

Edenderry Cultural and Historical Society was formed 9 years. Its objectives are to research, write articles and publish books on the history of the Edenderry area. The first project was to publish this book on Irish Wade. Unlike other town factories no longer in existence, Irish Wade is very much alive today due to the pottery pieces manufactured during its lifetime. They are highly regarded and avidly collected in many countries of the world including the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the British Isles. I am going to talk to you tonight briefly about Wade Ireland that once was a major business and employer in Portadown. So the theme of my talk is the history, people and products.

The Wades family business of ceramic making began in 1867 in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, England. The company focused on the manufacturing of decorative glazed tiles for fire grates and porcelain fittings for the textile industry. In 1868 Wades began to create teapots and ornamental flat back Staffordshire figures, growing the business slowly. By the late 1800s and early 1900s, Wades focused its business on manufacturing items such as gas burners for domestic lighting, then bobbins, thread guides and tiles. This beginning underscores the commercial vision of the company.

In 1919, Colonel George Albert Wade, son of the owner returned home a hero of the First World War and in 1927 was made a partner in his father's firm. It prospered under his guidance and his management skill played an important part in the firm surviving difficulties created by the Second World War.

During this period he made a bold move employing Jessie (Van) Hallen, setting her up with her own department to make figures, animals, garden gnomes and floral items.



Jessie Van Hallen

Her appointment was very important to the Wade company as led it into the production of collectable items designed by her and other artists. Since her death, Jessie van Hallen has become famous as one of the greatest modellers of ceramic figures.

After the War the then Prime Minister Clement Attlee was faced with the task of rebuilding a country devastated by heavy German bombing. Tax concessions were offered to companies providing work in unemployment black spots. With the Wade English factories working to capacity to produce ceramic electrical wares, the company needed another site to cope with the demand.

In 1946 Colonel Wade, who was also the Chairman of the British Electrical Ceramic Manufacturer's Association, was asked by the British Government to increase production by creating new jobs in depressed regions of the country. He asked his son-in-law, Major H Straker Carryer to find such a place. Mr. W.A. Mullen D.L. was the leading industrialist in Portadown at the time and was Chairman of the New Industries Council.



Col George Wade

We are hoping that in Portadown we will get something which is different from the produce of our potteries which have a traditional style, and which will have a style and individuality which will make it known in all the markets of the world.⁵

Above is what Col. George Wade said when he decided to buy the Factory in Watson Street.

When Sir George Wade visited the town he was shown over a factory in Watson Street by Mr. Mullen. They zigzagged across the floor to avoid the water drips caused by leaks in the roof, however despite this problem he was impressed enough to take the place.

Portadown was chosen because:

- (a) the factory had 150,000 sq ft of floor space
- (b) the town had a good transportation system of rail and water
- (c) availability of good labour and government financial incentives.



Wade Pottery, Watson Street, Portadown

In 1947 Wades purchased the vacant Watson Armstrong's Victorian Mill situated in Watson Street and within a stone's throw of the River Bann and Railway Station. It was bought for the princely sum of £14,000. It was converted into a ceramic factory and traded under the name of George Wade & Son Limited.

Colonel Wade appointed his daughter, Iris Lenora Wade and his son- in-law Major H. Straker Carryer to run the plant and they moved from England to Portadown to live.



Iris Carryer



Straker Carryer

They bought land in the Ballyhannon area of the town and built a large timber frame house. They lived in this house during their period of managing the factory. It was demolished many years later to make way for the up market Larchwood development in Ballyhannon.



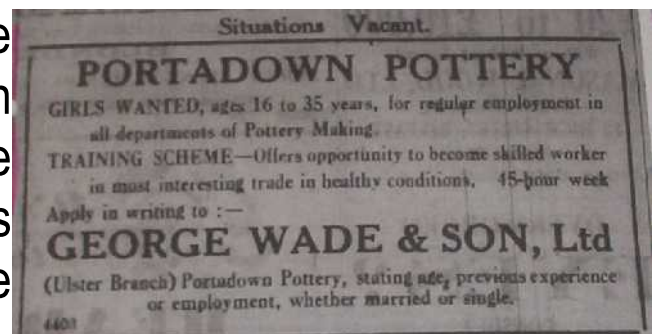
Larchwood



1953 Backstamp

The name of the company was changed to Wade Ulster Limited on 31st January 1949 and the Wade Ulster back stamp can be found on the earlier manufactured pieces and on its business headed paper.

