

Goblets Galore

The following article was written by Brian Clarke in discussion with Peter Adamson and concerns an exhibition of 18th century drinking glasses at the Cambridge Glass Fair. Please visit the Goblets Galore Gallery to view all of the glasses featured in the exhibition.

Peter Adamson made that move from a collector in 18th century glass to well known dealer a number of years ago, when early retirement left him the time to indulge in his first & second loves – his wife Debbie and his glass. The drinking glasses that “stuck” with him and became his passion and major collection were large goblets: English & Continental, some engraved, others of glorious design with sparkling grey metal. All a joy to hold, behold and from which occasionally to drink.

Peter was persuaded to show his collection at the [September 2009 Cambridge Glass Fair](#)- what a stunning show the two cabinets of large goblets made in the entrance! Leaving out the discussion on whether “Newcastle” style glasses were really all made in Newcastle and thus English, there was one cabinet of 18 Continental glasses and one of 32 English glasses.

When asked which goblets were his favourites, Peter replied that he always found that very difficult to answer, as all had “something or other” that made him decide to add them to the collection, “though there are some, which for various reasons I can select for special mention”.

From the Continental goblets the first he selected was no.C2 in the exhibition, a massive ceremonial goblet c1680, probably from the Netherlands (Fig. 1). This thinly blown, low lead content goblet measures an impressive 12½ in. without its lid, and with its lid (which is soda and not original), 16½ in. “What I admire most in this piece is the skill that was obviously required to create such a large item with superb proportions and presence, notwithstanding the fact, that when full, its wonderfully spiked and gadrooned bowl has a capacity of just over 2



Fig 1: A massive ceremonial goblet with associated cover. Probably Dutch or Bohemian (c. 1680).

litres". Goblets of this huge size were probably used at functions such as marriages and would be passed around for use in toasts.



Fig 2: A Lauenstein Erotic Goblet (c. 1750).

His second was no. C16 in the exhibition, 'A Lauenstein Erotic Goblet', c1750 (Fig. 2). Standing 9 in. tall, this goblet in the English heavy baluster style is excellently engraved with a woodland scene, the composition being of a hunting gentleman and a lady holding his gun!! The lengthy script in Old German, engraved around the rim of the bowl loosely translates to, "We love the fingers under the Oaks and Firs, cocking (!!) the hunter's gun." Peter added, "much more so than English engraving at the time, the continentals were very fond of producing 'naughty glasses'." Not of lead glass, the pointed round funnel bowl over a teared knop, over a teared inverted baluster knop, with a high domed and folded foot is a typical

example from the Lauenstein Glasshouse.



Fig 3: Composite glass.

His last selection from the continental glasses was no. C17 (Fig. 3). Designed to deceive, this glass is a composite, constructed from 4 different parts, all roughly from the same date c1680, though from different countries: the bowl is Bohemian, the stem English lead glass, the bottom knop and foot are also in lead glass but from different glasses.

The bowl is Bohemian (c. 1680) and the stem is English lead glass (c. 1680).

Peter informs us "I was informed at the time of acquiring this glass that it was put together by a prominent continental dealer for the purpose of having some fun with both collectors and fellow dealers: for the collectors it was shown as an example of what you must watch out for when collecting those glasses which look like very interesting early examples, and that every item must be examined very carefully before purchase. It was also on display without a price ticket and to this dealer's surprise, many visiting dealers, in their haste to get a price without carefully looking at the piece were momentarily led to believe (by themselves) it was a rare and interesting item, only to be slightly embarrassed on further examination to discover its true identity as 'The Glass That Never Was'."



Fig 4: Dutch Goblet (c. 1680)

I also enjoyed the form of no. C1 with its vibrant fruit & vegetable engraving on a large conical bowl over the most wonderfully massive quatrefoil/propeller knop stem I've ever seen (Fig. 4). Glasses C5 through to C9, with their multi-knopped stems, were a tribute to the skill of the glassmaker, whilst no. C11, a Norwegian glass dated c1770, has a finial to the cover, reminiscent of the Lismullen Cup, gifted by William III in 1690 after the Battle of the Boyne, some 80 years earlier, a glass that some of us had just seen in the Ulster Museum, on the Glass Association's recent trip.

