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William Gaskill

English Bottle-glass Objects

Paul Hollister, in his seminal work *The Encyclopedia of Glass Paperweights*, ended his description of English Factories by discussing the “soft green weights” made by "Kilner and Others" with the statement that they were the "source of quiet charm and gentle mystery." The paperweights and whimsies that were made with what was purported to have been left over glass (*i.e.*, the soft green) have a special place in most collectors' hearts and a quite corner of their collections. They have earned this special place due to their simple charm and their ability to invoke the childlike wonderment of ‘how did that get in there?’ when they are picked up and examined. They were made in a several distinct forms and were made in generous quantities, judging by the relative ease of their discovery today. The fact that so many of these remain in excellent shape today attests to their special value: people valued and protected them over the years because there were pretty, interesting, and until recently, remarkably affordable.

The historical horizon that we can find bottle glass weights can be divided into three periods: the beginning period, the high Victorian period, and the final or Edwardian period. (There are some British glass studios that are producing bottle-glass-like objects today but they are excluded.) The beginning period runs roughly from 1820s through the end of the 1840s. The major events that delineate this period are the very first self-documenting paperweights from the Kilner family to the lifting of the infamous English Glass Excise Duty in 1845. The high Victorian period runs roughly from 1850 to the end of the century in 1900. The major events that delineate this period are the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851 and the death of Victoria in 1902. The final period runs roughly from 1902 to the beginning of World War I. The major events that delineate this period are the ascension of Edward and the almost complete mechanization of the bottle factories in the United Kingdom, prior to the First World War.

The most prevalent and celebrated name for these objects is 'dump' or 'dumpy weights'. The rationale for this was simply stated by John Standon: "'Dumps' or 'Dumpy weights' were really 'end-of-day' creations, for they were initially made using waste glass from bottle factories." This folk etymology is clear: excess or waste crown and bottle-glass was going to be dumped: it was used to make objects that would be called dumps.

Jokelson praises the English glass manufactures in his book for their work with sulphides but completely ignores the inclusions that appeared in the bottle-glass objects. This probably was based on the delineation between the middle and upper classes, to which Jokelson's documented universe of objects was targeted and the working-class where the bottle-glass objects found a willing and receptive audience. Decorative art as well as folk art objects existed at the same time and at the same places. They met the unique requirements of their respective audiences.



Figure 1. Bottom-stamped Kilner and Kilner and Son(s) Paperweights (1829-1844)



Figure 2. Bottom mark of Kilner Paperweight (circa 1830s)



Figure 3. Boy on Elephant Paperweight or Doorstop



Figure 4. Boer War General: Mantle pieces, china bust, encased pipestem



Figure 5. Rolling Pins made from 'dump' glass 1880s



Figure 6. Encased Clay Pipe and Ally Sloper Pipe