

MALING

COLLECTORS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 28 September 2005

Mark Richard's words



In memory of "Miss Theo"

In May this year came sad news of the death of Theo Maling, aged 96. Violet Theodora Maling - "Theo" to her family and "Miss Theo" to those at the Maling Pottery - was the eldest child of Frederick Maling. In 1926 she started work as a designer in the family business having studied art and design at Armstrong College in Newcastle. Together with Marguerite (Peggy) Bullock, Theo was at the forefront of Maling Pottery design in the twenties. The untimely loss of her close friend hit Theo hard and, for the rest of her life, she always kept a piece of Peggy's work close by.

Theo never lost her interest in English Pottery. In the 1980s and in conjunction with an exhibition at the Laing Art Gallery she appeared on local television talking about her time at the Pottery. She was always intrigued at the prices that people were prepared to pay for Maling.

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Robin Smith has risen to the challenge of identifying "Poor Richard" mugs. He writes:

In 1732 when Benjamin Franklin, then a printer and bookshop owner in Philadelphia, published his "Poor Richard's Almanack, etc." he did not appreciate that it would become so famous. The Almanacks were intended for local reading within Philadelphia, but they soon became read throughout the then colonial states of the "New World".

Within a short time they had crossed the Atlantic to Europe and editions were printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, and there were fifty six editions in French translations. The "Way to Wealth" was soon translated into Russian, Welsh, Gaelic, Chinese, Catalan, Bohemian and Polish. All this in a time when communications were very basic and news only travelled as fast as a man on horseback or a ship under sail.

As the main purpose of the "Almanacks" was to encourage hard work, thrift and good living they were bought by lords, land owners and priests to distribute among their poor tenants and parishioners. Benjamin Franklin continued to publish the Almanacks up to 1758 by which time he had become famous both at home in

the "Colonies" and across the Atlantic in Europe. He was especially well respected in France where he became a national hero.

The talents of Benjamin Franklin were not limited to writing and publishing. In 1737 he became postmaster of Philadelphia and in 1753 he was made Postmaster General of the colonies. The year before he had conducted experiments with kites and lightning, establishing a link between lightning and electricity, with the resulting invention of the lightning conductor. However, he never patented the invention believing that "all men should, no matter their wealth, benefit from the discovery".

He went on to become embroiled in the French Revolution and later was one of the "Founding Fathers" of the United States of America.

So much for the man, but what about the Maling connection? The popularity of the "Poor Richard" sayings and homilies had by now spread into general use in Great Britain, so they would form an ideal source of material for transcribing into decorations for the pottery industry.

The decorations being used on "Sunderland Lustre" ware, some from engravings by Bielby and Bewick, were

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proving to be very popular. It is only conjecture as to who carried out the engravings, but the "Poor Richard" text material would provide ideal inspiration for the Maling engravers of the early 1800s.

The first time that the prints from these engraving appear is on pieces made by the factory when Robert Maling was in charge. There are prints both on plaques and "Daisy" plates. In TMOE ("Early Wares chapter) there is a picture of a plaque with the two inscriptions "Fly pleasures and they will follow you" and "The diligent spinner has a large shift." The first "saying" appeared in the Almanack for 1738 and was contained within the predictions for March, the second appeared in the Almanack for 1742 and the month of April.

There is an impressed backstamp to the plaque - ROBERT MALING - dating it to between 1830-1840 (TMOE M1.4).

A "Daisy" plate in my possession has the same backstamp, however the two sayings are: "He that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing" which originally appeared in German in the Almanack of 1758 and "Rather go to bed supperless than rise in debt" which came from the May entry of the Almanack for 1739. (See photograph.)

The "Poor Richard" series next appears more than 100 years later when Maling, now owned by Houltts, re-issued them as prints on mugs. A number of these were provided to shipping lines to advertise their company and to give as gifts to passengers travelling across the Atlantic - Churchill Lines being one such company. Not quite "Coals to Newcastle" but nevertheless the concept of the "colonial" work of Benjamin Franklin being shipped back to North America must have appealed to someone in either Maling or the shipping companies' PR department. Perhaps someone out there knows the answer to that little conundrum?



One of the interesting points about these new prints is that the original Robert Maling engravings were used! Thus fuelling the story that at the Maling factory nothing was ever thrown away. The photograph clearly shows that the print on the "Daisy" plate is identical to the print on the later mug.

