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Der Kandelgiesser (The Pewterer) from a woodcut by Jost Amman, Frankfurt am Main, 1568

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President's Letter

With the coming of spring (at any rate, it's spring in Cincinnati - the New Englanders among us aren't so fortunate), our thoughts turn to the upcoming national spring meeting at the Brooklyn Museum. By the time you receive this issue of the Bulletin, we will already have enjoyed the program planned for us by Barbara and Allen Dinnerstein.

All members present at the meeting will receive a complete copy of the report of the Committee on the PCCA in the 1990's. This committee, you will recall, is chaired by Bob Asher and consists in addition of Merrill Beede, Don Herr, Gene Seevers, and Bette Wolf. Their report is the product of several committee meetings as well as correspondence, telephone calls, and consultation with other PCCA members. It is a thoughtful and detailed review of our achievements and our weaknesses, and includes a number of recommendations, some strongly put forth and some judged to be less urgent. We will need ample time to consider and discuss these recommendations. Therefore, I have asked the presidents of the regional groups to include discussion of the committee's report and proposals in the agenda for their spring or fall meetings (or both), and to convey the regional groups' considered judgments and ideas to me or to one of the members of the committee. Individual members are also encouraged to contact any of us with comments, questions, or suggestions.

Discussion of the report and recommendations at the upcoming spring meeting will be restricted to a brief presentation and any clarifications that may be required. A full copy of the report will be sent in a later mailing to members not present at this meeting. A summary report also appears in the current issue of the Newsletter. Our goal is to be prepared, by means of widespread awareness and interaction at regional and individual levels during the next year, for general membership discussion and action on the proposals at the 1989 national spring meeting. Please give this very important report your considered and careful attention.

It is a pleasure to report the formation of the Western Regional Group of the PCCA. The group, led by Kenneth Barkin, who spearheaded the recent exhibit of pewter in Riverside, California, was formed earlier this year. The loyal contingent of Californians who travel east each year to our annual meetings may now be balanced by eastern members traveling west from time to time. We welcome the Western Regional Group to our organization.

Ellen O'Flaherty

Necrology

Albert T. Gamon

Albert Thomas Gamon, Director/Administrator of the Peter Wentz Farmstead in Worcester died November 6, 1987 at his home in Zieglerville, Pennsylvania at the age of 58.

He was a well know lecturer on antiques and decorative art and the author of numerous publications on antiques, pewter and Pennsylvania folk life.

He was a past president and treasurer of the Montgomery County Antique Dealers Association; a past president of the Mid-Atlantic Group of the PCCA; a member of the Winterthur Guild; the Smithsonian Associates; the National Trust for Historic Preservation; the American Association of Museums and the American Association for State and Local History.

All who knew and or worked with Al were inspired by his enthusiasm and impressed with his knowledge. He will be missed by all of us. We are grateful for his contributions to the PCCA.

Lola S. Reed MD

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following two articles by Professor Kenneth D. Barkin result from the exhibition of pewter held from January 10 - March 6, 1988 at the University Art Gallery, University of California, Riverside. The first is an essay written for the Bulletin outlining the history and organization of the exhibit.

The second article, "The Rise and Fall of European Pewter" is reprinted from the exhibit catalog "European Pewter in Everyday life (1600-1900)". Although the Bulletin was granted permission by Professor Barkin to edit as appropriate for reprinting I felt that editing would only detract from a fine article, so the text is reprinted here in it's entirety. The reproduced photos are a small selection of the approximately 100 pieces illustrated in the catalog.

The catalog is available ($14.95 + $1.00 shipping) from Ms. Katherine Diage, Art Gallery, University of California Riverside, Riverside, CA 92521

A West Coast Exhibition of Pewter

by Kenneth D. Barkin

The exhibition, "European Pewter in Everyday Life, 1600-1900," which opened at the University of California, Riverside Art Gallery on January 10, 1988 was some twenty months in the planning. Two years ago I began to teach a course in the History Department entitled, The History of Everyday Things and had curated an exhibition entitled, The American Vernacular Chair, 1750-1920 so that the students would have the opportunity to see some of the household goods that the average farmer or artisan lived with during the past two centuries. The chair show was a great success and it gave me the confidence to take on something more ambitious when the Director of the Art Gallery, Katherine Diage, asked me to consider curating another exhibition in the decorative arts. Oddly enough, it took me weeks to come up with the idea of a show on European pewter, although I had collected it for some ten years and had actually lectured on pewter in my course.

As a European historian who reads French and German, I had begun collecting European rather than American pewter and had taken great delight in tracing the makers' marks in the French, German and Swiss books. My own historical training led me to an interest in how widespread pewter had been in daily use during its heyday and what had ultimately led to its downfall. I suppose I was less orientated towards the specific piece and the maker than the typical pewter collector.

In 1985 I met William Scollard, a southern California pewter collector like myself, who was interested in European pewter and who did not specialize in one country or one particular form. Scollard's eclectic collection of some 500 pieces (most of which had not been catalogued) ranged geographically from Ireland to Russia and diachronically from a cast decorated dish in the manner of Briot c. 1590 to an Art Nouveau wine cooler of 1900. His willingness to lend me whatever I needed convinced me that I could mount an exhibition even if I were unable to locate other collectors willing to lend. It also meant that I could concentrate my energy on filling the lacunae in Scollard's collection.

My intention from the beginning was to put together an exhibition that would, at once, have a large number of pieces that were commonly used in ordinary life to interest the typical viewer, and some rare pieces that would arouse the interest of the advanced pewter collector or connoisseur. I did not believe that these goals were antithetical. I wanted to heighten interest in pewter in general and make the educated public, as well as museum curators, aware of how important pewter had been in daily life. That meant I would display plates, salts, chamber pots and spoons of the 18th and 19th centuries as well as guild pieces and cast decorated Nuremburg Tellers of the early 17th century. I had always admired Christopher Peal for writing a booklet on 19th century pewter, a book in which he argued convincingly that there were many beautiful forms made in pewter right up until its demise in the late 19th century, and they were no less beautiful for being readily available. I wanted these forms to be on display so that the typical viewer would realize that they might own a very attractive, if not rare, piece of pewter.

