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**Dear Collector,**

November 2000.

As the year 2000 rapidly draws to a close Jonathan and I felt that it was important to make contact with you once more before the end of this very special year. I am sure you can imagine this year has been a very 'eventful' one for us, in more ways than one and we wanted to share some of these special memories with you. Although I will try to be brief so much has happened it is difficult to know where to begin.

When we began making our plans to form the company in November 99, the task of converting a listed building into a glassmaking studio were quite a challenge and the problems we were faced with were sometimes insurmountable. But eventually with determination, patience and the inner strength that we possess to make wonderful glass, we were driven to find the answers to the problems. But this venture would have been much more difficult to achieve without the help of The Museum Trust, Richard Golding, Stuart Fletcher, our glassmaker Allister Malcolm and glassmaking assistant David Deegan and they all continue to offer their support for which we are very grateful.

On 10<sup>th</sup> July 2000 the first piece of glass was made in our studio and all of the equipment performed without fault and from that day on we have never looked back.

We have been very fortunate to have received and met so many interesting visitors from the Masters' of the Livery Companies, Lords and Ladies and of course so many of you, our enthusiastic and avid collectors'. In fact, we are delighted to tell you that in just four months we have enrolled over 220 new collectors' – a response that has overwhelmed us. All we have to do now is keep fulfilling your orders!

As we have been so busy, we have had to disappoint many requests from retailers but we do hope to be able to supply a few more next year and we will let you have their details as soon as possible.

We have been extremely fortunate to have been so rewarded with your interest and support and it makes all the hard work and long hours necessary for a new venture to succeed very worthwhile. And it is your enthusiasm, letters, phone calls and support for what we do that has given us the strength to help us through probably the worst devastation that we may ever experience....

Those of you who have visited our studio will know that we occupy a very picturesque position on the banks of the River Severn. However, being in such a wonderful spot does have its price as we now know-flooding!

On the 31<sup>st</sup> October we received a red flood alert and the chaos began. We removed what we could but we had no idea how high the floodwater would rise. The particular part of the museum buildings that we occupy had only ever had 6" of water in its history, but we knew that at least 12 " were expected. When we designed the studio we built the equipment on legs higher than the anticipated level of floodwater, but it was the furnace that was our main worry. It constantly cooks at approximately 1100 degrees and is never turned off as this would result in severe damage to the components. So our aim was to keep it at a constant temperature and away from the water. With the help of four men we carefully raised the furnace (that was full of molten glass and weighs in

excess of 2 tons) with a hydraulic truck a few inches at a time and placed no less than nine breeze blocks under each leg. We assumed that this would be high enough and with the threat of losing

power we also changed over the heat source by installing independent high-pressure propane tanks, to feed a separate burner system clamped into the gathering mouth of the furnace.

At 7.00pm that evening we left the studio confident that we had done everything that we could do and we watched the water just starting to creep into the courtyard and bubble up through the Victorian flag stones. We returned later that evening at 9.30pm with extra sandbags but the water had risen so rapidly during the last two hours that the studio and showroom was already under 2ft of water. We could not even open the door to the showroom as the wooden panels and carpets were already floating. At this point it was hard to explain how we felt but all we could do was wait and hope that it would not get as bad as we feared. This was a Halloween we will never forget!

To cut a very long night short, at 5.00am we received a phone call from the museum security team and when we arrived back at the studio nothing could have prepared us for what we found. Our dream studio was under 4ft of water and still rising. The level was dangerously close to the bottom layer of hot furnace bricks and the impact of cold water on the bricks could result in an explosion. At this point we had no option but to shut down the furnace and cool it as quickly as possible. But it would take hours to reach a safe temperature. This left us with no alternative but to call in the fire service, who brought in Shropshire's only heavy duty pumping unit which, after tremendous effort was positioned in the studio and was pumping out 6000 litres of water per minute, which is equivalent to three fire engines. To prevent the water coming back as quickly as it was removed the fire crew boarded up all of the windows and doors to help keep the rising level down. They worked tirelessly for 24 hours until the furnace was cool enough and the threat of an explosion had passed. As the river level continued to rise and subside it was several days before we could get back in and assess the full extent of the damage – not a pleasant sight!

