



## *GlassCuts*

The informal email bulletin of the British Glass Foundation

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## THE TRAIN NOW STANDING ...

*... a commemorate souvenir of a very special day at a very special location*

Those recently returning from a lengthy tour of duty on the Mir space station and claiming no knowledge may, just may, have reasonable defence. For all others there is no excuse, because we have been plugging *Hot Stuff!* mercilessly for months. But in the best interests of rounding up the stragglers, let us recap.

Richard Golding, the man who blew the blanks for the 2012 Portland Vase, has a studio in the quaintest of settings, a station office at the end of a steam-train branch line not a million miles from where the Battle of Bosworth Field saw the fall of our last Plantagenet King who then ended up ignominiously under a car park for the next four centuries. It's gorgeous; just as Richard - the glassmaker, not the King - is putting the final twirl to a perfume bottle or something, pulling up right outside his front door in a fluff of steam and that gloriously evocative whiff of brake pads and hot oil is the 12:15 to Uppinton-Fluffington. It's brilliant, it really is.

As part of his contribution to this element of life's soothingly enduring cycle, every year around now-ish Richard teases the new season out of the torpor of the old by inviting a celebrated glassmaker along to Station Glass for the day to, as he beguilingly puts it, 'play with glass'.

Allister Malcolm is resident glassmaker at Broadfield House Glass Museum in the day job but also serves as a Trustee of the British Glass Foundation (BGF). The latter sphere has seen him accrue an impressive portfolio as a dab-hand at fundraising and his latest initiative is the *Celebrity Doodles* project - which has recently extended into local schools as *The Doodle Challenge* - in which the great and the good are asked to supply a doodle on acetate that is then interpreted by a choice of artistes into works of glass art. The intention is to auction these to raise funds for BGF.

So far he has attracted a variety of doodles of varying artistic merit, or not as the case may be, from the likes of Tony Hadley, Beverley Knight, Robert Plant, Sir Trevor Brooking, Steve Bull, Maggie Philbin, Raymond Blanc, Emma Thompson and *Slade's* Dave Hill. They're all good, but I suspect that Frankie Valli of *Four Seasons* fame must be a prize scalp. Other than noting the coincidence that BGF Secretary Lynn Boleyn is also Secretary of the Frankie Valli Fan Club, I have no idea how we got that one.

Up to speed now? Right. Fast-forward to Saturday 21st March 2015 when who should Richard ask to 'play with glass' but our Allister. Generous to a fault, Richard also suggested that whatever was made that day by the Dynamic Duo could go to BGF as a piece to raise funds at auction. As a *quid pro quo*, Allister offered Richard the pick of his doodles (*you could have phrased that one better - Ed*) and Richard chose - you've guessed it - Frankie Valli.

Now just take a look at the Frankie Valli doodle and ask yourself 'what on earth could any glassmaker do with that? We were about to find out as two genuine *maestros*, each at the very pinnacle of their game, set to work.

Although Richard and Allister had started the ball rolling some time earlier in the morning, by the time my mother, a keen supporter, and I arrived at Station Glass around 11:30 and exchanged greetings with fellow BGF Trustee Meriel Harris, they were still resolving practical issues, mostly around how to get the kites to stay in shape rather than dribble into the piece as amorphous blobs.



They had evidently sorted it because within a few minutes of the ever-welcoming Sandra, Richard's good lady, inviting us to partake of light refreshments, the two compatriots were out of the blocks and off. To help them get in their stride Sandra kindly invited me to offer some words and I confess to feeling very privileged to take a few moments in relating what this was all about and why it was all so exceptional.

The audience warmed accordingly and clapped our two *virtuosi* to the rafters before settling down in near-silence to witness some magic. At one point a family and their kids looked in through the window, a matter of inches from where Richard was lost in concentration. I was directly opposite on the inside taking photographs; I think I may just have managed to capture the look of sheer awe and wonderment on their faces. And yes, right on cue, the 12:15 to Uppinton-Fluffington did pull up directly outside in a haze of steam and chuf-chuff-chuff. I'd wager that even the engine driver, more usually fending off a barrage of *oohs* and *aahs* from the steam buffs, was flabbergasted that, on this occasion at least, our transfixed audience remained singularly unmoved by his presence.

Shenton Station is not the largest building in Shenton - the public loos across the way are probably roomier - and so the crowd of maybe 40 or so, alternately seated and standing, were intimately positioned in front of the safety barrier behind which the pair were operating so graciously and effortlessly, and all in a clear expression of how they had been collaborating for years. Which just show how wrong you can be as they have never worked together before. Yet their mutual fluency around each other with barely a word was uncanny to the point of eeriness. There was some comment passed later, I think it was me, to the effect that perhaps they had been doing this in spirit together for the past 400 years but let's not get too deep here. Certainly it would be fair to say there was an understated yet arcane affinity between the two that went beyond professional respect into the realms of intertwined psyche. Or something like that.