During the year and a half of work before the exhibition opened there were both pleasant and unpleasant surprises. The best piece of luck occurred while I was leaving an antique shop in

Berkeley, when the owner said I should stay and meet the gentleman just parking his car by the door. Seymour Fromer introduced himself as the Director of the Judah Magnus Museum in Berkeley, a museum of Jewish history and art. Fromer said they had some pewter on display and quite a bit in the store room. We drove to the Museum of whose existence I had been unaware and made a deal. I would identify the makers of the Museum's Jewish pewter and the Museum would lend me any pieces I wanted. In the end, eight pieces from the Museum were selected for the exhibition including: an early 18th century chandelier from a Bavarian synagogue, two Hanukkah oil lamps, several Seder plates with wrigglework scenes and a broad rim dish with Hebrew inscription from Prague circa 1710.

A number of people responded to a general letter directed to members of the PCCA on the west coast. A small group of avid collectors in the Silicon Valley including Bernice Roberts, Cynthia Spann, Oveda Maurer and Melba Gee made available the European pieces in their collections. C. Frederick Hess III, now of Vancouver, offered some rare English pewter including a dish with central boss and a Cromwellian flagon. Bryce Kinsey of Minnesota offered the Baldwin flagon with double eagle thumbpiece that appears on the cover of Peter Hornsby's **Arthur Negus Guide to British Pewter, Copper and Brass.** A couple in Santa Barbara offered English Tudric pewter made for Liberty's and a colleague in art history, Tom Pelzel, lent a 17th century bump bottom bowl from Bohemia and an Archibald Knox designed candlestick. A point was reached when I actually was turning down many offers because so many collectors had already been so generous. Another high point was our ability to get Peter Hornsby of Witney, England to come to Riverside for two weeks of guest lectures at the time of the opening. He also agreed to identify pewter pieces brought by collectors the first weekend of the exhibition. A memorable line of his that was repeated several times was, "There will be some tears over this one." At one point a participant asked about a piece her friend had bought at auction as an 18th century oil lamp. After much discussion about how it might work as an oil lamp (mostly fruitless) someone said I think it is a bird feeder. We all agreed.

The disappointments included unfruitful negotiations with a collector of English wrigglework pewter and the failure of the pewter from the Dutch ship, Utrecht, to arrive from Brazil because of insurmountable problems with customs.

I should also mention John Dingler, the museum preparator, who designed and installed the cases which show the pewter at its best. The plexiglass shelves rest on wooden dowels that were attached to the walls at ten inch intervals. The shelves are enclosed by a large plexiglass sheet, giving one the impression that the pewter is literally floating on air. We also blew up slides of five European paintings in which pewter is prominent to 30" by 40" and placed them on the wall near the appropriate pewter displayed in the gallery. One collector lent two 19th century paintings in which pewter could be discerned in the foreground. Basically, the pewter was categorized by function. One section contained pewter in the home and at work. Another showed pewter in the tavern and others were: Religion, Guild and Decorated pewter. Thus, we chose not to display the pewter by nation of origin or century; a decision I think was correct, given my desire of heightening the public's awareness of the functional character of pewter over the centuries.

In the end, I am very pleased with the exhibition. A west coast branch of the PCCA was organized and elected officers. Of the some 312 pieces only eight came from outside of California and 304 came from private collections and, therefore, had not been readily available to be seen. The thirty or so pieces for the connoisseur would include: seven German guild pieces, three German flagons with brass inlay designs, an early Rembrandtkann with twin ball thumbpieces (c. 1640) by Jan van Vianen of Utrecht, a late 16th century Adam and Eve dish from France (18 inches), two Nuremburg Tellers one of which is dated 1619, a south German Monstrance; three bumpy bottom plates and dishes; a Belgian clock of 1720 with pewter dial and a host of wrigglework pieces including a William and Mary beaker, a Swiss trophy plate of 1756, and a tulip decorated salt box.

The ordinary functional pewter displayed ranges from a "Welsh Hat" commode to a late 19th century piggy bank. Attendance has been quite good and as Peter Hornsby predicted a lot of local pewter has emerged from the woodwork. I have had several calls from local people asking me to identify pewter that they had either inherited or family members had brought back from Europe after one of the world wars. There is more pewter around than one realizes -- even in California.

