

MALING

COLLECTORS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 19 June 2003

The Internet affects you! (Even if you don't have a computer...)



Come in No 79

Even if you don't feel confident about buying on an Internet auction site, they're still handy places to visit to increase your knowledge of Maling. All sorts of things turn up, and we're grateful to Allan Smith for finding this example of "missing" vase shape 79.

I'd not spotted it because it was just described as a "Maling Willow Pattern Vase" and it didn't sound very interesting. If the description had said "This is one of the vase shapes the Maling Collectors' Society have been searching for" then I might have had a closer look. But how was the vendor to know that?

Congratulations to Allan for his detective work. My illustrious ancestor would have been proud of you! - David

So you can't find as much Maling at antiques fairs these days? Not surprising - as the Internet is taking over. Two members mailed independently to make the same point about collecting on opposite sides of the Atlantic.

Sue Brown (UK) wrote: "*Maling is getting much more difficult to find. Perhaps, now people are trading on eBay, there is a knock-on effect in the selection in the antique shops/fairs.*"

Maureen and Peter Robinson (Canada) noted: "*eBay has defined the values of Maling items, so it has become increasingly difficult to find real bargains in the antique shops and markets. Prices have increased for the items we like such as Cobblestone and have dropped to rock bottom for Venetian Scenes.*"

Very true, adds David. Five years ago, you might see a specific item of Maling at a fair or auction, then not see another one for several weeks or even months. Now you can often find two or three of the more ordinary pieces up for auction on eBay at the same time. Inevitably, their prices have fallen as people come to realise how common they are. For confirmation, look at the "low" in the "Highs & Lows" at the end of this article.

The rarer or more attractive pieces are tending to increase in price because they are now available to a worldwide market. Before the Internet, I would never have known what might be up for sale on the other side of the world. Now I can bid on beautiful Deco from New Zealand - but so can everyone else.

Even when I was skiing in France in March, the hotel had an Internet connection, and I was able to keep in touch with the market.

Most dealers aren't Maling specialists - but they do keep their eyes on eBay. When they see a piece going for a high price, they may suddenly realise that they have something similar in stock but hadn't appreciated its value. Onto eBay it goes - and it's lost to those collectors who still rely on shops, fairs and auctions.

Is it wise?

Of course, in a face-to-face situation, you'd never dream of parting with money without giving a piece of Maling a good looking over. So, is it really wise to buy when all you can see is a photo and a description which may or may not be accurate?

As Sue Brown observes: "*I have purchased a few pieces from eBay. Most have been as described and I have been happy with the purchase. There have been two that I have received not as described. One was a vase that had a 'small stain' which was actually a hairline crack. The other was again a vase described as 'mint'. It nearly was on outside but the inside had not been washed, was very dirty from use and, once cleaned was crazed. I mailed back to both sellers saying that I was not happy with their description and on both occasions we agreed a lower figure and I received a part refund.*"

Continued on page 2

continued from page 1

That's pretty much my experience of eBay. Most sellers do their best to be honest and accurate because they don't want to get negative feedback which could damage future sales. I've only ever had one example of a piece not being as described, and I, too, negotiated a refund.

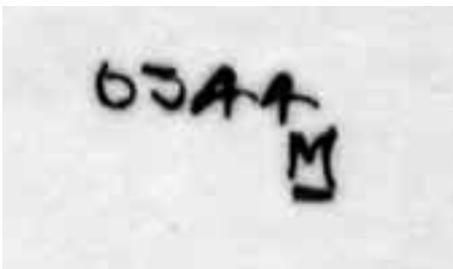
Of course, there's always the danger that a purchase will be broken in the post. If the packaging looks to be damaged, try to take photographs as you unpack. (A digital camera helps, but a conventional one will do.) You then have evidence to try to get some money back from someone.



Finally, we look back at the prices achieved by Maling during the last month on eBay. The cigarette box is probably one of the rarer items produced to celebrate the 1929 NE Coast Exhibition, and fetched £739. One of the cheapest pieces was a 1911 coronation plate, which went for the bargain price of £2.99.

Why mark our words?

Why do we keep reminding members to check pattern numbers carefully? The answer is that it's so easy to mis-read them. Look at the photograph here and decide what the number is. Then look at page 3 and see if you were right.