The factory employed people from the town whose association was with linen machinery therefore they had to be retrained by their English counterparts on how to operate lathes to make industrial ceramics.

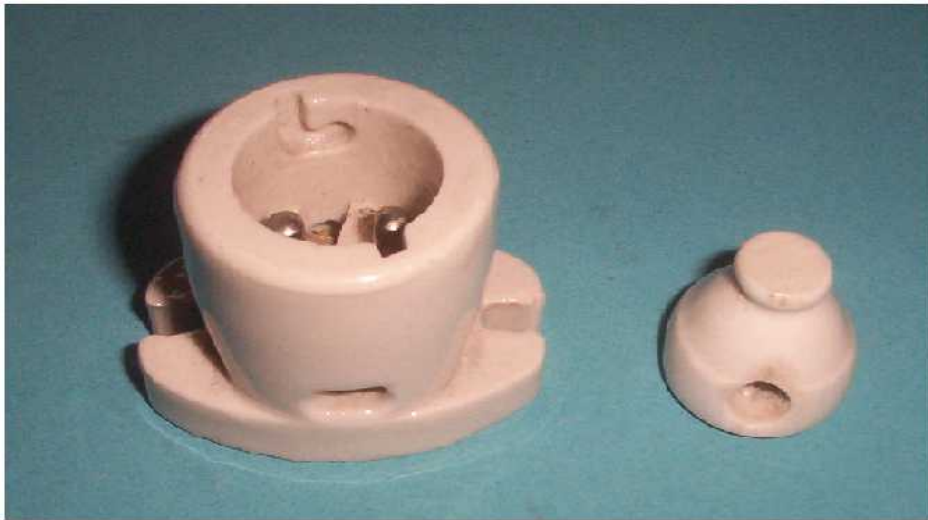


First Employment Advert, 1947

From 1947 to 1952 they made millions of electrical insulators, industrial ceramics, bottle stoppers and ceramic buttons. The 1952 year started out well but the ensuing months brought a slump and all operatives were put on working a four day week. The factory needed an economic miracle and it arrived in 1953, with the coronation of Princess Elizabeth II.



1953 Coronation Tankard



Plug & Bottle Stopper



Attached
Stopper

It was a big year for the monarchy and Wade Pottery of Portadown. The factory for the first time moved into the royal commemorative market. Lathes normally used for industrial ceramics started to turn out coronation mugs. The very first piece was a half pint tankard turned on a lathe normally used to make insulators for telegraph poles.

Local man, Cecil Holland, Glazing Manager, was instructed to put a royal blue coloured glaze on tankards designed by Director, Ernie Taylor. Cecil got his ingredients mixed up and the tankards ended up a blue-green colour.



Cecil Holland

He said "I'll quit before I'm fired" but to his surprise Iris Carryer, her husband and the management were delighted with the colour and asked him to repeat the process. As his discovery was accidental he had only a vague idea of what he had done. Mrs Carryer said she would throw him into the kiln if he did not reproduce the desired glaze. This accident was the birth of Irish porcelain, a very important development in the growth of the new Portadown pottery business.

Cecil Holland was born in Armagh on 11th April, 1918, he was the son of Harold Holland and Margaret Elizabeth Blakely. He married Winifred Reid of the Dobbin in 1942 in Thomas Street Methodist Church and took up residence in Alexander Avenue. Irish porcelain (i.e. blue/green) pieces are relatively cheap to buy, starting from a few pounds.



Irish Porcelain

The English Wade factories tried to copy this new colour but were unable to do so. The Portadown branch told them it was the leprechauns in the kiln that made all the difference. Business prospered and orders arrived daily from all parts of the world, especially the Irish American/Canadian business. It is hardly surprising, considering millions of North Americans who proudly claim Irish roots that much of the products were decorated with shamrock, whether painted, transferred or embossed. In addition the Irish connection was also a feature of much of the advertising material and the back-stamps where if you look closely you will find the maker's code letter. Each of these letters allegedly identified the particular Wade Operative responsible for the article.