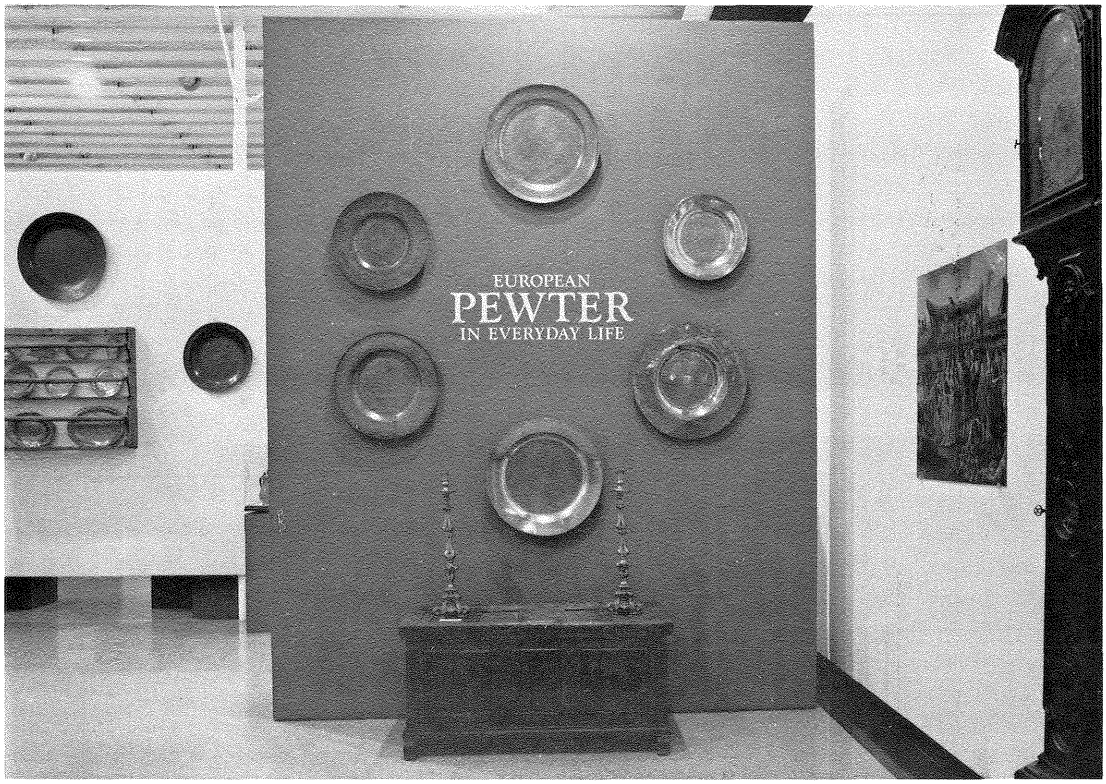


Fig. 1 - Exhibit Entrance

Fig. 2 - Pewter in the Tavern

Fig. 3 - Pewter in the Home

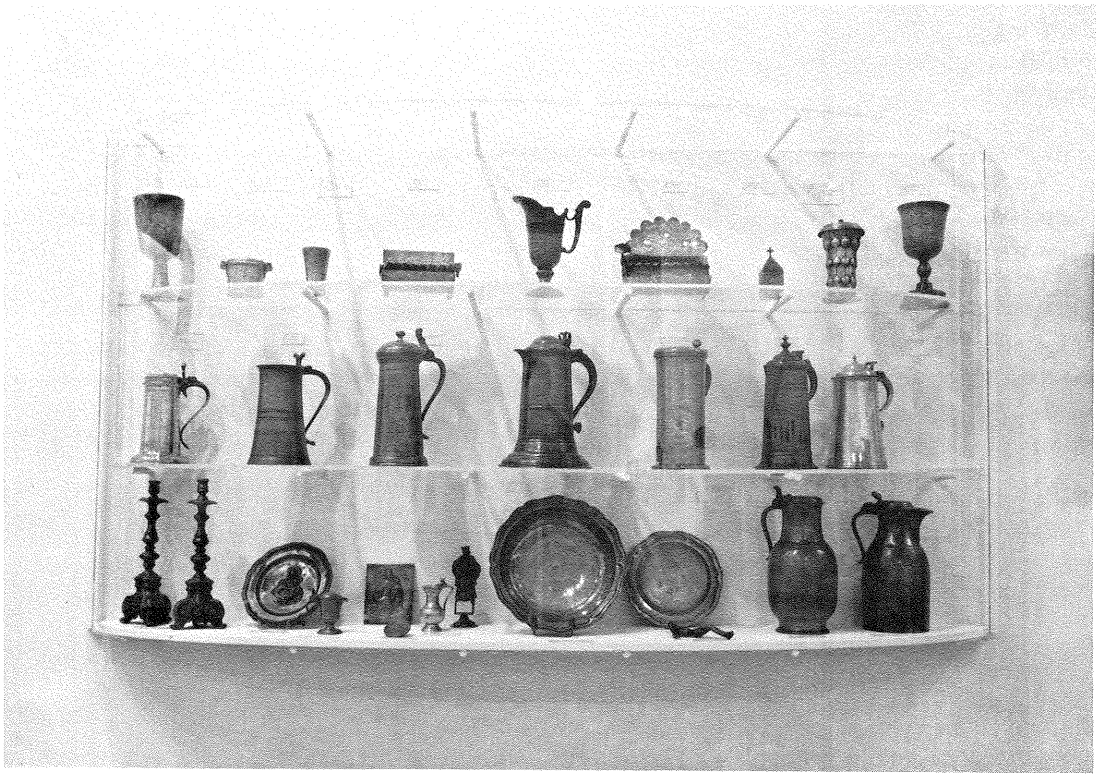


Fig. 4 - Pewter in Religion

The Rise and Fall of European Pewter

by Kenneth D. Barkin

Looking back from the vantage point of the second half of the twentieth century, we have only the vaguest idea of the important role that pewter played in everyday European life from 1600 to 1900. For a variety of reasons the survival rate of pewter is quite low in comparison to objects made of gold, silver or porcelain, all of which were considered valuable and, therefore, received devoted attention from their owners. Like leather, pewter was not a luxury for most of its purchasers and particular care was not devoted to its survival. Over centuries much pewter oxidized without minimal care and ultimately disintegrated. Pewter is also a soft metal that is easily damaged. Another major reason for the scarcity of old pewter is that it was commonly recycled; a plate with a hole or a flagon with a broken handle could be melted down and recast for only a modest percentage (25% normally in England and only 15% in Germany) of the cost of a new piece made from new tin. No doubt, many thousands of tons of pewter disappeared into the vats of pewterers, who generally found it more profitable to recast old pewter than to repair it. Indeed, many guilds forbade the repair of old pewter. Many old prints of pewter workshops show piles of old pewter in the background waiting to be melted down. Pewter was also melted down during the many European armed conflicts of the past centuries to allow the liquid metal to be used for the war effort. There is evidence that during the Thirty Years War, pewter was taken by victorious soldiers as booty to be sold subsequently for the value of the tin.

