

# Culinary & Dining Antiques

## Part 6: Table Glass: with Price Guide

### A brief History of Glass to c1900

Glass in its natural state exists only rarely as obsidian, a dark, vitreous lava, or as rock crystal, a clear form of quartz. Its manufacture began in the Middle East over 3500 years ago. All of the basic manufacturing techniques that we know of today have been in existence since then with the exception of glass blowing, which appears to have been invented in Syria in the 1st century AD. In manufacture it is made from one of the various forms of silica such as sand, quartz or flint. In practice and in tradition, fluxes of carbonate of potash acquired from burnt vegetation, or carbonate of soda acquired from natural mineral deposits were added, hence assisting by lowering the temperature at which the batch turned to its liquid form. As a generalisation potash glass was manufactured in Northern Europe where there were abundant forests. Potash glass has a greenish tint. Soda glass usually comes from the Mediterranean, for example Venetian, a fine clear glass called *cristallo*.

The earliest glass manufacture in England can be traced to French immigrants starting with Lawrence Vitrearius in 1226 at Chiddingfold in Kent. Production up to the fifteenth century was mainly of window glass for churches and monasteries with some vessel glass for medical or chemical use. The manufacture of urinals is also recorded. In 1567 John Le Carré, a gentleman glassmaker, arrived in London. He obtained a licence to make the Venetian *cristallo*, now popular amongst the nobility of Europe. After his death in 1572 his expert glassmaker Jacob Verzelini revived the lapsed patent and established quality glassmaking in England. He is buried in Downes Church in Kent. Glassmaking began to spread both north and west. By 1615 Sir Robert Mansell had gained control of the patent. He made *crystal* in the *facon de Venise* (style of Venice) using soda derived from barilla, imported since Le Carré's days.

Mansell offered manufacturers licences based on royalties and market restrictions. Now with coal-fired furnaces, production settled into those areas where fuel was available and the sea offered cheap transport to the markets for the finished products, namely London, Bristol and Newcastle.

Glasses bearing engravings with English names and dates are attributable to the Verzelini period but none can be attributed to Mansell, hence they are known as *facon de Venise*. The mid 1600s saw a hiatus in its production as puritanism gripped the nation, relieved by the Restoration of Charles II. Earlier in 1612 Antonio Neri had published his treatise *L'Arte Vitrearia*. Its translation into English in 1662 by Dr Christopher Merrett, a member of the Royal Society, was significant in the history of English glass. From the 1670s the term *flint* appears in invoices. Merrett's translation mentions flint as being associated with an 'incomparable pure and white crystal metal'. And *flint* was the term used to describe Ravenscroft's new 'glass of lead', resembling 'rock crystal' and perfected by 1676 representing the most important invention in the entire history of English glassmaking and probably one of the most significant advances in 3000 years.

The press-moulding of hollow ware was developed in America in the late 1820s and quickly arrived in England. The first pressing machine was installed by T. Hawkes & Co., Birmingham in 1831 and pressing was underway in the West Midlands by about 1835. From about 1870 technical developments embraced a whole new range of exciting areas of originality, particularly in shapes (mould making) and in translucent and opaque colouring by adding metallic oxides and other chemicals. By about 1880 the pendulum swung back to cutting because of further technical advances in machine development, re-enacting with precision the late Georgian style. By the 1890s iridescent glass arrived, called *carnival* because it was given as prizes at fair grounds.

## Summary of the Series

The series commenced in our March/April 2006 Edition. Any readers who have missed previous features can telephone us on 01843 862069 where we may be able to arrange back issues.

1. Collecting Silver Spoons.
2. Flatware and Cutlery Services
3. Table silver in general.
4. Culinary and Dining Ceramics.
5. Kitchen & Dining Room Furniture.
6. Table Glass.

## The Market

From chandeliers to table centres and epergnes, through wonderfully cut suites and services, decanters, carafes, sweetmeats and drinking glasses, this wonderful material, eminently functional, remains today one of the very few essential materials which may never be superseded. When molten it may be manipulated to any desired shape. When cool it can be subjected to almost any process, offering almost endless aesthetic potency. Its association with candlelight and dining is now firmly established and there isn't a home in the civilised world that isn't reliant on its unparalleled functionality in culinary and dining use.

The series so far has always leaned towards the functionality of antiques, rather than their collectibility although clearly the two are inseparable. And collecting of course, implies investing and the prudent stewardship of the family budget. On each previous category discussed, the theme of old versus new has always been compared and glass of course offers also the opportunity to compare these markets. Once again let me stress that in general antique and second-hand goods can in many cases be of better quality and cheaper than their new counterparts with the added bonus of investment potential.

