



History

The revival of this lost art was begun in the late **1960's** when Susan Benjamin, owner and founder of **Halcyon Days**, thought that this 18th century art form could be revived. She had the knowledge and design capability, however she required someone with the technical knowledge and ability to recreate this art form. She found a company in Bilston that had been enameling on copper, and with her design and marketing capabilities, teamed up with the Marshall family who had the expertise in enameling. The Marshalls formed a company, **Bilston & Battersea Enamels**, to manufacture **Halcyon Days** designs by Susan Benjamin.

After early experimentation, the range of boxes was officially launched in **1970**. As no one had attempted this process in modern day, there were constant changes that can be evidenced by the various types of mounts used through the years and the quality of the painting. One can see the steady improvement as the years progressed. In the early days, there were numerous limited edition boxes to commemorate events, people and places. These have become actively sought after by the collector.

A dated Christmas box series was begun in **1971** limited to an edition of the number of days in that year (365 or 366). These small ovals were only sold in England and were such a success, that in **1973**, Mrs. Benjamin decided to issue a round dated Christmas box which would only be produced in the relevant year. The oval series was ended in **1982**, but the round open edition series continues to this day and it is the most popular of all the boxes. Collectors are constantly seeking the older editions and the market is active.



In addition to making the enamels for their own shop and through selected retailers, **Halcyon Days** also were commissioned to create special editions by such retailers as Horchow Collection, Neiman Marcus, Cartier, Gucci, Tiffany's, Gump's, the Smithsonian, and others.

Cameron & Smith not only deal in the retired issues of **Halcyon Days** including their special commissions, but we also sell the entire current range of boxes. With over 1600 different designs in stock at any time, we have the world's largest inventory of enamels from various manufacturers.

After the successful launch of **Halcyon Days**, John Aris formed a company called **Crummles** to produce enamel boxes. Not as refined as the Halcyon boxes, he concentrated his themes on storybook characters that included the works of Beatrix Potter, Winnie-the-Pooh, Paddington Bear, Brambley Hedge, Ronald Briggs' The Snowman, Alice in Wonderland (based on the Tennile drawings) and Tasha Tudor. All of these boxes have been retired. **Cameron & Smith** makes a market in them and our inventory is constantly changing.

Following **Crummles**, **Staffordshire Enamels** appeared on the scene and from their early boxes, have increasingly improved their craftsmanship. They acquired **Marshall Enamels** and followed that with the acquisition of **Crummles**

In **1997**, the first known American enameller appeared on the scene. **Mary McLaughlin** launched her range of hand painted enamels featuring the greater Chicago area, her home-town. She has steadily expanded her horizons and now has a series of boxes featuring moments of leisure, and her prized series "Christmas In American Cities." While the early **Halcyon Days** boxes are reminiscent of a fine oil painting, McLaughlin's works are truer to a fine watercolour. One of her trademarks has become the painting of a scene inside the bottom of the base.



In the spring of **1999**, McLaughlin was commissioned by the First Lady, Hillary Clinton, to create a box of the White House in a limited edition of 50 to be given as official gifts to the dignitaries attending the NATO meeting in Washington D.C. She has joined the ranks of American artisans such as Steuben Glass and Lenox as an official gift of the Government. You can view her works on the [McLaughlin Page](#).

Two events in the enamels world which has given rise to the quality of workmanship:

Ian Marshall, former head of production and founder of **Bilston & Battersea Enamels**, launched his company known as **Marshall Enamels** in September **1999** and renamed it in **2001** to **The Ian Marshall Collection**. Examples of his work can be found on the [Marshall Enamels](#) page. He has managed to recapture the fine enamel painting that was known in the earlier days of the revival period. **Marshall Enamels** was acquired and absorbed into **Staffordshire Enamels** in **2002** When Ian Marshall began a second retirement from the industry.

Moorcroft Pottery purchased the small family firm of **Kingsley Enamels** in Worcestershire and changed their name to **Moorcroft Enamels**. They disbanded with most of the Kingsley range to create a new look in enamels. They have introduced a Lilliputian range of enamel vases in different shapes and have recreated a number of world famous Moorcroft pottery designs. They have also introduced a range of free hand painted enamel boxes and vases that has raised the level of the art of enamels. The free hand range is a stunning exercise in craftsmanship and detail and one can only marvel at the finished product. **Moorcroft** announced as of January 2006 they would cease their enamel division.

2006 marks a rebirth of the tradition begun by **Kingsley** and continued by **Moorcroft**. Having grown up with the enamel business, Elliot Kingsley Hall has experience in every aspect of the enamel making process. Having worked in the family business, **Kingsley Enamels**, he was made managing director of **Moorcroft Enamels** after they purchased the former company. He was the innovative driving force to develop freehand painted boxes and miniature vases. Too young to retire, Elliott turned to the only career he has known and reassembled some of his top painters to create a new range of freehand painted boxes. The new company making its début June 2006 is aptly named **Elliot Hall Enamels**.

Cameron & Smith Ltd. was formed in the fall of **1990** by collectors Patricia and Bob Smith to deal exclusively in Enamel Boxes. Realizing that there was no structured secondary market for the revival boxes created by **Halcyon Days**, they decided to concentrate in this area by helping collectors acquire those boxes they desired. If you are unfamiliar with enamel boxes, their origins date back to the mid 18th century in England. The boxes are enamel on copper shapes, however there was a marriage of enamel and porcelain in boxes known as **Chelsea Bonbonnières** (figural pieces). **Cameron & Smith Ltd** lost one of their beloved owner/collectors on July 29th, 2011. This year after Bob's passing has been long and difficult, but Patricia Smith and daughter, Melinda Smith, have maintained the business. They have reorganized and restructured many aspects in order to continue serving you.

FOR ADDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

"THE FIRST 25 YEARS OF HALCYON DAYS ENAMELS" a book by Susan Benjamin, was published in 1995 with almost 600 colour illustrations. This is the collector's bible for the revival pieces.