Code Letter	Employees
H	Mary McAtamney
C	Molly Morrow
V	Joe Mallon
S	Sheila O'Donnell
U	Teresa McAtamney
M	Kathleen Winters
D	Bernadette Devlin
P	Patricia Lyness.

It is interesting to note that all the above names clearly betray their Irish origins and thus were specifically selected by Wade's publicity department to appeal to the transatlantic Irish market

Collectors should note that code letters were re-assigned over time as operatives came and went, thus there is no certainty that an Irish Porcelain article was produced by a specific maker. Many other code letters appear in the middle of the back-stamp but no names appear to have been assigned to them. Most operatives were completely unaware that they had been allocated a particular letter.



*Tool used to mark Irish Porcelain
Pieces*

In 1954, Iris Carryer, who was the Art Director at the time came up with the idea of making small animals and calling them whimsies. Apparently the idea of animals came from a Noahs Ark she played with in her childhood. Her brother Tony was impressed and said " we could make them by the gross, it's a marvellous piece of whimsey." Hence the name, whimsies. Wades at this stage became known worldwide for these small collectable figures and animals and so began their golden era. The Portadown factory made sets; 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and the English company made the uneven numbers. These were very popular and cheap to buy. They were only made for a limited period and still highly sought after even today. The parent English Wade company forced Wade Ireland to mark them 'Made in England' which did not go down well with the Portadown workers.

Today you would pay up to £100 for some of these Whimsies.



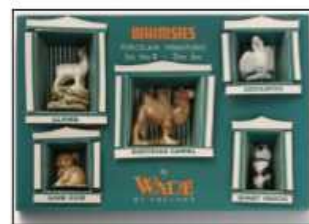
Set 2



Set 4



Set 6



Set 8



Set 10

Wade (Portadown) Whimsies, 1950s

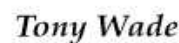
Set 2	Set 4	Set 6	Set 8	Set 10
English Animals	African Jungle	Polar Animals	Zoo Animals	Farm Animals
Bull	Lion	Husky	Camel	Pig
Lamb	Crocodile	Polar Bear	Cockatoo	Italian Goat
Kitten	Monkey & Baby	Baby Seal	Lion Cub	Fox/Hound
Hare	Rhino	Polar Bear	Llama	Swan
Dachshund	Baby Elephant	Penguin	Panda	Shire Horse

In 1956 all production of insulators and gift ware came to an abrupt end as a serious fire ravaged the factory premises on Monday 29th October 1956.



Watson Street Pottery after the fire

20,000 square feet of floor space was destroyed. To further exacerbate the situation the huge Christmas gift-ware and industrial ceramics orders had to be fulfilled. Tony Wade, the joint managing director and Sir George Wade's son, had flown over from England to assess



ny Wade's Statement

 To

The image displays four commemorative mugs, likely from the 1970s and 1980s, featuring the 'Rising Phoenix' logo. The logo depicts a phoenix rising from flames. The mugs are white with gold rims and handles. The text on the mugs includes 'LPGA OCTOBER 1970', 'LPGA OCTOBER 1980', 'PRESENTED BY WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS TO William Hickland HONORING LPGA FOR THE LPGA YEAR', and 'PRESENTED BY WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS TO Joseph Livingston (LPGA) IN GRATITUDE FOR HELP GIVEN'.

Fire Tankards

During the life time of the factory Wades employed or commissioned a number of designers. I mention a few most recognised for their contribution to Irish Wade.

Pieces designed by Raymond Piper, Bill Harper, James Borse Senior, James Borse Junior and Donald Nelson are worth buying. Two of the designers, Borse Senior and Junior I will mention briefly as they were employed designers and lived locally.

Borse Senior was born in Ashton-under-Lyme, England in January, 1920, the son of Persey and Jane Borse. At the outbreak of the Second World War he enlisted in the Manchester Regiment becoming an armoury sergeant.



