

Fairy Lamp Club Newsletter

Issue XXIII - May 2002

Mat-Su-No-Ke ROSE BOWL – OR, IS IT? by Graham, Helen and Jim

This article from Graham and Helen requires a little explanation. What began as a simple inquiry turned into a very fortunate discovery of original Stevens & Williams pattern design books. The original designs show various styles of decorated bowls, sometimes referred to as rose bowls, and how they were adapted for use as fairy lamp bases.

This article began as a simple question related to a certain style of Stevens & Williams bowl decorated in what is known as "Mat-Su-No-Ke."¹ Specifically, could this decorated bowl have been designed as a fairy lamp base similar to the ones illustrated in the Stevens & Williams design book?

In the process of preparing the article for the newsletter, I discovered some interesting and perhaps important information that we may find helpful in understanding how Stevens & Williams marketed their decorated bowls and adapted them to fairy lamps.

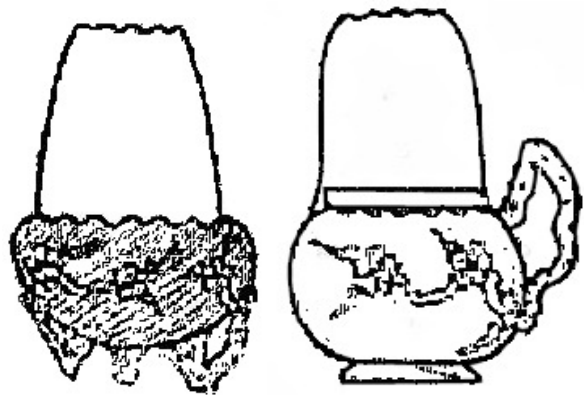
Graham and Helen's original article was to have been changed to include a better example of a Stevens & Williams Mat-Su-No-Ke bowl used as a fairy lamp base. However, in order to illustrate the subtle differences in the bowls, I have decided to print their original inquiry as it was written and add the new information for comparison. In this way, we all can learn together and perhaps form our own opinions better.

Following is Graham & Helen's original inquiry with their original photo.

Stevens & Williams Mat-Su-No-Ke BOWL – Is it or is it not a fairy lamp base? by Graham & Helen

Last year we met a friend at a glass fair who told us he had obtained access to some of the original Stevens & Williams pattern books while he was doing some research for a project he was working on.

It transpired that in the pattern books he had come across several drawings of fairy lamps and he asked us if we had ever seen bases with "branches for feet and with the branches scrolling up the side of the bowl with little flowers or blossoms on the end." Obviously, we had not and our curiosity was aroused. So we asked him if he would send us pictures. Which he duly did.



Then over Christmas we were surfing the web, visiting various antique web sites, when we spotted a yellow bowl/base with rather striking branch like feet scrolling up the side to flowerets or blossoms. The bowl was described as a Stevens & Williams Mat-Su-No-Ke bowl. From the picture on the website it was difficult to say if a lamp cup would fit

¹ This spelling of Mat-Su-No-Ke is derived from *British Glass – 1800-1914* by Hajdamach. Other common spellings include: Matsu-No-Ke and Matsu No Ke.

or interfere with the little flowers around the rim. A quick email to the seller ascertained the diameter of the opening and that a fairy-sized lamp cup would fit nicely.



We decided to take a gamble and buy the bowl. Even if it turned out not to be a fairy lamp base, it was still an extremely fine and rare example of art glass from the Victorian period.

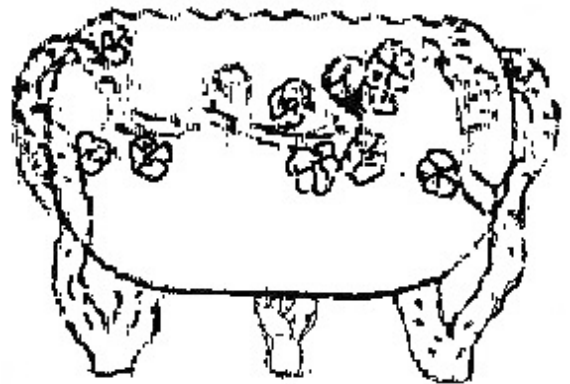
When it arrived it was pure quality as you would expect from one of the UK's finest glassmakers of the 19th century. We put a fairy lamp on it and it looked pretty good. You make your own minds up. Is it or isn't it?



We then emailed our friend a copy of the pictures and gave him the registration number that was etched on the base.