These mugs were produced in six "body colours" of; brown, purple, still blue, Japanese green, black and pink. In addition, a coloured lustre version exists. There would appear to be three versions of the solid body colours, two are a variation on the same theme i.e. one print to the front with, one having the shipping

company logo on the reverse, the other just "Poor Richard's Way To Wealth" on the reverse. The third version has two different prints on the mug and has gilding to the rim and the handle. All of the mugs that I have in my collection have the same black back stamp, (TMOE M1.23) but with simply "England" underneath "Newcastle upon Tyne", dating them to circa 1956.

Currently I am aware of nine different prints. For completeness I list the "Poor Richard" homilies and the dates that the text first appeared in the Benjamin Franklin Almanacks. Often two mottoes are found in tandem.

- 1 "He that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing" 1758 & "Rather go to bed supperless than rise in debt" May 1739
- 2 "Little strokes fell great oaks" August 1750 & "By diligence and patience the mouse eats in two the cable" January 1735
- 3 "For age and want save while you may, no morning sun lasts a whole day" October 1754
- 4 "Plough deep while sluggards sleep and you shall have corn to sell and to keep" August 1756
- 5 "Diligence is the mother of good luck" 1758 & "Now I have a sheep and a cow everyone bids me good morrow" June 1736
- 6 "Not to oversee workman is to leave them your purse open" November 1751 & "The eye of the master will do more work than both his hands" October 1744
- 7 "What maintains one vice would bring up two children" 1758 & "It is easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follows" June 1751
- 8 "Lost time is never found again" January 1748 & "What we call enough always proves little enough" 1758
- 9 "Fly pleasures and they will follow you" March 1738 & "The diligent spinner has a large shift" April 1742

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She was a lively and popular character in Acomb, where she lived independently until the age of 93. For the last 3 years she lived quietly in residential care, close to her daughter Jill, in Lowgate. - Heather Maling

David adds: *Collectors are, of course, delighted to find a personally signed piece, but these are few and far between. However, all of us can hope to acquire one of her most popular designs - the*

"Storm" pattern, introduced in the 1930s and later reissued in the 1950s

Although these pieces were painted by the workforce, rather than by her, they do give every collector an opportunity to appreciate the artistic contribution which "Miss Theo" made to Maling ware.

Her work says more about her than my words could ever do. On behalf of all members, I send our condolences to her family.



Amanda reveals her figure

It's gratifying to find that Maling "anoraks" can also include the great and the good. In the "Sunday Mail" magazine for 15th May 2005 we discovered the following:



Amanda proudly shows off her assets. In the background you can see some photos of pots. Does anyone agree with me that a piece of Wemyss seems to have crept in among the Maling?

"My Passion" - actress Amanda Redman tells about her Maling pottery collection.

I collect Maling Pottery, which used to be made by a factory in Newcastle and is quite valuable now. It all started 23 years ago when I was given a piece by Tim Curry while we were working together at the National Theatre in London.

It was a little Edwardian grapefruit dish and I thought it was exquisitely beautiful. Owning it sent me on a quest to find more like it.

I read up about the make and studied it in detail. Then I started picking up information and tips from talking to other collectors. After a while I could spot Maling a mile off at antique shops and fairs.

There used to be a huge exhibition of it in Newcastle and whenever I was working up there I would spend all day walking around that exhibition because I just adored it so much. If I've got money I'll spend it and worry about the future later.

I have quite an extraordinary collection of about 120 of their pieces, but I've no

idea how much it is worth. Ten years ago I had it valued when I only had about 60 pieces and it was worth about £250,000 then, so it's probably worth far more than that altogether.

But I collect Maling for love, not money - I've got pieces that are broken and I've glued them back together because I love them, even though they're quite worthless.

In fact, I've stopped collecting now because I have run out of space. There's nowhere spare in my house for it to go and, even if there were, it doesn't really "work" to put it on display because my decor won't complement it.

I'm hoping to extend our living space into the loft, so if I do that maybe I'll display some up there. But only some - the rest isn't even in the house because I don't want to be burgled.

David adds: *A gentleman should never, of course, question the word of a lady. But 60 pieces at a value of a quarter of a million? That would make each piece over four grand. Likely, do you think?*

True "Craft" pottery

Francis Gray writes: "Further to the item in newsletter 26 from my cousin Peter Beck concerning our grandfather's friendship with Fred T Maling. I enclose photographs of a Maling Masonic jug which bears the signature of our grandfather, Edwin Beck, and the names of the Lodges to which he belonged.

