

# MALING

COLLECTORS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 29 December 2005

## Day 10 is worth sharing

Collectors' day 10 was a bit of a good 'un, and we were delighted to return to the north east for our venue. In fact, we felt the day went so well that we've decided to publish a somewhat longer account for the benefit of members who couldn't attend.

The day kicked off with Steven and David doing a "Two Ronnies" style double act based on some of the more ludicrous e-mails the society receives. (We hasten to add that none of these were from members. We know that we can expect something a little more intelligent from you!)

Under the cover of humour, we hope that we imparted a few bits of knowledge. For example, what are we to make of the following?

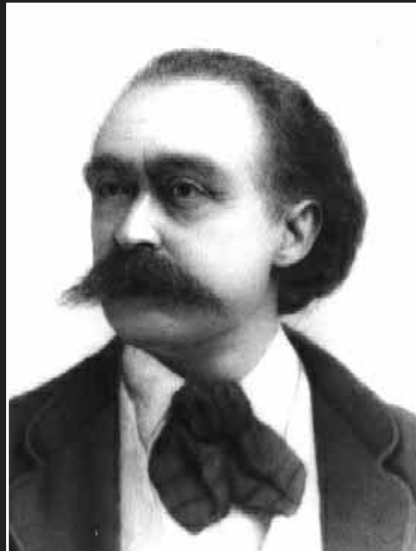
*"Several years ago, I got a bowl from my grandmother. I was told by an aunt that my grandparents got it for their wedding, but no one seems to know for sure. Could you tell me what it was meant for, and from which year it is?"*

Answer: Are we psychic? Without a photograph or pattern number, how can we begin to identify this piece? And how can we know what your grandparents used the bowl for? Maybe they kept their false teeth in it overnight.

However, this query did allow us to elaborate on Maling's bowl shapes and names. (Can you tell a Sefton from a Stanley, or a Louis from a Chelsea?) Other equally daft mails sent us into pattern numbers, paintresses' marks and odd snippets of Maling history. Here's another one:

*My parents received this plate as a wedding gift and were married in 1958 in Montreal Canada. Was Maling pottery sold world wide?*

Answer on page 2



*Antonin Boullemier - escaped the turmoil of Paris after the Franco-Prussian War and became highly respected at the Minton pottery.*



*Lucien Emile Boullemier - an early self-portrait, aged about 20 and painted circa 1897 (long before his connection with Maling).*

## Four generations of Boullemier



*Lucien George Boullemier - spent 30 years as a designer with Maling (partly in conjunction with his father - Lucien Emile).*



*Tony Boullemier - our star guest at the collectors' day. We're delighted that he says he's prepared to come along and do it again!*

Answer: No, the plates were skimmed across the Atlantic by highly-trained staff who made a regular charabanc trip to Blackpool.

OK, this query allowed us to recap on Maling's industrious Canadian agent, Jimmy James, and on "Coronet" wares made for the North American market. Both have featured in previous newsletters, and we trust you are familiar with the stories. If not, you'll find all past issues of the newsletter in the members' area of the website.



*Oval plaque designed by LEB during his time at the Soho pottery. Does the butterfly look familiar? Have a look at the Maling "Sylvan" plaque and decide for yourselves.*

Having warmed up the audience, we welcomed our special guest Tony Boulemler. He gave a fascinating and dramatic account not only of his father and grandfather, but also of other family members who had been involved in pottery and design over the centuries.

Although TMOE begins the family story with the arrival of Antonin in the UK, four earlier Boulemlers had very long working lives at Sevres as doreurs, doreuses or brunisseuses, starting with Antoine Hilaire from 1802-42, Madame

Jeune 1804-1833, Francois Antoine 1806-1838 and Hilaire Francois 1813-1855.

Antonin Boulemler, who had also worked at Sevres, removed the family from France to England in 1871, following the Franco-Prussian war. The family had survived the infamous siege of Paris, during which the citizens were obliged to eat dogs, cats, rats and even the animals in the zoo in order to survive.

However, the Parisians were unhappy with the eventual peace settlement and established their own socialist council, known as the "Commune" to press for a resumption of the war. Antonin was known to oppose the views of the Communards and he discovered, by chance, that his name was on a list of their enemies.

The choices were clear. Stay in Paris and risk being shot as an anti-Communist, or get out fast. He and his wife managed to catch the next train to Belgium and, from there, made their way to England. Here, he began a distinguished career as a painter for Minton.

