

The Chess Collector Magazine

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Editors' Comments

We hope that you will find this issue of the Chess Collector Magazine interesting and thought provoking. We start with a new feature- “Meet the Collectors”- in which we discuss all matters related to chess collecting with some of our CCI members. In this issue, we are in conversation with Dermot and Ciaran Rochford. Then on page 8, Vikhram Ravi provides enlightening research on the identity of the individuals behind the “B” in “B&Co” chess sets. This is followed by an article by Ross Jackson highlighting the lack of information on New Zealand Maori chess sets as well as detailing the known extant types of sets from the region. Jim Joannou has received very useful CCI member feedback on his Barleycorn Research for which he has provided an update on page 17. The issue finishes (as it started on the front cover) with a full Auction Review.

We would like to bring to everyone’s attention two upcoming CCI meetings. The first takes place in New Orleans on 4 – 7 September 2025 and will include several Paul Morphy- related visits as well as many other exciting lectures and activities. Full details can be found in the current issue of the CCI- USA magazine. But please note that the registration deadline is 1 August 2025. The second meeting is that of the German CCI section on 31 October – 2 November 2025 in Nuremberg. Full details are still being finalised and should be known by the end of July.

Finally, Chuck Grau has an author’s correction for his March 2025 article “The Tsarist Stauntons of Turner Teich”- the sentence below Figure 2 on page 11 should read “Teich was operating as early as 1885 ...”.

If you have any comments or suggestions for future issues of the magazine, then please send your Comments to: jimjoannou@btinternet.com and peter@whitehead.com

Front Cover

A selection of items sold at auction since the previous issue. Clockwise from top left- a “Ramayana” chess set which sold for €220 (\$238, £184)- please see the article on such sets in our November 2024 issue; a Pulpit set for €4200 (\$4540, £3510); a bone set for €1100 (\$1190, £920); a German set with 11cm kings which sold for €1300 (\$1355, £1075); a Calvert- style St George boxwood and rosewood set for £800 (\$1080, €950); and a Geislingen set which sold for €4000 (\$4320, £3340). All prices exclude buyers’ premium. See the Auction review on page 18 for further items.

Meet the Collectors- Dermot and Ciaran Rochford

Peter Whitehead



Photos on this page- Dermot and Ciaran Rochford in Blenheim Palace as part of the 2024 CCI Congress in Oxford (top left); Peter Whitehead and Ciaran in the Rochford family home outside Dublin with a selection of the Rochford collection waiting to be admired (right); Dermot and Ciaran with Dermot holding a much-treasured box- board (middle left); banners for their website and shop (bottom):

www.chessantiquesonline.com

www.finerpieces.com



The Rochford collection requires no introduction within chess collecting circles and neither do the affable father and son duo Dermot and Ciaran Rochford. After having been in email conversations with both for several years, I first met Dermot and Ciaran in the 2024 Oxford CCI Congress. I was then lucky enough to visit them this April in the family home on the coast outside Dublin. I spent a lovely day being entertained by wonderful hosts, being able to look at and handle parts of their amazing collection and generally talking all things chess related. The conversation continued over lunch and a pint of Guinness in a local pub after which the lure of admiring more chess sets just became too strong. Although the questions and answers given below were finalised by email after my visit (purely my fault- I wanted to maximise my time with their chess sets!), our conversations were the foundations for what follows below. I should also add that, although Ciaran strictly speaking provided the answers, this was fully discussed by him with his father first.



When did you start collecting chess sets (or chess- related items)? We started collecting in the mid-1980s – which makes me feel quite old saying that...

What was the first item which you acquired? A 9cm Jaques wooden weighted Anderssen set with green label and tilt-top box. We didn't even know who Jaques were at the time...



What inspired you to start collecting? I was a chess player whilst my parents were interested in bric-à-brac so our chess collecting was sort of the intersection of the two interests. I had a summer job in a small antique store- they got in a few Chinese puzzle ball pieces, and we were hooked...

How many sets do you own? It varies a bit, but generally 200 at any one time.

What is your collecting philosophy? As my father and I collect together, it is based on what we can agree upon! Generally, we like sets with character due to age, design or some other aspect such as a specific history or player association.

Do you have a preferred type of set? Or a specific focus or theme to your collection? We started collecting English playing sets because they were available and in our price range, so they hold a special interest for us. As with many collectors, as you progress, you start to develop a taste for the more obscure/rarer sets.

Do you have a favourite chess piece (e.g. king, knight)? I guess the knights have always been a focus for us – probably the same with many collectors given their figural nature, allowing for a lot of variety. The quality of the knights can be the differentiating line between good and outstanding sets – especially when looking at symbolic playing sets.

