

Is it a Vasart, Strathearn or Perthshire Paperweight

By Alan Thornton

Many collectors have difficulty deciding whether a paperweight was made by Vasart, Strathearn, or Perthshire, if it is not signed. That is not surprising, as there is a strong element of continuity in design - and personnel - between the factories. To understand why that was so, one needs to start with the history of the companies. What follows is a brief outline - you can read more history in Dave Webber's article in the PCA Bulletin 2000, for example.

Before 1946, Salvador Ysart and his 3 sons were working for Moncrieff Glass (paperweights being very much a minor product). In September 1946, Salvador Ysart and two of his sons (Vincent and Augustine) established **Ysart Brothers Glass** (trading as "Vasart", formed from the names 'Vincent', 'Augustine' and 'Salvador'. Paul Ysart remained working for Moncrieff.

Vasart made various glass art forms, including some paperweights. A small proportion of Salvador's paperweights are signed with a 'Y' cane. By 1954 Salvador had stopped working, and Dave Moir had joined. The company made a range of glassware, but paperweights were made for the 'gift trade', and the millefiori set ups were made by the glass makers' wives.

In 1960 George Dunlop (MD of Pirelli Glass Ltd) re-financed Ysart Bros and re-named it **Vasart Glass Ltd**. He appointed Stuart Drysdale as manager.

In the early 1960s, Vasart got a contract from Teacher's Whisky to make ashtrays from squashed whisky bottles. This lucrative but mundane work required larger premises and facilities. The existing premises in Shore Road, Perth were replaced by a new factory at Crieff, which was named **Strathearn Glass**. This factory ran from 1965 to 1980.

In 1968 Stuart Drysdale left Strathearn Glass to establish **Perthshire Paperweights**, which ran from 1968 to 2002. Five of the Strathearn glassworkers moved once the factory was ready, thus leaving Strathearn on a Friday and joining Perthshire the following Monday. It was not until 1978 that a 'P' signature cane was used in their designs as a matter of course.

What this history means is that in 1965 the same glass workers were at Vasart one day, and Strathearn the next; and that in 1968 some Strathearn glass workers transferred direct to Perthshire. It is no wonder that there are similarities in some of the products.

Some of the key workers

Ysart Bros

Salvador Ysart 1948 - 1954
Augustine Ysart 1948 - 1956
Vincent Ysart 1948 - 1965
Jack Allen 1948 - 1965
Dave Moir 1954 - 1965

Vasart / Strathearn Glass

Vincent Ysart 1965
Jack Allen 1965 - ?
Dave Moir 1965 - 1980
John Deacons 1967 - 1968
Peter McDougall ? - 1968

Perthshire Paperweights

Jack Allen 1968 - ?
John Deacons 1968 - 1978
Peter McDougall 1968 - 2002
Allan Scott 1975 - 1979

How to identify the factory

The most difficult pieces to attribute are the millefiori concentric and spoke designs made around the time that the new factories started up. Miniatures probably present the greatest challenge. But there are some clues that should prove helpful, though not definitive.

First, look at the base of the paperweight and the treatment of the scar where it was knocked off the rod (there may even be a maker's label!). The majority of Strathearn paperweights and early Perthshire paperweights have a 'fire polished' base, created by melting the surface of rough area with a blowtorch. This often has a 'scummy' appearance.

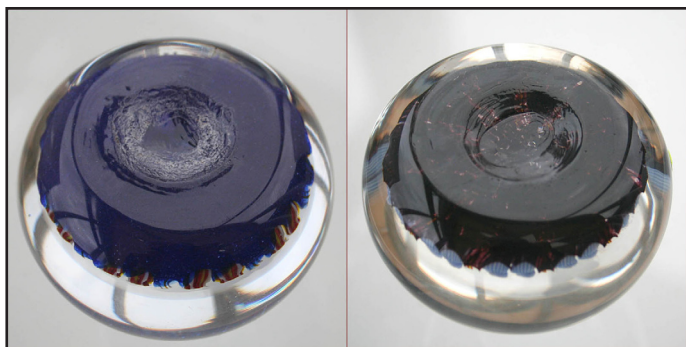


Figure 1. Strathearn 'fire polished' bases

Vasart sometimes ground out the rough mark or other unevenness on the base (using sand and a rotating wooden wheel), which gives a somewhat matt finish. Not all their paperweights were treated this way, but if you find rough grinding - as opposed to polishing - then it is probably a Vasart product.