Jim Borse (Senior)



Jim Borse (Junior)

In 1940, he was posted to Northern Ireland and it was here that he met his future wife, Mary Ellen Wilson of Armagh. He joined Wades in the late 1950s and his management skills and artistic flair were well recognised and highly valued by the management.



Armagh Teapot with Borse Backstamp



Selection of Raindrops



Cup, cream jug and sugar bowl, Dorset Range



Selection of Borse's Celtic Kells Range



Moscow Range Vase

Borse Senior's Irish Porcelain Designs

Many of the most prestigious Irish Porcelain designs were his creations, including the Raindrop tableware, Donegall and Mourne ranges, the Armagh tea ware and the celebrated Celtic range, inspired by motifs in the Book of Kells.

He also designed the tiles fixed to the exterior walls of the Gasworks Showroom.



Portadown Gas Company Showroom with Wade stonewall tiles

It was demolished in 2012 to make way for the ASDA complex. In an interview with Donal Cunningham, an ex Wade employee, he described Borsey Senior as a "genius". Borsey Junior joined the company in the late 1960s and on the death of his father in 1977 he was asked by the management to take over from him. He was responsible for the design of the majority of whisky flagons.

He worked a lot on tall vases and many transfers were put on them as they had the right sort of area to accommodate the transfer.



Borsey Junior's Whiskey Flagon Designs

The vases were used for various things and one in particular was at the time of the royal wedding between Charles and Diana. Like his father Borsey Junior's work was highly valued.

Some of the most sought after pieces; Himself, Herself and Eileen Oge of the Irish Song figures were designed by Raymond Piper in 1962 and made in 3 sizes. 11", 9" and 8 ½".

600-800 of the 11" Himself and Herself pieces were exported to America in 1962 and these pieces are very sought after today. Two of the 11" pieces have surfaced in Portadown and I have seen them - they are absolutely stunning. The first models produced also differed in colouration from those of later years. Himself's shoes were light brown and his cap was black whilst 'Herself' had a red skirt, tan shoes, a cream apron and a black coat. A pair of them can be seen in the Armagh County Museum situated on the Mall in Armagh. There was problems casting the 11" Himself and Herself so they were reduced in size to 8 ½" and production of this size continued until 1986.

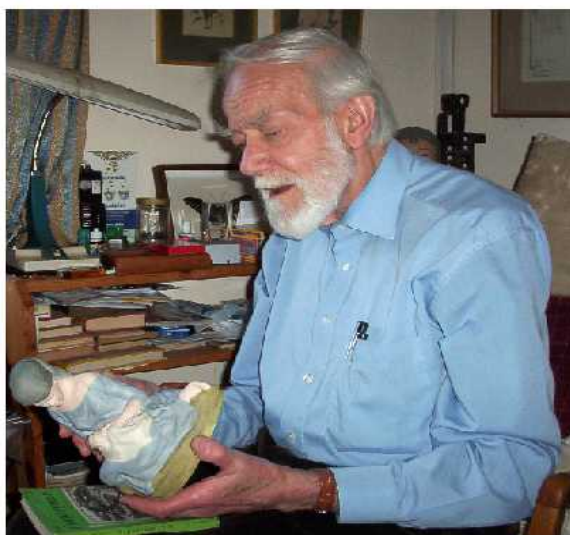


Charles & Diana Vase

Borsey Junior Design



Raymond Piper at work on his model of (Himself), Dan Murphy



Raymond admiring Eileen Oge

Eileen Oge was modelled on Felicity Carryer, (now Graham) daughter of Iris Lenora Wade. This figure was originally entitled 'Felicity' but was

later changed to Eileen Oge. One can be viewed in Craigavon Civic Centre with the name Felicity written with a black marker on its base. Apparently it was donated to the local Council by the Carryer family at the time of its production.



Himself, Herself & Eileen Oge



Felicity Carryer with Backstamp



*Harper at work on monkey from
Set 4 Whimsies*

Bill Harper designed the smaller Irish Song figures in 1962 and these are very much sought after today. The series comprised of: Phil the Fluter, Widda Cafferty, Micky Mulligan, Little Crooked Paddy, the Irish Emigrant, the Star of the Country Down, Molly Malone and the Bard of Armagh." His other notable designs were, whimsies, the large Disney figures, Alphabet Train, Irish Cottage and Irish Leprechauns.