Antiques fairs, auctions and shops and centres are in the main small businesses and their mark-up or profit margins are much lower than needed with new goods. There is no manufacturing costs with all of the overheads needed to run a modern business and after all of that there is no VAT man adding a further 17.5%!

The following three pages will discuss the relevant markets in detail. Each section contains a small price guide from real sales although readers are reminded that our Gold Services at [www.antiques-info.co.uk](http://www.antiques-info.co.uk) contains thousands of images from nationwide sales of glass in the last seven years. I hope you have enjoyed the series and I welcome any letters from readers on any area of the market I have covered.



## Table Centres & Epergnes

As I have indicated before in this series, it isn't necessary to go wholly antique when buying for the home. If you insist on having your oven-to-table ware or buying a dishwasher proof dinner service you can still choose a spectacular table centre which can really set the scene. In this series we have looked at silver and brass candlesticks and all kinds of ceramic table centres. Glass is a wonderful alternative for those who love the material. To show the extent of the market I have included at No 1 a table centre which also doubles up as a sweetmeat. The shallow cutting suggests a date of c1790 and this is a very rare object indeed for which there is a market. Great houses need such pieces. They are part of the accoutrements of dining at the higher levels of society or wealth. Alternatively No 2 serves as a lamp and oozes quality at just over £2000. Then we come down to earth. Epergnes are intended to hold fruit or flowers but all of our examples are for flowers. The highest price I have found at auction for a Victorian epergne is £600 hammer i.e. £706 with premium. At the lower end of the market a good quality, but more simple epergne can be had for about £150. On average epergnes sell at auction for about £286 plus premium or £336. Over the last five years prices have been stable although in the last twenty years they have proved to be a very sound investment. This is true in the longer term for most antiques which are very much a medium to long term investment, whereas buying new will almost guarantee you seeing your purchase price plummet the moment you walk out of the shop. The colour range of epergnes is enormous. I have chosen examples of vaseline, cranberry and blue-tinted glass which also display the advances in colour technology from 1870 when metallic oxides and other chemicals were used to achieve these spectacular effects. By the way cranberry has been a major loser in recent years as the repro has bitten into the market. It is a sad fact that once reproduction appears the real thing falls in value. Whilst typically Victorian these epergnes display a lightness and a modernity that will fit into any decor. Despite the massive interest now being shown in twentieth century glass, epergnes have remained popular in the hearts and minds of glass lovers nationwide. Never buy new glass: it's expensive and almost worthless once purchased!



1  
Antique facet cut glass table centre piece, having central diamond cut glass bowl above eight hanging sweetmeat baskets, 47cm. *Stride & Son, Chichester. Jul 03. HP: £5,200. ABP: £6,116.*



2  
Early 20thC multi coloured glass table centrepiece lamp, 23in high. *Amersham Auction Rooms, Bucks. Jul 02. HP: £1,750. ABP: £2,058.*



3  
Victorian pink and milk glass epergne with central trumpet vase flanked by two further vases and two hanging baskets, square base bowl, 23in high. *Andrew Hartley, Ilkley. Aug 05. HP: £480. ABP: £564.*



4  
Victorian glass epergne, consisting of central glass trumpet and three pendant vases in blue-tinted glass with frill rims, 19in high. *Gorringes, Lewes. Nov 05. HP: £380. ABP: £446.*



5  
Victorian Vaseline epergne. *Stroud Auctions, Stroud. Aug 05. HP: £300. ABP: £352.*



6  
Victorian lime-green and cranberry glass epergne, composed of tall, central trumpet-vase, three smaller vases and three pendant baskets, all with trailed ornament, 17.5in. *Gorringes, Lewes. Jul 06. HP: £280. ABP: £329.*



7  
Victorian Vaseline glass and pewter epergne, having five frilled rim trumpets on a knopped and pierce scrolled quatrefoil base, four splayed feet. *Locke & England, Leamington Spa. Mar 06. HP: £110. ABP: £129.*



8  
19thC table centre with heavy slice, diamond, hobnail and strawberry cuttings, upper vase pattern section with flared and shaped rim, engraved with a crest on knopped cylindrical base, 30in high. *Canterbury Auction Galleries, Kent. Mar 05. HP: £90. ABP: £105.*

