

Introduction & Figural

These pages cover the very limited period from 1932 to 1936 when McHugh Bros. Pty Ltd was producing their Art Ware (or "Fancy Ware" as it was called at McHugh). Shown on this page along with the maker's marks and labels used at McHugh are examples of the Figural and most decorated of their production. So click the "Read more" link to read on.
McHugh Art Ware Pottery

From what I have been able to determine McHugh's production of Art Ware was over a very limited period. I have discussed this with Robert (the curator of the "Erin May Collection"), Andrew (the curator of "The McGowan Collection") and Ross Pentreath. By looking at these collections we have determined that about one third of the examples in these collections are dated between 1933 and 1935. Ross tells me that he does have one pot dated 1932. It is our belief that McHugh only produced art ware between perhaps 1932 at the earliest and 1936 at the latest. There are three names that are associated with the McHugh's Art Ware production. Henry Trevena was in charge of the manufacture of McHugh's Art Ware. The thrower, glazier and mould maker Danny Beckett and the glazier Francis Manallack, both of whom had honed their skills in various potteries in Victoria. On page 103 of "The Potteries of Brunswick", Gregory Hill talks about Francis Manallack and his link with McHugh. Greg says that it was Francis Manallack who was responsible for the cobalt glaze that was employed at McHugh to such a striking effect. Greg relates how Francis Manallack was lured to Launceston early in the 1930's by the promise of a partnership in pottery. After an argument with the management, in 1936, Manallack and McHugh Bros. Pty Ltd parted ways. Of course as was the custom with glaziers, Manallack had kept the exact recipe of his glazes a secret, so without Manallack glazes McHugh's production of Art Ware was over. The pot above is dated 1938, this is quite crude in form and glaze and it really bears no resemblance to the McHugh production of the 1932 to 1936 period. Even the maker's mark seems to be a rather rudimentary copy of the mark that was used just a few years earlier. If the date on the base of this vase is correct I can only conclude that by 1938 McHugh had lost the ability to produce the quality of the production that they were producing between 1932 & 1936.

What sets McHugh's production above that of their contemporaries (such as John Campbell Pty Ltd) are the impressive range of glaze colours that they employed. If you scan through the shapes below you will see the full majesty of their glazes. To me the outstanding examples of McHugh glazes are the three examples of shape 60 below, I have resized these images as the vase are different sizes. It has always interested me that the colours and the "Drip Glaze" method employed by such Aussie companies such as McHugh, Campbell and Remeud is in the style of the Arts & Craft movement in Britain. In the UK this style of pottery had basically died out by the late 1920's, here in Australia it had a life that went in the case of Remeud right up until 1956. British manufacturers employing this style of production are C.H. Brannam Ltd of Barningham in Devon (Jug above on right), Ruskin Pottery of Birmingham and Minton Hollins of Stoke on Trent in Staffordshire (twin handle vase above on left). What began in Britain as the dark subdued colours of the Arts & Craft era ended as bright and bold colours of Aussie Pottery. There are two styles of incised base marks on the base of McHugh pottery. The mark above is the standard mark, these have been inscribed by more than one hand so there is always some variation. On page 157 of the "Encyclopedia Of Australian Pottery Marks", Geoff Ford shows an example of the maker's mark in the style of the one below and attributes this mark to Henry Trevena. There are two styles of labels used for the marking of McHugh Art Pottery, the first is a silver foil on brown paper and the second is a red and silver foil label. There is also a stamped under glaze mark that is occasionally used on the base of McHugh Pottery. It reads "H McHugh, Launceston". Geoff Ford dates this mark from 1926 to 1939, I have only ever seen one art ware pot with this mark, it is a fairly nondescript shape number 10. McHugh Figural and Decorated Shapes To me the best and the MOST sought after of McHugh's production are the figural and decorated shapes. These pieces are the hardest items to come by and the most keenly contested when they do come up at auction. It almost goes without saying, but these are the most expensive items to obtain. McHugh Dogs The McHugh Dogs come in two styles, the Retriever and the Kelpie, both are sitting on a plinth, but the Retriever had long hair where the Kelpie is short haired with pointed upright ears. I have seen Retriever done in black and white and called a Border Collie. Golden Retriever Door Stop

33 cm (13") long & 17.5 cm (7") tall

Retriever Door Stop

Image courtesy of Graham Mulligan

Kelpie Door Stop

33 cm (13") long & 22 cm (8.75") tall.

Frogs

16.4 cm (.6.5") long, 17.1 (6.75") wide & 9 cm (3.5") tall. This is the first example I have seen of a prone frog, all the other example that I have seen have been sitting up.

10 cm (4") tall This Frog is clearly marked to the base McHugh, Tasmania. Frog (unmarked)

7 cm (2.75") tall This Frog is not marked, but it has been attributed to McHugh

Tree Trunk Bookends

12.5 cm (5") tall & 7.5 cm (3") wide

The colour of the single bookend is truer than that of the two book ends together. Both of the Bookends are clearly signed, this is the only set of these I have ever seen. Majolica Leaf Plates

Majolica Leaf plates come in a range of sizes, the smallest of the pair below has 12.5 cm (5") diameter where the larger of the leaves has a diameter of 25 cm (10").

Character Jug or Toby Jug

Vine Leaf Pin Dish

Most of the Vine Leaf Pin Dishes that I have seen are in the style of the one above, but the dish below has been further decorated with incised lines. This is an interesting and in my view quiet attractive variation.