

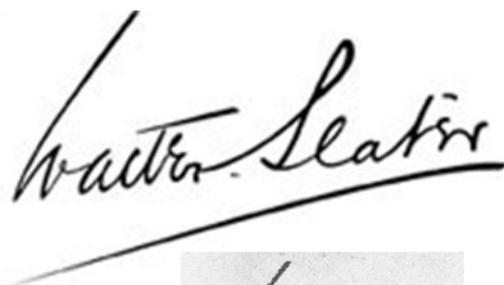
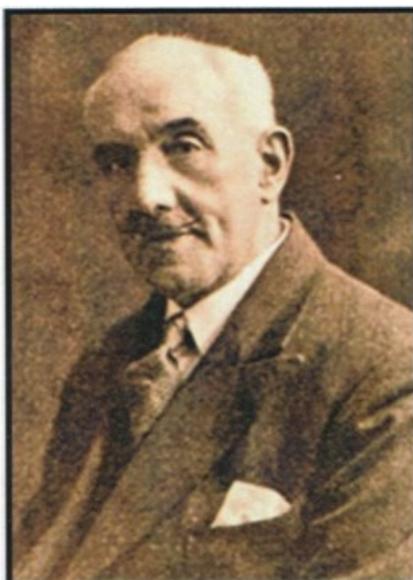
Walter Slater Lustreware

By Chris Watkins

Walter Slater came from a family that already had three generations of decorative managers in potteries. Born in about 1865, Walter became an apprentice at Minton's and by about 1885 he had moved to work for Doulton's, where he worked for twenty years.

By 1905, therefore, it seems likely that Percy Shelley would have been aware of Walter's work and would certainly have known of the Slater family. However, the time at which Walter joined the Foley Works was not a particularly hopeful one for artistic experiment: the economic depression of the first decade of the century. By the time the economic situation had improved, Walter was given more artistic freedom. In 1909 over 150 new patterns were introduced into the earthenware pattern book. Since he followed Frederick Rhead as Artistic Director, he developed existing series. These included 11 lustre patterns which bore the Spano-Lustra backstamp. In 1911 he introduced a new series of Intarsio ware, in what might nowadays be termed an Art Nouveau style.

The non-pattern book lustre-decorated pieces were introduced in 1920. See collection of 101 examples on the Group website. The technique used created a background of gradually changing colour on the piece, then ornamentation in gold and other colours was added, and finally a glaze with an iridescent finish. When such a variety of lustres was first introduced they found a welcoming public. At the 1921 British Industries Fair the whole of one side of Wileman & Co.'s display was devoted to these productions. During the customary royal visit, Queen Mary expressed particular interest and is reported to have referred to some of them as "charming". Their popularity was maintained through to about 1925 when the firm was renamed Shelley, but when lustres were last mentioned in trade journals in 1928 only a few pieces were available. The dynamic effect of lustre glaze may explain why most of the subjects were organic: animals, plants etc. The 45 base pics I have carry a facsimile of Walter's signature. He was ahead of his times: it's Walter dot Slater. A thinner version was used on some vase bases.





Peacock on 813 vase 38cm high



Hibiscus on ginger jar
23cm high



Poppies on 813 vase 39cm high



Grapes on bowl 30cm diameter



Galleons on bowl 31cm diameter