

# CARNIVAL GLASS SOCIETY – CONCISE GUIDE TO CARNIVAL GLASS

## SECTION 3: SECONDARY CARNIVAL GLASS - EUROPE AND BEYOND

**Overview.** After WW1 the popularity of Carnival Glass in the USA started to decline in favour of the simpler lines of stretch glass, but its large-scale production and export continued throughout the 1920s, right up to the Wall Street Crash of 1929, to regions such as the UK, Europe and Australia where demand remained strong. This led to the inevitable development of home-grown competitors and Carnival Glass production was taken up across the globe; in Europe, Australia, South America and India, to collectively form the second major period of Carnival Glass manufacture, during the 1920s, 1930s and beyond.

**UK Carnival Glass Production.** Following WW1 there was a period of great economic boom in the early 1920s on both sides of the Atlantic. The UK had nearly full employment and manufacturers were encouraged to embark on a massive export drive, partly to repay US war debts. Working-class consumers, after years of austerity, had money to spend on non-essential home furnishings. Seeing the opportunities, Sowerby Glassworks of Gateshead England, established since the mid-18th Century as producers of decorative glass wares, entered the market in the early 1920s with a range of Carnival Glassware designed to be attractive, fashionable and functional to compete with American imports.



Sowerby had an established reputation for finely crafted pressed glass, having been instrumental in developing pressed glass technology in the Victorian period.

The quality of their mouldwork was legendary. When they commenced making Carnival Glass, they used many of their existing pressed glass moulds, some dating back to the 1880s, including, Royal Swans, Diving Dolphins, the Daisy Block Rowboat and the Swan butter dish.

Sowerby Royal Swan Salt from 1892 mould in amethyst. Courtesy Dave Richards

To give added appeal when using moulds that were originally designed with plain interiors, Sowerby often added a new interior pattern to improve the iridescent effect, for example on the below 'Jewelled Peacock' pin tray. For this they copied designs directly from US Imperial Glass, using their Scroll Embossed and Persian patterns (*Below Scroll Embossed photograph courtesy Dave Richards*).

### SCROLL EMBOSSED

Sowerby designs may either be geometric or moulded into very realistic natural forms of Swans, Hens and Dolphins.

Where not 'as pressed', items often exhibit highly skilled levels of hand working, to crimp, flare, cup or reshape, and bases are frequently hand ground because of the way the glass was stuck up after pressing.



IMPERIAL



SOWERBY

Sowerby produced marigold Carnival on clear glass, which they called "Sunglow", and a darker iridescence they called "Rainbo" on shades of amethyst and blue glass.



Sowerby was not the sole UK maker of Carnival Glass. Others include: Mathew Turnbull; Canning Town Glass and Molineaux Webb & Co. There are still many unattributed Carnival Glass items which are frequently found in the UK, so other firms may also have been involved.

*Sugar bowl left by Mathew Turnbull, Courtesy Dave Richards.*

**Central European Carnival Glass Production.** The European area formerly known as Bohemia, was the birthplace of iridised glass, invented by Leo Pantocsek in 1856. This had led to its production as a high-quality art glass product by Bohemian and English glassmakers including, Loetz, Rindskopf and Webb through the last quarter of the 19th Century. Its popularity with fashion-conscious middle-class consumers was boosted by the various World Trade Fairs of this period, and the desire of glass manufacturers to expand its penetration into a mass consumer market was equally strong on both sides of the Atlantic. In the USA this had led to the development of Prime Carnival Glass (as described in Section 2) which had been exported in volume into the European marketplace.

Prior to WW1, Bohemian iridised glass had been a high-end product on a par with the output of Tiffany in the USA. Post WW1, European glass making was in turmoil; there was massive restructuring of national boundaries and a drive to maximise manufacturing output and exports through mass production. The former Bohemian glassmaking centres were split between Germany, with companies such as Brockwitz, and Czechoslovakia, with companies such as Inwald and Rindskopf.

Brockwitz was responsible for a massive output of the then fashionable Carnival Glass during the mid to late 1920s. The Brockwitz factory was huge, employing over 1000 workers at its peak, producing its own moulds as well as buying in moulds from specialist equipment makers such as Wilhelm Kutzscher that was located only a few miles away.

This factory produced an extensive range of patterns, with glass being exported to the UK, the rest of Europe and South America.

Their glass is characterised by intricate geometric designs, usually on exterior surfaces only, normally 'as pressed' without hand finishing, on clear or blue base glass. The quality of their pressings and iridising is consistently excellent. *Above: Brockwitz Imperat (Northern Lights) bowl. Made as early as 1910, shown in Brockwitz catalogues from 1915. Photograph from the Ward Collection.*





Brockwitz glass was designed for practical everyday use and is highly functional. Items include serving bowls, breakfast and dressing table sets and vases, usually in many sizes and shapes across a common pattern and often with items which can combine in different ways for different uses.

*Left: Brockwitz blue 'Rose Garden' letter vase, first shown in its 1915 catalogue, Anthony and Maureen Ward Collection.*

Inwald and Rindskopf were the main inheritors of the Bohemian glassmaking tradition. By the end of the 1920s Inwald was primarily geared to exporting pressed glass, including Carnival Glass, worldwide. Rindskopf had a history dating back to 1878 and was one of the early producers of Bohemian iridised Art Glass in the late 19th Century.

Both firms' designs are characterised by simple stylised geometric and floral patterns, on thicker glass: a quality which was largely dictated by the nature of the raw materials of the country which do not produce glass suitable for very finely detailed intricate pressings.



