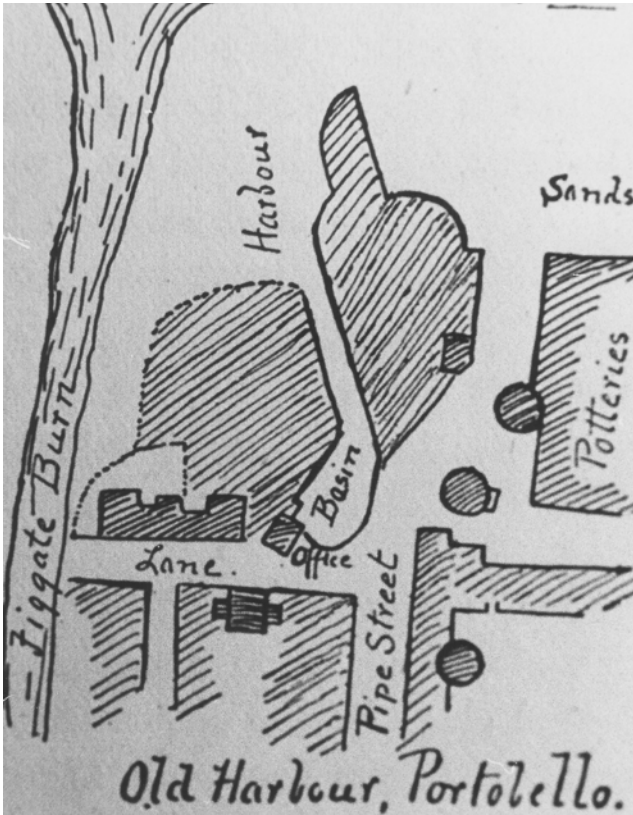


Portobello Pottery

GALLERY



The little harbour was built around 1790 at the instigation of William Jamieson mainly for the import of raw materials and the export of bricks, tiles and pottery. The premises that became Thomas Rathbone's, and later W. A. Gray & Sons', Midlothian Pottery are on the east of the harbour basin and those that were eventually acquired by Alexander Buchan are on the west close to the Figgate Burn. Unfortunately, the harbour proved unsatisfactory. It was very small; the entrance was narrow and the basin subject to silting up. By the middle of the 19th century it was largely disused.

However, the tracing from an 1824 street plan below shows the number and variety of manufactories established around the harbour and the Figgate Burn. A soap works briefly occupied the pottery until it returned to its original use and later expanded to cover most of the area once occupied by the harbour. Also shown are the cottages built for the workers who migrated to Portobello for employment.



Early Examples



Restored Spongeware Mug

©National Museums Scotland



Pearlware figure of Charity

© National Museums Scotland



© National Museums Scotland

This blue and white bowl from the Thomas Rathbone pottery has been named Talking Farmers for purposes of identification.



© National Museums Scotland

There are scratched marks on the base of this money bank;

RP Portobello Pottery 1827.

The initials are presumed to stand for Rathbone Pottery and it is significant that the incised material is underglaze so must have been done in the factory.

Domestic and Industrial Stoneware

Thomas Rathbone & Company got into financial difficulties in the first half of the 19th century and the pottery closed in 1850. The premises, on the east of Pipe Street and the harbour, were taken over by Dr W A Gray in 1856 who with his sons began a very successful enterprise manufacturing white and brown stoneware. Unfortunately, it did not survive the Depression of the 1930s.



This was a popular item from Gray's domestic range.



A stoneware bottle with a narrow neck for pouring.

The premises shown as a soap works on the map on Page One were occupied and operated once more as a pottery by a succession of individuals as detailed by Graeme Cruickshank until the advent of Alexander W Buchan as sole proprietor in 1877.



© National Museums Scotland

This salt glazed crock is by Thomas Tough .



A W Buchan & Co

It is possible to show only a few examples from the company's extensive range of products



Bottle and butter crock



Cream Jars



Ginger Beers



Demijohn and demijohn mark

STONE BOTTLES AND SPIRIT JARS.

