

MALING

COLLECTORS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 18 March 2003

A MESSAGE FROM STEVEN

The last few months have seen me coping with the demands of a new job, new home and a new life. Inevitably, this has meant that I have had much less time to devote to the society and its members than I would prefer.

I have always enjoyed reading your letters and e-mails and seeing your newsletter contributions. However, I am currently not in a position to reply to you all in person or to deal with the correspondence that your enthusiasm for Maling generates.

The society has come a long way in the last five years, and I would not want to let the members down - or not give the society the time it deserves. Under the circumstances, I feel that it is best if I step down from the position of Chairman and become a patron instead.

I do hope to remain active within the society and will still be in touch via David, who will pass on your news. I am sure that, with your sustained support, the society will continue with its mission to promote knowledge of, and interest in, Maling pottery.

Steven

Set your VCR for "Flog It!"

Maling ware has been quietly invading British television screens in recent months. February saw the broadcast of a BBC "Bargain Hunt" recorded at Harrogate. (For the benefit of overseas readers, this is a show where contestants select bargains at an antiques fair for sale - hopefully at a profit - at a subsequent auction.)

One team chose a Maling scoop dish priced at £45. Sadly, it raised only £40 at auction. However, it was good to see that the team and the resident experts recognised it and thought it was in with a chance.

More important is the BBC's "Flog It!". (This is the one where you turn out your attic for potential auction treasures.) The society managed to get a spot on the show when it was recorded in Newcastle, and we did around two hours' filming with presenter Paul Martin (see photo on page 2).

Once again, Charlie Allen gave up his studio on the factory site to let a bunch of media types wreak havoc. Margaret Robson was roped in to demonstrate painting techniques.

And David talked about the factory and its wares - surrounded by an excellent display of pots provided for the day by a number of members in the north east.

The pots weren't for sale, but were there to demonstrate the range of Maling ware over the last couple of hundred years. Could you select around two dozen pieces which would show the factory's highs and lows and represent two hundred years of production? Well, have a look at the photo and see if you think we got it right. (There's a brief list at the end of this article.)

The broadcast date isn't confirmed yet, but it is expected to be April-May time. We'll try to let you know when the programme is on.

Then there's our video of "Maling Memories", which seems to have gone down rather well. The first 50 copies sold out in weeks. As we're soft-hearted (or soft in the head) we'll continue to sell this tribute to Maling for the knock-down price

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of 15 pounds to UK buyers. Overseas members will have to ask for a price, as it depends on whether we have to convert it to your TV broadcast system. The USA, Canada and Japan are the problem areas. (Not that we have any members in Japan.)

You can also have a copy on DVD for the not-quite-so-bargain price of 25 pounds. Sorry, but duplicating VHS tapes is cheap when you do it in bulk. The demand for DVDs is so small that we have to get them on a one-off basis. Given that we spent around 3,500 pounds on this production, you can see that we are still selling these at well under cost price.

Now to the accolades... Our patron Tony Boulemier writes: "Lots of nice nostalgia gave people a very good feel for the old place. You brought Malings back to life. And - thanks to video - the images are indelible. On a personal note it was good and to see mentions of my dad and grandfather. Well done everybody."

Many members have also been kind enough to say that they enjoyed the production. Remember, your money gets you not only "Maling Memories" but also a free, bonus copy of the Tyne Tees programme "Potty About Maling". Did someone say: "Cheap as chips?"

Finally, to our choice of pots for Flog It. To represent the historical span of Maling we

ranged from a "Prepare to meet thy God" plaque from the 1820s to a Blossom Time teapot from the 1950s. To show the factory's diverse production we went from whitewares (jelly mould and marmalade jar) to as much top quality lustre as we could prise out of members' hands for the day.

A Victorian trio by Mr Miguet... outrageous Art Deco... the inevitable commemoratives (can't think who insisted that they should be in there!)... jugs... vases... plaques.... A fair selection? You tell us after you've seen the show!

Right: Bargain Hunt. Below: Flog It!



