

The First Makers of Pressed Glass in England (Auszug)

SG, Zum Abdruck:

Der überraschende Fund des **“Pattern Book”** von **Molineaux, Webb & Co. Ltd, Manchester, von 1927**, und die damit verbundenen Themen, wie die Rolle von Thomas Webb I und II, die Andenken-Teller für Queen Victoria um 1840 sowie die Andenken-Teller, die mit „W“ oder „WR“ gemarkt sind, war Anlass dazu, einige wenige Auszüge aus den wichtigsten Quellen zu Pressglas aus England hier zu dokumentieren. Aus Zeitgründen wurde nicht alles übersetzt. Die englischen Texte sind aber auch so gut überschaubar! Merkwürdigerweise hat ausgerechnet ein „Pattern Book“, das wahrscheinlich am Ende eines wichtigen Pressglas-Unternehmens herausgebracht wurde, das Interesse an allerersten Pressgläsern aus England wieder wachgerufen.

Auszug aus Slack 1987, S. 21 ff. The First Manufacturers

The first makers of pressed glass in England were **Rice Harris, Bacchus and Green, and John Gold, all of Birmingham**. They were quickly followed by the **Manchester firms of Percival and Yates** (later Percival, Vickers) and **Molineux & Co.** (eventually Molineaux, Webb); by **Thomas Hawkes in Dudley**; and by **Richardson**; and **Wheley & Davis, in Stourbridge**. All these firms were engaged in the blown-glass trade many years before experimenting with pressed glass, and some returned to this after a relatively brief flirtation with the new invention.

The vital prerequisite for making pressed glass was of course a **mould**, and the **earliest mould maker we know of was James Stevens**, who worked for **Rice Harris of Birmingham**. Stevens, a die sinker by trade, was said to have previously made moulds for a glass manufacturer in America, although we do not know who this was. Stevens made the first slip-out tumbler mould in about **1836**, but it took him several years to persuade Harris, who at first considered the idea useless, to test it. When eventually the tumbler was made, it was clumsy and heavy: **pressing tumblers** thin at the sides was difficult even with later improved machinery. However, this prototype was eventually put into production and sold at about 6 s [shilling] per dozen. The second tumbler produced by Rice Harris was much improved in design, having six flutes and splits and a star bottom. Then came fluted tumblers with a host of other patterns, and very soon other manufacturers were entering the field.

As well as having to deal with technical difficulties, the early manufacturers were faced with the additional problem of the **glass tax**. This tax had been imposed on the industry in **1745** and was in force for a hundred years. By the turn of the century the tax had more than doubled, and was a severe obstacle in the way of the early development of pressed glass, since the first articles produced, being much thicker and heavier than

blown glass, attracted more duty. This outweighed any savings that might have resulted from mechanisation. However, much to the relief of the pressed-glass innovators, the **glass tax was eventually abolished in 1845**. At last the industry could expand, and experiment with a much wider variety of articles in both size and weight. Thanks to its low production costs and the repeal of the tax, **pressed glass was now able to sell at an extremely low price**, and this found favour with a completely new class of consumers. It remained poor in comparison with the blown and cut glass which it sought to imitate, but for the majority of its purchasers its cheapness more than compensated for its lower quality.

In **1839** the **Patent Office Design Registry** was introduced. This gave protection to designs of goods for up to twelve months so long as the design was registered by the designer or manufacturer with the Registrar of Designs, and so **from this date on we have a clearer picture of who made what in pressed glass**.

The first registration was made by **Rice Harris of Birmingham on 24 January 1840**. This was for a method of decorating pressed drinking glasses, such as goblets, ales, and so on, with flutes and slits alternately placed within the design. The second registration was again made by Rice Harris and was dated 30 January 1840, only a few days after the first. Again, this applied to a design of flutes suitable for pressed drinking glasses, but this time the registration included tumblers and no doubt referred to that first tumbler made from the mould designed by James Stevens a few years earlier.

In **1842** the **Designs Act** came into force and this provided for classes of ornamental designs to be registered with a designated Roman numeral. The first four classes were: I for metal, II for wood, III for glass, and IV for earthenware; other groups mainly concerned fabrics. The protection of these ornamental goods was for three years, and in **1843** “useful” goods as distinct from “ornamental” goods were also included in the protection, also for three years. When a design was registered it was given a class - III for glass - the day, month and year were noted, and also the “parcel” in which the design was registered, together with the design number.

This information was then transposed into a coded system using a **diamond-shaped mark** to be used on the goods that were under protection. This system was used **from September 1842 to December 1883** in two cycles, the first from 1842 to December 1867 and the second from 1868 to 1883. Thereafter, a **new system** was introduced which used a registered number only: this appeared on the goods as “Rd. No.”, beginning at No. 1 in 1884. A full explanation of this system and how to read the different cycles is given on pages 131-132.

Before the middle of the century pressed glass was being produced in considerable quantity and in **1849** it appeared at the **Birmingham Exhibition** where it featured

in the exhibits of Rice Harris, George Bacchus & Sons (as Bacchus and Green were known after 1840) and Lloyd & Summerfield, all of Birmingham. Although pressed glass was becoming popular with manufacturers and the public, its next showing, at the **Great Exhibition of 1851 in London**, was received with mixed feelings and in fact the only leading manufacturer mentioned in the catalogue was Rice Harris. One review, however, gave a favourable report:

Rice Harris and Sons' pressed glass is of the greatest interest. By pressing into moulds this elegant material is produced to the public in useful and symmetrical forms, at prices considerably below those at which cut flint glass could possibly be offered. Many of the specimens of pressed glass exhibited have a degree of sharpness in all the ornamental parts ...[4].

