

A History of Poole Pottery

A look at Carter, Stabler Adams and Carter & Co Poole Pottery

by Ed Martel



*A late nineteenth century view of the East Quay, Poole, showing an aspect of the pottery set up by James Walker in 1861, purchased by Jesse Carter in 1873.**

The clays of Dorset have been exploited for centuries, transported around the country for use in all the major pottery centres. The dark clays were used for architectural ceramics, such as bricks, tiles and garden ornaments, and the finer, white clays for tableware and delicate pottery.

In 1855, however, this was set to change as Dorset began to make a name for its pottery as well as its raw materials. In 1855 a partnership of Staffordshire potters arrived in Poole with the aim of exploiting the local deposits and newly constructed railway linking Poole harbour with the national network. This company, the *Patent Architectural Pottery*, began production in Hamworthy and was soon forming displays at major design exhibitions in the UK and Europe. A few years later, PAP head technician James Walker set up a rival works across the bay. T.W. Walker's *Patent Encaustic and Mosaic Ornamental Brick and Tile Manufactory* on Poole's East Quay was not, however, a successful business. Perhaps the company's rather eccentric name was in part responsible, nevertheless in 1873, following years of struggle and limited success, Walker sold out to entrepreneur Jesse Carter. This sale was the beginning of the Carter family reign over ceramics production in Poole that was to last well into the twentieth century, and represented the first steps towards the creation of the Poole Pottery company.

By the mid 1880s the reputation of Carter's East Quay pottery was beginning to overshadow that of its neighbour, the PAP. Carter & Company Poole Pottery was fast making its name as one of the leading manufacturers of decorative tiles, faience (popularly used in hotels and public houses) and floor mosaics.

In 1901 the flourishing Carter & Co purchased the now declining PAP works, and Jesse Carter's sons, Charles and Owen, bought a second site in Hamworthy bringing the company total to three. This third site took over production of architectural wares whilst the others looked to decorative wares such as tiles and faience.

This period, the beginning of the twentieth

century, saw many developments in Carter & Company, not least of which was the move towards the creation of more stylish examples of domestic ware. To this end, Owen Carter worked on perfecting a range of reduction fired glazes for a new range of vases, dishes and other decorative domestic items. Around the same time, company designer James Radley Young developed his own pottery designs and decorating techniques that were to form the basis of an exciting new range of early twentieth century Carter & Co. wares. Young's creations were further developed during the First World War into wares which echoed simple Roman and African design.



*Tile panel, c1930. Map of Poole by Edward Bawden, sited for many years on the pottery showroom stairs, now in the museum.**

The company soon formed relationships with well known and accomplished designers and workshops, bringing its wares to the forefront of modern design. Popularity and success at the *British Industries Fair* encouraged Charles and Owen to invest further in decorative wares and they were soon to employ teams of skilled throwers,

paintresses and other skilled technicians. By 1920 the decorative wares of the East Quay pottery works were established and popular throughout the country. Relationships with designer Harold Stabler and Staffordshire potter John Adams formed, leading to the creation in 1921 of a sister company, wholly owned by Carter & Company, called Carter Stabler & Adams. Charged with developing purely ornamental wares and exciting domestic pottery, CSA experienced enormous success, exhibiting at the Paris Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in 1925, in Liepzig in 1927 and developing a series of ranges for names such as Heals & Co. Adams' noteworthy skills were instrumental in fast turning CSA into one of England's finest producers of tablewares.

Success for both CSA and Carter & Co continued to build until the Second World War brought restrictions on non-essential production. Coupled with conscription and export restrictions, the War meant that the early 1940s was a period which put Carter & Co into dire straits. By 1945 the company was near to collapse, yet manager Cyril Carter (Charles' son) soon managed to persuade the board of directors to start over by investing heavily in a new factory featuring the latest technology.

The board agreed. By 1948 large scale production was again underway, and following Adams' retirement in 1950, a new design team was appointed and worked hard to regain the company's pre-war reputation.

The late 1950s and early 1960s saw Carter & Company designs develop into oven-to-table wares and the establishment of the Poole Studio, a section of the works dedicated to the manufacture of limited editions.

In 1963 Cyril Carter retired from CSA and Carter & Co, severing the Carter family link with Poole that had lasted for ninety years. Soon after in 1964, Carter & Co Poole Pottery was merged with Pilkington Tiles of Manchester and was finally renamed Poole Pottery Limited.



*One of a set of promotional postcards issued in 1937, this one of paintress Ruth Pavely. *Images courtesy Richard Dennis Pub.*

Poole Pottery - Useful Information

Backstamps, makers' marks and forthcoming sales

A selection of Poole Pottery backstamps and makers' marks, courtesy of *Poole Pottery, Carter & Company and their Successors 1873-2002*, which contains hundreds more examples all dated and described.

Marks on Poole pottery include factory marks, codes for patterns, shapes and glazes, symbols used by throwers, finishers, sprayers, painters, paintresses, designers and backstamps.



Mark no. 18. Stamped, used from 1941 until 1950. Found on Poole utility wares.



Mark no. 20. Impressed, used from 1925 to 1927.



Mark no. 22. Moulded, used from 1925 until 1930. Found on 'The Ship' model.



Mark of Vera Wills (Morgan), 1933-1950, in use from 1936-1950.



Mark no. 36. Stamped, in use from 1951 until 1955.



Mark no. 39. Stamped, in use from 1955 until 1959.



Mark of Nellie Bishton (Blackmore), 1927-1932, 1944-1949, painting shop supervisor 1950-1976.



Mark of Ruth Pavely, paintress 1922-1945, painting shop supervisor 1945-1949, design assistant / head of painting 1950-1965. In use from 1922-1937.

A great many websites deal with the popular subject of Poole Pottery, providing the history of the company, images and a wealth of items wanted and for sale. Indeed, a search on Google returns some 400,000 separate. Not all items selling on the internet are old, however, and sadly not all are genuine. Nevertheless, here is a small selection of useful sites chosen from amongst the best Poole websites.

1. www.worldcollectorsnet.com/poole. This website features an excellent history of Poole Pottery and a useful message board.
2. www.poolepottery.co.uk. The Poole Pottery official website for the factory outlet and modern wares includes the Poole Pottery collector's club.
3. www.studiopottery.com. Studio Pottery features a vast array of pictures and a history of Poole Pottery ware, along with a large number of items for sale.



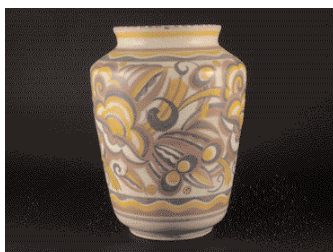
A rare Poole Studio tile panel by Tony Morris, circa 1965



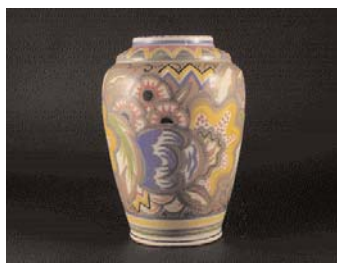
A Poole TZ pattern vase



Poole TJ pattern vase



A Poole TV pattern vase



Poole EP pattern vase



Poole Pottery 'Aubrey Beardsley' vase, circa 1978