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# Gentilshommes verriers, mythe ou legende?

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## Abstract

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Gentlemen Glassmakers, myth or legend?

Throughout history, or at least since the time of the crusades, glassmaking has had an almost secret mystique about it; similar in a way to turning base metal into gold, akin to alchemy.

Why was this? Why did most of the seventeenth

and eighteenth century glass works in Europe, belong to aristocratic families, e.g. les Comtes de Vogue in France, Baccarat in Lorraine founded in 1764, by Prince Bishop Cardinal Louis-Joseph de Laval-Montmorency – (and recently sold to a Chinese company), Cristalleries de St Louis -1586 in Lorraine, Glasfabrik Freiherr von Pochinger(1568) in Frankenau, Bavaria, and The Duke of Buckingham's Plate Glass Works, Vauxhall, London.

These "men of glass," were often referred to in contemporary literature and documents as "gentilshommes verriers" (or gentlemen glassmakers), In England men like Sir Robert Mansell, George Ravenscroft, Thomas Webb, and Harry, later Lord Pilkington of St Helens, and his distant cousin, the scientist Sir Alastair Pilkington carried the fame of their achievements in glass, right up to 2009 Nobel winner Sir Charles Kao the inventor of modern fibre optic.

The speaker Stephen Pollock-Hill is a second generation glassmaker and the family own the ten acre site on which the glass works stands.

Although not a maker of flat glass, recently they have helped create a room of mirrors for the re-opening of the new poshest top night club in London Annabels.

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\*Speaker

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