

Whitefriars Glass



A glance at the current trends in the market for Whitefriars glass.

By John Ainsley

With Price Guide.

On 2nd June, 2005, at Clevedon Salerooms, Bristol, lots 302-307 represented six very desirable glass objects, namely a selection of Whitefriars Kingfisher blue vases. Lot 302 was a textured hoop vase, 29cm high and estimated at £150-£250. Lot 303 was a Banjo vase 32cm high and estimated at £600-£900. Lot 304 was a Drunken Bricklayer vase, 21cm high and carrying an estimate of £150-£250. Lots 305 and 306 were respectively a Bark vase at 16cm and a tapered and textured vase at 18cm both estimated at £80 to £120. Finally Lot 307 was a rectangular textured "Bamboo" vase at 20cm with an estimate of £100-£150.

All of these lots were designed by the famous Geoffrey Baxter (1922-1995) who was recruited by the Firm in 1954. They date from between c1967 and c1980. All of these lots sold and we will be looking at what they fetched later and then comparing this sale with the prices achieved for Whitefriars at other salerooms around the country in recent times. See our study of the wider market on the page opposite.

Whitefriars of course dates back to 1834 when a wine merchant called James Powell set up a small glassworks in the Whitefriars district of London. Colour was always in its blood, the earliest innovation being a yellow uranium glass called Topaz. Amber staining and ruby and green cased glass followed. Stained glass for ecclesiastical use was always to the fore and as the century progressed Whitefriars worked with the leading architects and designers of the day. From 1873 until 1919 the famous Harry Powell raised the firms status towards world fame in the manufacture of domestic glassware. Harry was both a technologist and a designer, having studied chemistry at university. He also studied ceramic shapes from the Bronze age and Minoa as well as glass depicted in historical paintings.

Whitefriars embraced also the classic movements of the day such as arts and crafts and art nouveau collaborating with such famous designers as W.A.S. Benson and C.R. Ashbee.

Following Harry Powell's retirement, the firm moved to a new site at Wealdstone in Middlesex. Innovation continued with designs by Arthur Marriott Powell and William Butler. Colour was an almost constant and essential ingredient of decorative ware.

The streaky tumbler vases, presented in colours derived from stained glass, c1930, are incredibly accomplished and aesthetically delightful. After 1930 the new chief designer, Barnaby Dowell, continued the innovation, producing in 1935 and 1936 the spectacular ribbon-trailed vases in gold, amber, sapphire, emerald and sea green. During the ensuing decade James Hogan led the trend towards thick-walled organic vessels inspired by Scandinavian models. After his death, William Wilson took over as chief designer and managing director. Note always the essential input of the owner and managers in the processes. Wilson took on Geoffrey Baxter in 1954 and the story has now turned its full circle. Geoffrey was employed as the factory's assistant designer and was responsible for the design of all of the vases sold at Clevedon Salerooms in Bristol on 2nd June this year.

The whole story of Whitefriars cannot be related here. It is too long, too intense and too detailed. Sadly, by the 1970s the economic climate became very difficult. Geoffrey Baxter designed a collection of paperweights with millefiore patterns, a traditional output which might stave off disaster. In addition the range of the glass output was heavily curtailed and traditional cut-glass crystal re-introduced, but to no avail.

Whitefriars finally closed its doors in 1980 after 146 years of frequently spectacular production.

Bibliography.

Whitefriars Glass - The Art of James Powell & Sons.

Jackson, Lesley.

20th Century Factory Glass

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20th Century Glass

Miller, Judith.

Lot 302 sold for £210 hammer

Lot 303 sold for £600 hammer

Lot 304 sold for £180 hammer

Lot 305 sold for £80 hammer

Lot 306 sold for £80 hammer

Lot 307 sold for £150 hammer

The Market.

The emergence of six Whitefriars Kingfisher blue vases (pictured opposite) in one sale, all by Geoffrey Baxter, would appear to be entirely coincidental, according to auctioneer Toby Pinn. However the story goes that the star lot, the Banjo vase, was discovered in a South Wales boot fair for a mere two pounds a couple of months earlier.



302

Whitefriars Kingfisher blue glass textured hoop vase designed by Geoffrey Baxter (1967-1973), 29cm high. Clevedon Salerooms, Bristol. Jun 05. £210.



305

Whitefriars Kingfisher blue glass Bark vase designed by Geoffrey Baxter (1967-1980), 16cm high. Clevedon Salerooms, Bristol. Jun 05. £80.



303

Whitefriars Kingfisher blue glass Banjo vase designed by Geoffrey Baxter (1967-1973), 32cm high. Clevedon Salerooms, Bristol. Jun 05. £600.



