

ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF GLASS

– 30 years on

2008 marks the 30th Anniversary of the incorporation of the Association for the History of Glass. Surviving records from the early years are incomplete but served to compile this account of the Association's history and development.

On October 11, 1973, a meeting was held at the Victoria and Albert Museum to discuss the formation of a British National Committee of L'Association Internationale pour l'Histoire du Verre (AIHV) to plan, organise and run the 8th AIHV congress to be held in London and Liverpool in 1979. British delegates to previous AIHV congresses were invited to the meeting at which a committee of glass scholars from varying disciplines having a common interest in the history of glass was formed under the Presidency of Hugh Tait (British Museum). On 19th January 1978 the British National Committee of AIHV was incorporated as an educational charity called 'The Association for the History of Glass Ltd', registering with Companies House as a Company Limited by Guarantee and with the Charities Commission. The initial signatories were Hugh Tait, Mike Tite (British Museum), Robert Charleston, John Mallett and Barbara Morris (Victoria and Albert Museum), Donald Harden (retired, former Director of the London Museum), Ian Burgoyne (Pilkington Glass Museum), Gerald Taylor (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), George Boon (National Museum of Wales), Revel Oddy (The Royal Scottish Museum), Dorothy Charlesworth (Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings), Keith Davey (Dept of the Environment), Roy Newton (retired, Hon Visiting Professor, University of York), Harold Rawson (University of Sheffield) Cyril Weedon (Glass Manufacturers' Federation), and Ada Polak (Deputy Curator in Britain of Arts and Crafts Museums of Norway).

Membership was initially restricted by the maximum number (16) cited in the formal Memorandum and Articles of Association, and the Membership and Board were identical. However in the 1990s the Board decided to reinvigorate the Association, the first visible signs being the founding of *Glass News* in 1996. Its success, and that of the more regular series of study days, encouraged the Board to consider ways of expanding the membership. In 2000 agreement was reached with Companies House and the Charity Commissioners to amendments to the Memorandum and Articles of Association, including an increase in the maximum number of members to 300. In 2001 individual subscribers to *Glass News* were invited to become members of the Association, to nominate Board members and officers and to vote at AGMs subject to the legal undertaking to pay a sum of up to £5 to meet any debts should the Association, as a Company Limited by Guarantee, be wound up.

To date the Association has had four Presidents: Hugh Tait (1978-1996), Jennifer Price (1996-2003), Ian Freestone (2003-7) and Caroline Jackson (2007-), under whose guidance the Association has steadily increased its charitable activities. Other serving officers include Secretaries: Dorothy Charlesworth (1979-1981), Donald Harden (1981-3), Charles Truman (1983-5), Suzanne Gaynor [Higgott] (1985-1990), Paddy Baker (1990-1996), Justine Bayley (1996-2006) and Sandra Davison (2006-), as well as Treasurers: Keith Davey (1979-1996), David Crossley (1996-2005), Andrew Shortland (2005-8) and Jim Smedley (2008-) and Membership Secretaries: John Clark (1996-2008) and Jim Smedley (2008-).

The relationship between the AIHV and AHG has remained close. Hugh Tait (1977-9) and Jennifer Price (1998-2003) were also Presidents of AIHV; AHG Board member Reino Liefkes was the Treasurer of AIHV (1991-5) and AHG Board member Hilary Cool (1999-2003) was Secretary General of AIHV (2000-4). In 2003 the Association organized and ran its second AIHV Congress, the 16th, held in London.

The principal aim of the Association remains ‘The advancement of public education in the archaeological, historical, aesthetic and technological study of glass, for all periods of history and all parts of the world, together with the problems of conservation and presentation’. Since 1979 the Association has continued to hold meetings relating to aspects of glass history, initially at irregular intervals, but from 2003 biannual study days have been held each Spring and Autumn generally, but not exclusively, in London:

2000 ‘*Lead crystal glass in the C17th and C18th*’.

