

UK Belleek Collectors' Group

Newsletter

Memories of the Group's 50th Meeting at Royal Worcester ... fully reported in this Newsletter.

If you are wondering about the connection between this candelabra and Belleek, it is from the award winning Kerr & Binns Shakespeare Service (designed and modelled for the 1853 Dublin Exhibition by a young Irish sculptor William Boyton Kirk) which is believed to have been made from the feldspar and china clay discovered at Belleek by John Caldwell Bloomfield. The Shakespeare Service combined parian figures with richly painted and gilded porcelain.

Number 27/1
March 2006



This is another very full newsletter including the next instalment of Chris Marvell's articles on the origins of Belleek, Paul Tubb's genealogical research (this time William Wood Gallimore, Chief Modeller in the early days of the Belleek Pottery), "American Belleek" by Betty Clinton – our first contribution from a U.S. Chapter member – and photo reports on the U.K. Group's recent activities.

- 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, David Reynolds, Gina Kelland, Eddie Murphy, Don Clinton and Paul Tubb.
Articles by: Betty Clinton, Paul Tubb, Graham Houghton, David Reynolds, Gina Kelland and Chris Marvell
Other material: Gina Kelland, Graham Houghton, David Reynolds and Chris Marvell

Thanks to all who have helped with the Newsletter and special thanks to Betty Clinton (President of the L.A. Chapter) for her article on American Belleek.

Forthcoming Events

18 th /19 th March 2006	Stoke-on-Trent, hosted by Linda and Eddie Murphy
15 th /16 th July 2006	AGM, Bourne End/Amersham, hosted by Jackie and Jim Howden, Gina Kelland and Ann and Ray Parsons.
14 th /15 th October 2006	Kent/SE London, (precise location to be finalised), hosted by Colin Strong
December 2006	2006 Christmas Party, Draycott, Derbyshire (probably the 2 nd Weekend to coincide with the Stafford Fair), hosted by Bev and Chris Marvell

Future Plans

March 2007	Coventry, hosted by the Tubb family.
18 th -21 st April 2007	BCIS International Convention at Belleek, Co. Fermanagh
July 2007	AGM, Portsmouth, hosted by Pat and Brian Russell
October 2007	Not decided yet
December 2007	Not decided yet

Newsletter Deadlines

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

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

Cover Picture... is the base of one of the parian candelabra from the Worcester (Kerr and Binns) "Dublin" Shakespeare Dessert Service.

UK Belleek Collectors' Newsletter 27/1 March 2006

<i>UK Group Announcements.....</i>	<i>page 4</i>
<i>From the Chairman</i>	
<i>News from the World of Ceramics.....</i>	<i>page 5</i>
<i>- David Reynolds</i>	
<i>The Group's 50th Meeting in Worcester.....</i>	<i>page 6</i>
<i>Saturday in Worcester</i>	
<i>Saturday's Dinner at the King Charles House Restaurant in Worcester</i>	
<i>Sunday: The Royal Porcelain Works, Worcester</i>	
<i>Henry Sandon – his Reminiscences</i>	
<i>News from Patricia McCauley</i>	
<i>2005 Devotee Award</i>	
<i>Lunch at the Royal Porcelain Works</i>	
<i>Henry's "Bring and Tell"</i>	
<i>Conclusion of the Day's Events</i>	
<i>The 2005 Christmas Party at the Drum and Monkey.....</i>	<i>page 30</i>
<i>- Chris Marvell</i>	
<i>The Dublin and Worcester Connection:</i>	
<i>The Foundation of Belleek Pottery – Fact and Fiction.....</i>	<i>page 34</i>
<i>- Chris Marvell</i>	
<i>From Burslem to Trenton via Stoke and Belleek:</i>	
<i>The life of William Wood Gassimore</i>	<i>page 45</i>
<i>- Paul Tubb</i>	
<i>William Henshall update.....</i>	<i>page 51</i>
<i>- Paul Tubb</i>	
<i>The 2005 Belleek Convention.....</i>	<i>page 52</i>
<i>- David Reynolds</i>	
<i>American Belleek.....</i>	<i>page 56</i>
<i>- Betty Clinton</i>	
<i>Ebay Report- some exceptional Items of Belleek.....</i>	<i>page 58</i>
<i>And Finally.....</i>	<i>page 60</i>

UK Group Announcements

From the Chairman

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2006, and a special hello to those new members receiving their first newsletter since joining the Group. Since I embarked on a recruitment drive last October, we have had a lot of interest shown in the group with many new members.

We now have confirmed dates, venues and hosts for all our meetings up to July 2007, for those who were at the July 2005 AGM, you will recall we held off making a decision until we knew a date for the 2007 International Convention. As we now know the Convention has been scheduled earlier in the year than in the past in order to avoid clashing with the expected tourism influx into Co Fermanagh through the summer months. The Convention will be held from 18th until 21st April 2007, so we now need to plan ahead and complete our programme for 2007. If anybody wants to offer, please let me know for both the October meeting and also the Christmas party in December 2007.

As more and more members have become users of the internet and now have email addresses, we need to update the Group records. As well as email addresses not known, I am aware that members change email identities when changing service provider, sometimes ceasing use of an address previously on the Group records.

In order to enable me to create a new email contact list, could you please email me at chairman@belleek.org.uk and just type TEST and your name on the subject line.

If for any reason you prefer me to retain your email address but not circulate it amongst other Group members, please just add a note to this effect as a message.

On a similar theme, could you please check the accuracy of your address on the mailing label used to send this newsletter and if there are any errors or omissions, please let me know, as Royal mail were fined last month for losing 14.4 million items of mail last year, we don't want our newsletter being lost because of an addressing inaccuracy.

I have continued to promote the Group through the winter and am pleased to report that the March edition of Collect It! magazine has run a two page article on the Group, as part of their ongoing collectors club highlight. It is good to note that we received more space than many organisations have in the past.

Finally in closing this message, we will soon be gathering for our mid-March meeting in Stoke on Trent and then in July our AGM will take us back to The Chilterns.

- David Reynolds

Excerpt from
the "Collect
It!" article
on our Group

Belleek Collectors' Club

The pottery of Belleek started its life in 1857 as an Irish pottery manufacturing heavy earthenware. However, the company is particularly well known for their pearly, highly-translucent porcelain pieces commonly decorated with shells and for their baskets of flowers with leaves often so sharp they can cut admirers' fingers!
Vicky Hooper reports on their collectors' club.



LEFT
Special
Belleek
plate
made for
the group's
50th meeting in
October 2005.



David at the Worcester
Meeting

News from the World of Ceramics

New Developments at Belleek – from David Reynolds

These notes, made on Saturday 10th September at the 2005 Convention during the presentation made by Fergus Cleary, are not verbatim, but a flavour of what was said on the subject which formed only a part of the presentation. The sketches of the marks are as I copied them from the projector screen, so are for guidance only and not intended to be exactly how the new marks will appear.

BELLEEK MARKS AND OUTSOURCING PRODUCTION.

The current green mark will continue and guarantee that the product was made in Belleek, all products will become more limited edition production. Starting in 2005 ALL baskets will be limited edition and made in Belleek.

In 2006, the annual basket, entitled the Gerbera Basket will be a limited edition (limited by the year of production) and will have a finer rod than previous basket production.



*Large Wall Clock (3099) from the Belleek Living range – full details of the range are available on the Belleek Company Website:
<http://www.belleek.ie>*

OUTSOURCING – WHY?

Labour and energy cost of production, prices of some product catalogues are not globally competitive, competitors are already outsourcing. The Belleek Living range is currently made in Belleek but is to be made in China.

NEW MARKS.

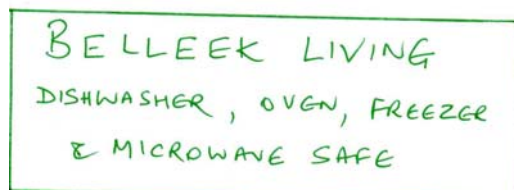
Both the circular Belleek Living and oblong Belleek Living, dishwasher etc. proof will indicate the product will be made out of Ireland.

Products with a “by Belleek” mark, will be outsourced and will not be in the traditional Belleek box.

2007 will see the 150th anniversary of the Pottery, there will be a special mark for

one year only, the colour of this mark has not yet been decided. There will be special limited edition pieces produced to celebrate the 150 years. 2008 will see a new mark again.

All non-ceramic products will have a “by Belleek” mark. The country of origin will still have to be marked on the item and the box.



The Group's 50th Meeting in Worcester

This meeting represented an important landmark for the UK Group. The first meeting was held in 1989 at the then Grosvenor Hotel adjacent to Victoria Station in London's Belgravia. Lady Marion Langham, Brian Scott and Jan Golaszewski worked tirelessly to bring the new group into existence, they were strongly assisted in this by Belleek Pottery whose representative then was Martina Kerr Bromley. *This is the photo that was taken of the collectors and Belleek Pottery representatives who could make it to that first meeting.*



Saturday in Worcester

The Saturday before the 50th Meeting at the Royal Porcelain Works found us free to explore the historic city of Worcester. It was a beautiful, sunny day and we wandered down the main shopping street, past the Guildhall into the maze of small streets which contains other interesting buildings, an excellent antiques centre and many shops, pubs and restaurants that simply oozed character. Here are a few images from our morning tour of the city.



After a good few hours of browsing and seeing the sights we arrived at the magnificent Cathedral, which is the final resting place of King John, who is of course mainly remembered as he who

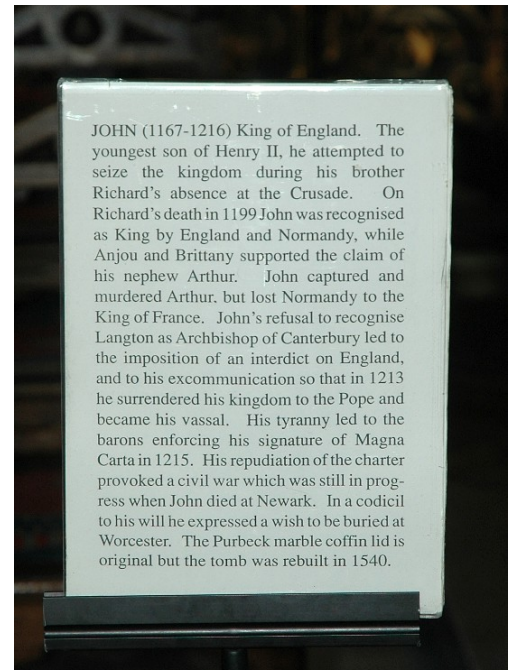


usurped King Richard's throne while Richard was away on the Crusades in the Holy Land.

He is also credited with losing the crown jewels (lost while crossing marshes in East Anglia) and of buckling under pressure from his aristocracy and being forced to accept the Magna Carta – the first true Bill of Rights on which all later declarations of rights (including the American Declaration of Independence) are based. So he was a completely awful King?

Well, my history isn't good enough to comment further, he may have had a lot of good points.... He DID however rather like Worcester and so Worcester Cathedral is where he was buried.

Worcester Cathedral is a wonderful building – it is truly worth a visit – the crypt is open to visitors and this is also fascinating.





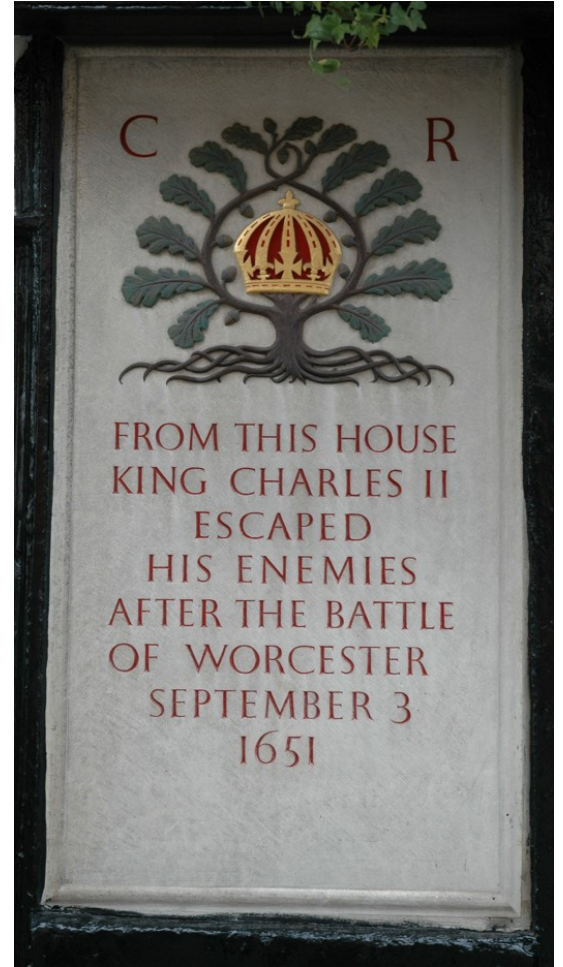
We continued along the river Severn, taking in the beautiful views of Worcester immortalised on many pieces of Worcester China, made by Flight, Barr and Barr, Chamberlains and Graingers. By now, the October day has become gently misty so we paused for a really nice lunch at a converted mill close to the bank of the river within sight of the Cathedral. Later that evening, at the King Charles House restaurant, we were to somewhat regret not having saved ourselves for the massive feast that was provided, but at the time, a light lunch with a bottle of wine seemed like an excellent idea!

- Chris Marvell



Pictures: Sights in Worcester: the classic view from the river bridge; our lunchtime restaurant with fountains; the swans and a half-timbered shop seriously leaning – not as seen after the lunchtime wine.

Saturday's Dinner at the King Charles House Restaurant



This is the King Charles House Restaurant – it is a historic building and a wonderful place for us all to meet on the Saturday night. David and Chris Reynolds had made sure of this and had reserved the entire restaurant for the UK Group.



The meal we were served was also of historic proportions... one might say “fit for a King” – it was indeed a feast.

Here we have assorted pictures of the revelling UK Collectors' Group members: relaxing, greeting each other and generally enjoying the evening.





As I'm quite sure you can see, we are having a good time – there is a recurring theme here, I'm sure you agree – the Belleek Collectors' Group isn't always just about Belleek – this was a special occasion and we were out to celebrate.



When the time to go back to our hotels arrived, our ladies sorted out the flowers to take home with them – so what's Brian doing here with these flowers – and a handbag?



Sunday: The Royal Porcelain Works, Worcester



The Sunday of the 50th Meeting began with members free to inspect what is now surely the finest museum devoted to one company – this is the Dyson Perrins Museum of the Royal Worcester Porcelain Factory. The picture (above) shows the works as it was in mid Victorian times, after the Kerr and Binns period, when Richard Binns was controlling the factory along with Phillips. The picture clearly shows Robert Williams Armstrong's showroom on the left (see article in this Newsletter) and many other buildings that still exist today.

