

Collectors Gathering April 2023

The 2023 Belleek Collectors gathering took place from Thursday 20th April until Sunday 23rd April.

For more information and pictures of the 2023 Gathering see: <https://belleekpottery.ie/belleek-collecto...ering-april-2023/>



Welcome to the Belleek Collectors International Society

Founded in 1979 the Belleek Collectors society has in the past had several thousand members from all over the world including USA, Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom, Australia & New Zealand. Going forward there is no formal membership and all information on the website is freely available.

There are special events and gatherings organised by the chapters and groups from time to time and upcoming events will

be notified through Belleek Pottery website and Facebook. (see below for information on the 2022 Belleek 'Gathering')

For more details on how to become a part of the various Belleek Collectors groups please see below details of local chapters and groups:

Belleek Pottery Facebook Page

Belleek Pottery Visitor Centre Facebook Page

Belleek Collectors International Society Facebook Page

Northern Ireland Collectors Group

UK Collectors Group



The Story of the Belleek Collectors
International Society

**Founding the Belleek
Collectors Society**



R.K. Degenhardt

Richard K. Degenhardt (pictured here), founder of the Belleek Collectors Society.

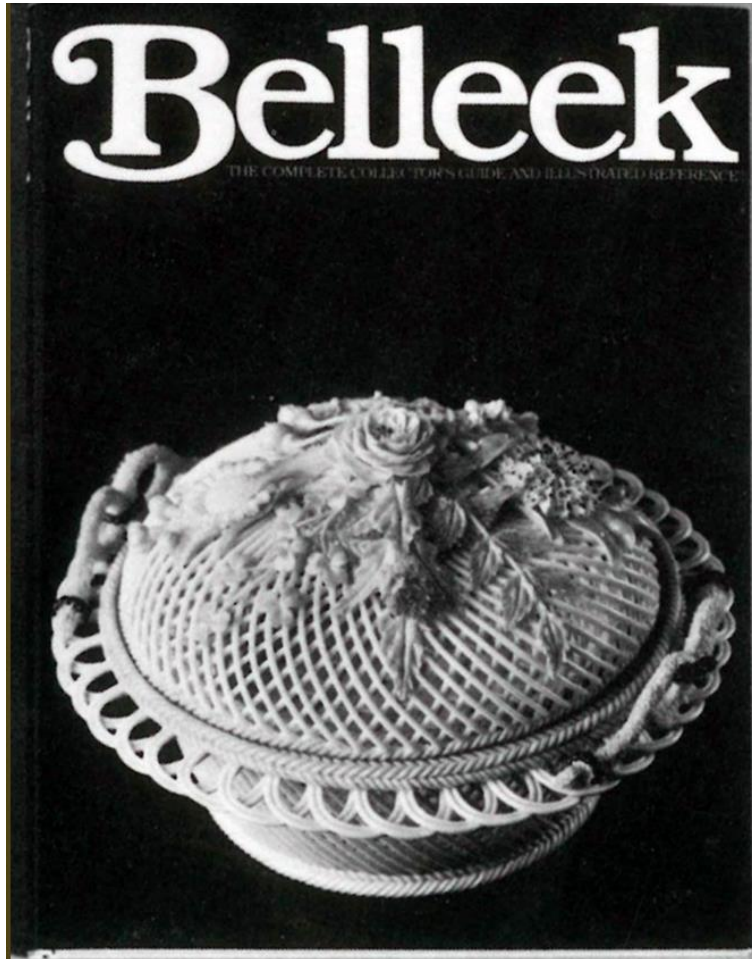
It was through the publication of his book 'Belleek; The Complete Collectors Guide' published in 1978 after several years of exhaustive research that brought Richard to the attention of Belleek Pottery and the genesis of the idea to form a Belleek Collectors Society.

Richard was born in the St Louis area of Missouri. His maternal grandparents were Irish from County Cork and this accounts for his middle initial 'K' which is Kennedy.