2001 ‘*Two Thousand Years of Window Glass and Glazing*’.

2002 ‘*Glass Supply & Use in London from c.1400–1900*’.

2003 ‘*Glass in the Islamic world: New Discoveries, New Ideas*’, and *AIHV 16th Congress*, and ‘*Shape & Substance: Replicating Early Glass Making Technologies*’.

2004 ‘*The Archaeology of the Post-Medieval Urban Glass Industry*’, and ‘*Creativity in Glass History and Heritage*’, and ‘*New Light on Old Glass: Collections, Analysis and Archaeology*’.

2005 ‘*Glass and Lighting in Antiquity and the Medieval World*’, and ‘*Glass in Cambridge Museums*’.

2006 ‘*Glass of the Roman Empire and Elsewhere*’, and ‘*Experimental and Ethnographic Studies relating to Ancient Glass*’.

2007 ‘*The Glass Industry: Constraints and Controls from the Medieval World to the C20th*’, and ‘*Glass in Architecture*’.

2008 ‘*Buying and Selling Glass in Britain 1600–1950*’, and ‘*Glass at The British Museum: Current Research, Science and Conservation*’.

One of the early meetings held in 1992 ‘Medieval Glass from British Sites’ led to AHG publishing a small booklet: Tyson, R and Clark, J *Bibliography of Medieval Glass Vessels from British Sites AD 1200-1500* (1994). More recent study days also have given rise to publications: J. Price (ed.). *Glass in Britain and Ireland, AD 350-1100*. British Museum Occasional Paper No. 12, and the forthcoming volume, *Glass of the Roman Empire* (eds. I. Freestone, J. Bayley and C. Jackson) [in honour of Jennifer Price]. The *Annales du 16^e Congrès de l’Association Internationale pour l’Histoire du Verre 2003* (ed. H. Cool) was published in 2005.

In early 1996 the AHG published its first newsletter, *Glass News*, to publicise research, events and meetings related to glass. To assess interest in a newsletter, over a thousand free copies were mailed to a wide ranging of individuals and institutions, inviting recipients to subscribe for a further three issues over the next two years. The first few issues of *Glass News*, edited by John Shepherd, were published irregularly, but subsequent issues edited by Juanita Navarro and Sarah Paynter, have appeared twice yearly, around January and July. The newsletter aims to continue providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and information in this diverse field. Initially a subscription to *Glass News* had been for four issues at a time, whenever they appeared. In 2007 this confusing practice was replaced by a simple annual subscription, and now the majority of *Glass News* subscribers are full members of AHG (currently 137 out of 163). Most members and subscribers are UK-based but Europe and the USA are well represented. About half have been subscribing regularly ever since *Glass News* first appeared in 1996.

In 2001 Hilary Cool (AIHV General Secretary and AHG Board member) created an AHG website: <www.historyofglass.org.uk>. It was used to publicise the 2003 AIHV Congress and has since been developed as an introduction to the Association for members and non-members alike and to complement the information carried in *Glass News*: details of AHG activities, board, membership, funding and links to glass-related sites. Board member David Martlew subsequently undertook a great deal of work on the website; Mike Cooper of Sheffield University is the current webmaster.

To increase the charitable activities of the committee and to further education in the study of glass, since 2006 the AHG has offered bursaries and grants towards the funding of glass education, research and publication. Three awards were made in 2006, two in 2007 and four in 2008. These grants have been put towards a wide range of uses, including travel (for example see *GN* 23 and this issue pages 4-5), experimental archaeology (see *GN*'s 18, 20 and this issue), purchasing archives (see *GN* 23) and publications.

The files of historic papers held by past and present AHG officers are currently being amalgamated to form an archive for the Association. This will comprise a full set of *Glass News*, minutes of meetings of the Board of Management and annual general meetings, details of study days and AIHV congresses, bursaries and grants awarded, copies of the Annual Returns to Companies House and the Charities Commissioners and miscellaneous correspondence. It has yet to be decided where the archive will be housed.