

TAYLOR MADE

How Thomas Taylor produce a bowl...

VISITED THE Thomas Taylor factory and visitor centre in Glasgow. The company offer free guided tours of the factory, where you can see all the stages of how a bowl is made, from the powder to the bowl.

HOW A BOWL IS MADE...

THE POWDER...

For black bowls, the powder used is called phenol formaldehyde, and the coloured bowls are made from melamine formaldehyde. Believe it or not, I didn't know this before I went to the factory and visitor centre.

THE START...

Depending on the size of the bowl, the powder is weighed and heated by radiowaves. It is then put into a moulding machine and to put it bluntly a ton of weight goes onto it and in very high temperatures (up to 150C). It is 'cooked' for a few minutes. When the powder



The bowls are currently being engraved with an emblem. In this instance, it was a teddy bear.



The melamine before it is put into the moulder at the back, and after this process, in the foreground. As you can see, there are still 'lugs' on either end.

is being cooked it chemically reacts to this and automatically hardens.

As the bowl is so hot, it is handled with heat resistant gloves and put in a storage space for 24 hours to allow it to cool to room temperature. At this stage, the bowl is yet to be 'trimmed.'

THE LATHE...

At this stage, although weighed previously, the bowls are all the same size. The bowl now

goes into another very clever machine and a programme is set for the size and the model (International, Ace, Redline etc.). The 'lugs' are used to hold the bowl in the machine.

The bowl is then taken to another machine that adds the grip to the bowl and finally moves to another machine that removes the lugs. You now have a bowl that is rough and not quite ready.

WEIGHING...

The bowls are now weighed to check that they are within the World Bowls regulations which stipulate that the entire set can have no more than 15 grams of difference.



Hot bowls. This bowl has just finished being heated and is very hot.



The test table used to ensure the set run identically and that they comply with the minimum bias of the World Bowls Board

TEST TABLE...

The bowls are tested to ensure the set all run on the same line and length. Interestingly, the Tester showed me a bowl that he had put on a slight tilt and let it run down and the result was incredible. The bowl finished two feet wide of the other bowls. It makes me want to get practising and get that wobble out of my delivery.



A set of bowls getting a right good polishing.

POLISHING YOUR BOWLS...

There are two stages of polishing. Firstly, the bowls are effectively shaken and pummelled by silicon in the shape of cones.



An up close shot of one of the bowls being polished.

The second stage of polishing is in the machine pictured above. It buffs them up with a polishing agent and gives the bowl the gloss we see when purchasing them.

ENGRAVING...

After the bowls have been inspected for damage, chips etc., the bowls are engraved with the Taylor name, the serial number, stamps and the model you have. Furthermore, the bowls are then engraved with an emblem. These days, Taylor's offer the added service of letting customers choose their own emblems.

PAINTING...

The bowl ends are put in a machine that rotates the bowl and they are hand-painted. The gentleman performing the painting was very good at it!

PACKING UP YOUR BOWLS...

After a final inspection the bowls are packed and ready to go to every corner of the world. As you can see from all the photographs, the process is precise and rigorous.

THE VISITOR CENTRE



The Thomas Taylor shop at the factory and visitor centre.

Thomas Taylor modernised the factory 7 years ago to include a very informative visitor centre and shop trailing their 200 year time line.

Grant Heron, the Managing Director of thomas Taylor, stated: "We have welcomed many visitors from all over the world and have been awarded 3 stars by the Scottish Tourist Board as a highly recommended visitor attraction. We look forward to welcoming many more in the future."

If you ever get the chance to go the factory I would suggest that you do. If you plan to go to see some of the Commonwealth Games in 2014, the factory is approximately seven miles from the greens being used in the Games and I would suggest it is a very worthwhile afternoon out. To ensure you get to do the tour please contact Taylors on 0141 554 5255 or e-mail info@taylorbowls.com to arrange a time.



The finishing painting touches to the bowl are being made.



The bowls, ready to be distributed. They appear to have changed colour.