



Friends Chronicle

Friends of the Wedgwood Museum



Launch of the Friends

The Friends of the Wedgwood Museum was officially launched on Thursday, 27th November 2003 at the 'Antiques for Everyone' show held at the National Exhibitions Centre, Birmingham. The Wedgwood Museum Trust was offered the central exhibition space to show some of our Designated Collection in a different setting.

The display 'Wedgwood and Artists', reflected the creative genius of different artists working with the Wedgwood Company, in a variety of ways, from three dimensional models to surface decoration, from the 18th through to the end of the 20th century. The opportunity to use this unrivalled antique fair to launch our new society was accepted with enthusiasm. Members of the Wedgwood Museum Curatorial staff and Committee members of

the Friends organisation all took part in manning the stand and encouraging visitors to join this embryo society. An interesting and stimulating time was had by all.

The large graphic panel created especially for the Friends proved to be extremely eye catching as the illustrations indicate



Official launch of Friends of the Wedgwood Museum in November 2003 at the Antiques for Everyone Fair held at the NEC.

and all Friends will have the opportunity to see this in person at our first event, planned for April, to be held here at Barlaston.

A number of new friends were enrolled at Birmingham and we look forward to welcoming them to Barlaston in the near future.

Volume 1, Issue 1
January 2004

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A friend of the Wedgwood Museum tries her hand at throwing

Lectures

The Wedgwood Museum Staff regularly lecture to a wide variety of organisations World-wide. We intend to include, occasionally, a synopsis of those papers & talks which we hope will be of interest to all members.

Lynn Miller, Museum Information Officer spoke to the Wedgwood Society of London on Saturday 6th December 2003.

Sir William Hamilton – 18th century Collector

From time immemorial individuals have gathered about them items they value or like; things that they hope may impress others, or articles that they hope will increase in value. During the course of her talk to the London Wedgwood Society, Lynn investigated the collecting habits of one great man, known throughout fashionable Society, as well as intimately to Wedgwood and Bentley themselves. It was in particular the collection of Sir William Hamilton's 'Etruscan' vases, which influenced the 'Wedgwood & Bentley' partnership period of ornamental ware production.

Josiah and Thomas Bentley made superb use of the Hamilton / d'Hancarville volumes entitled 'Antiquités Etrusques, Grecques et Romaines', in the production of their Black Basalt wares.

Hamilton himself was revered by many individuals as – '...a true lover and Pro-

Harry Barnard

Sharon Gater, Research Assistant addressed attendees at the Antiques for Everyone Fair in November on the subject of Harry Barnard.

Harry Barnard remains one of the most unique and treasured of the 'old Etruscans'. Originally engaged on a six month trial as a slip-decorator, throughout his career, spanning 1897 - 1930 Barnard's responsibilities grew to be many and varied. To artist and designer he added the occupations of writer and lecturer, in between times fulfilling the roles of tile department manager, museum curator, London showroom manager and all-round ambassador

motor of the Fine Arts and protector of Artists', (David Allan, artist, October 1775) and it was Hamilton's vase collection that was to raise British consciousness in what we now call the decorative arts. Josiah Wedgwood I himself acknowledged Hamilton's contribution to the arts by saying – 'The Whole Nation, as well as I, had long spoken with the gratitude of the Patronage you have afforded, and the assistance you have given, to the arts in this country by the introduction of so many of the valuable relicts [sic] of antiquities.'

The success of the Wedgwood 'antique' vase forms inspired by the originals in Hamilton's collection can be judged by the following statistic which appeared in an entry on Sir William himself in the 'Dictionary of National Biography'. – During the course of the entry an observation made by Josiah revealed that in two years he [Wedgwood] had himself bought into in England, by sale of imitations of the Hamilton vases, three times as much as the £84,000 originally paid for the collection of 'antiquities' by Parliament.' It is many of these Wedgwood & Bentley Etruscan vase forms that comprised the 'core' of many prestigious collections both at home and overseas today.



Apotheosis of Homer Vase



'Hercules in the Garden of the Hesperides' taken from P. H. d'Hancarville



Harry Barnard

for the company.

The latter resulted in a sea voyage to America in 1927 and an accompanying journal which he entitled 'My Trip out West' - a detailed and most enlightening account of a journey to a country which was then full of surprises and culture shocks.