Another reason for our limited knowledge is the tendency of most museums to exhibit the household goods of the elites and to slight the material culture of the typical farmer or artisan. While pewter definitely played a role in the chateau of the aristocrat and the mansion of the successful merchant, it was not quite as visible as objects of silver and gold. Thus, one can saunter through the European decorative arts wings of major American museums without seeing more than a tiny handful of pewter objects; perhaps an inkwell, some plates and a communion flagon. This is a result of interpretation, of numerous independent decisions that have had the ultimate result that pewter is not considered a significant part of our historical memory. When one reflects that more than thirty thousand tons of pewter were estimated to be in daily use in Britain about 1700, or that the inventory of a single pewterer (of some 1250), who died in England in 1689, included seven tons of pewter, one begins to get a hint of the pervasiveness of pewter in the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Further evidence arises on the continent from the inventory of Johann Georg Klingling, a Frankfurt master, who died in 1749. The following items in his shop were listed by the court: 629 teapots, 427 lamps, 331 coffee pots, 197 bowls, 415 salts, 286 presentation plates and 613 other plates. Some indication of the scope of the craft since the Middle Ages can also be gauged from the number of known masters practicing in central Europe. In his seven volumes, which cover about two thirds of German-speaking Europe, Erwin Hintze counted some 11,000 masters. Friedrich Tischer, who concentrated solely on Bohemia, identified some 1385 masters in that small kingdom, and the most recent work on Switzerland enumerates 1800 pewterers. This, of course, does not include the journeymen and apprentices who would have been toiling in the masters' workshops. Scarcely any town of 10,000 or more in western Europe would have been without a pewter workshop before 1750, nor would many annual fairs have lacked a pewterer's stall.

The aim of the current exhibition is to bring the importance of pewter in western history to the attention of the social historian, the curator of decorative arts museums, and the general public. The exhibition is divided into sections including pewter in the home, the tavern, the church and synagogue, and public institutions, in order to acquaint the viewer with the many spheres of life in which pewter played a major role. Another theme of the exhibition is that pewter was something of an "elgalitarian" metal, in that it was to be found in the vast majority (83% in one sample) of English homes which went through probate in the seventeenth century. Unlike gold or silver which were confined to the affluent, or wood and low-fired pottery which were to be found primarily on the tables of the poorer households, pewter was to be found in the form of porringers in orphanages, bedpans in hospitals and prisons, and plates at the coronation of George IV, as well as monstrances for the Holy Eucharist on the altars of

Roman Catholic churches (Fig. 1). This thesis should not be pushed too far, and Dieter Nadolski is right to remind us in *Altes Gebrauchszinn* that the peasants of east Elbian Germany

Fig. 1 - *South German or Austrian Monstrance* (holder for the Holy Eucharist). Cast, decorated with angels, 17 inches, late-17th century or early 18th century, unmarked
Collection of William Scollard

Fig. 2 - *Swiss engraved plate* with figure of soldier and words "Brought back by Barthellemy Guerre, July 18, 1756."
11 inches, mid-18th century, Jacob Morel, Geneva, active 1714-1776
Collection of Kenneth Barkin

and Poland rarely could afford pewter on their tables. In the wealthier countrysides of England, France, Holland, Switzerland and western Germany, however, the rural population appears to have been conversant with pewter, albeit their experience may have come from the renting of pewter plates for a wedding or the ordering of a dish engraved to commemorate an important occasion such as a son returning from foreign wars (Fig. 2).

These themes will be expanded upon below; at this point it is necessary to introduce the reader to the history of pewter. Among the important questions that merit discussion are: How is pewter made? What accounts for its phenomenal success in the early modern period? What did it replace in everyday life and conversely what replaced pewter during its steady demise and ultimate disappearance in Europe during the period from 1750 to 1900? These are historical questions and in order to address them we will have to place pewter in a broad perspective, taking into account changes in the European economy as a whole. Pewter is an alloy of tin with lead, copper and antimony used in varying proportions as hardening agents. It has a relatively low melting point (170°-230°C.) and is classified as a soft metal. The primary method of production was casting by the use of molds that had been made into desired shapes. For the most part the molds were made of iron or bronze, but there is considerable evidence from Central Europe that sandstone, clay and plaster molds were used for simple forms such as plates and spoons, both of which could be cast from a single two-part mold. The metal molds were time-consuming and expensive to produce and as we shall see, casting had certain limitations that were ultimately to limit the viability of the pewterer's craft. Because molds were so dear it was not uncommon for pewterers to exchange molds or to rent them from the guild. The exhibition includes several

pieces of rare relief decorated pewter, including a rare Adam and Eve dish which was cast from an intricately decorated mold of the early-seventeenth century (Fig. 3). A good deal of skill was required to finish the cast piece of pewter, which emerged from the mold with a rough and uneven look. The hammer, lathe and wheel were critical tools for the pewterer and many masters adopted a mark of crossed hammers to signify their craft.

The oldest piece of pewter known was excavated in an Egyptian tomb of 1300 BC. Its chemical composition was 93% tin, 6% lead and 1% copper, or about the same as European pewter some 3,000 years later. Pewter was quite common in the Roman Empire, being used primarily in the home. Some 300 pieces from the Roman period in Britain have survived until the present. In the chaos following the break-up of the Roman Empire, normal trade patterns were disrupted and pewter ceased to be made for several centuries or, at least, we have no surviving examples from that period. It should be remembered that Europe had only two important sources of tin, Cornwall in southwestern England and Spain. The Erzgebirge region that stretches across Bohemia to Saxony in central Europe was not discovered until the thirteenth century.

