

MALING

COLLECTORS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Historians help us out

Sometimes clues sit around for a long time before they lead to anything. Nine years is a new record!

A version of this beaker appeared way back in newsletter 3. It celebrates St Gabriel's Church, 1912-1962. I wanted information on the church. Historian Keith Cockerill recently contacted the society with this:

"From my time working in Byker, I remember a St Gabriel's Church in Heaton Road. If the mug (marked 'handpainted') was decorated in the Maling factory, it must be one of the very last pieces to come out of it."

The newsletter 3 beaker differs slightly in its decoration and in the handwriting used for the inscription. So I concluded that at least two people were involved here. The painting is somewhat crude, therefore I was inclined to believe that enthusiastic congregation members bought in blanks and inscribed them outside the pottery.

And what of St Gabriel's? There is a church and parish of that name just to the north of the pottery, as Keith observes. However, my researches showed that this parish was founded in 1900, so the 1912 date doesn't tie in. And a Google search gives over a quarter of a million references to churches of that name!

Keith concentrated on the local angle and reported: "St Gabriel's Church, Sunderland was begun in 1909 and completed in 1912. It was the church where I was confirmed".

Two minds are, as I have often remarked, better than my one. Time for me to get back

on the case. A word with the church's website contact, Keith Roper, elicited this:

"The dates are certainly milestones in our church history as 1912 was its opening and, making enquiries of other members, they do recall this commemorative mug."

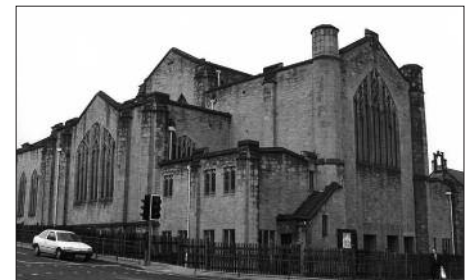
Back to Keith who discovered a parishioner called Ruth Brown (now in her 90s). She recollected that around 200 blank mugs were bought in from Maling. A Mrs Yarrow was mentioned as decorating them.

In the past, I've also asked for help with this 1911 coronation mug which bears the inscription "Presented by The Prudhoe Horticultural Society". (The usual version has "Rulers of an Empire on which the Sun never sets" in the space to the left of the handle.)

David Walker, of the Prudhoe & District Local History Society, offers this information:

"I was born in 1944, and have no recollection of the Horticultural Society in my lifetime. However my mother used to talk about the impressive Prudhoe Flower Show which was held in a field at Highfield Lane in Prudhoe when she was younger.

"Apparently the former main street - South Road - known to locals as 'up the town', was lined with all kinds of stalls which people would pass on the way to the showground, where there were marquees full of all kinds of garden produce - flowers, vegetables etc. Prizes and/or rosettes or certificates would be awarded to the best growers."



Driven nuts by nitwits

The lunatics are still busily taking over the asylum and my inbox.

For example:

"I was left a dish with the Cetem ware mark on the bottom and underneath this it has LEAFY, below this it says BE IN ENGLAND. Can you please advise if this is a genuine item?"

How does one explain tactfully that, if a "Made in England" transfer is applied in haste, the first two or three letters may not quite survive?

Then we turn to the correspondent who supplied copious pictures of his Maling item, including a base transfer with the word "Corinth". His question was: "Can you tell me the name of this pattern?"

Try a seven-letter word beginning with "C"... or the nine-letter word "clothhead".

Members will, of course, continue to receive a tolerably civil answer from me.

Make a cup of tea,

In the last issue we included an A to Z of Maling. “R” was for “retailers”, but we promised you a series of articles on Ringtons. Thanks to the diligent research and hard work of David Johnson, here it is. He writes:

The driving ambition of a man so determined to succeed in his own business, despite the obvious hardships of two World Wars, are witnessed through the phenomenal success of Ringtons Tea Merchants founder, Samuel Smith.



Sam was born in Briggate, Leeds on 22nd June 1872 and grew up in a small cottage on Lady Pit Lane. Victorian times were difficult for most families and by the age of nine he began working as a butcher's boy on Friday evenings and Saturdays, providing a small, but welcome contribution to the family finances.

In 1882 at the age of ten, he joined the Leeds branch of the York-based Ridgeway Tea Merchants, as an errand boy. Hard work and his great enthusiasm to learn all aspects of the tea trade quickly made an impression on his employers and his promotion to tea salesman was soon implemented. He proved to be an outstanding salesman and in time attained a senior management position within the company.

The first door-to-door horse drawn van delivery system was introduced in Sheffield at the end of the 19th century and it was to be this method of selling

that would inspire Sam to set up his own business. He was 35 years of age and had been with the same company for some 25 of those. A contractual agreement and his unquestionable loyalty to his employers prevented him setting up his own business in direct competition. So in 1907, to the surprise of his colleagues, he gave up his job in Leeds and headed north for Newcastle with his wife Ada and six children.

With his business partner William Titterington, Samuel Smith founded the new company, Ringtons on 17th June 1907. The name was born from the last part of his partner's surname with 'S' being added from Smith. Business began with £250 capital and a rented lock-up shop in Third Avenue, Heaton, Newcastle. Many difficulties were encountered during this early period of trading, but Sam's hard work, knowledge and great determination gradually began to pay off. Deliveries were done door-to-door, initially by one horse drawn van, and Tyneside housewives slowly began to accept Ringtons fine quality tea into their homes.