306

Whitefriars Kingfisher blue glass tapered rectangular vase with textured decoration designed by Geoffrey Baxter (1969-1977), 18cm high. Clevedon Salerooms, Bristol. Jun 05. £80.



304

Whitefriars Kingfisher blue glass 'Drunken Bricklayer' vase designed by Geoffrey Baxter (1967-1977), 21cm high. Clevedon Salerooms, Bristol. Jun 05. £180.



307

Whitefriars Kingfisher blue glass rectangular shaped vase with textured 'Bamboo' decoration designed by Geoffrey Baxter (1967-1973), 20cm high. Clevedon Salerooms, Bristol. Jun 05. £150.

Whitefriars Glass - Recent Hammer Prices.

Price quoted are hammer prices. Adding 15% will give an approximation to the buying price.



1
Whitefriars tall Drunken Bricklayers vase, designed by Geoffrey Baxter, square, asymmetrical design, in an 'emerald' tone glass, 13in high. Halls Fine Art, Shrewsbury. Apr 05. £1,000.



5
Large Whitefriars tangerine glass Banjo vase, designed by Geoffrey Baxter, circa 1967, 12.5in. Gorrings, Lewes. Mar 05. £550.



9
A 19thC Millefiori paper-weight scent bottle with a white, red and blue floret cushion, engraved shoulder with mono 'EK', facet cut blown stopper, possibly Whitefriars, 6.25in high, slightly af. Tring Market Auctions, Tring. May 02. £240.



13
Part set of Whitefriars glacier pattern glassware designed 1969, G Baxter, comprising: decanter, jug, eleven assorted tumblers, four beakers and three goblets. (21) Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Apr 05. £160.



17
Whitefriars textured rectangular tangerine vase with bamboo effect front, designed by Geoffrey Baxter, 21cm high. Cheffins, Cambridge. Apr 05. £110.



2
Whitefriars tall Drunken Bricklayer vase designed by Geoffrey Baxter, in an 'emerald' toned glass, 13in high. Halls Fine Art, Shrewsbury. Mar 05. £800.



6
A Whitefriars orange Banjo vase designed by Geoffrey Baxter, 32cm high. Woolley & Wallis, Salisbury. Jun 00. £420.



14
Whitefriars cinnamon glass 'Guitar' vase, designed by G. Baxter, 1967, spiral design in a textured finish, pattern no. 9675, 7.25in. Gorrings, Lewes. Oct 04. £160.



18
A Whitefriars Greek key pattern vase designed by Geoffrey Baxter, the square section body with circular neck in tangerine, 20cm high. Cheffins, Cambridge. Feb 05. £80.



3
Whitefriars 'Banjo' vase, designed by Geoffrey Baxter, bluish grey colour, unmarked, 32cm high. Hampton & Littlewood, Exeter. Jul 04. £740.



7
Three pieces of mid 20thC Whitefriars orange moulded glassware including 'Drunken bricklayer' vase and two others together with a bottle shaped grey glass vase, 21.5 x 11.5cm. Locke & England, Leamington Spa. Sep 04. £400.



10
A Whitefriars 'Drunken Bricklayer' glass vase, in kingfisher blue, designed by G. Baxter, 8in. Gorrings, Lewes. Dec 04. £240.



15
Whitefriars experimental glass bowl designed G. Baxter c1969, in kingfisher blue with green encircled spots, 29cm diameter; and a Whitefriars random strapping vase designed G. Baxter in indigo, 19cm high. Cheffins, Cambridge. Feb 05. £140.



19
Whitefriars glass, large textured bark vase in kingfisher blue, designed by Geoffrey Baxter, c1960, 23cm high. Rosebery's, London. Mar 05. £70.



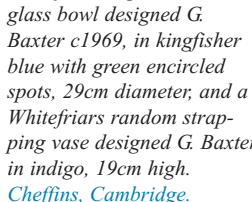
4
A large Whitefriars kingfisher blue Drunken Bricklayer vase, designed by Geoffrey Baxter, 13.5ins. Gorrings, Lewes. Sep 04. £700.



8
Whitefriars Kingfisher mobile phone 9668 vase, by Geoffrey Baxter, 26.7cm high, in indigo. Rosebery's, London. Sep 04. £260.



11
Three Whitefriars millefiori glass paperweights. Potteries Specialist Auctions, Stoke on Trent. Mar 03. £210.



16
Whitefriars textured tubular 'Willow' vase designed by Geoffrey Baxter, 30cm high. Cheffins, Cambridge. Apr 05. £120.



20
1960s Whitefriars red waisted bowl 10.5in. Denhams, Warnham, West Sussex. Jan 05. £70.



12
A pair of Whitefriars drunken bricklayer vases, designed by Geoffrey Baxter in textured tangerine coloured glass, circa 1967, 8ins. Gorrings, Lewes. Mar 04. £190.