

Glass from Pukeberg - a journey through time

Pukeberg Glassworks was founded in 1871 by master glass-blower C.W. Nyström and two associates. Nyström already had considerable experience of glass making, having previously been employed at Kosta, Transjö and Boda. At this time it was particularly common for glass-blowers from Kosta to become their own masters - so much so that in 1876 the works manager there wrote:

"Nowadays the glass-blowers of the district are so taken with having their own glassworks that we will end up with a glassworks in every homestead".

By 1900 Kosta had been the source - direct or indirect - of 18 new glass-making factories, and there were almost 40 glassworks in total in Småland at that time. Two crucial factors in the decision to locate here were the abundance of firewood for melting the glass and water power for driving the grinding machines. The Pukeberg works, established by the river in a wooded homestead in Madesjö parish, was no exception. Bottles were the first items to be produced, but the range soon expanded to include domestic cut glass and pressed glass. In ad-

dition, glass items for paraffin and oil lamps, screens, lampshades and other articles began being sold to Arvid Böhlmark's lamp factory in Stockholm.

Picture (1) Patron C.W. Nyström, Pukeberg, 1871.

In order to run their business properly, the work's owners needed skilled craftsmen - especially in the blowing room where the glass was actually produced. At the centre stood the furnace in which the batch of raw materials was placed to melt during the night. A team of 5-8 men worked with the molten glass and a pot at each gathering hotel or opening in the furnace - the number would vary according to the type of glass being made. The workers followed a carefully devised system and each had his own specific role with its own specific designation - gatherer, bloer, master, stem gatherer, stem maker, foot gatherer and taker-in. The master had the highest rank. Before attaining this elevated position, he would have to work his way through the lower ranks. Typically, a boy would start work at the age of 8 or 9 with the most menial task, learning each new step of the process by practising during breaks. The master's skill

was rewarded with the highest wage, as well as a number of other benefits including more spacious living quarters than his fellow workers. The set-up in the grinding works was rather different, as the work was of a more individual nature. The work force was divided into teams of 2-3 men, assisted by apprentices. The various stages of the work were coarse grinding, finer cutting and polishing. Beginners had to start as polish-makers, before progressing to simple grinding. Other specialist trades at Pukeberg were crucible-making and melting.

Pukeberg was bought up by Arvid Böhlmark in 1884 and four years later became part of AB Böhlmarks Lampfabrik (lamp factory). The following year, the wooden hut housing the furnace burned down and was replaced the following year by one in brick. New warehouse buildings were also added and a farmyard bell was hung from the roof of the largest - were it remains to this day.

Picture (2) Grosshandlare Arvid Böhlmark.

Picture (3) Pukeberg's farmyard bell, the inscription reads: "Pukeberg Glasswork was founded by Conrad Wilhelm Nyström, wife Johanna Danielsson, 1871. Built after a fire by Daniel Arvid Böhlmark, wife Carolina Pollack, 1895. Live by prayer and work. Give us this day our daily bread. Cast by Joh. A. Beckman, Stockholm 1895".

Working conditions in various sections of the works left a great deal to be desired. The blowing room was dark and drafty - the furnaces did not light or warm it up to any acceptable extent. And, of course, the air was always full of smoke. Work began at 5 o'clock in the morning and went on until the pots of crucibles were empty. In addition to their cash wages, employees had free house room, a plot of ground in which to grow potatoes, grazing for cows and free firewood. As most of the day was taken up in hard graft, leisure was limited, and the cramped living quarters were not conducive to much in the way of social contact. In the evenings, the men would gather in the warmth of the hut to maintain their tools, talk and play cards. Here they could also listen to the latest news or the colourful tales of passing vagrants. In 1905, the glass-workers of Pukeberg formed a trade union in order to address the unsatisfactory working, living and pay conditions and to represent the interests of the employees. A fund to cover sickness and funeral expenses had already been in existence since 1894 (founded on the initiative of Arvid Böhlmark).

The new glassworks mainly produced glass for paraffin lamps, although articles for glass lamps and electric lighting were also made. At the same time, domestic glassware was being manufactured on a smaller scale.

The items was bought direct from the works by traders, though before he sold the company, Nyström himself disposed of a good deal of what was produced. After Böhlmark took over, Pukeberg glass reached almost every corner of Sweden through travellers and salesmen connected with the head office in Stockholm. Distribution became easier as the railway network grew. The glassworks had their own horses to transport the goods to Nybro station.

Picture (4) Blåsning av belsningsglas.

Picture (5) Mönsterslipare Carl Haggren, 1937.

Picture (6) Mönsterslipare Carl Haggren, 1937.

At the beginning of 20th century the works grew steadily, but then a large order came from England resources proved inadequate to the task. In order to be able to meet demand in the future, an additional blowing room was built (1913), and the range of items expanded to include both cut and uncut domestic ware. In the 1920's, this diversity grew still further thanks to demand from overseas customers. The purchase of a pantograph machine from Germany facilitated the production of a dozen glasses with the same pattern and to make large series of tableware successfully. By 1922 there were 14 workshops: two for pressed glass, three for ornamental glass, one for

glass for lamps, two for domestic glassware and six for glass for electric lighting. Just 10 years later, the product list contained 750 varieties of glass tableware and ornamental glass. One of the main items manufactured in the 1930's was glass globes for petrol stations. Despite the economic worries of the first half of this decade, new items were launched, such as glass with overlays in ivory and other semi-precious materials.

