



Langham Glass

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We present this pamphlet in the hope that it will enhance your understanding and enjoyment of the glass house activity.

The Glass

Glass is made from sand. However, for the top grade crystal we require at Langham, special high grade sand is used. To this sand is added lead oxide to create the lead crystal. Soda, potash, and small quantities of other chemicals are also added to assist the melt and establish the quality of the glass. This mixture is then known as "batch".

The Furnace

A good furnace is vital to the production of top-quality glass. The temperature must never drop below a certain level, and during its five year life the furnace is never allowed to go out.

Each weekend, to replace the glass used in production, the heat inside the gas-fired furnace is increased to 1,350 degrees centigrade, and about 30 cwt. of batch is loaded into it. This is called "charging" the furnace. Once the batch has completely melted, the temperature is reduced to 1,100 degrees centigrade and the glass is ready for use.

Now comes the finishing of the bowl. A solid rod is attached to the foot, and the edge of the bowl is scored with a wet blade and tapped free. Again the bowl goes into the glory hole to be softened, before it is cut to size, then opened with a special shaping tool.

After that, the glass is tapped free of the iron and placed into the oven for annealing. When cool, the base of the foot is ground smooth leaving the small circle in the centre which is characteristic of genuine hand-blown glass.

Animals, Birds and Paperweights

As you can see from our range, not all glass is blown. The animals, birds and paperweights for which Langham Glass is so justly famous are sculpted from a blob of molten crystal gathered on the tip of a solid iron. Watch any of these items being made and you can see the ultimate expression of the master glassmaker's craft and skill, as he moulds and shapes the glass using a wet hand-pad.

A Tribute to the Master

It takes many years of dedication, training and experience to become a master. Only a very few of the apprentices who begin their glassmaking lives sweating at the furnace opening ever make it. It requires not only real artistic flair, but a deep knowledge of the special characteristics of molten glass.

Langham Glass is probably unique in that every item produced is made by hand. But that is as it should be, because everybody in the Glasshouse, from the most junior apprentice to the senior master, knows that he is playing his part in ensuring the survival of one of mankind's oldest and most fascinating crafts.

