

MALING

COLLECTORS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 20 September 2003

It's anniversary time!



What's all this(tle)?

You will have probably seen the picture of Nancy Brook decorating an embossed plaque in 1949, but how closely have you looked at it and what's unusual?

A point for spotting that the newspapers that were used to cover each bench to keep the working surface clean have been removed for this picture! But there's more. Look a little harder and you will see a small vase in the form of two thistles being used as a brush holder. I have never seen one in the flesh, have you?

Presumably a Maling product (it's not likely that unglazed items from other potteries would be lying around would they?) and probably from the hand of Norman Carling. Why is it that we have not seen one? Maybe you have one in a china cabinet and have not realised how rare it is? - *Steven*



A reader takes us to task for not including more on commemorative wares (surely a first!). However, there is justification for returning to the 1953 coronation of Elizabeth II, particularly in this anniversary year.

The photo shows the extremely rare plaques made to commemorate the event. According to information which accompanied the photo: "The plaques were hand painted by Lucien George Boulemler in three (or possibly four) designs and signed. The plaques were only produced in a limited number of three each and were then distributed among the higher-ranking members of the factory, with LGB retaining one for himself."

On the left of the photo we see the late Anne Rowbotham. The lady on the right has been tentatively identified as Dolly Porter (nee Robinson) but your confirmation would be appreciated.

And staying with the 1953 coronation, here's a brief anecdote to prove, once again, how weird the world of Maling collecting is. While editing our "Maling Memories" video, I needed a photograph of LG Boulemler. Steven said all he had was a photocopy of a newspaper cutting from the early 50s, which might do.

Despite my best efforts at computer enhancement, the photo quality wasn't good enough for use in the video, but the article

itself threw up a surprise. It read: "From now until the Coronation, CT Maling and Sons Ltd of Newcastle will be in 'top gear' producing Coronation mugs and beakers for schoolchildren.

"They are producing between 2,000 and 3,000 a day - which means more than a million before next June. The design of the mugs and beakers, including the emblem of the Queen's head, has been approved by the Federation of British Pottery Manufacturers.

"A large proportion of the million will be for export, mainly to America. The rest are on order by education authorities all over Britain. On the left, Mr Boulemler, the firm's art director, is at work on a Coronation portrait of the Queen. And below is Miss Vera Stephenson applying lithograph transfers to mugs and beakers."

So, where's the surprise? The answer is that Miss Stephenson is applying the bog-standard transfer used by virtually all manufacturers. In all my years of collecting commems, and despite the fact that a million of these were produced, I don't recollect seeing one of these pieces marked as Maling. Where are they all? - *David*

PS - There's more than one cause for celebration. See page 4 for the run-up to the 75th anniversary of the NE Coast Exhibition. And the society is five years old.



The A TO Z of Maling

After taking a short holiday, this series returns with "E", which is for...

Edward VII

While commemoratives may not be the most exciting Maling wares, they do provide a reasonably accurate way of establishing dates, shapes, patterns, etc. For example, 1902 Edward VII coronation pieces were made for Harrods in London and confirm Maling's connection with this prestigious store at the very start of the 20th century.

Evergreen

As the photo is in black and white, you can't easily tell that this is Maling's green-striped "Evergreen" range, rather than the blue-striped Cornishware manufactured by T G

Green from the 1920s onwards. (Confusing enough that a pottery called Green made blue wares, and even more so when you consider that Cornishware was made in Derbyshire, not

Cornwall.) But a Cornishware jar labelled "Boracic" went for 600 quid at auction in 2002 - so don't underestimate the potential of Maling's "Evergreen". Its day may yet come!

Empress

Introduced in the early 1930s, the "Empress" range of shapes married embossed and moulded decoration with contemporary designs (often floral). By no means as "in your face" as many of Maling's Deco wares. As Steven notes in TMOE: "The 'embossments' seem a rather unnecessary addition to what was basically quite a pleasing new shape, but the firm was perhaps worried that too much modern simplicity would be bad for sales."



Football loses - pottery gains



We thank David Johnson of Newcastle (for text) and Lindon Roberts of Warrington (for illustrations) for the following additional information on the footballing career of LE Boullemier.

LEB was born at Penkhill, Stoke upon Trent, in 1877. During his youth he played non-league football as a half-back for Stoke Alliance, Chesterton White Star and Stone Town. League football soon followed, and he appeared for Stoke in seven league games (1896/7) before joining Burslem Port Vale in the summer of 1897.

His debut was at right-half in a home draw with Burton Wanderers in a Midland League match on 6 September 1897, and he rarely missed a game in the next five seasons. He played a total of 136 league games, scoring five goals for Burslem Port Vale, and was a member of the team which won the Staffordshire Senior Challenge Cup in 1898.

