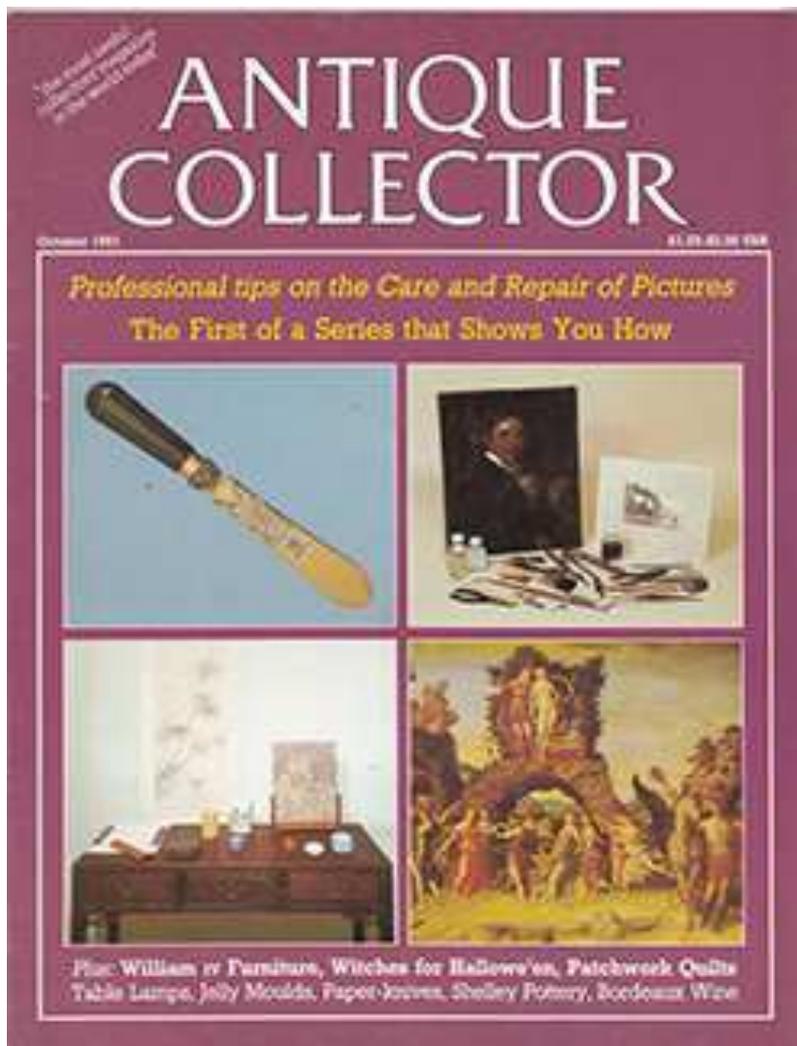


SHELLEY IN THE PRESS



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A late 19th century earthenware SHELLEY INTARSIO is little-known and exciting to find, urges Chris Watkins

Visitors to a recent London exhibition of Shelley Pottery have experienced a number of surprises with regard to the wide variety of wares made by this small firm. Not least has been the surprise of finding signed pieces dating back to 1780. A more accessible yet also rather unknown period of this family's production derives from the period when the Shelley family were managing the partnership Wileman & Co, established in 1872 by J. B. Shelley and James F. Wileman. From 1884 the firm was wholly a Shelley concern, with the young Percy Shelley as the main driving force. 1896 saw the appointment of the first Art Director, Frederick Rhead, a man with a distinguished background in pottery design and a training at both Minton's and Wedgwood's. His productions, especially those in earthenware, are well represented in the exhibition organized by three collectors Chris Watkins, William

Harvey and Robert Senft which is at the Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh until 21 November.

