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On the Way to Old Chelsea

By Gerry Pearce and Chris Watkins

Two vases and a tazza or rose bowl are shown here in a part decorated state. All destined to be completed as Old Chelsea, they beg the question as to how they left the Wileman factory in this sadly undressed state. The name Old Chelsea appears on a range of earthenware shapes including vases, coffee pots, plant pots, tazzas, clocks and lidded and stoppered jars.

The decoration is extravagantly rich with the use of bold colours and much burnished gold. The hand decorating would have made these expensive pieces to purchase at the end of the 1890s to early 1900s, when brought to the market. Two flowers feature: daffodils and irises, generally in yellow or red but blue and mauve are known and cobalt blue ground colour appears on most.

The **unfinished** pieces have reached the



Fig 1. 8002 with part and complete decoration

same stage in the process of decoration. The pale pink outline of the flowers would appear to be a transfer or tracing, ready to be hand decorated and the first hand colouring has been applied in cobalt blue. Having examined the tazza, there appears to be no fault



Fig 2. 8137 or 7426 unfinished, 8137, 8137R, 7426



Fig 3. 8388 tazza or flower bowl

in the body but the blue of the rim has run beyond its intended line and may have caused its rejection at this stage. That does not explain why Wileman would have allowed the piece out of the factory already marked with the 1895-1910 "THE FOLEY CHINA" over "CW" backstamp (K01) and even more strangely, three similarly unfinished pieces. The photographs illustrate the part

and completed decoration of the pattern numbers 8002, 8137 and 8388. (figs. 1,2,3) 7426 used the number 137 shape.

As for the early Intarsio range, the Old Chelsea (O.C.) 8000 series pattern numbers applied derive from the shape number, so the same decoration appears on different shapes under different numbers. For example Intarsio small jug shape, number 3032 is replicated in O.C. as 8032 (fig.4); Intarsio squat "donut" jug 3036, as O.C. 8036 (fig.5); Intarsio 3075 as O.C.8075 (fig.6) etc. For these three examples the decoration is essentially the same lily but where the flower is painted in red the letter "R" is added to the number, eg 8036R shown here with a further colour variant. This shape number system does not apply to the 7000 series numbers,



Fig 4. 3032 Intarsio 8032 Old Chelsea

34 known recorded Old Chelsea numbers are - 7426, 7429, 8002R, 8004, 8012, 8015, 8019, 8019R,



Fig 5. 3036 Intarsio, 8036 and 8036R Old Chelsea

8020, 8020R,8022, 8025, 8025R, 8032, 8036, 8036R, 8053, 8059, 8075, 8075R, 8109, 8137, 8137R, 8331, 8344,8344R, 8388, 8409, 8409R, 8410, 8410, 8410R, 8458, 8458R. There are probably many more and unfortunately a lot of pieces have no pattern number applied. Back stamps vary across those used, from about 1894 to 1910 (J08, K01, K02, K02A), the same period as Intarsio. (fig.7)

Now having free access to the Wileman and Shelley pattern books, it has been easier to check on the numbers and of those listed above; only a single piece has been found in one of the earthenware books: pattern number 7426. (fig.8) The vase is illustrated at fig.9. All the other numbers located in the books apply to different items, many of them being pub advertising



Fig 6. Intarsio 3075, 8075, 8075R, 8075R different colour way



Fig 7. Backstamps on Old Chelsea. 1894-1910 K01, K07, K02, K02A

ware. This indicates that there must have been another pattern book, sadly lost from us. Perhaps 7426 was recorded in the earthenware book in error. The final anomaly is that in the



Fig 8. Pattern no.7426 Tristo Ware Vase



Fig 9. 7426 vase shape 43

pattern book vase 7046 has the notes - "Gilt in Liq(uid) Burnished gold Tristo Wares Stippling only in Best Hand Gold" It is unknown why the name Old Chelsea was used but why record the only pattern known as Tristo Ware? We shall probably never know. Any members having pieces with numbers not listed above please send pictures including

the base marks to the editor. Thank you.

Thanks to Les Foley and Bruce Sandie for pictures. Further reading in Bryan Goodlad's magazine article in Shelley Group magazine issue no.52, June 1999 and handout notes from his excellent presentation at the Shelley Weekend meeting of 2008. Pattern book picture reproduced with kind permission of WWRD, United Kingdom Ltd. and the City Archive, Stoke on Trent. Backstamp identification numbering as per The Shelley Group website www.shelley.co.uk. Pictures not to scale.■