

# Darbyshire Pottery Society

**NEWSLETTER NO 3 APRIL 2015**

<http://darbyshirepotterysociety.org>

Hello friends and collectors of interesting pottery, a happy new year to you all. In this newsletter I will endeavour to add a bit more of this interesting story.

Anybody interested in the history of Darbyshire Ware should visit the history section in our web site.

Darbyshire is probably one of Australia's lesser known Companies, despite being one of the country's largest commercial potteries in the 1940s and 50s.



I am quoting from an article in the 'Antiques & Collectables' magazine published in June 1993. The information was supplied by William and Dorothy Hall the authors of 'Australian Domestic Pottery a collector's guide', published in 1992.

Jean Elliott the founder of Darbyshire Pottery was born at Kalgoorlie WA in 1910. Her father Charles George Elliott, was a gold miner who became a West Australia Parliamentarian, and who founded the Prospectors' and Tributors' Association.

Jean studied studio pottery under the instruction of Reg Landers whose wife, Flora, was art mistress at the Methodist Ladies' College.

Flora was well known as a Perth China Painter, and later for her hand built and wheel thrown pottery. Examples of her work may be seen in a number of Australian Galleries.

For her own pottery, Jean used blue clay dug from her own back yard, which adjoined the Swan River at Maylands.

In 1940 Jean married her second husband Bill (who was my father), an accountant with Mobil Oil.



Both Jean and Bill saw the need for well produced and attractive pottery following the Second World War. Australians wanted pretty things for their homes, and the Darbys shires obliged by opening their commercial property in 1947 in Perth, in Wellington Street; close to the Perth railway station.

Glaze formulae were closely guarded secrets by commercial potteries. Indeed potters would sometimes not even give the formulae to their bosses! However, Jean was fortunate that an employee, Mr Gough, combined his clear glaze formula with her pottery skills. Gough had learned his trade in England in Derbyshire and when he returned to England he gave the formula to Jean.

Darbyshire Pottery flourished to such an extent that the business had to be transferred to purpose built premises at Odin Road, Innaloo near Scarborough. By now a staff of 64 worked there, making it one of the country's largest commercial potteries.

Eighty four different designs of pots were made and many of these designs were produced in three sizes. The 1953 Darbyshire salesperson's catalogue lists over 150 items for sale. Prices were not cheap; for example the largest Aboriginal figure sold for just over eight pounds, which was well above the average weekly wage. All Darbyshire Ware was made in moulds and the glaze was applied in three spray bins. The manufacturer's name was usually impressed on the base together with 'Darbyshire' and 'NZ'.





Pots were also exported to Papua New Guinea.

Small items such as the salt and pepper shakers and jugs had a self-adhesive sticker applied at the factory with 'Darbyshire' printed on it in copper plate writing. The stickers may have been removed, especially if the items were actually used in the home as well as displayed.

Today's collectors appreciate the wide range of items produced, the beautiful colours, and by the consistently good quality of the unique glaze.

Alas, Darbyshire Pottery went into receivership in 1958. The closure was forced upon it by a sales tax policy coupled with importation of cheaper products from overseas mainly Japan.

## COLLECTORS CORNER

Cathy Serventy

Although I was aware of Darbyshire pottery, being a Darbyshire-Serventy, I had only seen a few pieces that my mother Carol owns. I also knew my cousin Jo had collected some. Then we went to NZ to live for a year. Strangely enough, while visiting a small town called Bulls (which is full of antique and second hand shops) we saw two little hens. They looked familiar - and they were Darbyshire. "All the way from Australia" the shopkeeper said. We knew!

We loved our little chook salt and pepper set and continued looking for Darbyshire, in shops and on TradeMe (NZ version of EBay) and bought our collection home when we returned. We have added a couple more and heard more history from Carol Darbyshire/Serventy and by reading Uncle Tony's newsletter. We have a very small collection but it has pride of place on our bookshelf and we still keep an eye out for more. Thanks Darbyshire Pottery.



Cathy Serventy with daughters Lucy and Ari, Jiggi NSW 2015

Hello Tony

I do not know if you are aware of a recent sale of Darbyshire pieces on USA EBAY. They were interesting pieces as they were bought straight from the pottery and many retained their original boxes. I did not buy any of the pieces but I did copy lots of the pictures and they might be of interest for your newsletter and to you. Best Regards,  
Pip

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Thanks Pip for these fantastic photos! Really appreciate your time. We have never seen these boxes and they would be quite rare now.





Please contact me with any news or items of interest related to Darbyshire Pottery by email at [tonydarbyshire1@gmail.com](mailto:tonydarbyshire1@gmail.com) my mobile 0417975713

Cheers Tony