However, life is full of ups and downs for us all and it is times like these that make us stronger and help to prepare us for whatever might be around the corner, although we hope this does not happen too often! If any of you have been a victim of these devastating floods our sympathies are with you and we hope that you are starting to get your home or business back together.

And so we move on. Many positives come from the negatives and we are certainly being positive. Repairs are well under way and we expect to re open our showroom doors this week. So for those of you looking for that unique Christmas gift – we look forward to seeing you. We will be open Monday to Saturday until we close on 23<sup>rd</sup> December. We will re open on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2001, but if you need to contact us prior to the 8<sup>th</sup> please do so.

I have attached a few photographs of Jonathan's latest cameo designs, which will be available in small limited editions from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001. If you are interested in ordering any please register your choice early to avoid disappointment, as these pieces will be officially launched at the International Spring Fair in February and the editions are sure to sell out.

#### **Limited Edition prices**

***[Water Lotus bowl - £295. Sycamore vase - £425. Lily vase - £220. Aquarium - £250.]***

There are several other wonderful techniques being devised at the moment and although they are still 'under wraps' and I am not allowed to say anymore, I think you will be stunned at the artistic and technical brilliance when you see them.

We receive many requests from you enquiring about experimental, trial and one off pieces. These pieces are indeed very collectable and are only available through our own showroom and they do sell very quickly. Therefore, for those of you interested in such pieces you do really need to visit our shop, but a phone call prior to your visit would be advisable. However, we do appreciate that it

is not always feasible to travel a great distance, therefore if you would like to register on our 'one off' list, I will be happy to mail you photographs when Jonathan has completed a small selection of

pieces. If you are interested in receiving these details please drop me a line. For those of you who have personally commissioned pieces we would like to thank you for taking the time to write or phone us with your response. We are only too pleased to know that you are happy with your very special piece of glass. Fortunately, we have not had any disappointed collectors' yet! Jonathan continues to work hard to fulfil your cameo orders and once again we thank you for your patience and understanding of the slight set back that we have experienced.

In my next newsletter I will be telling you all about a new and very exciting venture, 'Contemporary Cameo Glass' of which we are a part. The company represents the most proficient cameo carvers and promotes their work world-wide. This is sure to put contemporary English cameo in the history books and I will send you all the details in the New Year.

Every piece of Jonathan Harris Studio Glass that we produce involves team work and early next year I will be introducing to you our very talented team of glassmakers' who help us to achieve the very best in hand made decorative art glass.

We feel very privileged to have been approached by a leading web designer, who was so impressed with what he saw at our studio (before the flood) that he is going to install a live web cam in our studio. This will mean that we will be the first virtual studio in the UK and you will be able to log on and watch us glassmaking from your arm chair! The site will also consist of many other interesting pages, all relating to what we do. There will be a large section, which gives exclusive access to collectors' with special offers, and events etc. You will also be able to safely order and shop on line. But do not worry if you are not keen on 21<sup>st</sup> century technology, I will still be at the end of the phone, sending you all the details by snail mail and we will always be there ready to welcome you to our studio. This new website is an additional way of keeping in touch not a replacement.

However, I think I have said enough for now but thank you once again for your continued interest and we hope you will enjoy keeping in touch with us during 2001, which we know will be even more eventful than this year-all good we hope and we have so many more exciting events, exhibitions and designs to show you that I can hardly wait to start writing the next newsletter.

On a final note, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very merry Christmas and prosperous New Year, throughout which we will continue in our 'pursuit of excellence'.

**Best wishes,**

*Alison & Jonathan.*