

Stourbridge Glass Museum – how it came into being.

The remarkable tale of the period from the formation of BGF in 2010 to SGM official opening in 2013.

Now available direct from the museum. All proceeds to BGF.

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Down memory lane

Ian Dury has been doing a spot of research recently and has unearthed a delightful tale from yesteryear that turns out to be a real 'wheels within wheels' story. I have to declare a bit of vested interest here since my late mother married a relation of the man concerned, so it happens that by coincidence we all know each other but knew none of this narrative until Ian linked it all together.

Husband and wife Brian (whose cousin married my ma) and Chris Furness recently had the opportunity to view a family heirloom. Both of Brian's parents were part of a line in several generations of family glassmaking heritage; Brian himself worked at Thomas Webb for a while. His father Sid Furness and mother Kathleen (nee Chapman) were once employees at Stuart Crystal. In 1966 they moved to South Wales and managed the new training school at Stuart Crystal in the Pengam Glassworks, Aberbargoed. Mother Kathleen's Great Grandfather was William Chapman a glassmaker in Stourbridge and member of the Flint Glass Makers Friendly Society in 1864.

Whilst Brian, now long retired, was volunteering at Kinver library recently, he discovered that he and another volunteer had a mutual connection with the Pengam Glassworks. It turned out that way back in 1966 Sid Furness took on the library volunteer's husband as an apprentice glasscutter. The library volunteer was June Dury and the apprentice glasscutter of the class of '66, commencing work in August of that year, was a young Ian Dury, now June's husband.

It so happens that Ian is writing a book on the history of the Pengam Glassworks and, through this chance encounter, Brian has proved to be a brilliant source of material. During a recent meeting Brian recalled his parents donating the Flint Glass Makers Friendly Society Certificate to the former Broadfield House Glass Museum over 30 years ago and wondered if it was still in the collection.



After a phone call to Sarah Hall, keeper of the glass collection now held at Himley Hall, she confirmed that the certificate was still in the collection and invited Brian and Chris along to view it. This unexpected surprise was made the more special in finding that Sid and Kath had written on the reverse all the details of the donation. Moves are afoot to secure a display spot for this wonderful item so all can enjoy it. The thing is a work of art in its own right and is perhaps a reflection of the pride its members took in their profession - which, of course, our contemporary glassmakers still do to this day.



Audible upgrade

Talking of family, the lovely geezer I mentioned above who married my ma was named Mervyn. 'Our Merv' as he was affectionately known, had a severe hearing loss. He coped with that, and a lot of other ailments, admirably but one thing really got his goat. *'I dunno'* he used to moan *'I spend three bleedin' grand apiece on two aids for me lug-oles* (*'I invest a large measure of finance in assistance-devices for my aural appendages' for readers outside Gornal - Ed*) *and in half o' these new-fangled buildings ah still cor hear a blind mon's tap wi' a lump'ommer'*. (*My audio-cognisance is still deficient in both quality and timbre - Ed*)



Well at least he couldn't grumble about Stourbridge Glass Museum because our Volunteer Co-ordinator Moemi tells us that thanks to funding from Creative Black Country, with whom she has been working of late, we now have a brand spangly-new induction loop in the reception area. This is great news and goes a long way to further enhancing our visitor experience for those who don't hear so good. If you don't know what a hearing induction loop is, and just how much it can aid the hearing process, then we'll happily advise you prior to your visit. From my own experience I can tell you it transformed Our Merv's life. Even if he was still grumpy. (*'Ah bay now I con lissens better, a'er kid' - Our Merv*)

Situation Vacant

This, *verbatim* as we received it, from Dartington in North Devon...

Are you a new glass graduate who would like to develop their skills and produce their own products? Are you further on in your glassware career and would like the use of studio space? Are you seeking a permanent role and would like to be part of the visitor attraction producing Dartington's Studio Collection products?