What are the oldest, rarest and most valuable items in your collection? We have a few current favourites, and it does vary a bit over time. But the 16/17th Century Spanish/Italian set F116 below is a favourite at the moment- the design is very unusual, and it has a lot of character. More detailed information and additional photos can be found on our website at:

https://www.chessantiquesonline.com/rochford_collection/secbig2/ueh.html



What makes your collection special? I guess from my point of view, it is the fact that it is an opportunity for my father and I to work together on something over a long period of time. I live outside Seattle on the West Coast of the USA and my father is back home in Dublin, Ireland. In terms of the collection itself, we have strived to try and have the best examples of many forms of sets from many origins.

What does your collection mean to you personally? It allows us to express our interest in the topic and meet people with similar passions. When we acquire something that needs research, it can be very satisfying when we are able to uncover new information on it with the chess collecting community. For us, it has evolved over the decades from a hobby to an addiction, I guess!

What do you enjoy the most about collecting chess sets? I like the thrill of the hunt. I think my father enjoys the research aspect more.

How has your collection evolved over time? As mentioned, we basically only collected English playing sets for the first 5-10 years. We then met Garrick Coleman and some of the large collectors (like Victor Keats and Thomas Thomson) who were very kind to show us their collections. We then of course aspired to emulate them to some degree, even though our budget was quite limited during that period.

How do you decide which set to add to your collection? We don't really set any criteria. If we see a set that we both like (not always easy to agree upon!), and we feel the set is of the right quality, and the price is fair, then we usually try and buy it. We are relatively flexible in terms of condition and think that we have a reasonable feel for the market.

What pre-requisites must a new acquisition have? Quality and rarity. Over time, we have become more flexible on condition (especially on the very rare sets). We don't usually pass up a set that has had a well-used life if the price is fair.

How do you acquire new items for your collection? We have built some friendships in the chess collecting world over the years and they are kind enough to offer us sets from time to time. We try and keep an eye on the public markets through the internet as well.

If participating in an auction, do you follow a particular strategy? We try and set a limit and stick to it! It does not always happen that way, but we try. Over the last decade, the fees being charged at the physical auction houses have really increased, and the packing and shipping costs must also be accounted for. In addition, buying just on photos has got us burned many times, so we try and build a little buffer in our limit for unexpected condition issues as well.

Do you regularly curate your collection? (e.g. sell/dispose of a set when you acquire a better version? Keep your collection to a certain number of sets?) If so, how do you decide which items to keep or let go off? In our earlier collecting days, we had no option other than to sell some of our existing sets to allow us to buy whatever set had captured our imagination that we really could not afford. Growing out of this, we setup an online store at www.finerpieces.com. After having a set 20 years, it is sometimes good to move it on to someone new and it helps us fund our next purchase as well. On what we decide to sell, a few things can affect that- perhaps our tastes have changed a little over the years, or a friend/client we know is looking for a specific set we have. Sometimes we end up with 2-3 similar sets which makes letting one go a little easier.

What is your most surprising/unexpected find? Many years ago, we bought a nice boxboard and Calvert set. The old write-up on it is in the Chess Collector Magazine Volume XVI, no 3, 2007, and at https://www.chessantiquesonline.com/Favorite_chess_set.pdf. As always, my father has been very supportive and enabled us to start collecting even though buying antiques sets in the mid- 1980s put a strain on the family budget.

What was your most disastrous acquisition? There have been many! Once we stretched our budget and bought a very good European bust set from a well- known auction house. The cost made me sweat, and I was hoping my father would be ok with it once it arrived and he saw it in person. The set came with a boxboard. We gave detailed instructions on how the chess pieces should be packed. A large parcel was delivered to my father- the boxboard was wonderfully packed, but the pieces were left to roll around inside totally unwrapped – and as a result 30 out of 32 pieces were very badly damaged. The painful saga for this set continued from there...

Which set do you regret not acquiring when you could have done? There have been many such sets, but to be fair they were all beyond what we could afford, so we can live with those misses. We were once offered a very good early Amber boxboard- wonderful, but in poor condition for what seemed like a very large sum to us. In retrospect, I think we should have gone for it, but financially it would have been a stretch, and our wives were, shall we say, not too excited about the idea!

If you could add any set to your collection, which one would it be and why? There are many but I have always admired the early Augsburg Figural Sets. I think the overall design and execution of these sets is outstanding.

If your collection was going up in flames and you could only save one set, which one would it be? And why? That is a good question- one or two sets my father gave me as gifts many years ago, so they have sentimental value. We do also like the very early Italian bust set F63 shown below and would want to save it if at all possible. For more information and photos:

https://www.chessantiquesonline.com/rochford_collection/secbig/ritabust.html



What is the long- term vision for your collection? We hope to continue to find the more unusual and finer versions of sets that appeal to us. It would also be great to be able to add some additional information/knowledge to the hobby in relation to specific sets or makers. I think the set P289 we recently acquired which provides the missing link to Foster as a maker is a good example. For more information and

additional photos, please refer to:

https://www.chessantiquesonline.com/rochford_collection/secbig3/fostup.html



Have you considered the legacy of your collection? Not really. We hope our online presence will help others interested in this area for some time to come.