A. W. BUCHAN & Co.,

The Introducers of the Modern Screw-Stoppered and printed **STONE BOTTLES**, for Malt Liquors and Stone Ginger Beer.

PORTOBELLO POTTERIES, Portobello, EDINBURGH.

Under Glaze Labels in Black, Blue, Brown, printed on bottles.

Champagne Shape.

JARS NAMED IN TYPE OR ENGRAVED FROM PLATE.

Can Shaped Jar.

With Swing Stoppers.

JARS BROWN OR WHITE BASKETTED, AND CANE OR WOOD BOTTOMED.

Square Shape.

Telegram: "BUCHAN, PORTOBELLO."
Telephone: "0199 PORTOBELLO."

Stone Screw Stoppers.



Two dissimilar examples from Buchan's brief flirtation with the art ware named Portobello Faience that had its own special impressed mark in the form of a buckled belt.



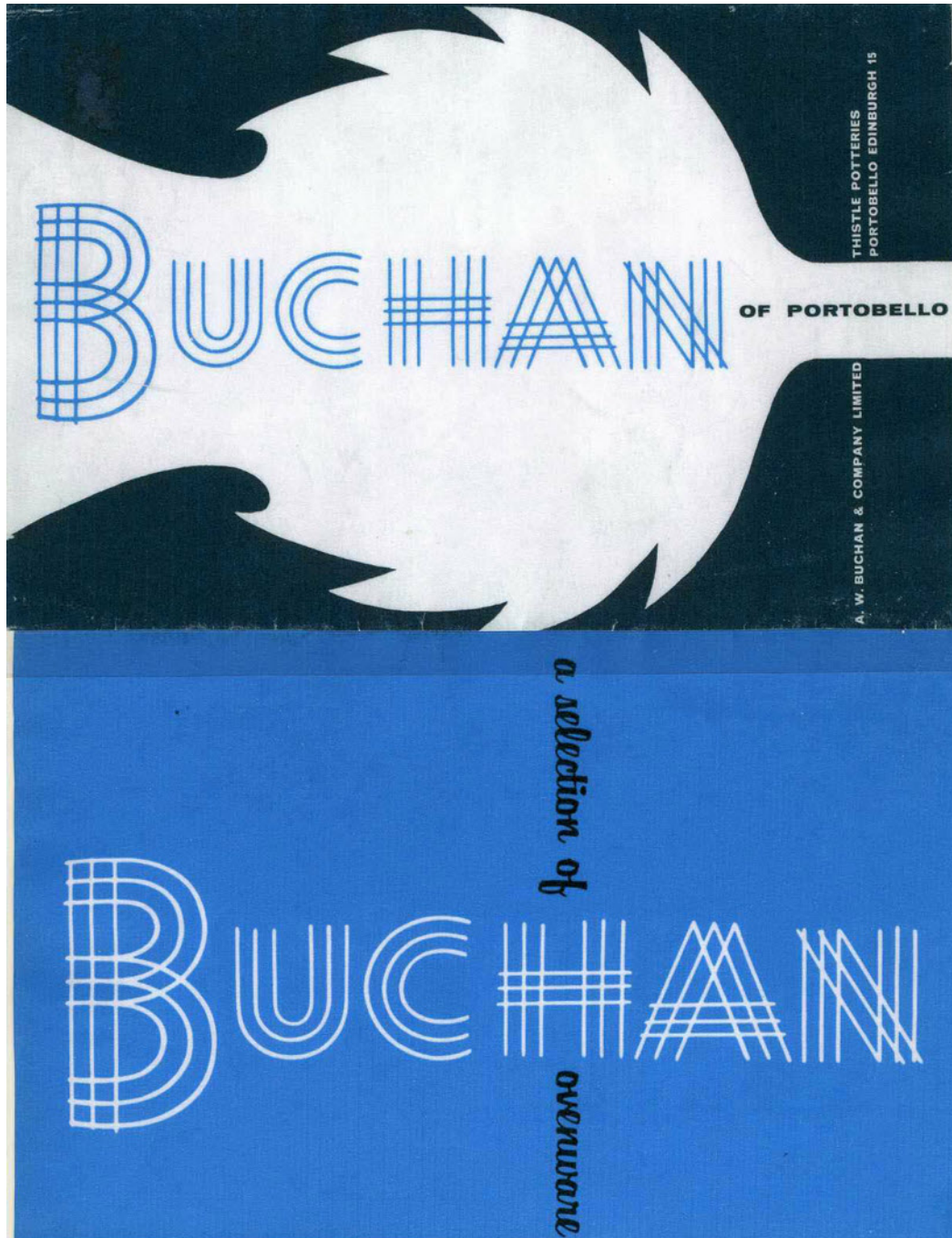
Buchan bed warmer

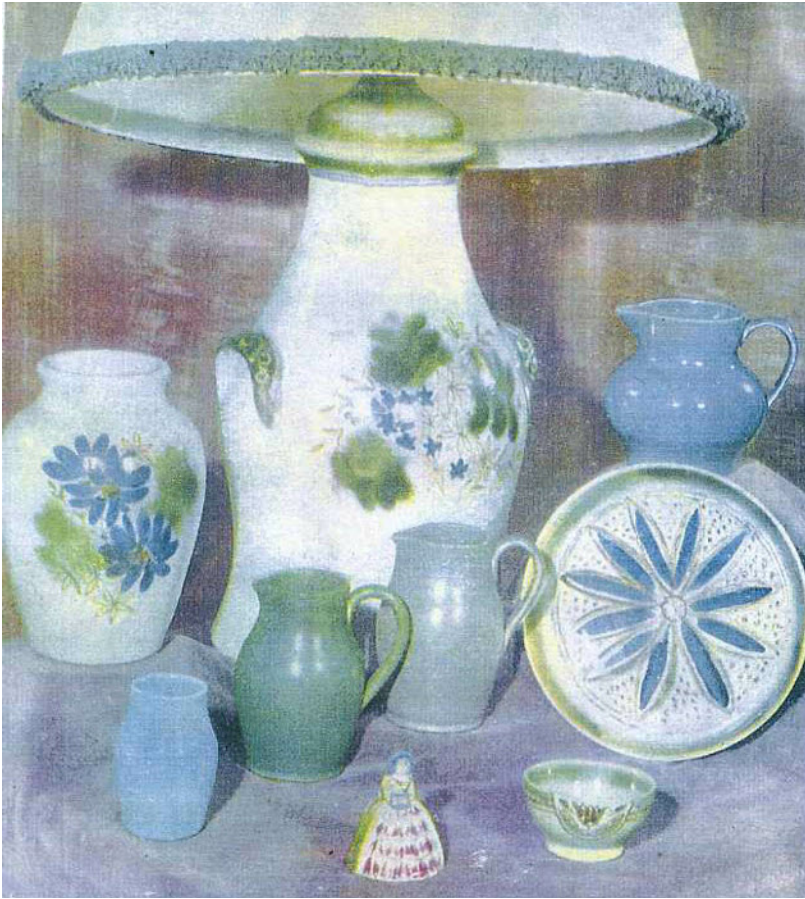


Two types of bottle that were made in huge numbers by the Buchan factory

Decorative Stoneware

The path decided on by the Buchans after the Second World War involved, in contemporary parlance, a re-launch and re-branding of the company. A new trademark was adopted and there was extensive use of the thistle, in advertisements and catalogues.





“Buchan Blue”

