Leeds Art Library Research Guide

Leeds Pottery

Our Art Research Guides list some of the most unique and interesting items at Leeds Central Library, including items from our Special Collections, reference materials and books available for loan.

Other items are listed in our online catalogues.

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Pottery in Leeds - a brief introduction

Leeds has a long association with pottery production. The 18th and 19th centuries are often regarded as the creative zenith of the industry, with potteries producing many superb quality pieces to rival the country's finest.

The foremost manufacturer in this period was the Leeds Pottery Company, established around 1770 in Hunslet. The company are best known for their creamware made from Cornish clay and given a translucent glaze. Although other potteries in the country made creamware, the Leeds product was of such a high quality that all creamware became popularly known as ‘Leedsware’. The company’s other products included blackware and drabware.

The Leeds Pottery was perhaps the largest pottery in Yorkshire. In the early 1800s it used over 9000 tonnes of coal a year and exported to places such as Russia and Brazil. Business suffered in the later 1800s due to increased competition and the company closed in 1881. Production was restarted in 1888 by a ‘revivalist’ company which used old Leeds Pottery designs and labelled their products ‘Leeds Pottery’. The revivalist company closed in 1957.

Another key manufacturer was Burmantofts Pottery, established around 1845 in the Burmantofts district of Leeds. The company are best known for their decorative bricks and tiles in terracotta, glazed bricks and architectural faience (ceramic material used as a decorative skin on buildings). The firm supplied tiles and faience facings for various buildings, including Yorkshire College. It also produced glazed and painted art pottery items such as vases, potpourris, rose-leaf bowls, comports and dessert services. Burmantofts Pottery closed in 1957.
Special Collection items (reference use)

The Leeds Pottery Drawing & Pattern Books

The Leeds Pottery Drawing Books were compiled and used in the Leeds factory as a guide and record of the products. Our library has 9 Drawing Books dating from c.1781 to c.1819. The books feature high quality pen & ink drawings and beautiful watercolour illustrations.

A design from Vol. 1 of the Pottery Drawing Books

The Pattern Books contain engraved plates of designs selected from the Drawing Books. The Pattern Books acted as a trade catalogue to be shown to prospective customers. Our library stocks Pattern Books dating from 1783-1814.
Miscellaneous items (reference use)

Notes on Leeds Pottery and the Lives of James Wraith Senior and John Thomas Morton (1950s)

A scrapbook created during the 1950s concerning the ‘revivalist’ Leeds Pottery Co. (1888-1957).

The scrapbook includes biographies, original photos, newspaper cuttings and original letters concerning royal family members who were presented with gifts of Leedsware.

Burmantofts 1902: Burmantofts Works Leeds and Leeds Fireclay Company Ltd. (Burmantofts, 1902)

Facsimiles of 52 photos presented by Burmantofts Pottery to a potential customer. The customer was possibly the Leeds-based architect Thomas Ambler (1838-1920). The photos show buildings decorated in Burmantofts faience, terracotta and glazed bricks.

Rothwell Ware Inventory & Valuation of the Rothwell Pottery 1772

Facsimile of a manuscript held by the British Museum concerning Rothwell pottery. Also includes the entry relating to the manuscript from Christie's sale catalogue, 1970.
Articles in journals & pamphlets (reference use)

_Burmantofts Pottery_
By A. Garlick (Leeds City Council Pamphlet, 1991)

‘The Leeds Horses’
By Donald Towner, from *Leeds Art Calendar, 51, 1963*

_The Leeds Pottery Drawing and Pattern Books: Compiled for the Wedgwood International Seminar Visit to Leeds City Art Gallery..._
By David Thornton (Leeds City Libraries Pamphlet, 1969)

‘The Leeds Pottery and its Wares: A Bibliography’
By David Thornton, from *Leeds Arts Calendar, 65, 1965*

‘Leeds Wares’