What advice would you give to a new collector? Please share your insight and expertise. I guess the more pieces/sets you can handle and see in person, the quicker you can decide what sets are of interests to you. We bought some part sets/single pieces over the years when we could not afford/find a complete set – I think this is also helpful.

How do you store, maintain and display your chess- related items? Because we have limited space that we are allowed to use for display in our homes, we really rely on our websites www.chessantiquesonline.com and www.finerpieces.com to see our sets. We try and update these sites monthly once we have new things to share and we have a monthly associated email newsletter that people can sign up for.

Do you fix issues with pieces yourself? If so, what is your top repairing tip? No, we don't have the skills on that side of things. We use Ron Fromkin in Florida- he is great and very helpful (email: ivoryrepair@yahoo.com). We highly recommend him.

Do you play chess and if so, at what level? Yes- my father actually taught me when I was child. I am weaker now, but when I was sixteen, I went to the world junior tournament representing Ireland. I was fortunate enough to become friends with a young Alexei Shirov- a few blitz games with him quickly showed me that my future did not lie in playing chess.

How long have you been a member of CCI and what do you enjoy about CCI? I guess a long time, 30+ years. We really enjoy the magazine and the events that the hard- working organizers put together. We hope to be able to attend more of them going forward than we have in the past.

Do you have other collections beyond chess- related items? Not really. I have a few remote- controlled planes, but that collection quickly shrinks once I start flying them... sometimes the "landings" are less than ideal!

Tell us one thing about you that no- one would guess? I came second in a women's tennis tournament – my wife and I were taking some beginner lessons, the club held a friendly tournament, and due to my Irish Christian name (Ciaran), I was incorrectly put in the women's draw. As no- one was available to change the draw, I had to play... I came second and have a second- place trophy with a woman on top to prove it! I did have a lot of explaining to do each time I met a new opponent that day...

Unmasking B&Co. – Research into their possible identity

Vikhram Ravi

Disclaimer: The seed, and basis for this article is a chess.com forum post by user "BobbyStaunton" (Ref 1). Huge thanks to them, for without that post, this article wouldn't exist.

B&Co. Chess sets have long been admired in collecting circles, frequently showcased online and celebrated for their distinctive charm and refreshing take on the Staunton design. Collectors especially value their unique construction—pieces that unscrew into parts—as well as their rarity, and the allure of a mysterious maker! Despite considerable examples having surfaced over time, the identity behind the "B" in B&Co. has remained an enigma. While this article doesn't claim to solve that mystery conclusively, it offers a compelling candidate worth considering.

Some B&Co. sets are shown below for your viewing pleasure- top left from Bram Ueffing's collection (Ref 5) with unscrewed bishop inset; top right from Richard Ruffing's collection and previously in the author's collection (Refs 3 and 4); bottom left and right from Jon Crummiller's collection displaying a rare set of B&Co chessmen featuring glass-eyed knights, with both the knights' chests and rook tops stamped. This is housed in its original box, complete with a metal plaque inscribed: 'The Regulation Chessmen Loaded – B&Co London'.



B&Co. set characteristics:

- **King height** – Most B&Co. sets that have been sold/showcased have a king height between 7-9.5 cms.
- **Finial** –The kings have tiny but charming ball finials instead of the usual cross seen in most Staunton sets.
- **Woods** – The sets are made of boxwood for the light side, and ebony for the dark side.
- **Stability** – The sets are mostly unweighted but are stable owing to the rather wide bases (almost 50% of the king height), making them a pleasure to handle on the board. The pieces are felted in a green baize to prevent scratching of the board surface. The Regulation Chessmen shown immediately above are a rare exception being top of the line weighted sets.
- **Time period** - Most sales listings place these sets in the period between mid-late 19th – early 20th century.

- **Unique characteristics** – Pieces that unscrew into parts, kings with characteristic ball finials, wide bases, bishops with rather charming mitres, unique knights, and great rooks and pawns, accounting for an excellent set and board presence.

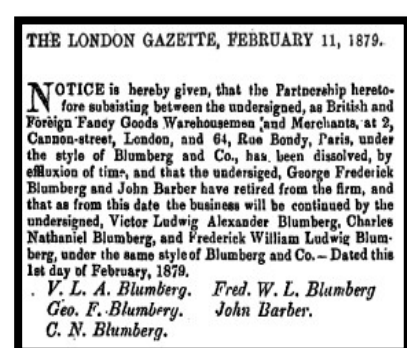
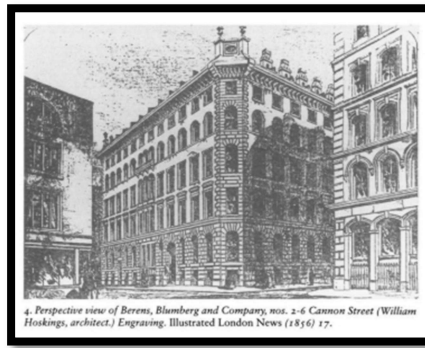
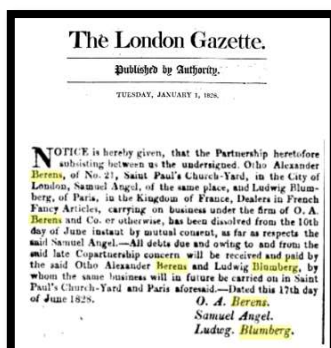
Berens and Blumberg:

While Bobby Staunton's post identified the "B" potentially as "Blumberg", I wanted to start by discussing the men behind the brand, and their trade.