After several centuries pewter re-emerged in the tenth century, although not in the home as earlier but in poorer parishes of the medieval church as a substitute for silver and gold. Church councils alternated between approval and rejection of pewter for holy rituals. The most common uses were as candlesticks, ewers, cruets, chalices, chrismatories, pyxes, holy water stoups, baptismal bowls and founts (Fig. 4). In Bohemia, church pewter survives from the first

Fig. 3 - *German or French Adam and Eve dish,* relief decorated, Roman emperors around rim. 18.25 inches with 2.5 inch rim, early-17th century, unmarked
Collection of William Scollard

Fig. 4 - *German church ewer* with decorated handle 8.5 inches, 19th century, unmarked
Collection of William Scollard

decade of the fifteenth century, whereas the earliest piece of secular pewter dates from 1557. At this time pewter was not inexpensive, and when it appeared again in domestic use it was in the homes of the nobility, where it was used by servants, and by aristocrats when travelling unsafe roads.

By the late-fourteenth century pewter was to be found in the homes of merchants and other men of wealth. Bedpans of pewter are known to have existed in the fourteenth century as well as oil lamps, bowls, plates, tankards and flagons. Indeed, some of the most elegant forms made out of pewter are north German flagons of the fifteenth century. In inventories of the Hanseatic city of Lubeck, pewter turns up about 1320 and whole pewter table services are listed by 1380. An indication of the importance of pewter in central Europe in the high Middle Ages is the agreement between the Prince of Wales in 1347 and the Dortmund merchant, Tidemann Lemberg, to give the latter the right to export all of the tin mined in Cornwall to central

Europe for three and a quarter years. Another indicator is the enormous amount of tin mined in the Erzgebirge region, which amounted to 57,250 tons in the fifteenth century and 75,000 tons in the sixteenth century. The city of Dortmund alone had eleven master pewterers in the fourteenth century; some, no doubt, worked in other metals as well as tin.

In the early-twentieth century, Burg Homburg, a Swiss castle destroyed in 1356, was excavated and a number of pewter items were discovered including an eight-inch flagon with a knop on the lid and double-acorn thumbpiece. The spout had a man's face decorating it as do similar pieces centuries later. Also found were a fourteen-inch bowl, three saucers and an octagonal sided flagon relief-decorated with a lion and having a double-acorn thumbpiece.

One of the characteristics of European pewter is the persistence of certain classical forms over many centuries. The double-acorn thumbpiece continues on French pewter into the nineteenth century or for some 700 years. Interestingly, the acorns slowly moved closer to each other over the centuries. The Swiss Glockenkanne is a common form in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but is also to be seen in a Swiss painting of the Last Supper of about 1500, and a similar form is to be found in a thirteenth century stained glass church window (Fig. 5). It is well known that the English baluster-shaped wine measure continues for some three and a half centuries with only modest changes in the thumbpiece. Of course, pewter design was influenced somewhat by contemporary taste; the best example is the enormous outpouring of fluted and swirling rococo plates, bowls and coffee pots in the eighteenth century, several of

Fig. 5 - left—*Swiss Glockenkanne* with clasp and initials AAM on plaque. 13.5 inches, Joshua Hiller of St. Gallen, active 1649-1698 right—*Swiss Glockenkanne* decorated with flowers. 12.5 inches, dated 1740 on plaque, Johannes Weber of Zurich, active 1713-1788 Collection of William Scollard

which are displayed in the exhibition (Fig. 6). While it is true that many pewter forms derive from silver or pottery, there are quite a few including baluster wine measures that are confined to pewter alone. The vast majority of cast pewter was not decorated either by means of the mold or by engraving; thus, for those who are attracted to functional objects that are made with a concern for simple lines and traditional forms, pewter provides many outstanding and original examples.

Returning to the Middle Ages, it is clear that pewter gradually replaced household goods made of wood, bone, leather, horn, stone and low-fired pottery. These materials continued to dominate the tables of the peasants and artisans for a while but disappeared from the prosperous urban home. They came to be seen as crude and primitive, whereas pewter, perhaps because of its identification with the church or its similarity to silver when new, became something of a status symbol. Hatcher and Barker, in their *History of British Pewter,* tell us, "It was essential, therefore, that pewter and other vessels of value were displayed to the best effect, and to this end the buffet, dressoir, veseller or cupboard were used." That is, the medieval ancestor of the Welsh dresser was used specifically to show the world that the household ate from and drank out of pewter rather than wood or primitive pottery. Many of the forms of early pewter derived, in fact, from wood and ceramics. In the mid-sixteenth century William Harrison noted among the changes in England, "the exchange of vessel, as of treen (wooden) platters into pewter, and wooden spoons into silver or tin. For so common were all sorts of treen stuff in old time that a man should hardly find four pieces of pewter...in a good farmer's house...." Now, Harrison continued, a farmer could not be considered prosperous unless he had a garnish (whole table service of dishes, plates and chargers) of good pewter. Meanwhile, those who could afford silver were clearly not happy about the growing importance of pewter; in 1431 three Berliners were burned alive for selling an alloy of tin as silver. Pewter also benefitted from the rising standard of living that marked western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. British, French and German cities prospered before the wars of the Reformation and the Thirty Years War were to decimate them. A properly set table included many more plates, bowls and platters than had been true earlier. Increasingly, Europeans began to pay attention to household goods, to seek to display their improving well-being by conscious choices about the goods they would use in their everyday lives. At this time pewter was the beneficiary; 300 years later pewter would be the victim of another wave of prosperity.

Fig. 6 - Unmarked Swiss or southern German rococo pieces:
left—*Coffee pot* with wood thumbpiece and finial. 7 inches
center—*Sauce pot* with wooden handle. 3 inches
right—*Creamer* with swirled spout, 4 inches
Collection of Kenneth Barkin and William Scollard

As the use of pewter became widespread, the number of pewterers increased rapidly and they began to break away from metal workers' guilds (organizations of producers) to form their own more specialized guilds for master pewterers. The earliest record of such guilds in the following cities are: Paris 1268, Nuremberg 1285, Lubeck 1360, Prague 1371, Augsburg 1324, Hamburg 1375, Vienna 1416, Bristol 1456 and York 1419. In towns and cities where few pewterers were situated, they usually joined together with silversmiths, goldsmiths, jug makers and tinsmiths to form fraternal organizations of masters. Just as today numerous craftsmen do not belong to unions, so it was not uncommon for pewterers in small towns and rural areas to operate outside of guild regulations successfully.