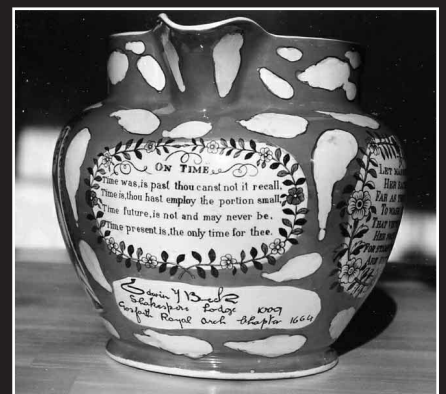
"Both his signature and his Lodges - Shakespeare 1009 and Gosforth Royal Arch Chapter 1664 - are in his script. I assume it was Fred who arranged the personalising of the jug. I have seen other Maling Masonic jugs but cannot recall if they were signed"

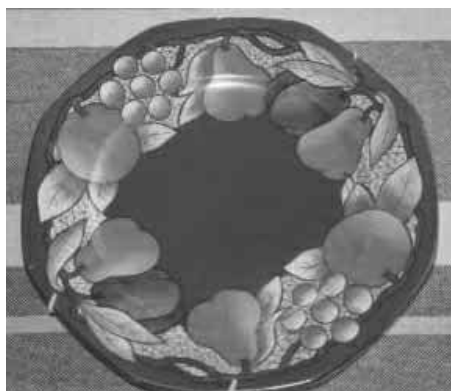
David adds: Sorry there isn't room to show all three photos. The jug bears to the left of the handle the inscription: "Let Masonry from pole to pole her

sacred laws expand, far as the mighty waters roll, to wash remotest land: that virtue has not left mankind, her social maxims prove, for stamp'd upon the Masons mind are unity and love."

To the right of the handle is a vista between twin pillars, across a chequered floor to an imposing building in the background. Various other symbols are incorporated (and I apologise to any members of the Craft for the inadequacy of that description).

But, as the wording here says: "The world is in pain our secrets to gain, but still let them wonder & gaze on. They ne'er can divine the word nor the sign of a free and Accepted Mason.





Some food for thought

Who has spotted the rarest piece of fruit on a Maling item? Yes, this is another of my flights of fancy, so let me explain... I was in casual correspondence with a member about this vase.

I happened to mention that I didn't normally associate pears with Maling designs. The member referred me to the plate (pattern number 3890, previously unpublished) which clearly has pears in abundance.

That set me wondering what fruits I had actually seen on Maling ware. For example, I can't immediately recollect seeing a banana anywhere. And yet Maling had quite a success with a fruit which I would consider more exotic - "Pomegranate".

We see grapefruit dishes, and lemon squeezers. But how many times do those fruits turn up in a painted design? I throw the question over to you.



A real high flier

In the last newsletter we touched on the idea that "missing" patterns may often turn out to be variants on something already known. But how's this for a variation?

You should all be familiar with "Asiatic Pheasant". It wasn't exclusive to Maling and, after "Willow Pattern", is probably the second most common blue and white transfer used by UK potteries. The plate is an example.

The bowl, on the other hand, takes this pattern into the stratosphere of Maling quality. It has a rich cobalt blue background, coloured enamelling to the flowers, quality gilding - the full monty. (It's "missing" pn 3664.)

So, while some "missing" patterns may just involve a simple variation in colour, others were obviously very classy re-workings of an old idea.



SOCIETY BUSINESS

Once again it's subscription time. (Where did the year go?) Please pay 10 GBP to "The Maling Collectors' Society and send to the address below. To save money, we don't send out reminders.

There are still, at the time of writing, a few places left for collectors' day 10. This will be held on Saturday 10 September in Killingworth Village, close to Newcastle. The cost is 10 GBP a head and payment details are as above.

We don't plan to do a factory tour this time. If you haven't seen the pottery, you can get a pretty good idea from our "Maling Memories" video - still available

for the bargain price of 15 quid.

Your efforts to recruit new members are always appreciated. Membership application forms are available to anyone who would like to pass on a few to their local antiques dealers or centres.

All of the above may seem like a shameless attempt to extract cash from your pockets, but we remind you that the society is a not-for-profit organisation and devoted to research into Maling. Ever thought about how much it costs to have the newsletter professionally designed and printed, and the cost of stamps and envelopes? We get the best deals we can - but it ain't free!


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

Joining fee: £20 (UK); £25 (overseas)
 Includes FREE Maling catalogue
 Renewals: £10 p.a. (worldwide)