Antonin's son (Lucien Emile) followed his father into the pottery business, but not without displaying many other talents. He was well known in the Stoke area for his prowess as a singer, poet, footballer, swimmer and water polo player.



*A plaque in Italianate style by LGB. Possibly made to prove his credentials when he was hoping to study in Italy - before WW1 interrupted his plans.*

Around the start of the new century, LEB took his family (including his young son - Lucien George) to America for a few years. Their voyages out and back were made with the White Star Line who would later (fortunately with the Boulemlers safely back in England) go on to build the ill-fated "Titanic".



*The wall pocket looks like Maling, but it's unmarked. Is it the real thing? The "feel" suggests it is a genuine piece of Artware. The bowl may possibly have started life as a Maling "blank", but the glaze and the colours suggest that it was decorated elsewhere.*

LGB followed the artistic leanings of his father and grandfather and planned to study in Italy. Unfortunately, WW1 intervened and he was posted as a motorcycle dispatch rider to Salonica where he was part of the Royal Flying Corp's effort to hold back the threat from Turkish and Bulgarian troops.

His wartime experiences were, as he later admitted, not too stressful. When asked what his worst times had been, he said: "when the cockroaches used to come out of the piano while I was playing for the lads in the mess!"

As a passenger on a routine reconnaissance flight in 1918, he witnessed the beginning of the end of the war. The Bulgarians were retreating, and this was the first sign that the enemy could no longer maintain a united front.

Once the war was over, the Boulemlers returned to their love of pottery. LEB had worked at Minton and the Soho Pottery before moving to Maling. Here he was joined by LGB, who had

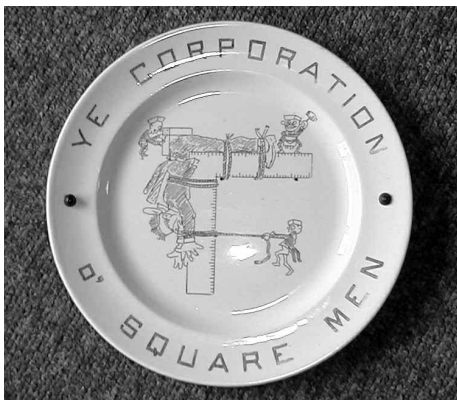
previously worked at Woods. And so, despite famine, war, potential execution and a near-miss with the “Titanic”, Maling’s greatest 20th century design team was formed.

LEB was eventually tempted away to Staffordshire and New Hall, where he created the range of “Boumier Ware”. (That was the French pronunciation of the family surname, though the preferred anglicised version is “bully-mere”) Possibly no wonder that the Maling workers coined the nicknames of “the old bull” and “the young bull” as a way of coping with the unfamiliar surnames of father and son.

LGB worked at Maling for 30 years, leaving only when the pottery closed to take up a post at Wetherby’s in Staffordshire. He continued to be active into his old age, and still painted his beloved miniatures.

Tony recollected that, as a treat for his Dad in advanced years, he had taken him on an aeroplane trip and managed to secure an invitation to the flight deck. “Have you ever been in an aeroplane before?” asked the young chap at the controls. “Oh, yes” replied LGB. “But not since 1918.” The pilot nearly fell out of his seat.

Items from the family collection gave an insight into their diverse interests and talents. We can present only a small selection here.



*Seen on the day... Linking back to an article in the last newsletter, this plate has obvious Masonic connections. But, if the Masons are a secret order, putting such an item on the wall would be a bit of a giveaway, wouldn't it? One suggestion was that these plates may have been used for dining within the Lodge.*

Modestly, Tony confessed that the “art” gene seemed to have skipped his generation. However, it appears to have re-surfaced in his daughter - so we hope to see the Boulemier name coming back into artistic circles in the future.

After lunch, Ruth hosted “is it is, or is it isn't?” A fiendishly simple challenge in which members were presented with two pieces of Maling. Except one wasn't the real thing. Neither was marked in any way, so which was which?



*Seen on the day... Bet you've never seen a “Flight” plaque like this one before. “Flight” was originally produced in beige and grey. However, while aerographing one day, Joyce Hayley (nee Kirk) decided to spruce one up with this splendid sunrise scene. Sorry our black and white reproduction can't do it justice.*

Members had to fall back on something which we can't teach in any newsletter - the “feel” of the piece. Among other things, we talked about glazes, paint shades and the weight of an item.

