

The Evolution Of The Belfast Pattern Pump

The Belfast Pattern pump is simply a particular style of pump only found commonly in Northern Ireland. At first glance it appears the same as an Evans Yard Pump but in reality it is quite different. For a pump it is quite fancy. Some of its features include spirals, flutes, ridges and in certain places rope style decoration. At first every one appears the same but actually there are lots of different patterns. We think most of these are early models with a few that don't really fit in but have a lot in common with the standard pumps. The standard pumps are very commonly seen and often have the name of the plumber cast into them. (see Fig.1)



Fig.1, Skillyscolban, Co. Down.

Early models are much more interesting than the standard Belfast Pattern pumps as they are uncommon anywhere. From what I have seen the ones I think are earliest always have no marks. Their barrels are fluted, rather than spiral decorated and have very large horizontal bulges on the pump head. Caps are also different but handles are essentially identical. (see Fig.2) This kind of pump had subtle changes made during its years of manufacture.



Fig.2, Back Road, Drumbo, Co. Down

After this kind however, the spiral pattern had started to emerge but rather than spirals they had zig-zags. Very few original caps still exist on these pumps so we don't really know that they look like. Another big improvement was that for the first time the design allowed for text to be cast into the pump therefore meaning makers, plumbers, installers, etc. could be credited on the pump itself. One of the earliest plumbers to be credited on these pumps was William John Knox, who died in 1878 therefore meaning that these pumps must have been manufactured before that year. The inscription reads "W J Knox & Sons Lisburn". An example of a pump like this (with no inscription) can be seen in Fig.3.



Fig.3, Ballinderry, Co. Antrim.

A later development made the barrel fluted again but with ribs as well. The head shape became Bulbous and for the first time had flutes as well. The text area became thinner but the text got bigger. Caps were varied but were very fancy. The neck of the pump is also fancy being embellished with what looks like a bejewelled bracelet. The spout is fluted as well. The bottom half of the head however, is not fluted. A picture of this kind of pump inscribed "A C Simpson Armagh" can be seen in Fig.4.



Fig.4, Palace Stables, Armagh City.

After this however was the standard Belfast Pattern pump (see Fig.1). It had the spiral on the barrel, the text rim was virtually the same. The bottom half of the head was fluted but the spout wasn't. The top half of the head remained fluted but became concave rather than convex. The cap became smooth with a fluted finial and rope decoration around the bottom. The neck became rope decorated as well. This kind of pump became the traditional Northern Irish pump and can be seen all over NI.

A modern day development are replicas. They are essentially identical to a standard Belfast Pattern pump but have a sharp (rather than blunt) bucket hook and a cast iron handle. They are always inscribed "Rankin & Co. Ballymena" (see Fig.5)



Fig.5, Ballycrune, Co. Down.

Other Pumps:

Another kind of Irish pump is a Magee pump, made by Magee & Co. Belfast. There are currently two known kinds of Magee pump. The first kind of Magee pump has a few examples around NI (see Fig.6) and the other kind there are only two examples known. One being in museum storage (see Fig.7) and one being for sale in Larne. Both kinds are inscribed "Magee & Co. Belfast".



Fig.6, At the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

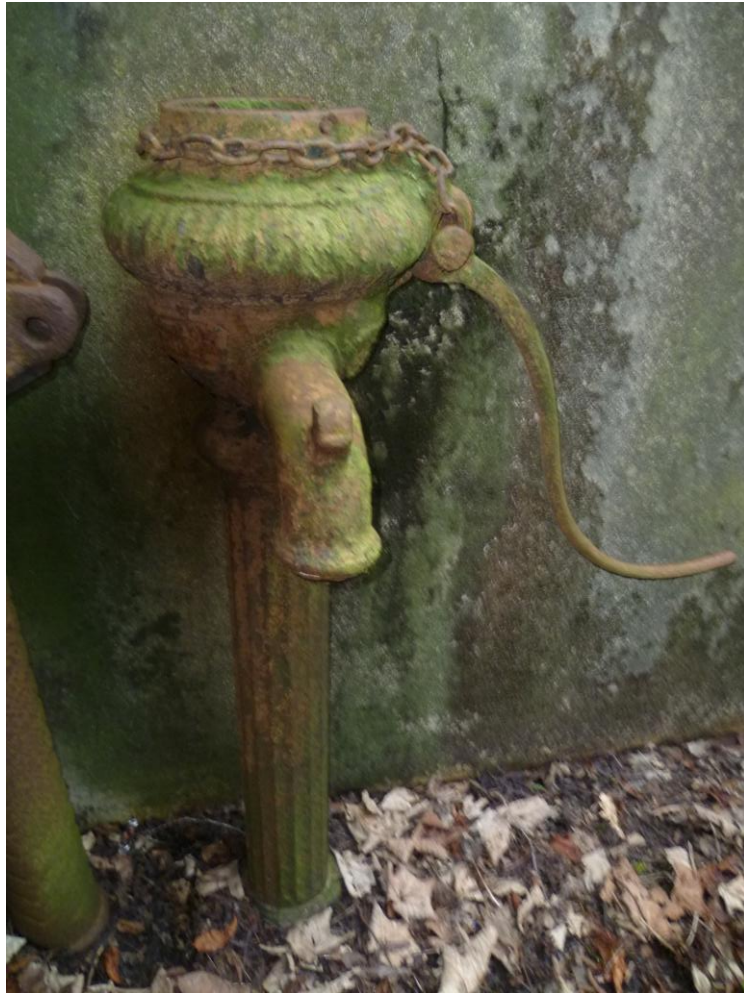


Fig.7, In Storage at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.