

A piece of WW1 “crested china”



If it wasn't for the fact that it's obviously meant to represent a WW1 soldier's cap, you'd think it was something that you might find in a maiden aunt's china cabinet – but in fact that's exactly what it is !

The coming of the railways had given working class people a chance to travel, and white glazed porcelain souvenirs of the places they had visited became very popular. The early range included figurines, everyday objects, replicas of visitor attractions, local museum antiquities, or functional items (e.g. ring trees, stamp boxes, pin trays).

These items were referred to as “Crested china”, because they typically bore the name and coat-of-arms or crest of the place they were bought – although some the crests have been shown to have been made up, which certainly seems to be the case with the Kildwick item shown above.

These ornaments were largely made in the Potteries around Stoke-on-Trent, by companies such as Arcadian (as above) , Carlton, Grafton, Savoy, Shelley, Swan, Willow Art, and (the best quality) W H Goss.

With the outbreak of WW1 the idea of seaside holidays were no longer uppermost in people's minds; but, as one market closed, another opened and a number of pottery manufacturers started to produce a range of war-themed products.

Some of the new designs were simple, such as the soldier's cap shown above, others were more elaborate. Some crested china was made in the figures of generic soldiers, nurses and sailors, tanks, aeroplanes, shells, hand grenades and even battleships. Other pieces were produced to represent specific people: statues of the nurse Edith Cavell, King George V, Lord Kitchener, Admiral Jellicoe, General Joffre and Lord Roberts became very popular.

Who bought the Kildwick cap, shown above, and whether it was intended as a keep-sake or as a gift, is not known. It's just a small piece of ephemera, a small part of history.

Further Information

"Great War Crested China" by Dora Ringland for Western Front Association
(<https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/world-war-i-articles/great-war-crested-china/>)

Australian War Memorial website –<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C288502>

Imperial War Memorial website – <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/crested-china>

Acknowledgements

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