RAGS TO RICHES

Barbara Mills writes: On a recent visit to an Aunt and Uncle who now live near Harrogate the conversation turned to Maling after I commented on one or two pieces out on display in the lounge. My Uncle went on to tell me a lovely story about Maling and his childhood.

During the 30s he lived on Scrogg Road in Walker, not far from the Maling factory. He has clear memories of 1935 and 36 when a girl called Tilly used to come round with a washing basket full of Maling. She gave the Maling out in exchange for old clothes and rags instead of the usual money. Indeed, he went on to say that there was still such a piece in the family. Only snag, his daughter who lives in Canada owned it now.

Undeterred I quickly contacted her and soon found out that the piece was pattern number 5780, Japanese Lanterns. Further contact ascertained that the piece was a Chelsea bowl but did not have any gilding on it. It makes you wonder where Tilly actually got her pieces from, as even in those days Chelsea Bowls were not cheap.

It has to be assumed that the pieces were seconds, which would perhaps be borne out by the fact that the bowl has no gilding on it, or did she have some other source of supply? Like other Maling mysteries, we will probably never know.

David adds: *I remember John Hughes saying that a "rag and bone" man used to come to the factory and buy up tea chests full of "seconds". Eventually, Malings realised that they were missing out on a business opportunity, and opened a small shop on the factory site to sell these wares direct to the public. Presumably, the shop closed with the outbreak of war and the introduction of the ban on selling decorated wares.*

Society Matters

Those of you with Internet access may have noticed that the long-awaited update of the society website has taken place. Everything appears to work. Members may e-mail for the new password if they haven't received it.

Sorry that this is another 4-pager. This is my time for skiing holidays, so I can't spend as much time on the newsletter as I normally would. - David

COMPETITION

This is actually a correction, disguised as a competition - but we'll still put up a Maling-related prize. Inevitably, memories fade with time. The video "Maling Memories" includes a clip which mentions that L E Boulemier scored the winning goal in the 1898 Cup Final when playing for Stoke against Sheffield United.

The date and opponents are correct, but LEB wasn't playing for Stoke on that occasion... Which Midlands team was he playing for when he scored that winning goal? The answer, as ever, is in TMOE. Send answers to the address on the back page (or e-mail us) by 30th April.

How Maling was made

Les Dixon joined the Maling Pottery in 1927 at the age of sixteen and became General Manager in 1946 (about the date of the photograph below). Here he describes the manufacturing process.

Although the practice of making pottery has changed little since the first production of Maling Ware in 1762, the manufacturing techniques had advanced considerably when the firm closed in 1963. The development in the mid-19th century of mass production methods streamlined the industry, whilst the introduction of electric furnaces and machines in this century increased the speed at which the pottery vessels were made.

Raw Materials

The basic raw materials, which are combined in a variety of recipes to produce the different types of clay body, need to be prepared separately before they can be mixed together. The chief constituent, clay, is an earthy material resulting from the decomposition of chiefly feldspathic rocks. When wet it becomes plastic and on firing in a kiln at an extremely high temperature vitrifies to form a solid mass. Ball clay (a type of clay mined in Dorset and Devon) gives both plasticity for shaping and extra strength to the earthenware, whilst china-clay (kaolin) - from Cornwall - adds whiteness, porosity and stability. The addition of flint prevents the object distorting during the drying process and stone allows a greater vitrification and hardness after the firing,

On arrival at the Quayside at Newcastle the raw materials would be transported to the factory where each constituent was prepared before being used. Five hundred tons of boulder flints per cargo were transported to a "calcination kiln" where they were subjected to a firing process in order to make the flints brittle. The flint would then be crushed in a "flint mill" into a fine powder form, the density of which was important for the accurate blending of the raw materials. The grinding of stone was carried out in much the same fashion, though to a finer degree. If the stone was too dense, the clay would shrink and

distort during the firing. In the 20th century three types of clay were employed at the Maling factory. These were: firstly, vitreous clay - for hotel ware and hospital ware; secondly, semi-vitreous clay - for decorated fancy ware; and thirdly, cell clay - for battery and acid containers. The preparation for each of these earthenware bodies was similar, though the proportions were different.

