick Slater, Joshua Poole, Samuel Scarlett, William Bromley and William Henry Kerr which we will flesh out further for later articles.

We know that William Henshall was alive and living in Belleek at the time of the 1901 census with his wife Elizabeth. Also, their daughter Rose was living next door and married to the pottery kilnman, Patrick Montgomery, who was a native of Fermanagh. William gives his age as 55 and Rose hers as 30 and all three say they were born in England. The rubric with the census did not ask for anything more specific than just the country if a person was born outside of Ireland. These ages led us immediately to the 1871 census on the reasonable assumption that if Rose were born in England it was a pretty fair bet that both William and Elizabeth were there too.

And so it proved for, living at 15 Granville Place, Burslem in 1871, were William Henshall aged 25, Elizabeth Henshall aged 24 and their daughter Rose aged 6 months. William's occupation is given as a Parian Figure Maker and Elizabeth's as a Painter. [Who said Victorian mothers did not work?]. Rose was born in Cobridge and Elizabeth in Hanley but the surprise and the real genesis of this article is that William gives his place of birth as Wales.

On then, to the 1861 census, and there is no sign of a William Henshall of the right age in Staffordshire and born in Wales. There are two 'possibles' for being our William and of the right age. There is a William Henshall aged 16 living at New Church Row, Longton with his father, also William, a Potter and mother, Hannah, a China Painter. This William's occupation is given as a 'Potter Presser' and he is said to have been born in Tunstall. There is also another 16 year old William Henshall living as a boarder with his sister Catherine in the house of Ephraim Locker at Swan Passage, 2 Dale Street, Hanley. This William is described as a 'Working Potter' and born in Hanley. Ephraim is a 'Potter's Decorator of China' and his daughter and Catherine are said to be 'Potter's Burnishers of China'.

So, what about Wales? The 1861 census of Llanelli, Carmarthenshire lists yet another 16 year old William Henshall living at Pottery Place, Pottery Road and born in Llanelli. He lives with his widowed mother who is aged 39 and was born in Haverfordwest, an elder brother, Joseph, also born in Llanelli and a 'Potter Hollow Ware Presser' and three younger sisters the eldest of which was born in Burslem, Staffordshire. William's occupation is said to be 'Attendant in Pottery'.

Before leaving this family to concentrate on William I should record that the elder brother, Joseph, remained in Llanelli and working in the pottery through all the subsequent census returns. He married a local girl, Caroline, and they had eight children, the last two probably twins. By the 1891 and 1901 census returns a question was being asked about which languages each person could speak and all the family, apart from 19 year old Bessie, one of the twins, admitted to speaking both Welsh and English. Joseph, therefore, looks to have become thoroughly at home in South Wales which was, after all, his birthplace. In 1901 two of his children are also working in the pottery the others as teachers, a hairdresser and a manageress of a confectioners. His eldest son, Frederick, married at Llanelli in 1894 to a girl born in Tunstall.

Llanelli pottery was in production between 1839 and 1922 and, like many others including Belleek, seems to have gone to Stoke to recruit skilled workers. On the page of the census recording William are 25 names, seven of which are recorded as being born in the potteries. Included is the family of Jeremiah Shufflebotham – one of whose descendants, Samuel Shufflebotham, was an important influence in a brief renaissance of Llanelli's fortunes in its later years – and another family of Henshalls whose head, Thomas, may have been William's elder brother, but born in Burslem, and a 'Platemaker in Pottery'. This Thomas had married a local girl from Haverfordwest and is still in Pottery Place ten years later but with six children and a 92 year old grandmother all being supported on his pay as a Potter. By 1881 he and the family are back in Stoke and his occupation is given as 'Pottery Manager'. It is infuriating that none of the Stoke pottery workers give any indication of which pottery employed them. Thomas must have done quite well for himself because in the 1891 census his wife, Sarah, now a widow is living on her own means in Hanley with four of the children all involved in the pottery industry.

Added to these Henshalls there is a Henrietta Henshall aged 20 and born in Burslem lodging further along Pottery Place in the house of Mary Richardson who herself was born in Hanley. Henrietta is a 'Transferer in Pottery'. All these Henshalls are closely connected with the pottery works but George, aged 22 and living in

Furnace, Hengoed, Llanelli is listed as a labourer although also born in Burslem. In subsequent census returns, up to and including 1901, George and his family remain in Llanelli but there is no connection in any of their given occupations between this family and the pottery industry in the town. However their eldest son, John Henshall, did return to the Potteries and married a Burslem girl with whom he was living at the time of the 1881 census in Wolstanton giving his occupation as 'Oil Refiner'. I have not been able to find either John or his wife, Margaret, in any subsequent census.

I think it possible that George, Thomas and Henrietta are all siblings or other close relatives of William. Henrietta helping out another young widow from Stoke is probably quite understandable in the circumstances. All this is, of course, surmise but there is no doubt that the William Henshall, born in Wales and starting his pottery career in Llanelli is a candidate to be the same as the William who married Elizabeth and fathered Rose back in Stoke, said he was born in Wales in the 1871 census return and, eventually, died in Belleek.

Our William married Elizabeth Ferneyhough in the parish church of Wolstanton on November 14th 1864 and both bride and groom are said on the certificate to be living in Silverdale. William gives his father as John Henshall whose profession is Modeller and Elizabeth says her father is George Ferneyhough a Potter. This marriage certificate gives rise to three problems as we seek to reconstruct William's life – firstly why did they wait for six years to begin a family? It could be, of course, that during this time other children were indeed born but died before the next census in 1871 and so were not recorded thereon. There are at least eight Henshall children listed as dying at either 0 or 1 year old between 1865 and 1870 in the registration districts of Wolstanton and Stoke-on-Trent. Or there could have been children born elsewhere – Belleek perhaps? – who remained there when the parents returned to Stoke for Rose's birth in 1870. This latter is unlikely as there is no census evidence of any other children born to William and Elizabeth at this time.

The second and, potentially most difficult, problem arising from the marriage certificate is the name of William's father. None of the three William Henshalls we have been considering and born in 1845 had a father named John. The one born in Tunstall on February 9th 1845 had a father named William; The one born in Llanelli on March 10th 1845 had a father named Joseph; and the one born in Hanley on March 3rd 1845 took his name from his mother Lucy Henshall in the absence of any father being recorded.

Our third problem is that both William and Elizabeth are stated to be "of full age" which at that time meant "over 21". If born in 1845 William was certainly not of full age in November 1864, but maybe sufficiently close for a compliant curate to allow a little license. However Elizabeth consistently gives her age as one year younger than William in the census returns and is only 24 in the 1871 census, 34 in 1881 and 54 in 1901, so that she was most certainly not "of full age" at the time of their marriage. It is not uncommon for ages to be 'elasticated' for a variety of reasons, not always nefarious, so that perhaps we can allow the couple this lapse from strict rectitude. What is certain, however, is that on Ruth's birth certificate her mother is stated to be Elizabeth nee Ferneyhough.

It is difficult at this juncture to be sure which, if any, of the William Henshalls we have been discussing is 'our' William after whom the lovely Belleek basket is named and who, it is said, made most of the flowers on the famous centre piece for the Paris exhibition in 1901. He is buried at Mulleek in the Church of Ireland graveyard there. [Thanks to Brian Russell for this piece of information].



No. 46 Seaford Street, Shelton, Hanley – this is the only one of the many houses mentioned in Stoke which still exists!

The received wisdom about the potteries men who went over to Belleek is that few of them stayed for any great length of time, apart that is from William Henshall. However even he did not stay in Fermanagh initially because in the 1881 UK census he is back in Stoke at 46 Seaford Street, Shelton, Hanley with wife Elizabeth and three children – Rose aged 10 born in Burslem; Albert aged 8 and born in Ireland; William aged 5 and born in Burslem. A fourth child, Ernest, was born in Hanley the following year.

The father, our William, is a China Flowerer, which is exactly what we would expect from what is known of his career at Belleek but, clearly, he had been over to Ireland and returned to Stoke. Did he go in 1863 with the others from Goss? If so, he was back in Wolstanton to marry Elizabeth in November 1864. Was he, indeed, employed at Goss? The visit in the 1870s could not have lasted more than four years and the family may well have come back at the same sort of time as most of the other men. We know that William was back again in Belleek in 1888 and 1897 as he is recorded as being involved in a minor fracas in 1888 and listed as being among the 1897 workforce in John Cunningham's book "The Story of Belleek". He is probably there, too, in 1891 as there is no sign of him in the UK census for that year.

The one doubt is that William now claims to have been born in Hanley! But, he is still married to Elizabeth, the oldest child is Rose and he has spent some time in Ireland. As noted earlier, in the 1901 census of Belleek he says he was born in England.

One thing which seems clear is that skilled workers were able to and encouraged by rival employers to move around the country quite widely. Also, as evidenced in other industries such as the railways at Swindon, Cadbury's at Bourneville and Lever Bros at Port Sunlight, employers built housing for their workforce – I feel fairly sure that Pottery Place and Pottery Road were provided by Llanelli Pottery just as English and Irish Row were provided in Belleek. This was very attractive to workers with young families and a great aid to recruitment. At the same time people did not have to make lifelong and irrevocable decisions, such as those made by emigrants to America or Australia, as travel around the UK became possible with the spread of the railways in mid Victorian times. Henshall clearly took his young family to and from Ireland a number of times as work prospects changed.

The question remains as to which of the 16 year old William Henshalls is our man. I think it is unlikely to be the one who was a Pottery Presser as he is listed in the 1871 census as still a Pottery Presser and married to Alice. If it is the one born in Wales it fits up to the 1881 census from which point his birth place is always England and even as specific as Hanley. If it is the one whose trade in 1861 was that of a Working Potter, why would he say he was born in Wales at the 1871 census?

At this juncture, in order to throw some light onto the conundrum, we decided to work a little laterally and concentrated on another 'fact' from the 1861 census return, namely that the William who called himself a 'working potter' had a sister named Catherine and just a couple of years older than himself. From the International Genealogical Index [IGI] maintained by the Church of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City and available on the internet we discovered a baptism for Catherine in Hanley on April 5th 1843 giving her parents as John Henshall and Jane. Elated at the father being John we looked for William's baptism reference but, sadly, no luck. Wherever or if ever it had occurred it has not yet been recorded among all the parish and other registers so far transcribed in the IGI. But, on the index of civil registrations we did find a marriage for John Henshaw and Jane Blackwell in the Stoke on Trent registration district in the last quarter of 1842. The certificate gives the date of their marriage as October 10th 1842 and the place as Hanley Chapel in the parish of Stoke. Both John and Jane give their residence simply as Hanley and John styles himself as a Potter. So, too, according to the certificate is his father, also a John, whilst Jane's father, Ephraim, is a Painter.

