

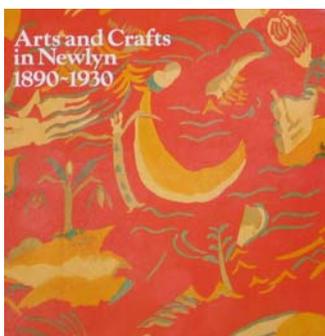




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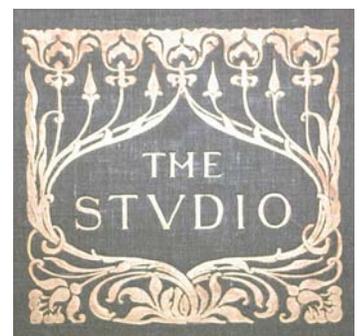
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Newlyn Industrial Class Arts and Crafts copper work. 1890 to 1930

Established in Newlyn, Cornwall in 1890 the Newlyn Industrial Class had an important role in the social and artistic development of the local community. This has been documented by Hazel Berriman her excellent book *Arts and Crafts in Newlyn*. The class produced hand beaten copper work from the 1890s and continued into the first half of the twentieth century This 'Newlyn Copper' is now greatly valued by collectors and there is growing recognition that the copper working at the Newlyn Class represents a unique and important part of the history of the British Arts and Crafts Movement. Sadly, there are few Newlyn pieces in national art galleries or museum collections of Arts and Crafts metalwork and there is great need to tell the Newlyn story, bringing the quality and beauty of the work to the attention of the wider public.

The most authoritative account of the Newlyn Class is provided by Hazel Berriman who locates the Newlyn Industrial Class within the broad development of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain. In her view, the artists who inspired and supported the development of the Newlyn Class were "cosmopolitan in their outlook and well aware of the growing Arts and Crafts Movement" which was concerned to promote craftsmanship in the face of increasing industrial and mechanised production. Whilst the development of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the late 19th century centred in and around London, links were developed between Newlyn and the Home Arts and Industries Association which established classes in rural and working class communities. As a result, Newlyn copper work was exhibited at their exhibitions in London in 1899 to 1901 and the quality of work was commended by leading art journals such as the *Strand* and *Studio* magazine.

1. Postcard c.1900 showing the Newlyn Lighthouse (private collection)
2. Phoenix tray – showing the influence of John Pearson in the use of mythical creatures in the design. (private collection)
3. Arts and Crafts in Newlyn – Hazel Berriman by kind permission of Newlyn Art Gallery)
4. Charger designed by J.D Mackenzie illustrated in Volume 20 of The Studio (private collection)
5. Front cover of the Studio (private collection)

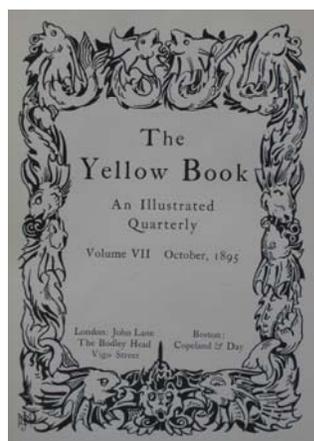
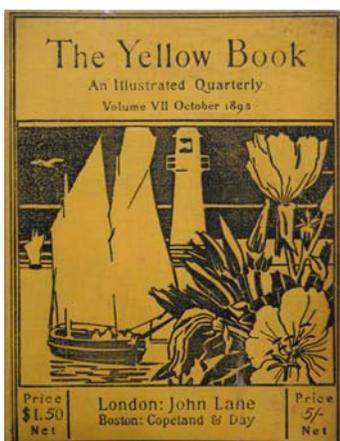
Artists and Craftsmen



A Village Industry 1908 (exhibited at the Royal academy) by Stanhope Forbes showing J D Mackenzie instructing pupils (including Johnny Payne Cotton) at the Newlyn Industrial Class (untraced)

Much has been written about the painters who settled in Newlyn and whilst there is very little information about the Newlyn class we do know that artists of the Newlyn school of painters T.C Gotch, Percy Craft, Reginald Dick and J.D. Mackenzie were important in helping to set up the copper class. J.D. Mackenzie was clearly a driving force particularly in creating the designs of fish, marine creatures, flowers, birds, ships and coastal landscapes used to decorate the copperwork. Mackenzie, though closely involved with the Newlyn and St Ives painters, appears to have exhibited comparatively few of his own paintings. However his work in illustrating an article on Newlyn painting in the Yellow Book in 1895 gives a perfect example of his style and imagery which was clearly the guiding light in the design and decoration of Newlyn work.

J. D. Mackenzie is mentioned in an article in the *Studio* by Newlyn artist Norman Garstin in 1895 featuring the design and creation of 4 large copper plaques to be mounted on the Art Gallery at Newlyn. "Mr Mackenzie is an artist of great charm and facility of design, kept constantly flowing by his desire to help on the industry or craft whatever it may be called". It is interesting that many pieces of Newlyn copper have inscriptions ie *Designed by J.D. Mackenzie* but rarely give credit to the person who actually made the piece. The importance of the designer is emphasised in the *Studio* article on the Newlyn plaques, in which the maker Phillip Hodder, clearly a master craftsman, is described only as Mr Mackenzie's "assistant".