Happily, Barnard's ceramic skills - both technical and artistic are still in evidence in artefacts as varied as the enormous Winton Hall vases and the very fine, pink-tinted bone china. Barnard's output bears out his life-long belief that :

"it is the individual touch of the craftsman that gives pottery a charm which the machine cannot impart."

Eric Ravilious – A Centenary Celebration

Ravilious, born in 1903, was given the nickname of 'the boy'. His work for Wedgwood is very much of its time, capturing a tranquil picture of English life between the two wars. It is a world of afternoon teas and gardening, the excitement of the Oxford/Cambridge boat-race and the lights of Piccadilly before the black-out.

Suspended then in permanent youth, it seems rather incongruous that 2003 marks the centenary of this artist's birth. However, the briefest study of his contribution to Wedgwood design reveals that he is more than worthy of special attention.

Ravilious's debut in the world of ceramics was well-timed, coinciding with a general concern throughout the industry for the prevailing static nature of surface pattern design. Ravilious, demonstrated that an all-over pattern for an entire table service was not essential. 'Garden' of 1938, not only depicted various garden motifs and activities on each shape, but often depicted

his wife and friends. Such sentiment is rarely found in ceramic design.

However, not all of Ravilious's designs were immediately accepted. Some, including the 1936 mug intended to mark the coronation of Edward VIII, were considered eccentric. It was even suggested that the latter might be the real reason for Edward's abdication. Nevertheless, the Royal Family, undeterred by such comments eventually chose to order Ravilious's 'Persephone', printed in gold, for the coronation banquet to be hosted by the Foreign Secretary in 1953.

Sadly, Ravilious did not live to see this. He was lost, presumed missing carrying out his duties as an official war artist with the Royal Marines in 1942. The majority of his designs were revived in the 1950's following the lifting of wartime restrictions on decorated ware for the home-market.



Eric Ravilious

Wedgwood International Seminar visit to England – October 2003

London and Staffordshire were the venues for the 48th Wedgwood International Seminar held in October 2003. Sixty five overseas participants from eighteen American states, and four intrepid individuals from 'down under', experienced visual delights with wonderful Autumnal colours, whilst absorbing much new research and information on 'Wedgwood Collectors, Collections and Collecting'. Talks were given at the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum in London, whilst the main meeting was held at Barlaston, hosted by the Company, and Curatorial Staff of the Wedgwood Museum Trust. The intensive

two day aspect of the Staffordshire based visit took in a factory tour, with an opportunity to view 'The Spirit of Wedgwood' historical exhibition. Trips to Gladstone Pottery, Dudson, Moorcroft, the Lady Lever Art Gallery (Port Sunlight) and the Wedgwood Collection at the Castle Museum, Nottingham, were all greatly enjoyed.

On returning to London participants had the opportunity to view, by kind invitation, the collection of Sir Martin and Lady Wedgwood.



Alan and Adele Barnett (WSWDC) pictured with Josiah I at the recent Wedgwood International Seminar held at the Wedgwood Visitor Centre.

Museum Friend raises funds for the Wedgwood Museum Trust

Museum 'Friend' and direct Wedgwood descendant Alan Wedgwood, participated in the 'Good Food Show' held at the Wedgwood Story Visitor Centre on Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th December 2003.

Able assisted by his wife Janet, the Wedgwood duo did brisk business in selling the exquisite wooden pieces which Alan personally hand-crafts. These are sold in aid of charities - and this time the Wedgwood Museum Trust was the grateful recipient of the proceeds of over £1000.

Our picture shows Alan at his 'post', watching young visitors to the event enjoy the fruits of his labours - wooden building blocks!

Alan uses 'salvaged' wood from tree-felling, or even recycles old, solid wood furniture which would otherwise be thrown away. Each piece of original woodwork is painstakingly crafted by Alan - almost you could say - 'a chip off the old block'!! All joking apart his exceptional work is appreciated by all.



Alan Wedgwood at the recent 'Good Food Show'



Future Events

In 2004 the RHS celebrates its Bicentenary and in conjunction with this the Wedgwood Story Visitor Centre and the Wedgwood Museum Trust are to stage an exhibition entitled 'A Passion For Flowers' which is due to open on Monday 5th April 2004. An exclusive preview to the exhibition has been organised for 'Friends' members on Sunday 4th April 2004. Details to follow.

Please put this date in your new diary. We look forward to meeting you all on this occasion.

First Friend's event to be held on 4th April 2004



Friends of the Wedgwood
Museum

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