

## Description of the Collection

The Pilkington's collections are significant because of their size and the range of material spanning almost the factory's entire history from 1889 to 2008. The collections are material evidence of one of the most successful and longest surviving of the British art potteries founded in the late Victorian period. The Pilkington's factory was based in Clifton, Salford.

### ***Time-span***

The collections span almost 120 years and provide evidence of the history of the company from the discovery of clay that led to its formation in 1893 to its liquidation in 2010. The archives contain factory records from every decade from the late 1880s up to the 1970s.

The collections range in date from the early 1900s to 2008. They include early ceramic tiles and four pieces from the first exhibition of Lancastrian Pottery in 1904 through to a 2008 calendar tile.

### ***Documents***

The collections contain documents that relate to every aspect of the company's history and activities:

- the factory: building, fit-out, equipment eg kilns, furnaces
- legal status: company registration, patents
- financial management: balance sheets, share documents, insurance, income tax, land duty, Poor Law rate
- the workforce: salaries and wages, company newsletters
- technological developments: clay and glaze recipes, records of experiments
- design: sketches, pounced designs, large scale architectural schemes
- production: firing records, stock lists
- marketing: UK and international exhibitions, leaflets,
- retail: details of London shop, overseas representatives
- merger: merger with Carter & Co Ltd in 1963.

In addition, SM&AG has the personal archive of W.S. Mycock, Pilkington's longest serving artist and designer, who worked for the company from 1894 to 1937. As well as designs, his archive includes notes made when he was a student, notes for his lectures about pottery and William Morris, books and catalogues, which provide a deeper insight into him as a designer, his influences and sources of inspiration.

### ***Products***

The Museum has a good representative collection of the styles of pottery produced by Pilkington's at different stages in its history:

- the early experimental glazes and simple forms influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement
- the highly decorative lustre glazes associated with the Edwardian period, some influenced by the classical or medieval past

- the eggshell and lapis glazes and modernist forms dating from the 1920s and 1930s, sometimes with stylized Art Deco patterns
  - the transfer-printed tiles from the 1950s onwards.
- The collection has examples of most of the products Pilkington's made for domestic use. As well as tiles, these include:
- items for the hall/drawing-room/dining-room – ash trays, bowls, boxes, candlesticks and holders, chargers, a clock, figures, ginger jar, a flower frog, jardinière, plaques, plates, salt cellar and numerous vase types including urns and wall vases
  - items for the study – book-ends, pen/pencil holder, tobacco box and match holders
  - items for the bedroom – powder bowl, ring holder, wash-jug and ewer
  - items to wear – brooches and buttons.

There are also examples of material made to market the company's products including a cabinet of ninety sample tiles from the 1960s.

### ***People***

The Pilkington's archives include the names of many men and women employed in all aspects of the design, manufacture and marketing of its products from the 1890s onwards.

Their roles range from general labourer to specialist skilled worker. The collections include more than a dozen marked pieces by Pilkington's most accomplished thrower, E.T.Radford, as well as the wheel that he used to throw them on.

There are several pieces by each of the most important artists and designers on Pilkington's staff up to the Second World War: John Chambers (chief designer), Gordon Forsyth, Charles Cundall, Richard Joyce, W.S Mycock and Gwladys Rodgers. There are also a number of items made by William Barnes, who oversaw the re-opening of the pottery department in 1948, and Eric Bridges and John Brannan who worked with him on all aspects of pottery manufacture.

Most other artists and designers are represented by at least one item. These include several well-known freelance designers: Walter Crane, Lewis F. Day (who was paid an annual retainer), Alphonse Mucha and, in the 1950s, Mitzi Cunliffe, the American architect.

*(Taken from a review of the Pilkington's Collection and Archive by Dr. Ruth Shrigley, April 2017)*

Fro further information please visit the Pilkington's Lancastrian Pottery Society

<http://www.pilkingtons-lancastrian.co.uk/index.html>