Then this may be the opportunity for you in our new Visitor Centre in Torrington, North Devon. This is a front facing role where the public watch up close on the skilled work that is being produced in our new electric furnace. Would suit someone who is local to North Devon or is willing to commute. Flexible working hours Monday – Friday between 9am and 3.30pm. If you would like more information or are interested in this opportunity then please contact Stephanie Wright : swright@dartington.co.uk

News from the Crown Dependencies

My old school chum Nick Bate, whom readers may recall from *GCs passim* I hadn't met for the thick end of 60 years until a recent chance correspondence brought him and his wife Jenny to our parts, is rapidly carving himself a niche as our Channel Islands correspondent. Nick has unearthed some fascinating stuff, some of which may - or may not - have connections with our area but his latest bit is so off the wall we just had to bring it to your attention. He says: '*Let me tell you about a glass moulder with Jersey connections.*' OK Nick, off you go ...

'John Robinson of Somerset, not to be confused with John *Paul* Robinson the Canadian glass artist, produced several years ago a recreation of Michelangelo's *Pitti Tondo*. The original was created in 1503-1504, and is a 3-foot diameter unfinished sculpture of the virgin and child.

The details of this are covered in various websites (*try [here](#) for starters- Ed*) so suffice to say that the artist discovered a plaster cast of the original, used it as a model to carve a new marble prototype, then made a rubber mould from which two wax casts were made. These were then used to create sand moulds, with the wax melted-out, following which the blue glass from Checha was poured in; it required three weeks to cool.

The result was beautiful, and the first one was gifted by the artist to a cathedral in Los Angeles. The second one was gifted to the Parish Church of St. Helier, known colloquially as Town Church. It sits in the north transept mounted in a gimbal and is backlit to give a great impression. I attach two images, one showing the detail, and the other with the contrast subdued to show the mounting and an adjacent chair for scale. If any glass enthusiasts come here for a holiday, it is not to be missed'.



Glass in action Stateside

Here's a confession. It winds me up, it really does and if I hear again anyone (especially around Stourbridge) saying that glassmaking is dead then I swear I'll ... *(at this point Editor makes signs of slow manual strangulation before regaining composure)* ...



But don't just take my word for it. The June edition of *Geographical* (the magazine of the Royal Geographical Society with IBG – the very same who produced our online [Discovering Britain - The Crystal Canal guide](#)) carries news and a couple of stunning images of what's going on right now over in Corning, NY. The large black contemporary glass building just across the river from the eponymous Museum of Glass is the world headquarters for Corning Incorporated. It is not open to the public. Oooh, spooky.

'So what's going on there?' I hear you ask. With acknowledgements, I quote: '*Corning Inc is a pioneer in glass technology (as seen in an accompanying image) producing ultra-pure glass for a range of technologies including fibre optics, mobile phones and lighting. Here (seen in a second image) a skilled technician traces a part template for optimised glass utilisation on a boule of Corning HPFS fused silica. (This) has been used for the windows of space shuttles and submarines, as well as some of the world's most powerful telescopes*'.



And it's not just Corning Inc., but you get my drift. In the interests of balance we must say, of course, that other glass specialists are available. Including here in good ol' blighty. Right then, so where are you? Tell us who you are and what you're doing, and let's sing it from the bloomin' rooftops. You know it makes sense.

Thanks from the sharp edge

The number of people who have never heard of the Samaritans www.samaritans.org must be vanishingly small, but just in case let us remind ourselves of those tireless volunteers who are on hand every minute of every day and in complete confidence to help and advise those with troubles many of us are fortunate enough never to even imagine. Our admiration knows no bounds, so we were really pleased to receive a message from their Kate Owen for the illumination of our front-of-house icon at SGM over the weekend of 20th-21st April. This was part of an awareness campaign that saw several other notable buildings around our area similarly illuminated and we are happy to reproduce Kate's letter in full:

The support you have given Samaritans during Marathon Weekend on 20th and 21st April 2024 is greatly appreciated. Lighting your landmark in green showed members of our community that Samaritans are available 24 / 7. Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy and Samaritans' vision is that fewer people will die by suicide.

Every 10 seconds, Samaritans responds to a call for help. We're here, day or night on freephone 116123 for anyone who's struggling to cope, who needs someone to listen without judgement or pressure. Please scan the QR code for more information.