Irish Song Figures - 1962

Donald Nelson, another designer was employed by Wades for three years. He is mainly known for his fluted and waisted coffee ware sets produced mainly in brown and green, though black and blue versions are known to exist. He also modified the Celtic soup bowls.



Nelson's Coffeeware in green, brown and blue



Nelson's Celtic Soup Bowls

During the early 1960's they made a limited range of Hagen-Renaker wall rock plaques. Iris Carryer's friend was Maxine Renaker, wife of the owner of the famous Hagen Renaker Pottery of LA, California, USA. She encouraged Iris to manufacture these in the Portadown factory. These were difficult to make and only 500 were produced. These also, are highly sought after today.



Various Species of Fish



Toucan - Bright Coloured Plumage: Red, Blue, Yellow & White



Horses - Galloping or Rearing



Butterflies - Blue, Orange & Yellow

Hagen-Renaker Rockwall Plaques

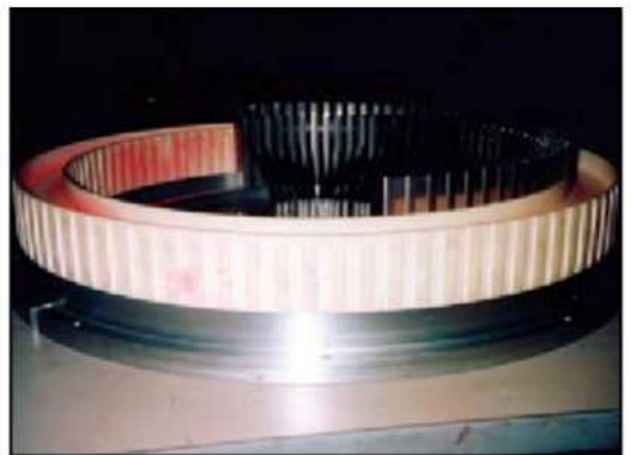
Other pieces of note, included - Nanny, the Baby, Hunkered Elf, Polar Animals, Rhinoceros Ashtrays, Irish Wildlife Series, Bengo Money Box, Pogo, Pex Fairy, Noddy Set and Dustbin Cat to name but a few. I mention these because of their value.

In 1962, the Alumina part of the business was set-up at the factory in Portadown on the advice of Major Carryer's American contacts. The Alumina became the high tech end of the business which proved very profitable. Examples of the products produced were:-

- Nose Cones for guided missiles to France.
- Heat Resistant Tiles for Early Apollo Missions. In an interview with Managing Director of the time, Jack Johnston; he said - "for all we know some of the heat resistant tiles made at the Portadown factory may be on the moon".
- Valves for use in UK's early warning system for detecting incoming ballistic missiles
- Laser Research for British Aerospace
- Alumina parts for body scanning equipment
- Sole supplier to Europe X-ray Tube manufacturer
- Helicopter cockpit floor armour.
- The largest ceramic insulator rings ever manufactured in the world were being made for German railways experimental electromagnetic monorail system.
- The America NASA shuttles circling the globe with their surface temperature being measured by die pressed sensor bodies.
- General purpose flak jackets.



John Stringer and Cecil Martin with first nose cone manufactured in Portadown



Insulator rings for electro-magnetic monorail system

In

In 1964 the Carryers left Portadown to live in California.

The company's name was changed in 1966 from Wade Ulster to Wade Ireland Limited after the Carryer's left the firm. The factory continued to make Irish porcelain and the figures created in the early 1960s.