*Rd 15353 registered by Stevens & Williams
18 October 1884*



A few days later he emailed us back, with the original pattern drawing showing that it was indeed a rose bowl and not a fairy lamp base.

He also stated: "That as it was not a fairy lamp base. Can I buy it from you?" "No, not just yet." was our reply. How about a swap for your painted Burmese epergne or your Wee-size Burmese?

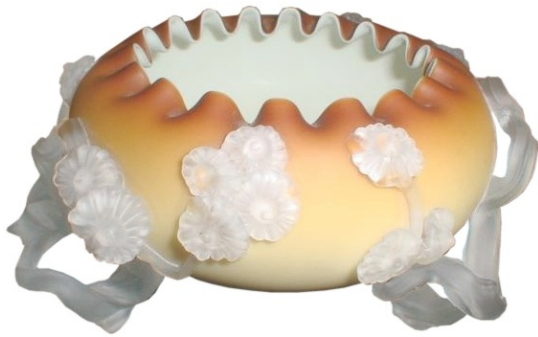
Never mind, we still like our Mat-Su-No-Ke rose bowl!

Now that you have the benefit of Graham & Helen's original inquiry, let's look at some additional information they have provided,

including additional information from Stevens & Williams design books.

In Graham's defense, I asked him to show the Stevens & Williams crimped dome on this base, even though the colors do not match exactly. He originally had a yellow satin dome decorated in a lace pattern similar to R-95. It looked very nice but I thought it better to show it with a Stevens & Williams shade instead. In addition, Graham indicated that the rosettes on the bowl do not interfere with the fairy lamp cup. The cup rests entirely on the crimps. That said, Graham does not believe this particular bowl was intended for use with a fairy lamp and many agree with him. But, there is more to this story.

Stu, a Fairy Lamp Club member and avid rose bowl collector, provided another example of the same bowl only in a slightly different color.



As you can see, this color matches Graham's dome much better and the rosettes are placed slightly lower on the bowl. So, the question remains, is it a rose bowl or fairy lamp base? I do not think there is a wrong answer for this example. But, there is more.

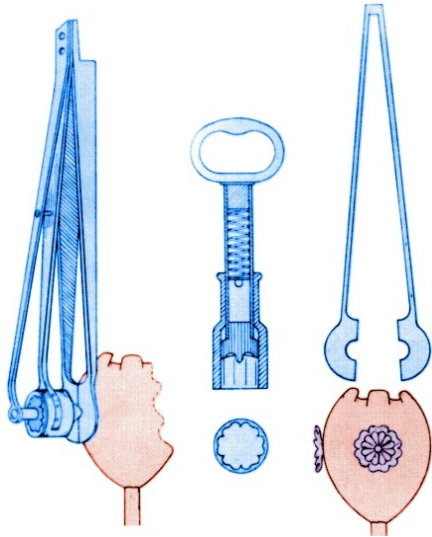
Several weeks after Graham provided the article, he sent me another example of a Mat-Su-No-Ke bowl.



Graham believes this is a complete Stevens & Williams Mat-Su-No-Ke fairy lamp base. The base is much smaller than the yellow version and the bowl only has six single applied flowers, unlike the yellow bowl that has several groupings of flowers.

Before I go much further, I think some definitions and explanations would be helpful.

In 1885, while at Stevens & Williams, John Northwood I (Harry Northwood's father) patented a set of spring pincers and a stamping device which allowed for the quick application of flowers and rosettes, notably on the Mat-Su-No-Ke vases and bowls. Influenced by Japanese decorative styles, the name translates as "The Spirit of the Pine Tree."



The pincers ensured that the applied flowers were held away from the surface of the glass giving a more natural and lifelike effect.²

There have been several references to Stevens & Williams's design book. Below is a photo that will help you understand what the design books are like.



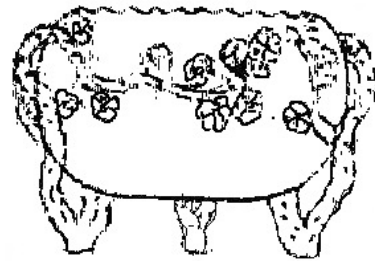
As you can see, it is a "ledger-like" book with pencil drawings and notations. It also includes a pattern number, dimensions of some items, colors, dates, and pricing information. I have selected a few items related to fairy lamps that will provide some

² British Glass – 1800-1914, Charles R. Hajdamach, p. 304.

³ The Golden Gorse is a conspicuous plant throughout Great Britain. It has spiny branches and bright yellow flowers.