Samaritans is not only for the moment of crisis; we're taking action to prevent the crisis. That's why we work tirelessly to reach more people and make suicide prevention a priority. You have generously played your part by lighting up your landmark green and raising more awareness of Samaritans in Sandwell and Dudley. We hope we can continue to work with you in the future and together we can save lives.

With heartfelt thanks and kind regards,

*Kate Owen,
Deputy Director for Outreach and Awareness at Samaritans
Brierley Hill*



Photo by Stourbridge Photographic Society

Don't miss out

There's always a full programme of events and activities all year round at SGM, but of course this will pick up pace around the time of the International Festival of Glass in August. Keep abreast of what's going on here at the museum via our social media feeds or our *What's On At SGM* feature. Which just happens to be right below. Hey, did you see how I did that, linking it straight to the next item? Clever or what? There's also a discreet clue by the big arrow ...

WHAT'S ON AT SGM

Full details of our packed programme of events are contained in our brochure (available free of charge from the Museum and other local outlets) or via the Stourbridge Glass Museum website by clicking here: <https://www.stourbridgeglassmuseum.org.uk/events/>



Volunteer Week

Come along on Friday June 7th and meet our wonderful museum staff and volunteers from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm for a delightful tea and cake session. 🍰🍰

This is a fantastic opportunity to:

- ◆ Discover the various volunteer roles available in the museum.
- ◆ Learn how you can make a difference and contribute to our community.
- ◆ Explore behind-the-scenes and see how we bring history to life.
- ◆ Hear inspiring stories from our current volunteers.
- ◆ Ask questions and find the perfect volunteer role that suits your interests and skills.

Whether you're passionate about history, love working with people, or simply want to give back, we have a place for you! Come join our friendly team and help us preserve and celebrate our heritage.

GIFTS AND DONATIONS

to BGF funds, for which we thank you

Funding and maintaining a revenue stream is an ongoing requirement. We greatly value your contributions. BGF Trustees are unremunerated; all monies received go to the cause. Donations can be as one-off contributions or standing order.

BGF routinely reviews its donation procedures. Enhancements are announced as and when but we currently accept donations direct by cash, cheque and BACS. **We would respectfully ask that all cheques and orders be made payable to BRITISH GLASS FOUNDATION.**



This is the QR code for the British Glass Foundation.
Scan to browse the work of the BGF or to make a donation.

For donations by BACS our bank details are:

HSBC Bank
Branch Identifier Code: MIDLGB2108U
Sort code: 40-38-07
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To donate via *JustGiving* visit:

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To donate *PayPal* visit: <https://www.paypal.com/uk/for-you/transfer-money/send-money> and donate to bgf@britishglassfoundation.org.uk

To donate through our website visit: www.stourbridgeglassmuseum.org.uk and hit the 'Donate' button.

Donations made by a UK taxpayer can attract Gift Aid, which is a great supplement to our funds and costs the donor nothing. All we need to claim this is your Gift Aid declaration; contact us for details if you have not already supplied us with relevant particulars.

Please note: In acknowledging the support of donors *GlassCuts* generally will not reveal either the details of the donor or the amount donated unless the donor indicates otherwise or the circumstances are in the public domain or public interest. This does not preclude the possibility of details, including the amount donated and/or the donor's particulars, appearing elsewhere in BGF material.

In addition to cash BGF is similarly grateful for donations of good quality glass to sell in our shop. All funds raised from the sale of donated glass go into a separate Collections Account towards future acquisitions for the museum. To make a donation directly into the **British Glass Foundation Collections Account** use sort code: **40-38-07** and account number: **52291789**.

Notes and queries

Whilst we are happy to facilitate this *ad hoc* information exchange on unusual items of interest BGF cannot undertake valuations or offer comment other than that supplied by our correspondents. Submission does not guarantee publication. No responsibility ... etc (*usual caveats apply*)

* Great news on the mysterious candy jar featured in the last issue. We are advised these were the handiwork of legendary glassmaker Malcolm Andrews. He does not remember who they were made for, but recalls making only 4 or 5 of them which suggest they were something out of the ordinary.