Rhead's work bears the backstamp of the interwoven W & Co (see illustration), and the trade name Foley, both of which were used until 1910. One of the more popular ranges which Rhead created in earthenware was that named Intarsio, first produced in 1896. Although the name is similar to the Italian *intarsia*, meaning 'inlaid work', the influences on this style were more those of Dutch potteries such as Rozenburg. Rhead is known to have travelled to Holland and written on the Rozenburg and Delft potteries: his Intarsio used a similar range of colours to that of the Dutch earthenware. Deep greens, browns, blues and purples are common since only a limited palette was suited to this particular style of decoration. One or two yellows and an almost luminous green provided contrast. The decoration was applied directly to the fired earthenware and a heavy glaze added. In the great majority of cases this underglaze decoration creates a very durable effect, with almost complete fusion of the colours with the glaze: in one or two cases the glaze or colour seems to have bubbled slightly in firing.

The range of items produced in Intarsio decoration was extensive. Probably most numerous were vases of varying styles, many of which featured multiple handles, up to six in number. Coffee pots in at least four shapes, jugs, loving cups, candlesticks, chalices and pilgrim bottles were also made. A series of clock cases, some basically rectangular in form but others with flowing open shapes, were produced: the pattern generally included a motto or theme relating to time. Plant troughs, umbrella stands and jardinières on pedestals were some of the larger items. The size of pieces in this range was also extensive: vases of only four inches in height can be compared with umbrella stands of 28 inches and even taller jardinières on pedestals.

Designs display a variety of themes. Many of the earlier patterns include flower motifs or other natural forms. Later patterns included bands of a repeating design featuring one of a variety of animals - lambs, cats, swans, ducklings, geese, fish and hens. These may show the influence of W. S. Coleman who had been active at Minton's during Frederick's apprenticeship.

Every piece of Intarsio ware from this period carries the Wileman & Co backstamp incorporating the series name Intarsio, a four digit



Above top and bottom, respectively
Wileman & Co backstamp
used from about 1890-1910.
Shelley backstamp used
1910-1925.

pattern number, and often a Registered Design number. The pattern numbers started at 3000 in 1896 and had reached approximately 3300 by 1900. In most cases a pattern number was given to a particular combination of pattern and shape of object: not every number is recorded in the pattern book, but if all were used then there must be potentially hundreds of items available for the collector.

Two distinctly different series of the Intarsio range deserve mention. First a series of character teapots introduced in 1900 (around pattern no 3350). These were modelled in the shape of a statesman in green frock coat and the lid to the pot was formed as the head of a politician: Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Salisbury, W. E. Gladstone and others have been reported. A small number of more traditional commemorative wares was also pro-

duced in Intarsio. The second series worthy of mention is that featuring themes and famous lines from Shakespeare's plays. Introduced in about 1901 (pattern no. about 3450), the last of these ran at least to pattern no. 3506 and possibly constituted the last of the range designed by Frederick Rhead.

Rhead moved on from Wileman & Co in 1905 and Walter Slater became Art Director. In 1910 Slater created a new range of Intarsio designs (from about pattern no. 3540) with distinctly different Persian-influenced decorations in the same underglaze technique. Equally as collectable for those interested in the later period, these designs extended at least as far as pattern no. 3705 and carried the later backstamp.

Collecting

Overall, the Intarsio style has potential for the general or the specialist collector: it is an attractive style of earthenware decoration mostly found in excellent condition, and produced in sufficiently small quantities to make each new find exciting. Prices can vary from around £25 for the smallest simplest vase to at least £500 for an umbrella stand. £50 or £60 may purchase an attractive medium-sized vase, and up to £300 can be paid for a clock-case. Prices have been rising while the exhibition has been touring.

Books

Further details and illustrations may be found in *Shelley Potteries* by Watkins, Harvey and Senft, published by Barrie and Jenkins at £15.

Where to Buy

Street markets including Portobello Road in West London are often good sources for Intarsio ware, and the dealers listed should be contacted.