⁴ Twelve pence in a shilling and 20 shillings in a GBP. (I think.)

insight into how Stevens & Williams marketed their fairy lamps and decorative bowls. The "blue" captions are actual notations obtained directly from the design book. The information in the design book was, for the most part, in the form of column entries, such as design number, price, and date. Other information about the item was made in the margins as explanatory notations.



Design number 9.260 – Gorse³ yellow with three sprays – October 11, 1886 – 8" wide by 5" tall – 25 shillings – In ruby, 22 shillings.⁴ This design appears to be Helen and Graham's yellow bowl. Notice the flower groups and how high they are applied on the bowl.



Design number 11.405 – Ruby shaded from top and green from bottom – May 2, 1886 – 8 shillings/6 pence – with lamp shade 12 shillings. The reference to the "lamp shade"

is assumed to be an optional fairy lamp dome. Notice the shading and the unusual combination of colors. Is this a drawing of Stevens & Williams's ribbon MOP satin?



Design number 11.408 – Blue shaded – 6 shillings. Note that the fairy lamp dome is not illustrated with a lamp cup. Unless the cup sits completely within the bowl, this is possibly an artist error. Or, is this bowl designed for a pyramid-size fairy lamp? In addition, the spray of single rosettes appears similar to Graham's blue version, which he indicated was smaller than the yellow. Now, the logical question is, "Did Stevens & Williams make pyramid-size fairy lamp domes?" I am not aware of any. How about you?



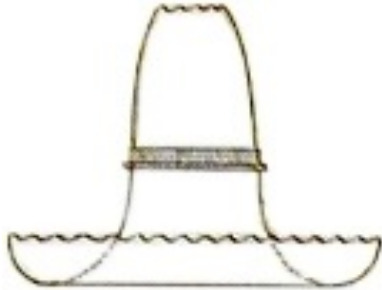
Design number 11.411 – Brown shaded with single flowers and handle. Notice that this example has a lamp cup resting on the crimps and a handle for carrying. Does the handle suggest that this bowl was made specifically for a fairy lamp? Or, is it equally logical to put a handle on a rose bowl? Also, notice that the decoration has single rosettes.



Design number 11.741 – Blue shaded six sided. Bottom – 2 shillings/6 pence with lamp fitting – 3 shillings/6 pence, complete – 6 shillings. This is clear evidence that Stevens & Williams bowls were "multi-purpose" and the buyers could purchase exactly what they wanted for their own purposes.



Even though the illustration does not show the crimped edge, I believe this is the fairy lamp and bowl combination shown in the illustration.



Design number 11.777 – Blue shaded over ivory. Crimped (words not legible) same size as 11.234 only opening through base for fairy lamp with 11.138 shade completed. – 9 shillings/6 pence complete. It would be very interesting to see the two additional designs referenced with this lamp. It would appear, however, that another Stevens & Williams piece was modified to accommodate the fairy lamp.

Now, as you can see, we have learned a great deal about how Stevens & Williams designed and marketed its products. It is clear from the information in the design books that several of its bowls, decorated and undecorated, were either specifically made for fairy lamps or were adapted to suit the whims of the consumer.

So, now what? I think there is considerably more to learn about Stevens & Williams fairy lamp production. Certainly, a careful review of the complete design book would be very beneficial considering what we have gleaned from the few pages we have seen. If only we could get access to the rest of it. Any ideas?

Fairy Lamp Club Newsletter

Issue XXIV - August 2002

STEVENS AND WILLIAMS MATSU-NO-KEE UPDATE by Jim, Lloyd, & Dil

If you recall, the last issue of the newsletter had a very informative article on Stevens and Williams (S&W) "bowls" and how they were adapted for use as companion bases for fairy lamps. At the close of the article I noted the importance of the information and the need to continue the research for additional information. I am very pleased to report that I received a great deal of additional information that corrects and adds to what we know about S&W art glass and fairy lamp production. So that I may give credit where credit is due, I will discuss the information as it was received.

Lloyd, long time member and major contributor to the newsletter, provided a photo that corrects a misidentification I made in the article related to S&W Design Number 11.741.



Lloyd happens to own a similar design and has provided the following photo and description.



The fairy lamp is a reddish chocolate color outside and a creamy yellow inside. The base seems to be an example of S&W Design Number 11.741 (FL-XXIII-6).

In addition, Lloyd also provided this example of an S&W Matsu-no-kee bowl that is apparently not intended for use with fairy lamps. I have included it for comparison purposes.



