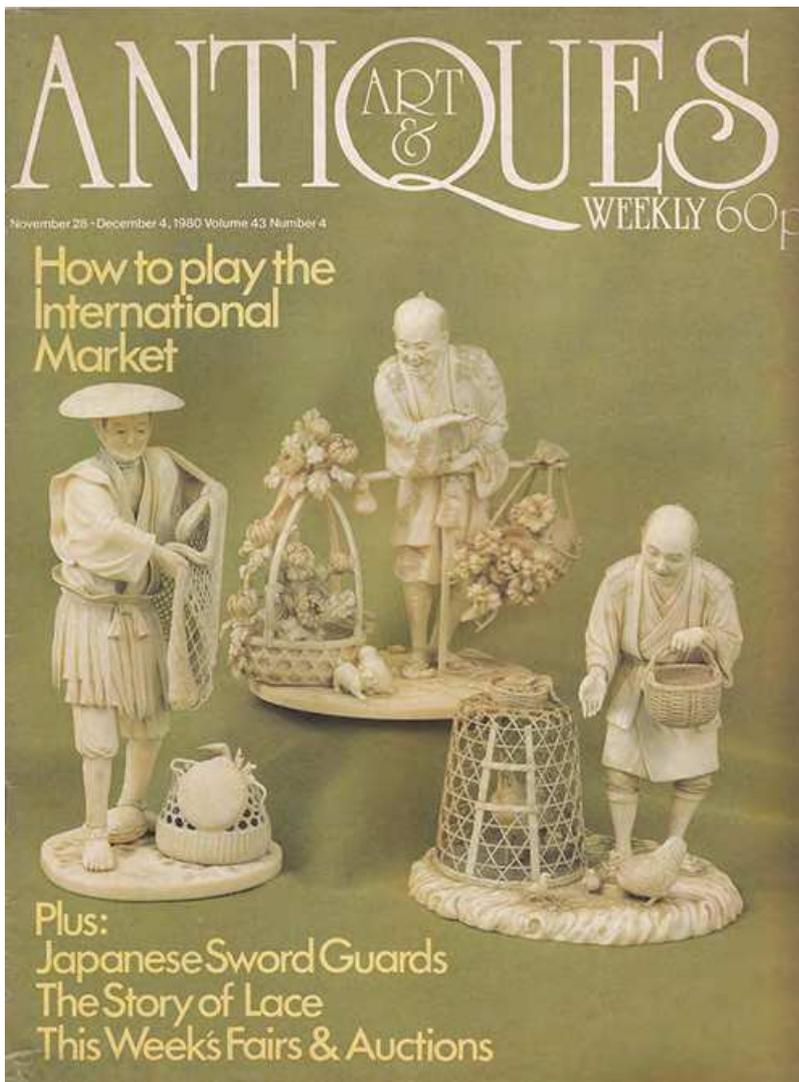


# SHELLEY IN THE PRESS



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# A century of ceramics

From the 1870s to the 1960s, Shelley pottery wares have vividly reflected the changing fashions of decorative and applied arts – notably Art Nouveau, the 1920s Oriental styles and Art Deco. The first comprehensive exhibition of Shelley pottery – on view at the Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Road, London E2, until January 25 – next year travels to Stoke-on-Trent, Bristol and Edinburgh.

Coinciding with the exhibition comes the publication of *\*Shelley Potteries*, a labour of love by three ardent collectors, Chris Watkins, William Harvey and Robert Senft, which records the history and development of a typical, family owned and run English pottery.

Shelley china had become a household

name by the 1920s. The Shelley family had been potters for many generations, but their involvement with what was to become Shelley Potteries did not start until 1872 when J. B. Shelley, in partnership with J. F. Wileman, formed Wileman & Co at Longton, Stoke-on-Trent. Wileman left the company 12 years later but the Wileman name was retained until 1925 when it was changed to Shelley – the name Shelley appears on wares made from 1910 onwards, replacing the Foley trademark.

J. B. Shelley's son Percy joined the prospering firm in 1881. The company's first art director, Frederick Rhead (appointed 1896) introduced a highly successful range of decorated

earthenware, *Intarsio*, in the Art Nouveau style – probably inspired by a visit to the Rozenburg Pottery in 1889. Rhead's successor, Walter Slater, produced a new range of Oriental-style *Intarsio* in 1911.

The company found itself in a particularly strong position after the First World War when Percy's three sons came to the works. It was during this period that Shelley's gained their reputation for bone china teasetts and earthenware dinner services, and produced a large range of arms, heraldic and commemorative china. The bone china teaware was of high quality due to the large proportion of bone; the exact recipe was a closely guarded secret.

Wileman & Co had produced wares for children since 1902, involving simple illustrations of nursery rhymes, and in the 1920s popular ranges were designed by Hilda Cowham and Mabel Lucy Attwell. Undecorated domestic ware, including superior jelly moulds, helped the company through the difficult 1920s, as did a range of advertising wares. Between the wars, the efforts of Percy and his sons helped the company to expand and diversify while others struggled and failed. In 1929 Shelley's became Shelley Potteries Ltd.

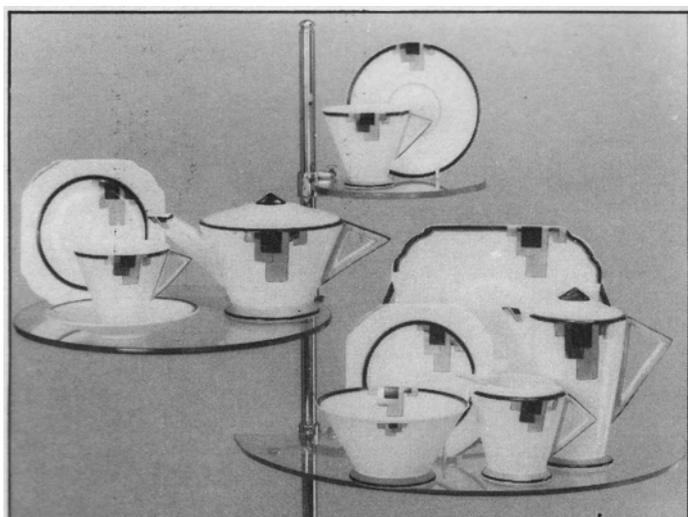
Walter Slater's son Eric produced some striking Art Deco ceramics in 1930 – *Vogue* and *Mode* – which were conical in form, with solid, triangular handles. In bone china teaware, one of his most successful designs was *Regent* in 1933, with flared, trumpet-shaped body and circular handles.

Shelley's also catered for more conservative tastes – their traditional designs were particularly popular overseas and during the Second World War, 80 per cent of their output was exported.

After the war came the transition to a technology-based industry and, inevitably, the firm was drawn into the take-overs which changed the Potteries. The era of small family potteries was over. In 1966 Shelley's were taken over by Allied English Potteries, a newly formed conglomerate, which in 1971 merged with the Doulton Group – it is unfortunate that Royal Doulton felt unable to sponsor the Shelley exhibition.

*\* Published by Barrie & Jenkins. £15.*

**Colour: Top left and bottom - Clock cases from the *Intarsio* range of earthenware, 1897, with underglaze decoration over a transferred outline. Top right - Clock case from the *Urbato* range, c. 1900, untypically with tubelined decoration. All designed by Frederick Rhead, art director for Wileman & Co from 1896-1905**



**left Part tea and coffee set in the 'Eve' shape, 1932, by Eric Slater, art director for Shelley Potteries**

**Below: 'Vogue' shape dinnerware with sunray pattern, 1930, by Eric Slater for Shelley Potteries**





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