Multi-talented Mr Boullemier

In the last newsletter we asked about the football career of Lucien Emile Boullemier in connection with a comment made on our "Maling Memories" video. He did play for Stoke in 1896/7. But his winning FA cup goal was scored when he was a player for Port Vale in 1898. And it wasn't the final but round 1.

On 30th January 1898, Sheffield United (who were top of Division 1) and Burslem Port Vale drew 1-1. The match was replayed on 2nd Feb 1898 when Port Vale won 2-1. LEB scored the winning goal in extra time. Sadly, in round 2 later that month, Port Vale went down 3-0 to Burnley and were out of the competition. Football's loss was pottery's gain.

A number of readers have provided more information about this versatile man. He partially retired from football in October 1902, to concentrate on his art work and emigrated to America in 1903, eventually to take up his father's profession as a ceramic painter. When he left the Vale, the directors put on a benefit game and dinner to help him with his expenses.

From 1903 to 1905 he was working at the Lennox china factory in New Jersey. (He didn't totally give up his football because he continued playing for Philadelphia Hibernians)

Returning to England in 1905, he made some non-league appearances for Northampton Town before making an unsuccessful comeback with one final league appearance, once again for Port Vale in November 1905. (Other non-league appearances for Northern Nomads and North Staffs Nomads are known.)

He went to work at Mintons as a painter and later at the Soho Pottery in Cobridge from where he joined the Maling factory in April 1926 and remained with them until 1936. He then went to work at the New Hall factory in Staffordshire where he created the range of "Boumier" Ware which carried his facsimile signature.

In addition to his footballing talents, he was chairman of Stoke Swimming Club and a water polo referee.

Later in life LEB developed his musical interests and was a member of several amateur operatic societies. The following review of his performance in



"The Gondoliers" appeared in the "Staffordshire Sentinel" of 7th February, 1923.

"Mr. Boullemier, as already indicated, is a 'host in himself' as the Grand Inquisitor, the dignified picturesque and amusing personage who regards himself as king-maker - a kind of Warwick who rather reminds you of Dr. Samuel Johnson. Mr. Boullemier revels in the unctuousness of it, but he also gets through the musical numbers of the part very well - 'I Stole The Prince' and 'There Lived A King' (assisted by Mr. Edge and Mr. Butterworth as the two gondoliers). Mr. Boullemier greatly enhances his reputation by this impersonation and renders most valuable service to the Society, by the members at which he is also held in such cordial regard personally by his amiability and comradeship."

Many more recollections of Mr Boullemier and his son are contained in our video "Maling Memories" - still available to members at the bargain price of £15 while stocks last.

We have a winner

The answer to our competition was, of course, Port Vale. The winner is Lesley Frew and she will receive a piece of Maling as a prize.

How Maling was made

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

Cup and Bowl Making

The Jolleying Department made all the “holloware” such as cups and bowls. A ball of clay of the right size was thrown into a plaster mould which shaped the outside of the cup. While the mould rotated at high speed a metal profile (the “jolley”) was lowered into it; the clay was opened out and drawn up the mould thus forming the complete shape. The mould was then placed into a dryer which removed a certain amount of moisture so that the cup could be withdrawn from the mould.



This department was the most difficult and strenuous in which to work and wages were paid (as in all the making departments) only on what the Jolleymen could produce. On average, about two thousand articles were made by each machine in an eight hour period. The cups and holloware were then taken to the Topping and Turning shop where they were shaped, turned and polished by the use of hand tools.

Plate and Dish Making

In the Platemaking Department “flatware” was produced by flattening the clay into a pancake by the lowering of an electronically operated spreader onto a revolving head then a horizontal metal profile or jig brought down to cut out the underside of the plate. Again, as with the holloware, each item would be placed into a rotary dryer.



When dry the plates would be transferred to a Towing machine which removed all the rough edges. With an average output per semi-automatic machine of fifteen hundred pieces in eight hours, this department produced plates, saucers, plaques and dishes. A fully automatic machine could turn out five thousand pieces per day, but it required three people to operate.

Handling

Handles were made by pressing in a mould, by casting, or from clay squeezed into long strips through a machine and then cut and shaped by hand. As the method of making handles by casting was easier it proved a boost to production. About two thousand handles were produced per hour by this method which kept twelve teams of four Handlers active on piecework all day.

