

CARLTON WARE NEWSLETTER #39

REMEMBERING CLIVE GRAHAM by Ian Harwood & Jerome Wilson



We first met Clive on August 16, 1996 when we attended a Carlton Ware auction at Christie's, South Kensington. We had arranged to meet Keith & Helen Martin there and we waited outside for their arrival. We soon saw Helen walking towards us in her 1920s costume and accessories accompanied by Clive, while Keith tried to find a parking spot. Helen was often to be seen in similar garb at the club meetings in Stoke (see picture, Carlton Times, volume 9, page15). After quick introductions to Clive, we hurried into the auction room before it became a standing room only crowd!

After the auction we were in for a really special treat! Keith & Helen had arranged for us to see Clive's collection, so we all got into Keith's car and he drove to Clive's flat in Chiswick. We have referred to this visit in previous Newsletters but it cannot be written about too often; Clive's collection was amazing and it could be found in every room of his large mansion flat! Our first stop was in the kitchen

where the walls were full of shelves of Floral Embossed in what seemed like every pattern ever made. At that time, we were not collectors of Floral Embossed but, on seeing the variety of patterns and shapes and realizing the many years of manufacture that this encompassed, it gave us a totally new respect for something we had



previously more or less dismissed. Clive was a wonderful and patient host answering all our questions and identifying patterns we had not previously seen. Some people would have been satisfied with the contents of this room for their entire collection and we became mesmerized ourselves in trying to see it all and marveled at how many pieces had been so carefully arranged. We asked Clive how he found room for new additions as there didn't seem to be an inch to spare but he assured us there was. On subsequent visits we saw him sneak in a newly found toast rack here or an egg cup there! However, we can't imagine what he

would have done if he found a large jug that he wanted!



As hard as it was to leave the kitchen, Clive said there was plenty more to see and led the way to the next room. We now know how Howard Carter must have felt when he opened King Tut's tomb in 1922! One room after another was full of wonders – patterns we had only previously seen in the Carlton Ware Collectors book were now right before our eyes; many in a variety of shapes and colourways. One piece that will always remain with us was in Clive's bedroom, on a shelf high above his bed. It was a large bowl in the geometric **Mondrian** pattern. Unfortunately, we never did get a picture of this rarity.

We will never forget that afternoon and evening, the first time we met Clive and the first of several visits to his flat to enjoy his wonderful collection. It changed the way we collected and displayed Carlton Ware from then on!

In June 1997 we made our next trip to the U.K. We had decided to expand our antique dealing overseas and had rented a cabinet at the Gloucester Antiques Centre and were also booked to do three shows. Keith & Helen had invited us to stay with them in Kent and we had shipped ahead 14 boxes of stock for the cabinet and shows; Carlton Ware, of course, being the largest part of our stock. Our boxes were waiting to be unpacked and sorted on our arrival and we had to get busy right away as we had a Sunday fair to do the next morning in Chiswick, right on Clive's doorstep. Keith & Helen were as excited as we were as we unpacked some of our stock and got it ready to take to the show. It was an art deco fair so we had to limit what we took to fit into that theme.



Clive arrived at the show shortly after the doors opened and we were still busy setting up our table. However, by the time the show ended, Clive had found 3 pieces to buy on our table, including the **Medley** demitasse pictured above. Of



course we were highly delighted with the sale; not so much for the cash involved but for the fact that we were surprised that Clive could find anything at all in our stock that he wanted to add to his collection! Later, we got our first witness of how he could fit these new additions into his displays.

We returned to the U.K. later that year in October to attend our first Carlton Ware conference in Stoke, as well as to replenish our stock in Gloucester and to also rent a cabinet in the Bartlett Street Antique Market in Bath. We met up with Clive during registration and proceeded to the bar where he introduced us



to many other club members, all of whom were eager to show us pictures of their collections and to see pictures of ours. It was a tradition of Clive's to have a cabinet at the conference where he would display a very small part of his collection. He always came up with a different theme each year, whether it be a display of **Revo** bowls, demitasse, candle sticks or some other shape. Perhaps the best display that we remember was of 17 vases in the **406** shape, all in different patterns; (see pictures, Carlton Times volume 22, page 21).