Still thinking laterally we then looked in the registration indexes for possible further William Henshalls with birth references in and around 1845 and came across the registration of one William Blackwell Henshaw at Stoke on Trent in the final quarter of 1845. Given that things were written down by clerks in 'as heard' condition in the middle of the nineteenth century Henshall and Henshaw are sufficiently close when spoken for us to accept that this is probably our man. His birth certificate shows him born on September 20th 1845 with father, John, a Modeller and mother Jane nee Blackwell. The birth took place at Swan Street, Hanley.

In his favour is that the father is named John and is a potters modeller; William is born in Hanley as he says on all but the 1871 census return; He himself is a 'working potter' in 1861 as we might expect from one of those recruited to go to Belleek a few years later. In no official document later in his life does he make any reference to his given middle name of Blackwell. Did he, perhaps, fall out with his mother's family or did he see it as an unnecessary affectation – he gave none of his own children more than a single first name. We shall probably never know.

In 1861, then, he is with his sister in the household of Ephraim Locker at Swan Passage, 2 Dale Street, Hanley and his father and mother were living at 12 Charles Street, Hanley with further children Ephraim, aged 9 [probably named for Jane's father]; Herbert aged 7; Jane aged 3 and Arthur aged 1. In 1871 the parents are still at 12 Charles Street but now have with them another child, John aged 23, a confectioner, with his wife, Annie and their own children, Jane aged 13, a potter's paintress; Arthur aged 10 and a part time Potter; Anne a scholar aged 6 and Emily also a scholar and aged 4. This son, John, we have found in the 1861 census as an apprentice Baker lodging at 14 Parliament Row, Hanley. Ephraim has not yet been found in the 1871 census but his brother Herbert is lodging at 26 George Street, Hanley aged 17 and gives his occupation as that of Potter.

One interesting sidelight on all this is that the father, John, consistently gives his place of birth as being Swansea, South Wales!! We have not been able to find any references to that birth, it would, after all, have occurred before the advent of civil registration in 1837 but it raises the intriguing possibility that William's father may have learnt his trade of modelling in the Glamorgan pottery and decided, when things closed down there, not to go to Llanelli but to return to Stoke to continue his career. Or he was working for the Cambrian pottery and was 'poached' back to Stoke as a young modeller of promise. Some further delving into archives will be needed.

I have learnt from Keith and Tina Treharne that, although the Llanelli pottery produced mainly earthenware pieces, they did produce a few lithophanes almost certainly between 1839 and 1855 and the only known porcelain products of the factory. Tina raises the intriguing prospect that John may have known of these products and could, conceivably, have introduced William to the idea which he, in turn, introduced into Belleek later in his life. It may be yet another possible indication of the inter-connection and cross fertilisation which went on amongst the workers and managers of the various pottery manufacturers of mid Victorian times.

Synopsis of William Henshall's life.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 1844/45 | Born - September 20 th 1845 at Swan Street, Hanley, as William Blackwell Henshaw, son of John. |
| 1861 | A 'working potter' living in Hanley with his sister, Catherine. |
| 1864 | Marries Elizabeth Ferneyhough at Wolstanton - November 14 th |
| 1870 | Birth of Rose at 15 Granville Place; Burslem - December 6 th |
| 1871 | Still at 15 Granville Place [the census] with Elizabeth and Rose. |
| 1872/73 | Living in Ireland at birth of son, Albert. |
| 1875/76 | Living in Stoke on Trent area at birth of son, William. |
| 1881 | Living at 46 Seaford Street, Shelton with Elizabeth and 3 children. |
| 1882 | Still in Stoke on Trent area at birth of son, Ernest. |
| 1888 | Engaged in fracas at Belleek during a strike, which he did not support. |
| 1897 | Listed among Belleek workers. |
| 1897 | Rose marries Patrick Montgomery. |
| 1901 | Living in Belleek with Elizabeth. [Rose next door]. |
| 1902 | Dies at Belleek and buried at Mulleek. |
| 1911 | Rose still in Belleek – no children to the marriage. |

Newsletter Snippets

Seen in the Guardian on 12 September:

Moorcroft have insured the life of their Designer Emma Bossons for £1.5 million. Her work accounts for 40% of Moorcroft's £6 million annual sales. Their Chairman, Hugh Edwards, described her as "a phenomenon".



Emma Bossons

Belleek on the Box:

On "Bargain Hunt" recently the Red Team bought a Neptune cup, saucer, and plate with a green tint. The Expert, David Barby, pointed out the shell feet and coral handle and described the pieces as 'delicate' and 'superb'. He held them up to the light to show how fine they were. The Auctioneer at G.A. Key in Aylsham, Norfolk said he could sell any amount of Belleek there, and estimated the 3 pieces at £30 – 40. The Red Team had paid £40, and in the sale the opening bid was £20 and they sold for £42.

Painting of Belleek:

Spotted on the Internet by Brian Scott's eagle eye –

"The Irish Jug"

Copyright Bonhams 1793 Ltd.

This lovely painting of an Aberdeen Jug is by the Scottish artist Anne Redpath (1895 – 1965) who has been described as one of Scotland's best known and most loved painters.

Her paintings can be seen in the Tate, Royal Academy, Aberdeen Art Gallery, and Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. This one was sold last year by Bonhams and is currently on sale at a gallery in London's Bond Street.

- Gina Kelland



The Dublin and Worcester Connection

William Henry Kerr, William Dargan and the Development of the Belleek Pottery.

By Chris Marvell

Introduction

This article is an attempt to put the foundation and development of the Belleek Pottery into its proper historical context. In particular it describes the efforts of two Irishmen, William Henry Kerr and William Dargan.

Belleek Pottery was not an accidental creation, although parts of its story concerning fortuitous events have been over-emphasised by some previous accounts of its foundation – chance meetings and lucky finds have been said to play the prominent parts in its history before the Pottery actually started production. This article's main proposition is that Belleek Pottery was conceived, founded and developed due to a tremendous amount of hard and dedicated work by a highly motivated and determined group of Irish entrepreneurs. The principal in all this was Robert Williams Armstrong. He was funded almost entirely by David McBirney, who was the owner and only shareholder in the company, and the venture was located in Belleek because John Caldwell Bloomfield gave his land, moral support and resources from his estate. These three are the main players in the story, but there is no doubt that the contributions of others were important, even vital, in making it all happen. So, as well as these three, other prominent Irishmen (Kerr and Dargan among them) worked and planned toward the success of the venture over a long period of time. At the earliest stages of the "Belleek Project", as I shall call it, the contributions of William Henry Kerr were essential and the famous engineer and philanthropist, William Dargan, helped the project and maintained a long term interest in it, giving moral support, exercising influence in high places and even providing financial assistance.

The Belleek Pottery was a wholly Irish project, indeed one might go as far as saying that the foremost reason for its creation was the Honour of Ireland. The secondary reason was to achieve artistic recognition for its creations; third came the employment and education of the inhabitants of Belleek Town and coming in a distant fourth was the motivation of commercial success – making money for the founders and shareholders was (although fervently desired) emphatically *not* the reason the pottery was created. Even McBirney, who one might suspect had the most reason to complain about the lack of commercial success, since he essentially funded the whole thing, could glory in the artistic and patriotic success of the venture.

So this article sets out the events and circumstances that led to the conception, foundation and development of the Belleek Pottery, with emphasis given to the previously largely unrecognised contributions of William Henry Kerr and William Dargan. The artistic, commercial and historical background, the groundswell of Irish pride and the technical developments that came together to make Belleek Pottery a realistic proposition are discussed. Finally, the article attempts to put a more complete and historically accurate Belleek Story together although many gaps in this account still remain.

The article is titled "The Worcester and Dublin Connection" because all of the principals involved either lived, worked or otherwise had a significant connection with the two Cities. Important meetings took place there. Dublin was the site of the pivotal 1853 Great Exhibition and perhaps even more than today (after Irish independence and partition) the centre in Ireland for artistic and commercial endeavour. Worcester was crucially the site of the famous Porcelain Works which, under William Henry Kerr's control, concentrated together the Irish talent in the decade before Belleek was founded.

The article is in three parts:

- 1. The Roots of Belleek – Dublin and Worcester Connections before the Foundation of the Pottery.**
- 2. The Foundation of Belleek Pottery – Fact and Fiction.**
- 3. W.H. Kerr and Belleek Pottery 1862-1883 - Success and Fulfilment of the "Grand Plan" but Decline and Death for the Founders.**

Part 1. The Roots of Belleek

Dublin and Worcester Connections before the Foundation of the Pottery

W.H. Kerr – his early life in Dublin

Let's begin with one of the unsung heroes of the Belleek Story. William Henry Kerr was born in Dublin in 1823, the eldest son of James Kerr. The Kerr family traced its origins to County Tyrone.

James Kerr had a brother, Joseph and it was Joseph who had opened a china shop at 110 Capel Street in Dublin in 1819. James Kerr joined his brother in business at the china shop in 1820. When Joseph Kerr died in 1823, the year of William Henry's birth, James Kerr became the sole owner of the business.

In 1840 William Henry Kerr, at the age of 17, joined his father at the china retailers at 110 and 111 Capel Street, which then traded as James Kerr and Son.



William Henry Kerr 1823-1879

James Kerr and his son William Henry prospered. In 1844, as freemen of Dublin, both James and William Henry, then aged 21 are listed as eligible for jury duty as follows:

The special jury panel for 1844 as delivered by David Charles LATOUCHE, Esq, AB High Sheriff of Dublin this evening, 4th January 1844.

334	KERR James, 110 and 111 Capel street, china dealer
337	KERR Wm Hen, 110 and 111 Capel street, china dealer

Just after this date, the shop moved to new, much larger premises, just along the road, at 114-115 Capel Street. By now James Kerr and Son were the major representative in Ireland of the Worcester Porcelain Company then owned and operated by Walter Chamberlain. In the 1850 issue of Shaw's Directory of Dublin (right), it was reported:

Kerr, James and Sons, 114-115 Capel St and 5-6 Anglesea Row (china, glass, lamp and oil merchants)

Kerr, James, 114-115 Capel St and Larch Hill, Santry (merchant)

Kerr, James, 4 Anglesea Row (china stores)

Kerr, W.H., 114-115 Capel St and 9 Windsor terrace, Kingstown (occup not listed)

JAMES KERR & SON,
LAMP & OIL MERCHANTS

TO
His Excellency the EARL OF CLARENDON,

Begs to draw the attention of the public to their extensive Stock of the following Oils, which are of the purest and best qualities, and which they are enabled to sell to large purchasers for cash, at a very small profit, being cash purchasers themselves, viz. :-

SPERM OLIVE PATENT SOLAR ARGAND LARD	PALE SEAL SOUTH SEA REFINED DO. PALE REFINED RAPE. GROUND NUT, and REFINED OILS.
--	--

OFFICE—114 and 115, CAPEL-STREET, and STORES—5 and 6, ANGLESEA-ROW, DUBLIN
N.B.—Railways and other Companies supplied on Liberal Terms.

