

MALING

COLLECTORS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 37 December 2007

Memories of Stoke smoke

Our patron Roger Allan is not only a member of the Maling family, but also had a long career in the pottery industry (though not in the north east). He writes:

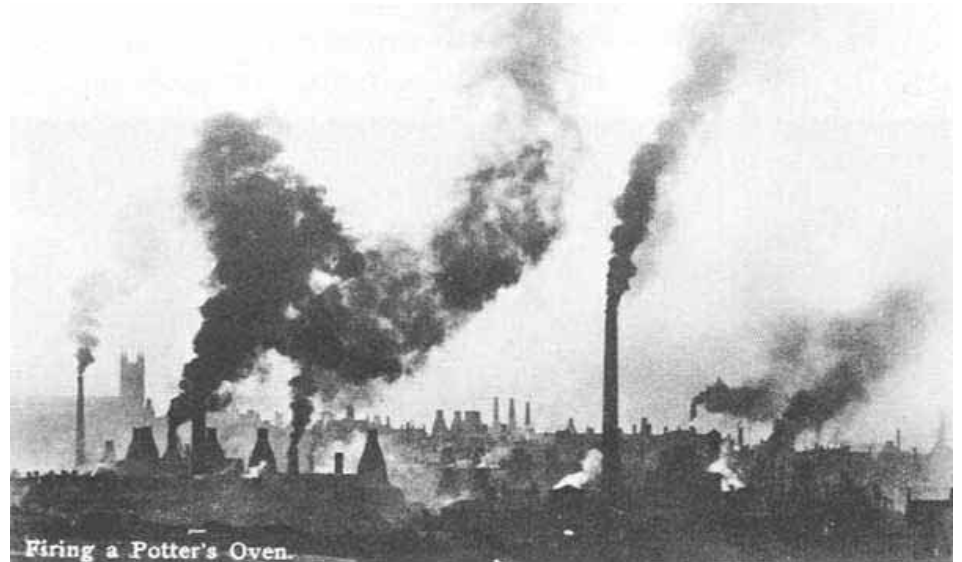
The article on Billy Milsom (newsletter 36) was particularly interesting to me, as my pottery life started while bottle kilns were still being fired in Stoke and also here in Derby at Royal Crown Derby.

It was people like Billy who were so valuable in any pottery, starting young then going on for so long - such a wealth of experience! I don't think it happens anywhere now. I find the stories of the people who worked at Maling possibly of more interest than what was made and when, though this is important for the records and I admire the great effort that goes on in this field.

Through my time in the pottery industry in Stoke, Derby, Chesterfield and Swadlingcote, I have been privileged to have met and worked with many like Billy, seeing how things should be done as only craftsmen and craftswomen do it. It has been my everlasting regret that, unfortunately, I never set foot in the Maling "Pot Bank" when it was working. But seeing what went on in potteries during the same period I have a pretty good idea of what it must have been like.

What scale - seven biscuit kilns! And one a monster. Derby had three in 1950. The same sort of firing process - eight mouths, a ton in each, build up quickly - never mind the smoke (of which the quantity was unbelievable). A good fireman could tell by the colour in the kiln how the firing was going. Yes there were Bullers Rings and cones that sagged at certain temperatures, but firing was very much a skill.

It depended on the quality of the coal, the weather, maybe the fire had to be held back if it was getting too hot. As



A view of Stoke in the days which Roger so vividly recollects.

for the loading and unloading, a padded cap and a ladder were required. The saggars contained not only ware but alumina powder to support the items during the reduction in size that took place during the firing.

Saggars could be very heavy (ref: "The Manufacture Of Earthenware" by E.A. Sandman). A common height oval - 20 by 15 by 8ins - could weigh from 20 to 30lbs and, when filled with flatware, some half a hundredweight. The arrival of the electric kiln was a blessing!

Sandman's book, first published in 1917, was a mine of information and still in use when I was at Stoke Tech in 1953. I will always remember the scene in Stoke when I used to leave the Tech at about 5 o'clock on a Friday. All the kilns were being fired up, and the smoke was quite something. Considering the clean air we have now, it is difficult for anybody who hasn't seen it to visualize what it was like.

Those were Billy's days. He saw the lot. What a lad!

Crown clarification

A correspondent points out an ambiguity in my article on the Scottish commemorative mug in newsletter 36. While the Crowns of England and Scotland were united under James I (and Elizabeth I was never Queen of Scotland) the two kingdoms were not formally linked until the Act of Union in 1707.