Because both of the items under discussion were unmarked, they cost less than a tenner apiece. One of these modest gambles was right, the other wrong. The guilty party was duly identified, and we hope members found this “hands-on” session useful in developing their knowledge of Maling.

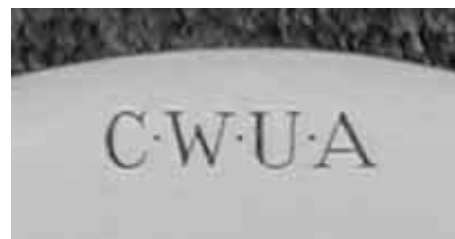
Incidentally, it was good to meet New Zealand members Robert and Isobel Snow in late September. They arrived after the collectors' day, but I was able to pose this conundrum to them over a very pleasant lunch. I'm pleased to say that they came to the right conclusion.

As a closer, we replaced our customary “pots and chat” session with a session which we called “show and tell”. Members who had brought pots along were encouraged to say a few words about them. Why do you like it? Was it a bargain? Has it special meaning for you? That sort of thing. We hope it went well and gave you the opportunity

to tell us something, rather than the other way round.

Finally, a word about the raffle. We thank all of you who bought tickets and helped to subsidise the day. One of the prizes was something of a mystery, and demonstrates that no one knows everything and we can all help each other out.

The item in question was a Maling plate from the 1930s, bearing the inscription “CWUA”. We don't know what it means, and suggestions from the room ranged from some sort of coal or chemical workers' union to a water users' association.



*Chelsea Women's Underwater Aerobics? No, we didn't think so either. But what the heck does it stand for?*

Someone, somewhere out there, may be reading this and thinking: “blimey, the good old CWUA. My granddad used to work for them!” If so, we'd like to hear from you.

What may seem trivial or obvious to one member may just be the key to unlocking a puzzle which has been baffling another member for ages. Don't be shy. It's better for us to be told something twice than not to be told it at all.

Our thanks go to Garry and the team at the Killingworth Arms, Newcastle, for their excellent hospitality.

We hope that members enjoy the atmosphere of the less formal pub venues which we have chosen in recent years. If you think your local would be a good venue (and are prepared to do some of the legwork!) please let us know.

Keep in touch with your comments on the society - whether they be good or bad. We'll do what we can

# Bridges span two centuries

**Keith Cockerill writes: I have recently had a book published called "Bridges of the River Wear". It is a gentle photographic stroll downriver, from Wearhead to the coast at Sunderland, using the river's bridges and their histories to link the river together from source to sea.**

Of the 80 or more bridges that cross the river, the modern A19 road bridge over the Wear sits close to the site of William Maling's Hylton pottery of 1762. I needed little encouragement therefore to include in the book a photograph which shows the old pottery site nestling beside Hylton Bridge.

A bridge for the Hylton area was suggested as early as 1817. A suspension bridge was then proposed in the mid-19th century, but the scheme never reached fruition. By 1891 yet another bridge project was suggested based on a design by local architect Frank Caws. Owners of land on the Hylton Castle Estate offered free land on the north shore for the scheme, but again the proposal failed to materialise.

Over 80 more years would elapse before Hylton finally got its bridge. The bridge in the photograph was built between 1970 and 1974. The site of the original Maling pottery of 1762 is to the bottom left of the picture.

Mr Maling travelled to work every day on horseback, making use of the nearby ferry. Robin, Baron of Hilton granted passage of the ferry to his chaplain, William de Hilton, in 1322. It was a strategic river crossing for centuries before the building of bridges further downstream.

The ferry operated using a rope-haul and later a chain-haul system and could transport the horse-drawn coaches of the day. It was closed around 1915.

Finally, I refer to the plaster plaques and tankards designed by Norman Carling, which were manufactured after he left the services of Maling. I have in my possession a plaque of the bridges at Sunderland, which has Mr Carling's name engraved into the design. It looks to have been made in the 1960s.



I would guess that this plaque is quite rare compared with, for example, the plaques commemorating the centenary of the Blaydon Races. What pleases me most about my bridge plaque is that it completes the full circle of the Maling connection with Sunderland.

Around 200 years separate the birth of the factory at Hylton, Sunderland to the manufacture of this plaque by Norman Carling on Tyneside - and the popular 19th C theme of Sunderland's bridges has spanned the two centuries.

*Keith's book is available in bookshops throughout the north east.*



  
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