

Barton Balls

Exciting Find of Rare target balls

By Mike O'Malley



Figure 1

Many glass target balls will have rough, jagged, and sometimes misshapen necks. Like many glass products of the time, they were hand blown into molds. Unlike other glass products, their sole purpose was their destruction. Armed with this knowledge, glass blowers were not always delicate in removing the blow pipe from the ball. There was no reason to be concerned with the finish or look of the neck.

In grade school I was required to memorize a spelling rule. It began with, "I before E except after C". The exception in target balls is the ground mouth. There are target balls where the jagged edge is ground to a smooth finish. In this article we will discuss some of the most beautiful target balls ever found. Among them is the most exceptional ground mouth target ball I have ever seen.

Are adjectives such as spectacular, stunning, magnificent, outstanding, dazzling, exceptional, and extraordinary a little over the top when used to describe a target ball? Not if you have a Barton Ball in hand.

The Barton Balls were found in an old storage building under renovation in England in 2005. The storage building was located on the shooting grounds of a well known English fam-

ily. The name of the family has been closely guarded and is unknown to me. In the find were two target ball variants - one with the normal target ball neck, the other a wide ground mouth neck. Each of these variants came in two variants - one is cobalt blue the other a sand ball with a pebble effect in powder blue. The normal neck balls (Fig. 2 & 4) were found loose and scattered about the building. The ground mouth wide neck balls (Fig. 1 & 3) were neatly packed in straw and contained in two wooden crates. Stenciled on the crates were the words "E Barton & Son's Stourbridge, Purveyors of fine glass shooting Targets".

To describe these balls as cobalt blue and pebble blue is not completely accurate. The cobalt balls are islands of dark blue with fine clear raised lines surrounding each island. The sand ball is almost impossible to explain. To describe them as spectacular would be an understatement. I will accompany this article a caveat. Until you have held the Barton Ball in hand, you have not seen it. Many of you probably saw the Barton Balls at the 2008 FOHBC National Bottle Expo in York, Pennsylvania.

Since the find in 2005 another variant of the Barton Ball has been dis-



Figure 2



Figure 3

covered. Rumors are now circulating in the target ball world that there may be more.



Figure 4

How exciting it is to be a collector! We are filled with questions. If we are very fortunate, we will sometimes find an answer to a question we had not yet thought to ask.

If you have questions or interest in target balls, please contact me.

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