In my quest for more information, I chanced upon a gem of a blogpost titled "The London Dead" (Ref 7), a website dedicated to throwing light on crypts in cemeteries around London, and the people interred therein. The particular post in question talks about the rather fancy tomb of Otto Adolph Victor Alexander Berens (1797-1860) at the West Norwood Cemetery (pictured below). This is a fine example of an Edwardian-era mausoleum designed by Edward Middleton Barry, son of the famous architect Charles Barry. It is notable that Edward completed the Houses of Parliament after his father's death. The tomb was completed in the mid-19th century, during the height of the Victorian era, at a staggering cost of £1,500, according to Historic England. The blog also talks about Berens already being a successful merchant in 1827 but is uncertain about when he emigrated to England from Russia. However, I found an entry in the second volume of a four-volume memoirs of Baron Andrei Ivanovich Delvig (1813–1887), a major Russian engineer that translates to the below.



Ludwig Alexander Blumberg (Unknown-1857), possibly of French descent (as per Ref 9 and image on the LHS below), is said to have entered into business with Berens, forming Berens, Blumberg and Company that later became Blumberg and Co. (abbreviated to B&Co. which we will discuss a bit later in the article). National Archives Denization¹ (Ref 8) records indicate that both Berens and Blumberg underwent the process on 3rd July 1834. London Gazette articles (Refs 10 and 11) from the 19th Century indicate Blumberg to have died in 1857 but the business to have continued by his family. Interestingly, an 1828 article announces the partnership between Berens and Blumberg. The illustration in the middle shows the rather nice premises of Berens, Blumberg & Company in 1856 in 2 – 6 Cannon Street which agrees with the Delvig memoirs above.



What was their main trade? They were London and Paris based sellers of British, and foreign fancy goods. Quoting verbatim from the 1856 Illustrated London News:

¹ Denization was a process under which foreigners could be granted certain citizenship rights (such as owning property) without being fully naturalised.

"We have read in novels of people who have sold every-thing, 'from a ship to a thimble.' The establishment we describe is something of the same sort - from a sixpenny salt-cellar to a £500 chamber organ. The dealer in fancy wares can be satisfied to any amount. There are here articles for every hour of the day and every rotation of life... and the recreation of the evening." "... their annual sales go into hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling..."

Adverts showing the variety on offer by Berens, Blumberg & Co. (then Blumberg & Co.) are shown below.

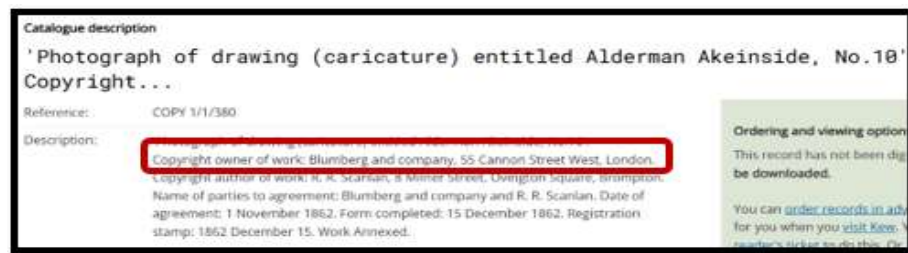


Addresses identified (thus far):

Company	Year	Address	Source (consulted via Google books)
Partnership established in 1828			
Berens, Blumberg & Co.	1834	20, St. Paul's Churchyard	Persons elected to the London Alms houses
Berens, Blumberg & Co.	1843	33, St. Paul's Churchyard & 60 Rue de Bondy, Paris	The Post Office London Directory
Berens, Blumberg & Co.	1845	33, St. Paul's Churchyard	The Medical times
Berens, Blumberg & Co.	1846	33, St. Paul's Churchyard	Repertory of Patent Inventions Volume 28
Berens, Blumberg & Co.	1853	33, St. Paul's Churchyard	The Shopkeeper's Guide
Berens, Blumberg & Co.	1854-55	Notice to quit 33, St. Paul's... on account of city improvement (Temporary address at Little Distaff Lane, Cannon St. West)	The Indian News and Chronicle of Eastern Affairs 1854 The Economist Volume 17
Berens, Blumberg & Co.	1856	Cannon st. address under construction/nearing completion	The Civil engineer & [and] architect's journal Volume 19
Berens, Blumberg & Co.	1865	55 Cannon st. west & 64 Rue de Bondy, Paris	British and American Claims
Blumberg & Co.	1866	55 Cannon st.	The British, Foreign, and Colonial Trademarks" Directory.
Blumberg & Co.	1873	2 Cannon st.	The Export merchant shippers of London
Blumberg & Co.	1880	2 Cannon st. & 64 Rue de Bondy, Paris	The Post office [afterw.] Kelly's directory
National archive records indicate that the company dissolution was between 1883-1916			

Note: The addresses in Paris appear to be a business centre of sorts, bringing together several brands under one roof, acting as a demonstration and sales area, as researched by noted collector Walter Biensur.