Manchester, too, was producing pressed glass before the middle of the century. An extant letter dated **1848** and written by the founder of one of Manchester's most important glass factories, **Thomas Webb II of Molineaux, Webb & Co.**, to the Warrington firm of Robinson and Skinner, describes how the manufacture of pressed glass was carried on at Molineaux, Webb. [...]

The second half of the nineteenth century was to see the heyday of pressed glass, with countless experiments in methods of manufacture, both with machinery and ingredients. The trade spread, and established itself most successfully in **Lancashire** and **Tyneside**, two regions **where coal was available** to fire the furnaces and the ingredients for glass-making easier to acquire. Here, machinery and moulds could be made in the existing industrial workshops and materials that were not available locally could be brought in by ship to Liverpool and Newcastle. Knowledge of the techniques was passed on to these new centres by the pioneers - for instance **James Stevens' sons**, after working with their father at Rice Harris in Birmingham, went on to manage the mould department at the **greatest Tyneside factory, Sowerby's Ellison Glass Works at Gateshead**. Meanwhile, the Joint founder of Sowerby's Ellison Glass Works, Samuel Neville, had previously worked at Bacchus and Green.

At first, the **canal system** was used for transport, and in fact this may have been one of the reasons why **Birmingham** had early success in making so many manufactured goods. Birmingham had excellent canal connections with many parts of the country - Gloucester, London, Hull, Liverpool and Manchester - and by canal, too, came the **Staffordshire coal** for the glass furnaces. As **railways** spread throughout the country, however, rail was increasingly used. As pressed glass grew more successful, the major manufacturers opened up **show-rooms** in the major cities - London, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Glasgow - and later in Europe, particularly France and Germany. A flourishing export trade grew up - for example in **1882 Sowerby's** Ellison Glass Works were advertising weekly shipments of their glass to Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy and Russia, and fortnightly shipments to Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Exports were also very strong to the colonies, with some pieces and even whole sets of glassware being made

specifically for colonial use. It was not until the turn of the century that, **faced with changing fashion and foreign competition, English pressed glass went into decline**.

Slack 1987, S. 24:

In the **second half of the nineteenth century** there were, as has been said, two major areas producing pressed Glass in England: one in the **North-East**, centred on **Tyneside** and **Wearside**, and the other in the **North-West**, centred on **Lancashire**, and in particular the **Manchester** area. Of these, the north-eastern manufacturers were the more prolific in their output and in the variety of their products.

The most important of the **north-eastern** firms were:

Sowerby's Ellison Glass Works, Gateshead
(formerly Sowerby and Neville)
Neville Glass Works, Gateshead
George Davidson & Co., Teams Glass Works, Gateshead
Henry Greener & Co., Wear Flint Glass Works, Millfield, Sunderland
Edward Moore & Co., Tyne Flint Glass Works, South Shields
W. H. Heppell, Newcastle Flint Glass Works, Newcastle

Slack 1987, S. 115:

We now turn to the **North-West** of England for the other pressed-glass making centre that concerns the collector today. **Lancashire** had been renowned for its glass-making activities since the 18th century, when the industry was centred on **Liverpool**, Prescot, and Warrington, but it was not until the 19th century that **Manchester** became a centre for the trade. By the time the status of City had been conferred on Manchester by Queen Victoria in **1853**, however, glass-making was well established, and **by the end of the Victorian era Manchester was the most prestigious centre of the pressed-glass trade**. [...]

Manchester was situated in a favourable position for glass-making, for the **basic raw materials** in the form of sand and chemicals were always at hand, **coal** to fire the furnaces was in abundance, and there was a **network of canals and railways** that enabled access not only to the rest of the country but to ports such as Liverpool and Hull as an outlet for foreign trade. One other major advantage, and one which was greatly to benefit the pressed-glass side of the trade, was the close proximity of the **engineering and foundry workshops**, where **moulds and presses** could be made to order, and it was this link between the glass-maker and the ironworker that made Manchester the centre for the leading pressed-glass producers of the north-west. The pressed-glass trade was first set up in the **Ancoats** district, and later spread to the **Hulme** district, these two areas becoming the established glass-making centres.

John Derbyshire, Regent Road Flint Glass Works,
Salford, Manchester
Molineaux, Webb & Co., Ancoats, Manchester

Burtles, Tate & Co., Poland Street Glass Works,

Manchester

Siehe unter anderem auch:

PK 2008-3 Lattimore, Rice Harris, Broad Street Glassworks, Birmingham**The Richardsons, Wordsley Glassworks, Stourbridge (bei Birmingham)****PK 2008-3 Anhang 03, SG, Archiv Rona Crystal, Musterbuch Molineaux, Webb & Co. Ltd., Manchester, England, um 1927 - Patterns of Pressed Glass Goods**

Abb. 2008-3-03/017 Ausschnitt aus GOOGLE MAPS England

Newcastle Upon Tyne / Gateshead, Sunderland, South Shields in der Region North East

Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield in der Region North West, Birmingham, Stourbridge in der Region West Midlands

London, Southampton, Portsmouth, Bristol