Guilds can perhaps best be understood as professional organizations of craftsmen who were united to advance the common interest of their members. In many respects they would be closer to the American Medical Association today than to the American Federation of Labor. The pewter guilds laid down the rules and regulations for becoming a master and the code by which all masters were to practice their craft. Very early the guilds and city councils established the proportions of tin to lead that were to be used in making pewter. Since lead was much cheaper than tin, guilds often legislated the proportions that were necessary for high quality pewter. The Hanseatic towns of northern Germany had already established maximum lead levels in the early-fifteenth century and required pewterers to mark their wares with identifying symbols so that those transgressing the rules could be apprehended and fined. Generally speaking, high quality pewter in central Europe had a mix of ten parts tin to one part lead. In Bremen, *Englisches Zinn* (English quality pewter) required 100 pounds of tin to one pound of copper; Crown pewter required fifteen pounds of tin to one pound of lead; Clear pewter demanded five pounds of tin to one pound of lead; and Medium pewter required two and a half pounds of tin to one pound of lead. Since most pewter was sold by weight, guild or town inspectors weighed suspicious pewter to determine if it was heavier than the object would have been if the required proportions were used. Cologne in 1501 required 100 pounds of tin to sixteen pounds of lead. Many German and Dutch towns termed the highest quality English pewter, although their proportions fell quite short of those actually used in England. According to Christopher Peal, the composition of English pewter in the mid-seventeenth century was: 98% tin, 0.65% copper, 0.3% lead and 0.45% antimony. This varied greatly according to the piece and the pewterer.

Gradually, across Europe pewterers were mandated to mark their pewter and have their marks registered at a central place. In Bautzen, a city regulation of 1616 required "every master diligently to strike his own mark beside that of the city on his pewter-ware, be they large or small pieces, to certify that his work is as smooth as it should be." In England such a law was passed in 1504 and a subsequent law made the sale of unmarked pewter illegal. Enforcement, however, was haphazard at best and Peter Hornsby recently estimated that one third of authenticated pewter sold at English auctions is currently unmarked. In Holland the Rose and Crown mark of high quality was taken from England and eventually worked its way across central Europe. Generally, the best pewter in German-speaking regions was marked *Feinzinn or Englisches Zinn* while the poorer quality was marked *Probzinn.* A 1735 regulation of Brandenburg pewterers required them to stamp "alte Probe" on pewter that was melted down from broken or used pieces because its exact proportions might not be clear to the master casting it into a new piece. The stamping of housemarks or owner's initials on newly purchased pieces was encouraged to prevent stolen pewter from being sold for the value of tin.

The pewterers' guilds sought to protect the well-being of their members by limiting competition among them in a variety of ways. Dutch guilds sought to limit imports of finished pewter from Britain and Germany. The English Parliament forbade the importation of foreign pewter in 1534 and further forbade masters from emigrating or employing alien workers. Dutch pewterers complained frequently that the English charged enormous prices for raw tin to encourage the purchase of finished pewter and to limit the tin available to Dutch pewterers. The Dutch discovery of tin in Indonesia in the seventeenth century freed their masters from the tyranny of England's mercantilist policies. The guilds were forever complaining about peddlers and tinkerers selling inferior or second-hand pewter to unsuspecting consumers. From the repeated complaints about itinerant Italian pewterers in northern Germany, one gets the impression that Italy played a greater role in the history of pewter than is currently understood.

Since the guilds had to rely on municipal governments to apprehend unlicensed retailers, they were continually pressing for greater enforcement efforts by the authorities. Perhaps the most eloquent statement came from the pen of Justus Moser, an influential thinker and historian of Osnabruck. In his *Patriotic Fantasies* of the 18th century, he laments, "Westphalia should shame itself when one realizes how it allows Frankfurt merchants of pewter to behave. The savages of America are not so badly deceived by glass beads, mirrors and toys as we are by foreign pewter. The Italians, Bavarians, Swabians and Franks stride across our land with uninspected wares made in Frankfurt where one produces goods for rural Westphalia as for the Hottentots of Africa. A pound of pewter sold by the Tyroleans is three-quarters lead. So it is no wonder that the pewterers in our cities, who have honor and conscientiousness, cannot compete against such wares."

The other method adopted by the guilds, as by the American Medical Association in the past, was to limit the number who could become qualified masters. Regulations in Switzerland, for example, allowed a master to have only one apprentice at a time apart from his son. The period of apprenticeship was three to six years and for those who completed this successfully there was another five or six years as a journeyman pewterer, much of which in central Europe was spent travelling or wandering to learn new techniques from other masters. The journeyman would then have to produce a masterpiece, recognized by other masters, in order to receive his right to become a master of the guild. Clearly, if the market for pewter was poor in a region, the masters were unlikely to welcome many new masters. German guilds often described in great detail the pieces that would have to be produced unaided. It is very clear that the sons of masters had a much easier time of it than stangers. The history of pewter records a large number of family dynasties who dominated pewter making in their regions for centuries. The aforementioned Klingling family of Frankfurt produced fifteen masters between 1618 and 1787. During this same period seven Frankfurt families accounted for 46 master pewterers. Homer and Hall, in their study of pewter in the English Midlands, record the family tree of the Greenbank family of Worcester, which without interruption was involved in making and selling pewter from c. 1590 to 1733. The much inter-married Wood, Duncumb and Ingram families of Birmingham and Bewdley produced masters continuously from c. 1625 to 1817.