Not to show any favouritism, Peter also chose three glasses from the English cabinet. This was difficult, with such a variety of glass on display; large Newcastle goblets, engravings by Sang and Wolff, unusual bowl shapes and those showing that perfection of 18th Century design.

First choice was no. E5. A superbly engraved Friendship goblet and cover, probably of Newcastle origin, c1760 (Fig. 5). The glass is engraved by Jacob Sang, possibly Amsterdam's finest wheel engraver of the 18th Century. This superb glass, carrying exceptionally fine engraving of clasped hands emerging from clouds with a crown above and with cornucopia on either side, also includes a verse from Dirk Smits poem of c1740 translated here as: "If you value tender, noble friendship, Then fill me to the brim, Drink me empty and refill me, And thus hand me to your friend."



"Retaining its original cover probably makes this a unique survivor, as no others engraved by Sang with this poem, have survived with their lids and only around 6 or so other glasses, engraved by Sang with this poem, have been found."



Secondly, Peter chose a goblet, not in his possession anymore, but kindly loaned for the exhibition, no. E6 (Fig. 6). "For me, this 'cup bowl' goblet with its wonderful simplicity of design and superb execution by the maker, standing 11 in. tall and being a glass of 2 piece construction, is so successfully produced that it's a testament to the great skills of the blowers of the day. It needs no further embellishment in the way of engraving or the addition of knops or other frills. It's a superb, simple, but very well made goblet."

Lastly, Peter chose a glass that he calls "a classic" (Fig. 7). "No. E10 for me is an example of the finest quality glass, from the very best period, a 9¼ in. Heavy Baluster Goblet, c1710/15, superb in every aspect; construction, form and metal all being of the very best quality, a glass that I think speaks for itself." With its large round funnel bowl, resting on a huge triple annulated knop, a short plain stem section over a basal knop and a folded conical foot, it is presented in a wonderfully bright fiery metal.

For readers of The Glass Cone number E14 will be familiar, having appeared in issue 83, summer 2008. Peter is still trying to discover a definitive meaning for the inscription "THIS IS FOR THE SECOND FAULT" over the engraving of two churchwarden pipes, broken in two places.

I could not complete this overview without a mention of the other Friendship goblet on display, no. E5a (Fig. 8), a superb example of stipple engraving by David Wolff, showing three cherubs on clouds – quite a rarity. This goblet, now passed on to another collector, had been in the Drambuie collection prior to Peter's and Lord McAlpine's before that.

For admirers of the 18th Century baluster goblet, the colour of the metal and the simplicity of form please the eye, where the weight of the metal and feel of the glass in the hand completes the pleasure; for me, no. E7 is all of that, with its solid based round funnel bowl over a round knop and short baluster section over a folded conical foot (Fig. 9).

I was also delighted to see in this company, a perfect drawn trumpet goblet over a teared plain stem on a folded conical foot – E22 (Fig. 10), a glass so basic, yet a "must have" in a collection of 18th Century glass. Other examples of honeycomb moulding and engraving were a delight to the eye.



Fig 7: A fine heavy baluster goblet (c. 1710/15).



Fig 8 (Left): Newcastle light baluster Friendship goblet, with stipple engraving by David Wolff (c. 1732-1798).

Fig 9 (Centre): Heavy baluster goblet (c. 1690/1700).

Fig 10: (Right): Plain stem goblet (c. 1740).

Credits

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We thank Peter Adamson for the use of his library photographs, all of which were taken by [Athelny Townshend](#).

We also thank the current owners of C4 in the continental section and E5a, E20 and E29 in the English section and Mr M Evans for E27 and Ms L-a.Vernon for E6 in the English section, for their permission to show their glasses.