All the clay mixes went through a screening process by using a system of bronze sieves which vibrated at high speed. Foreign bodies were extracted and the mixture passed over an electro-magnet to remove any particles of iron. The clay mixture was then pumped under pressure into the filter press and the water forced out leaving 2 1/2 tons

of plastic clay (7 1/2 tons were made daily).

The clay was then transferred to the "Pug Mill" which converted it into a homogeneous mass by removing the air bubbles and finally extruded it in an endless roll of clay which was cut off into ten inch lengths for the potters.

The Maling factory was highly organised and the clay passed through various departments or "shops" receiving different treatment at each stage before finally arriving on the shelves of the retail china shops. Various methods of making earthenware were employed. In order to eliminate unnecessary costs these processes were rigidly adhered to. *To be continued...*



Members solve some mysteries

We thank various members who have helped to clear up a few mysteries from previous newsletters.

Way back in issue 11, we featured a Victorian drinking horn with Queen Victoria, Edward Prince of Wales and a mystery gentleman on it. Thanks to Newcastle's Archives Department, we were able to identify the gent as Sir Riley Lord, a prominent local citizen at the start of the 20th century. But why did he have his mug shot on a mug?

Robin Smith writes that: "The drinking horn relates to the Royal Victoria Infirmary. I am the Estates Manager for all the Newcastle Hospitals and as such manage the archives etc. The interesting thing is we did not know this commemorative existed!

"There were two events that could have merited the commemoration. These were the laying of the foundation stone in 1900 by the then Prince of Wales, or the official opening of the RVI in 1906. Sir Riley Lord was Chairman of the Committee to build the RVI and as such earned high respect within the Tyneside community.

"I am now doing some more research in order to try and ascertain the exact event related to this particular drinking horn. The Hospital Trust is planning a "celebration" in 2006 to mark the 100 years of the RVI so we do have a little time to solve the mystery.

David adds: *I did once jot down a reference from a long out-of-print book on commems which referred to a 1900 Maling beaker for the opening (sic) of the infirmary. That one must have been dated for the authors to be so precise, so it must actually have been for the laying of the foundation stone. Mine isn't dated, but it's a reasonable assumption that they are one and the same.*

Now we turn to a puzzle which solved itself in record time. In last December's newsletter, we featured a Maling "blank" vase painted by Glasgow School artist Ann Macbeth. Several members supplied information about her.

Ann Macbeth (1875-1948) enrolled in the Glasgow School of Art in 1897 and won a prize for needlework two years later. Her embroidery was highly regarded and given regular coverage in "The Studio" magazine.

Although best known for this work, she also had an interest in ceramics. A reference book on the Glasgow School records: "China and glass painting was a subject which many women studied at the School of Art, though they were not encouraged to make or design 3-D ceramic forms which were seen as more intellectually demanding activities."

In retirement, she lived in the Lake District where it is recorded that she kept a kiln and made christening mugs for local children and anniversary teapots for their parents.

HIGHS & LOWS

How do we sum up the diversity that is Maling? Answer: with difficulty. And how do we put a value on an item? Answer: with reluctance. As our membership includes both dealers and collectors, a conflict of interest could easily arise. That's why we'd rather let the market decide.

However, a member recently came up with the suggestion that we could publish a few prices from auctions. Just for fun, I looked back over the last month's trading on eBay and wasn't too surprised to find the grandest and humblest of Maling ware at either end of the price scale.

The superbly gilded "Windmill" plaque went for £511. It was dated 1931 and had very slight rim damage from a plate hanger. The chipped Keillers jar went for just under a fiver (and lucky to get that much, in my opinion). Let's see what the highs and lows are in three months' time. - *David.*



MALING
The Maling Collectors Society
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE
PO Box 1762
North Shields
NE30 4YJ

www.maling-pottery.org.uk

Secretary: David Holmes
Patrons: Roger Allan,
Tony Boullemier, Fred Hoults,
Caroline Kirkhope,
Dr John Maling,
Steven Moore

Membership:
£20 p.a. (UK),
£25 p.a. (overseas)