Here was a company that sold a staggering variety of fancy goods from clocks, watches, fine China, musical boxes and instruments, in addition to acting as a wholesaler for a wide variety of other household items – a literal “one stop shop” of sorts. Chessmen and boards are almost a footnote in a never-ending variety of a catalogue of items. A search of patents and registrations also show paper weights, an apparatus to hold women's dresses, a fairy lamp amongst a few other earthenware items but sadly nothing with chess sets. Having said that, one of the items which was on offer provides a connection to the abbreviated form B&Co. The colophon of the book “The Club Adventures of Alderman Akeinside”, a classic satire from 1870, has the text “Published by B & Co London (Wholesale)” (Ref 12). National archives records reveal the B & Co to be Blumberg & Co- please refer to photos below.



Even a cursory search online reveals that the firm of Berens, Blumberg and Co. is a sought-after name in many collecting circles, one of them being music boxes, and boxes for musical instruments, with hinges stamped “B, B & Co.” or “B&Co. improved”. Overlaying them with stamping on the one available chess box example lends better confidence but is not conclusive. The typeface / stamping style has similarities to stamping seen on the plaque inside the box, and the knight chest stamping respectively.



Conclusion:

The fact that the advert dates from 1864, all known stamped musical boxes, as well as storage containers with hinge stamping around the same timeline, and their similarities with the one known example of box plaque and knight chest stamping add weight to a theory that is still conjecture (due to the lack of extensive catalogues describing their Chess offerings in better detail). It could quite possibly be by design, considering Chess was one amongst a plethora of offerings they stocked and sold in their shops (but not by any means a famous offering as chess items are hardly mentioned in advertisements in the many surviving catalogues). No written document has surfaced to suggest that B&Co. made Chess sets, and their vast network spanning Germany, the UK, and France (amongst other countries) likely suggests that they were just retailers of well-made sets, by a yet to be identified maker.

Having said that, I will continue to research and look for further proof in support of the theory posited in this article. Until further proof emerges, Blumberg & Co. is as good as any candidate that solves the B&Co. puzzle! I hope that you have enjoyed reading this article. For any comments, please contact me on theindianchesscollector@gmail.com.

References

1. <https://www.chess.com/forum/view/chess-equipment/old-chess-set-advertisements-post-here>
2. <https://www.antiqchessshop.com/product/ref1628-b-co-regulation-chessmen-box/>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/QhE3b0givr8> - Formerly my collection
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New Zealand Maori Chess Sets

Ross Jackson (Edited by Peter Whitehead)

Introduction

The Pacific Ocean is by far the world's largest geographic entity, and the ancient peoples of the islands explored vast distances with sophisticated navigational skills, in the world's fastest boats, at a time when European seafarers were still largely hugging coastlines. The map below, which corrects the distance distortions of the ubiquitous Mercator map, shows the size of the Pacific Ocean. For illustrative purposes it inverts the hemispheres which geographically is just as valid an orientation.



The last destination of Polynesian exploration was to reach New Zealand between 1250 and 1300 AD (see map below) whilst the first European explorer to visit did so in 1642.



Collectors value rare sets from Mongolia, or those from Inuit tribes, but the history and culture of chess from arguably the largest area of the planet is unrepresented. For collectors who have an interest in chess sets that represent human cultures, there is a scarcity of information on sets from Oceania. The only publication on the subject is "Volume 3 Pacific Islands & Asia" in the series "Cultures, Chess & Art" by Ned Munger, who visited New Zealand in 1957 and 1993 and purchased two sets made by Jiries Giacaman, an artist from Bethlehem who trained in Israel and later moved to New Zealand.

New Zealand Maori Chess Sets

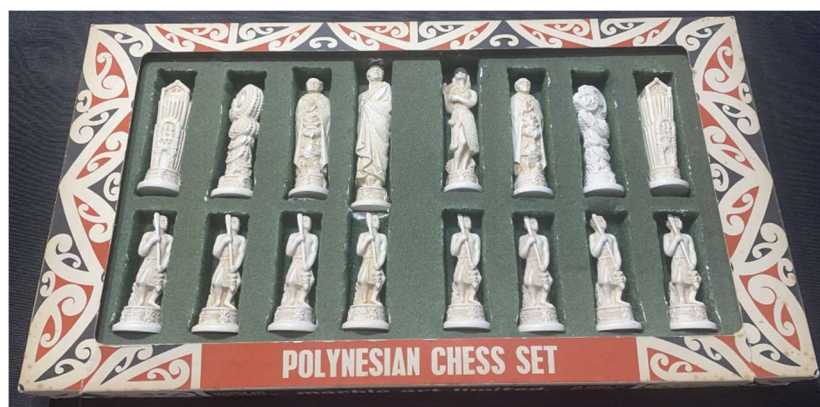
With the exception of the latest resin set, New Zealand manufactured sets are all rare. I have just accumulated the only complete New Zealand commercial chess set collection, comprised of the set by Marble Art, the “Discovery of New Zealand” bronze set, the “Kotahi” Maori chess set, and the commonly available resin set, which will now be detailed in turn.