In a study of East Friesland, Theodor Kohlmann examined the origins of masters over a long period and found that 69% were from the immediate district in which their workshop was established, 18% were from the larger province, and only 12% were from other parts of northern Germany. Very few came from villages. Thus, when German pewterers migrated, it tended to be from city to city. Many cities actually prescribed the masterpiece that was to be produced. One city required an oval bowl with a lid, according to fashion, and a six-sided flask with a screw top. The masters in Basel passed the following regulation in 1610: "In view of the fact that masterpieces are not useful or saleable, but have become outdated; in the future, they are to be made in the current fashion, so that they may be of use to the beginner and can be sold." Some guilds were willing to close their eyes to a less than successful masterpiece if the candidate was the son of a master or paid a substantial amount into the guild treasury.

Part of the guild's function was to prevent competition among masters. This was done by forbidding advertising and efforts by a pewterer to steal another master's customers. The regulations for working hours and standards of quality were designed to prevent a master from having unfair advantage over his colleagues.

The setting up of a pewter workshop was an expensive proposition and many journeymen never raised the capital to buy the necessary tools and molds. But since many pewterers came from family dynasties, it was not unusual for a young man to inherit the required equipment or marry the daughter or widow of a master. In the hierarchy of craft guilds, pewterers were definitely above the median in status and prestige. Although not as prosperous as gold-or silversmiths, they sometimes belonged to the same metalsmith's guild. Clearly they were well above tailors and cobblers, who were near the bottom of the scale. It was not uncommon for pewterers to be members of the city council and even mayor or lord-mayor on occasion. There were also masters who struggled to get by and wound up filling the export orders of merchant pewterers in London or Bristol.

Poverty among pewterers was less common as the craft experienced its greatest prosperity during the two centuries between 1550 and 1750, a period when pewter reigned supreme on the tables of most urban west Europeans and was used in a variety of new functions that could not have been imagined in the Middle Ages. This exhibition seeks to document pewter's triumph in the home and the tavern, its significant role in institutions such as hospitals, churches and synagogues, and on shipboard as evidenced by the surviving pieces, displayed for the first time in North America, of the Dutch ship *Utrecht,* sunk in 1648 off the coast of Brazil (Fig. 7). The historical backdrop to pewter's increasing success was the shift in wealth from the Mediterranean to the north Atlantic in these centuries. England and the Netherlands came to be the dynamic economic center of Europe, surpassing Spain, northern Italy and the Hapsburg Empire. Both the English and the Dutch favored pewter in the household and both had access to large quantities of tin.

Fig. 7 - *Twenty-three pieces of Dutch pewter* from the Dutch frigate Utrecht, sunk off the coast of Brazil in 1648, restored by John Somers. Collection of John Somers

Both countries passed the threshold of wealth required for pewter to be affordable to a majority of their respective populations. It is estimated that a plate would have cost an unskilled laborer a day's wages around 1700. The one southern European country where pewter was common was Portugal, although this is not widely recognized. There are some 20 pieces of Portuguese pewter in the exhibition to emphasize its importance.

The evidence for pewter's pervasiveness in the household and the tavern during the 1550-1750 period is to be found in a variety of sources. In 1500 there were 50 masters in England; 90 years later, there were 350, and by 1700, there were 400 in London alone, 60 in Wigan, 30 in York and 30 in Bristol. At the craft's highpoint in 1700, 1250 pewterers were practicing in Britain, a 2,500% increase in a century and a half. Hatcher and Barker estimate in their *History of British Pewter* that about 25,000 tons were in daily use in the home and four to six thousand tons in churches, colleges and guilds. Worcester, a major pewter center in the Midlands, recorded 50 masters before 1710. According to Hatcher and Barker, the London guild granted a high of fourteen licenses to open shops annually in the period 1660-1680 as compared to six in the mid-sixteenth century and eleven at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The number of new apprentices rose from 24 annually in 1550 to 56 in 1660s. By the end of Elizabeth I's reign, the vast majority of farmers owning land had a complete set (garnish) of pewter plates, dishes and bowls.

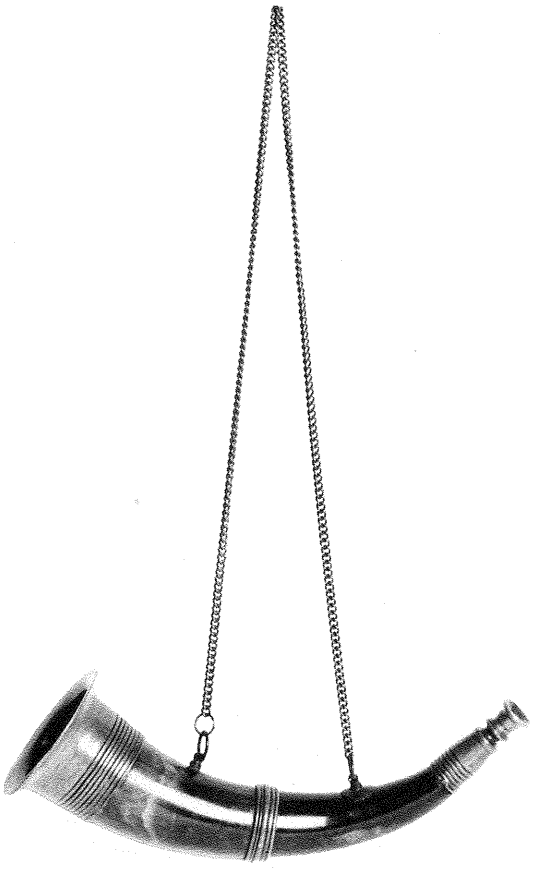
Britain was far from unique in the growth of its pewter manufacture. While the records of the Netherlands are not as good as those of England, it can be established that 83 foreign pewterers married in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, 59 of whom were German and three of whom were British. Over its entire history, Rotterdam was home to a total of 175 masters, the high point being in 1750 when 30 masters practiced the craft simultaneously in this modest-sized city. A study of Rotterdam probate records in the first decade of the seventeenth century indicates that some 78 estates with more than 100 pieces of pewter each were recorded. The Swedish ship *Vasa,* which sank in 1628, was outfitted with pewter plates and bowls for all officers, and the sizable amount of pewter on the Dutch ship *Utrecht* also give evidence of the ubiquity of the metal in everyday life, as do the 200 pieces of pewter excavated at Port Royal in

Jamaica, which was destroyed by an earthquake in 1692. P. Spencer Davies speculates that much pewter may remain to be excavated at Port Royal.

