

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ADVERTISING JUGS

Advertising jugs have long been used to promote drinks, distillates, cigarettes and numerous other products connected with the bar trade. From about 1840 the most important distillers and drinks producers offered to the owners of inns, eating places, pubs, restaurants and bars, jugs that promoted their products. Whilst in Europe advertising jugs were widespread they reached the United States only after the second world war and even today some states prohibit the use of these jugs because they publicise alcoholic drinks and tobacco.

The real purpose of the jugs is not only publicity but the correct manner of serving the most famous and well known distillate: whisky. In fact it is from Anglo-Saxon countries that comes the custom of adding to whisky a small part of pure water (cold but not iced), that which the English call "spring-water", to savour all the properties of the most appreciated and fascinating distillate we know. These jugs have been produced in various materials such as: terra-cotta, glass, pottery, tin, aluminium, porcelain, wood and plastic, but most of them are certainly in pottery. Numerous big firms have manufactured these jugs; to name a few: Royal Doulton, Shelley, Wade Regicor, J.Green & Nephew, Euroceramics, Setton Pottery, Moulin des Loups and various other firms throughout Europe and the world. The large distillers entrusted to the designers of these manufacturers the image of their own product to make it recognisable through logos, shapes, brands and colours of the jugs which were then distributed to all the most prestigious venues where the product was most popular.

The collecting of advertising jugs is a relatively recent hobby. It developed around the 1970-80, and has had a rapid expansion to the point of numbering collectors all over the world. Australia, where it seems that the jugs have numerous valuers, gave birth to the first collectors' association which now boasts hundreds of members scattered over all continents. The most sought after jugs are naturally the ones from Scotland, the undisputed home of whisky, more valuable if they are of limited edition, numbered, very old, commemorative, and of famous brands such as Johnnie Walker, Buchanan's, Dewar's, Black & White, etc. Obviously collectors do not despise those of more recent production, as long as they are almost no longer made. Values can range from a few Euros for the more common jugs (those produced in large number) to many thousands of Euros for the rarest and most sought after "Royal Doulton" of the late 1800s.

At this time no-one can establish how many jugs are in circulation and the few catalogues are constantly being revised and up-dated by new displays and values. The most difficult aspect of this type of collecting is surely the tracing of items. They may be found in junkshops, flea markets, antique fairs and, fortunately, for some time now, on the internet where some collectors have already opened their own site where jugs can be bought, sold or exchanged and especially the exchange of information and news on this fascinating world of the publicity jugs.

Alessandro Orzes