Marble Art “Polynesian” Chess Set

The earliest set was made in plastic by the company Marble Art in the 1960s and called the “Polynesian” chess set. It was designed and produced by John Fotiadis, an immigrant to New Zealand. His company’s products can aptly be described as kitsch, a pejorative term meaning tacky and tasteless, and to many might be superficially dismissed for being trash. However, kitsch is increasingly recognised as a valid art genre as there can be a sincerity and goodwill toward the subjects.



The original sets are identifiable by the package box, and they are quite rare.



Each Maori tribe has its own distinctive style of carving and those from this set are indicative of the Te Arawa tribe of the Rotorua district. The king is wearing a cloak made from feathers and is holding a mere (a greystone club), the queen holds her hands in the welcome position and has two pois hanging from her waist which are used when performing the poi dance. The bishop is represented as the Tohunga whose religion (indicated by how he is holding his hands) is Ringatu. The knight is depicted as a Manaia (birdman) with hands in the prayer position whilst the rook is shown as a pataka (food store) inside a Pa Tu Watawata (fortified village). The pawns are warriors carrying long clubs and they are in a Wero (direct challenge) stance.

The history of this set is a story of immigration from the post-war calamity of Europe, entrepreneurship in a new country, and cross-cultural friendship in a more positive world. The following extract from a letter written to the previous owner of my chess set from John Fotiadis's nephew, and the book he co-published², outlines the history of the set and the Marble Art company:

... it stems from refugee families fleeing Europe after the 2nd World War. My uncle John Fotiadis has a Romanian/Greek background. After working in refugee camps for the UN in Athens, he settled in New Zealand along with families in tow in 1952. He set up Marble Art Ltd soonish after that. His love of the Maori people he met and became friends with was not superficial. (He felt they reminded him of the Greeks in their generosity and manner). And as for knowing anything about the culture, it was probably pretty much as informed as the times he lived in allowed it. From where we stand these days, it will seem as though these things his factory produced are perfect examples of Kitsch. But I do know that his wanting to use Maori motifs was based on much more than making money. As you can see in some of the family photos, they had a genuine attraction to the indigenous culture of the country they had settled in. Aotearoa had given them a second chance of living a fulfilling life after the tragedy of the war they had just been through. In their eyes their new home could do no wrong. It was the land of milk and honey.

I tried finding out more about the chess sets myself, a few years ago, when I was researching the show I had on in Auckland. I eventually traced someone in the Wairarapa who apparently still had the rights to the moulds of the chess set!!! And I tried to correspond further with him after I found this out. But he was a little cagey, and I never did find out where he lived or where this factory that was still producing them was actually set up!

The "Discovery of New Zealand" Set

The next set with a Maori theme was the "Discovery of New Zealand" chess set cast in bronze (with silver plating for the lighter pieces). It has an associated custom-made table made of tawa wood with the chess squares being rosewood and sycamore. One example is in the permanent collection of the New Zealand National Museum Te Papa. It was commissioned by Riki Creative Art Ltd in 1970 and designed by the Hungarian-born artist Frank Szirmay. One side was meant to represent "the tradition, art and mystical religion of the Maori race" while the other represented "James Cook, his men and the authority and creed of his home country"³.

According to the Te Papa Museum website, on the British side, the king is James Cook and the queen is Britannia. The bishops are represented by orbs and crosses whereas rooks are shown as a combination of an anchor and a bollard. The knights are depicted as dog heads, a clear reference to the figurehead on HMS Resolution, a Royal Navy sloop in which Cook made his second and third voyages of exploration in the Pacific. The pawns are seamen. On the Maori side, the king is a stylised representation of a chief, the queen a "Chieftainess" and the pawns are Maori warriors. The bishops are shown as godsticks (spiritual tools used by Maori priests in rituals) thought to represent the Maori God of Death, Hukere. The knights are portrayed as the prows of war canoes and the rooks as Tekotoko (carved figures on the gables of meeting houses).

My set was numbered 59, and more copies must have been made, yet I have only seen the Te Papa set and my own.

² "Marble Art Ltd" by Lucien Rizos and Damian Skinner- please see <http://www.lucienrizos.com/certain-materialities-damian-skinner-2017.html> for a book review.

³ "The Discovery of New Zealand Chess Set in Sculptured Bronze" Booklet, by Riki Creative Art Limited 1970 as quoted on the Te Papa Museum website.