## Glass



**1**  
Early 20thC Baccarat engraved and gilded suite of glassware: 3 pairs of decanters and stoppers, a pair of confitures, covers and stands, water jug, pair of comports, dish and domed cover and 65 glasses in various sizes. *Gorringes, Lewes. Apr 01. HP: £3,200. ABP: £3,764.*



**2**  
*Lalique Coquilles. A suite comprising a large dish, no. 3009, 12in dia, six smaller dishes, no. 3012, 8in dia and four bowls, no. 3204, 5in dia. Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Dec 01. HP: £1,700. ABP: £1,999.*



**3**  
Part suite of drinking glassware: seven goblets, eleven wine glasses, eight liqueurs, pair of ewers, each with stopper and jug, all gilded with ribbons and festoons, glasses on faceted stems. *Gorringes, Lewes. Mar 06. HP: £900. ABP: £1,058.*



**4**  
Suite of Bohemian amber flash table glass, c1900, decorated with landscape hunting scenes to include twelve goblets, eleven liquor goblets, twelve dishes and twelve plates. *Rosebery's, London. Mar 05. HP: £800. ABP: £941.*



**5**  
Gilt decorated glass part table service, early 19thC: water jug, jar and cover; footed bowl, 6 beakers and 5 wine glasses, decorated with foliate swags, with two other gilt decorated glass beakers. *Rosebery's, London. Mar 06. HP: £480. ABP: £564.*



**6**  
Part service of pedestal glass, comprising four sizes of facet cut glasses, twelve water goblets, two similar sizes of seven wine glasses and eleven sherry glasses. (37) *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Feb 05. HP: £320. ABP: £376.*



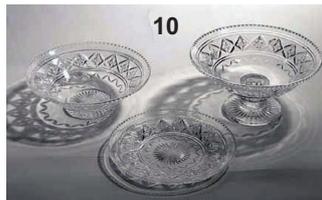
**7**  
Pair of Victorian glass sweetmeat bowls, with turn-over rims and cut detail, on square pedestal bases, 7.75in. *Gorringes, Lewes. Mar 06. HP: £200. ABP: £235.*



**8**  
Cut glass table glass including wine glasses (38) tumblers (12), cocktail glasses (10) and lemonade glasses (11). Various plain brandy balloons and other glassware. *Rosebery's, London. Jun 05. HP: £170. ABP: £199.*



**9**  
Part suite of Whitefriars glacier pattern glassware designed in 1969 by Geoffrey Baxter, comprising: decanter, jug, eleven assorted tumblers, four beakers and three goblets. (21) *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Apr 05. HP: £160. ABP: £188.*



**10**  
Good nine piece dessert service comprising six plates, 27cm, a pair of footed dishes, 22cm and a comport 23cm diameter, each piece cut with stylised diamonds and star banding (9) *Hampton & Littlewood, Exeter. Jul 04. HP: £100. ABP: £117.*



## Suites & Services

Readers will remember that when I covered dinner and dessert services of pottery and porcelain, there was quite astounding value in antique services compared to buying new. At the top end of the market an early nineteenth century Spode Japan pattern service (221 pieces) worked out at only £15 per piece and an early nineteenth century Mason's patent ironstone china service at £18 per piece. A Booth's service come out at only £10.50 per piece and a Royal Albert 100-piece porcelain dinner service at only £1.64 per piece. This is astonishing value, so much so that at this price the odd future breakage would be irrelevant. (See our September/October 2006 Edition)

Here at the higher end of the market a large Baccarat service, engraved and gilded, fetched just over £40 per piece and a part suite of drinking glassware which appears to date from the nineteenth century, £34 per piece. In this case, this incomplete service will probably be broken up and sold individually or in groups. For example the Bohemian service contains wine glasses alone, with faceted stems, which are currently valued at over £100 each. The part service of pedestal glasses at No. 6 works out at about £10 per glass. This nineteenth century service is a good buy and the twentieth century service of about ninety pieces at No. 8 works out at only about £2 per glass. For those seeking a sleek modern image the part suite of Whitefriars glacier pattern, designed by the famous Geoffrey Baxter, works out at less than £9 per piece. A few years ago I came across an early twentieth century suite of glass (fully cut in the Georgian style) consisting of six each of five sizes of glass from water tumblers, through to liquors, thirty glasses in all, in an up-market antiques shop. With the nominal 10% discount I was able to buy this superb suite of glass for about £3.60 per piece. In auction today I would expect to get at least £8 per piece and the buyer would still have an astonishing bargain compared to buying new, as well as a future investment.