Shown on these pages are photos of a very few examples of the many magnificent exhibits on show in this simply wonderful museum. Here are a few examples of Worcester pieces from the period immediately before and just after the founding of Belleek Pottery. It was because of the early connections between the potteries at Worcester and Belleek (amongst other reasons) that we chose to celebrate our 50th meeting at Worcester. So here we have: examples of Worcester parian figures dating from the 1850's and later; a wonderful dish made by the Chamberlain company in the 1840's showing the proposed new Houses of Parliament (looking different to the way it does today); the Kerr and Binns (1850's) chess set (that was illustrated with Henry Sandon in Newsletter 26/3) and a fabulous piece from the 1853 Shakespeare Service.



Following the museum tour, members of the group congregated for coffee in our meeting room, which was the lecture room of the Dyson Perrins Museum itself.

Our honoured guests, Henry and Barbara Sandon had arrived early and were already engaged in enthusiastic discussion with group members on all things Worcester.



We were highly privileged to have Henry and Barbara present at our meeting as Henry is one of the World's leading experts on Worcester porcelain, known to all from his appearances on the BBC Antiques Roadshow. Barbara, his wife is clearly his greatest supporter! Henry Sandon, although known for his porcelain expertise, loves all things Worcester – he was a chorister at Worcester Cathedral, performed archeological studies on the pottery sites in Worcester and was curator of the Dyson Perrins Museum.

Once Henry, Barbara and all our members returned from the museum, we settled down for the meeting proper. Amanda Savidge the manager of the Royal Worcester Visitor Centre (*pictured left*) made the arrangements for the meeting in conjunction with Chris and David Reynolds. We owe Amanda our grateful thanks for preparing

everything for us so efficiently.

So, we waited expectantly while David and Francis (right) made their final preparations for the meeting... then David made his announcements and introduced our Guests.



Henry Sandon – His Reminiscences

By Gina Kelland, with expert help from Graham Houghton



David welcomed the Group's esteemed guests, Henry and Barbara Sandon. Henry entertained us for the next hour or so, ably assisted by Barbara's interjections from time to time.

He said he was delighted to have been asked to talk to the Group, and had admired Belleek for some time. He had told his son John he was coming to the meeting, and John said that he liked Belleek too and thought the latest designs are very good.

Henry said he had several connections with Belleek and there was a lot presented at the Roadshows in Ireland many years ago. He thought most of it was fake! It had been interesting to see early earthenware made for every day purposes. The Irish people had an abiding love of Belleek.

He talked about a programme that was recorded in the town of Cork. There was nobody in the queue at 10 o'clock when the Roadshow opened, after an hour or so people started trickling in. Somebody said that people would arrive when the pubs opened and they were quite right. One dear old soul brought in a Belleek basket that she had repaired herself with araldite. Henry said because of the damage he thought it was worth £300. "Can't you make it more than that?" she said!

Worcester was in a bad state in the 1840s and went downhill rapidly. In the later Chamberlain period they made awful false teeth and floor tiles. The "Shakespeare" service put it back on the map. It is claimed that Irish stone and Irish gold was used for it, but there is no proof.

The connections with Royal Worcester and Belleek are very substantial. The lovely iridescent lustre seems to have been copied from Worcester. Worcester went into Japanesque and strange copies of things from around the world. Odd things were produced around 1860, especially the Aesthetic Teapot. This is a figure of a man in a feminine stance one hand on his hip and the other stretched out as if he was limp wrested. The outstretched arm is the teapot spout and the other arm is the handle. It was thought to be a cartoon character of Oscar Wilde.

He said that in his book from 1969 (British Pottery & Porcelain for Pleasure and Investment) he recommended people to buy Belleek, so he blames himself for pushing up prices. He said the Americans always collected Belleek.

The Royal Worcester Museum has the finest collection of Worcester ceramics in the world. The oldest and rarest piece in the collection is the Wigornia Cream Boat which stands on a pedestal on its own. It was made in 1751, in the Doctor Wall period and inscribed on the base is word Wigornia, which is the Anglo Saxon word for Worcester. The Museum was originally in the building that is now the cafeteria, which was designed by the Architect Robert Williams Armstrong one of the founders of the Belleek Pottery. It is now in the building next

door which was once a Victorian school. The schoolboys were downstairs, the girls upstairs, and his wife Barbara confirmed that she was educated there – but not in Victorian times!

Henry came to Worcester to sing in the cathedral choir and teach at the Royal Grammar School. He said that when they took all the fun out of teaching he became the Curator of the Royal Worcester Museum and grew to love the porcelain and all it stood for.

Times were tough for the painters and workmen. They worked from 6am to 6pm, 6 days a week until late in their life - some in their 80s, 90s, one even 100 and still working. Henry's Royal Worcester Porcelain book gives details of the lives of the staff, and he said that one of the objects of his book was to see that the people who made and painted such beautiful pieces would not be forgotten.

R.W. Binns (who had several roles as Managing Director, Art Director, and first Company Historian) was a benevolent man, but he was strict. He used to fine the staff for misdemeanours and details can be seen in the fines book. For example, an apprentice was fined a penny for being 5 minutes late. That was a lot when you consider that his wage would probably be 1 shilling (12 old pence or today 10p) a week. 2 pennies fine for hunting a mouse. Mr. Binns kept the fine money in a kitty and at the end of the year it went towards a week's holiday at the sea side for the staff – this was in the 1850s, and Henry didn't know of any other company doing that in those days.. The fine money was their pocket money for the trip which was split equally between them whether they had been good or bad.

Mr. Binns lived to his late 90s. He retired in his early 90s and lived down the hill but made a visit every day to every department in the factory. When he walked in the paint shop the foreman said 'everybody stand'. When he left and they were told they could sit and get on with their work for which they received payment by the piece.

When Henry was teaching at the Royal Grammar School there was a boy who jiggled about when he put on a gramophone record. He was playing one of Clara Butt singing Land of Hope & Glory, the boy started jiggling and when Henry asked him why, he said it was because he loved records. Henry hit him on the head with the record, which splintered all over the room! He said to the boy that he could tell his descendants that he once broke a small record. Years later in Worcester, a tall policeman tapped Henry on the shoulder and said "You don't remember me do you, Sir? I am the boy you hit on the head with a record" and Henry retorted that it hadn't stunted his growth.

Henry was in the Cathedral Choir for many years, and got married there. On the night of their wedding he was singing in an opera in Birmingham. The Cathedral was an ancient establishment full of old men, and David Willcocks (the organist and choir master) said when Henry joined it had brought the average age down from 62 to 58. The first evensong Henry sang at was quite a memorable occasion. It was on the day of the wedding of one of the Canon's daughters. There was a wedding feast with plenty to drink to celebrate the event in the college hall. The whole Cathedral Choir became paralytic before evensong. During the service the Colonel lost his place and was heard to say in a very loud voice 'What are we singing' and when the chorister next to him told him, he said 'Oh Hell, I sang that ten minutes ago', but those who attended said it was the most memorable service ever.



Barbara – in the audience, making sure Henry doesn't go astray

At the Worcester factory the union brought in a requirement that everybody had to retire at 65. This meant that all those oldies had to give up work and within weeks their funerals were taking place, sometimes two or three a week. Henry said he feels that people must be allowed to do their jobs as long as they can and want to.

He spoke about Charles William Dyson Perrins of the Worcestershire Sauce family. He used to wander round the world staying in hotels and if they didn't have the Sauce he signed them up for a year's supply. He made a lot of money and did a lot of good. He founded a hall in the Royal Grammar School, but in particular he kept the factory going through the early years of the 20th century. He paid the wages of the staff which nearly bankrupted him. The factory closed, but Dyson Perrins got it going again. A tremendous debt of gratitude is owed to him for putting together the great collection. Much was put in to trust in perpetuity for everybody to enjoy. He bought from Sothebys and finally stopped buying when he was 91. To show their appreciation Sothebys put on a dinner for him. He said he would like to meet the Porter, who had been buying for him for some 50 years, as he wanted to give him a tip. At the end of the dinner the Porter was ushered in. Dyson Perrins said to him "My man you have been buying for me all these years and I have never given you a tip I have got a tip for you, if you get a half empty bottle of Worcestershire Sauce fill it up with vinegar and it will last you for ages"

Henry said it was nice to know that the Belleek factory carries on with the same styles. One of Worcester's present best selling lines produced at the factory are the pieces decorated with various fruits. This range is very popular with gypsies for their caravans who particularly like the gilding, and they pay for it with lots of dirty old cash. One gypsy tried to buy a piece from the Museum. When the gypsies die their caravans are burnt out together with their collections. What a shame!

He said he had been doing Antique Roadshows for 28 years, and before that Going for a Song with Arthur Negus, and Collectors' World. Arthur Negus was a dear old soul who liked Barbara. The only antiques he had in his house were in a cabinet his father had made for him, and some pieces that were in safe keeping at the Bank. His wife Queenie hated antiques and when he died she sold them all off. Henry said he is often mixed up with Arthur Negus. He said he got caught by Noel Edmonds with a 'Gotcha' on one of the Roadshows. Noel gave him a box which contained a very valuable piece, and when Henry opened it the piece was broken. Noel made out that Henry was responsible. Henry said he was not amused. He has done Desert Island Discs with Sue Lawley but she asked unexpected questions – like "how long have you been married?". He has also been involved with various things for The Archers like script writing.

A couple of years ago he was on This Is Your Life with Michael Aspel and he brought the famous Red Book to show everybody. Barbara and their two sons knew about it in advance. It was a frightening day, he said, he was whisked off to the studio and incarcerated in a dressing room for hours whilst the guests arrived. Somebody came and asked if he would sing, so he asked what song? It was The Policeman's Song from Gilbert & Sullivan, and Henry's next question was what key? He had to recognise people he had not seen for 50 years, but it was fun. Amanda Savidge (the Museum Director) arranged for the painters to paint a plate for him. There was a coachload of people from Worcester, and people from The Archers. Michael Aspel said it was the happiest 'This Is Your Life' he had ever done. It built up to a climax and towards the end Arthur Negus was mentioned. Henry thought it could not be him who was coming because he had died some years ago, but it turned out to be his daughter.

Finally there was an opportunity for questions. First Jan Golaszewski asked what gave him most comfort from his own collection. Henry said a painting of Barbara's poodle, and a painting that Harry Davis left to him when he died. They are relatively modern but he said he loved them very much and hopes they will go to heaven with him.

What he didn't want to find in heaven is polystyrene cups! He explained that he had been at Spode doing a recce for Songs of Praise (it was a sad story; he had to find an old potter who had been made redundant). He went into the cafeteria for a cup of tea and was offered a teabag in a polystyrene cup. He said he wanted a teapot and cup, but was told they didn't have one. What!! No teapot at Spode. He told them to find one in the factory, and they eventually found a blue and white one.

Next Peter Iles asked if he had connections with other porcelain factories. Henry said he did, through the Pottery, Porcelain, and Glass Manufacturers' Association. Peter asked him about Bronte, and Henry said this was a small factory in Malvern that he had founded, and went on to say that Mrs. Thatcher had visited it the previous week and after she had lunch at the Worcester factory in the Museum by the Shakespeare Service.

Sarah Wood asked if he had a special piece from the Antiques Roadshow. He said Ozzie the Owl, and explained that a lady arrived with him in the bottom of her bag and said it had been on her mantelpiece and used for flowers. It is a slipware drinking pot made in Staffordshire in the 1680s. When he valued it at £20,000 the lady went very white and said she had brought it on the bus. Henry said she should take it home in a taxi which the BBC hired for her, and she was escorted by two policemen – she was clutching the bag to her bosom. It was sold in due course and is on display in the Stoke-on-Trent Museum.

Henry said his son John also had a good find, a slipware tyg which had been bought by its owner for £500 at a local auction. John valued it at £50,000, and Henry said it was on loan to the Stoke-on-Trent Museum, and is displayed next to Ozzie. They make a fine pair.



If you want to read more about these reminiscences and Henry's life, it is chronicled in his autobiography "Living With The Past", first published in 1997. Secondhand prices start at about £3. His reference book that he referred to "Royal Worcester Porcelain: From 1862 to the Present Day" was published in the 1970s. If you have a copy you can count yourself lucky, as current second prices start at £75 up to around £175!

David makes a special presentation to Henry after the talk,

Here we have Graham and Chris – and Henry reading the 50th Meeting Edition of the Newsletter! Chris is obviously pleased that Henry is finding it interesting...



Henry later most kindly autographed a few copies of the Newsletter.

News from Patricia McCauley



After we had all calmed down following the rapturous reception that Henry's talk received, Patricia took centre stage to make announcements and presentations. She said it was great to see familiar faces at this gathering of friends. She brought apologies from Angela Moore that she couldn't be there, and congratulated everybody on the 50th meeting. She said members of the Group were great ambassadors for the Company.

News from Belleek was that new additions were coming on line with silverware such as photo frames to complement them. Also Shamrock pieces were planned. It had been a difficult time economically with reduced tourism etc., but it was hoped it would turn around in the next 2 years.



Patricia continued with the news that because Belleek will have been in business for 150 years in 2007 there will be a celebration each month of the year. The website was being updated, and the 2007 Convention would be held in Fermanagh on 18 – 21 April. The Northern Ireland Chapter (of which she is President) would be hosting it and they had great enthusiasm for the Convention.

She said they would be looking to the U.K. Group for assistance. They thought there would be about 500 people attending. She promised it would be unlike any other convention, and they wanted people to see as much of Belleek as possible. They will need help with coaches, tours, etc., and she asked members to let David know over the next few months if they can help.

On this page we have pictures of Patricia making presentations and together with Chris Reynolds



2005 Devotee Award



Simon Whitlock was voted the Devotee for 2005. He had re-vamped and upgraded the website, and there had been much praise for it and the Newsletter at the recent U.S. Convention. Simon said he was glad it is doing so well, and he had more plans and ideas. He thanked Melanie's mother who had always advised them to buy antique Belleek.



Simon is a worthy recipient of the award – he has contributed greatly to the Group over the years.

Pictured here: Patricia presenting the award – appreciative onlookers as the award is presented and Simon with the award.

Following the presentation, we continued with lunch.

Lunch at the Royal Porcelain Works



An excellent buffet lunch was organised by Amanda and her helpers. Members of the group wasted no time in sampling the delicious food. After the excitement of the morning, members were also engrossed in conversation and keenly anticipating the afternoon's events.



Did I mention that we had a wonderful cake made for the occasion – most kindly provided by the Paul, Pat and Patrick Tubb? Well, Henry and Barbara were persuaded, as is traditional, to perform the ceremony of cutting the cake. Here we have Henry looking determined and dangerous with the cake knife... and then the ceremony itself.



*Also shown here:
Belleek pieces on
display over the lunch
break and Group
members enjoying
their lunch.*





Henry was in great demand as can be seen here – with David and Brendan McCauley and is this Eddie getting Henry to sign up for another meeting? No, it's probably just an autograph!



