



MRS. MUBBLE
FERNHILL
1888



Measham Ware Teapot

[Contributed by Walsall Museum](#)



Measham Ware Teapot

Working boatmen bringing narrowboats past Measham (~20 miles northeast of Birmingham) on the Ashby Canal in the East Midlands would order a specially-made teapot and collect it on their next run up the canal. They were often given as wedding presents and handed down through generations. This teapot was given as a present in 1897 to a family in Darlaston.

Measham Ware pots were also bought by Norkies - farm labourers from Suffolk and Norfolk who, after the harvest was in, went to Burton on Trent to work in the maltings etc. They had the fare for the train home retained by the breweries and, when they got home, they liked to present Measham ware to their mothers or sweethearts. Measham ware was made near Burton, at Church Gresley, Moira, Woodville, Swadlincote and Measham.

<http://www.meashammuseum.btck.co.uk/TheCollection>

The Collection.

Central to the museum is the Dr. Hart collection, a treasury of artefacts, pictures, letters and documents recording the history of a Midland village through the eyes of two local doctors - father and son - over nearly a century.

Linked to the Hart Collection are items recalling the coal mining, terracotta and pottery traditions of this area, where mining was first recorded in the 13th. century.

The Measham Teapots.



Traditionally associated with the canal people, Measham Ware dates from the last quarter of the 19th century. Sometimes known as Rockingham Ware, it was produced in Church Gresley and Woodville, the last known pieces being dated 1918.

Measham Museum's earliest teapot is dated 1886. All kinds of tea-table ware were made in the characteristic dark brown glaze, covered in shiny sprigs of flowers and bird. They were commissioned and sold by Mrs Annie Bonas from her shop on High Street, Measham, near where the Museum is housed.

100 years of Measham Weddings .

Photographs of Measham wedding donated by local families collected for the wedding exhibition and now kept at the museum for all to see.

TRUE or FALSE?

Want to start a collection of Measham but don't know how to tell reproductions from original pieces? Evelyn Booth offers two simple tests and gives an idea of how much you should pay

the first pieces of reproduction Measham to appear were mostly miniatures and therefore easy to tell from the original. More recently, teapots, kettles, jugs, tobacco jars and mugs have been produced which are modelled quite closely on the originals. These sometimes find their way into antique dealers' hands and, because original Measham is now so rare, not all the dealers realise what they are. Most pieces are sold off for a much lower price but some may, in ignorance, be priced as the real thing.

There are two ways that you can be 99% sure whether a piece is original or not. First, look at the plaque which contains the motto or dedication. If the lettering is pressed into the surface of the clay and coloured blue or occasionally black, it is almost certainly old. The messages were sometimes of a general nature - 'Home sweet home' - but often specific - 'A present for Mrs Jones 1884'. Most dated pieces are from 1875 to 1920. Occasionally a piece was made to commemorate an event outside this period but, if the date is wildly adrift, be on your guard. On modern Measham, the message is simply painted, nearly always in black, onto the surface of the plaque. Because it is not made to order, mottoes on reproduction Measham are always general.

Sometimes original Measham had no plaque at all in which case you have to rely on the second test which is to turn the piece upside down and look at the colour of the clay from which it is made. Modern pieces are made from a pure white clay whereas the originals were made from a straw coloured body, rather like the mixing bowls which Mason Cash, the company that made a large amount of Measham ware, still produces.

As you start to get your eye in, you notice that the colours of the flowers and birds are more subtle on the old pieces. You will also see that the retarder, which was used to prevent the brown glaze from obscuring the decoration, was sometimes carelessly applied and allows the straw coloured body to show through in streaks. Modern pieces, on the other hand, are more garish and the colours do not blend so well.

As well as the items mentioned above, many others were produced including a sugar bowl and cream jug set, three graduated jugs, a two handled loving cup and even a chamber pot. Original Measham has become very hard to find in recent

years, partly because it often has strong family associations; relatives are reluctant to part with it when houses are cleared. If you do see a piece, there is a good chance it may be damaged. Very small chips or good restorations are acceptable but missing chunks and bad repairs affect the value considerably. Pear-shaped teapots with the replica on the lid and in A1 condition fetch from £250 to £600 depending on size. Kettles on stands should be around £225 to £325 and plainer 'Cottage' pots, £175 to £275. Reproduction pieces may become collectable in time but you will have to wait another hundred years to find out!



● (above) Tobacco jars ancient (on the right) and modern.

● (right) The white clay, visible on the base of the left hand jug, tells you that it is a reproduction.



● The jug on the right has stamped blue lettering and runs in the brown glaze and so is an original.

Evelyn Booth (01562 850458) runs Lockside Antiques, specialising in lace plates and Measham ware.