

60 years in the business Pam Howells

By Joanne McDonald (Vectis Auctions)

If anyone was born to be a bear artist then it is Pam Howells. During a bout of childhood illness and being confined to bed, enterprising Pam decided to pass the hours away by making a teddy bear. Little did she know then the impact this would have on her life.

Always artistic, Pam studied at Art College and after passing her exams at the age of 18 got a job as 'Assistant Designer' for H G Stone at the Chiltern Toy Works in Pontypool, South Wales. Her capabilities were tested early on when Chief Designer, the very experienced Madeline Biggs took the decision to move to South Africa; making a career move to work as an Occupational Therapist in a hospital there. This was in December 1957 just a year after Pam had commenced her career.

It was not long before the first Chiltern toy designed by Pam Howells was launched in 1962. Moving away from the traditional Hugmee, a staple of Chiltern at the time, Pam created an artificial silk teddy bear with light brown head, inset white muzzle, finished with a black plastic nose and stitched mouth. He had amber and black safety eyes, integrally dressed as a Bandsman with gold braiding to his chest and was seated on a red painted metal trike with rubber edged wheels.

Initially made in a 28cm (11") size, a larger 43cm (17") version followed plus pixies, dogs and a Sooty on wheels too. They all had a pull chord which enabled you to drive the wheels and propel the bear to pedal faster and faster.

Other novelty items followed, bears on a cart, a waving bear with internal armature, pram toys, roly poly bears, pandas and dogs, plus a musical mother bear that gently rocks her baby as the music is played. Pam worked

during a period of intense change in the toy market and at Chiltern, with the takeover by Chad Valley and the eventual loss of the single Chiltern label. After 10 years at Chiltern, Pam's sculptor husband was transferred to Lincolnshire by his firm, so Pam went too; leaving behind many superb memories of what was in the 1960's the largest producer of such goods in Britain.

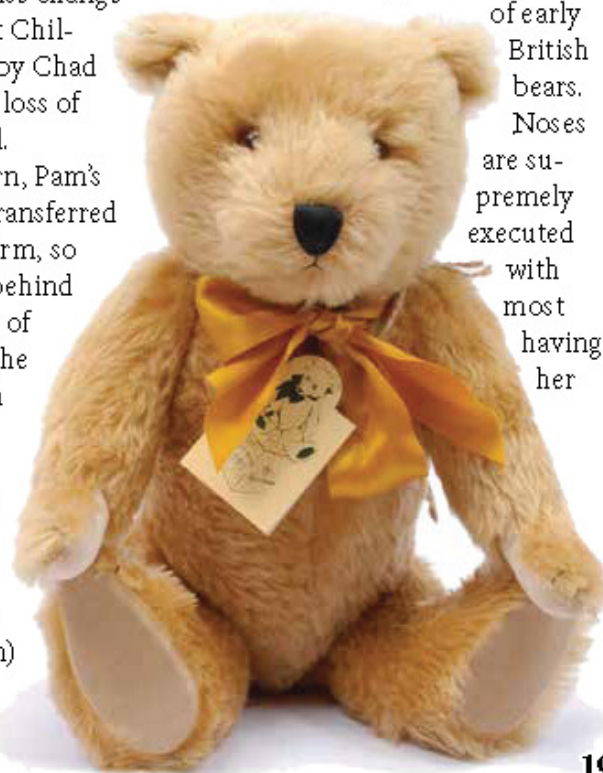
Bear making was Pam's love so it was not long before she set up a studio near her home with a business partner (Ann) creating teddy bears under the 'Pamela Ann Designs' label, mov-



ing on to work in a solo capacity as 'Bears That Are Special' by Pam Howells. Always sought after, her high quality, traditional skills have been applied to create shop specials and limited editions for Teddy Bears of Witney, Peggotty and The Teddy House to name but a few. Publisher Mayfield commissioned Pam to create 'Harold' teddy bear, which was manufactured in a soft brown plush and given away as part of a magazine subscription deal.

Pam's original works are exquisitely made in quality English and German mohair or art silk mainly focusing on larger teds, there have been the odd smaller creation down to miniature versions at only ¼"! They have glass eyes and claw stitching into the paws reminiscent

of early British bears. Noses are supremely executed with most having her





trademark solid shape with dropped outer edges. Occasionally Pam likes to dress her bears in vintage style or use aged fabrics in keeping with the style, sometimes adding a small brooch, ribbon or coronet of flowers.

One of her most popular recent works under her own name has been a replica Chiltern Hugmee, faithful to those marketed by Chiltern in the 1950's in blond mohair. Pam has also created pastel limited editions for the Teddy Bears of Witney catalogue.

An intensely private person Pam has never been one to promote herself and she is happy that the bears sell themselves. She is im-

mensely proud of being awarded a British Toy Makers Guild Award. Other than bears Pam loves ballet, painting and motorbikes, yes motorbikes! She was even known to have arrived at a Teddy Bear Shop opening celebration on a bike with bears in tow.

Perhaps this fondness explains her first creation for Chiltern combining teds and speed!

There can only be one or two other people in the bear business who can boast over 60 years in the business, having attended the Hugglets Festivals and been listed in the Teddy Bear Guides since 1989. She has always been at the forefront of the teddy bear artist scene from its inception, she evokes



warmth and praise from her all who know her and is extremely well respected by everyone in the bear world.