As is by now also a tradition at these events, Chris tried (at first with limited success) to get everyone interested in a group photo on the steps of the old showroom (now the café). It was only with the help of Eddie Murphy and David Reynolds that members were eventually corralled and persuaded to leave their lunchtime delights and go outside into the absolutely wonderful Autumn day!



Eventually just about everyone was outside, enjoying the sunshine. It was still quite an operation to get everyone organised for a photo... eventually (again as is traditional) an unsuspecting passer-by was conscripted to take a photo of the whole group. Just about everyone is here, but I think Neville had already escaped as he had to arrange another later event.





Just who are brought this disorganised rabble along? Here we are, completely blocking the door to Royal Worcester's Café – I hope nobody minded too much!

We really needed a sheepdog here – it took an awfully long time to get everyone in place, it was such a relaxing and enjoyable day, no-one was too inclined to take this all that seriously...

...but eventually here we are...
A "proper" group photo!



This really is a historic picture – Henry later pointed out the significance of the location. The building we are standing in front of is the old showroom, designed by Robert Williams Armstrong who went on to design the Belleek Pottery and was a founder and the first manager of Belleek Pottery. This building, however was the location of choice for Royal Worcester's own group photos: Henry has a very nice example in his book on Royal Worcester, taken in 1928 of all the Worcester painters, taken in exactly the same spot as our photo here – it is a very nice feeling that we are continuing a tradition!

Enough of this. After the photo, we discovered the reason for Neville's absence – he was preparing another show for us. We were invited to a lecture theatre and Neville introduced a presentation which was part of a program to be made by an Irish television company about Belleek. It featured as presenter and expert... our very own Neville! It included very interesting coverage of the McElroy auction that took place in Spring 2005 and featured in our Newsletter. This was a highly significant sale of Belleek and was an opportunity to showcase some extremely rare items. It was a very interesting show and we look forward to seeing the final TV presentation. Following this we returned to our meeting room for the next item which was a special "Bring and Tell" that Henry was going to host.

Henry's "Bring and Tell"

By Graham Houghton



Henry and Barbara prepare for the Bring and Tell

in the next room. He also said that he would keep what he judged to be the best piece for his own collection. He then asked the members which were the oldest pieces. They had no difficulty in pointing out a bowl and a coffee can belonging to yours truly. He said they were of similar age; about 1760 – 65, both depicting colourful Chinese figures and identical rim decoration. However, they were not both made at the Worcester potteries.



No doubt all of you who have attended our meetings or who have read the Newsletter will know that at every meeting we choose a theme and members are invited to bring a ceramic piece and tell us about the piece, why they like it, or why it is significant to the theme of the Bring And Tell.

We were asked to bring items made at Worcester potteries. I expected the format to follow our previous meetings but our 50th Meeting was to be an exception: The pieces were placed on a table at the front of the room and our Guest Speaker, Henry Sandon, and his charming wife Barbara were invited to examine the pieces and discuss them.

Henry was obviously very excited, not only by the number of items of Worcester brought by the Belleek Collectors but also the exceptional quality of the objects. He had already identified several rare pieces which he said he wanted for the Worcester Museum



They were very similar, but the bowl was made at Liverpool by Richard Chaffers. He then explained that he was able to identify the bowl as being Liverpool by the foot rim, which was undercut and Worcester foot rims were more triangular in shape as on the coffee can. He then checked the transmitted light through the coffee can which was straw in colour. He said that until the time he carried out excavations on the old factory site it was thought that the colour of transmitted light through old Worcester pieces 1751 to 1780 was a greeny blue colour. The pieces showing a straw colour were thought to have been

Coalport. However, some of the pieces he excavated proved that the earliest pieces can show a straw colour, as did the coffee can he was holding.

He then selected a beautiful tureen submitted by Keith and Tina Trahearne. He said, it was most unusual and he had never seen one before. It was a Chamberlain & Co shape marked with a Kerr & Binns mark and dated 1860. On the inside of the lid was a family crest which meant that it had come from a dinner service specially commissioned by someone from the Aristocracy. This, he said was important, as Chamberlain had encountered financial difficulty following a fall in orders after the 1851 exhibition. The judges at the exhibition gave them a terrible slating for the poor quality and design of the exhibition pieces they had submitted. There was a loss in confidence and the people who had been commissioning large dinner and tea services had gone over to Minton who had an exceptional exhibition, winning the most prodigious awards. Chamberlain was rescued by Kerr and Binns in 1860, the year that this piece was made. This piece indicated that the buyers had regained confidence in Worcester products now that the Pottery was under the control of Kerr and Binns.



The next piece to catch his attention was a Worcester part Dejeuner or Tête à Tête set with its tray, sugar and creamer in a style similar to some early Belleek, submitted by Chris and Bev Marvell. It was beautifully painted by R.Hill who had actually signed it. Henry pointed out that this was very unusual and immediately conveyed information to him that it was not painted at the Pottery. Worcester Companies didn't allow their painters to sign their pieces until 1900. He then turned over the tray and with a loud 'Aah, that's interesting!' he turned the base to the members to point out the black marks on the foot rim. In the trade that is called 'Mouse Dirt' (well that's the polite version) or Spit Out'. What it shows is that the piece has been refired and with the piece bearing the signature of R.Hill, it had probably been bought as a blank from the Pottery, decorated out of the factory by R.Hill and moisture had got into the piece.

When it was refired the moisture had come out at the point of least resistance, which was the unglazed foot rim and left the black stains in the material of the foot. The lids were in the form of a shell and were marked with the Royal Worcester mark dated 1862, the year the Company was formed. He asked Bev if she had the cups and saucers to make it a full set, she said that was all she had. He said it was a splendid, terribly important little tea set and out to be in a museum – preferably his own!



He then picked up a pierced lamp shade submitted by Eddie Murphy. Henry said he had never seen one before and it was very rare. It was not marked and he thought it was about 1880, probably made by Alfred Barry employed by the Grainger Company from about 1870. He was well known for this type of piercing or as it is known in the trade 'reticulated'. He then explained the method of piercing and how the clay had to be kept damp for the whole period the work was being carried out. The absolute master of this technique was George Owen, who spent months creating some outstanding pieces. The Museum was very fortunate in having some of the finest examples of his work. Unfortunately the materials and the technique he used for keeping the clay in a workable state for such long periods were lost when he died. Eddie thanked Henry and said that it wasn't for sale, but he had been offered £1,000 for it.

Henry then examined a jug submitted by Paul Ewings. The jug was made by Locke & Co., which he said was always considered to be of lower quality than the other Worcester manufacturers. He dated the jug 1895-96.



Next was a sugar and creamer in Parian ware with a frill top and decorated in green similar to Belleek. He said these were made by the Grainger Company and he found a letter K on the base which he said was a date code. They started with the letter A in 1891, therefore K being the 11th letter of the alphabet it would date the cream and sugar to 1902.



He next selected two three footed pots, similar to an Irish pot but with handles and a neck to a small top suitable for holding a single flower. These were the property of David and Chris Reynolds. They were beautifully decorated with a painting of a bird and finely gilded. Henry said they were called 'Amphora'. He found a guilders mark on the base of HB and gave Barbara the book containing the names of the Worcester guilders to find out who HB was. She soon came back with the name of Henry Bright who worked at the Pottery from 1875-1937.





Jackie Howden had submitted a large sugar box in blush ivory with gold decorated handles. Henry said that at the time that this piece was made sugar wasn't granulated or in cubes but came in a block form, hence the large size of the sugar. It had the Royal Worcester mark and was also marked with the stamp ENGLAND, indicating it was later than 1891. To protect American industry the McKinley Act of 1890 required all imports to America to be marked with the country of origin. This came into force in January 1891, and was also the reason for Belleek changing from 1st to 2nd period mark. After 1891, Worcester added a dot for each year so that pieces made after 1891 could be precisely dated. It was shape number 1373, a square embossed teaset. Jackie said that this piece was one of her restoration projects. When it came to her it had no handles, so she had made them and wanted to know if he could tell her if they were similar to the original design. Henry was quite taken aback by this piece of information and congratulated Jackie on her restoration skills. He thought the handles were excellent

and suggested she should get a copy of the original drawings from the archives so that she could make her own comparison or adjustments as necessary.



Chris Marvell had submitted a Parian ware ink well, similar to the Belleek sea horse. Henry explained the Kerr and Binns shield mark which was on the base and the way they dated their pieces. In this case there was a 6 on the left side of the shield and a 2 on the right, which gave the date of 1862.

The scheduled time to conclude the Bring & Tell item had long passed but Henry was so interesting no one wanted to stop him.

He selected a tea plate belonging to Joanna Urbanek with daisy decoration signed by W. Powell.

He confirmed that it

was made in 1928 and he knew quite a lot about the painter Willie Powell who was a very small man, probably less than 4 ft tall. He was quite a character and when visitors came to the decorating shop he always gave the demonstration and was the centre of attention. When the Company had a group photograph he stood on a box to raise himself to the same height as the rest. Henry showed the members a photograph and pointed out Willie and named a few of the others in the photo (see next page).



Worcester Museum Archive picture of Jackie's Sugar Box – part of a tea set.

Our grateful thanks to Wendy Cook, Curator of the Dyson Perrins Museum, for providing this picture from the archives.



In order to cover all the items submitted, Henry quickly spoke about the beautifully decorated Belleek saucer submitted by Gwen Wood. A tea cup and saucer decorated in Japanese patterns and symbols owned by Bev Marvell. He dated them at 1884, probably decorated by the Callowhill brothers who emigrated to America and found work making paintings for one of the railways. He said that Mr Binns was particularly keen on this form of decoration which he called 'Japanesque'. There was a cauldron for displaying violets painted with wild flowers which Henry dated at 1875. Another cup and saucer submitted by Paul Tubb also decorated in the Japanese style dated 1880. An unusual square cup and saucer decorated with a lace and flower pattern owned by Bev. Henry said that the lace pattern was a copy of lace used to make the wedding dress of Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Beatrice.

Finally there was a cup and a jug both submitted by Joanna. Henry said that the cup decorated in the classical style which followed the Japanese style and was dated at 1899. The jug was interesting, it was in old ivory with flower decoration, it should have cover as the strainer inside the lip indicated that it was for iced water and he dated it at 1884.

Henry thanked the members for bringing the wonderful pieces for him to examine and discuss, they were magnificent, an excellent example of Worcester wares.



Henry looking up a picture of the 1928 Worcester artists in his own book on Worcester – the picture was taken in the exact location of our own group photo.

His favourites had to be the Dejeuner set beautifully painted by R.Hill and the tureen in the Chamberlain & Co shape marked with a Kerr and Binns mark and dated 1860.



Postscript from Gina: I had brought along a small blue & white bowl, recently left to me by a friend. I didn't like to put it on the table as there was so much there, and I had no reason to think it was Worcester. I quickly showed it to Henry later on and he said indeed it is Worcester, very early before pieces had factory marks – about 1757 – and described it as having 'feather moulding'.

A man in a striped shirt and dark trousers stands to the left of a projector screen. The screen displays a map of Dublin, Ireland, with labels for 'DUBLIN', 'Kilmainham', 'Ringsend', and 'Loughlinstown'. Below the map is a photograph of a large, multi-story building, likely a historical site related to the presentation.

*Pictured –
Worcester Kerr
and Binns items
– and Belleek
for comparison.*





Finally it was left to our Chairman to make closing comments and to make a presentation to Amanda, who set up the meeting for us and looked after us during the whole of the proceedings.

The verdict on the meeting by Group members....

...Roll on the 100th meeting, if it's as good as this one was!



The 2005 Christmas Party at the Drum and Monkey



"A night at the Oscars" was the theme, so we expected some pretty important attendees – well, Lara Croft, Rambo, Oliver Hardy, Greta Garbo and Madonna aren't bad for starters! And who's this glamorous lady with Victor Meldrew?

I'm not sure if Rambo would have taken his M-16 (or is it an AK47?) to the Oscar ceremony, though... Eddie, if stopped on his way to the party would have had quite a bit of explaining to do... or he could just have shot his way out – that's what Rambo would do...



So here we all are – expectant before the dinner – dressed in our err.. finery!

The "Drum and Monkey" in Alderley Edge was once again the venue for the Group's Christmas Party – our usual private room and as usual fantastic food and plenty of good company.





There was a draw for table prizes – this caused considerable amusement, then the meal was served – excellent as always. Eventually, Eddie... I mean Rambo, called us to order to announce the drawing of the raffle.

Is this Pat willing their ticket to win?

If so, it was a highly successful tactic – Paul, Pat and Patrick won the



First Prize – the 1st period Grass kettle and stand. So Paul drew for the second prize... an unusual small-sized Neptune cup and saucer (2nd period as it was the second prize, of course)



...this was won by Myra and Bob..

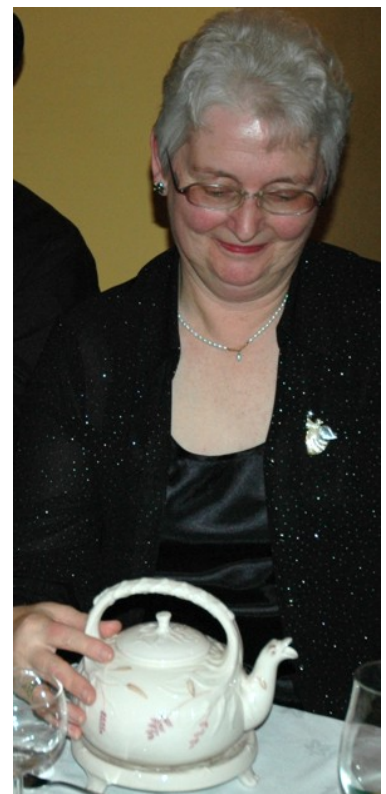
Mark and Amanda won the third prize, a gilt-decorated Tridacna cup and saucer – third period, naturally.



And, so, as you can see from these pictures – everyone was happy – well the winners anyway:



Pat, Myra and Amanda look pretty satisfied, and so does David!





Here we have enthusiastic onlooker as the raffle is drawn – or is the spectacle this contest between Rambo and Bev – my money's on Bev!



We were so relaxed that even the “blower” competition suddenly seemed a good idea –

...that's four for Bev, five for Patrick and... yes, Rambo is the winner with a new World record of (I think) six.



Eventually even your photographer (Chris) managed to win something – seen here in James Bond attire. Sheila was also eventually successful in a prize draw.



The winner of the fancy dress - well it was no contest really - it had to be Rambo... he had a gun, after all!



...he certainly doesn't look like he can be trusted with this tiny delicate Belleek vase!.



Sunday at Chris and David's



Once again, as they have done now for the past few years, Chris and David Reynolds invited us to their home on Sunday for morning coffee, a good session of conversation and Belleeking and then a buffet lunch. This very kind offer was taken up by a good number of the Group members and we convened for the second session of the 2005 Christmas party round at Chris and David's. We were welcomed by David and young Harry.



Here's some of Chris and David's wonderful Belleek collection, the buffet lunch and Linda, Tony and Bev enjoying the day.



Many thanks to Chris and David.