Iris Carryer

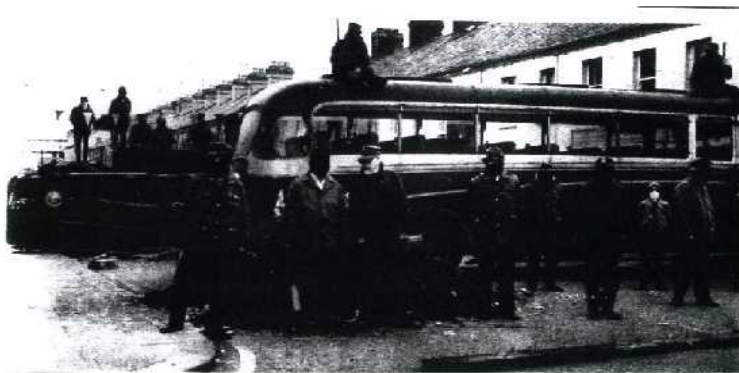


Straker Carryer

*Dear Both of You,
We owe our jobs to you. You were always fair and just and understanding.
Now it looks as though your work has been for nothing... but we shall
remember you always in our prayers.¹⁶*

Letter from Employees

This period proved difficult for Wade which was exacerbated by the troubled political situation in the Province. The entrances to Watson Street and Joseph street were blocked by UDA barricades.



UDA Barricades, top of Watson Street & Joseph Street

A secret deal was negotiated with the Portadown Gas works & Electricity Company Limited that provided Wades with an entrance through the gasworks premises which enabled them to bring in raw materials and deliver the finished products to customers. The insulating trade of this period was declining, Irish porcelain trade was struggling however the Alumina products were booming. In 1967 part of the factory was refurbished to improve Alumina production.

George Best of Manchester United, who many football experts say was the greatest footballer of all time arrived in the Edenderry area of Portadown on 19th October 1967, to unfurl a bannerette for the recently formed Portadown Manchester United Supporters Club. He was accompanied by his parents and uncle Tommy Russell, an employee in the Wade factory. To mark the occasion his uncle Tommy, commissioned the local pottery to make ½ dozen tankards suitably decorated with the football clubs heraldic coat. The ceremony took place in Louis Holme's hostelry, known today as Gary's Bar. After George unfurled the bannerette his parents, uncle and himself were presented with one each. One of the remaining three is proudly owned by a Portadown family but the whereabouts of the other two remains a mystery. As a result of George's untimely death in 2005 if these tankards came up for sale they would be much sought after by collectors of football memorabilia.



George Best unfurling bannerette for the Portadown Manchester United Supporter's Club



Gary's Bar



George Best at Killicomaine Junior High School

Johnny Truckle entered the employment of Wade Ulster in 1955 and became its Production Manager. He took an interest in military tankards that were produced for the various army regiments stationed in the area during the 'troubles' of the 1970s/80s. When a new army unit arrived in the area he would approach the commanding officers about the possibility of ordering Wade tankards to commemorate their tour of duty in Ulster and most approved.



Johnny Truckle

Around 50 different army units are known to have had sets of commemorative tankards made for them. The number produced for a regiment was normally 500. Though in the case of the smaller military units this figure was reduced to 100 and in certain specific instances, even lower i.e. thirty made for bomb disposal officers of the Royal Logistic Corp. and the hundred produced for Parachute Regiment HQ. RLC tankards carried the cartoon images of Felix the cat - the inference being that, like a cat, a bomb disposal officer had nine lives. The Parachute tankards were crested with Pegasus, the winged horse, set against a striking red background. Sadly Johnny Truckle died on 20th September 1983 as a result of a terrorist incident.



Some of the Military Tankards

S



Royal Logistic Corp. - Bomb Disposal
Tankard



Parachute Tankard

Flagons and Decanters for the whiskey distillers were holding their own and smaller honey coloured Irish character figures released in the 1970s proved popular .1977 was the best year of the decade. The Queen's Silver Jubilee proved to be a commercial bonanza.

Irish Character Series	
Wade Reference Number	Name
S16	Danny Boy
S17	Molly Malone
S18	Kathleen
S19	Mother MacCree
S20	Phil the Fluter
S21	Paddy Maginty
S24	Rose of Tralee
S25	Eileen Oge
S26	Paddy Reilly



S19, S18, S24, S17 & S25



S20, S21, S16 & S26



Queen's Silver Jubilee Tankards

The 1980s opened brightly with the announcement in 1981 that Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer were to get married. A range of royal memorabilia was produced, including memorabilia to celebrate the birth of Prince William in 1982 followed by Prince Harry's birth in 1984.