The bowl is inscribed Rd 15353⁵ and 1893 (year?) on the bottom and does not seem to be a fairy lamp base, at least we have not found

a lamp cup that fits. You can see it is shiny, blue inside and a dark chocolate brown outside shading to Burmese yellow, which does not fluoresce in ultraviolet light. There is a raspberry prunt on the bottom.

Both photos are great examples of S&W products, but there is more!

I was very fortunate to have received an email from Mr. Dilwyn (Dil) Hier regarding the S&W designs and the S&W Matsu-no-kee article. Dil is an avid collector and researcher of Stourbridge decorative art glass and the friend Graham referred to in his article on S&W Matsu-no-kee.

Dil's collecting is based on the techniques used by the glass artists and attributing them directly to the individual glass producers (primarily Stourbridge). He has done extensive research on Burmese ware and has prepared the text for a book and future CD. In addition, Dil's wife, as "Specialist Glass Fairs Limited," organizes the bi-annual Glass Collectors Fair at the National Motorcycle Museum near Birmingham; the next is on 10th November 2002.

Dil's correspondence was very detailed and carefully developed. In fairness to Dil (and to keep me from making huge editorial blunders) I would like to include his correspondence in its entirety with only minor editorial comments and illustrations for clarity. I have also reproduced from the last newsletter the design sketches and notations (shown in black) for your convenience. So, without further delay, Mr. Dil Hier:

⁵ Rd 15353 registered by Stevens & Williams 18 October 1884

Dear Jim,

Let me first introduce myself and declare my interests. I am Dilwyn (Dil) Hier a collector of and researcher on Stourbridge Decorative Art Glass and the friend Graham referred to in his correspondence on the subject of S&W Matsu-no-kee. I found your article very interesting and offer the following corrections and additional information, which is based on source data.

First as you can see from the above the spelling, I have shown "Matsu-no-kee" as it appears in the S&W pattern book. I have never seen the term "rose bowl" used in the pattern books associated with these items. In regards to your use of the expression "adapted for fairy lamps," it is quite clear that S&W produce fairy lamps utilizing their decorative art glass techniques and were selling to both Clarke and Price,⁶ often at discounted prices.

Now, to other details. You quite rightly say there is not a definitive answer to whether Graham and Helen's base is for a fairy lamp. My own view is that S&W were very precise manufacturers and would intentionally apply the decoration to suit the purpose. You would not expect anything else from the John Northwood and Frederick Carder collaboration. Decoration applied lower, as in the second item, achieves a different balance when the shade is in place.



The blue shaded lamp (shown on right) is not Matsu-no-kee, but is what is often referred to as "Blackthorn." However, again I have not found this term in the pattern books. It is used in the S&W book *The Crystal Years*⁷ and by John Northwood II in his book on his father.

The device illustrated and patented by John Northwood I was used for producing this type of applied flower. The "pincher" arrangement was used for cutting and pressing out the petal shape and by changing "dies" they were able to impress different designs for the stamen, etc. The central plunger device was also used for creating these designs and could, with a different insert, be used for Matsu-no-kee, however the random shape of Matsu-no-kee indicates that it was done with a simpler tool similar to that used for raspberry prunts, a device similar to that used with sealing wax. The description by my good friend Charles Hajdamach is a liberal extract from the John Northwood II precis of the patent. These flowers were produced in flint and colored whereby the colored flowers often have an opal core cased in colored flint.

⁶ Samuel Clarke sold his company to the Price Candle Company in 1910.

⁷ *Crystal Years - A tribute to the skills and artistry of Stevens & Williams Royal Brierley Crystal*, Williams Thomas. Whitehouse-books.com, 60 East Market Street, Corning, NY, U.S.A., 14830. Telephone: 607-936-8536. Email: julia@whitehouse-books.com

They were either "matted" as illustrated or left bright i.e. the natural finish.

Blackthorn



Matsu-no-kee



Apart from the detail of the "flower" Matsu-no-kee is always in flint, applied in clusters, and is therefore easy to differentiate in the pattern books.