Picture (7) Loreet ut nonsequis nissi blaore feuis alis ad er sum ver lure eugait vullut vero odit.

During the second world war, a lack of raw materials and dearth of export opportunities caused serious problems for the company. However, glass for signals for the railway became an important product in the range. At the end of the war, conditions improved and sales to countries affected by the war grew substantially. Increased demand led to the need to modernise the vitrification process and indeed to rationalise the entire production process. In 1954 the new blowing room was built and all the functions in the production line concentrated in one inter-linking complex of buildings. At 175 meters long, Pukeberg could boast of being Sweden's longest glassworks!

Other improvements followed in the 1960's, including

the installation of a long conveyor belt. Electrically heated furnaces improved the vitrification process. In 1965, the works had 14 crucibles, a day tank furnace and a tank furnace in continuous operation. Domestic and ornamental glass made up just a quarter of the range, while lighting articles still accounted for the bulk of production. In 1964 AB Arvid Böhlmarks Lampfabrik moved its production of lighting fittings and head office from Stockholm to Pukeberg and the work force increased by 20 to a total of 160 employees.

From the 1950's, artists and designers became more and more important in the development of the glassworks. Earlier, in 1926, Lennart Nyblom and his daughter, Helena, had been taken on to rejuvenate Pukeberg's products, but their input had been short-lived. "Artists may be good, but they're expensive", remarked the then manager. Böhlmarks in Stockholm, however, continued to engage artists to design light fittings. One of them was Elis Bergh: he worked for the company from 1996 for ten years. Another was Harald Notini, who took over artistic control of the company after Bergh left, both at the Stockholm factory and at the works in Småland. Uno Westberg was active at Pukeberg from 1935-1978 and, like Notini, designed glass for lighting, everyday use and ornamental purposes. In 1958, Göran Wärf was taken

on to the permanent staff, and soon Pukeberg was able to offer their customers a wider assortment, including practical stacking glassware in pale colours as well as plates and bowls made by a new glass-pressing technique. Experiments also resulted in unique bottles and dishes with glass-fibre woven ornamentation. Ann Wärf also worked at Pukeberg, this time in graphic design - creating a new logo and product packaging. Göran Wärf was replaced in 1964 by Eva Englund, who remained in the company until 1973, making a great success of designing both art glass and objects for everyday use.

Picture (8) Eva Englund....

Picture (9) Eva Englund....

Picture (10) Eva Englund....

During the 1970's, the manufacture of glass for lamps diminished in importance, ceasing altogether in 1977. At the same time ownership changed hands in rapid succession and the operation began to concentrate on ornamental, domestic and art glass. During the latter half of the 70's, new designs were created by Staffan Gellerstedt and Erik Höglund. The designer names in the 1980's were Gunilla Lindahl, Carin Nordling, Lars Sestervik, Ragnhild Alexandersson and Ljupco Kocovski.

Since 1989-2009, Pukeberg has been owned by the Nolendorfs and Gill families, who also runned Zero (lighting) & Lustrum (furniture). Through Zero, the Pukeberg tradition of manufacturing light fittings continued. The new owners engaged a series of new artists, including Eva Englund, who returned to the company, Margareta Hennix, Liselotte Henriksen, Börge Lindau, Rolf Sinemark and Birgitta Watz. During the first half of the 1990's they produced both unique one-off pieces and mass-produced glass for Pukeberg. Since 1996, Carouschka Streiffert was hired to create new exciting designs.

2009 Did Andris Nolendorfs continue the business himself as the only owner and MD for Pukeberg. His ambition was to develop the area to be an important culture center for art, crafts and design. Today the Design Archive, Linnaeus - University, Art Studios of Pukeberg, Art & Craft Consellers and Nybro Art Association are suited in the area. Andris Nolendorfs have made a number of



Andris Nolendorfs MD and owner of Pukeberg

purchases, saving many artefacts for future generations. In the exhibition at the glassworks you can follow the development of Pukeberg glass right up to the present day, showcase by show case, from the tableware of yester-



O.G. Ohlsson
BYGGNADS AB OG OHLSSON

year to the site gives a unique picture of a turn-of-the-century glassworks. A visit to Pukeberg is a journey through time - and as new products are constantly being developed, the journey continues to new destinations...

Gunnel Holmér
Småland Museum - Sweden's Glass Museum

2013 the family owned company called OG-bygg bought Pukebergglasbruk. The old factory buildings will continue to work as it has done in the past years with holding new creative activities who makes the area live and grow!

You can follow what is going on at the blog www.pukebergglasbruk or at the homesite of Pukeberg. www.pukeberg.se. Welcome to visit us both virtually and in real life!