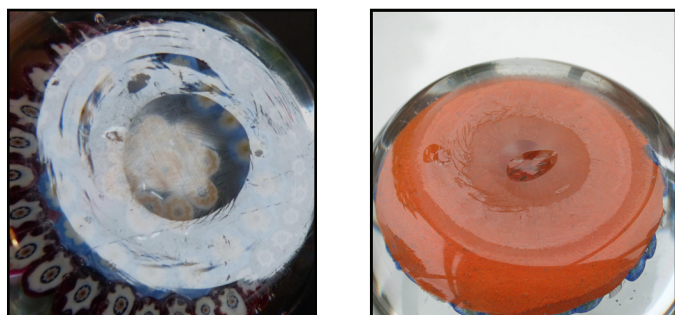


Figure 2. Ysart Bros / Vasart ground bases

Later Perthshire pieces often have concave polished bases, that extend across most of the width.



Figure 3. Later Perthshire polished bases

If you are not able to handle the paperweight, and only have a top image for example, then you will need to consider the canes and the overall design. If the paperweight is a spoke and millefiori panel design, then look at the spokes: if these are white latticino, then the paperweight is probably a Strathearn product. Vasart and Perthshire tended to use multicoloured twisted ribbon for the spokes.

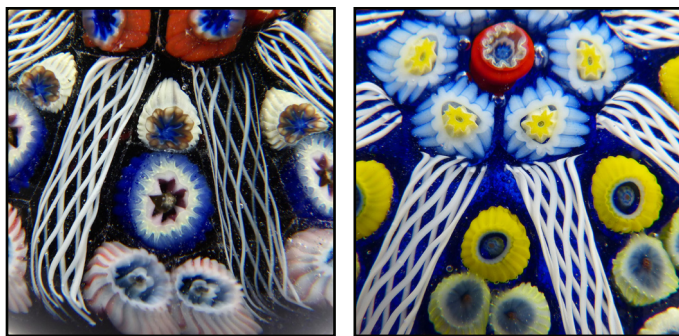


Figure 4. Typical Strathearn spokes made with white latticino



Figure 5. Typical Perthshire twist spokes



Figure 6. Ysart Bros / Vasart spokes vary

The next thing to think about is the design of the individual canes. Complex canes (made when individual canes are bundled together, re-heated and pulled again) are very uncommon in Strathearn paperweights, and rarely used in the earlier Perthshire designs with millefiori and spokes. Such canes are found in some Vasart paperweights, however. One style of cane found almost exclusively in Vasart paperweights is the large 'daisy' cane, especially in the earlier work (Figure 7).

The main difference that I notice between Strathearn canes and the early Perthshire canes is that a Perthshire paperweight often appears more 'frilly': that is to say, more canes with obvious star shapes rather than nearer round canes. Compare the appearance of the pairs of paperweights in Figure 8. These show labelled Strathearns on the left, labelled Perthshire



Figure 7. Typical Vasart canes. A large 'daisy' cane and complex canes on the left, and a very complex cane at the centre on the right hand image.

on the right. Note the white twist spokes in the Strathearns and coloured twist spokes in the Perthshire as mentioned above.



Figure 8 Labeled Strathearn paperweights on the left, labeled Perthshire paperweights on the right.

Strathearn made more closepack examples than the other makers: Vasart examples are relatively rare, and I think the only Perthshire closepack made before 1978 is the PP18 doorknob. The Strathearn closepacks were made in large, medium and small size.



Figure 9. Closepack designs. Labeled Strathearn on left, Perthshire doorknob on the right.

The biggest challenge is the miniatures, which are often 3 row concentrics on an opaque colour ground. These were made by Vasart as tops for bar tools *inter alia*; by Strathearn; and by Perthshire as the PP3 design. It can be tricky - maybe impossible sometimes - to decide whether an example is early Perthshire or Strathearn.



Figure 10. Vasart minis (bar tool tops).