In illustrating the S&W pattern books the source should be identified as Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Archives.⁸

Following are specific comments on previously described patterns:



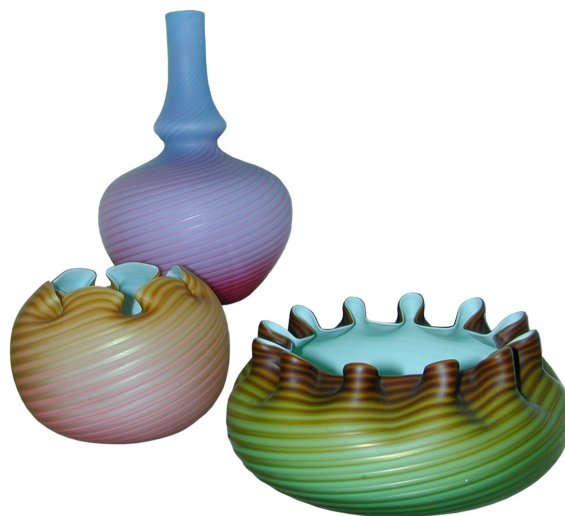
Design number 11.405 – *Ruby shaded from top and green from bottom* – May 2, 1886 – 8

⁸ www.dudley.gov.uk/council/library/archives/archive1.htm.

⁹ Verre-de-soie translates from French to "Glass-of-Silk."

shillings/6 pence – with lamp shade 12 shillings

This item is S&W "Verre-de-soie."⁹ Those with color combinations are sometimes also labeled "Pompeian Swirl" and this term is often used in America as well as your more generic description, spiral air trap mother of pearl satin glass. The color combination is one of the various two color shaded combinations to be found with Verre-de-soie. Some of the color combinations listed are: Brown – Blue; Ruby – Brown; Blue – Ruby; Ruby – Green and Brown – Green, whereby the colors are either from the top or bottom e.g. brown from the top, blue from the bottom or vice versa. Below are a few examples of the Verre-de-soie color combinations.



Representative examples of S&W Verre-de-soie or as commonly used in the United States, Pompeian Swirl.



Design number 11.408 – *Blue shaded – 6 shillings.*

Your reference to the missing lamp cup is, I think, a "recordist's" error; since there are as many shown in the pattern books with as without the cup. Once more we have here Verre-de-soie with "Blackthorn" applied decoration. I guess the patterns need to be looked at more carefully to identify any pyramid sizes. This might come from entries about the candles e.g. some records state "candles 1 shilling per dozen;" I would need more knowledge on candle prices to tell. There is also reference to Clarke cup No. 13; again I do not know what size this refers to.



Design number 11.411 – *Brown shaded with*

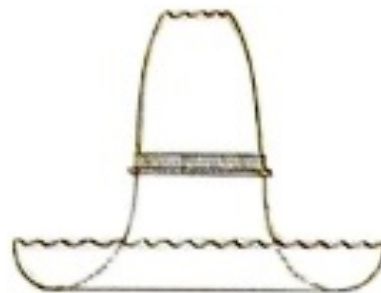
single flowers and handle.

The text should read: "Brown shaded. Flint flowers and stems." Once more the "Blackthorn" design. The handles were made for carrying; some even had two handles.



Design number 11.741 – *Blue shaded six sided. Bottom – 2 shillings/6 pence with lamp fitting – 3 shillings/6 pence, complete – 6 shillings.*

The text should read: "Blue shaded. 6 crimps."



Design number 11.777 – *Blue shaded over ivory. Crimped (words not legible) same size as 11.234 only opening through base for fairy lamp with 11.138 shade completed. – 9 shillings/6 pence complete.*

The illegible text reads ".... through end for fairy lamp". I will need to look at design number 11.234 to see what it is, but they do have "flower saucers" where the center is

pushed in like a volcano to hold a posy.



Design number 11.138

The design number 11.138 is your standard S&W fairy lamp shade with crimped top as in the illustration above.

As you have gathered there is much more in the pattern books that would be of interest to fairy lamp collectors and given time I will put more of the information that I have to hand together. At present access to the original pattern books is restricted due to staffing shortages, but I will get there again before too long.

In the meantime to wet your appetite, they do have these bases on mirror plateaus, wall brackets as well as suspended by chains.

I trust the above is of interest and will enable you to develop your previous article.

Needless to say, Dil's contribution to the S&W Matsu-no-kee article has certainly "wet our appetite" for MORE! As for me, I can hardly wait to see what the next installment of this story brings.

In the meantime, I have updated the on-line article to include the new and corrected information.¹⁰ I will continue using this article as a repository of information until I collect enough information to justify

developing an on-line database of S&W fairy lamp designs.

Thanks to everyone who made this article possible. But, stay tuned. I have a feeling the best is yet to come.

¹⁰ You can access the article through the Fairy Lamp Club webpage or go directly to www.fairy-lamp.com/Fairylamp/ArticleMatSuNoKe.html.