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Collard pottery run on arts and crafts lines.

(From Western Daily Press)

One of the smaller twentieth century potteries which is attracting attention among ceramics collectors, writes Virginia Brisco, is the Honiton Art Pottery which was started in 1918 by Charles Collard.

Collard was steeped in the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which he first embraced as an apprentice at the Aller Vale Art Pottery at Kingskerswell, near Newton Abbot, and always used local materials where possible.

He also emphasised hand work rather than the machine and to encourage workers to develop their talents and skills so they gained enjoyment from their work. By so doing they and the customer would gain more pleasure from owning the pot, but as Collard was running a business, he knew he also had to keep up with changing fashions in order to stay afloat.

The first pottery that Collard owned was the Crown Dorset Art Pottery at Poole, where he produced the popular 'Torquay pottery' styles whilst developing new ideas - he particularly liked the Celtic roots of Art Nouveau and many pots carried this type of decoration.

He introduced established pottery artists like Sam Shufflebotham, who had previously worked at Llanelli Pottery and Pountney's in Bristol. 'Shuff', as he was known, specialised in roses, fruit designs and Dutch figures and his work is highly collectable today.

Collard moved to Honiton in 1918 where he continued to train his own staff and recruited designers from outside. Vera Stuart and Beryl Radford joined the pottery as teenagers in the early 1930s, developing their own lines which carry their names.

The Stuart pattern consists of bold blocks of colour mainly in autumnal shades in swirling formations while Beryl has an oriental flavour, showing an exotic bird amongst foliage.

During the interwar years the Honiton Pottery commissioned Sir Frank Brangwyn in 1930 and although Collard could not market these designs as Honiton Pottery, they were an inspiration for later ranges, especially those with an 'orange-peel' textured background.

Frank Braddon was another artist brought in who had originally worked for C H Brannam at Barnstaple, and taught at the local art school. His Art Nouveau swirling scrolls are particularly memorable but by 1934 he was working in Nottinghamshire at Langley Mill Pottery where he produced bold geometric shapes for their Lagoon Ware range, a design popular at Poole and Honiton.

In 1937 Braddon's employment at Langley Mill was abruptly terminated and he moved back to the Honiton Pottery where he remained for the rest of his life. He developed his Lagoon Ware patterns into superb formal panels and continued making

model animals and painting them.

There is one story that he was so incensed at his dismissal from Langley that he demanded his recently designed model of a polar bear should be sent down to Honiton - it was, and the pottery produced them for several years, although they are quite hard to find nowadays.

World War Two effectively ended the period of Honiton as an Art Pottery run on Arts and Crafts lines and although Collard retired in 1947 and his successors moved into mass production, they continued to commission designs from prominent artists, like Jane Willingale whose bold designs for plates and mugs for Next shops were made in the 1980s.

There is more information about Collard in a handy book price GBP4.50 available from Newton Abbot Town Museum.

Alternatively there is a Honiton Pottery Collectors Meeting tomorrow at the British Legion Hall, Dowell Street, Honiton where doors open at 10.30am, the talk by Gill Sarre starting at 11.30am and another talk in the afternoon by Peter Crumpton on British Ceramic Toast Racks, begins at 2pm.

Experts are on hand all day with advice, etc but for more information, call Janet Mills on 01626 774497 or email shipsview@onetel.com.