



The Wileman-Shelley Link

This cabinet displays Wileman pottery which predates the use of the Shelley backstamp. The Shelley connection started in 1872 when Joseph Ball Shelley went into partnership with James F. Wileman. In 1881 Percy Shelley joined the firm and, on the retirement of James F. Wileman in 1884, the company became a Shelley family business.

Joseph Ball Shelley died in 1896 and Percy Shelley took over. He had already been involved in improving all aspects of production and decoration and, following his visit to the 1893 Chicago Exhibition, had gained a better understanding of export markets. He employed well-known artists to enhance the company's reputation, including Frederick Micklewright and Rowland Morris, a talented sculptor, who in 1896 designed 'Dainty', the most enduring Shelley cup shape. Most significantly in 1896, Frederick Rhead was appointed Art Director. As an experienced designer from a distinguished potteries family he set about making changes to every aspect of china and earthenware design.

Until 1910 the company continued to use the Wileman backstamps alongside the phrase 'The Foley China', a reference to the part of Stoke-on-Trent where the factory was located. After this date the Shelley name was used on backstamps.

Perhaps the rarest piece displayed here is the 'Grotesque Pig' reflecting a trend for the unusual.

