

Dating Shelley Birds

By Chris Watkins

Twenty-five years ago our Research Officer was writing about Twitching: now I'm doing it.

I love looking at birds through the window (currently N=26 species) but I hadn't thought of looking at Shelley birds on my screen (currently N=80 variants).

The first known bird shape was a crested miniature, number 63 Goose,



Goose 9cm high



Prairie Hen 6cm-high

L03 1916-1925. How many explanations can you think of for that? My favourite is "Shelley birds turn back time".

It's more difficult to date large birds because they don't have Registered Design Numbers to help us. They were labelled with the slightly academic title "Bird Studies". Distinctions between "pre-war" and post-war" (i.e. WWII) are often made, partly because either a different mix or mould must have been used in the later period creating a smaller model.

So how many are there all together? Elder (2000) took the view "there are still quite a few out there yet to be spotted". Curt Leiser (2001) estimated "close to forty in total.". Tony Kent (2007) thought 47 (and illustrated 46). Palmer (2016) mentioned 41 (and illustrated 40).

My listing on the Group website contains 24 models, 40 variants in small, 14 models, 40 variants in large. Total 80

The examples in this article have not been illustrated previously. Puzzles continue: the Kingfisher came from Curt Leiser's archive - without a model number or base pic. But it's so Shelley I included it.

Registered in 1904 it was described as "Miniature" and was the forerunner of the "small series", twelve of which were registered in 1915. Many of these have been illustrated previously, except number 6 "Prairie Hen". Registered Design Numbers help dating. On that basis Davenport (1996) thought there were 12 in the small series, but the series developed to Number 27, with later examples bearing the 1938-1966 backstamp (M05 see Group website). So that would mean 28 small examples. But here the puzzles start. Numbers 13 to 17 in that series have not been found and there remains only one whose series number has not been identified. So there may be a few more to find. And puzzle two came from tabulating the backstamp images I had (N=37). Series numbers 1 to 15 all had the post-war backstamp M05 1938-1966, and the later examples all bore the pre-war backstamp



18. Woodlark

unknown number
Kingfisher



It has been estimated that there are about 80 birds per person on the planet. So the Shelley bird series may have stopped spot on.

(with commiserations to anyone who has searched for "Shelley bird" images on the internet)



Large series 06 Spotted Woodpecker 20cm high



Small series number 11 Spotted Woodpecker 5cm high

References

- Chris Davenport (1994) *Shelley Twitching*, Shelley Magazine, 32: 12-13
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- Helene Elder (2000) *More Shelley Birds for the Aviary*, Shelley Magazine, 56: 15, 16
- Mannie Banner (2001) *lovebird/parrot* Shelley Magazine 59: 17
- Curt Leiser (2001) "Newsletter "Going to the Birds?". NSCC, 12:2, 1-10
- Tony Kent (2007) "Birds of a Feather" ASCC Shelley Newsletter, 21:4, 1-4
- Tony Kent and David Deller (2012) "Shelley Birds" Shelley Magazine, 103, 18-20
- Steve Palmer (2016) "Dawn Chorus" talk at Annual Weekend

PHOTO CORNER



A most unusual Dainty Floral Muffin Dish pattern number 11993/6