For many of the delegates the highlight of the conference was the Sunday morning fair. The vendors would be up early, some with hangovers, setting up their booths for the 3 hours of sales. The remaining delegates would be up soon after, staking out their spot in the queue waiting to be let in at opening time. When the doors opened, the masses would run in trying to see everything at once in order to scoop up that illusive piece before it was gone. That was not Clive's practice though. He would take his time making his way around the room from booth to booth, examining everything that was on offer. After he had made his rounds, he would return to those booths where he had seen something of interest. If it had been sold in the mean time, so be it. But he always came away with a small selection of equally small items, even finding the odd piece in our booth.

Clive started another tradition at that conference. Later in the day, after the fair had ended, Clive called us up to his room to look at all the pots that he had bought. He handled each piece and told us from whom he bought it and why he wanted it for his collection. It was most educational to listen to such an advanced collector talk about each piece with such knowledge and enthusiasm. From then on, we always looked forward to this ending of the conference. One piece in particular that we remember was a tiny bowl in the **HONESTY** pattern. You can just see it in the picture on the right; it's in the front on the left hand side of the bottom shelf. Clive was over the moon with this purchase as he had never before seen such a tiny piece of Handcraft.



The last time we saw Clive was in May 2006 when we again visited him in his flat. We found him sitting in front of his **ANEMONE** tapestry, unfortunately not in the best of health anymore but still the best of hosts. During that visit Clive gave us a piece from his collection. It was a piece of **CURLED LETTUCE** in the Triple Tray shape. Clive knew that we collected this pattern and we were delighted to accept this piece, especially when he told us that it was originally owned by his family and was the piece that started him collecting Carlton Ware.

That was the kind of man he was and we will never forget him because of all these wonderful memories we have.

A Visit to Sutton Court

By Diana Kearns

I'd been collecting art deco china for decades before I surfed the net on a Carlton Ware quest and found, not only fellow enthusiasts but websites, clubs and newsletters. I have since made many new friends and the highlight of my journey was last year's invitation to visit Sutton Court, Chiswick; the home of collector extraordinaire, Clive Graham, and his fabled Carlton Ware collection.

On this occasion, Harvey (Chairman of Carlton Ware World Wide - CW3) and his neighbour, Tom – hot-foot from Egypt and filming the recently discovered tomb linked to Tutankhamun – were to make a short video film of Clive. The former actor and bon vivant was now too ill to attend the forthcoming Carlton Ware Worldwide club meeting in Salisbury and had arranged to send a video greeting to his friends and fellow club members instead. I was there to help and could not have been more delighted.

Despite his declining health, Clive was in robust form. This larger-than-life character – with Carlton Ware collection to match – could never be subdued. Clive's vast collection was fabulous and exciting; the first and largest exhibition of superb Carlton Ware that I had ever seen at close hand.

In preparation for the video shoot, tangled power cables and lighting leads snaked across the carpets, vying for position with the line to Clive's essential oxygen supply tank – which he had nicknamed "R2D2".

While Tom and Harvey set up lights, camera and tripod, Clive and I took refuge



in one of his sitting rooms, surrounded by an exuberant display of wonderful china and swapped stories as to how and when we both discovered the world of Carlton Ware. Surprisingly, we started collecting a year apart (in the late 1970s) and both of us were originally inspired by pieces owned by our respective families.

I was almost overwhelmed by Clive's collection. In every room, arranged in purpose-built glass cabinets, a breathtaking kaleidoscope of Carlton Ware patterns, colours, shapes and sizes dazzled the eyes. This compilation of "Best Ware" encompassed most of the fantastic designs that the Carlton Ware factory had produced, particularly during the "Jazz Age" of the 1920s and 30s. I noticed that some rather large pots were perched precariously on tiny plastic pizza stands while, disconcertingly, Clive confided that he washed his entire collection in his dishwasher. I congratulated him on his nerves of steel as he assured me that this was the perfect method to discover whether a piece contained a hidden restoration: definitely not for the faint-hearted.

I watched with admiration while Tom filmed the ever-flamboyant



Clive at his amusing best, ad libbing with ease; a true pro – only one take was required. I only wish I had met Clive when he was in good health: the life and soul of any gathering, full of fun and bursting with energy.

As one of the world's renowned collectors, Clive Graham's name will be forever linked with that of Carlton Ware. The man who assembled a collection of the finest that this pottery had to offer, has sadly gone; but he will live on in the memories of friends and fellow collectors as one of the most colourful characters in the history of Carlton Ware.

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