The “Kotahi” Maori Chess Set

The oldest purely Maori sculpture set is also very rare. It was produced in a crushed stone compound by a company that survived for only a few brief years in the early 1980s. The carved representation of human faces on the pieces are called Wheku in the Maori language. As with other indigenous cultures, tattooing for Maori is a process that highlights cultural connections to family, society, place, and ways of viewing the world. The Wheku have slanting eyes and are commonly seen as a Koruru, the head of an ancestor (Tupuna) or guardian (Kaitiaki), depicted at the gable of a Wharenui (meeting house). A Wheku is seen to be more spiritual (Wairua) than physical and can be gifted to give strength and courage. In my collection I only have the pieces- some with repaired damage.



The commonly available resin set

The latest commercial chess set is the most detailed, most available and made of resin.



Non- commercial sets

Apart from the Giacaman sets, I believe that, to date, there are only two other unique carved Maori art chess sets. The first has chess pieces featuring New Zealand pāua eyes, teeth and protruding tongues. Protruding tongues, rolling eyes and stamping feet are features of the Maori haka, a dance that unites, and challenges. The haka can be misinterpreted as it is more complex than its intimidatory appearance. I have been unable to confirm the identity of the artist for this set, but I believe it may be that of Maori carver and author⁴ Ropata Davis.



⁴ “Treasured Taonga- Traditional and Contemporary Techniques and Concepts in Bone Carving” by Ropata Davis

The second set, which I do not have, was gifted to Field Marshal Montgomery on a visit to New Zealand in 1947. Each chess piece is “carved with motifs embodying the heads of Maori gods and the Auckland City coat of arms”⁵. It came with an associated chess table inlaid with a variety of New Zealand woods. In his reception speech, he recounted that he quit chess when his 9-year-old son beat him but would try again with this set.

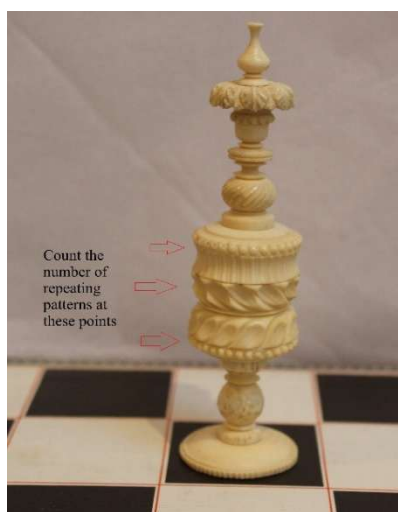
Conclusion

New Zealand is not a chess powerhouse, though it does have the distinction of having the most numerically contested national chess championship in the world (Scotland is second). However a sizable part of the planet is in its environs, and the indigenous people have a story to tell that can be reflected in chess sets.

Follow up on Barleycorn Research

Jim Joannou

At the CCI conference in May 2024 held in Oxford, UK, I gave a presentation entitled ‘When is a Barleycorn Not a Barleycorn?’ and I followed this up with an article in the July issue of The Chess Collector Magazine (Ref 1). I stated that I was continuing with my research, but needed help / information from CCI members and I requested that anyone, who owned a Barleycorn set, should take a picture of the white King and count the number of repeating patterns around the barrel of the king piece and email the information, along with the picture, to me (See Picture Below). I would then collate the results to determine if any of these Barleycorn sets were manufactured using the ‘Holtzapffel’ lathe or if they were carved using hand tools and a standard lathe. (Refs 1 & 2). I would also examine the pictures to see how many of them could be attributed to Jaques as the maker.



The results below speak for themselves:

No. of sets examined: 22

No. of sets attributed to Jaques: 5

No. of sets manufactured on a Holtzapffel lathe: 0

So, we can say that all the sets examined by myself, and others will have been created by hand, probably using a standard lathe and the skill of the carver / turner as suggested by CCI Member Alan Dewey in his co-authored article published in the Chess Collector Magazine (Ref 3). We cannot totally rule out that there may be other existing sets that were made using the Holtzapffel lathe, but until any such sets comes out to play, we can only assume that the cost of

owning a Holtzapffel lathe in the 19th Century was just too much for the many skilled carvers working on their own in the 19th Century and even for larger companies like Jaques.

I would like to thank all those CCI members who rallied to my call and provided their pictures and information. I am still happy to receive further pictures and information from members which I will add to the survey. If I ever find a Barleycorn set that was made using the Holtzapffel lathe, then I will certainly report it in a future issue of this magazine.

References:

- 1) The Chess Collector Magazine. Vol XXXIV No2 July 2024.
- 2) On the Collecting of Chess sets. 2022. Holgar Langer. Rediroma-Verlag. ISBN 978-3-98527-470-3.
- 3) The Chess Collector Magazine. Vol XX No2 2011. Barleycorn Chess Sets & The Persistence of Craft. Milissa Ellison & Alan Dewey.