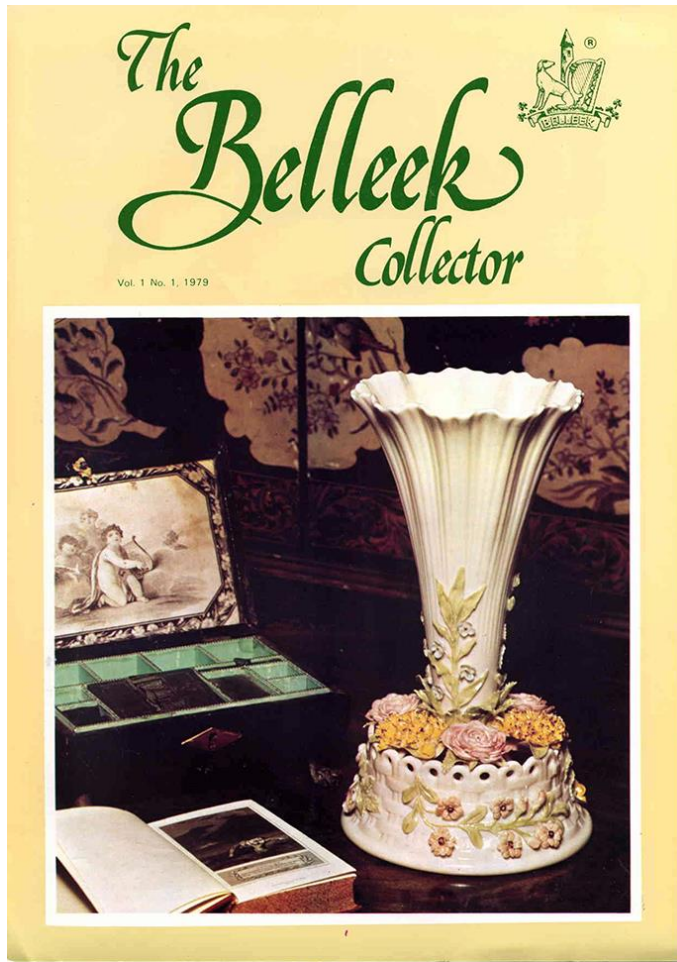
Later in 1979 Richard was appointed as Executive Vice -President of Belleek Ireland Inc. with special responsibility for the Belleek Collectors Society. Through his travels and meeting interested individuals and groups, many

local societies or chapters began to be formed throughout the United States and Canada. In 1985 the following chapters were listed in the Belleek Collectors magazine:

San Diego CA, Los Angeles Orange County CA, Santa Clara Valley CA, Washington State, Downtown Chicago, South & West Chicago, Kansas City, Cleveland OH, Cincinnati OH, Phoenix, Denver, Houston, Maryland and Boston.