Within one year of trading, Samuel Smith had acquired two horse drawn vans and four assistants. Such an expanding business soon required larger premises, so Ringtons moved to an abandoned rifle range in Shields Road, Newcastle, where the buildings provided the much needed space. By 1912 Sam's second son Douglas had joined the company as a tea delivery boy and, by 1913, Ringtons were flourishing with eleven vans, seventeen loyal staff and hundreds of new customers.

Continued prosperity looked assured in 1914, when Samuel bought out his partner's share of the business. Nothing could have suggested that 1914, would be any different from the previous successful years, but sadly, with the sudden outbreak of the Great War, the survival of Samuel Smith and his Ringtons Tea Company, was to be severely tested.

With fifteen of the seventeen male staff conscripted, the introduction of rationing and conditional sales laws, Ringtons tea sales dropped to rock bottom. Over the next five years in a desperate effort to survive, Sam Smith began selling anything edible he could obtain. Dried eggs, tinned milk, canned meats, fish, pickles and many other foodstuffs were sold by Ringtons.

With war at an end Sam was left with a business in turmoil. He now only had three vans left on the road, but despite an uncertain future, he was determined to fight on. Twelve of the fifteen staff who had survived the war were re-engaged and together they slowly began to restore the company.

During the 1920s Ringtons were once again expanding. Firstly a head office and factory on Algernon Road, Newcastle followed by a depot in Leeds. Things were certainly moving along at a rapid pace with many new staff recruited. They even introduced two motorised delivery vans, but at this time the housewives' choice was to have their tea delivered by horse drawn vehicles.



and read on...



Samuel Smith was a close family friend of the Tyneside pottery owners C. T. Maling & Sons, and in 1928 they produced the first ceramic promotional item for Ringtons. It is fair to say that Ringtons were one of the first companies in this country to sell premium offers of this kind. The following note from the late Les Dixon (last Manager of Maling's Pottery) confirms how this came about:

"In the 1920s and 30s promotion through advertising was popular. Sam Smith who was a very wise and experienced businessman observed many products being marketed over the years (with much success) through what he named the 'dressing up' process. It was not uncommon to see such things as tobacco, biscuits, sweets and even tea being marketed in colourful lithographed tins.

"However, products being sold in beautiful, reusable and ornamental ceramic containers were not commonplace at this time. So in 1928, Maling Pottery and Ringtons Tea began their long association. Orders would be placed during the summer months with a view to Ringtons selling the pottery



during the Christmas season. Those very products have today become desirable collectables through the strong interest and demand that exists in Maling Pottery."

To be continued...



21 today - or not?

A version of this story has appeared in a previous newsletter, but I revisit it as we now have a pic.

It's always good to find a piece of Maling with a date on it. That allows you to tell when a particular pattern or shape was in production. Or does it?

This cup is inscribed "Jane Brown, Born October 22nd 1883". Obviously, it's a christening present, isn't it? You may care to engage your deductive powers before I move on to suggest "no".

For a start, the design appears to be from the hand of Mr Miguet, and he didn't join the pottery until the 1890s. So we're already a decade adrift.

Also, it appears to be "bought in" porcelain with a lithographic decoration and, again, we tend to associate that with the Miguet era.

Finally, although the mark isn't too clear on the photograph, it appears to be a twin towered castle. RC Bell dates its earliest appearance to circa 1900.

So what's the solution? I'd suggest that this was not a present for a christening but for a "coming of age". If Miss Brown was born in 1883, she'd have turned 21 in 1904. That puts us comfortably into the period which all the above clues indicate.

It's only a theory, and I'd be grateful for your thoughts.

A grave matter

Thomas Hardy's laugh-a-minute novel of death and despondency, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", is not exactly my cup of tea. So I ignored the recent BBC TV adaptation.

But I'm grateful to the correspondent who pointed out that, in episode 2 when Tess buries her infant son, she marks the grave with lavender placed in a Keillers jar.

If you spot Maling in unexpected places, let us know.

Les fleurs de Miguet

The society was recently given sight of these watercolours by artist and Maling designer Charles Miguet. They are signed, and one is dated 1910.

Mr Miguet certainly seemed to love his flowers and, if any member has pieces from his era, you should recognise his hand in the patterns which he created for the pottery.

The two lower paintings include a dragonfly - a "trademark" which Mr Miguet also used on several of his Maling designs.

One surprise is the size of these pieces. All four are around 40 inches high. I had known that Mr Miguet painted flowers as a hobby, but had always assumed that he worked in miniature, as he did at the pottery.

Some of the paintings bear the label of George Hughes, an art dealer who was active in Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, prior to WW2 and was agent for the Palace of Arts at the 1929 NE Coast Exhibition. So that's another (albeit oblique) Maling connection.

One thing I don't know is what the flowers are (as I'm the world's worst gardener). Are they native to Britain, or did Mr Miguet paint them from memory? That's your gardeners' question time puzzle to ponder on.


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Kirkhope, Heather Maling

Dr John Maling,

Steven Moore

Joining fee: £20 (UK); £25 (overseas)

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