In the mid 1980s the Wade Group were then commissioned by Natwest Bank to make novelty Pig Money Boxes for young savers and the Portadown factory enjoyed this increased work saving it from closure.



Set of Irish Nat West pigs



Portadown Times Article

In 1986 it was decided to halt the production of electrical insulators and a short time later the giftware section was closed. Between April and June 1985-86 the giftware sales represented £122,00 of the firm's turnover. In the year to November 1986 Wade Ireland's losses were over £300,000.

By 1989 output was confined to Whisky Flagons , Alumina and Tableware.

Meadowland <i>Sample sizes as above</i>		Designed by Barbara Cooksey. Centre garniture of meadow plants, including daffodils, freesia and tulips. Olive green rim.	1 Classic Linen Sample Sizes (Approx) Dinner Plate - 24 cms diameter Soup Bowl - 23 cms diameter Coffee Cup - 6 cms high Saucer - 14 cms diameter Creamer - 9 cms high Covered Sugar - 10 cms diameter Creamer - 6 cms high		Designed by Barbara Cooksey. Central motif of flax plant in bloom. Border with panels of stylized linen interspersed with sprigs of flax flowers.
Music <i>Sample sizes as above</i>		Designed by Peter Ting. Art Deco design with deep black and white border, highlighted at intervals with vibrant colours.	2 Rose' Chintz <i>Sample sizes as above</i>		Designed by Judith Wootton. Pale pink roses with woodland flowers and foliage. Trellis border of pink diamonds.
Nuts & Berries <i>Sample sizes as above</i>		Designed by Elaine Williamson. White centre with deep border of acorns, red berries and variegated foliage.	3 Blue Chintz <i>Sample sizes as above</i>		Designed by Judith Wootton. As above only in blue.
Summer Fruits <i>Sample sizes as above</i>		Designed by Barbara Cooksey. Central sprig of cherries surrounded by clusters of apples, pears, cherries, blackberries, strawberries and plums. Rim edged in olive green.	4 Green Chintz <i>Sample sizes as above</i>		Designed by Judith Wootton. As above only in green. The rarest of the chintz patterns.

Tableware Plates

The table ware production commenced in 1987 when the factory started manufacturing for the Swedish firm, Rostrand. Two million pounds was invested into the production of its own table ware but production problems and lack of sales proved costly. At the end of 1989 the Portadown factory was sold to Beauford PLC for 19 ½ million pounds and renamed Seagoe Ceramics Limited. Himself, Herself and Eileen Oge was reissued in 1991 by Seagoe Ceramics Limited. Only twenty or so of the three 9" figures were made, therefore they are extremely rare.



Ester Twinem working with Tableware



Himself, Herself & Eileen Oge

Around 100 of each of the 6 inch Irish Song figures were reissued by Seagoe Ceramics Limited in 1991 making them also extremely rare and highly collectable.

Irish Character Series	
Wade Reference Number	Name
S16	Danny Boy
S17	Molly Malone
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S25	Eileen Oge
S26	Paddy Reilly



S19, S18, S24, S17 & S25



Irish Song Figures



S26, S21, S16 & S26



The honey coloured Irish Character Figures were also reissued by Seagoe Ceramics Limited in 1991 and generally darker than the originals, are difficult to find as only 200 of each were produced.



Seagoe Ceramic Backstamps

The Seagoe backstamps should be noted, especially the one which includes, Portadown on the Free Presbyterian plate. This is the only time that Wades used the town's name in one of its backstamps.

The tableware business could not resolve their production difficulties therefore Beauford decided in 1993 to close down the department thus bringing to an end, 46 years of traditional potting in Portadown.



Factory at Carn Industrial Estate

The manufacture of Alumina products continued for another 10 years, 3 of those years at the Watson Street factory and the remainder at a new plant acquired at the Carn Industrial Estate on the outskirts of the town. Despite the fact that work force had unique experience of Alumina manufacturing and world class experience in engineering design, the Carn facility closed its doors in September 2002 thus bringing all ceramic production in Portadown to an untimely conclusion.

It is a matter of regret that no local recognition has ever been given to the firm, its management, designers, employees and its products. Like the proverbial prophet, Irish Wade is not without honour – except in its own country.