



Briglin animal character figures produced as small vases, money boxes and ornaments. These are a popular line among collectors and range in price from £3-£5 for a small animal to £10-£15 for a 5in money box.



Vase decorated with abstract leaf design. 8in high. £30-£40.

A new series on Craft Pottery - Briglin

By Graham Gower

Think of Baker Street and probably Sherlock Holmes springs to mind. Yet few would also associate this famous street with one of the most successful and important potteries to operate in the heart of London. It was amid the hustle and bustle of this famous street, in the basement of number sixty-six, that two aspiring young potters of like mind, Brigitta Appleby and Eileen Lewenstein, achieved a long held ambition. With confidence and anticipation they had formed their own pottery and with a play on their names decided to call it 'Briglin'.

The inexperience of youth was no deterrent to this pair of highly motivated and creative people. To start up and run a pottery was no easy task, particularly in 1948 during the period of post-war austerity. Nevertheless, with hard work and dedication, plus a dash of good fortune, the pottery was soon on a course towards success and achievement.

At first there was little glamour working away in a basement pottery producing just mugs, cups and saucers. With initiative and perseverance they quickly obtained their first order. This was for one dozen teaset, an order confidently placed by the London department

store Selfridges. From here on the pottery never looked back, attaining a reputation for producing modern styled functional ware that was well made and decorated. With careful and astute management coupled with popular production lines Briglin was to outlast many of its competitors and to become one of the foremost potteries of its type.

Although the name Briglin is well known and respected among students of ceramics art it has yet to find a broader appreciation among collectors and dealers. However, with the rising interest in collecting craft pottery in general, it comes as no surprise to note that pieces carrying the 'Briglin' mark are now attracting serious attention and are fast becoming sought after as collectors' items.

Naturally, this interest has encouraged price increases, notably for the larger stylised pieces which impart the Briglin house style. As with all new collectibles, there is uncertainty about pricing. At present the collector of Briglin has an open field, with scope to engage in selective buying at reasonably low prices. Evidently this will change with a greater appreciation of Briglin pottery and a broadening of the collecting base.



Vase showing competent use of the wax resist technique to create a 'bamboo' effect. 10in high. Value £35-£45.

Prices being asked can range from a few pounds and rise upwards to £30 or £40 for medium size pieces. Smaller items like mugs, cups, ashtrays, dishes and bowls etc., can be found for less than £10, but for table items such as a coffee or tea set for example, the asking price can reach £80 or more depending on the decorative style.

For the quality pieces expect to pay much more, especially for the large or spectacular pieces, studio items and those attributable to a particular potter. These items can carry a price tag up to a £100, but these values vary depending on the merits of a particular piece and whether purchased from a specialist dealer or not. Few of these quality pieces have surfaced in the market place. This is to be expected as the collecting of Briglin is in its infancy and the market has yet to gauge the potential interest. If recent collecting patterns are a guide, Briglin may well become a 'market leader', attracting the attention given to other decorative craft ware seen over the last few years or so.

The choice offered to the collectors is wide and results from Briglin's forty years of production. In the early years the pottery concentrated on domestic earthenware but soon developed into producing a wider range of hand crafted and decorated wares. These included kitchen ware, gift ware, fancy and novelty ware, figurines, jugs, tea and coffee sets, commemorative items and the usual variety of vases, bowls and dishes. Complimenting these were the studio pieces, ranging from slab and hand built pots to stylised decorated pieces of varying size and shape. These pieces further reflected the imagination and high standards associated with the pottery, particularly those showing Scandinavian influences. These choice pieces were produced by the pottery during the 1950s and have since become collectors items, commanding good prices ranging from £15 upwards for a small vase.

Although studio ware was an integral part of production, it is the high fired red earthenware, decorated using wax resist techniques and sgraffito design or patterning that epitomises the wares marked Briglin. Many of the designs used on this ware were naturalistic and often applied in an abstract manner, and with the added enhancement of oxides and colour glaze. This style of decoration can also be found on larger individual and artistic pieces. In addition plain glazed items were also produced relying on simple shape or form for effect, or decorated using minimal design work.

Of the wares produced at Briglin it is the distinctive red earthenware which is the most common and which the potential collector will easily recognise. Other less common items, which do not have the immediate appearance of being Briglin, such as glazed ware, white bodied ware and studio pieces, are easily identifiable by the impressed backstamp 'BRIGLIN', which is found on the pottery's products.

The initial efforts and endeavours of the two founders had indeed borne fruit. With the pottery on a sound footing and business prospects good Eileen Lewenstein decided in the late 1950s to part company, pursue her own interests and set her sights towards a new career. Subsequently, with the notable potter Emmanuel Cooper, she was to launch the highly acclaimed *Ceramic Review* and to become its co-editor for many years. Fortunately, her creativity did not abate and she has since become one of our finest craft potters, ensuring without question her lasting place among our most distinguished potters.

Under the able and skilful direction of Brigitta Appleby, a potter of equal standing and repute, Briglin pottery continued to flourish and employed a skilled workforce of some fifteen people. When the Baker Street lease expired in 1958 the pottery moved to new premises in nearby Crawford Street, where in 1967 a second showroom was opened, an event which further confirmed the commercial and artistic success of the pottery. This was enjoyed until the 1980s when business pressures and creeping recession offered little incentive to continue. Reluctantly Briglin Pottery was slowly wound down and production finally ceased in 1990.

The closing of the pottery passed almost unnoticed but the legacy of Briglin is still with us. In the long history of the pottery many aspiring young potters came to work at Briglin, learning or practising their skills before moving on to become renowned potters in their own right. For the collector, the legacy is quality pottery that is worth collecting in a market that is just beginning to recognise the ceramic work of Brigitta Appleby and Eileen Lewenstein.



Selection of designs using the wax resist technique. Left to right. Pedestal cup £10-£12. 6in vase £8-£10. Goblet £8-£10. Ashtray £10-£15. Pot £6-£8. Mug £8-£12.



Examples of coffee mugs produced at Briglin. These items range in value from £8-£12 depending on decorative style.



Selection of glazed items. Left to right. 4in dish £10-£15. Small dish with fish design, c1950s £15-£20. Pot, c1960s £20-£25. Vase £10-£15.



A popular design found on a range of tableware. Left to right. Goblet £5-£7. Teapot £20-£25 and tea mugs £4-£6.