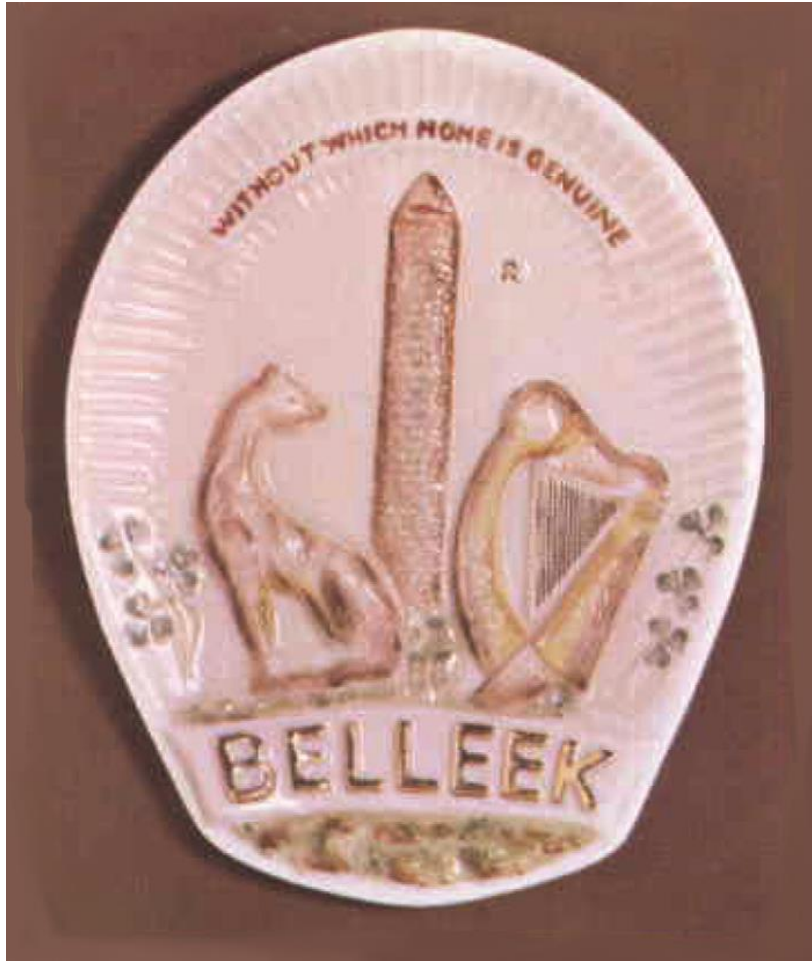


Shown above is an image of the front of the book called "Belleek: The complete Collectors Guide and Illustrated Reference" by Richard K. Degenhardt which was published in 1978. Although there had been a few other published works on Belleek, this was the most comprehensive work giving the historical context, the manufacturing and craft process and a reprint of images taken from the Belleek "Old Photograph Album" and from the 1904 and 1926 Belleek Catalogues



Pictured above is the front of the very first Collectors magazine which was published in the spring of 1979. It was the first of four quarterly magazines. The front image is that of the Flowered Table Centre.

As well as many features it set out the guiding objectives principles for the Collectors Society.



Above shown is the Collectors Plaque produced by the Pottery as an introductory gift to members of the Society.. The plaque was a miniature version of the plaque at the entrance to the Pottery representing the familiar symbols of the Belleek trademark; The Irish Wolfhound, Round Tower and Harp all sitting on an island which could represent Ireland but equally represent Rose Isle, the island on the River Erne where the Pottery was sited. (The island no longer exists due to river works in the 1950s)

The Founding Principles of the Belleek Collectors Society

(1) To identify the very many collectors and potential collectors of Belleek throughout the World.

(2) To provide them with the means by which they can readily develop their interest in Belleek and a forum by which they can communicate and exchange ideas not only with the Pottery itself but with one another.

(3) To provide each member of the society with opportunities to purchase certain limited edition pieces, which is the intention of the Pottery to provide solely for the members of the Society.

(4) To publish an official journal of the Society, which will convey not only news and views of the Pottery and its people but also news and views of the collectors and friends of Belleek throughout the World.

In the years since then, with the rise of the internet and the availability of online information has made the continued publication and distribution of a Newsletter both an expense and un-necessary, The membership of the Society is free of charge and those wishing to join can do so by contacting a group near them through Facebook page or through their website.

First registered Chapter of the Belleek Collectors Society- San Diego, California, USA

The first registered chapter of the Belleek Collectors Society was the San Diego Chapter which was formed on October 16th 1981. A prelude to this was some correspondence between Betty Clopine and Richard Degenhart as well as some informal meetings at the antique store at La Jolla, California, belonging to Joseph Mancuso and his wife Patricia Mancuso who was an avid Belleek collector.

The first official meeting took place at Bullocks Department Store at Mission Valley. Joseph Mancuso was elected President with Fred Gary as Vice-President. Elaine Borg was voted Secretary and Nancy Osborn chosen as Treasurer of the chapter.