⁵ <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/ODT19470731.2.123?query=chess+Montgomery&snippet=true>

Auction Review

In addition to the items on the Front Cover, we detail in this Section the results of a number of auctions held since our March 2025 issue- please note that all prices quoted here exclude buyer's premium.

A Josef Hartwig, Bauhaus- 'XVI' chess set (1924) sold in Germany in May for €10500 (\$8300, £8880) compared to €8000 for an equivalent set reported in the Auction Review in our March 2025 issue. A Jaques Carton Pierre Gothic- style casket with burgundy lining and red label underneath (denoting that this originally held a Jaques 3.5" ivory set) and printed Entered No 3454 realised £2000 (\$2680, €2355) despite some damage to the castellations and one side becoming detached. This casket likely dates to around 1855 as the set with Entered No 3485 is shown in Figure 3 of Sir Alan Fersht's book "Jaques Staunton Chess Sets 1849- 1939 (A Collectors Guide)" as being from that date.



A Swiss "Bears of Berne" softwood chess set (above left) with 10cm high kings sold for £1000 (\$1330, €1190), whilst an early 19th Century Irish Killarney Arbutus set (above right) with inlaid boxboard and counters for backgammon/draughts sold for £2900 (\$3890, €3415). Four carved rock crystal chess pieces (below left), described as Fatimid- style, 2.5 – 3.5cm tall, realised £1700 (\$2200, €2015), and an ivory Indian chess set with abstract, non- figural pieces (often referred to as a "Muslim" Indian set), 5cm kings, and stained in red and green respectively, fetched €800 (\$865, £670) (below right).



A Calvert laburnum and boxwood set (shown below) dating to the first half of the 19th Century reached £2800 (\$3460, €3360). The 8.4cm high kings had urn-shaped finials, the queens ball finials and the rooks were stamped underneath with "CALVERT 189 FLEET STt.".



Two Chinese ivory sets (below)- one puzzle ball and the other one described as representing the Cantonese army versus the Mongolian army- sold respectively for €1600 (\$1730, £1340) and €1000 (\$1080, £835).



An Art Deco porcelain chess set (below left) with 10cm kings from around 1930 and manufactured by the “Aelteste Volkstedter” factory fetched €1900 (\$1970, £1570). The set was designed in 1922 by Hugo Meisel in an Asian/Indian style with pawns wearing Chinese hats, rooks as elephants, horses as knights, and the queens as Indian- style goddesses⁶.



A “Reds and Whites” porcelain chess set (above right) formerly in the collection of Lothar Schmid, the German chess grandmaster who refereed the 1972 World Championship matches between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky, sold for €3800 (\$3975, £3150). This type of set is commonly known as the “Propaganda Set” given its depiction of evil, greedy capitalists on the White side against happy workers on the Red side. Designed by the Danko sisters (Natalya- sculptor and Yelena- porcelain painter) in 1922, this was produced by the Lomonosov Porcelain Factory in Petrograd (later Leningrad) up to 1939. From the maker’s marks, the auctioneer dates the set sold as “before 1925”. The choice of colours naturally reflect the warring sides in the Russian revolution pitting the Tsarist White Russians against the Communist Red Russians. On the white side, the king is depicted as Death, the queen as Fortuna/Greed with gold coins spilling from her bag, the bishops as Tsarist Hussars and the pawns as the populace in chase. On the red side, the king is a blacksmith, the queen

⁶ Please refer to pages 16 – 17 of “Schach & Porzellan”, catalogue for the exhibition held in the State Museum for Porcelain, 16 March – 13 October 2024.

a farmer's wife, the bishops are Red Army soldiers, and the pawns are peasants harvesting. Please note that the white king in the set sold is glued.

A Meissen "Frogs" porcelain chess set designed by Alexander Struck in 1955 reached €13200 (\$15210, £11310). The kings are 8.3 cm high and shown as frogs sitting with crown and sceptre, whereas the queens wear coronets and sit cross-legged. Knights and bishops are represented respectively as diving and running frogs (in German, a bishop is a "Läufer" which translates literally as a "runner"). Both rooks and pawns are shown as frogs squatting on pedestals of differing heights.



An 18th Century bone Kholmogory set in red and black sold for €3200 (\$3455, £2675). From the photo above right, this is clearly an example of a Russian "little faces" set which describes a conventional playing set "finished with carved heads" (see "Master Pieces" by Gareth Williams, pages 84- 86).

Finally, as a reminder to our members that you should never take auction descriptions at face value, a Kholmogory set was sold recently in Norway for N.Kr 9800 (€830, \$930, £700) with the set actually being described by the auctioneers as an early 20th Century bone set!! A handwritten note found inside the original chess board with fitted drawer for the pieces provided information on the impeccable provenance of the set which was once a gift to Frederik Rode (1800-1883), who was a priest in Finnmark in the northernmost part of Norway from 1826 to 1834 and also had a seat in the Norwegian parliament. The set actually arrived in Norway as a result of the Pomor trade between the people of Northern Norway (including Finnmark) and the Russians who lived around the White Sea (including the town of Kholmogory).