BRITANNIA, Gray's Antique Market, 58 Davies Street, London W1 (01-629 6772)

WILLIAM HARVEY, Stand N6, Antiquarius, 135 King's Road, London SW3 (01-352 2203)

TADEMA 1900, 10 Charlton Place, Camden Passage, London N1 (01-359 1055)

JEANETTE YOUNG, 2nd floor, Alfies Antique Market, 13-25 Church Street, London NW8 (01-723 5731)

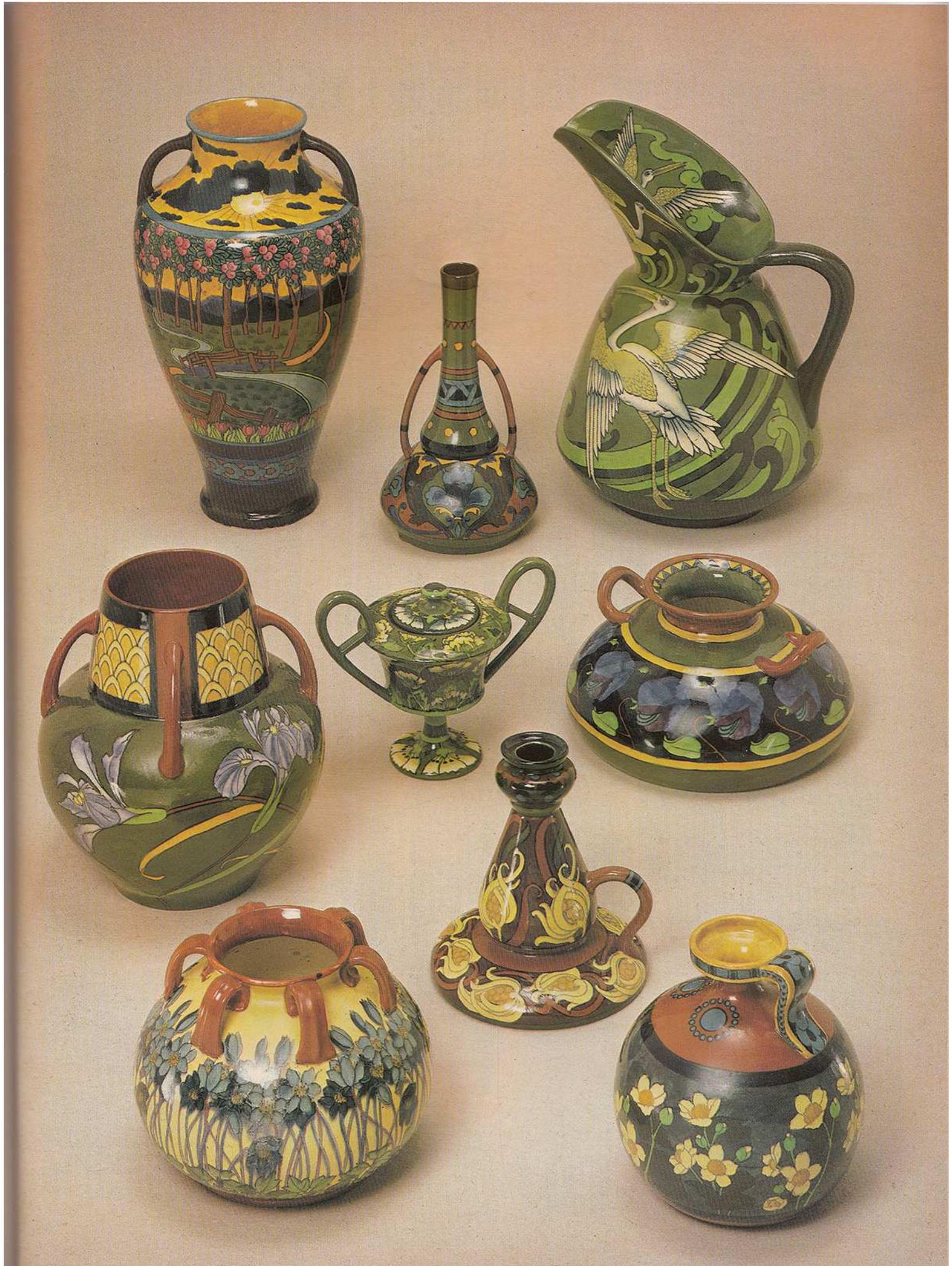


Plate 1 in Watkins, Harvey and Senft (1980) Shelley Potteries, Barrie & Jenkins