There was a foot on the jars which he called a 'sharp-edged foot' for which he has a special board made for them that incorporated a length of carbon attached to the pear wood, which gave a neat crisp sharp edge (fruit wood was perfect for this role and glassmakers would buy up old orchards to obtain it – Ed).

We understand that Andy Cope, an engraver at latter-day Ruskin but who served his time at Webb Corbett-Royal Doulton, may have been the engraver, although he feels he might have given the outer line of the emblem a sharper definition. Enquiries continue on that one. The sand engraving would have been by Duncan Scott. Our thanks, as always, to Ian Dury who has again translated his lifetime of glassmaking skills into our ace researcher.



* This delightful vase on a stand is puzzling reader Judy Barber. It's about 2 feet high and a foot across the top. More than that, she would appreciate your help.

PARISH NOTICES

tell us the news from your world

Send us yours and we'll try to mention it. No guarantees other than we'll do our best.

- * Alan J. Poole newsletter latest edition. alanjpoole@aol.com
- * Contemporary Glass Society latest news. www.cgs.org.uk
Monthly Glass Network Digital also available.
- * The Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers of London. Updates: info@glass-sellers.co.uk
- * The Glass Society Events Schedule. <http://glassassociation.org.uk>

From the Hot Studio:

www.allistermalcolm.com **Facebook** @allistermalcolmglass **Twitter** @allistermalcolm **Instagram** @allistermalcolmglassltd
Follow all that's going on via Allister's feeds.

Keep up with the latest via Al's media feeds.

Just a reminder ...

If you've got something 'glassy' to say and you want it said to somebody else, consider sending it to us and we'll do our best to help pass the information via *GlassCuts* or *OffCuts*. Usual address. There's no fee, but if you've got a few bob lying around in a spare pocket we can always find a good use for it.

And finally ...

We leave you with this piece of wise advice that may help when someone is really, really getting on your nerves ...

'When you're dead, you don't know you're dead. The pain and hurt is felt by others, not you. It's the same when you're stupid.'

Works for me.

Graham Fisher MBE FRGS
Trustee, PR & Comms
pp British Glass Foundation
www.britishglassfoundation.org.uk

Volunteering at Stourbridge Glass Museum

Would you like to be part of a vibrant and enthusiastic group of volunteers dedicated to supporting the British Glass Foundation and its work at Stourbridge Glass Museum?

Specialist skills or knowledge are welcome but not essential. We are committed to equal opportunities and full training will be given where necessary. To find out more, contact us via the usual address and we will be delighted to do the rest.

Promotional opportunities

Award-winning *Black Country Radio* and *BCR Xtra* broadcast throughout the Black Country on 102.5 FM and also via DAB and on-line around the world. Part of BCR's remit is to promote local events. If you are organising an event that satisfies the criteria of not-for-profit, charitable or philanthropic and is community orientated then you may be eligible for no-fee promotion.

Go to www.blackcountryradio.co.uk hover over 'Local' and click 'Local Events Guide'. Submit the form you'll find at upper left under '+ Add Event'. Your announcement will then appear on the *Events Guide*. Allow sufficient notice and the event may be 'voiced' and broadcast live on air during daytime broadcasting. Depending on the number of events, yours might be broadcast several times; there's no guarantee but it should appear at least once. Meanwhile it stays on the *Events Guide* listings on the world-wide web until the day itself. And it's all entirely free of charge.

Second time around

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Keeping in touch

BGF Secretary & Business Manager Lynn Boleyn MBE

01384 900447 : bgf@britishglassfoundation.org.uk : Stourbridge Glass Museum, Stuart Works, High Street, Wordsley, West Midlands, DY8 4FB

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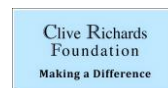
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BGF would also like to acknowledge the following, *inter alia*, for their support and generosity ...

Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership Growing Places Fund : Garfield Weston : Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust : The Headley Trust : The Charles Hayward Foundation : W.A. Cadbury Charitable Trust : John Ellerman Foundation : The Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers of London : The Pilgrim Trust : FCC Communities Foundation ... plus many contributions from other trusts, foundations and individuals. (E&OE)

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British Glass Foundation

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