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. This is the second part of the article.

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 2. The Foundation of Belleek Pottery

Fact and Fiction

Important Connections

To consider some other Irish connections leading to the foundation of Belleek Pottery, we need to look at events in Ireland that pre-dated the production of the Shakespeare Service. We return to the proprietor of the Royal Porcelain Works, Worcester: William Henry Kerr. True to his patriotic Irish form, the architect that Kerr had employed to look after his major rebuilding plans at Worcester in 1851 and 1852, was another young Irishman, Robert Williams Armstrong. It appears that while Armstrong was working as Kerr's employee, both Kerr and Armstrong made trips to Ireland to see if suitable Irish raw materials could be found for what amounted to a "pet" project of both Kerr and Binns – no less than the demonstration of Irish mastery of the ceramic art – which, as we have seen, led to the production of the Shakespeare Service and the development of Kerr's Irish Statuary Porcelain.

Robert Williams Armstrong's association with W.H. Kerr

Francis Armstrong was a County Longford man who had settled in Dublin, working as an architect and builder. His son, Robert Williams Armstrong, was born in 1824. As a young man, he had shown interest in potting and pottery but he followed in his father's footsteps and trained to be an architect and civil engineer. He married Annie Nairn in 1848 and moved to England around 1850 to work as an architect and civil engineer with his practice based in London. *For full details of Armstrong's family tree, please refer to Brian Russell's excellent research on the subject (Newsletter 26/1, March 2005).*



Robert Williams Armstrong
1824 - 1884

It is possible that this move to England was instigated by Kerr, who had also finally moved to Worcester himself around 1850. Armstrong worked extensively with Kerr at Worcester but his services were also contracted by other English potteries in Stoke on Trent, amongst them Minton. In spite of most of his employment apparently coming from Worcester or North Staffordshire, Armstrong had his architects practice based in the City Road, London.



Left:

Advertisement produced by W.H.Kerr and Co. (Kerr and Binns) in 1858 showing the interior of the Showroom.

(This Showroom was designed by Armstrong in 1851 when the Chamberlain family still owned the works).



Above: Front page of a promotional Guide to the Porcelain Works published in 1853, showing the front of the Showroom.



Armstrong's Showroom as it appears today – essentially unchanged since it was built in 1851, but now used as the Visitor Centre's Café

Kerr's plans for the reconstruction and redevelopment of the old Severn Street Chamberlains Works relied on modernisation and rebuilding. Kerr had to have good working conditions and modern buildings to allow his team of young designers to flourish at Worcester, he also needed modern production to replace the old fashioned and outdated processes which were the legacy from the old Chamberlains Company.

The picture painted in the last days of the Chamberlain Company is one of lack of investment in design, plant and buildings and of production methods which had remained essentially unchanged since well before the merger with Flight, Barr and Barr in 1840. Having a well qualified architect was clearly essential to Kerr and Armstrong possesses one quality that made him highly suitable in Kerr's eyes: he was Irish and he also shared Kerr's views on the need to bring Irish design and industry into prominence.

It appears that as soon as Kerr was given responsibility as Managing Director of the Chamberlains Company (in 1850), he employed Armstrong to design a prestigious showroom for the Company. This building still stands today (It is the Royal Worcester Café) and it featured heavily in W.H. Kerr and Co. advertisements from the Kerr and Binns period. The building actually predates the Kerr and Binns period and illustrates that Kerr wasted no time in his redevelopment plans as soon as he was given the responsibility for this.

Armstrong had had some experience of the pottery production process as he had taken an interest in this from an early age, but his training and profession was that of an architect. It is clear that Armstrong was able to gain more experience of modern pottery production methods by working with Kerr and Binns amongst others. Armstrong's reputation as an architect in the pottery industry combined with his knowledge of porcelain and pottery production along with his Irish origins, would have made him (in Kerr's eyes at least) the ideal candidate to design, build and operate the Belleek Pottery.

It is not known exactly when Kerr first met Armstrong although their business interests and backgrounds in Dublin would almost certainly have brought them into contact with each other well before 1850. This is certainly an earlier date than the first meeting of Armstrong and Bloomfield – whichever story of that meeting is accepted (this is described later in this part of the article).

David McBirney's association with W.H. Kerr

Kerr's position in the Dublin business community probably also meant that he knew David McBirney before either Armstrong or Bloomfield met him, but this cannot be absolutely proved without additional evidence being found. Other circumstantial evidence comes from the strong associations both had with William Dargan and the coincidence that both McBirney and Kerr lived in (or near) Kingstown and (before 1850) both had business interests in central Dublin (as has been described in the first part of this article).

Writing later, in notes relating to Belleek Pottery's exhibits in the 1865 Dublin Exhibition, McBirney gives specific acknowledgement to Kerr: "[Belleek Pottery]...wholeheartedly assisted by W.H. Kerr in his research on the commercial possibilities of the pottery."

I have found no original documentary evidence but the accepted belief is that McBirney was finally persuaded to fund the Belleek Pottery venture after a meeting in Worcester between McBirney, Kerr and Armstrong during which Kerr outlined the business possibilities of the potential venture and Armstrong proposed the actual buildings that would be required. Kerr was apparently able to illustrate the success that he had had at Worcester using the Belleek materials in his own manufacture of his Irish Statuary Porcelain (Parian) figures. The precise date of this meeting is not known but must have been between 1853 and 1857.

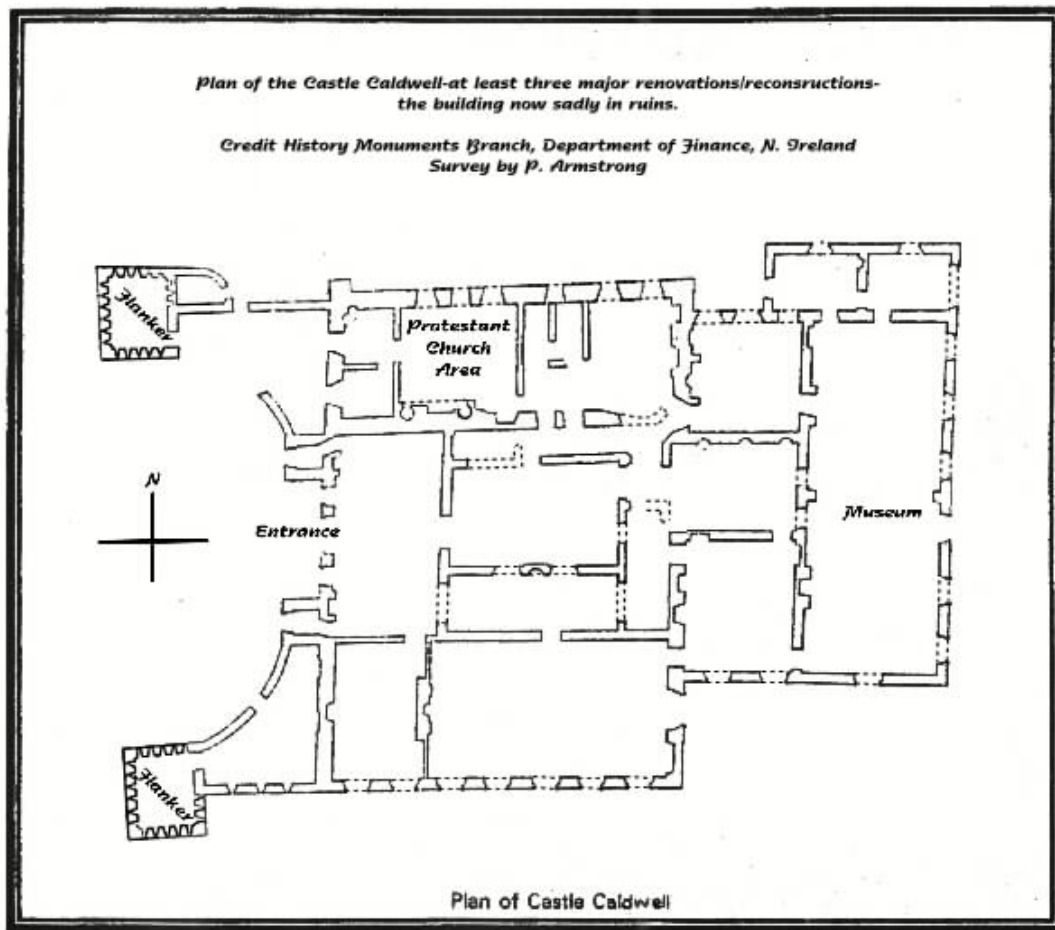
The most important Irish connection? The Stories and the Reality of the "Irish Earth"

So, what about the wonderful new Irish "clay", so praised in the Shakespeare service? Kevin Curry categorically states that Kerr used feldspar from Killiney Hill, south of Dublin, but other authors (Sandon, Langham et al.) state that Belleek materials were used in making the Shakespeare Service. Whether or not Kerr used Belleek materials in 1853, it is certain that he used them later and the raw materials became important in themselves to the British porcelain industry. We have all heard the story that comes from John Caldwell Bloomfield himself, telling how *he* found the Belleek clay:

"Bloomfield was amazed on one of his walks through the [Castle Caldwell] estate by the brilliance of the whitewash on a tenant's cottage; he inquired further and was taken to a clay bed where he found the kaolin and feldspar."



John Caldwell Bloomfield 1823-1897 (above) and Castle Caldwell, photographed when the house was already in a very sorry state (around 1900) (left).



The floor plan of Castle Caldwell is shown (left): note the house contained a Protestant Church and a Museum.

Below left, the remains of the house as it is today, a ruin (below).



On the discovery of the Belleek raw materials, we have a second view: this is the “official” version – this from many Belleek Pottery sources (Example Website: http://www.theirishgiftshouse.com/en-us/dept_2.html)

“In 1849 John Caldwell Bloomfield inherited the Castlecaldwell estate, which encompassed the village of Belleek, from his father. Mindful of the plight of his tenants in the aftermath of the potato famine he sought to provide some form of worthwhile employment. An amateur mineralogist, he ordered a geological survey of his land. To his delight it revealed the necessary raw materials to make Pottery - feldspar, kaolin, flint, clay and shale.”

A **third version**, a slightly different view of this “discovery” comes from Sir Charles Alexander Cameron (born 1830), later an important Dublin luminary, writing in his memoirs in 1912 (Published in 1913) – this is also documented by Richard Degenhardt in both editions of his “Belleek Collector’s Guide”:



Sir Charles Alexander
Cameron

*"In the 'fifties I spent several of my Christmas holidays with the late Mr. John Caldwell Bloomfield, D.L., and his first wife, at Castle Caldwell, on Lough Erne, County of Fermanagh. One day, when out shooting along with my host, I **noticed a white patch of clay**, and took a portion of it to the Castle. I heated it to redness, and on removing it from the fire and allowing it to cool, I found that it had not lost its white colour: this showed the absence of iron oxide. I then said to John Bloomfield that I believed he had a good porcelain clay on his estate."*

"I subsequently made an analysis of it. At that time the late Rev. Joseph Galbraith, F.T.C.D., was interested in mineralogy, and he doubted the existence of a real china clay in the County of Fermanagh, and addressed a letter to that effect to the editor of "Saunders' NewsLetter," a daily paper since extinct. I, of course, replied, and others joined in the discussion, which continued for many days, and was spoken of as the "china war."

"That I was right was, however, proved by a factory being started to work the clay [Belleek Pottery trading as David McBirney and Co.]. I have the first article made from it - a saucer, manufactured from a small quantity of the clay sent to Kerr's Porcelain Factory, Worcester. In process of time the clay was exhausted, but feldspar replaced it."

Cameron's mention of Kerr here is significant. Cameron lived in Dublin and had in 1852 been appointed as Professor of Chemistry at the Dublin Chemical Society that had its premises in a building on Capel Street, Dublin. James Kerr's China Shop was a large building also on Capel Street. Cameron does not actually say that it was he who took or sent the kaolin to Kerr, he just says: "...clay sent to Kerr's Porcelain Factory...". Clearly the actual date of Cameron's visit to Castle Caldwell when he discovered the clay is absolutely vital in determining what really happened! If this account is true and Kerr did use Belleek clay in making the Shakespeare Service, it must have been well before May 1853 when, as we have already heard, Kerr was able to exhibit the Service in the Dublin Exhibition, made principally from "Irish earth". In spite of the later published views that Belleek materials were used in making the Shakespeare Service – it seems more likely that Kerr actually used the Dublin Killiney Hill feldspar for the service and then used Castle Caldwell materials for later "Irish Statuary Porcelain" production once it was proven to be of better quality than the Killiney Hill material.

John Caldwell Bloomfield gives the following, again slightly different and more detailed version of the **first** account, in his article "Belleek Pottery" which he read to the Society of Arts in 1883: this is basically the "official version". Again, it was written long after the actual events happened, so inaccuracies may have crept in and embellishments may have been made with the benefit of hindsight, as is also of course possible in Cameron's account (above):

*"Returning home from China, I found the property I inherited, from isolation and continued absenteeism of my immediate ancestors, not in a satisfactory condition. Gifted with some energy and a wish to improve, I immediately commenced to examine into the resources of the estate, **and in the course of geological and mineralogical researches, I found kaolin and feldspar in the gneiss formation.** The day on which this took place, I decided that, if spared, the water power I had already thoroughly appreciated in Belleek should turn the wheel of a porcelain factory. Travelling like a miller's commercial agent, with a pocketful of kaolin, running after my late friend William Dargan, and every one possessed of a patriotic spirit, I chanced to fall upon Mr. Robert Williams Armstrong, the present partner and manager at Belleek, and he, with the late Mr. David McBirney, who found the capital, set to work, and the result has been that I have lived to see a wretched hamlet, inhabited by squalid occupiers of hovels unfit for human life, their only science the use of the tongue and fist, their extent of art a mud pie, grown into a town, with some £60,000 to £70,000 expended in and about it. But this was not affected without the personal labour and loss which must ever attend the exertions of every philanthropist."*

Yet a **fourth view** is just about conceivable, but highly unlikely. It is recorded that Kerr and Armstrong made at least one trip to Ireland to conduct “geological surveys”, apparently as early as 1851, for suitable raw materials. They used the book and maps by Robert Kane describing the “Industrial Resources of Ireland”, published in 1844, as their guide. They may have found the Fermanagh deposits themselves! In reality, this view is extremely unlikely as they would have depended on good local knowledge of an area to narrow their investigations, neither Kerr (a businessman) nor Armstrong (an architect) really had the basic expertise to carry out such surveys, so their trips were most likely to have been to check-out or confirm good “leads”, basically coming from Kane. It is slightly more likely (but not recorded) that Kerr was so impressed by the “sample” Cameron sent to him, that he decided to make a trip (with Armstrong) to Fermanagh to see for himself. Unfortunately, this is supposition, as we have no record of the exact date when Cameron says the material was sent to Kerr in Worcester, or if **this** was a motivation for Kerr and/or Armstrong to visit Fermanagh.

