

Object(s): Cream Jug

Object Number(s): STMEA:76.A.79.12

Researcher details: Richard Hall, Volunteer

Amongst our extensive collection of dairy items is a jug with a famous connection. This jug formerly belonged to Mrs Emily Munnings, the mother of Sir Alfred Munnings, the noted artist. It was used when Mrs Munnings lived at Mendham Mill in the latter half of the 19th century.

The jug itself is brown glazed earthenware, 9.5cm tall and 6.6cm in diameter, tapering to the top. It was manufactured in London by the Dairy Supply Co, which began trading in London as the Express Country Milk Supply Company in 1864.

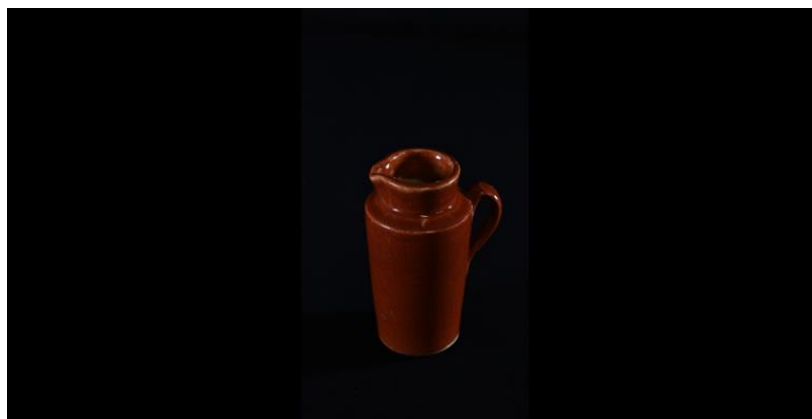


Figure 1: Jug STMEA:76.A.79.12. Museum of East Anglian Life.¹

A short history of the Dairy Supply Company

As we have seen, the Dairy Supply Company, grew out of a business, originally established to supply milk and dairy produce to the City of London. The blogger, Ian Mansfield,² Has researched the history surrounding the Dairy Supply Company and their premises in London's Coptic Street.

Mansfield tells us that the company, originally known as the Express Country Milk Supply Company was established in 1864 by Victorian entrepreneur, George Barham. Mansfield tells us that Barham's plan was to be the first company in London to bring in its milk supply by rail, from the countryside surrounding the capital, rather than relying on supply from London cows.

"His timing was fortuitous, as most of London's bovine supply was cut off by a mass cull of the cows in 1865 due to an outbreak of cattle plague (or '*Rinderpest*' -an infectious viral disease of cattle³). His

¹ Image: e-Hive record. STMEA:76.A.79.12. Museum of East Anglian Life. [Internet]. [Cited 16 November 2020]. <https://my.ehive.com/accounts/3978/objects/59349/cream-jug>

² Mansfield I. The Dairy Supply Company near the British Museum [Internet]. Ian Visits. 2011 [cited 16 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.ianvisits.co.uk/blog/2011/08/09/the-dairy-supply-company-near-the-british-museum/>

³ Rinderpest [Internet]. En.wikipedia.org. 2020 [cited 16 November 2020]. Available from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rinderpest>

business prospered, and by 1885 the “Express Dairy Company Limited” was bringing 30,000 gallons of milk into the capital every night.”

Barnham, like many of his peers, was somewhat of an inventor - it was Barham, who is said to have invented the milk churn and an improved version of the ‘Alfa-Laval’ cream separator in 1891. He also began to produce a range of products linked to the dairy industry. In 1880 he established the Dairy Supply Company to market and sell products, located in Coptic Street in London in 1888 with a production factory at London’s Park Royal. By this time, the company had already formed links with Royal Doulton potteries (who had recently played a significant role supplying earthenware pipes for the modernisation of the London sewers), to produce a range of ceramic and earthenware products. The makers marks on the products sold by the Dairy Supply Company are a combination of the Royal Doulton makers mark but bearing the Dairy Supply Company name. This means we can reasonably conclude that our jug dates from this period.

In 1913, the two companies passed to Barnham’s sons and the Dairy Supply Company was taken over by Colonel Arthur Saxby Barnham. However, during WWI, the Dairy Supply Company was forced to merge with Wiltshire United Dairies, Metropolitan and Great Western Dairies, to overcome distribution problems caused by a lack of labour and transport.