Following their FA Cup first round victory over Sheffield United in 1898 (see newsletter 19) the club returned from the Midland League to Division Two.

The photograph shows the 1898/9 Port Vale line-up, and LEB is seated on the left of the three players in the middle row. The programme card shows team members for Port Vale's 2nd Division game at Walsall on 17 December 1898, with LEB at right-half position (third row up from bottom).



It's VAT man again

A couple of readers have asked for clarification on the VAT position when buying Maling from abroad. As this is most likely to happen when you buy online, we refer you to the article in newsletter 6. (See the members' area of the website for a copy.)

The position hasn't changed and, assuming you get caught, you are liable for VAT at 17.5 percent (though, if the item is over 100 years old, the rate drops to 5 percent). You are not liable for import duty as your Maling is returning to its country of origin.

How Maling was made

Former Factory Manager Les Dixon continues his series on the production process.

Mouldmaking

Most objects were usually made by the casting process particularly those with moulded patterns. A designer would initially draw up a design for a new shape which would be modelled in clay size - that is, larger than the finished size. Plaster moulds were taken from the original model, the chief constituent of the plaster being gypsum.

The plaster absorbed the water leaving the article partially dry, thus the mould had to have a smooth surface from which the clay took its shape. From the original clay model a plaster cast was taken. This was known as a master mould. The master mould was preserved whilst all working moulds were made from a second mould known as the block mould. Great care was taken to ensure that the various parts of the mould fitted exactly, for a bad join left a raised seam on the ware. For intricate shapes, a set of moulds may have been made in as many as ten sections

Casting

The liquid clay slip had to be constantly suspended by rotating blades in the Casting Arks to remove air bubbles before being passed to the Casting Department. The Castor poured the slip into a plaster mould which absorbed the water from it. A coating of clay was thus deposited on the inside of the mould, the thickness of this coating depending on the length of time the slip was left in the mould. Surplus slip was poured into a



trough and recycled. The moulds were then placed in a mould chamber where the slip was dried through the action of gas burners. Each mould had a life-span of a hundred and twenty fillings. While it was drying, the clay piece contracted and could be removed when the mould was opened.

Before the introduction of casting in the early years of Maling's history some



wares would have been thrown on a wheel or hand pressed. However these methods were more costly and time consuming than casting or jollying, since they called for exceptional skills.

Biscuit Firing

When a piece was white hard - that is, dry and chalk white - it was ready for the first or biscuit kiln fire. Maling possessed six biscuit kilns which were originally coal fired. They made all their own fireboxes or saggars (a case of baked fireproof clay enclosing pottery while it is baked) into which the ware was placed for firing in a kiln. For making the saggars, a type of clay known as "fire clay" was used and it was also employed for the making of bricks which Maling used for lining the inner walls of the kilns. Silver sand was sprinkled over each saggar to prevent the clay ware from sticking to the base. The saggars were then filled to their capacity with objects and stacked in the kiln - each kiln holding 1,400 saggars. Biscuit firing took about fifty-six hours at a maximum temperature of 1250 degrees C.

Between 1949 and 1956 these kilns were replaced by four twin electric furnaces. The use of saggars was eliminated as they were not necessary when firing by electricity. In 1950 a "Birlec" electric kiln was purchased followed by an "Efco" electric enamel kiln in 1951. The introduction of the new kilns was made necessary in order to make the industry more attractive to the local work force and to save on fuel and labour costs.

The four "Twin Biscuit" kilns purchased in 1956 were installed mostly for the firing of "fancy ware" destined for the export market. Each kiln was double-chambered into which two trucks were pushed. Firing took place mostly at off-peak electricity periods with automatic

electronically controlled instruments using microtiming switches. The firing temperature for these new kilns was 1160 degrees C and it took only fourteen hours to fire the furnace. This was a tremendous boost to production.

It took four hours to remove all the white biscuit ware which was then transferred by conveyor belt to the Biscuit Warehouse for cleaning. Using rotating brushes and air hoses, the ware was cleaned of dirt and extra particles. Alumina dust created by this method was very damaging to the health of the operators. Once the ware had been biscuit-fired and cleaned it was ready for decorating.



Following the previous article in this series, a member writes: I was very interested to see a picture of my late mother (Mrs Phoebe Milor) in newsletter 19. She is on page 3 in the "Plate and Dish Making" section of "How Maling was made". I have a very similar picture to this and I believe at the time it was taken she was demonstrating in Fenwicks department store in Newcastle.

Another picture of interest to me is in TMOE (3rd edition). On page 18 is a picture of my grandmother (Mrs Fairlamb) who also worked at the Maling factory. - Mrs P M Chapman.