So which story do we believe? Did Bloomfield just stumble across the “magical” white feldspar or did he methodically search for it? Was it the trained chemist, Cameron who found it? Perhaps Kerr or Armstrong found the deposits themselves by their “geological survey”. There is certainly no specific mention of the Castle Caldwell materials in Kane’s 1844 “Industrial Resources of Ireland”. The truth is probably somewhere between Bloomfield’s and Cameron’s versions. Both their accounts were written long after the actual event (Bloomfield’s account in 1883 and Cameron’s in 1912) so the reality of the situation must have become somewhat clouded both by the passing of time and the tendency to embellish in order to make a good story! The common thread here, is that at least two of the parties involved, Bloomfield and Kerr, strongly held a similar point of view: Bloomfield’s phrase “...*running after my late friend William Dargan...*” is highly significant here. Dargan was *the* “Great Irish Philanthropist” of that age and it is clear that both Bloomfield and Kerr aspired to his noble aims – to follow in his footsteps is what they desired to do. This was the strongest influence leading to the foundation of the Belleek Pottery: commercial aims were subordinated to the glory of Irish achievement and personal motivation to do “good works”.

To sum up: whichever way you look at it, the Belleek “clay” was vitally important and clearly the most necessary of all the conditions leading to Belleek Pottery’s founding. The availability of the raw materials was necessary but certainly not sufficient in the Pottery’s foundation: many other factors were also required. That Kerr was involved with the raw materials is clear, and (as we have said) Armstrong, as Kerr’s employee and friend, was also involved. The motivation for Armstrong and Kerr to make “survey trips” to Ireland was to discover (or to confirm) sources of **Irish** raw material for the Kerr and Binns Worcester Company. It is highly unlikely that the original objective of these trips was the foundation of an Irish Porcelain company! In the story of the foundation of Belleek Pottery, the vital sequence of events was: the discovery of the raw materials; the enthusiastic backing of John Caldwell Bloomfield; the meeting of Bloomfield and Armstrong and the promise of finance from the successful merchant David McBirney of Dalkey, probably brokered by William Dargan. While this was progressing, W.H. Kerr was at Worcester working with the overriding agenda of producing items with the predominant involvement of Irish talent and Irish materials. Kerr was vitally interested in the success of the Belleek Project and he provided technical help, business and moral support and played a vital role in introducing and persuading the parties involved.

Another pivotal story in the series of events leading to Belleek Pottery’s foundation is the first meeting of Bloomfield and Armstrong. Bloomfield himself (quoted above) writing in 1883, fully thirty years after the event took place says he “...*chanced to fall upon Mr. Robert Williams Armstrong, the present partner and manager at Belleek...*” when he was “...*travelling like a miller’s commercial agent, with a pocketful of kaolin...*” It is highly unlikely that this can be taken literally as this phrase is taken from a speech in which Bloomfield uses poetic descriptions of other events. Other accounts have Bloomfield chancing upon Armstrong in a shop in Dublin (Kerr’s shop on Capel Steet?) – again, this may well have happened but it was clear that Kerr already knew of Bloomfield’s material and Kerr employed Armstrong. If not the direct link between the two, it is inevitable that Armstrong would have come to know of Bloomfield in his conversations with Kerr.

So the wonderful raw material had been found. It was almost immediately in demand in England: William Pare, writing in the Ballyshannon Herald, reports on 15th June 1860:

“The feldspar will be brought from a neighbouring hill...here it will be calcinated, ground and triburated, and when made into clay will be dried and forwarded in blocks...to Staffordshire and Worcestershire Potteries, for its conversion into china. It is to be hoped that ere long the china itself will be made in this country.”

The following two extracts are other accounts of the Irish feldspar and kaolin (please note that there are many spelling mistakes, assumptions and factual errors which have been left uncorrected: for example, the Shakespeare Service was not a “dinner service” and the location of County Fermanagh is given incorrectly!). Both extracts are from ABCIR, the Antique British Ceramics Information Resource (<http://www.abcir.org>):

“In the early 1850s, following the Great Exhibition of 1851, William Henry Kerr, owner of the factory that we now know as Royal Worcester, received a shipment of Felspar and China clay from an estate in County Fermanagh. Southern Ireland. He was asked to analyse this and decide upon its suitability for porcelain manufacture. At this time Parian Statuary figures, in imitation of the Greek and Roman marbles, had just been introduced by the likes of Copeland and Minton and were the height of fashion throughout the western world. The Fermanagh shipments were the purest samples of Felspar that had ever been seen and Kerr was very excited with them. He went into almost immediate production and in the Dublin exhibition of 1853 won the gold award for what he called ‘Irish Statuary porcelain’ with a full dinner service depicting scenes from ‘A Midsummer Nights Dream’

Kerr, and the other manufactures based further north in the potteries, had used English deposits of Felspar to produce their Parian but the iron silicates always present in the ore lead to a grey tone in the finished articles which not everyone found pleasant. A whiter body was achievable by using cleaner deposits found in Sweden but even these were no match for the new Irish Felspar products. The estate owners were swamped with demands for supplies to be shipped to all the major manufacturers.”

“It is difficult to overstate the importance of Parian to the potting industry at this time. As an example, When the Kerr and Binns factory in Worcester was reformed into the Worcester Royal Porcelain Company in 1862 a new system of numbering their products was introduced. The ornamental ware was split into ten different classes and the first two of these were for Statuary Parian. Class one being for busts and small figures and class two for larger figures. Its importance long outlived its original purpose of copying classical works and when these became less fashionable figures were produced depicting other themes. The world was opening up and there was a huge interest in other cultures. James Hadley in particular, while working at the Royal Worcester factory produced a wide range of ‘water carriers’ representing several of the middle eastern countries.

The constituents for this Parian were 40 percent feldspar, 36 percent China clay and 24 percent frit. All of the Parian produced during these very early years had an ivory tone that was almost grey but factory recipes varied slightly and some were greyer than others. Minton, for instance, was much lighter than Copeland while that from the Royal Worcester factory was marginally darker. This grey, or ivory, tone was caused by iron silicate deposits in the feldspar.

*By the early 1850s a cleaner source of felspar had been found in Sweden which removed the ‘grey’ tone and many factories started producing a much whiter Parian. Wedgwood’s version was known as Carrera and they produced many figure groups in this formula but the name didn’t really catch on and it is still mostly known as Parian.. **Royal Worcester aquired a source of pure feldspar in Ireland and started producing their ‘Irish Parian’** This looked purer because of its whiteness and most of the other companies in Britain started clamouring for access to the same supply but it lacked the same degree of translucence and many figures continued to be made to the original recipe.”*

The Irish material that was used to make the Worcester Shakespeare Service was undoubtedly of inferior quality, or else the Worcester potters were then inexperienced in the art of Parian production. Later accounts of the Service (Wendy Cooke) tell us that very few of the pieces were perfect even as originally exhibited in 1853 and that the body of the service was fragile and unstable – it basically fell apart!

As Louis Solon commented (see part 1 of this article), the present day Royal Worcester Company has examples of pieces from the Shakespeare Service in their excellent museum and they are extremely fine, both in their modelling and decoration. There is now however a great deal of damage and restoration to the remaining pieces (perhaps this would be expected, given Solon’s description of their history!) and this is most probably due to the unsound material used in their making. The Killiney Hill materials, if they were used to make the Service, were of inferior quality and would certainly have caused difficulty in the production.

That the Shakespeare Service was highly successful when exhibited was recorded in great detail by R.W. Binns – although his “official” account of the making of this service was written by him much later (in 1897) when Binns had retired from Royal Worcester – again we have a possible example of someone looking back with “rose coloured glasses”.

At the time, in 1853, it was vital for Kerr and Binns to be seen to be successful and it is obvious that a good deal of what we would today call “spin” was attached to their eulogies on the Service. That Queen Victoria could not be persuaded to buy the service at the Dublin exhibition, in spite of taking great interest in Kerr’s exhibits, is perhaps telling: the service looked splendid, was of fabulous design but was somewhat lacking in its implementation. Once the Belleek materials were available, it is clear that Kerr wasted no time in using them and then produced very high quality Parian figures and

other items made from this Belleek material during his time at Worcester. At present the detailed research required to determine which British companies actually used the Fermanagh raw materials has not been done.

Regardless of the doubts and controversy that surround the original Castle Caldwell “find”, Kerr now finally had his answer to the “Parian” of Minton, the “Statuary Porcelain” of Copeland, and the “Carrara” of Wedgwood. Worcester could now produce an effective Parian body and Kerr and Binns (and Binns alone after 1862) made many extremely fine products using this Parian or derivatives of it. Kerr and Binns called the ware “*Irish* Statuary Porcelain” when sold in a figural form.

The Dublin 1853 Exhibition and the foundation of Belleek Pottery

In the formation of Belleek Pottery, it is highly probable that the 1853 Dublin “Great Industrial Exhibition” played an important part. Kerr was an important exhibitor, Degenhardt states that Bloomfield attended the exhibition, McBirney was influential and living in Dublin at the time, as an associate of Dargan’s he would almost certainly have attended. Cameron and Kane, as representatives of the Dublin scientific community were also certain to have been invited. Kerr acknowledges Kane in the special book Binns produced for the Exhibition committee members. Armstrong had his architects practice in London at the time of the Exhibition but would surely have attended because of his association with Kerr. It is entirely speculation but it is possible that all the parties vital to Belleek Pottery’s foundation could have met in Dublin because of the Exhibition. This may not have been the case, but it was certainly true that the power of the Exhibition was to motivate and energise these Irishmen, to galvanise them into action to rectify the deficiencies of Irish Manufacturing at the time. Marion Langham states:

“Shortly after the 1853 Dublin Exhibition, Bloomfield and Armstrong met. With so much in common, they soon agreed to work together to build the Pottery. Bloomfield would provide the land at a nominal rent whilst Armstrong would design, build, and manage it. A financial backer was all that was needed and Bloomfield felt he knew the right man - David McBirney. Bloomfield and Armstrong's enthusiasm was such that McBirney was intrigued and travelled to the Worcester Porcelain Factory and then to Belleek. Soon afterwards he agreed to finance the venture. The pottery would be known as "D. McBirney & Co.”

It is perhaps hard to believe that Bloomfield did not already know Armstrong by the end of 1853, especially given the Bloomfield-Cameron-Kerr connection in the discovery of the china clay and feldspar at Castle Caldwell (discussed earlier in this article). It is clear that considerable discussion *did* take place around this time concerning the formation of an Irish Company to produce fine porcelain using Bloomfield’s materials. What is unclear is the extent to which Kerr was involved. Kerr had just produced the Shakespeare Service using Irish materials although it is questionable whether Bloomfield’s feldspar had been available in time. Kerr had produced at least one sample item using Bloomfield’s materials at Worcester around this time, but I have found no direct evidence that Kerr’s involvement at the time went further than making samples and providing business advice and encouragement. Kerr had the knowledge, the resources and the ability to make the “Belleek Project” happen. His actions point to his wanting to be involved, but in late 1853, Kerr, although (in R.W. Binn’s words) equipped with “the enthusiastic patriotism of Irishmen”, probably had his work almost completely cut out in looking after the regeneration of the still-ailing but now recovering Worcester Factory.

The Events leading to the Formation of Belleek Pottery

Richard Degenhardt, in his second edition of “The Complete Collector’s Guide and illustrated Reference” states:

This date Degenhardt gives here is of course

incorrect: the Shakespeare Service was not exhibited until May 1853 and although Bloomfield almost certainly *did* see it in Dublin then, he was much more likely to have gone to the Dublin Exhibition at the behest of Kerr or Cameron or even at the invitation of his friend William Dargan. Kerr was also probably the catalyst in introducing his friend and architect, Armstrong, to Bloomfield. McBirney was an associate of William Dargan’s. Dargan and Kerr between them knew all

“... Cameron of Dublin, sent samples of the Irish [Castle Caldwell] clay and feldspar to the Royal Porcelain Works, Worcester, England to be tested. The English firm was then owned by the partners, Kerr and Binns. W.H. Kerr, a native of County Tyrone only 20 miles from Belleek, had used Irish materials to produce a dessert service, “The Midsummer Night’s Dream”, which Bloomfield had seen on display in Dublin in 1851.” (sic)

three of the Belleek principals. It is a nice theory that they discussed the formation of the Belleek Pottery when they all met at the 1853 Dublin Exhibition – unfortunately this has not been verified!

S. McCrum writing in his book “The Belleek Pottery” states:

“A number of trial pieces were submitted to him [to McBirney, by Kerr]. After a visit to Castle Caldwell and a careful examination of the possible site and the deposits of raw materials, McBirney offered to supply the entire capital necessary for building the factory and starting and running the business, which was to trade as “McBirney and Company” with Armstrong as art director”

McBirney seems to have been finally persuaded as to the viability of the

Belleek Pottery venture and hence committed to give it his (considerable) financial backing after travelling with Armstrong to meet Kerr at Worcester. It is not clear if McBirney was brought in at a late stage, to be used as the source of finance, or was involved with the project from its earliest days. The evidence from Cunningham is that William Dargan, perhaps because he had the highest profile of anyone in Ireland as an entrepreneur and philanthropist, but also because both Bloomfield and Kerr both counted him as their friend, was asked by Bloomfield to contribute the capital well *before* David McBirney was approached. It was only when Dargan declined, having already dissipated a good part of his personal fortune on speculative ventures in the 1850's following his financial loss at the 1853 Exhibition and other commercially unsuccessful ventures, that McBirney was approached. It may even have been Dargan who suggested McBirney as an alternative candidate to supply the finance when he was unable to comply himself. We cannot date these events precisely but they must have taken place between 1853 and 1857.

The Belleek Pottery foundation stone was laid in 1857 and production of earthenware is thought to have started within the next three years. The “Belleek Project” had been successfully started but the Project's main objective of gaining recognition in influential circles for artistic production was by no means yet achieved.

The Roles played at Worcester by W.H. Kerr and R.W. Binns



Kerr and Binns “Queen Victoria Service” plate in the “Worcester Enamel” style painted in 1861 by Thomas Bott (above) and its extraordinary mark - one of the most elaborate backstamps ever (right) designed by Digby Wyatt.



Returning now to the Worcester side of the story; over his years in control of the Worcester Factory, Kerr was responsible for the overall management and financing of the company and the “Art Director” R.W. Binns was in charge of the design and production of the merchandise.

Perhaps because the “official history” was later written by Binns, it is *he* that is credited with the major achievements of the Kerr and Binns Worcester Company. Kerr does however gain some credit for his efforts in rebuilding the Severn Street Factory, installing new equipment and making improvements to working conditions there. Binns rightly gets credit for employing talented artists and designers such as James Hadley (in 1852), Josiah Rushton (in 1853) and George Owen (in 1859). Other artists, Thomas Bott and William Boyton Kirk were employed at Kerr and Binns in 1852. That the Kerr and Binns factory truly rose to prominence was highlighted at the Paris Exhibition of 1855 where “Limoges Enamel” style work by Thomas Bott, and Parianware decorated in the Italian Renaissance style (according to Binns) received great acclaim. Finally in 1859, after Prince Albert had been shown examples of Thomas Bott’s enamel work, Queen Victoria ordered a dessert service from them decorated in the “Worcester Enamel” style (by Thomas Bott). This service is said to have finally: “*Re-established the reputation of Worcester Royal Porcelain Works after many troubled years.*” – again these are R.W. Binns’s words. This service was exhibited at the 1862 London Exhibition. With all this artistic success, the next event to happen is wholly unexpected – in 1862, Kerr left the company!