The handles were fixed on to the objects by the application of an adhesive chemical solution mixed with “ball slip” (ball clay mixed with water). Originally this would have been undertaken by hand but in later years an automatic machine carried out the operation fixing six thousand handles in a day.



NEWSLETTER

Once again we apologise for having a 4-page newsletter. We will attempt to return to 8 pages when time permits.

BUY & SELL

We're happy to help members to find or dispose of pieces. Indeed, we've made this offer a few times in the past, but had little take-up. Now, like buses, two come along at once!

Maureen and Peter Robinson write: We purchased a “willow pattern plate” on eBay for 5 US dollars. As suspected, it turned out to be a jumbo saucer and was in excellent condition. So, if anyone has the corresponding cup I'm sure we could come to a mutually satisfactory arrangement. (e-mail - intres@sympatico.ca)

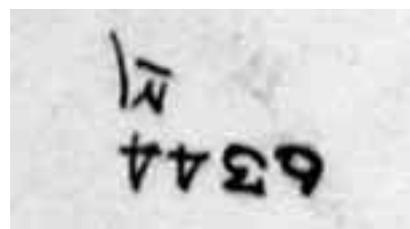
Ian Stewart writes: If any member is trying to put together a dinner service in the “Kelvin” pattern, I have two dinner plates and two soup plates which are surplus to requirement. (e-mail: eagleojibwe@aol.com)

You can also contact these members via the society PO Box address and we'll pass your message on.

S.E. MEETING

Pat Proctor has kindly agreed to host another informal meeting for members in the south east. It will be at her home in Bedfordshire for those in the area or prepared to travel. Before making any firm arrangements, Pat would like to know what the level of interest is. Pat can be e-mailed - p.proctor@ouvip.com - or contacted via the society PO Box.

How many of you identified the pattern number on page 2 as 6544? If so, you're 200 out. It's actually 6344 as this photograph shows. (It's upside-down so you couldn't cheat!) Both marks come from items in the “Artware” range and we can be confident that 6344 is correct because it is clearly marked on other pieces. This is a known pattern, but you can see how tricky it is to identify unknown ones unless we have several sightings to compare. Keep your eyes open!



Did we flog it?

We hope that UK members managed to catch the showing of the BBC's "Flog It!" programme on 14th May. Unfortunately, notification of the broadcast came through too late to write to everyone to say that it was on.

We got our promised four minutes and, in that time, managed to do a look at the factory, a painting demonstration (thanks to Margaret Robson) and a chat about pots. Those who saw it seem to have enjoyed it.

Inevitably, as we did more than two hours of filming, much was cut. My closing remarks were to the effect that the quality of Maling dropped off in the 1950s. I followed this up by explaining that the factory was in financial trouble and wasn't producing the range of more elaborate gilded and lusted pieces that it had made pre-war.

The last bit was cut and made it appear that I was criticising the quality of workmanship in the 50s. I'd just like to make it clear that I didn't mean it to sound like that. Blame the editor!

Some of you may have missed the show - particularly overseas members. If you have a computer or DVD player, you may contact us for a free CD of the show in MPG format. Sorry, but we don't have video copies.

There is another Newcastle "Flog It" scheduled for broadcast on 7th July. We don't know if there will be another bit on Maling or not.

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A ROSE IS A RIP-OFF!

"A new design by Maling's" heralds this advertisement dating from a world before trading standards and pan-European accords. But can we believe it? Knowing Maling's penchant for reinvention, you will have guessed that the answer is no! It's a design that you may have encountered before as we have discussed it several times.

I used to know it as "OSBOURNE" until David bought an 1897 commemorative plate with just the border and a portrait of Queen Victoria. In Maling's second pattern book the floral element is named as "EGLANTINE" so we have presumed that the border and flowers are two separate designs, brought together as early as the 1890s. Now they reappear as a 'new' design introduced in 1939 - a good 40 years after they were truly new.

I recall asking Lucien George Boulemier about this advertisement way back in 1987. "Yes, that's one of mine," he said, and told me how awkward the mottled ground was to fire. I then suggested that it might have been an old design, to which he replied "It was just something they used to put on lavatories. I made it look like something!" I'm not arguing, Mr Boulemier! - Steven



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

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