

It all started with the purchase of a simple standard blue printed earthenware dish in the now so popular *Abbey* pattern by Thelma and Robert Cluett. What followed, after years of remarkable research, is a superb new book entitled *George Jones Ceramics 1861-1951*, published by Schiffer.

George Jones is one of my very favorite potters, who, until now, fit into the hitherto "neglected factory" category. For how else can you explain how a firm that was one of the largest—they employed over 1,000 workers—and operated for 90 years (1861-1951) was so neglected by both writers and researchers?

Here was a major factory with a full and complete range of wares that included the finest of the popular and colorful majolica. Majolica prices reach new highs at auctions on both sides of the Atlantic. Recently I noted record prices for a majolica covered game dish and another for a majolica garden seat. George Jones also offered a full assortment in bone china of tea sets, dinner sets, service plates, fine artist-signed dessert plates, fish plates and game plates.

The company also worked very closely with designer Frederick Schenck on lovely examples of the valuable (even then) *pate sur pate*. In addition it produced a full range of earthenware dinner and supper sets, including many in named blue printed designs. There was more: toilet sets, souvenir ware, both hotel and restaurant ware, canteen china and assorted novelties.

In his book, author Cluett has traced the firms from all over the world that George Jones sold to, from the top New York shops right down to the souvenir importers like Jones, McDuffee & Stratton of Boston fame.

Cluett researched the background of George Jones and notes that he was born in 1823 to "a family that had no connection to the pottery industry." That alone can be considered unique.

His introduction to ceramics was a seven-year apprenticeship with Minton in 1837-1844. He then became a traveling salesman for the noted Wedgwood and Boyle until he moved on to start a business as a commission agent and an earthenware broker with clients in the United States, Canada, Australia, New

George Jones Master Potter

By Bill Saks

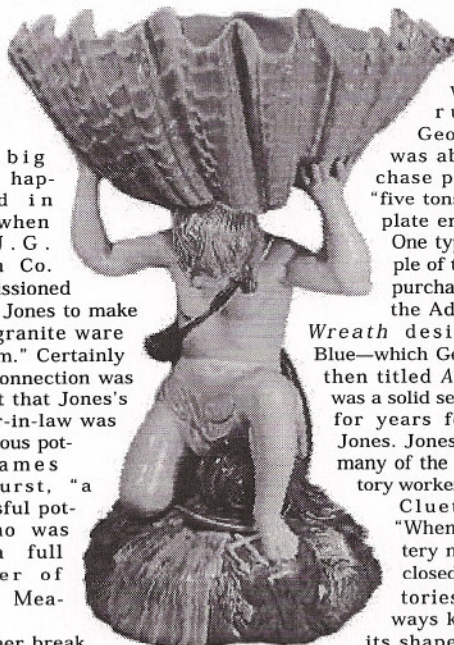


Three outstanding examples of majolica. Clockwise from front left: sardine box with lobster on cover, ca. 1875, \$3,500-\$4,000; Stilton cheese bell, ca. 1874, \$6,000-\$7,000; game pie dish, ca. 1875, \$4,500.

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His big break happened in 1862, when the J. G. Meakin Co. "commissioned George Jones to make white granite ware for them." Certainly a key connection was the fact that Jones's brother-in-law was the famous potter James Pankhurst, "a successful potter who was also a full partner of James Meakin."

Another break happened when



Above: Neptune with shell, ca. 1875, 16" high, \$5,000.

potter William Adams went bankrupt and George Jones was able to purchase part of the "five tons of copper plate engravings." One typical example of this specific purchase included the Adams *Abbey Wreath* design—Flow Blue—which George Jones then titled *Abbey*. This was a solid selling design for years for George Jones. Jones also hired many of the Adams factory workers.

Cluett states, "Whenever a pottery manufacture closed, other factories were always keen to buy its shapes and patterns." In 1900, when

Brownfields closed, Jones was able to purchase excellent patterns such as *Bismark*, *Linda*, *Pompeii* and *Rhine* at the auction two years later (1902). When the Old Hall pottery closed, he proceeded to buy its patterns and designs and followed this up by buying the patterns from J. Dimmock Co. This is a key point that explains to today's collectors why the exact same pattern can appear on wares from different potters.

George Jones was well versed in the pottery field and moved ahead to build a family business. In 1873, when he was 50 years old, he formed a partnership with his two sons. This was the year that the popular trademark "Crescent" was first registered. By mid-1877, the outstanding artist/designer Charles James Birbeck joined the firm.