So, in this 1850 directory (above), William Henry Kerr was still listed as living in a suburb of Dublin (9 Windsor Terrace, Kingstown), although his occupation was not listed. His father, James, had been highly successful, and by now owned a number of businesses in Dublin. By 1850, the china retailing business had expanded to include other merchandise and retailing now took place from at least these three Dublin locations.

This advertisement (left) shows that china retailing was not the only venture that Kerr and Son undertook.

The significance of the Kingstown address – Dargan, Kerr and McBirney

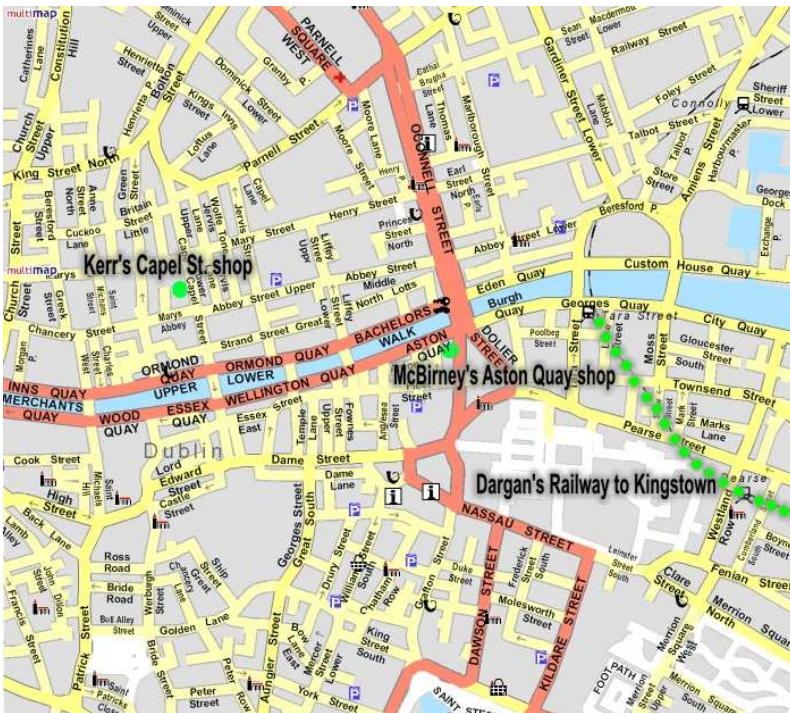
To understand some of the importance of Dublin as a centre of business and Irish life, and to introduce two more of the important characters in this story, it is worth looking at the geographical factors of Dublin in the 1840's.

Kerr's address is given as **Kingstown**. Kingstown, originally called Dunleary, was at one time a fishing village. But the mouth of the River Liffey became choked with sandbanks that made the approach to Dublin very difficult for vessels of any size. Therefore a harbour was built by the engineer Rennie, who began work in 1816, and the place was renamed Kingstown when George IV visited Ireland in 1821.

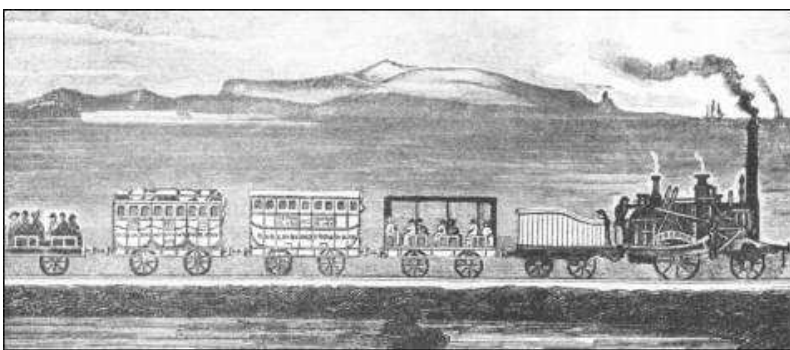


So Kingstown is the old name for Dun Laoghaire and was from 1821 (as it is now) one of Dublin's ports and a major commercial district. Nine Windsor Terrace, where W.H. Kerr lived, still exists: it is a large three storey town house in a prominent position on the sea front. Kingstown was also the destination of Ireland's first railway (from central Dublin), designed and constructed by the great Irish engineer, William Dargan, and opened in 1834. William Dargan is another neglected hero in the Belleek Story, we will hear a great deal more of him later.

The coming of the railway to Dublin facilitated the development of merchants and businesses in the area. Crucially, it made it possible for the new, increasingly wealthy class of businessmen to live in comfort in the new Victorian suburbs of Dublin and have their place of work in central Dublin. It was the start of the "commuter age"! So Kerr could live in Kingstown and work in Dublin at his father's businesses courtesy of Dargan's new railway.



Less than two miles South East of Kerr's house, in the district of Dalkey, David McBirney (1804-1882) had his home. Dalkey in Victorian times became a high class residential district which it remains today. McBirney lived on Glenageary Road, also close to Dargan's Railway. His main retailing business was on Aston Quay (McBirney and Collis, on the South bank of the Liffey in Central Dublin, the large shop still exists but is now a "Saver Centre", having also been a Virgin Megastore in recent years). As well as this venture, McBirney had other interests including a directorship of the Dublin-Kingstown-Dalkey railway – William Dargan was, not surprisingly also a director of this concern. By all accounts, McBirney was a highly successful businessman., but he wasn't quite in William Dargan's league, Dargan was more like an Irish version of Brunel! The extension to Dalkey of the Dublin to Kingstown line had been accomplished by Dargan's novel "Atmospheric Railway", this was completed in 1843 - so McBirney too was able to live in this new high class Victorian suburb and work in central Dublin.



Pictures on this page: Map of Dublin showing Kingstown and Dalkey. Detailed map of Central Dublin. The name above the entrance of McBirney's shop at Aston Quay (courtesy of Brian Russell). The first train on the Dublin-Kingstown Railway in 1834

William Dargan also contributed to Belleek Pottery's founding although mostly in an indirect way. He did more than anyone to set the scene that would allow others to flourish This gives some of his background.

The engineer, entrepreneur and philanthropist William Dargan (1799-1867) became a national character: the "prompt, sagacious and far-seeing man" was held in high esteem by all. He was nicknamed "The work-man's friend", and was sought out by royalty and highly respected by the newly developing class of businessmen, Kerr and McBirney among them. Another appellation for him was: "The man with his hand in his pocket". The first nickname he well merited by the "justice and wise liberality of his dealings with the artisan class;" the second, while it originated in E.J. Jones' celebrated statue (in which he is represented in that attitude) and perpetuated by a not infelicitous poem, is indicative of his readiness to spend his money freely when his judgment or his patriotism suggested it.

Dargan, having made his name initially working with Thomas Telford on the construction of the London to Holyhead road (which included Telford's famous bridge across the Menai Straits), was a famous and wealthy man by the mid 1840's and (as we will see later) was single-handedly responsible for promoting, organising and funding the 1853 Dublin Exhibition. He was a great patron of the arts and later also founded and provided money for the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin – the Gallery taking Dargan's personal art collection as the basis of the Irish national collection – the statue of him stands outside the National Gallery to this day.

Dargan's house, Mount Anville, which he had built in 1849 in a similar Italianate style to Prince Albert's Osborne House, was where Queen Victoria and Prince Albert arrived to see him in 1853 during their official visit to his Great Dublin Exhibition. Mount Anville is to the South of Dublin, just West of Kingstown. It still exists today and has, since 1865, been the Dublin Sacred Heart Convent secondary day school.

So, William Dargan is a link, by his railway directorship to David McBirney. Dargan is also a link (by the 1853 Dublin Exhibition) to Kerr - to commemorate this, Kerr at Worcester even produced a parian bust of him. Modelled by Dargan's friend, the sculptor E.J. Jones and made the fine plate (illustrated left) as part of a gift and tribute to him.

To bring in another of the Belleek Pottery principals: John Caldwell Bloomfield, the landowner of the Castle Caldwell Estate at Belleek, also knew Dargan well, although it is not known when they first met. Bloomfield later wrote that he considered Dargan to be his good friend.

Two highly important issues to the Belleek Pottery would later involve William Dargan: the first of these was the crucial issue of finding the finance for the Pottery in the first place - it was in fact Dargan who Bloomfield had originally approached for financial help when the Belleek Pottery project was mooted in the mid 1850's, well before David McBirney agreed to provide all the necessary capital.

The second issue involved getting the rail link to Belleek - again it was Dargan who Bloomfield and McBirney had to call upon to step in and rescue the construction of the vital (to Belleek Pottery) Enniskillen – Belleek – Bundoran railway. Dargan agreed to this request, providing money from his own personal fortune, when it had seemed likely that the vital line would not be completed in spite of Bloomfield and McBirney's own considerable investments and strenuous efforts. The line finally opened in June 1866.

So, Bloomfield considered Dargan to be a good friend – see Bloomfield's quotation later in this article – and Dargan was held up as an example of a great Irish patriot and philanthropist that Bloomfield, McBirney and Kerr clearly each aspired to emulate, although perhaps in different ways. At the time of the 1853 Exhibition, William Dargan was hailed as Ireland's "Railway King" and as one of the foremost personalities in the whole British Isles, not just Ireland.

This is jumping ahead: we have now introduced most of the main characters of the Belleek Story, but back in 1846, Kerr had an important new element to his life in addition to working at his father's china retailing business in Dublin. By 1846 he was spending time in Worcester as well as Dublin – he was now doing work for the Chamberlains Worcester Company, over and above acting as their Irish retail distributor.