Kerr’s “retirement”

1862.] THE ART-JOURNAL ADVERTISER. 111

ROYAL PORCELAIN WORKS,
Worcester, March, 1862.

IMPORTANT SALE.
Worcester Porcelain.

MESSRS. KERR & CO. beg to inform the Nobility and Gentry, and Families Furnishing, that a Change of Partnership being about to take place, they have determined on disposing of the whole of their Manufactured Stock by Private Sale, at Reduced Prices, or Discount, at the Works, consisting of

**BREAKFAST,
DINNER,
DESSERT,
TEA, and
TOILET SERVICES,**

In Fine Porcelain, and
Stone China.

The above are made into Services, for 12, 18, or 24 Persons, and all marked in plain Figures, at Reduced Prices.—The Ornamental Stock will be sold subject to Discount, according to amount Purchased.

The Stock is chiefly of the newest and most elegant Patterns, and almost every variety of Prices, in value amounting to from £20,000 to £30,000.

SALES FROM 9 A.M. TO 6 P.M. EACH DAY,
FOR A LIMITED PERIOD.

SAMPLES FORWARDED, CARRIAGE FREE, IF REQUIRED.

ALL SERVICES PURCHASED AT THE ABOVE SALES CAN BE MATCHED
HEREAFTER AT THE MANUFACTORY.

N.B.—VISITORS ADMITTED TO INSPECT THE WORKS AS USUAL.

LONDON OFFICE: 91, CANNON STREET, CITY.
DUBLIN: 114 & 115, CAPEL STREET.

In March 1862, William Henry Kerr “retired” from his position at Worcester, leaving control of the company to R.W. Binns and Edward Phillips who then became joint Managing Directors. Previously, in 1860, William Boyton Kirk had also retired both from Sculpting and from Kerr and Binns: Kirk entered the Church three years later and is recorded as occupying parishes in Birkenhead and Ashton Under Lyme in his later years. Following Kerr’s departure, Binns retained control of artistic direction and Phillips took on the role of works superintendent. The company name was changed to the “Worcester Royal Porcelain Company”. Since Kerr had been the sole owner of the Worcester factory, one would normally think that the sale of his interests should have benefited him financially, so that on his return to Dublin, he would have had a considerable amount of money in his pocket – there is unfortunately evidence however (see below) that he returned to Ireland with very little!

Kerr was only 39 years old. His real reasons for leaving Worcester are not immediately obvious. Hugh Gibson (writing in 1993 but using evidence from 1862) writes: “*In 1862... at the old Diglis China Works in Worcester the partnership of Kerr and Binns had floundered. The ten year partnership had been one of great technical and artistic innovation and there had been a good deal of building and renovation at the works. Binns took credit for the artistic success: Kerr took the blame for the commercial failure, for the financial performance was miserable, and he returned whence he came to Ireland.*”

Advertisement placed by W.H. Kerr and Co. announcing the sale of the “Whole of their Manufactured Stock”. Diplomatically, the change in ownership is phrased: “A Change of Partnership being about to take place” – Kerr was going to “retire”.

There is a strong feeling of premonition here – Kerr at Worcester seems to have been in a similar position to McBirney at Belleek twenty years later – there was great artistic success but “miserable” commercial failure! What we *do* know for sure is that in 1862 Kerr returned to Dublin to manage the family

china business still based at 114-115 Capel Street, where he continued to act as Royal Worcester’s main dealer in Ireland and that he was able to take on other responsibilities and projects. By 1862, Belleek Pottery was in operation but was almost certainly producing only earthenware. Belleek had therefore not yet achieved the artistic recognition that full Parian production would bring. Many problems remained to be solved at Belleek. In April 1862, it is perhaps significant to note, Kerr was free from his Worcester responsibilities and was therefore available to provide assistance and support to his friend Robert Williams Armstrong.

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

From Burslem to Trenton via Stoke and Belleek

The Life of WILLIAM WOOD GALLIMORE

By Paul Tubb

William Wood Gallimore was born in Burslem on February 7th 1841 and was baptised at St Paul's Church in Burslem on March 3rd in that year. Quite unusually we have on his birth certificate the precise time of his birth, 10 past 2 PM, as this was how the registrar interpreted the question 'When and where born'. As to the location within Burslem the father gives as his residence 'Furlong Cottage' Burslem and states that his occupation is an Engraver. William's parents were William Gallimore and Esther Wood who had been married in the parish church at Wolstanton on July 2nd 1832. Whether Esther was connected to the pottery family of Wood, famous for Woods Ware items of everyday crockery, I have not been able to establish with certainty.

Her parents, John Wood and Susannah Wood, had been married at the church of Norton in the Moors on January 19th 1807 at a time when numerous Wood surname entries are listed in the marriage registers there together with many other well known Potteries surnames such as Wedgwood, Bromley, Aynsley, Shufflebotham, Spode, and Tams. No doubt the somewhat cleaner air out on the Moors away from the smoke filled streets of the five/six towns was attractive to those who could afford to either live out of town or use its facilities for their ceremonial events. William's paternal grandparents, Jesse Gallimore and Ann Faulkner, were also married at Norton in the Moors on October 12th 1797. Some years earlier on May 12th 1783 a Samuel Gallimore had married a Mary Faulkner, also at Norton in the Moors, but I have not yet been able to establish whether this is a case of brothers marrying sisters. The biblical provenance of the names Jesse and Samuel may well indicate that they are brothers but I have not found any documentary 'proof' of their being so.



Norton in the Moors, St Bartholomew's Church

© Alf Beard 2005

William and Esther, William Wood's parents, were married before the start of civil registration in July 1837 so we are dependant upon parish register evidence for any children they may have had between their marriage in 1832 and William's birth in 1841.

St. Bartholomew's Church. Picture reproduced from: <http://www.wishful-thinking.org.uk/genuki/STS/NortonintheMoors/StBartholomew.html>

The only likely baptism reference I have found is that of Jane Gallimore, born in late 1838 and baptised at Wolstanton on January 27th 1839. Unfortunately, I have no further certain reference to her from any source. At the time of the 1851 census the household consisted simply of William W Gallimore, the 10 year old son of William and Hester living with his parents at Buck's Lane, Burslem. The father, William, was aged 39 and is noted as an Engraver on Copper while all three give their place of birth as Burslem. Incidentally, in the light of William's subsequent career, the next door neighbour is an 'operative chemist' named Thomas Robotham who was born in Ireland and living with his south Staffordshire born wife, Elizabeth, but no children. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility to imagine a friendship between the neighbours and young William hearing tales of the Emerald Isle which helped him to decide some few years later that working in Ireland was something which appealed to him.

There is no sign of Jane, nor indeed any other children, still at home. There is a Jane Gallimore living at 6 Cobden Street, Hulme, Manchester with parents George and Jane and three brothers and a sister. The parents and the oldest children, including Jane, are all noted as having been born in Burslem, Staffordshire and my surmise is that this is the aforementioned Jane. I think, however, that she is a cousin of William Wood Gallimore as her father, George, is probably William's elder brother born in 1805 but baptised at St. Paul's in Burslem on the same day as William, September 25th 1808. Thus, it would appear that William and Esther only had the one child who survived infancy and there is no evidence that I have uncovered yet of any who may have been born but died young.

By the time of the 1861 census the family had moved to Rose Street in Hanley and the elder William is still an engraver and his son is noted as a Potter's Modeller a job designation that he would keep for the rest of his life. Once again, as with William Henshall, there is no indication of which pottery company he was employed by but the book "William Henry Goss" by Lynda and Nicholas Pine indicates that he was at that time a member of Goss & Peake's team in their John Street factory adjacent to the Cock Inn at Stoke. The same authority suggests that William was one of just two or three craftsmen engaged at that time on making parian portrait busts from which the moulds were made for the range of busts on which the factory, later just W H Goss, built its reputation.

The Pines clearly give 1863 as the date on which William Wood Gallimore, along with Bromley and some ten others, was induced to leave Goss & Peake and set off for Belleek. The authors give no indication as to the reasons behind this move. In 1862 William Goss had won the highly coveted medal at the Great International Exhibition for his display of parian and figurines and it seems clear that Gallimore and, probably, some of the other defectors had had a major input to this success. Could it be that their part in the success was not appreciated sufficiently? Or were the strains between Goss and Peake, which led to the dissolving of their partnership in 1868, already becoming apparent and casting a shadow over the working conditions? Or were Armstrong and McBirney so persuasive and offering such a good deal that even senior and trusted employees of Goss & Peake took the bait and went off to the west of Ireland and a lifestyle totally unknown to them? What makes men turn their back on current success in search of possible success elsewhere?

There is no generally agreed answer that I have seen to any of these questions. Possibly something of all these influences was at play. Somebody or something must have persuaded these talented, but nonetheless ordinary, working men that Parian ware was the coming 'thing' in pottery and that a factory towards the western edge of Ireland was best placed to reap the economic advantage in producing it. Then again, given the links between the Worcester porcelain factory and Belleek through Kerr, Dargan and Kirk why did Armstrong and McBirney come to Goss & Peake at Stoke to recruit their expert potters? There is room here for a thoroughgoing piece of historical scholarship to find an answer to this mystery.



Holy Trinity Church, Northwood

There is, however, common agreement that William Wood Gallimore came to Belleek in 1863 and was very influential in helping the factory there to produce high quality parian ware figures in quite a short time span, probably through a fruitful artistic partnership with Robert Armstrong's wife Annie. It is clear, too, that he was back in Stoke and with Goss & Peake again in 1866. During that summer he married Mary Elizabeth Stevenson at Trinity Church, Northwood, Stoke upon Trent and their first child, Flora Ethel was born in Hanley the following year and then Marian in 1868. His wife, Mary Elizabeth, had been born in Stoke in 1846, the second daughter of James and Caroline Stevenson who at the time of the 1851 census were living at Greville Street, Northwood, Hanley. By 1861 they had moved on to 1 Gill Street in Shelton and in both census returns her father is noted as an engraver. He is also stated to be an engraver on William and Mary's marriage certificate, as also is William's father. Her residence at the time of the marriage is given as Tinkers Clough whilst William's is Rose Street. On the certificate William's age is 25 and Mary Elizabeth's is 21.

It seems highly probable that William and his family were back in Belleek at the time of the 1871 census as there is no sign of them on the census returns for England and Wales. The 1871 census of Ireland is lost and so their presence in Belleek cannot be verified. I was at a loss to account for a Maria Gallimore, aged 3 and recorded as a niece, in the household of George and Mary Heath at 145 Waterloo Road, Burslem thinking that she may be the second child of William Wood Gallimore and Mary. But I could find no connection between George or Mary Heath and the Gallimore family and, with his parents living at 25 Vincent Street, Hanley, it must have been more likely to leave Marian with them

than with an aunt and uncle when the rest of the family went over to Ireland. It is much more likely that the whole family went to Belleek together and the Maria Gallimore recorded with the Heaths in Burslem is from another family entirely.

However by the time of the 1881 census of England the family is back in the Potteries and living at 9 Prospect Place, Hanley. All the children are recorded as being born in Hanley, apart from 11 year old Mary who was born in Ireland. This clearly supports the contention that the whole family was in Ireland and therefore probably in Belleek at the time of the 1871 census. They would have remained there for some little while longer as the 1881 census also records a William Gallimore aged 8 and born in Ireland living with William Wood's parents at 25 Vincent Street, Hanley and noted as grandson. In 1881, then, William was back in Stoke and had been since at least 1876 when his son Jesse Albert was born followed by Bertram in 1878 and Lawrence in 1880.



Rose Street, Northwood

I have not yet found the precise date of the accident with a gun which resulted in William Wood losing his right arm but I feel sure that it would have been in this second period in Ireland. The story of William Goss's daughter 'watching spell bound as things of beauty grew under Gallimore's magic touch' would relate to the period 1875 to 1881. She says 'He never appears to take any care, but a lovely form, or perfect portrait would appear to grow out of a series of hurried and apparently careless dabs with various tools at the wet clay'. It was in 1875/76 that William is credited with producing the large busts of Llewellynn Jewitt and the Prince of Wales for the Goss pottery. The Pine biography of William H Goss¹, the source of the above quotation, suggests that in 1881 William Wood Gallimore retired from the Goss pottery works and went to America. There is no indication of the nature of this 'retirement' and we are more than 20 years before the advent of old age pensions and Gallimore had only just turned 40 anyway. That he might not be able to continue with his work, given the nature of his disability, is likely but I have no evidence of the arrangements that pottery firms made for such employees, particularly when the injury occurred outside of work and was in no sense due to the working conditions. Added to which, Gallimore had at least twice walked out on Goss and gone off to Belleek. I think it is more likely that some sort of offer of work had come from America and induced him to up sticks again and take the whole family over to New Jersey. Miranda Goodby's article² on Staffordshire pottery workers going over to the potteries in New Jersey and the Ohio and Mississippi valleys in the mid 1840s shows that there was a long standing connection and movement of men and ideas between Staffordshire and the east coast of America. That Gallimore's reputation as a modeller would attract offers of employment from the American pottery industry, which was eagerly seeking to emulate Belleek quality wares, is only to be expected and was sufficient to encourage the whole family to book passage for America in the early 1880s.



Probably the house in Rose Street, Northwood where William Wood Gallimore was living in 1861

It might have been that at this juncture my pursuit of William Wood Gallimore would have come to an end but, fortuitously, Ancestry.co.uk offered a fortnight's free use of their American census records which helped to continue the story. At the same time an email buddy, Nan Brennan of Chicago, who shares an interest in some of my wife Pat's genealogical history names in county Down [although we have not yet established any certain link but have helped each other occasionally over the last few years] came up trumps with a mine of information off various US websites. So, thanks to Nan and to Ancestry we can continue the story starting with the 1900 census return which shows William and his family, now augmented with a further son, Archie, born in 1889 in New Jersey, at 471 Bellevue Avenue, Trenton, New Jersey. The father William W is noted as a Designer & Moulder [Pottery] as is the eldest son, William, whilst Bertram is noted just as a designer. Two of the girls are dress makers but neither Flora nor her mother state any occupation. Incidentally, the 1890 US census remnants contain no reference that I could find to the family and nor does the English census of 1891.

