



Sandy MacBoozle

Pelham Puppets

Pelham Puppets were the brainchild of Robert Pelham, making their first appearance in 1947, and remaining in production till 1993. After World War II, Robert, or 'Bob' formed a company, 'Wonkey Toys', in Marlborough, Wiltshire, employing ex-service personnel to make novelty wooden toys.

The original company name came from Robert's time in the army where he was nicknamed the Wonkey Donkey Officer because he made small wooden carvings, mainly donkeys.

He must have been an enterprising and resourceful man, as he managed to source much of his material from government surplus stores and junk yards often asking family and friends to keep anything that he could reuse, such as scraps of material, cardboard, wooden boxes, string etc.

When the company turned their attentions to puppets, these were initially made from odds and ends too.

Early puppets included Sandy MacBoozle (Scotsman), Cowboy, Cowgirl, Witch, Lulabelle (hula girl), Ice-Skater and Clown. Originally the puppets had their wooden heads turned on a lathe, but after visiting a fairground in 1948, Bob secured a supply of the wooden balls used for coconut shies, and so often these were used for the heads of puppets.

The factory was initially set up in Marlborough. A fire in 1961 created a hiatus in manufacture and led to new ranges being introduced in 1963 and old lines being discontinued. The factory was rebuilt and grew in size at the same location. Bob Pelham continued to head the company and was assisted by his wife Ann; after Bob's death on 19 June 1980, she continued with the business until 1986. The original site in Marlborough was sold and the factory moved in 1986 to Collingbourne Ducis, a few miles further away. In 189 the London Road factory was demolished. The company changed ownership several times and moved again to Gloucestershire in the early 1990s, but the company went into liquidation in 1993.

The company at its height made puppets featuring the Disney Characters including Mickey Mouse and Pinocchio. It also made dolls for ventriloquists, glove puppets and rod puppets.

In 2008 the Pelham Puppets company was revived by a former employee, David Leech, and it now produces a new line of puppets, some echoing former styles. David Leech has researched the company extensively and has written books about the company and its puppets and a history of the company may be found on the [Pelham Puppet Company Website](#)