E.J. Jones' Statue of Dargan outside Ireland's National Gallery



WORCESTER

143
A Kerr & Binns, Worcester Dessert Plate
1852-1862

finely painted in the centre with a view of Mount Anville, near Dublin, within a pierced turquoise ground border richly gilt and reserved with panels of instruments and three grisaille portraits titled 'Sarsfield', 'Moore' and 'Brian Boroihue', printed circle mark, puce painted title 'Mount Anville near Dublin. The residence of Will^m Dargan Esq.'. 23.75cm; 9 1/2 in, very minor stress cracks to rim, with a leather covered case, distressed (2)

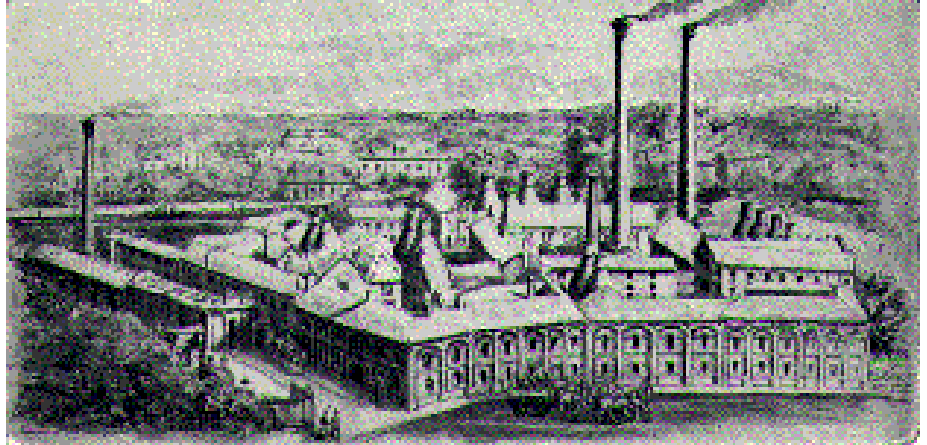
W.H.Kerr of Dublin was taken into the ailing Worcester company as a partner in 1850 and in 1852 he formed a new company in partnership with Richard W.Binns. The company exhibited at the Dublin exhibition in 1853, and numerous sales of high quality ware resulted. Kerr returned to Ireland in 1862 and the company was subsequently re-named the Royal Worcester Porcelain Co., a firm which continues today. £300-400

Very high quality Kerr and Binns plate illustrating William Dargan's house, Mount Anville in South Dublin. Sold in Sotheby's Irish Sale 22nd May 1997 for £747. This plate was probably part of a service given to Dargan by Kerr in recognition of Dargan's efforts in setting up the 1853 Exhibition.

Kerr's association with Chamberlain's of Worcester

After ten successful years with the family business, in 1850, William Henry Kerr finally left his father's firm to live in Worcester and work full time at the Worcester Porcelain Company, then controlled by Walter Chamberlain.

The reasons behind this important move are simple. Kerr had a ready-made route into the Chamberlain Company not only because of his family firm's success as Chamberlain's Irish representatives, but also because he had, four years previously on 7th September 1846, married Caroline Louisa Stone, daughter of Caroline Sarah Chamberlain and John Stone. Caroline Sarah was Walter Chamberlain's sister.



The Chamberlains Severn Street Factory, Worcester, in the late 1840's – Interestingly this shows the new showroom, designed by R.W. Armstrong which was built before Kerr took control of the company.

It is clear that being married to Walter Chamberlain's niece was only one reason why Kerr quickly rose to prominence at Chamberlains: his expertise in the china retailing business was highly valued and he had already been heavily involved with Chamberlains on behalf of James Kerr and Son, who were (as already mentioned) the principal retailers of Worcester porcelain in Ireland. Kerr had impressive contacts from working in Dublin, he was young and enthusiastic whereas Walter Chamberlain was old, in poor health and it seems basically unable to cope with the demands of running a modern porcelain manufacturing business.

Registration District Worcester									
1846. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church									
in the Parish of St Peter the Great in the County of Worcester									
No.	(1) When married	(2) Name and Surname	(3) Age	(4) Condition	(5) Rank or profession	(6) Residence at the time of marriage	(7) Father's name and surname	(8) Rank or profession of father	
302	September 7 th	William Henry Kerr	Full age	Bachelor	Merchant	Kingstown County of Dublin Both Row	James Kerr	Merchant	
		Caroline Louisa Stone	Full age	Spinster	—	—	John Stone	Maltster	
Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by me									
This marriage was solemnized between us, William Henry Kerr in the presence of us, John Stone, George James Alexander Walker, F. J. Lilly, Emily Walker, H.A. Jessop, Agnes Chamberlain Thos Walker off Min									

Copy of William Henry and Caroline Louisa Kerr's Marriage Certificate – they were married in Worcester on 7th September 1846.

As background, we need to understand some of the previous history of porcelain manufacture in Worcester. From 1840 until 1850, Walter Chamberlain had been in control of the Chamberlains Worcester Porcelain Factory along with a partner, John Lilly. William Henry Kerr officially became part of the Chamberlains company in 1850 when John Lilly retired and Walter Chamberlain and Frederick Lilly, John Lilly's son, invited him to enter a partnership with them. For a short period, the business operated as "Chamberlain, Lilly and Kerr", but within a year the works came under William Henry Kerr's sole control when he was appointed Managing Director. Soon after his appointment, in 1851, Kerr asked another Irishman, born in Dublin, then living in England, Richard William Binns (1819-1900), to join him at the firm as Art Director. Binns arrived at the Worcester factory in 1851. In 1850, the most important Belleek founder, Robert Williams Armstrong, a good friend of Kerr's was also on hand – he was then already working for Kerr and had designed the first new building for the Severn Street Factory.

So, by 1851, William Henry Kerr was married, living in Worcester and was Managing Director of an Important Porcelain Manufacturer. The 1851 Census records his address as "Elm Villa" in the Red Hill district of Worcester (Parish of St. Peter's). He lived there with his wife, Caroline Louisa and two servants. He now gave his profession as "China Manufacturer". It appears that he had arrived at this happy state by hard work, excellent connections, intelligence, enthusiasm and luck – the World now lay at his feet... we shall now discover what he did next.

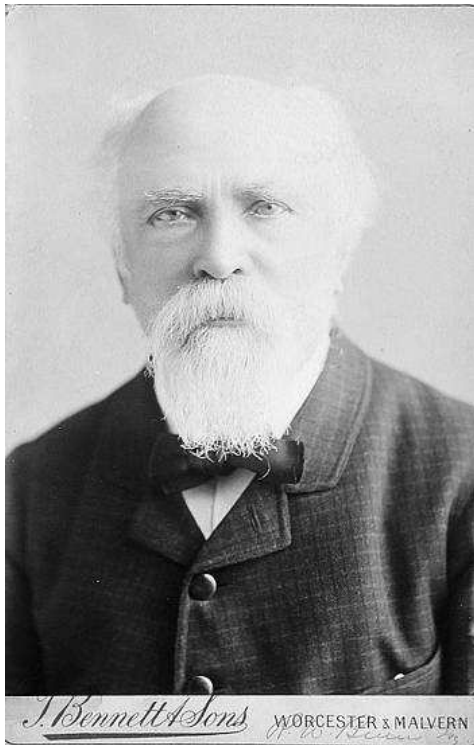
The Poor State of the Chamberlains Company in 1851

Now I would like to give some more details of the plight of the Porcelain Manufactory in Worcester which faced Kerr when he was given responsibility there.

In 1850, when Kerr became Managing Director, the business of the Chamberlain Company was not healthy, the Severn Street Factory was in the slow process of reconstruction following a serious fire; furthermore, there was a legacy at Chamberlains at that time of a lack of new innovative designs and declining sales. Chamberlains, although they had been a highly successful company for a long time, had become somewhat guilty of complacency and had been living on their reputation for fine china of the "old style" since well before their merger with Flight, Barr and Barr in 1840. It was clearly important to Kerr that the fortunes of the Worcester Company were revived. Kerr represented an injection of "new blood" when he became M.D., he was, after all, only 27 years old. The failing health of Walter Chamberlain was also an issue. In a very real sense, the action of putting Kerr in control was a determined attempt to rescue the failing company: Kerr was the right man at the right time

The Great Exhibition of 1851 – a disaster for Worcester

In the first year after Kerr took control of the Chamberlain Company, if anything, the situation got worse. This was 1851 and the year of the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. Although Kerr and Binns had been experimenting with new china bodies and shapes, this had not yet been successful and no new ware was available in 1851. Chamberlains therefore exhibited largely "traditional china" which was similar to ware that the company had been making since well before the Flight, Barr and Barr merger – very fine quality but totally lacking in innovation: the jury at the Great Exhibition was "*barely complimentary about any of their products and offered only slight praise for their reticulated porcelain which was not at all original.*" This was the final straw for Walter Chamberlain and he retired from the company shortly after the Exhibition. Their major rivals at the time, Minton and Copeland both exhibited highly innovative ware: Parian! William Taylor Copeland and Herbert Minton had been chosen by their fellow potters to represent the whole pottery industry at the meetings called by Prince Albert to organise the Great Exhibition, so they had a huge political advantage over Kerr and the Chamberlains Company. At the Exhibition (much to William Taylor (Alderman) Copeland's chagrin) Minton's were awarded the highest honour for their Parian ware. Both Minton and Copeland, however, received very favourable publicity from the 1851 exhibition, especially because Queen Victoria herself (with Prince Albert's knowledgeable guidance) particularly liked the new ware. The Queen had been escorted to view the ceramics exhibits by Herbert Minton. The Queen had admired and immediately ordered several Minton Parian-based services and other decorative items which of course Minton's company was only too happy to supply. Copeland also did very well at the Exhibition, the Queen returning with several examples of their new Parian ware too.



The Kerr and Binns Worcester Porcelain Company

Following Walter Chamberlain's bowing out, in 1852 the old Chamberlains firm was bought outright by Kerr and was then operated as W.H. Kerr and Co. As we shall see, this feat of financing may not have been as prodigious as might at first be thought, as the old Chamberlains company was by then in dire straits. It also seems that John Stone, Kerr's father in law, retained ownership of much of the land and buildings comprising the Worcester Porcelain Works. Within a year, the company became generally known as "Kerr and Binns", Kerr having made Binns a full partner in the venture, although the official company name remained W.H. Kerr and Co..

On gaining full control of the company, in 1852, Kerr expanded his programme of rebuilding and expansion, he also bought completely new machinery and thoroughly modernised the production process at the old Chamberlains Severn Street factory. As a matter of pride and indeed sound business sense, Kerr now *had* to innovate, or he would be left further behind by his rivals. Parian was the fashion of the day, so Parian was what he had to have! To succeed in this aim, Kerr intended to rely on the talents of his new partner, Richard Binns. It is clear that Kerr's own skills were those of an organiser and facilitator, he was excellent at pulling strings and making important contacts. He also had the great quality of recognising talent in others and gathering together the people he needed to make things work. Armstrong and Binns were two of these people.