Subsequently there have been many mergers and sell offs on the dairy supply industry and the Dairy Supply Company no longer occupies its former premises in Coptic Street. Its name however lives on, indelibly inscribed into the walls of the Grade II Listed building that it formerly occupied.

Sir Alfred Munnings

Sir Alfred Munnings was born at the Millers House in Mendham on 8th October 1878. Since 1872, his father ran the watermill, originally in partnership with Mr George Chase, until he died as a result of a carting accident in 1887. Sir Alfred’s Nephew, John Munnings,⁴ recalls that flour from the mill was transported by wherry to Yarmouth and then shipped on to London and Newcastle. Mendham watermill continued in the Munnings family until 1932 when milling ceased. Today the watermill lives on holiday cottages.

Sir Alfred Munnings, must have been inspired by what he saw and experienced whilst living at Mendham Mill. It is claimed that two of his paintings: ‘The Path to the Orchard’ and ‘Stranded’, were painted in the grounds of the watermill, while he lived there. In his memoirs, Sir Alfred is said to have written;

“My home was on a river. The Waveney, which divides Norfolk from Suffolk. Now, when I’m often far from it, my one desire is to find time, which I never can, to write about it browse back on the

⁴ Munnings J. Norfolk Mills - Mendham (Memoir) [Internet]. [Norfolkmills.co.uk](http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk). 2020 [cited 16 November 2020]. Available from: <http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills/mendham.html>

past, to picture its lovely mills, each in turn, and lastly one of the largest on the river – our mill where we lived.....”⁵

However, Sir Alfred Munnings is perhaps most famously known for depiction of horses and rural scenes in his paintings. During WWI he was employed as a war artist attached to the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, where, he developed several paintings of horses and trench warfare,⁶ occasionally under heavy artillery fire from the German guns!

His talents were not confined to painting, and after the war he also began a career as a sculptor. His first public work was a monument of Edward Horner astride a horse, in conjunction with Sir Edwin Lutyens⁷ (designer of the Thiepval Memorial and the Cenotaph in Whitehall), which stands in St Andrews church in Mells, Somerset.



Figure 2: The Monument to Edward Horner in Mells Parish Church. By Robert Cutts⁸

⁵ Munnings A. Memories of the River – Sir Alfred Munnings [Internet]. Mendham Mill Luxury country cottage accommodation in East Anglia. 2020 [cited 16 November 2020]. Available from:

<https://www.mendhammill.co.uk/information/history/>

⁶ Alfred Munnings [Internet]. En.wikipedia.org. 2020 [cited 16 November 2020]. Available from:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Munnings

⁷ Edwin Lutyens [Internet]. En.wikipedia.org. 2020 [cited 16 November 2020]. Available from:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwin_Lutyens

⁸ Cutts R. The Monument to Edward Horner in Mells Parish Church [Internet]. 2020 [cited 16 November 2020]. Available from: By Robert Cutts from Bristol, England. Public Domain,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=43767138>



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Cream and dairy products

Our object collection contains many items used in the dairy trade (See also - STMEA:75.A.78.1, STMEA:76.A.79.9a-b, STMEA:76.A.79.10 and STMEA:76. A.79.11). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many farms, including the Abbots Hall estate, used to supply milk, butter and cream to the surrounding area. It is in this context that our jug is believed to have been used; either to measure out a supply of cream for a customer or simply as a returnable means of carrying the cream home.

Cream occurs naturally in milk and comprises the higher fat layer which rises to the top of the milk⁹. It is often used as an added ingredient in cooking but can also be used as an accompaniment to deserts, soups and cakes. Cream contains a higher level of saturated fat, which has been associated with vascular diseases in humans. As a result, many dieticians suggest a limited amount is more suited in a balanced diet. Today you can buy alternative products to cream with a plant base and / or lactose (an ingredient found in milk and dairy products) free, sold as 'cream alternatives' which are also suitable for people following a vegan diet.

Whether you love it or hate it, cream has found a niche in our common vocabulary as indicative of something which has either risen to the top or someone / something which is substantially better than anybody or anything else.

⁹ Cream [Internet]. En.wikipedia.org. 2020 [cited 16 November 2020]. Available from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cream>