We strive for accuracy in the newsletter and are happy to clarify this point. Others, sadly do not have this desire for veracity. (Remember the "Wizard of Oz" plate?) Two other examples of Maling-related nonsense appear on page 4. Feel free to send in any stories you may have on this theme.

ANNUAL EMAIL CHECK

Please send a message to confirm your email.
This helps to keep our records up to date.

A little bird tells its tale

David Johnson writes: In 1973, I commenced my occupation as a Valuation Assistant in the firm John Ross & Son Chartered Surveyors of Newcastle and Gateshead. This family run business of the old school brings back many fond memories for me. Property valuations, residential sales, rating assessments and property management in general, were all to become second nature to me over the next four years. I have many fascinating stories to tell from this early period of my working career, but it is with the property management that I must continue this story.

We had many clients who engaged us and a large part of our management service was to let out fully furnished accommodation. The majority of those furnishings were to be obtained from the weekly sales of auctioneers Thomas N. Miller, formerly of Gallowgate in Newcastle. On so many occasions I attended viewing days with my principal and returned holding full responsibility to bid for the goods that we had previously picked out. Quality Maling was plentiful back then and when the opportunity presented itself for me to buy such, I didn't hesitate. My regular attendance and Maling purchases brought me into contact with many interesting characters of the day, all of whom had a tall story to tell.

One such story was told by a chap known to many as "Old Joe". Sadly, all I would ever know of old Joe was that he

lived in Byker and had once worked at the Maling Pottery. He told of rare trial samples that still existed from the hands of Malings modeller and designer, Norman Carling. Elephants, Egyptian Princess, Scottish Highlander, Mermaid, Old Boot, figure groups and garden ornaments.

To be honest, I didn't have a clue who Norman Carling was - the only authoritative book available concerning Maling was 'Tyneside Pottery' by R. C. Bell, and it simply didn't mention him or any such rarities. Story telling seemed to be something that Joe did naturally around this saleroom and yet for whatever the reason, his story bore a certain amount of credence.

Some twenty years would pass by and old Joe had become just a faint memory within my Maling mind, when his story suddenly became my reality. A little bird told me where a rare Maling trial sample garden ornament was nesting - another myth I thought, but how wrong I was. This little bird led me to a much larger bird - a Maling trial sample garden ornament of an owl. It is one of five garden ornaments produced by Norman Carling (1902-1971) while working at Malings between 1935 and 1946.

This particular item only ever reached the biscuit firing stage and was painted outside the factory in gloss paint, by a former Maling employee. Such garden ornaments were never made commercially and this is the only



Trial sample, produced May 1945. From private collection - provenance known.

example known to exist. Carling was a brilliantly gifted man and because of his skill, Malings could now consider for the first time the production of such figures. However, they were made in such small numbers that they are often only ever known from the memories of ex-workers such as old Joe.



Tilley's Tea Rooms, Lockhart's Cocoa Rooms, Rinaldos... Newcastle names now long gone. And with them the vast amounts of crockery made for them by Maling.

I recently came across this photograph of Cross St. Newcastle upon Tyne 1885, (by courtesy of Newcastle City Council). Businesses pictured in this photograph are: James Cook, Plumber and Gas Fitter, 7 Cross Street.; Lockhart's Cocoa Rooms, 91 Westgate Road; Joseph Coxon, Newsagent 93, Westgate Road and Hannah Makay, Confectioner, 3 Pink Lane.

Lockhart's is the building in the background, with the white lettering above the second floor windows.

Brush up on Maling

Those of you who have seen me will know that razors and I have not been in close contact for many years. Therefore I claim to know little or nothing about shaving mugs.

Fortunately there are collectors out there who do, and this photograph from one such enthusiast started my brain working. He wanted information on this Maling mug, marked with a CTM transfer-printed triangle and the Registered Number 181205. Also he requested information on any other Maling shaving mugs.

All I could add was that the Registered Number dated the piece to around 1890. I was also able to find a couple of examples of shaving mugs in old catalogues. But neither of these matched this shape.

Something was nagging me. Three containers and no handle? That surely isn't conventional for a shaving mug, is it? Fortunately, my correspondent was able to shed further light. He wrote:

"These mugs are an unusual shape but really only a standard scuttle mug with an extra brush holder instead of a handle. The top would contain either a block of soap, soap flakes or soap powder, and any excess water would drain out. The position of the drain holes indicates which soap product the mug was originally intended for.

"In this case the drain holes are a little way up the side as soap flakes had to be



left to soak in hot water, so a small amount of water remains in the soap compartment.

"The secondary brush holder seems quite a good idea as a place to leave the brush whilst shaving. It can not have been considered so at the time as nobody copied it."