A much later photograph of Richard William Binns, probably c. 1890

Kerr and Binns Worcester Marks

The period of Worcester Manufacture that we refer to as “Kerr and Binns” is woefully undocumented for such an important period in Worcester Porcelain’s history: the items they produced and even the system of marks they used are relatively obscure. Over the entire period 1852-1862, Kerr and Binns used the “standard” Worcester mark, which is four curly “W’s” interlaced in a circle with the Worcester crescent and 51 (for 1751, the year Dr John Wall founded the original Worcester Porcelain Company). This “W’s” mark was used for most “standard” production, useful ware and for most of the ware still in production from Chamberlain’s days. Two other marks were regularly used by Kerr and Binns. The first is the normal “K&B” mark: the gothic script letters “K & B” in a shield with a banner diagonally across it; the word “Worcester” is written on the banner and a date year is usually included across the middle of the shield (e.g. 1862 in this case). Added to this mark, for special artist decorated ware, the initials of the artist may also be included in the bottom left quadrant of the shield (e.g. T.B. for Thomas Bott). The second “special” mark is the W.H. Kerr mark: this is the upper case print: “W.H. KERR & Co.” and “WORCESTER” written in a circle; this is outlined by an outer and inner circle, within the inner circle is a Royal Crown: this mark was used over the entire 1852-1862 period, being found mainly (in the author’s experience) on Parian figures. By no means all Kerr and Binns Parian figures are marked, but if marked, the W.H. Kerr and Co. mark usually seems to have been used in preference to the K & B shield. The “W.H. Kerr and Co.” mark reflects that this is the proper name of the business. Other marks were used for specific new ware introduced by Kerr and Binns like this “Royal Vitrified China”.



W.H. Kerr and Co./ Kerr and Binns marks 1852-1862

Kerr and Binns, or just Kerr?

A good deal of misinformation seems to exist in the printed literature regarding the use of these marks. One author states that the K&B mark was only used after 1857 – this is incorrect: in the author’s experience, all three “general” marks were used over the entire 1852 to 1862 period, but may have been used for different types of ware. Even in 1862, in Cassell’s “Illustrated Exhibitor” which described that year’s London International Exhibition, a list of prizewinners has the Worcester Company described as “W.H. Kerr and Co”, even though this was right at the end of the period of the Kerr and Binns partnership.

Retailer’s, Decorator’s or Manufacturer’s Mark?

We should not confuse the “W.H. Kerr and Co. Worcester” mark with the “James Kerr, Dublin”, “James Kerr and Son, Dublin”, or “Kerr, Dublin and Worcester” marks, as these are *retailer’s* marks used by the Kerr family china business in Dublin and do not signify the manufacturer of the ware at all – it may or may not be Worcester. Before the mid 1840’s, retailers held powerful sway over the manufacturers they represented and (perhaps in an attempt to protect their sources) even actively deterred manufacturers from marking their own wares – it was common practice for *only* the retailer’s mark to be used – if the manufacturer included any mark at all, it was likely to be in a coded form. As an example, before 1851 Minton used an “Ermine Mark” or crossed L’s (a facsimile of the Sevres mark) with a small “m”, rather than the clear name “Minton”; sometimes only a pattern number was used.



Examples of Retailer’s marks (with and without the maker’s mark): **Derby** plate sold by Richard Briggs (left), two **Minton** items, sold by W.P. & G. Phillips and Thomas Goode & Co. (centre) – note the Phillips piece, from the 1840’s does not even mention Minton - and the **Belleek** sold by Robinson and Cleaver (right), finally a Spode plate from the 1840’s retailed by James Kerr and Son – again no mention of the manufacturer, Spode!

Towards the end of the 1840’s, with the artistic value of manufacturers’ products being recognised, and with the strong encouragement of leaders of the artistic

establishment such as Henry Cole, most manufacturers started marking their ware clearly, with the retailer’s mark being added by the manufacturer at the retailer’s request (such as Robinson and Cleaver - Belfast, Thomas Goode & Co. South Audley St. London or indeed James Kerr and Son - Dublin). Another mark, very seldom seen is “W.H. KERR, DUBLIN” which is found on ware *decorated* in Dublin under Kerr’s control in the 1870’s: the blanks used were usually made by Royal Worcester..

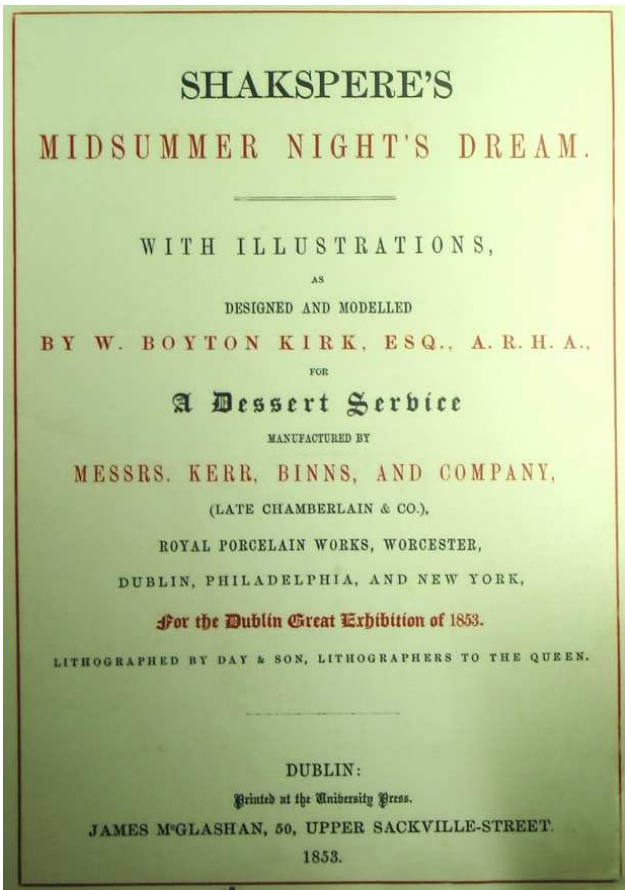
William Boyton Kirk and the “Dublin” Shakespeare Service

One more person of significance to the Belleek story now comes onto the scene. In 1853, Kerr and Binns commissioned another Irishman, William Boyton Kirk (1824-1900) to design and model the figures for a complete dessert service based on Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In 1845 Kirk had been made an associate member of the Royal Hibernian Academy and had come to prominence by winning a prize at the Royal Society of Arts in London.

William Boyton Kirk arrived in Worcester around 1850, at about the same time that Kerr moved there permanently. The reason for his presence in Worcester was that Kerr had intended to update Chamberlain’s production in time to exhibit new figural pieces in the 1851 London Great Exhibition. Unfortunately, as we have seen, these efforts were in vain and Chamberlains ended up with virtually nothing new to show at the 1851 Exhibition.



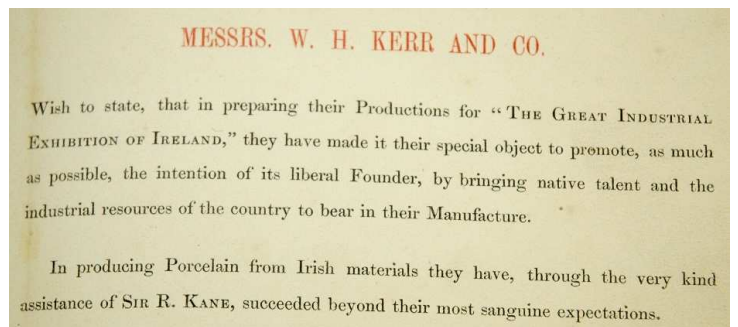
Gilded Parian Candelabra (base) from the 1853 Kerr and Binns Worcester Shakespeare Service (above)– Note the Celtic style decoration in gilt around the base. The front page of a contemporary description of the service is pictured on the left.



Kirk was then employed at Kerr and Binns from its inception in 1852, forming, with Charles Toft, Edward Locke and James Hadley the core of Worcester’s newly formed figure modelling department – before this time, Chamberlains had no history of figure production at all. The “Shakespeare Service” was envisaged by Kerr and Binns as an expression of Irish art and design, the *Midsummer Night’s Dream* theme appears to have been chosen by collaboration between Kirk and Binns. It used parian for the figures (and figural parts of other pieces) and white bone china for other items (plates, comport tops etc.).

The Service represented the first commercial use of the new Worcester parian body (also called “Irish Statuary China”). A book was prepared by R.W. Binns (illustrated on the next page), published in 1853, containing the text of Shakespeare’s play, to illustrate the service. The astonishing and elaborate Victorian dessert service, composed of carefully modelled figures from the play and a magnificent tiered centrepiece, was a unique production, and was made especially for the Great Exhibition in Dublin in 1853.

A copy of Binns’ book was presented to each member of the Great Industrial Exhibition Committee; inserted into the book is a halfsheet from Kerr & Co. (shown here on the right) stating:-



"Messrs. W.H. Kerr and Co. wish to state, that in preparing their Productions for "The Great Industrial Exhibition of Ireland", they have made it their special object to promote, as much as possible, the intention of its liberal Founder, by bringing native talent and the industrial resources of the country to bear in their Manufacture. In producing Porcelain from Irish materials they have, through the very kind assistance of Sir R. Kane, succeeded beyond their most sanguine expectations".

The "Porcelain from Irish Materials" is highly significant from the point of view of the development of the Belleek Pottery, although, as we will see later, Kerr may or may *not* have used any material from the vicinity of Belleek in making the Service.

The reference to "Sir R. Kane" is to Professor Sir Robert Kane (1809-1890), another Dubliner, who, amongst other things was founder and Director of the Museum of Irish Industry, head of the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland, and an avid supporter of Dargan's 1853 Exhibition. Kane was also the author of the 1844 book "The Industrial Resources of Ireland" which includes a geological survey and descriptions of areas of the country where feldspar and clay suitable for porcelain manufacture could be found. The "liberal Founder" is ambiguous: it probably refers to William Dargan himself, but it is possible to read this as referring to Kerr, who most certainly was a strong adherent to Dargan's views and philosophy regarding the industrial, economic and social development of Ireland.

The designer of the figures in the service, William Boyton Kirk, is an interesting figure, himself tied into the later development of Belleek Pottery by his creation of "Erin" and other figures. His father was the eminent Irish sculptor, Thomas Kirk.

W.B. Kirk was born on 29th May 1824, as a boy showed a marked talent for sculpture and was sent to the Dublin Society School (now the RDS) in 1839. He also worked at his father's studio in Jervis Street, Dublin. In 1845 he entered Trinity College, having made his first appearance as an exhibitor in the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1844. He left Trinity College without taking his degree and was already in 1845 expressing his intention of becoming a clergyman. Regardless of this on 16th February 1850 he was made an associate of the Royal Hibernian Academy. For most of the period 1848-1857 he lived in England and during this time accomplished the designs for the Shakespeare Service and many other designs for parian figures produced by W.H. Kerr and Co.



Strickland's Dictionary of Irish Artists lists some of his important work and among these works are designs for Belleek Pottery:

"Figure of Erin", "Summer", "Winter" etc.

Erin is well known but there is no record whatsoever of Belleek ever producing a "Summer" or "Winter"!