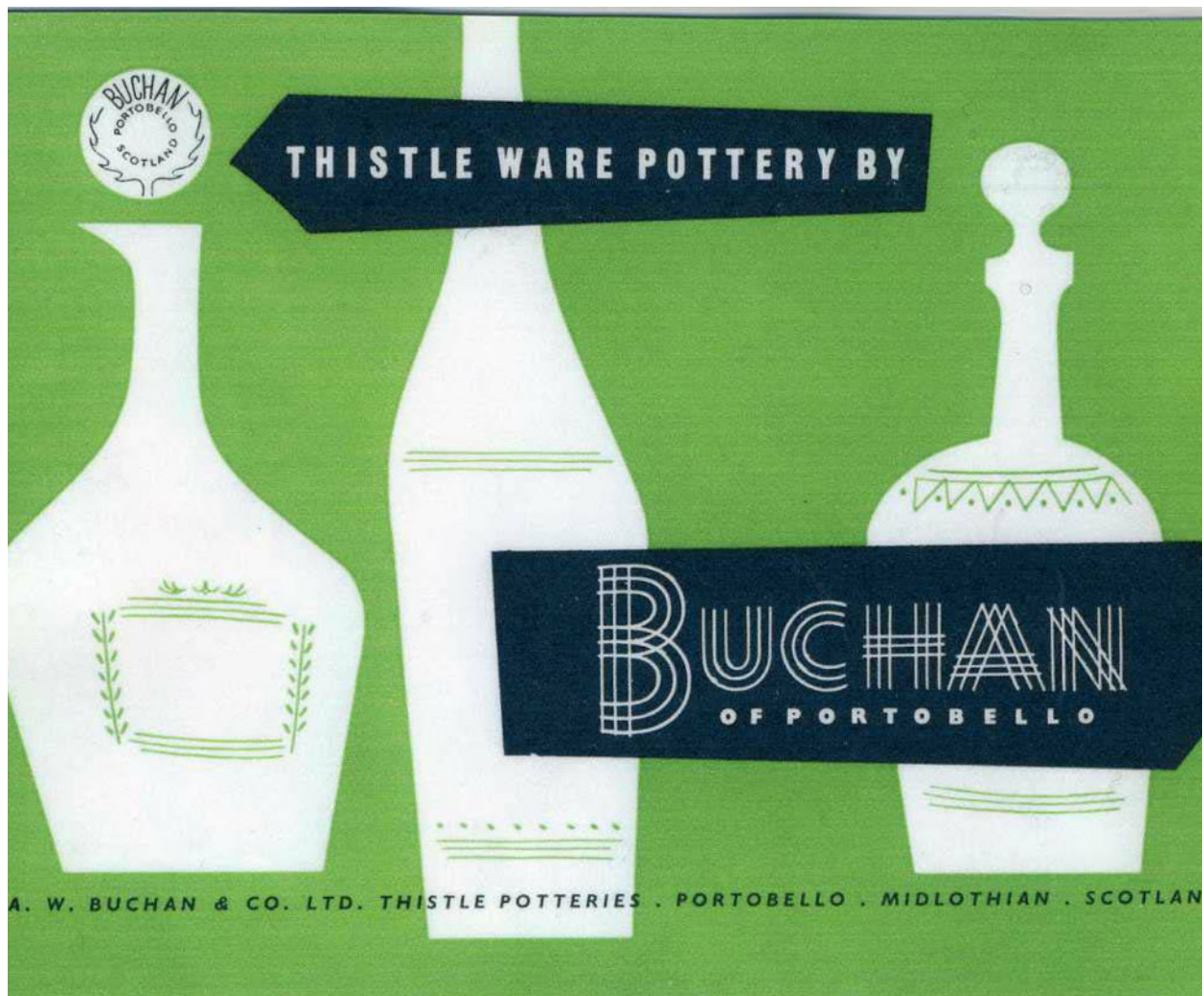
A selection of items is shown in this advertisement designed to display the variety and tastefulness of the products now available.

Decorated OVENWARE that also did not look out of place on the dinner table became a very popular line from about 1960.





Two sizes of mug of the same shape, listed as Number 187 by the factory. Other sports featured in the series were rugby, fishing, skiing and yachting. 160 one-pint mugs of this shape were thrown on the last day of production at Portobello, 8th June 1972.



Despite having produced decorative stoneware products in over 300 designs it is Thistleware and the naturalistic design of a thistle with a bluebell and heather that defines Buchan Pottery for most people. It sold in huge numbers all over the world and to quote Graeme Cruickshank, "... in 1972, all seventeen girls in the decorating shop were painting the famous *Thistle* group."

After 1972, though, its future lay elsewhere.