Despite the evident intense concentration levels there was a moment of pure levity when Allister, who is more accustomed to working virtually on top of his furnace, commented on all the remote gadgets and contrivances that Richard operated with the tap of a toe and suggested the floor appeared to be booby-trapped with gizmos. Despite his impish comments none of this seemed to faze him and he was soon flicking this open or that shut as if to the Manor born.

Now I could wax lyrical for page after page about what we all witnessed on this memorable occasion but I think it would be easier on the senses if instead I reproduce the sequence of shots showing the various stages right from taking the initial gather, the addition of the colours, the pricking out of the kite details, the smoothing down, the re-blowing and the marvering into the final ovaloid shape with flattened front and rear, replete with Frankie's kites in full colour.

Should, however, you prefer a moving account - excuse the pun - then by use of nothing more complicated than an iPhone and a bit of natty editing for *YouTube* Allister's good lady Terri snared the lot in a quick-fire two-minute time lapse that captures it all from start to finish and concludes with a comparison between the original scribbly doodle against Richard and Allister's exquisite interpretation of it. Click on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9JCMvIbG0Y&feature=em-share\\_video\\_user](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9JCMvIbG0Y&feature=em-share_video_user) and prepare to be blown away; it is just incredible.

Putting into simple sentence like that makes it all sound so easy but the truth is that for the average human this would represent the accumulation of a lifetime's skill and then even longer to put into practice. For this pair, who have clearly been bestowed gifts of talent by a far higher authority, it was done, dusted and in the annealing oven to thunderous applause by shortly after 2:30pm. Honestly, the more I watch these people work, the less I understand how they do it.

The *Frankie Valli Doodle* collaboration was very much a one-off and, as the audience drifted off to their own secret somewheres, I reckon they knew it. For many, this would be something the likes of which they might never witness again; it was that special. But fret ye not, for Richard and Allister continue to fight the good fight in their own ways and the BGF will continue to support them and their ilk whilst they do.

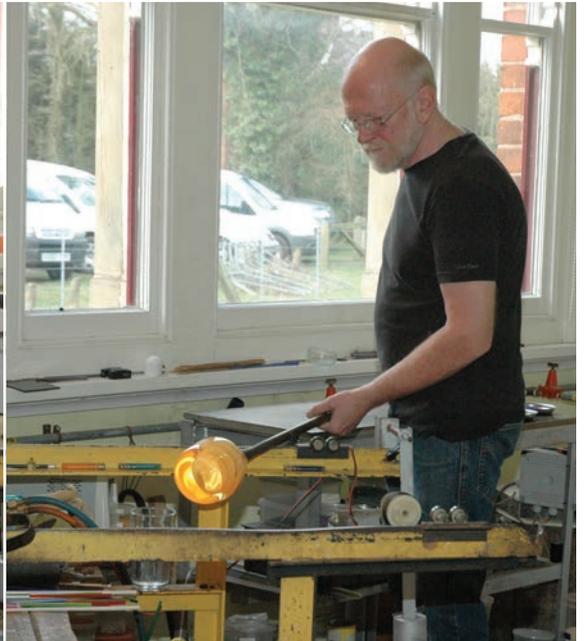
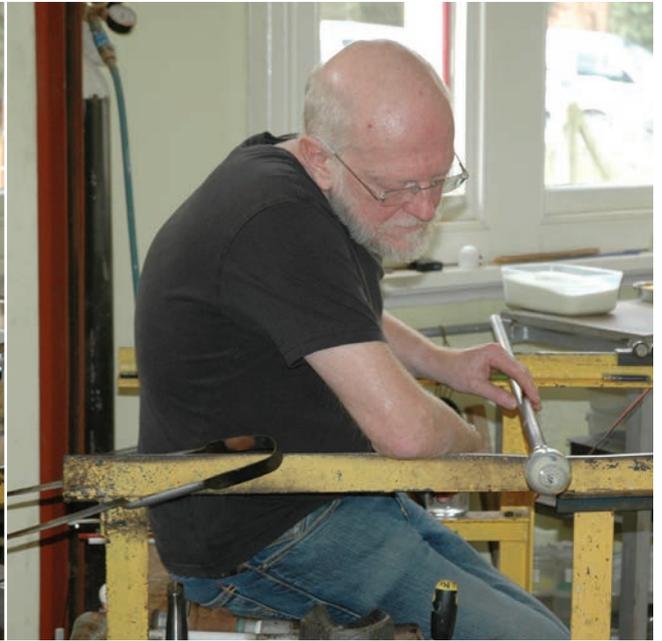
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*Hot stuff!* indeed. What a day.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Fisher MBE'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke underneath. The letters 'MBE' are written in a smaller, more formal font at the end of the signature.

Graham Fisher MBE  
Press & Publicity  
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March 2015  
Keep it Glass















## CELEBRITY DOODLES...

*... the first example of doodle to glass*

courtesy of

Frankie Valli, Richard Golding and Allister Malcolm



British Glass Foundation