The meeting was an historic one and toasted in champagne. Each person there was issued with a special charter membership card and received a copy of the by-laws of the group.

The charter members were as follows:

Nancy D. Agostino, Beverley Auerbrock, Ruth Bohling, Elaine Borg, John C. Borg, Dorothy Burges, Nell Byrum, Isabelle Cameron, Betty Chopine, Edward Dougherty Jr, Kathryn (Betty) Gary, Fred Gary, Sharon (Hatch) Freymiller, Claire V. Healy, Frances Horton, Carolyn Jackson, Alice Killingworth, Adele Larimer, Joe Mancuso, Patricia Mancuso, J. Meyer, Marcella Murphy, Nancy Osborn, William T. Osbourn, Jeanne Park, W. L. Park, Christine Pennell, Gordon Reid, Bernard C. Rogers, Lillian Rosenbaum, Janice Schmid, Martha Talkington, Elaine Tarbox, Edith Taylor, Elizabeth Wilson.

A certificate of chapter recognition for the San Diego County Chapter No 1 was sent to Joseph Mancuso by Richard Degenhardt on August 30th 1982. This document is held by each chapter president during their tenure in the office.

Here are some interesting facts about the San Diego Chapter

- The San Diego Chapter have met four times a year continuously since it was formed- .(COVID Pandemic notwithstanding)
- It has two Hall of Fame Honourees: Fred Gary in 1986 and Dorothy Wheeler in 2005.
- Founding chapter member Sharon Hatch is still actively participating in the Chapter and is the current President.
Others Alice Killingworth, Marcella Murphy, Nancy and Bill Osborn, Betty Chopine, Fred & Betty Gary, Frances Horton, Adele Larimer and Lillian Rosenbaum participated until their passing.
- Chapter members have attended every Convention.
- The chapter financially supports the Degenhardt Scholarship through annual donations.
- San Diego, Los Angeles and Orange County have rotated hosting joint meetings since 2001.

This is an excerpt from an article written for the U.K. Collectors Magazine (December 2021) Information supplied by Marylyn Orbann (daughter of Fred & Betty Gary) and was compiled by George Unzelman.



Above group picture of some of the members of the San Diego Chapter taken circa 1995. Below picture of some members of the chapter taken on the 17th March 2018.

Below a picture of Dorothy Wheeler who was the Honouree in 2003.





Fay Bevens and James Leonard observing Elizabeth McGolderick (Mulrone) painting a Institute Cream Jug. The Institute set comprised of a cup, saucer, sugar bowl and cream jug were being made as special collector pieces exclusive to the society.

Attendees at the First Belleek Collectors Tour May 1982

Pictured below are members of the Belleek Collectors Society, photographed outside the Pottery. This first Collectors trip to Belleek Pottery took place on Saturday 22nd June 1982. Over sixty people made the trip mainly from the United States and Canada.

The Collectors Society, formed in 1979 with the objective to bring the story and produce of Belleek Pottery to a wider audience. The tour not only took in the delights of Belleek Pottery but involved the week-long visit to all the main tourist destinations in Ireland.

The climax of the tour was a gala dinner held in the Carlton Hotel in Belleek with various presentations. The society members formed a bond which would lead to many collector groups being formed in subsequent years.



The following people attended the 1982 Collectors trip to Ireland and the Pottery, listed in alphabetic order:

Mrs. Clare Adamson, Ontario. Mrs. Angela Bannon D.C. Miss Kathleen Bannon D.C. Mrs. Nancy K. Barton, KS. Mrs. R. Clarke Benkendorf, IL. Dr. J. William Bohley OH. Mrs. Gwen Bohely, OH. Mrs. Kathleen Bonham, IL. Mr. Jack Brennan, N.Y. Mrs. Genevieve K. Brophy, TX. Mr. Horace D. Brown, CA. Mrs. Mariellen Brown, CA. Mrs. Colleen Bryan, Mr. Oscar Burlin, CA. Mrs. Regina Burlin, CA. Mrs. Faye Buvens, NM. Miss Aline Buvens, NM. Ms. Moira Caldwell, CA. Ms. Maureen Caldwell, CA. Mrs Elizabeth A. Clinton, CA. Ms. Carol Cooper, NV. Mr. Al. Corriveau, NH. Mrs. Josephine Corriveau, NH. Mr Kenneth M. Dempsey, CA. Mrs. Donna B. Dempsey, CA. Mr. James S. Denton, AL. Mrs. Mary E. Denton, AL. Mrs. Marie A. Dowling, NY. Mr Richard C. Fleming MS, Mrs. Barbara Fleming, MS, Cdr, Fred Gary, CA, Mrs. Elizabeth Gary, CA, Mrs. Mary E. Greene MI, Mr Robert E. Gregg, CO, Ms. Cissie Guie, PA, Miss Rita A. Haley, NY, Mr Joseph V. Haley, NY, Ms. Frances Z. Hughes, CA, Mrs. Fran Jacobson, OK, Mrs. A.E. Jones, KS, Ms. Patricia A. Kaczynski, CN, Mrs. Claribel E. Kaleva, CA, Mrs. Mary Kolb, IL, Mrs. Julie H. Larson, IL. Ms Beth Leonard, MA, Ms Patricia Leonard, MA, Mr. James D. Leonard, MA, Mr. Bertil O. Lundh, WA, Mrs. Jarene Lundh, WA. Mr. E. Gordon Mankins, TX, Mrs. Margaret A. Mankins, TX, Mr. Tom Martin, NY, Mrs. Bess Martin, NY, Ms. Patricia McNamara, MI, Mrs Vera Mellors Derbyshire, England, Mr George R. Metzdorf, PA, Mrs. Helen V. Metzdorf, PA, Mrs. Carol Morones, PA, Mr. Robert P. Mundhenk, NY, Mrs. Robert P. Mundhenk, NY, Mrs.

Irene M. O'Brien, TX, Ms Anne F. O'Melia, VA, Ms Mary J. O'Melia, VA, Mrs. Dorothy L. Oehler, IL, Mrs. Ivy J. Onley, Ontario, Canada, Ms Jean Oster, NY, Mrs Victoria Pearce, KY, Mrs Claire Primeau, VA, Ms Cindy Reynolds, FL, Mrs. Beverley A. Robinson, TX, Ms Mary D. Sacco, MA, Ms Adelina C. Sacco, MA, Mr. Richard E. Schwab, OH, Mrs. Carol J. Schwab, OH, Mrs Christine Solano, IL, Mrs. Helen R. Stelzer, IL, Mrs Jean Stephenson, CA, Mr Frank Stortz, CA, Mrs. Hazel Stortz, CA, Mrs. Antonia Vesley, NY, Mrs. Betty Wade, NY, Mrs. Donna G. West, TX, Mrs. Irene Wishart, AL, Mrs. Catherine M. Wood, NY.

Gospel Plates



St Matthew Plate



St Mark Plate



St Luke Plate



St John Plate

Four Gospel Plates- St Matthew, Mark, Luke & John

In the summer of 1979, the first of a planned series of four Gospel plates was offered for sale to the members of the Belleek Collectors Society. It was the St Matthew Plate and was designed by Jim Kirkwood from the Kilkenny Design Centre. The inspiration for the series came from the Medieval Irish manuscript displayed in Trinity College, Dublin, known as the 'Book of Kells'

The book contains the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John written in Latin but it is the decorative and intricate illuminations accompanying the text that is a wonder to all that see it.

Although the manuscript gets its name from the town of Kells in Co Meath, it is believed that it was begun at the monastery, founded by

St Columba or Columcille on the remote island of Iona on the west coast of Scotland.

The monastic settlement there was one of the first to suffer the destructive Viking raids in the 9th Century. Because of the successive raids by the Norsemen, it was decided to remove the precious gospel book to the relative safekeeping of their sister Columban monastery at Kells.