So there you have it. A unique Maling design which nobody wanted to imitate. Bad luck CTM and Sons!

Whose day was it anyway?

Collectors' day 11 proved to be a sociable affair, with members traveling from as far afield as Dorset and Scotland to attend.

We have moved away from the more formal lectures we used to do in the past, and the days are now more a meeting of old friends. And a pub venue does help to make the atmosphere more relaxed!

Steven, Ruth and I kicked off the day with a session based on the comedy game show "Whose Line is it Anyway?" Members of the audience threw out suggestions, and we improvised a few bits of information, and the occasional joke, around the theme.

I don't think the members were quite prepared for such an informal (OK, downright wacky) start to the proceedings. But they soon got into it.

In the afternoon we welcomed three paintresses - Jean, Joyce and Margaret - who answered questions from the

audience. We were delighted to be able to show Jean a piece which she had painted in the 50s. Even more delighted to present it to her as a gift from the members.

Finally, we had our "show and tell" session. In the past, members put their

pots on a table and we talked about them. Now we encourage them to say a few words about what the pieces mean to them. (And it would be good if those of you who can't attend in person would jot down a few anecdotes. These newsletters don't fill themselves y'know!)

During the collectors' day we had quite a lot of chat about paintresses' marks. This is an area which it hasn't been possible to document fully, but a few fresh bits of information did turn up.

A new paintress would be tutored by a more experienced one, but she didn't necessarily take on the initial of the tutor. Thus, Margaret Robson (mark: T1) was trained by Betty Hill (mark: B1). Betty's mark has, as far as we know, not previously been recorded in print.

Nor was there any guarantee that a paintress would be identified by her own initial. Betty happened to be a "B", but Margaret was allocated a "T". One other unpublished mark is that of Janet Kerridge (mark: E1). Janet trained Joyce Hayley (mark: Y).

As our guests explained, the paintresses knew each other by their real names, and had no particular reason to know another's mark. Hence the sketchy information we have been able to pull together.

Another complication is that there may have been around 40 paintresses at any one time, but there are only 26 letters in the alphabet. So we find marks which combine a letter and a number, marks which combine two letters and marks which are pictorial (like an Egyptian hieroglyph).

This is a complex area, but we hope to keep working on it.

Sighting of site is suspect

It's not every day you come across evidence of a Maling pottery pre-dating 1762. And today is no exception, so don't get excited!

However, I was interested to receive correspondence from a non-member suggesting that Maling had operated a pottery at Silksworth, some three miles south west of Sunderland. All is revealed in "The Potteries of Sunderland and District", published by the Sunderland Libraries, Museum and Art Gallery in 1951.

This records: "Robert Markland, of Silksworth, potter, is mentioned in a trust deed of 1749. There was certainly a pottery there before 1754. This was most probably a small kiln for the manufacture of common brown ware for local use. Local tradition maintains that its site was on or near that of the village school.

"The burials of two sons of William Tyrer, potter, of Silksworth, in 1758 and 1759, are recorded in Bishopwearmouth parish registers.

"Christopher T Maling (died 1810) of the North Hylton Pottery lived for several years in Silksworth House, where he maintained a small kiln for experimental purposes."

So it looks as the two strands of this story have been woven together down the years to make a tale which doesn't stand up to scrutiny.



Those were the days! Over 4 million people attended the exhibition.

Check your cheque book

It may well be that, because of recent postal problems, we have not received your renewal payment. Several members have reported that their cheques were not cashed. That's because we didn't receive them.

If you do not have a receipt with this newsletter, the probability is that your payment got lost. Please have a look at your records and send us another cheque if necessary. Naturally, we will return any duplicates we receive.

We are sending this newsletter to all members who were on the books as of September 2007. We know that you are passionate about Maling and we value your support. You have kept us going for ten years, and we aim to carry on.

Please also take a moment to confirm your email address. (See contact box on left.) If we cannot rely on the postal system, we must make sure that we have other lines of communication in place.


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Tony Boullemier, Fred Houlst, Caroline

Kirkhope, Heather Maling

Dr John Maling,

Steven Moore

Joining fee: £20 (UK); £25 (overseas)

Includes FREE Maling catalogue

Renewals: £10 p.a. (worldwide)

Mad as a Hatter!

This is the first recorded sighting of a Maling hat or wig stand. (At least, that's how the eBay vendor described it.)

He may as well have added that it could double up as a child's potty. Or, if you glued it to your head, you could go to a fancy dress party as a Teletubby.

Of course, it's an ivy pot - designed for growing trailing plants. At least the foliage would disguise the rather ugly shape. But even the most ugly Maling is loved by someone.

