

Newsletter Number 1 for April 2015



The Winchcombe Folk and Police Museum opens its door for the 2015 season on April 1st. Volunteers have been busy with the Museum Manager, Anne Crow, in recent weeks arranging some new displays, cataloguing and photographing exhibits and updating the many folders of sources held in the museum. As a new venture the Museum is launching this free monthly newsletter to inform people living in the GL54 area and all others interested of some of the treasures held. The newsletter will be emailed each month, until the museum closes for the winter at the end of October 2015.

In each issue the Museum team will focus on a topic special to Winchcombe. For each topic the newsletter will let readers know a little of its history and of the resources and information the Museum holds about it. We think that once you have read the newsletter you may wish to come into the Museum to see more about the chosen topic and the many other aspects of Winchcombe covered by our resources.

In this April newsletter our chosen topic is the famous **Winchcombe Pottery** in Becketts Lane, Greet. Do come to the Museum to see examples of work from the pottery.

A Brief History of Winchcombe Pottery

There has been a pottery on the current site since the beginning of the nineteenth century. At the start of twentieth century the pottery was known as Beckett's Pottery. R A Beckett died in 1913 and the pottery closed with outbreak of WW1.

1926 Michael Cardew, who had trained under the nationally renowned potter Bernard Leach, came to the area looking to open his own pottery. He met the famous designer Gordon Russell in Broadway who told him of the empty Beckett Pottery. The property was by then owned by Mr and Mrs Alfred Butler. Michael Cardew rented the pottery and bottle kiln, from the Butlers. With the help of two local people, Elijah Comfort and apprentice Sydney Tustin, Winchcombe Pottery came to life. The potters used local clay and experimented with various production methods.

1935 they were joined by Charlie Tustin and a year later by Ray Finch (1914-2012).

1939 Michael Cardew left for Cornwall and Ray Finch took over but the pottery closed on the outbreak of war.

1946 Ray Finch bought the business from Michael Cardew and Syd and Charlie Tustin rejoined. The ware becomes well known all over the world as practical domestic pottery.

1952 experimentation with stoneware began.

1954 final firing of the brick bottle kiln and electric kilns took over.

1969 Mike Finch (Ray's son) joins and later runs the pottery with the help of Matt Grimmett the great, great, grandson of Elijah Comfort.

1974 a wood fired kiln built for stoneware production.

A really marvellous book detailing the history of the pottery with great colour photographs and some of its products is available from Winchcombe Library. It is 'Winchcombe Pottery' by Ron Wheeler 1998.

Winchcombe Pottery has a really splendid web site (<http://www.winchcombepottery.co.uk/>) that includes details of items for sale in its shop.



This pot by Syd Tustin is part of the Museum collection. In 2004 Winchcombe 'Winds of Change Gallery' held an exhibition of over 100 pieces of Tustin's work in slipware and stoneware. Syd Tustin worked at the pottery for 51 years. He joined aged 14 and was involved in the production of over 1 million pots. Syd retired 1978. Clearly Syd Tustin deserved the national reputation he developed. The piece shown was thrown by Tustin at the end of a day with left over scraps of clay. At the time he was still an apprentice.



The updraught kiln at the Winchcombe Pottery as photographed in 2014 was originally built in 1794.

The kiln was last fired in 1954.

This may indicate that in substance that the Winchcombe kiln is the second oldest pottery kiln standing in Britain. It is remarkably similar to the design of a bottle kiln built in 1785.



The Museum holds a file of older newspaper and magazine cuttings that includes:

- photographs of Ray Finch throwing a jug
- a cutting from the Gloucestershire Echo for October 19th, 1998 about the world wide renown of Winchcombe Pottery
- the obituary of David Leach the famous potter and eldest son of Bernard Leach
- an appreciation of the potter Eddie Hopkins (1941-2007) who worked at Winchcombe pottery until 2006
- photographs of Elijah Comfort and Michael Cardew at work in the 1930s
- photographs of Charlie Tustin, Don Jones (stayed 1950-71) and all the potters in 1951.

The next issue of the newsletter will focus on the Paper Mill at Postlip as part of this season's concentration on Winchcombe industries.

The museum is open Monday to Saturday from 10.00 to 16.00. A season ticket for people with a GL54 address gives unlimited access for £5 until October.

Please send feedback on the newsletter to info@winchcombemuseum.org.uk