The subsequent history of the book is clouded, it was stolen from the monastery in AD1007 when its outer cover in gold and precious stones was removed. It is also possible that parts of the gospel of St John were also removed or lost though some believe that St John's Gospel was never completed.

It remained at the abbey until the 17th century when Oliver Cromwell invaded Ireland (1649-1643) and stationed a part of his force at Kells; at this time the manuscript was brought to Dublin for safe-keeping. It came into the hands of the bishop Henry Jones (1605-1682), an alumnus of Trinity College, and Jones donated it to the college's library in 1661 along with the Book of Durrow. The manuscript has been housed at the Trinity library ever since. In 1953 the book was rebound in four separate volumes to help preserve it. Two of these volumes are on permanent display at Trinity College; one showing a page of text and the other a page of illustration.



Left to Right J. F. O' Mahoney, Commercial Director, Belleek Pottery (1976-1982) Dr G. O. Simms, Archbishop of Armagh (1969-1980), P. J. O'Neill, Managing Director Belleek Pottery (1967-1982)

Each Gospel plate was accompanied by a booklet written by Dr George Otto Simms, former Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and one of the foremost authority on the Book of Kells.

The St Mark Plate was launched in 1981 and priced at \$110.00 excluding taxes.

The St Luke plate was launched in the autumn of 1982 and retailed at the similar price of \$110.00 plus taxes.

There was a gap in the launch of the fourth plate due mainly to the financial state of the Pottery and the subsequent takeover by the Industrial Development Board who then sold Belleek Pottery to a new company headed by Mr Roger Troughton.

The St John Plate was launched in 1984. but the price had greatly jumped to \$195.00 plus taxes. This caused much annoyance amongst many collectors as they felt it was taking advantage of those who wished to complete the series. As a result many fewer St John Plates were made and today are difficult to find.

First Belleek Collectors Honouree 1986

The First Belleek Collectors Honouree was selected in 1986. The person chosen by the members of the Society was Commander

Fred Gary U.S.N.R. and past president of the San Diego Chapter of the Belleek Collectors Society.

Fred Gary was a familiar face at the pottery having been on the inaugural collectors tour in 1982 and been on most of the subsequent trips. His enthusiasm and knowledge of Belleek impressed everyone who met him and it was a fitting tribute that he became the very first Belleek Honouree.

Commander Gary and his wife Betty were honoured with a champagne reception at the Hotel De Coronado. All society members from the San Diego area were invited to attend, There too were Bernard O'Rourke, Executive Vice President of Belleek USA and Jeanne Fahey special events co-ordinator representing Belleek Pottery.

Later in June of that year Fred Gary was inducted at the Pottery as the first Belleek Honouree at a reception at the Hyland Hotel in Donegal town.

The role of an honouree for their year of holding the chain of office meant that they acted as ambassadors of the Pottery speaking to and encouraging groups of collectors to form chapters as well as enhancing their knowledge of the wide range of Belleek products both in the past but also its current products.



Commander Fred Gary

UK Collectors Club





Back row, left to right:

Pat McAleer, Unknown, Unknown, Chris Marvell, Rodney Capper, Jan Golaszewski , Martina Kerr Bromley, Unknown, Peter McCormack, Unknown, Pat Campbell, Charles Easthope, Fred Jones

Front Row, left to right:

Bev Poole (now Marvell), Julia Reece, Margaret Capper, Fiona Easthope, Marion Langham, Christine McCormack, Doris Campbell, Kathy Owen, Betty Jones.