But there are also some interesting variances with other evidence we have been looking at so far. Initially there is the absence of sons Jesse and Lawrence born in 1876 and 1880 respectively but the presence of a son Victor born in England in 1883. The death of a child is understandable as is the birth of another and Victor's birth is duly recorded in the civil indices of births and deaths in England and Wales but there is no record of Jesse or Lawrence having died. It must be, then, that they died after the family went to America because in the census entry Mary says that the marriage has lasted 34 years and produced 9 living children only 7 of whom are still alive. In fact, Lawrence died in January 1899 as I discovered through another email contact, Faith Ann in Florida, who responded to a request on the message boards for information on the family.

Obit for Lawrence Gallimore - Trenton Evening Times Jan 9, 1899

LAWRENCE GALLIMORE

At 471 Bellevue Avenue, Lawrence Gallimore, son of William and Mary E. Gallimore, age 18 years. Funeral was held this morning.



*The Gosshawk carving on the end of the shed at
the Goss works in Stoke*

The census entry does mean, however, that the family did not go to America in 1881 as reported by the Pines in their biography of W H Goss although William may well have left Goss's employ at that time. In the 1900 census return the whole family, apart from Archie of course, state that they immigrated into the USA in 1884. Not that this was William W Gallimore's last contact with England because he and his son, William, are recorded on a passenger list from the Cunarder R M S Etruria – was this a happy coincidence or done by design? – which berthed at New York from Liverpool in April 1886 and amongst whose passengers were Wm W Gallimore aged 48 from Hanley and Wm Gallimore Jr aged 18 also from Hanley. Travelling with them and also noted as an artist from Hanley was a man called J Chetwynd aged, like our William, 48. There is no sign of William W's wife or daughters or the younger boys on this section of the passenger list. For what purpose had they crossed the Atlantic again? Were they on a recruiting mission and Mr Chetwynd was their solitary capture?

There is another detail difference between the census returns of 1881 in England and 1900 in New Jersey. The son William was recorded as having been born in Ireland on the 1881 census and as we have seen this ties in with the time when William W was in Belleek. On the 1900 census in the USA he is said to have been born in England but there is a clear error on the form and his information has been confused with his sister Marion's details. Marion's birth in 1868 in England is recorded in the indices but there is no sign of a William born 1872 in England.

What, I wonder, was William Wood doing between leaving Goss in 1881 and setting off for America in 1884? He might, of course, have gone back to Belleek or gone to work in another Staffordshire pottery or gone to America to see what the prospects were before committing his family to the rigours of emigration. Did he in fact leave Goss in 1881? Was he actually employed by them or did he work in a free lance capacity from home during these years? As usual, more questions to be answered by further research.

The same sort of uncertainty surrounds his working life in the potteries of Trenton. Both Ott & Brewer and the Ceramic Art Company, later to become Lenox, were moving quickly at this time into the world of parian manufacture and it is generally thought that William Wood Gallimore, along with the two Bromleys, was a significant influence on this development given their experience at both Goss and Belleek. In the Eng's book on collecting American Belleek³ it is said that William Wood Gallimore was actually employed by the Ceramic Arts Company, formed in 1889, and the Bromley's by Ott & Brewer. The similarity between some of the early parian products of both factories and those of Belleek is striking and would appear to support the contention of their influence. But then there is the evidence arising from the Trent Tile Company history which states quite clearly that "a man called William Wood Gallimore an artist and modeller succeeded Isaac Broome as their leading modeller in 1886." Isaac Broome himself, originally from Quebec, had spent 8 years with Ott & Brewer before joining the tile company.

I think it is likely that from the time of his accident William Wood's career necessarily took a new direction into what we would nowadays call 'consultancy', offering his expertise and experience to the pottery industry in Staffordshire, Ireland and Trenton and training the next generation of modellers, which probably included his own son, William, in the craft and artistic licence the medium allowed.

What is certain is that, not long after the census was taken in 1900, William Wood Gallimore died at his home in Trenton on Saturday July 28th. The following notice is taken from the Trenton Times of Tuesday, July 31st 1900 and is clearly not that of an insignificant man within that community.

Gallimore Funeral Services

*Vast Concourse of Sorrowing Friends
Paid Their Last Respects-The Sermon and the Bearers.*

The funeral of the late William Wood Gallimore whose death occurred on Saturday morning took place this morning from the residence, No 471 Bellevue Avenue. Rev. Walter A. Brooks, pastor of the Prospect Street Presbyterian Church, conducted the funeral services, which were simple but impressive, and the sermon that followed moved to tears the large concourse of people that filled the house to overflowing.

The remains rested in a handsome casket, white silk lined and covered with astrichan. The trimmings were of silver and the plate bore the inscription "William W. Gallimore, 1842-1900." The casket is the first astrichan covered one to be used in Trenton. The interment took place in the family plot in Riverview Cemetery.

The bearers were C.H. Hansen, Jas. Barlow, Henry Darling, G. Holcombe, E. Swan and E.B. Sterling. L.C. Cougle was in charge of the arrangements.

It is interesting to note that, provided the reporter got his facts right, the date of Gallimore's birth is incorrect on his casket. One other question is; Who were the bearers? Were they work colleagues or employees of the funeral house? If colleagues, is E Swan the artist E W Swann who painted the Belleek bird cabaret set?

This report makes reference to the 'family plot' in the cemetery, so perhaps Jesse and/or Lawrence had been buried there. There is also an internet reference, reprinted below, to the death of William Wood Gallimore's father in 1891 so he too may have been interred in the family plot. William Wood's mother, Esther, had died at 25 Vincent Street, Hanley on February 21st 1883 about a year before the family set sail for America. His father was the informant of his mother's death and the cause of death was given as Chronic Hepatitis & Jaundice.

The Winterthur Library in Delaware is a world famous repository with many items referring to the history of commerce and design. It is a mark of the respect in which William Wood Gallimore was held that they were willing to accept the donation of his father's prints and drawings.

The Winterthur Library

The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Creator:	William Gallimore
Title:	Transfer Prints
Dates:	1820-1892, bulk 1820-1840s
Call No.:	Col. 216
Acc. No.:	71x166
Quantity:	1 box
Location:	4 A 13

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

William Gallimore (1807?-1891) was a designer and engraver. He did considerable work for the Wedgwoods, Enoch Wood, John Alcock, John Ridgeway, and other English potters. He died in 1891 in Trenton, New Jersey at the home of his son, William W. Gallimore, who was also in the pottery business, as were his children.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection consists mainly of transfer prints and proofs from cooper (sic) plates engraved by Gallimore and others, together with some original drawings from which the engravings were made, for potteries in Staffordshire, England. Pastoral scenes, exotic landscapes, elaborate architecture, genre scenes, floral and geometric designs, and miscellaneous scenes are represented. Also included is a letter from the Johnson Brothers to Edwin A. Barber and a piece of cardboard marked "Old Proof Prints/Property of E.A.B./ Given by Mr. Gallimore [William W.] in 1892/ 50 prints (1820-1830) / Also from other sources 19 Prints 1830-1840."

ORGANIZATION

Prints are arranged by subject matter. An index to subject matter is available at this repository.

Following William Wood's death the family continued to make their way in their adopted country. William, the eldest son, did not long survive his father as this death notice from the Trenton Evening Times of February 5th 1909 shows.

Death of William Gallimore

"William Gallimore, one of the best known of Trenton potters, died this morning after a short illness at his home 578 Rutherford Avenue. He was the son of Mary E. and the late William Wood Gallimore.

The funeral will be held Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Interment will be made in Riverview Cemetery."

Bertram married a New Jersey girl called Clara in 1905 and at the time of the 1910 census they with their two children were living next door to his mother who still had Marian, Madeleine and Archie with her. Another example of the sort of error which creeps into the filling up of forms is that Archie is now said to have been born in England!! Interestingly, through the efforts of Nan in Chicago, I have seen Bertram's registration document issued to him in September 1918 which describes him still as an alien and with loyalty to England. It also says he works as a painter at J L Mott Co one of the best known of Trenton's pottery companies at that time.

Through the good offices of Faith Ann in Florida I have also discovered that Flora E Gallimore died at Trenton on December 22nd 1901 and Victor died there on May 31st 1921. Details are from the Trenton Newspapers Death Index at the Trenton Historical Society.

Synopsis of William Wood Gallimore's life.

- 1841 Born on 7th February at 2.10 pm at Furlong Cottage Burslem
- 1851 Living at Bucks Lane, Burslem with parents
- 1861 Still living with parents at Rose Street, Hanley - a Potter's Modeller most probably working for Goss & Peake
- 1863 First visit to Belleek and cooperation with Mrs Armstrong.
- 1866 Marries Mary E Stevenson in Stoke
- 1867 Birth of Flora at Stoke
- 1868 Birth of Marian at Stoke
- 1870 Almost certainly back in Belleek. Birth of Mary [Madeleine]
- 1873 Birth of William in Ireland
- 1876 Birth of Jesse Albert in Stoke
- 1878 Birth of Bertram in Stoke
- 1880 Birth of Lawrence in Stoke
- 1881 Family living at 9 Prospect Place, Hanley except William with grandparents
- 1884 Family emigrates to Trenton New Jersey

- 1886 William W and son return briefly to England
- 1887 Birth of Archibald at New Jersey
- 1891 Death of father, William, at Trenton
- 1899 Death of Lawrence at Trenton
- 1900 Family at 471 Bellevue Avenue, Trenton
Death of William Wood Gallimore on July 28th
- 1901 Death of Flora at Trenton
- 1921 Death of Victor at Trenton

References consulted

1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901 UK census returns per ancestry.co.uk.
1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 USA census returns per ancestry.com.
Birth, Marriage and Death certificates from UK General Register Office

Bibliography

- ¹"William Henry Goss" by Linda & Nicholas Pine; Milestone Publications, Portsmouth 1987
- ²"Collecting American Belleek" by Loman & Petula Eng; Schiffer Publishing, Atglen PA 2003
- ³"Our Home in the West –Staffordshire Potters and their Emigration to America in the 1840s" – Article by Miranda Goodby from Ceramics in America 2003, Chipstone Foundation.

Web sites:-

"American Art Tile 1876-1941" by Norman Kartson; Michael Freedman Publishing, NY 1998
"A History of Belleek" by the Belleek Collectors Club on Collector's Café website
Various Trenton Newspapers on-line

William Henshall update

In the last issue of the Newsletter (26/3, October 2005), Paul Tubb presented his research on the important Belleek designer, William Henshall. Paul now gives some additional information.

Since my article on the life of William Henshall was published in the last newsletter the 1851 census has become available on Ancestry.co.uk thus enabling me to confirm some of the surmises made in the earlier piece.



At the time of the 1851 census William was aged 5 and was living at Charles Street, Hanley with father and mother, John and Jane Henshall and his younger brother John, the one who became a confectioner and baker in later life. There is no indication in Charles Street of their sister, Catherine, the one with whom our William was living in 1861, but she is recorded in the house of her grandparents Ephraim and Catherine Blackwell [with her surname spelt Henshaw] at Church Road Hanley along with their two other children.

The father, John, says he was born in Swansea, South Wales as he consistently does in all the census returns but so too does Joseph Henshall the father of the Henshall family living at Pottery Row in Llanelli. This raises the possibility that John and Joseph might be brothers which would make our William and the one we nearly thought it might be in Llanelli cousins.

Some time later this year it is hoped to have the 1841 census of England and Wales available and indexed for searching. There is not the detailed information on this census that there is on the later ones, but useful corroborative information can be found. In particular we might find something to connect John and Joseph Henshall.

- Paul Tubb

The 2005 Belleek Convention - by David Reynolds



The 2005 BCIS International Convention was held in The Crowne Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, Michigan during a very warm few days in early September.

Proceedings commenced on Thursday 8th September with registration throughout the afternoon in a very spacious lobby area of the hotel, this gave ample circulation space for members seeing old friends, and new ones to remain for as long as they wanted and an early short presentation by Robin Peebles, the Michigan Travel representative, focussed our minds on the fact that after only two years since we left Portland Oregon, here we all were for another international gathering and the proceedings had begun. A reception followed the dinner break and welcoming addresses from Phyllis Bagnall the Convention co-ordinator and Angela Moore, BCIS President preceded the first batch of prize drawings and the opening of the sales area, well attended by dealers displaying a sumptuous array of fine old Belleek.

As has become the accepted norm, Don Campbell was the Master of ceremonies throughout the Convention.

Friday 9th September was our first full day of presentations commencing in the morning with Brian Graham's talk on the work of Eugene Sheerin, what inspired him to paint the fine pictorial decorations on Belleek wares and the legacy that exists today from such talent. After coffee and some more prize drawings, I took the stand for an hour to talk about Belleeking UK Style, in which I talked my way through the beginnings of our Group in 1989, how we have organised meetings, how those meetings have developed from a day to the weekend events we now enjoy. Christmas parties were highlighted, as were details of many of the visits we have made, guest speakers and in-house presentations from our own members. I talked about the need to constantly look ahead, be responsive to change and to ensure a healthy long term future for



the Group. This included recruitment and the problems over the years encountered by many BCIS Groups and Chapters in maintaining membership levels. I went on to talk about our web-site development and the newsletter, how it had developed from the first double sided sheet to the "good read" that it now is. At this point I introduced the concept of Associate Membership of the UK Group and this was well received with a strong take-up from overseas collectors. I continued with details of UK member's involvement in Pottery visits and International Conventions, with particular reference to our own successful event in 1997.

Having opened my address with my own definition of "Belleeking" which hopefully one day might appear in the Standard Oxford Dictionary:

"A word used frequently by members of the Belleek UK Collectors Group to describe gatherings, talking about Belleek or anything else of interest to Belleek Collectors, going places, eating, in fact any activity involving Belleek Collectors either alone, or in each other's company"

I felt it appropriate to close by reading a poem written many years ago by the late Lady Rosamund Langham about Marion, her daughter in law and her love of Belleek.



The morning session concluded with Linda Beard, Chair of The Richard K Degenhardt Belleek Collector's Scholarship fund talking about the work of the Fund, the endowments made which have enabled students to follow studies at The University of Ulster, including one who went on to work in the Belleek Pottery Design Studio. Linda talked about the way in which every donation goes in full to benefit students, no expenses or administration costs fall to the fund, these are paid for by Corporate Sponsors in addition to their Fund Donations.

Here I would mention the items donated to the Degenhardt Fund for sale by auction during the Convention. On behalf of the Group, I purchased a Limpet TV Set and also took a 1997 Stoke on Trent Convention Plate for this auction. I have since received thank you letters from Linda Beard and also The University of Ulster.



After lunch and yet more prize drawings, the afternoon session commenced with Paul Tubb's presentation entitled The Town of Belleek in the Census Returns of 1901 & 1911. Paul took us on a journey through the recorded households in Belleek through the period of his study and highlighted the movement of families and the variety of work they had done in the Pottery, also how the Pottery spread of different trades varied between the ten years. It was interesting to note also the fact that the same households might have given different answers in 1911 to the same questions, as answered in 1901, due in part to a different person completing the census return, or even a better degree of literacy and understanding of the question. Paul also talked about the Staffordshire men who had come to Belleek and the houses built for them and their families, many of the locations of homes for which Paul had examined the census return were shown in a slide show which gave the audience a closer link with the subject being spoken about.