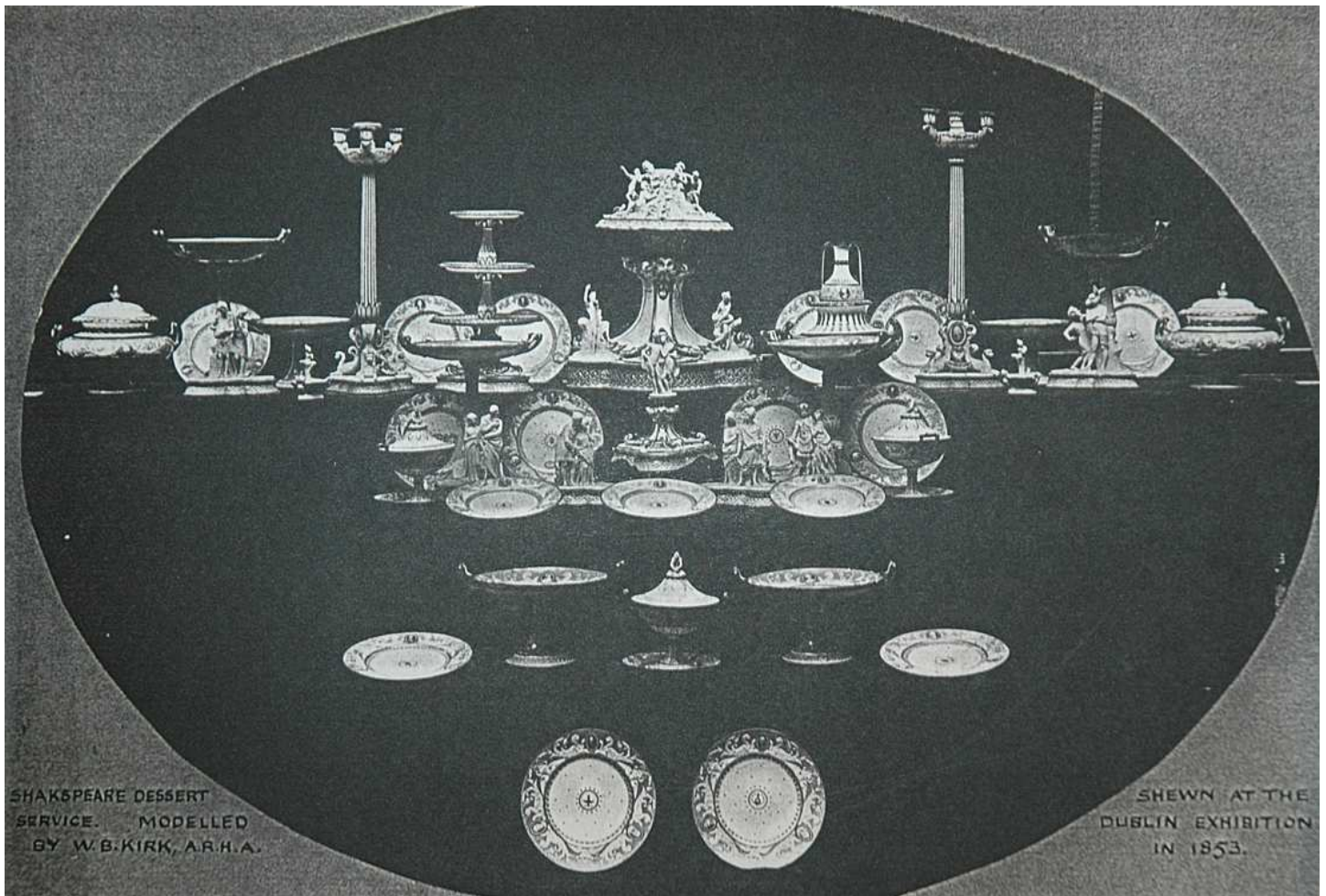
Left: W.B.Kirk, after his ordination.
Above: Binns' Midsummer Night's Dream Book.



As Strickland puts it: "In 1860 he [Kirk] carried out his long-cherished design of entering the Church; he took orders and held various cures in England; was for some time vicar of Holy Trinity, Birkenhead, and afterwards of St. Peter's Ashton-under-Lyne. He resigned his Associateship of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1873, and on 11th October of that year was made an Honorary Member. After his ordination he occasionally did some busts, including "Lord James Butler"..."

Kirk died at Ashton-under-Lyne on 5th July 1900.

Left: St. Peter's Church, Ashton-under-Lyne
Below: The Shakespeare Service



Let's leave a final comment to one of the most famous ceramic artists of Victorian times: Louis Solon, of Minton *pâte sur pâte* fame and also a highly distinguished historian of ceramics, later wrote concerning the Shakespeare Service:

"[Mr. Binns]... himself made the general arrangement, and designed the forms and decorations of this desert service, remarkable on many accounts. Made for the Dublin exhibition, it claimed to have been manufactured from materials chiefly found in Ireland; an Irish sculptor of great talent had been entrusted with the execution of the models. The lithographic plates, reproducing the groups and figures which entered into the composition, do not give enough credit to the work of Boyton Kirk, as one may judge from the few examples preserved in the Worcester Museum. Porcelains, like books, obey their destiny. The service, having been sold after the exhibition, was soon lost sight of. All traces of it were gone when, many years afterwards, Mr. Binns chanced to come across a few of the pieces, badly damaged, but probably the only remnant of what had been one of the most creditable and costly productions of the Royal Porcelain Works. They were immediately acquired and deposited in the museum, where they stand as an excellent illustration of the revival of ceramic art in England".

William Dargan's Successful 1853 Exhibition in Dublin



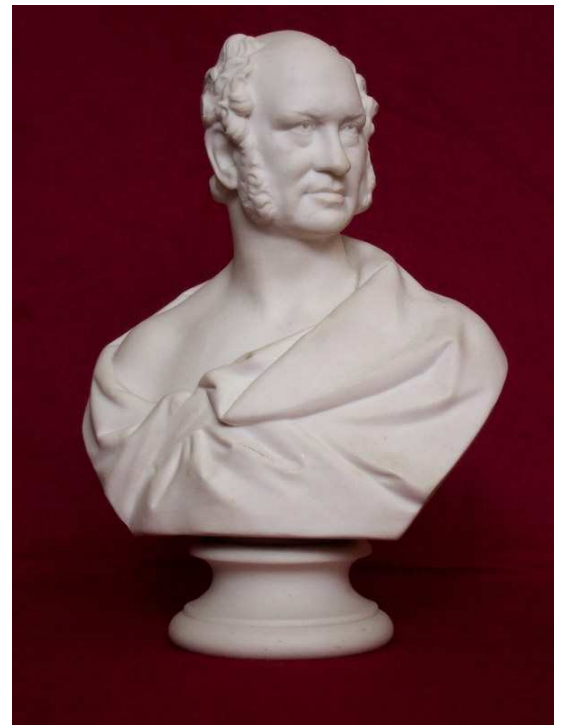
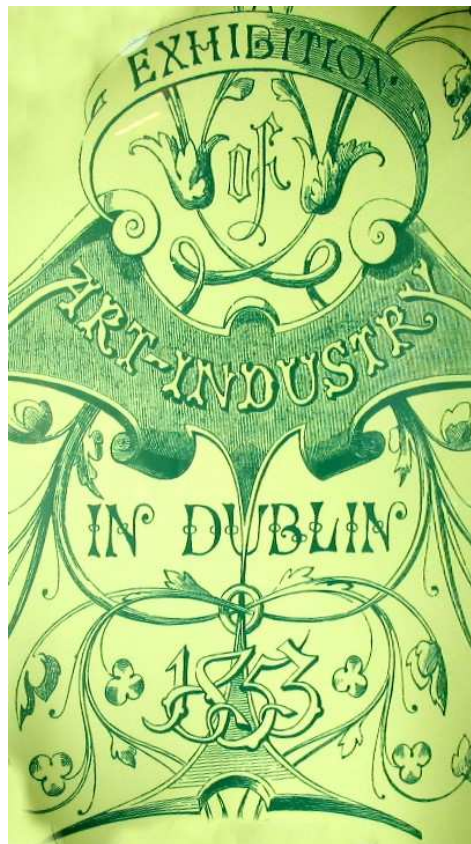
Next we have one of the most important single events leading to Belleek Pottery's foundation: the 1853 Dublin Exhibition.

The Great Irish Exhibition Building measured 265,000 square feet (illustrated next page), one third the size of the London Crystal Palace of 1851. The Irish Industrial Exhibition Building housed the entire fair. It was located in the centre of Dublin on the lawn of the Royal Dublin Society.

It lasted from the 12th of May to the 31st of October. Queen Victoria, accompanied by the Prince Consort and the Prince of Wales, then a lad of twelve, paid an official visit on the 29th of August. The Royal Party had, on the previous day, given Dargan the unprecedented honour by dropping in, unannounced at his home – unfortunately the great man wasn't in! Later Dargan and his wife officially received the Queen and Prince Consort at Mount Anville where the Queen offered Dargan a Baronetcy, which he declined: seemingly his modesty and attitude to the "common man" made the idea of "Lord William Dargan" unacceptable to him!

The Exhibition owed its conception, organisation and funding *entirely* to William Dargan who had originally planned to donate £25,000 to the effort, but ended up putting in £100,000 of his own personal fortune to the Exhibition. Dargan was ultimately forced into this position because the Corporation of Dublin refused to contribute any money at all to the venture.

Overall attendance at the Exhibition was 1,156,232. When final accounts were completed, Dargan had sustained an overall personal financial loss of approximately £9,000 (some sources put his personal loss as high as £20,000).



Above, W.H. Kerr's (Kerr and Binns) Parian bust of William Dargan, Sculpted by E.J. Jones.

Above left, drawing of William Dargan (source unknown)

Left, part of the title page from the 1853 Exhibition Catalogue

As a backdrop to the Exhibition and to gain some understanding of the conditions and the motivations of the then "leaders of society", it is helpful to review the state of Ireland itself. The social conditions in Ireland in 1853 were dramatic. In spite of the famine, the country was overcrowded with large unemployment. According to *The Illustrated Dublin Exhibition Catalogue (1853)*:

"[Ireland]...with so many natural helps to Manufacture, has hitherto availed herself of few or none of them; with coal and iron and limestone in abundance, her mines have been but very partially worked; with waterpower running from every great lake in sufficiency to turn all the spindles that derive their impulse from steam in Manchester, It runs idly, and to waste, into bays and harbours that are estuaries of the Atlantic; with a surplus in population craving employment, its people have been without occupation; their labour "at home" has barely sufficed to procure the means of a miserable existence. Ireland has been emphatically termed "a land of raw materials," and he who develops its resources, calls it latent energies into actions, and enables man to derive comforts and luxuries from the wealth of nature, may be indeed described not only as a Patriot to his country, but as Benefactor to the World."

So, did Kerr keep his promise to use Irish Materials?

