

PATTERNS THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN

PART 2

The Wilkinson/Newport pattern books held at the Hanley library contain some extraordinary watercolours whose designs strongly suggest the designing hand of Clarice Cliff. They have been carefully outlined and coloured which would suggest more than a passing idea. The overall tenor of the designs suggest that they may date from the mid 1930's.

The complexity of the patterns shown in this article here suggest that they were conceived as coloured lithographs rather than fully hand painted designs.

Although it has been asserted that Clarice Cliff disliked lithography, it is clear that she recognised its importance in the output of the factory. However, it would seem that this dislike was not so deep seated as to prevent her from designing a very large number of elegant and arresting lithographs over her entire career.

Although there is no proof that these designs were ever produced, it is of interest for us to see the thought processes and ideas that existed in Miss Cliff's design area that were beyond the Bizarre period.



This northern winter scene, which might have been inspired by a Christmas greeting card, contains a number of easily identified Clarice Cliff design elements. Here we see the half hidden cottage with a smoking chimney; the smoke plume with a distinctive curl, a tortuous tree with exposed roots in the foreground and a hilly landscape.

The severely recurved stem on the holly in the foreground finds its parallel in many other Clarice Cliff lithograph patterns,

Of interest are the pine trees in the middle distance. These find their reflections in Moderne 'Norge', 'Pine Grove' and

'Caprice'. However, in this watercolour the pine trees have been circled and annotated with the words "without these". By removing these elements, the design opens up to become suitable for positioning to the right and on the shoulder of flatware.



This curious Elizabethan scene has similar Clarice Cliff elements to those shown in the previous image.

Again, we have a hilly landscape with a "bonsai" tortuous oak tree in the foreground with a severely recurved trunk and exposed roots. The patches on the trunk suggest 'Honolulu' whilst the oak leaves and acorns connect back to 'Acorn'

The houses and poplars have their reflections in the Bizarre pattern, 'Elizabethan Cottage'. The vertical exaggeration and exposed depiction of the houses gives the design an uncomfortable feeling.

Attached in the lower right corner is the partial depiction that would be used on smaller tableware items or as a balancing design element.



Although this design is severely abstract, there are the same design elements that are found in the previous patterns.

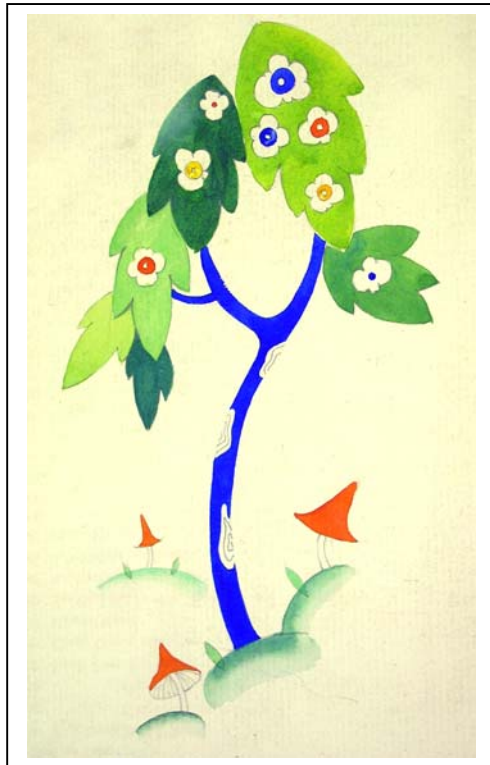
Here we see a stylised, overarching tree with a severely recurved trunk and exposed roots. Hanging from the tree are an extraordinary collection of stylised flowers and leaves.

The reduced hilly landscape has been moved to the foreground. Toadstools are not often seen in Clarice Cliff designs (Latona 'Mushroom' is an exception) and in the watercolour shown here, they

lend a further touch of fantasy. The inclusion of blue, wavy lines has been seen to be

necessary in order to balance the overhang of the tree and perhaps, to suggest a breeze. (Try covering them up to see the effect their absence has on the design).

As indicated by the pencilled frame, this pattern has been designed to fit on the shoulder of round, flatware. The closest parallels to this pattern may be found in Miss Cliff's late 1930's patterns whose working names are 'Corolla' and 'Summer's End'.



This abstract design shows Miss Cliff's design elements, although in reduced form.

Although the tree does not show a recurved form, its bifid style and patches still recall 'Honolulu'.

The flowers located in the foliage recall such late 1930's patterns with working names of 'Waverley', 'Tiger Tree' and 'Chippendale'. Again, the hilly landscape is in the foreground and decorated with toadstools. However, unlike the previous watercolour, some perspective has been achieved by placing one of the hillocks, with its toadstool, in the middle distance.

The alternating curves of the hillocks, tree and foliage along with the simple composition would make this design suitable for positioning on either the right or

left side of round flatware.

It is through the appreciation of these and other designs that a better appreciation of the breadth of Miss Cliff's design repertoire can be made.

Greg Slater ACT