Paul was followed to the rostrum by Briane Carter from El Paso, Texas and President of the Phoenix Chapter, who spoke about Chapters and the importance of preserving the links between members who are spread far and wide.



There were no more presentations on Friday, the rest of the afternoon was taken up with sales of Belleek, sales of the Convention cookbook, Belleek Bingo, yet more prize drawings and leisure time before dinner. Dinner was followed by two auctions running in tandem, an open bidding auction for items donated to the Degenhardt Memorial Fund and also a silent auction for those items donated for a fund to donate towards the cost of the next Convention. As in past years, Dean, husband of Convention co-ordinator Phyllis Bagnall, was our entertaining auctioneer.

After breakfast on Saturday (10th September) we boarded a fleet of buses for the relatively short journey to the Frederick Meijer Gardens, a delightful expanse of formal and informal garden displays, hot houses and a fine collection of sculptures tastefully integrated into the garden settings. This was in fact our second trip, the first had been on Wednesday 7th September when we travelled up State to Saugatuck for a trip on the Kalamazoo River aboard the Star of Saugatuck, a paddle wheel vessel which took us down river and out onto the vast Lake Michigan.



Having had lunch at the gardens we travelled back to the Crowne Plaza where the afternoon commenced with a message from Angela Moore, BCIS President, followed by (yes) more prize drawings and then we settled down to listen to Fergus Cleary, Head of Design, Belleek Pottery talk about future developments at the Pottery including the need for outsourcing in order to remain competitive in today's global economy. I have reported elsewhere in this newsletter on the details of what Fergus had to say, and details of outsourced products and a new regime of marking to identify such items.

After hearing from Fergus we began to depart so that the room could be transformed for the gala banquet, but not before some more prize drawings. The gala banquet was followed by traditional Irish entertainment and a final closing of Convention activities.

For many of us, there was still another day to enjoy before starting our journeys home. A full day trip took us across Michigan State to the town of Frankenmuth, originally of German settlement and with a Bavarian appearance to many of the buildings. The purpose of the visit was to shop at Bonners, the world's largest all year Christmas store which covered numerous acres, and in fact a store locator plan was a must in the labyrinth of Christmas goodies, trees, decorations and anything remotely connected to the festive season. Unbeknown to us before we arrived, Frankenmuth was home to a weekend classic car and van event and the ladies shopped whilst the men sat on the roadsides watching a show resembling 1950's and 1960's films, not to mention all the pick-ups which looked to be straight from "The Waltons"



After leaving Frankenmuth, next stop was Davison and the home of Phyllis and Dean Bagnall who supplied us all with a sumptuous afternoon buffet and food from the barbecue, it was difficult to concentrate on the food whilst viewing the Bagnall family collection of Belleek, and all too soon it was time to leave. As the bus pulled away from the house with a Belleek Convention banner fluttering in the gentle breeze, we knew that the 2005 Convention was now at an end.

Pictures here: Phyllis and Dean Bagnall's home and some of their wonderful collection.

On previous pages: Patrick Tubb relaxing; a detour to where we want to be? A welcoming leprechaun; Belleek at the Convention; Paul giving his presentation; Fergus and Phyllis, Honoree Roland Glendinning with Mary and Evelyn Twiss.



American Belleek

by Betty Clinton

The UK Belleek Collectors' Group is delighted to have received the following article about American Belleek written by Betty Clinton. Betty is President of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Belleek Society, and her husband Don was the Belleek Hall of Fame Honoree in 1990

Our very first piece of American Belleek was given to us by Don's mother – she had received it as a wedding gift in 1920. The plate was done in silver overlay by Lenox. Along with our collecting Belleek we began to look out for American Belleek. We do not have a large collection but do enjoy the pieces we have. I will share with you the short history of what we consider the two finest makes of early American Belleek.

Ott & Brewer

In 1864, Joseph Ott was joined by his nephew John Brewer. In 1875 the company made a ware known as "ivory" porcelain. In many ways it looked like Irish Belleek but at that time not as fine as the Irish make.

At the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, Ott & Brewer were awarded a medal for the finest example of parian ware. However at the same Exhibition, Irish Belleek made its debut and it was well received in America and completely overshadowed all the American porcelain. When Ott & Brewer saw how very fine the Irish porcelain was it then became a symbol of the finest porcelain made.



In 1882, John Brewer contacted William Bromley, Jr. and asked him to come to America to help them with the product they were making.

After a year of not being satisfied with the results, John Brewer asked for the Senior Bromley to come and help them refine the quality of their porcelain. This time they had the person who knew first hand how Belleek was made.

Bromley had been the manager for William H. Goss who was the inventor of the Irish clay body. In 1884, Ott & Brewer successfully made ware that resembled Irish Belleek. They used the clay beds from New Jersey and water from the Delaware River – during the ten years of production they continued to improve the quality of their wares.

Many collectors as well as our selves considered their porcelain to be the finest produced in the U.S. One good example of the quality was that their wares were so thin that when a dozen cups and saucers were weighed they measured only one pound! When compared to Willets, Ott & Brewer is considered much finer and the one most collectors look for.

The factory produced Belleek for only ten years from 1883 to 1893. In 1894 they were bought out by the Cook Pottery – that pottery stayed in business until the great depression and was demolished in 1932.

Willets Manufacturing Company

In 1879, three brothers Joseph, Daniel and Edmund Willets started the Willets Manufacturing Company.



In 1884, William Bromley, Sr., left Ott & Brewer after perfecting the Belleek process and went to work for Willets. He then taught them how to make Irish made wares – so this is the reason so many items made in that period look like the same patterns of Belleek. For many the quality of their wares were compared to Ott & Brewer. Unfortunately the industry began to decline and by 1909 the company ended their production of American Belleek.

I hope you are able to understand why of all the potters that produced American Belleek these are, in my opinion, the very best in the art of making American Belleek.



Walter Scott Lenox also worked at Ott & Brewer and went on to establish a name in American Belleek and then on to make a name that is to this day highly regarded.

*Walter Scott Lenox's Ceramic Art Company
which he founded after leaving Ott and
Brewer – refer to:
<http://www.potteriesoftrenton.org> for more
details*

The last maker of Belleek was the Morgan Belleek China Company. They had to stop making Belleek ware in 1929. The Irish Belleek Pottery Limited filed a suit against them to stop using the word Belleek on any porcelain.

Since that time no American Belleek has been produced in the U.S.

Our Collection

Tridacna Cup by Willets: With hand-painted flowers. (*Illustrated along with Irish Belleek version*)

See page 142, plate 283 in “Collecting American Belleek” by Loman & Petula Eng

Our cup is 2nd red mark with snake used only for factory decorated items. Look also page 139, plate 275 and see our cup. We have 2 cups, sugar, creamer and tea caddy. There is only one difference in our set to the one made by Belleek. That is on the covered sugar lid there is a shell top not. On Ebay we found the matching tea pot but were out bid by the great, great granddaughter of one of the Willets founders! Small world....

Thorn Cup by Ott & Brewer: (*Illustrated*)

This is one of our most prized pieces in our collection. We do not own a Belleek cup but looking at the picture in Marion Langham's book we can see no difference. It is a first mark, found on page 96 of “Collecting American Belleek”. That was sold at Tiffany & Co.

Echinus Cup by Ott & Brewer: (*Illustrated along with Irish Belleek version*)

When compared to our tea set by Belleek, we can see no difference. The only exception is the gold around the rim of the cup.

For those who may be interested in learning more about American Belleek, I really recommend:

“American Belleek” by Mary Frank Gaston and “Collecting American Belleek” by Loman & Petula Eng. They can be found on Ebay.

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!



“These Belleek spill vases are very special ,we have not seen any like them before and people who sell belleek haven't either. They are made of red clay and are black with gold streaks ,the stamp underneath the pots are gold and the 1st stamp. we took the pots to belleek in Ireland and they said they were genuine.”

Not sold at £311 by seller suekirk52.

“ An opportunity to acquire a stunning pair of rare Belleek Boudoir Candlesticks. Manufactured in Co. Fermanagh, N.I. in the first period, 1865 - 1889, these beautiful candleholders have applied flowers and delicate basket work, typical of this Northern Irish parian ware. Both are in exceptional condition.”

Sold for £1605.56 by seller madziya176.



“ An unusual coloured porcelain jug marked with the Black Second Period Belleek mark (1891 - 1926). It is finely moulded with triangular panels which are hand painted with enamel colours and gilding. The height is just over 3 inches. The condition is excellent, no damage or restoration at all.”

Sold for £260.08 by seller magnalis.

“ **YOU COULD BE BIDDING FOR THIS BEAUTIFUL BELLEEK TEAPOT. IT IS A 1ST BLACK MARK ECHINUS TEAPOT MADE BETWEEN (1863-1890) IT APPEARS TO BE IN PERFECT CONDITION WITH NO CHIPS, SCRATCHES OR BLEMISHES. IT HAS BEEN GILDED AND PAINTED AND THERE APPEARS TO BE NO FADING. INSIDE THE LID IS THE BELLEEK STAMP AND THERE ARE INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO MAKE A CUP OF TEA - THE OLD FASHIONED WAY!! THE BELLEEK 1ST BLACK MARK STAMP IS ON THE BASE OF THE TEAPOT. IT MEASURES APPROXIMATELY 9 INCHES FROM HANDLE TO SPOUT AND 6 INCHES TALL. IT IS A TRULY EXQUISITE ITEM. HAPPY BIDDING.**”

Sold for £770.00 by seller hairysue





“ This is a super early piece of Belleek. It is a lidded trinket dish, in the form of a fluted fan. Typical of the parian ware from this most superb factory, the piece is highly translucent. It has the black, 2nd period, stamp on the base. The piece measures 4 1/4" on the straight sides and is 1 3/4" high. On the left hand front of the lid there is a small flaw, which, as it is glazed I believe would have occurred in the manufacturing process. This can be seen clearly in the photos. This is I believe a difficult to find piece, made no later than 1926, and will make a super addition to any collection. Offered with no reserve. I have quoted a postal charge for Special Delivery, within the U.K., which gives insurance cover to the value of £500.00 as I think this piece deserves special attention. Overseas buyers should ask for details of charges before bidding. Many thanks for looking and good luck.”

Sold for £288.67 by seller billpiggott



“Fine Irish Belleek Porcelain Limpet Sugar Bowl 1920s. A superb demitasse sugar bowl bearing the second Black Belleek mark used 1891 -1926. Fine sea shell horizontal ribs with three limpets with green accents, a beautiful piece. Height just under 2 inches with a 2½ inch diameter. No cracks, chips or repairs.”

Sold for \$82.00 by seller hunter23

**“Rare Belleek possibly unique
Belleek Shell Pattern bowl in
silver mount 1st Black Mark**



Coloured pink shell trim with blue coral. First Black mark to base plus pink 3 - possibly painters mark - same colour as shell tint. This is unusual, it is not the jelly mould D831 Degenhardt reference, it is not the base of the biscuit box or scallop bowls as it is eight sided rectangle and has a flat rectangular base. This piece may be unique.”

Sold for \$1009.22 by seller onlineauctions

“Belleek Pottery Scene Gertrude Johnstone Cup & Saucer

This is an exceptionally rare Belleek hexagon cup and saucer from the 2nd black mark period, which has been hand painted by one of the most famous Belleek artists Gertrude Johnstone, who died in 1902 in her early twenties. The pieces are decorated with scenes of the pottery, bridges and the surrounding areas along with gold detail to the rim of the cup, handle and saucer. The cup has been applied with a 2nd period mark and the saucer with the artist initials G.A.J in green. Pieces by the artist rarely surface which are signed. To have a picture of the famous pottery that has been painted by such an historical figure makes these pieces highly collectable.”



Unsold at the asking price of \$2,500 by seller guaire



Vintage Belleek Black Mark Cup Saucer - Both pieces are in excellent condition with no chips cracks or repairs. The pattern on both pieces is very unusual and one that I have not seen before. I have shown a close up of the centre of the saucer, The saucer measures just over 5.25" and the cup is 2.25" high. An unusual pattern!

WE HAVE JUST BEEN INFORMED THIS IS THE RARE PATTERN #36

Sold for \$605.00 by seller sov2

And Finally...

Transcribed from the BBC Antiques Roadshow in the Millennium Forum, Derry, broadcast on Sunday 5 February 2006

Lars Tharp and a lady sitting at a table with a gilded Bamboo Teapot and a two pink glass bowls in a stand.

Lars: We are dressed for a cream tea, we've got a jam and cream dish and a nice little tea pot. Tell me where does this teapot come from?

Lady: It was a wedding present to my grandparents, and it's Belleek and is very unusual. They haven't got a record of that teapot in the Belleek factory.

Lars: And Belleek of course is an incredibly and rightly celebrated Irish factory based in County Fermanagh. If we take the lid off to have a look at the mark underneath, there it is, the dog, the harp, and the tower. It says Belleek and Co Fermanagh Ireland. Now that mark immediately tells me what period of Belleek this belongs to. This particular mark doesn't come in until the very end of the 1880s. Does that square with your own family records?

Lady: Yes, my grandparents were married in 1896 so that would fit in.

Lars: So this was a wedding present in 1896?

Lady: Yes.

Lars: You happen to have brought along one of my favourite teapot models of all time. Look at that shape: first of all you've got a pentagonal shape. How often do you see a teapot with 5 sides? And each of these sides, well it's conceived as a bundle of bamboo with these notches overlapping and they've even gone into that delicious detail of the severed ends of each of these rods of bamboo, you can see the pith – they've actually taken the trouble to model the pith that you would see on bamboo, and then you have a bamboo spout and a bamboo stem for the handle. Now this is not a Belleek invention, that may be why it doesn't appear in pattern books. Royal Worcester produced this shape in this very material, this parian body, back in the 1880s and Belleek took a lot of designs, almost copied them straight off Royal Worcester. So you could say, well hang on that's a Royal Worcester shape, but no it goes further back than that. You can go back into the 18th century, to around the 1760s, 1770s, this shape was being produced by Josiah Wedgwood. But it doesn't stop there. If you go back another 60 years to China, to a part of China called Yi-Hsing, that's where we find the original pentagonal bamboo teapot and there it is made in a red stoneware but it's exactly the same, and it's come through that hop skip and a jump over the water to Ireland's Belleek.

So how much would it cost to lay something like this out for tea? Well your little Victorian coloured glass jam and cream set on its electroplated stand would probably cost you in the region of £100 - £150. Now the teapot I would expect if you were to sell a piece like this to a collector of Belleek – and let's remember that Belleek collectors aren't merely in Ireland but also in England and, more to the point, in America – a rarity like this would probably cost them at least £1000.

Lady: A teapot? Oh my goodness.....

Lars: One lump or two?

Lady: Oh, that simple teapot? I cannot believe that. Thank you very much indeed. That's amazing.