The Shakespeare Service was a crucial exhibit at Dargan's "Great Industrial Exhibition". The element in this that most interests us, is Kerr's claim that china clay and feldspar (or at least some of the materials to make the "porcelain") for the service came from Ireland - one possible location in Ireland, which interest us vitally, being John Caldwell Bloomfield's Estate, Castle Caldwell, near Belleek in County Fermanagh. This is not, however, the only possible source - another possible location being Killiney Hill, just South of Dalkey near Dublin, this source having been documented in Robert Kane's "The Industrial Resources of Ireland" in 1844 and strongly proposed as the true source of the material by Kevin Curry, a recent researcher. If you take Kerr's words literally "...kind assistance of R.Kane..." (see earlier quotation) then the Killiney Hill source seems most likely, since Kane states clearly that Felspar located near Dublin is suitable for the manufacture of porcelain: "*The granite in the vicinity of Dublin is distinguished for the whiteness of its felspar and the complete absence of hornblende...*", whereas he only vaguely states that similar rock outcrops occur "... in Tyrone, in Sligo, Fermanagh, Mayo and Cavan..." clearly having (in 1845 at any rate) no specific knowledge of the Castle Caldwell source.

The timing of the exhibition is also critical in determining which of these sources is the actual one, as the discovery of the Belleek raw materials only pre-dated the start of the Exhibition (12th May 1853) by a short time, having been discovered (depending on whose story you believe!) some time in 1852 - this is covered in detail in part 2 of this article. Was there sufficient time for Kerr to have the original experiments performed, for Kerr and Binns to have perfected their own Parian recipe and for Binns and Kirk to have designed and produced the service? This is altogether a quite considerable undertaking! Actually, the design and modelling of the service had been done earlier, only the final production had to wait the availability of the Irish raw materials - this is absolutely amazing in itself, as it shows the extraordinary leap of faith that Kerr had made in promising Dargan that a service made from Irish materials would be available for the exhibition - Kerr could have had no certainty when making the promise that it would actually be possible! These were exciting times and the principals were swept along on an optimistic tide of patriotic fervour...



The interior of the Exhibition Hall of the 1853 Dublin Exhibition - it was intended to rival the Crystal Palace in its design and scope.

Strangely, following the Exhibition, the building was dismantled and then seems to have disappeared without trace!

So, it is clear that Kerr and Binns intended the Shakespeare Service as a demonstration firstly that: "Ireland can match England for industrial production" and secondly of: "What patriotic Irishmen could do" and the use of the Irish materials and Irish designers (Binns and Kirk) were therefore highly important - in fact absolutely crucial - in this scheme. As the exhibition catalogue said: "...he who develops [Ireland's] resource... may be indeed described not only as a Patriot to his country, but as Benefactor to the World." This text was intended as praise for Dargan but Kerr and Binns saw themselves in the same light. Kerr, Binns and Kirk were successful in achieving this objective: the following notice was printed in the (Dublin) Morning Post of 1st November 1853:

"The Shakespeare Service claims a high place in the observation and admiration of the Irish people on many and most substantial grounds. It has been set before the public as a product, in its novel, beautiful, and truly chaste design, of Irish Art; in its elegant and correct execution, of Irish enterprise and industrial resources; and in its material, being principally Irish earth."

The gist of this is extremely clear - **Ireland** had something to be proud of! This contemporary article (above) is somewhat over-effusive and is clearly not wholly correct as the service was made, not in Ireland (as it implies) but used the "industrial resource" of Worcester (and Irish raw materials). It is not always possible to take even apparently clearly written evidence as absolute proof - in telling stories; Irishmen also excel!

Even though the Exhibition was highly successful and the Irish press hailed it as an illustration of Irish industrial and artistic prowess, it was abundantly clear to the impartial observer that there was a "complete paucity" of industrial products actually **made** in Ireland. This lack was certainly one of the elements that spurred on patriotic Irish businessmen such as Kerr and McBirney, designers such as Kirk and Armstrong and philanthropists such as Dargan and Bloomfield, to strive for truly Irish products to be made.

In 1853, as the Exhibition closed, the foundation of Belleek Pottery was still four years in the future. The Exhibition had been a strong impetus towards true Irish industrial production - the seeds of the Belleek Pottery had been sown.

...to be continued (all references and bibliography will be given in the final part of this article)

Belleek Pottery Workers Tribute to Stephen Hobson



The Tea Service now donated to the Potteries Museum, Hanley

Chris and I had just popped into the Potteries Museum for a spot of lunch (they do exceedingly nice Staffordshire oak cakes), when we noticed the 'new acquisitions' display in the foyer. In the display case next to the mummified cat found in the attic of Bethesda Chapel (amazing!) was a Belleek Neptune teaset.

The museum only has 2 modest pieces of Belleek at present, a pink wash Tridacna cup and saucer and a small shamrock basket (donated by Daisy Makeig Jones of Wedgwood fairyland lustre fame), so this would certainly become the major Belleek representation in their collection. This new teaset is unique because it is a presentation piece, we therefore thought it was important to learn more.

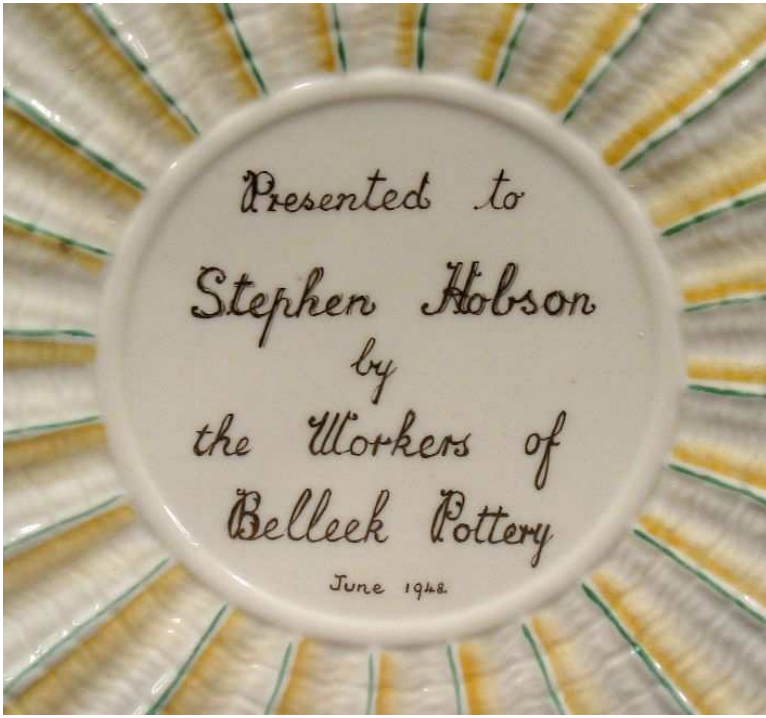


Miranda Goodby, ceramics curator at the Museum, was delighted that we wanted to photograph this service to share with the Belleek collectors and learn more about its background. So we arranged to visit her and Julia Knight, her assistant, for a chat.



This teaset is special because it is inscribed 'Presented to Stephen Hobson by the Workers of Belleek Pottery June 1948' in the centre of the bread plate in gold. As you would expect, it is 1st green period (1946-1955) with a few saucer replacements from the 3rd green period (1965-1981) in the Neptune pattern, sumptuously decorated (for Belleek!) on the ribs in green with a yellow wash (rare but not unknown) but with completely gilt handles and rim (this is all very much in the Cyril Arnold style). It comprises of bread plate, teapot, sugar, cream and 6 cup, saucers and tea plates.





Stephen Hobson (1901 – 1972) was an official of the National Society of Pottery Workers (later renamed the Ceramic and Allied Trades Union) who went over to Belleek to help set up the union lodge there, he then returned to Stoke and later became the Assistant General Secretary of the union. In 1967 he was awarded an M.B.E. for his contribution to the work of the Unions.

Stephen Hobson was an enthusiast for the Pottery Industry and particularly its Trade Union issues, over many years, he researched and collected information relating to the work of the Unions mostly in the Staffordshire Potteries area: the Stephen Hobson collection on the history of Trade Unionism and the pottery Industry in the 19th and 20th century, is held at the Stoke-on-Trent city archives, Hanley library: it amounts to around 200 documents.



The photograph here from the Staffordshire Sentinel newspaper shows him being presented with this Belleek teaset in 1948 (in Stoke) on behalf of the workers at Belleek. Seated on the left is Harold Hewitt, General Secretary of the National Society of Pottery Workers Union, on his left is the Assistant Secretary Albert Goodwin and on his right making the presentation, is the High General President Mr Radcliffe.

Earlier this year, Mrs Vera Hobson, Stephen Hobson's widow, decided that the service should come to the Potteries Museum because of her husband's contribution to the ceramics industry as part of the Union. At the moment the Museum is still deciding where the service will be on display. Some swishy new display cabinets have just been installed in the main ceramics gallery and a "pot reshuffle" is currently underway – indeed many pots from the archives that have not been seen recently are to be given space.

We can't recommend too highly giving the Museum a visit and Miranda says if the Belleek teaset is not yet on display – just ask to see it!



The decoration of the presentation teaset appears to be unique as it is a variation on the colours used for decoration number D118, shown in the 1937 Catalogue (left). A kettle and cup and saucer painted in this “118” colour way are shown below:



The “standard” 118 has green and yellow lines and gilt embellishment which is quite different to the items in the presentation service: the biggest difference, shown clearly in these pictures of the teapot and a cup and saucer (above left and left), is that the handles in the presentation service are gilt, whereas “118” has green washed handles.

As the presentation was made by “The Workers of Belleek Pottery” to their Trade Union representative, it is possible that the management of the Factory will have had no say at all in its decoration. This could well make it’s decoration a “one-off” – there is certainly no decoration number painted on any of the items in the set.

Here we have the Potteries Museum Miranda Goodby discussing the Teaset during our very pleasant visit to the Museum.



- Bev Marvell

Ebay Report – some exceptional Items of Belleek

Note that the descriptions are quoted from the Ebay listings – no attempt is made to correct any spelling or factual errors!



“A most splendid item with the Belleek Early black mark and the rare impressed harp mark. It came from a Dairy and with think it might be for making cream cheese. It is made up of an 11 inch diameter base plate, which has a raised center with three "fins". There are 5 stackable rings, each approx. 1 1/2 inches deep and 6 1/2 inches in diameter. The domed cover is pierced and is also 6 1/2 inches in diameter. There is also a flat" weight" which fits in the center - this is photographed resting in front of the constructed "tower" and shows one of the 3 Belleek printed marks. Along with a printed mark (which also includes the name of possibly the retailer), there is the rare Belleek impressed harp mark. This dates the item to between 1863 and 1880. the printed mark appears again beneath the cover. On each ring is printed the word patent. This wonderfully collectable Dairy item has been used and does have some staining as the photographs show. Please also study the photographs to see the crack through one of the rings , a chip and barely noticeable hairline in the base.”