The Bohemian amber flash table service at No 5 speaks quality. At £20 per piece it could be broken up or used in a dining situation. Buying new glass is expensive and a dubious and perhaps imprudent waste of money, when the market contains so much manufacture from the past which nowadays may be purchased for a virtual song and yet prove a possible future investment.



## Decanters, Carafes & Water Jugs

In recent years the prices of certain types of glass have soared, particularly the famous twentieth century names. At the other end of 300 years Georgian drinking glass on average have doubled to trebled in the last ten years. Anything of any serious quality or rarity in any category of antiques or collecting is going through the roof. Meanwhile the middle and lower end of the market has suffered a setback across the board. Pressed glass has suffered the most and Victorian flint is virtually unsaleable whilst even the best of Sowerby coloured glass has suffered a set back. Readers could refer back to my double feature in the March/April 2006 and May/June 2006 Editions which covers pressed glass in depth. So what about decanters? Years ago they were popular for those of us fortunate enough to be able to decant good wine, and much good wine still has to be decanted. But today modern technology and wine making methods have combined to produce excellent and reliable wines. It appears that today's 'people about town' prefer to display their financial comfort through the labels on the best and most expensive of brands, whether it be a good brandy, a distinguished single malt or a well-respected claret or burgundy. The market says it all. A Fabergé decanter fetched nearly £2500 in March, and in March 2004 a pair of George VI Art Deco silver mounted decanters dating to 1934, raised almost £1800. Earlier this year a silver mounted 1902 Art Nouveau decanter fetched more than £700. Ordinary Georgian decanters with missing stoppers fetch less than £20 at most and when complete need to be a very good example to raise £50! I make the point with No. 9, a good engraved jug and four various decanters for only £82! Good quality pairs can still fetch £800 or so but the point is further made at No. 5 when a fine pair of Georgian decanters raised a mere £211!

Some tips. The carafes at 6 and 7 are good buys. Look out for these with 'foreign' stoppers masquerading as decanters. Eighteenth century decanters are very desirable as are sets of three or four. Ensure stoppers are matching and watch out for bloom on the inside. This is not a 'deposit', removable with a proprietary cleaner, rather an erosion of the glass caused by the acids in water, the same cause of 'rings' on drinking glasses. The answer is to skim the surface with hydrofluoric acid and this is not a do-it-yourself job. Gold service users can check out our website databases for specialist dealers or restorers throughout the UK.



1  
Glass water jug with hinged silver lid, in the form of a water lily leaf, bears Faberge mark, 20cm. *Rosebery's, London. Mar 06. HP: £2,100. ABP: £2,470.*



2  
Pair of glass ships decanters and stoppers, c1800, triple ring necks, engraved with swags and anchors, chips, 29cm. (4) *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Feb 05. HP: £680. ABP: £799.*



3  
Set of four 19thC Bristol blue square glass decanters and stoppers marked Rum, Brandy and Hollands. *Denhams, Warnham. Oct 04. HP: £260. ABP: £305.*



4  
Set of four 19thC cut glass decanter bottles, faceted stoppers and star cut bases, 24cm high. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Jul 03. HP: £230. ABP: £270.*



5  
Pair of Georgian three ring facet cut decanters with circular 'bull's eye' stoppers, 12in high overall. *Tring Market Auctions, Herts. Jul 04. HP: £180. ABP: £211.*



6  
George III glass carafe, with cut fish scale neck and engraved floral drapes, 7.75in, and a George III drinking glass with wrythen bowl and folded foot, 4in. *Gorringes, Lewes. Jul 04. HP: £170. ABP: £199.*



7  
Set of four Victorian glass carafes, bulbous shape cut with diamond bands, 7.5in. *Gorringes, Lewes. Jul 04. HP: £170. ABP: £199.*



8  
1930s iced water jug, plain plated neck and loop handle, slightly domed cover with circular bakelite finial, 12.5ins high, lacking liner. *Canterbury Auction Galleries, Kent. Apr 06. HP: £95. ABP: £111.*



9  
Late Victorian bulbous water jug, engraved with cranes, flowers and ferns, 12.5in, mallet shaped decanter with triple ringed neck with heavy slice/diamond cutting, 8.25in, and mushroom stopper for same, and two others. *Canterbury Auction Galleries, Kent. Apr 06. HP: £70. ABP: £82.*



10  
Late 19thC cut glass water jug with slice and diamond cut decoration on circular foot with star cut base, 24cm. *Reeman Dansie, Colchester. Apr 06. HP: £34. ABP: £39.*