



Claremont

Collectors' Club Renewal Piece 2013

Designer: William Moorcroft



Diameter: 4"/10cm



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If you were living in the late Victorian era, imagine how surprised you would have been to discover fine art pottery covered in colourful toadstools. This was an age when frills, gilding and the excesses of Empire were the norm when, all of a sudden, a young designer born in the back streets of Burslem, introduced images of the natural world. It was tantamount to a revolution, and among those design images were colourful toadstools. The Victorians were astounded, but such pieces were available to purchase in Liberty & Co, the renowned Regent Street store in London's West End, and Liberty represented the height of fashion. It was a store in which London's high society wanted to be seen.

Inevitably, the Moorcroft founding father struck up friendships with the Liberty family, including a lasting friendship with Alwyn Lasenby, a nephew of the founder of the great store, Sir Arthur Liberty himself. It was while staying with Alwyn and his young wife, Constance, at their home in Esher, Surrey, that William sketched the now famous toadstools in the woods surrounding an expensive country house in Southern England called 'Claremont'. These toadstools were to eventually become known as Claremont (a name chosen by Liberty). Indeed, Liberty had been so impressed with William's early toadstool sketches, that Alwyn Lasenby Liberty wrote to his friend, William, "I think the specimen vase of the Toadstool design is a very charming piece, and a very happy edition to my collection."

In its long tenure as a Moorcroft design, Toadstool undertook many mutations of form and colour since it was first registered in October 1903, but by 1913 it was sold as Claremont. The rest became history. In this, the centennial year of the company which William Moorcroft helped found in 1913, it was felt to be right and proper to re-create the Claremont design, just once, as the Collectors' Club Renewal Piece for the centennial year. Rather than focus on toadstools from the James Macintyre & Co era c.1903, Moorcroft chose the later version from c.1913-1918. These Claremont pieces would have first appeared at about the time William opened his new factory in Sandbach Road, and for those collectors who would like to see a line of toadstools spanning two decades, then a visit to a Moorcroft Travelling Exhibition is a must. Examples dating from 1903 - 1916 have been included, but if you cannot make that exhibition, the Collectors' Club Claremont coaster is a pleasurable acquisition, if not an alternative. It has a diameter of 4"/10cms, and will continue to be the Collectors' Club renewal piece until the end of 2013.



Moorcroft Collectors' Club
Sandbach Road, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire ST6 2DQ
Tel: 01782 820510
Email: MCC@moorcroft.com