Sold by Ebay seller granhoughton for £1311.11

“Rare Irish Belleek Porcelain "**Prince of Wales**" Ice Bucket. Stamped with the old brown Belleek mark underneath base. This is one of the most important Belleek pieces ever made. 3 piece construction consists of the base, body, and lid. The Item is in excellent condition with one very small chip on one of the horses manes on the lid (see picture). Item measures 19 1/2 inches tall by 8 1/2 inches at it's widest point. This gorgeous porcelain ice bucket is simply stunning. An excellent gift for a collector or an elegant addition to any bar.”

Sold by Ebay seller dtenenbauminc for \$1100.00



This is a very rare and important **First Period Belleek lizard vase** depicting the reptile with bronzed finish coiled around plant form body with mushrooms and leaves on base. All intact gilt decoration on characteristic white porcelain body. Bears the first black mark (1863-1890) on underside of base, as pictured. Beautiful clean and pristine condition, no chips, cracks, or blemishes. Original condition with no restoration. Measures almost 9" height 3 3/4" across the base. Very rare form of authentic First Period antique Belleek. An exceptional find.

Sold by ebay seller joeribar for \$2413.99



“Rare 1891 Black Mark Belleek Tridacna Green Tinted Shell Cup. Excellent Emossed Shell Shape and Interesting Handle. Has a Very Shallow Chip on the Gilding Which is in the Ideal Spot for an Easy Restoration. Cup Measures Just Over 2" High.”

This is of course a Victoria cup, not Tridacna!

Sold by Ebay seller Carole20005 for £90.88





Decorated and gilded Fan pattern cup and saucer: "This is a beautiful tea cup and saucer made by Belleek. It is shown in Degenhardt's book on page 94. It is in great condition with no damage. It has the second black mark (1891-1926). I have another set. This auction is for one set. High bidder to pay for shipping and insurance. Please email me with any questions."

Sold by Ebay seller cliffbilbo for \$733.00

"Rare, **Belleek Artichoke Cup and Saucer.** 1st black mark and both with the registry mark. Both pieces have a red 1 below the mark. The plate is 5 1/2" diameter and the cup is 2 1/2" high. The condition is perfect with no wear to the gold gilt, no chips, nicks, scratches or repairs. You will never find a better piece, perfect in all aspects.. I will be listing more 1st black mark pieces all before 1891 all free from any defects"

Sold by Ebay seller jgtiques for \$1009.00



"Rare, **Belleek Chinese 3 footed Cup and Saucer.** 1st black mark and both with the registry mark. The cup has the number 3 on the foot. The plate is 5 " diameter and the cup is 1 3/4" high. The condition is perfect with slight wear to the to the turquoise on both pieces, could have been in the making as there is very little wear to the gold gilt on the rims . There are no chips, nicks, scratches or repairs. Being offered with no reserve. I will be listing more 1st black mark pieces all before 1891 all free from any defects"

Sold by Ebay seller jgtiques for \$798.88



"You are bidding on a porcelain figurine of a **fairy on a water lily by Cyril Arnold.** The figurine is approximately 4 inches tall and 6 3/8 inches at the widest point. The figurine is very beautiful and incredibly delicate. The title is hand incised into the bottom "Water Lily Fairy" and well as "Modelled - Hand - Painted by Cyril Arnold, Bundoran, Ireland". I am unsure if there is some extremely minor damage to the leaf at the top of her head on the left side or not (There may or may not have been a short tiny stem on the leaf originally). I would have to say the piece is in near mint or mint condition. It is my understanding that Cyril Arnold was the head of the decorating department at Belleek Pottery from 1946 till 1966 when he took over management of Belleek Pottery factory. In 1968, he left Belleek Pottery and founded Bundoran Pottery where he worked until his death in 1986.

OK, not Belleek, but rare and interesting nonetheless: nobody wanted this Bundoran fairy at \$89.99!



Annette Bugansky - Hand Crafted Porcelain

Earlier this year I saw an article in The Telegraph Magazine which was accompanied by a picture of 4 vases which appeared to be knitted. The brief article had a few words about how this had been achieved, and I followed it up and contacted the Designer to find out more. It seemed to me her porcelain vessels must have a lot in common with Belleek.



Annette Bugansky is a British Ceramic Designer who is successfully creating innovative products for her in-house collection of vases, vessels, and contemporary containers. She started her career as a fashion and textile designer and now she is able to combine her textile past and her passion for texture and surface pattern with beautiful tactile forms which are hand produced in porcelain in her London studio. She explained that for each individual

piece she knits a sheath to cover the model, a mould is taken from this and is then cast in Porcelain and hand finished. The process – apart from the knitting! – is therefore similar to that of producing Belleek; the difference is that Annette's pieces are produced individually by her, not by a factory process in a commercial pottery.

Annette says she is greatly inspired by her experience in the fashion industry and was a costume designer before she became a ceramicist. She researches techniques used in other disciplines and develops them for use in ceramics. Her work has produced an organic blend of neutral shades and exciting textures. Her designs are intended to look equally exciting when empty as when used. The knitted texture vessels combine traditional and experimental knitting patterns to create the surface pattern, and casting in porcelain means every detail is reproduced whilst its translucent quality gives added depth. Most of her work is white and unglazed as she doesn't want colour to detract from the delicate surface detail.



- Gina Kelland

annette
bugansky
2005

Exhibitions

"Materialise" 13 September to
21 October 2005, Mon-Fri 10am-8pm
University of the Arts, Davies Street,
London W1

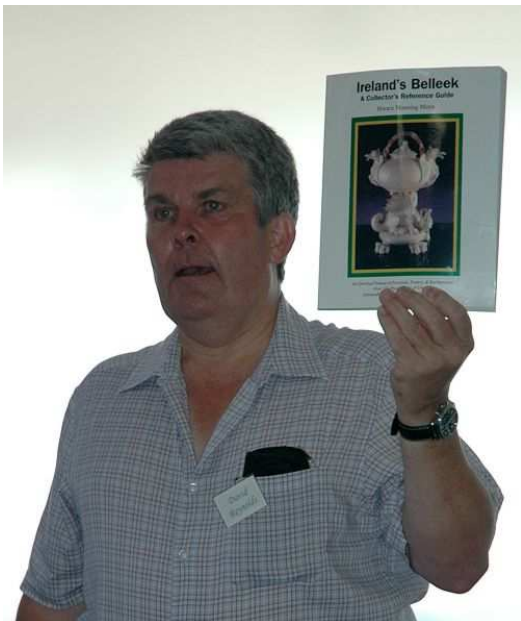
"Ceramics Now" 8 September to
14 October 2005, Mon-Fri 10am – 6pm
Pearl Fisher Gallery, 50 Brook Green,
London W6

Outlets

Annette's Studio: E2E Cockpit Arts,
Bloomsbury, London
Atelier, Cross Street, Islington, London
Bilston Craft Gallery, Wolverhampton
Crafts Council Shop, Pentonville Road, London
Cupola Gallery, Sheffield
Fisherton Mill, Wiltshire
Galerie zur Stellermacherei, Germany
Loop, Cross Street, Islington, London
Roger Billcliffe Gallery, Glasgow
Twist Art & Design, Chelsea, London



In Brief: New Books Available



During the Sunday Meeting, David announced that the following two new publications on Belleek were now available:

"Ireland's Belleek, A Collector's Reference" which is a reprint of the Horace Manning Mann auction catalogue with some amendments and additions.

A new booklet by the Ulster Museum called "Marks of Distinction" which is available from the Pottery, priced £3.95.

The picture shows David with the "Ireland's Belleek" book

CALENDAR OF ANTIQUE FAIRS, EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

(updated 26.09.05).

AUCTION/EXHIBIT/FAIR	DATES	TIMES, LOCATIONS
Ambrose	29 - 30.09.05	
Stafford	30.09 - 02.10.05	
RHH, SW1	09.10.05	10.00-16.30
England v Poland	12.10.05	World Cup Qualifier
Newark	13 - 15.10.05	
Belleek 50 th meeting	15 - 16.10.05	@ Worcester
Affordable Art Fair	19 - 23.10.05	@ Battersea
Royal Society of Marine Artists	19 - 30.10.05	@ Mall Galleries
Fish & Chips supper with Christine McCormack	21.10.05	@ home
Picture Postcards Fair	23.10.05	@ Royal Nat Hotel, WC1. 10.00-16.30
Detling	29 - 30.10.05	
Royal Institute of Oil Painters	02 - 13.11.05	@ Mall Galleries
Ambrose	03 - 04.11.05	
RHH, SW1	06.11.05	10.00-16.30
Olympia Fair	07 - 13.11.05	
Alexandra Palace	20.11.05	
Frieze Art Fair	21-24.10.05	@ Regents Park 11.00-7.00
NEC	24 - 27.11.05	
Picture Postcards Fair	27.11.05	@ Royal Nat Hotel, WC1. 10.00-16.30
Newark	01 - 03.12.05	
New English Art Club	02 - 19.12.05	@ Mall Galleries
RHH, SW1	04.12.05	10.00-16.30
Ambrose	08 - 09.12.05	
Stafford	09 - 11.12.05	
Belleek Christmas Party Weekend	10 - 11.12.05	Hosts Chris and David Reynolds
Picture Postcards Fair	18.12.05	@ Royal Nat Hotel, WC1. 10.00-16.30
Alexandra Palace	15.01.06	
National Fine Arts & Antiques Fair	18 - 22.01.06	@ NEC (100 premier dealers)
London Art Fair	18 - 22.01.06	@ Islington, N1
Alexandra Palace	12.03.06	
Alexandra Palace	14.05.06	
Alexandra Palace	17.09.06	
Alexandra Palace	19.11.06	
Ali & Janek's Wedding	2006	

- Jan Golaszewski

And Finally, don't Forget...

*The Next Meeting: October 15th /16th
is our*

50th Meeting

in Worcester

Our Guest Speaker is:



Henry Sandon

Henry Sandon is regarded as the world authority on Worcester porcelain. He has had a great love for ceramics since his early days as an archaeologist, and has a wide knowledge of pottery and porcelain of all periods and countries. He is the author of several books dealing with Worcester and other porcelains, and lectures frequently on the subject. In 2000, he was voted Antiques Personality of the Year by readers of BBC Homes and Antiques magazine.



The short biography above is from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/antiques/tv_and_radio/expertbiogs_s.shtml#henry_sandon



This fascinating picture (left) of Henry Sandon with a fantastic chess set made at Worcester by Kerr and Binns between 1852 and 1862 comes from the Worcester Museum archives. We believe that the picture dates back to the time when Henry Sandon was curator of the Worcester Porcelain Museum.

The chess set is made of parian, the "white" and "black" being distinguished by "white" being plain unglazed parian and "black" having gilded bases. The set is very rare indeed, possibly being from Richard Binns' (of Kerr and Binns and later Royal Worcester) own personal collection.