David adds: Thanks for the valuable information. We are always on the lookout for personal memories of the factory and the workers. If you have any stories or photographs, please let us know. Those of you who have seen "Maling Memories" will know how fascinating these bits of social history are to collectors.

HIGHS & LOWS

How much is your Maling worth? As much or as little as you're willing to pay. Yet again, the highs and lows on eBay show us that. Among the recent highs, the bowl with kingfisher and butterflies went for 570 USD (approx 360 GBP). The "Formosa" soup bowl was a mere 2 GBP.



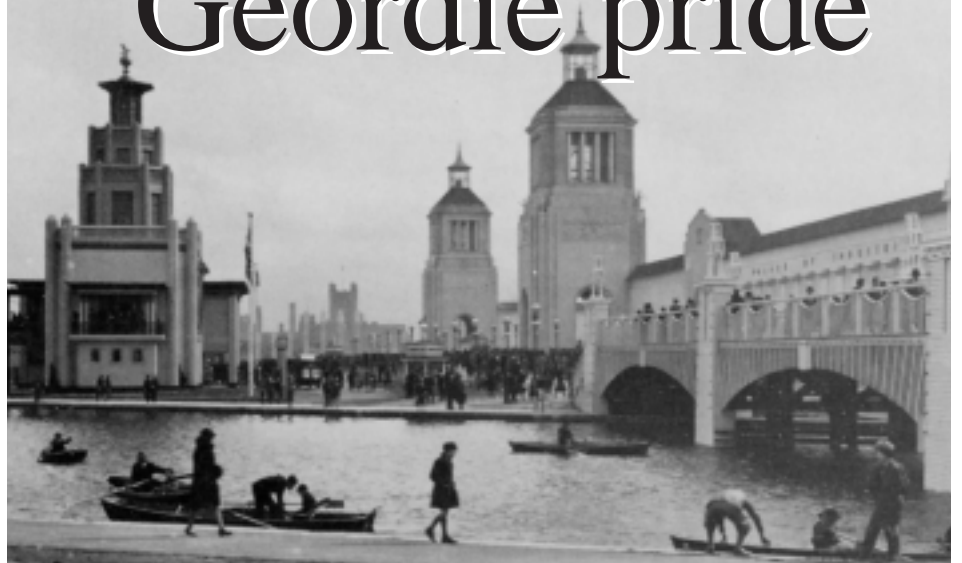
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Secretary: David Holmes
Patrons: Roger Allan,
Tony Boullemier, Fred Hoult,
Caroline Kirkhope,
Dr John Maling,
Steven Moore

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

A celebration of Geordie pride



Next year marks the 75th anniversary of the North East Coast Exhibition - an event which has several important Maling connections. The pottery produced a vast range of souvenir items which were, no doubt, snapped up by the 4 million visitors who attended.

In the Palace of Industries, Maling shared a stand with prominent local retailers Townsends, and paintresses gave demonstrations of their craft. Ringtons also exhibited and sold Maling caddies containing packets of tea.

The following information is taken from a publication which marked the Exhibition's 50th anniversary in 1979.

The Twenties were a difficult period for the country and the North East. The great wealth of industrial skills which had developed so rapidly in the North East during the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century were failing to sustain it through the economic decline of the 1920s. The national and world demand for steel, iron, coal and shipbuilding was decreasing, hastened by the economic exhaustion after the First World War.

It was during this time of economic and industrial depression that it was felt important to promote a North East industrial exhibition, imperative for showing off modern technology and machinery and to show the rest of the nation and the world that the North East was still a powerful industrial and manufacturing area.

The idea of holding an exhibition to stimulate and revive trade in the area had been first suggested in 1925, and in 1926 an Executive Committee was formed under the patronage of King George V.

The promotion of the exhibition had its ups and downs during 1926-27, one of the main influences being the financial failure of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley 1924-25. However, during the early months of 1927 the Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne, Arthur W. Lambert, was made Chairman of the North East Coast Exhibition Committee, and due to his persuasive powers and organisational energies, enthusiasm for the Exhibition began to increase.

It had been hoped that the Exhibition could be opened at the same time as the New Tyne Bridge in 1928, but in order to allow time for fund raising through guarantees, it was decided to hold the Exhibition from May to October in 1929.

Newcastle upon Tyne was the obvious choice of venue, being nearer the commercial centre of the North East Coast region, with excellent national rail connections and shipping routes to numerous continental and North American ports. The actual site, the same 125 acres of the Town Moor used for the 1887 Jubilee Exhibition, was again chosen because of its close proximity to the City and its immediate access to the Great North Road from London to Edinburgh.

To be continued