In October 2005 the UK Belleek Collectors Group celebrated their 50th meeting and editor of their magazine Gina Kelland wrote about the founding of the group ‘

“The UK Belleek collectors’ Group was founded in 1989 by Marion Langham and Brian Scott, who planned it over many cups of coffee at Marion’s stand in the Portobello Road. This led to the Group being recognised by the Belleek Collectors’ International Society as their 15th members’ group. members’ group. It has blossomed into a current membership of 57 households with shared interest in collecting and researching Belleek”

The first meeting was held in 1989 at the then Grosvenor Hotel adjacent to Victoria Station in London’s Belgravia. Lady Marion Langham, Brian Scott and Jan Golaszewski worked tirelessly to bring the new group into existence, they were strongly assisted in this by Belleek Pottery whose representative then was Martina Kerr Bromley. This is the photo that was taken of the collectors and Belleek Pottery representatives who could make it to that first meeting.

Elected Chairperson, Lady Marion Langham, Secretary, Jan Golaszewski, and elected in absentia Treasurer, Brian Scott.

Members listed as: Mr Chris Marvel, Mr & Mrs F. Jones, Mr P. Clapham, Ms J. Reese, Ms B. Poole, Mr & Mrs R. Capper, Mr & Mrs P. McCormack, Mr & Mrs P. Campbell, Mr

J. Golaszweski, Ms Katherine Owen, Mr & Mrs C. Easthope and Lady Marion Langham.

Representing Belleek Pottery at the meeting was Collectors Society President, Martina Kerr Bromley and Sales Manager Mr P. McAleer.

In the years since, this group are probably one of the most active of the many Belleek Collector chapters, having members researching the complex history of Belleek Pottery and its relationship with the Staffordshire potteries where many of the seminal group of skilled potters came from to help set up the fledgling pottery in a remote place called Belleek located in the north-west of Ireland. They publish a magazine twice yearly and back copies and further information on this group can be found on their website at: [Belleek United Kingdom Collectors Group](#)

Seen Left to Right- Lady Marion Langham, Lord Langham, Martina Kerr Bromley. Pictured at the opening of the Belleek Visitors Centre in 1989.

Northern Ireland Collectors Group formed in 20th June 1991



Pictured here L-R. Barry Cosgrove MD Belleek Pottery; Patricia McCauley, Manager Belleek VC; Annie Skelton, William Skelton, Belleek Collectors



Pictured here at the launch L-R. Geraldine Campbell, Banbridge; Tom Dooley, Secretary; Patricia McCauley , Chairperson; Elizabeth Beck, Banbridge

The Northern Ireland Collectors Group was formed during a meeting at the Glengannon Hotel near Dungannon in in June 1991 with over sixty people attending. Elected as group chairperson was Patricia McCauley, manager of the Belleek Pottery Visitor Centre. Tom Dooley was elected as Secretary and Eunice Robinson was elected as Treasurer of Group. Later that evening guests were treated to a buffet dinner which included spectacular 'Belleek' desserts complete with chocolate harps and shamrocks. Afterwards each clooector present received a special plaque marking the historic occasion.

First Belleek Convention Los Angeles 1993



The First Belleek Collectors Convention was held in Los Angeles in February 1993. There were over 275 attendees with representation from eighteen chapters including those from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

The Convention was also attended by many of the Hall of fame Honourees and President of the Belleek Collectors International Society Mrs Angela Moore addressed the assembly remarking that it was exciting to be part of such an enthusiastic group of people.

A special plate was made to mark the occasion and limited to 500 pieces. It was designed by Fergus Cleary Head of the Pottery's design team and it incorporated a cluster of scallop shells on the outer rim a reminder of many of the Pottery's early designs incorporating marine themes. The central portion displayed the Belleek trademark used by the company since its earliest production.

1993 Los Angeles Convention Plate

Some pictures from the event



Members of the Los Angeles Chapter supervising the Convention registration



Don Pickerall from the Dogwood Chapter making a point during one of the discussions



Some of the UK Collectors Club delegates at the convention including front l-r Christine McCormack, Roy Hollyhead, Rose Holyhead, behind them Peter McCormack, Marion Langham and Jan Golazewski.



1992 Honouree, Evelyln Twiss addressing the Convention