Above - The Yellow Book 1890 the cover and title page designed by J D Mackenzie (private collection)

Right – Extract from the Studio Volume 8 1895 showing the 'fire' plaque, one of a series of four plaques designed by J.D Mackenzie and made by Philip Hodder, illustrating the four elements which embellish the front elevation of the Newlyn Art Gallery. Private Collection)

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Newlyn Copper Useful and Beautiful

Copper working at Newlyn provided a very pure expression of Arts and Crafts values following the principle aims suggested by William Morris as “An art made by the people for the people, a joy to the maker and the user” (William Morris *The Beauty of Life 1880*). The Newlyn class created and sold useful and beautiful objects for the home including a wide variety vases, bowls, jugs, candle holders, coffee pots, tableware, picture frames and mirrors. Architectural items such as bell pushes, doorplates, fire screens, fenders and other household equipment were also made. The key features of Newlyn design centre on the decoration which celebrated the beauty of the natural world particularly the fish and marine life of Newlyn. Many designs showed seabirds, fish, crabs, shells, lobsters seaweed, and fishing boats, which were part of the everyday life of the Newlyn community. Wild Roses Daffodils, Irises and other wildflowers were also depicted in designs along with views of the local coast and harbour. Whilst many designs were based on fish or other creatures drawn from nature, there were also striking designs of fantasy fish, galleons and tempestuous seas which drew very much on the “artistic” imagery of the Arts and Crafts movement commonplace in contemporary art magazines such as the *Studio*. As well the imagery, the precise construction of the items particularly in riveting, seams and finishing relied on great skill and craftsmanship very much in keeping with the tradition of the artist craftsman established by Morris and Ashbee .

Collecting Newlyn Copper

There is now a growing interest in ‘antique’ Newlyn pieces and given the numbers and variety of Newlyn copper made in the Arts and Crafts period and later years this is an exciting field for collectors. Newlyn items frequently feature in decorative arts sales at the best auction houses in the UK and many pieces change hands through internet auctions for collectors. Apart from Penlee House in Penzance, few public collections have Newlyn. Cannon Hall in Barnsley and the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle have pieces on show but a recent exhibition of Arts and Crafts metalwork at Blackwell House in Cumbria featured only a single item of Newlyn. Identifying Newlyn pieces is challenging; many pieces were stamped Newlyn or inscribed *Newlyn Industrial Class* but many items, often the larger more important items were unmarked. Newlyn stamped marks vary in size, characters from about 1mm to 5mm in size have been observed. On rare occasions pieces with paper labels are found, these include items sold by James Lanham, Artist and Colourman St Ives who exhibited and sold Newlyn copper alongside paintings from the St Ives and Newlyn schools.

1. Detail from a rose bowl 2. Robin and holly pin dish 3 Detail from ink well
4. Detail from octopus pin dish 5 Paper label from back of mirror
(private collection)

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A new project to research and celebrate Newlyn Copper. Can you help?

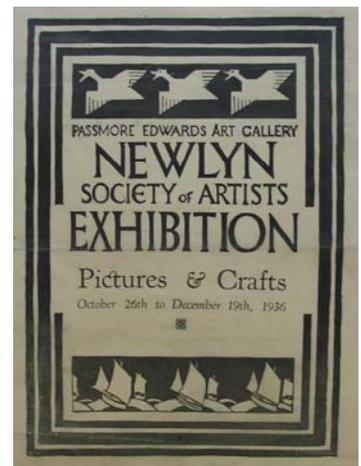
A project is being established to study the history of Newlyn copper and to bring together pictures, documents and oral history of this important Arts and Crafts venture. The two people developing the project at the moment are Daryl Bennett, an amateur historian interested in the Arts and Crafts Movement, and Colin Pill, an enthusiast and amateur copper worker, who has spent much time studying the Newlyn technique and historical background. A small steering group is being formed in and around Newlyn and anyone interested in the UK or further a field is welcome to join and support the project. As well as collating and classifying pictures of Newlyn pieces, the project aims to uncover documents, original drawings, articles in period journals and to provide a comprehensive account of tools and techniques. In an effort to develop knowledge about the people and personalities who created Newlyn copper, there is a need to capture the oral history and collate information from the descendants of people who were part of the Newlyn class. The broad aims of the project are to help develop the knowledge and appreciation of Newlyn copper, helping to establish a permanent archive of documents, artefacts, recordings, images and drawings of Newlyn work. The outcomes of the project would be to increase public access to and enjoyment of the history and cultural significance of Newlyn copper, promoting exhibitions, web based information and a publication to capture and illustrate the Newlyn story. The project will also aim to support the revival of copper working as a leisure, learning, therapeutic, and economic activity in Cornwall and the UK. To find out how you can support the project please contact

Daryl Bennett on 0114 2682981;
 Daryl.bennett@virgin.net
 See www.artscrafts.org.uk or

Colin Pill on 01225 309400;
 cpill@slrconsulting.co.uk



Cormorant detail on the side of a 12 inch high hot water pot (private collection)



Front cover of the 1936 catalogue for Pictures and Crafts at the Newlyn art Gallery (private collection)



Inaugural public meeting to gain support for the project – held in September 2006