**Above L: Inwald Double Diamond Tumble-Up, R: Inwald Fleur-de-Lys plate. Below R: Diana the Huntress bowl by Zabkowice (all from Anthony and Maureen Ward Collection), Below L: Rindskopf Stippled Diamond Swag sugar and creamer courtesy Dave Richards**



Czechoslovakian Carnival Glass is virtually all marigold, made as practical items for general household use. Inwald's iridescence is consistently outstanding with great colour highlights, whereas Rindskopf's is of more variable quality. Central European Carnival Glass was also produced in Poland by Hortensja and Zabkowice, and also further West in the Netherlands by Leerdam.

All the Central European firms took a massive hit from the 1930s onwards as their export production was affected by the Great Depression emanating from the USA and by their output being switched from decorative wares to utility glass for the manufacture of defensive items for the impending WW2. Glass researchers have faced huge obstacles in attributing much Central European glass because of the wholesale destruction of factory records and sites during WW2: there are still many items with unconfirmed attributions and new evidence is constantly being turned up.

**Nordic Carnival Glass Production.** Carnival Glass was also produced in the mid-1920s to early 1930s in the Nordic countries: in Sweden by Eda and Elme; and in Finland by Riihimaki and Karhula. Collectively these produced a relatively small quantity of Carnival Glass, some of which was exported to the UK, the USA and South America (*Below: Riihimaki 'Elektra' vase, pattern #5950, first shown in their 1928 catalogue, Courtesy S&T Auty*)



Eda produced press moulded Carnival Glass for just four years 1925-29, but in fact they had experimented with blow moulded, iridised glass as early as 1905 in the production of these rare Marigold Swirl Vases putting them on a par with Fenton in the USA.

*Left: Marigold Swirl vases (3,5,7 and 9 inches) made by Eda in 1905, part of the Anthony and Maureen Ward Collection.*

There were close links between the Nordic and American glassmakers, who seem to have shared and exchanged technical

knowledge. In the case of Eda, skilled glassworkers transferred out to work in American factories and the company also had links with other manufacturers across Europe.

Nordic Carnival Glass was produced in marigold on clear base glass, amber and a darker finish on a blue base glass, although small quantities of purple, lilac, pink, white milk glass and white clear glass were also used. The designs are usually bold intaglio geometric or stylised floral patterns, on the exterior surfaces only, with a few exceptions. The glass is of a high quality, the bases of pieces are ground, and the iridescence is exceptionally well finished. Shapes include bowls, vases and decorative containers. Vases in particular are frequently hand shaped after pressing.



Deep Purple 'Floral Sunburst' large jardinière by Eda, Sweden. Anthony and Maureen Ward Collection

**South American Carnival Glass Production.** The bulk of South American Carnival Glass was made in Argentina by firms based in Buenos Aires, and in Brazil. South America had been a major export client for Carnival Glass produced in the USA, Europe and Scandinavia through the 1920s and early 1930s, which led to the development of home production in the early 1930s. The main firms involved were in Argentina: Cristalerias Rigolleau; Cristalerias Papini and Cristalerias Piccardo; and in Brazil: Esberard. However, local South American collectors and researchers are constantly turning up new unattributed patterns suggesting other firms may have been involved, both in Argentina and Brazil and other South American countries such as Peru and Mexico.



Designs fall into two categories. Some are based very closely on European patterns, while others are a unique blend of naturalistic and geometric elements. The taste for European styles undoubtedly reflected the huge numbers of people immigrating to South America from there in the early 1920s.

In some instances, it appears there was a close connection with USA companies such as US Glass, and actual moulds were traded to press patterns such as Omnibus and Rising Sun. Items were produced mainly in marigold, with some blue glass. Popular shapes are: wine, cordial and water sets, often with attractive undertrays; lidded comports; tumblers and bowls.

*Photograph Jewelled Peacock Tails by Esberard, Courtesy Seeck Auctions*

**Indian Carnival Glass Production.** One of the main producers of Carnival Glass in India was the Jain Glassworks although other factories sprang up mainly in the Firozabad area. They started their production slightly later than Europe in 1935. Their output was mainly of drinking vessels, tumblers and jugs, and vases, in marigold, with occasional pale blue glass.



The designs are very distinctive, featuring elaborate patterns produced with dots, diamond shapes and lines.

Patterns are either geometric or to make nature inspired forms of leaves, fruits or animals. The subjects are often based on traditional Indian symbolism, such as vases in the shape of hands, coiled fish and coiled serpents. The main export market for Indian glass was Australia.

*Photograph left: Three Serpent vases from the Anthony and Maureen Ward Collection.*

**Australian Carnival Glass Production.** Australian Carnival Glass was produced in Sydney by the Crown Crystal Glass Company. Australia had been a recipient of much imported Carnival Glass from the USA in the prime period and later also from the UK. Crown Crystal started to iridise glass in 1919, but only started to register their Carnival patterns in 1923, and continued production into the early 1930s.

Many of their patterns feature realistic representations of the native Australian fauna and flora, with a few purely geometric patterns. Uniquely many of the patterns carry registration marks which enable the development of production variations to be followed. The most common shapes are bowls and comports, with less frequently: table sets; water sets and vases. The colours are marigold on clear glass and dark on purple and black amethyst glass. The bowls and comports are often ruffled or crimped in the style of American Carnival Glass such as this dark amethyst ruffled master Swan bowl by the Crown Crystal company, photograph courtesy S&T Auty.



So, it can be seen that throughout the 19 'teens', 1920s through to the late 1930s, the craze for Carnival Glass and Carnival Glass manufacture had spread across the world. In **Section 4, The Re-Emergence – Contemporary Carnival Glass**, we see that, during and after the second world war in the 1940s there was a general decline in the manufacture of Carnival Glass although items continued to be produced throughout the 1950s. After which there was a 're-emergence' of the manufacture of Carnival Glass in the 1960s brought about by interest from collectors who were rediscovering the beauty of Carnival Glass made during the earlier Prime and Secondary glass periods.