George Jones had a number of excellent years of growth and profits, and all went well until the 1920s. New management was brought in, and Walter Bakewell headed a new team. Results were mixed, even though a wide range of wares was offered to appeal to both middle class trade and to the most exclusive shops in England and overseas.

The 1930s saw mergers and lots of changes. The Bishop & Stonier factory (now part of the "Group/Mergers") was closed, and they moved into the George Jones factory. By 1933 both the Goss and the Allerton factories were closed and the "remains" moved into the George Jones premises. Sadly, with all these closings, mergers, etc., the entire staff now numbered merely 900.

The end was getting closer. In 1935 both Caudon and Coalport were joined with George Jones. However, by 1943 the entire staff was down to 200. By 1951 the trade name "Crescent" ceased to be used.

So another major English pottery faded away, sadly and quietly ... until Robert Cluett started his research project. He located a total of 70 full pattern books that had survived. He followed this up by tracing more than 140 named printed patterns and locating shops all over the world where they were sold.

The illustrations, numbering 746, are all in full color. They cover all the different products from Flow Blue, majolica, bone china and *pate sur pate*. A full description plus a price guide covers each photo.

An interesting range of advertising is shown from various

Below: pate sur pate vase signed "Schenck," ca. 1880, 6-1/4" high, \$1,800.

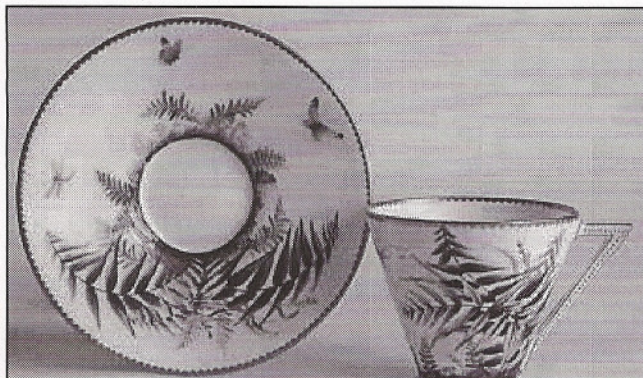
trade publications. The appendix notes the biographies of the owners and artists throughout the years.

I strongly suggest to all collectors of George Jones products that they not miss this volume. It is a masterpiece of research and written with much love and feeling. Robert Cluett mentioned to me several times that he would "love to hear from the readers of the *Antique Trader* who may have questions on George Jones pieces." Please write to my *Trader* column; I will be delighted to forward your letters on to him.

I want to wish Robert Cluett continued success. *George Jones Ceramics 1861-1951* is one of the best written and researched books I have read for a number of years. I thank both the



author and publisher for permission to use both quotes and the superb photos/illustrations. ✨

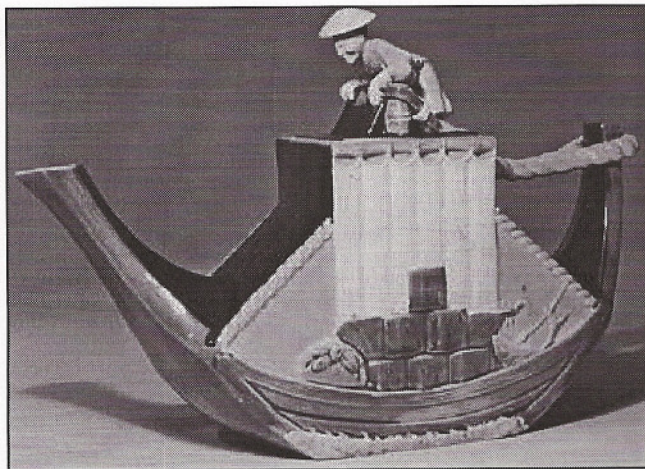


A sample of the many shapes and patterns of George Jones. From top: bone china cup and saucers, ca. 1878, shape registered in 1876 as "Tall Chad," \$100-\$150; "Briar" pattern, "Garnet" shape, ca. 1884, \$75-\$100; ca. 1892, \$100; tea and coffee cup, "Milford" shape, \$75 per set (each).

Left: Most unusual and rare majolica teapot designed in 1876, \$7,000.



Above: Abbey pattern oval tray, 11" long, ca. 1920, \$150.



Left: Most unusual and rare majolica teapot designed in 1876, \$7,000.