‘The Love of Leeds’
By Henrietta Hind, from *Art Journal, 1911-12*

‘Old Leeds Ware’
By Henry Wilson, from *Connoisseur, Vol.10, 1904*

‘The Making of Clay Pipes’ From *Pottery Gazette, July 1st 1916*

‘On Early Leeds Pottery’
By Frank Freeth, from *The Connoisseur, Feb.1921*

‘Portrait of a Yorkshire Pottery’
By Christopher Gilbert, from *Country Life, September 1st, 1966*
Catalogues & collection guides (reference use)

Catalogue of the Well-Known Collection of English Creamware, the Property of Donald C. Towner, Esq. Day of Sale, Tuesday, 13th February, 1968
(Sotherby & Co., 1968)
Auction catalogue with descriptions & photos of pottery items, includes Leeds items such as transfer-printed and green-striped wares.

The Collection of Leeds Creamware and Allied Wares Formed by Alistair Sampson, Esq., Which Will be Sold at Auction by Christie, Manson & Woods Ltd. on Monday March 6, 1967
(Manson & Woods Ltd., 1967)

English pottery from the Hollings Collection, 1946 at Temple Newsam House, Leeds
(Leeds Art Gallery, 1946) (Items 72 - 152 are Leeds Pottery items)

‘Exhibition of Old Leeds Pottery: Unusual Display at Kirkstall’
From Pottery Gazette and Glass Trades Review

Handbook of Leeds Pottery and Catalogue of the Exhibited Material at the Leeds City Art Gallery, 1951
(Leeds Art Gallery, 1951)

Price List of Leeds Pottery Reproductions
By W. W. Slee (Goodall & Suddick, 1913)

Leeds Creamware and Other English Pottery in Leeds Art Galleries
(Leeds Art Galleries Pamphlet, 1976)
Leeds Pottery histories

*Historical Notices of the Leeds Old Pottery*
By Frank Kidson and Joseph R. Kidson, (1892 & 1970)
The first history book about the Leeds Pottery manufacturing company, written by the well-known local music antiquarian Frank Kidson and his antique dealer brother. Our collection includes a limited first edition of this book (1892) and a reprint version (1970).
Available for reference use.

*The Leeds Pottery*
By Donald Towner (Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1963)
The second history of the Leeds Pottery manufacturing company, written by the Honorary Secretary of the English Ceramic Society. Also includes an extensive guide to different Leeds Pottery products.
Available for loan.

*The Leeds pottery 1770-1881: To Which is Appended an Illustrated Account of the Work of the Revivalists, J. & G.W. Senior and J.T. Morton 1880s to c.1950*
By John D. Griffin (Leeds Art Collection Fund, 2005)
The third history book about the Leeds Pottery. This history uses new, previously unavailable material to provide a more accurate and comprehensive account. Presented in two volumes; the second includes high quality reproductions of the original Leeds Pottery Drawing and Pattern books.
Available for reference use and loan - please ask staff.
Items available for loan

*The Castleford Pottery Pattern Book, 1796*
Includes a comparison with the Leeds Pottery pattern book.

*Burmantofts Pottery*
(Bradford Art Galleries & Museums and Leeds City Museums, 1983)

*Creamware and Other English pottery at Temple Newsam House, Leeds: A catalogue of the Leeds Collection*
By Peter Walton (Manningham Press, 1976)

*English Cream-Coloured Earthenware*
By Donald Towner (Faber, 1957)

*Victorian Art Pottery*
By E, Lloyd Thomas (Guildart, 1974)

*Jewitt's Ceramic Art of Great Britain, 1800-1900*
By Frederick Jewitt, rev. by Geoffrey Arthur (Barrie & Jenkins, 1972)

**Leeds Central Library opening times:**

- Monday-Wednesday: 9AM-7PM
- Thursday: 9AM-6PM
- Friday: 9AM-5PM
- Saturday: 10AM-5PM
- Sunday: 11AM-3PM

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