Figure 11. Labeled Strathearn minis

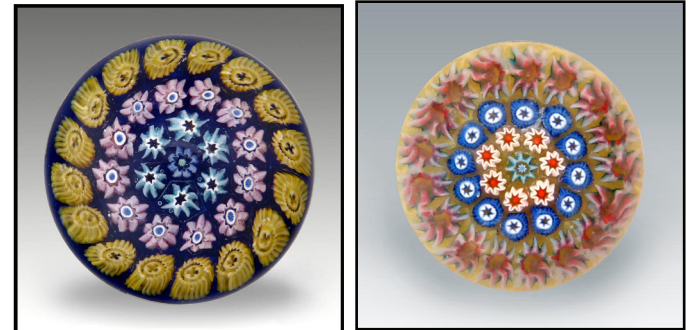


Figure 12. Labeled Perthshire minis

There are 3 pages of examples from the makers as appendices to this article.

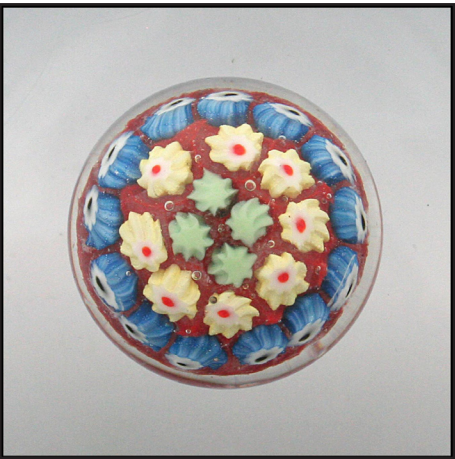
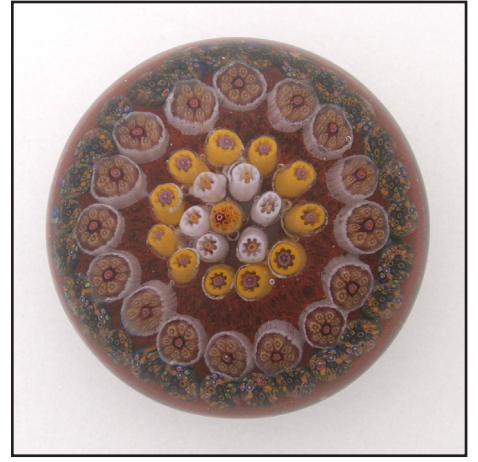
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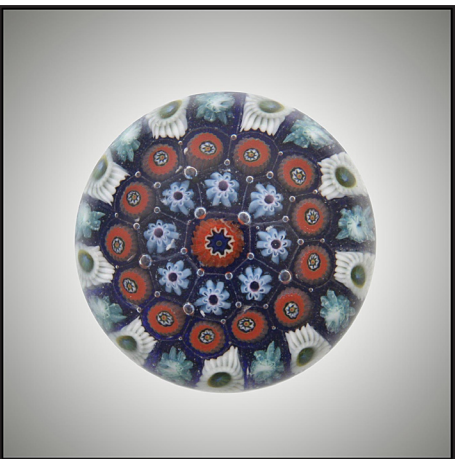
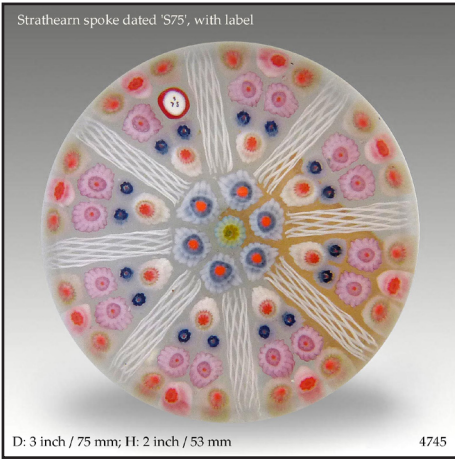
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Appendix 1. Ysart Bros / Vasart Paperweights. Three minis bottom row.



Appendix 2. Strathearn Paperweight images. Three minis bottom row.



Appendix. Perthshire Paperweight images. PP1, PP2 and PP3 designs.

