
WEDGWOOD JASPER HEELS



Wedgwood jasperware and Edward Rayne

Wedgwood is an acclaimed quintessence of style and quality worldwide. Articles with Wedgwood name are the pride of museums and private collections, they adorn the tables of the high and mighties as well as common devotees of good taste and high quality.

Just listing the collection of Wedgwood products might be a topic of a separate research paper - in more than 250 years of its history the company has been producing articles from bone china tea sets, dinnerware, vases, Christmas decorations, figurines, serveware, flatware, boxes to jewellery.

Whatever the taste differences of porcelain lovers, they all understand that china ware is not an eternal stuff and more than often its practical qualities come second to beauty. With Wedgwood there is no need to compromise. As manufacturer assures, four Wedgwood bone china cups can withstand another British pride - a Rolls-Royce or even a bus with 40 passengers onboard.

Spring shoes by Rayne.

The "Wedgwood" collection for export.

Mr. Edward Rayne the famous London shoe designer has produced what he calls his "Wedgwood" collection - for the export market - for Spring 1959. Specially intended for the American and Canadian market - the heels have traditional Wedgwood design in blue and green with cameo trims in blue - green and black.

KEYSTONE PHOTO SHOWS: The Cameo in the centre - is the feature of this high heeled silk court shoe - from the Rayne Wedgwood Collection.

October 11, 1958

Having no chance to prove this assertion in person, I take their words for it. Especially, because I happen to have a very unusual object with Wedgwood name on it - jasper heels.

Yes, you get it right. The heels !

Here are the heels for shoes made of jasper porcelain imitating Greek and Roman motives in decoration.

The history of invention of jasperware is well documented. I would only like to remind that the company founder Josiah Wedgwood has spent five long years since 1770 to 1774 searching for the right solution, sometimes being almost at the brink of despair.

He considered this invention his greatest professional achievement.

This new material - non-glazed porcelain - was called after a natural hard stone jasper and products made of it were called jasperware. Blue jasper featuring classical figures in bas relief, has virtually become synonymous with the Wedgwood name.

It was exactly this material that UK shoe manufacturer Edward Rayne decided to use for heels and decorations in his new collection of shoes.



When I first saw a pair of shoes with jasper heels I was in doubt if they could withstand the weight of the human body by themselves. The replacement heels that we were lucky to acquire for our collection have solved the mystery - there was no metal shaft inside! Actually there is no through hole.

H&M Rayne



Nijinsky, Anna Pavlova, Diaghilev Ballet artists, Lili Langtry, George Edwardes, May Tempest and others. Nevertheless, the firm has become a properly footwear company only after opening a shop in London at New Bond Street in 1918, offering its exclusive line of day and evening shoes to the public at large.

One of the vivid attestations of the high level of company footwear was the fact that in 1936 Rayne was granted a Royal Warrant by Queen Mary - an honour that has been repeated three times.

History of H&M Rayne Ltd. has started in 1885 when an Irishman Henry Ryan, who changed his name to Rayne, and his wife Mary, have founded a company, which supplied theatres with stage props, costumes, make-up and footwear.

Company clients list included such famous names as



Gold lamé court shoes with Louis heels.

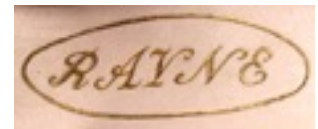
H&M Rayne, UK, 1900s

In 1950 Edward Rayne, the grandson of the founder, inherited the helm. He was 28 at the time and it was under his leadership that the company gained international recognition. Rayne shoes were sold all over Europe, in the United States, Australia and Asia. New shops were opened in London and departments offered Rayne shoes in Harvey Nichols, Harrods and Selfridges. In 1970 Rayne shop was opened in Paris at the famous Faubourg St Honore, the only UK shoe shop in Paris after John Lobb.

Edward Rayne cooperated with such renowned fashion designers as Hardy Amies, Norman Hartnell and John Cavanagh. He also commissioned development of some collections to designers like Andre Perugia, Roger Vivier, Mary Quant, Jean Muir, Bill Gibb and Bruce Oldfield.

Rayne company was quickly following the changes in step with the changing times, but it never cut its British roots. One of the experiments with the purely British symbol - Wedgwood jasper, was the idea to use it in design of footwear.

The biggest difficulty was that jasper was intended not only for the decorative purposes, but rather functionally.



Spring Shoes by Rayne..
The "Wedgwood " Collection for export.

Mr. Edward Rayne the famous London shoe designer has produced what he calls his Wedgwood collection - for the export market - for Spring 1959. Specifically intended for the American and Canadian market - the heels of the shoes have traditional Wedgwood designs in blue and green - and there are Cameo trims in blue - green and black. Mr. Rayne is taking his collection to New York and Chicago.

KEYSTONE PHOTO SHOWS:
Model Marion Roberts who comes from South Africa - with a selection of the Rayne Wedgwood Collection - decorated heels and matching cameo trims.

October 14, 1958



The company magazine “Wedgwood Review” in November 1958 reported that “Exhaustive trials, long to be remembered...were necessary before the first perfect batch was delivered hot from the oven to H&M Rayne”. These were the models later sent to New York Plaza Hotel and to Chicago to be displayed during the National Shoe Fair.

In 1977 Wedgwood и Rayne created another collection and reintroduced jasper shoe heels in new colours including primrose, pale blue, sage green and lilac. Next year this collection was offered at the American market.



Olive suede stilettos with Wedgwood jasper ware heels..

H&M Rayne, UK, 1958

The heels feature a bas-relief of Hebe, daughter of Zeus and Hera, she was a cupbearer to the gods and was viewed as a symbol of eternal youth, the summer of human life. Eagle is a symbol and sometimes an embodiment of Zeus himself. The image is placed within a laurel wreath.



Slingback leather sandals with Wedgwood lilac jasperware heels, featuring the image the southern wind Zephyr

H&M Rayne, UK, 1978

The image of Zephyr in the figure of an airy lady angel is thought to be first modelled for Wedgwood by Thomas Stothard, English painter, illustrator and engraver, member of the Royal Academy of Arts. Usually, Zephyr is depicted as male. In Greek tradition he is a god of a ruinous western wind; in Roman mythology - he is a god of southern balmy winds.

The Shoe must go on!

In the late 20th century Rayne shoe company went through a series of painful transformations: it was bought, sold and resold, became a retailer to other brands and finally in 1994 it was liquidated.

Edward Rayne’s impact on the British fashion industry is hard to overestimate. As a Chairman of the British Fashion Council he has been promoting and improving the image of British fashion all over the world. In 1988 Rayne had received a well deserved knighthood for his life long services to the industry. He died tragically on February 7, 1992 in London.

Is this the end of the story?

Hopefully not! Rayne is back thanks to Nick Rayne and his wife Lulu, who are reviving the brand after 20 years of silence in cooperation with French shoe designer Laurence Dacade. Here is hoping the British traditions of high quality and style lives on and we will see more Wedgwood jasperware masterpieces in Rayne shoes.