A very careful study of the north German town of Emden concludes that the 150 years from 1600 to 1750 were the highpoint of pewter production in the town's history.. Dieter Nadolski, an east German historian of pewter, also views this period as the apogee and points to the increase in implements on the table of the typical citizen as one reason for the craft's rapid growth. Salts, spice boxes, napkin rings and saucers were among the new items that were frequently made of pewter. It also became common to award pewter as prizes at fairs and to give pewter gifts with the newly popular wrigglework and engraved scenes to commemorate important occasions. In the Decorative Pewter section of the exhibition there is a Dutch beaker with William and Mary in wrigglework (Fig. 8), to celebrate their accession to the throne of England, and a large wedding porringer with a wrigglework picture of a young man with a woman sitting in his lap. No doubt the porringer was made to celebrate a wedding.

While the exhibition cannot document completely the extraordinary range of objects made from pewter during these prosperous centuries, among the items we have been able to include are: buttons, spoon racks, a mace and sceptre, syringes, a snuff horn, (Fig. 9), a brandy keg, lunch pails, a papal medal, a monstrance, a chandelier, a punch ladle, an invalid feeder, a bleeding bowl and the dial of a Brussels grandfather clock. Other objects that are known to have been made are: coffins (The Wettins of Saxony are alleged to have ordered 41 pewter coffins over the centuries), water pipes, window locks, spurs, buckles, vases, roofing tiles, rings, chains, and chess figures. Of course, the bread and butter of most pewterers were plates and bowls (often called sadware), hot water bottles, spoons and drinking vessels (the latter called hollow-ware). All over Europe pewterers produced sets of measures in local designs. The haystack measures of Ireland and the Tappit hens of Scotland are best known, but there are many other measure forms (most of which are unique to pewter), especially in Germany where different measures were used for beer, wine and brandy. The division of the Holy Roman Empire into may small principalities also produced much local variation in weights and measures.

Dutch beaker with William III and Mary in wrigglework decoration. 6.5 inches, late-17th century, faint Dutch Rose and Crown mark. Collection of Kenneth Barkin



Scottish or English snuff horn with pewter decoration. 10.5 inches, c. 1800, unmarked Collection of William Scollard

The introduction of the metric system in France was opposed by pewterers who were accustomed to a local monopoly in their regions because the weights and measures differed from province to province. With one uniform standard, a national market was created and competition was spurred. Not until 1872 did the German Empire adopt the metric system.

Homer and Hall have added to our knowledge immensely by publishing pages from the order book of Ingram and Hunt, two late-eighteenth century midlands pewterers. Their inventory included: seven types of teapots, eight different syringes, eight types of inkwells, five tureens, eleven bedpans and urinals, three sizes of colanders, and sixteen varieties of drinking vessels. In a typical year, Ingram and Hunt turned out 55 tons of pewter valued at over 5,000 pounds sterling. It was not unusual for them to exceed 100,000 spoons and 3,700 tavern mugs a year. A Saxon pewterer of the same period offered 27 types of syringes, varying in function from the making of sausages to cake decorating and to the treatment of female disorders.

Evidence from both Britain and Germany indicates that pewter was an egalitarian metal to be found in the households of all social strata. Nadolski views pewter as universal in the towns and cities of central Europe but not common in the villages until the early-nineteenth century. John Hatcher, writing about late-sixteenth century England, states that "pewter was one of the most common items to be found in middle-class and lower-class homes, and that only a very small group of necessities such as linen, beds and cooking pots approached the level of (pewter) distribution." Such statements are to be found by contemporaries as well. In his *Natural History of Cornwall* (1759), William Borlase commented, "Pewter is used in all civilized nations, by every degree, from the poorest day labourers to the Prince upon his throne, there being hardly a house in Europe or any part of the world where commerce reaches but has some pewter." It is doubtful whether Borlase could buttress his assertion with evidence but it is, nevertheless, valuable as the perception of an educated and well-travelled Englishman.

Historians who have written about pewter differ to some degree about the timing of its decline. At some point between the early-eighteenth and the early-nineteenth centuries the number of pewterers began to decline, and those who continued in business increasingly complained of reduced orders and competition from other materials, such as porcelain, slip-ware pottery, glass, Britannia metal and silver plate. Scholars have understandably stressed the importance of these materials in their explanation of pewter's demise, and I will discuss this competition below. What has not been addressed adequately is the change in the European economy and in taste during the period from 1750 to 1850 that determined the reduction of pewter in the household. That a serious decline occurred cannot be doubted, although one should keep in mind that fewer pewterers does not necessarily mean less pewter if productivity increased or the scale of the surviving enterprises rose because more journeymen were employed. New technology might enable fewer pewterers to turn out many times more goods than in the past. A Saxon pewter firm, for instance, claimed in the 1830s that by the use of more advanced machines it could turn out three million pewter spoons a year.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the craft experienced difficult times all over Europe and the number of masters as well as apprentices declined dramatically so that by the British census of 1841 only 300 listed their occupation as pewterer, a decline from 1250 a century and a half earlier. A detailed study of northwest Germany shows that the number of pewterers began to drop in the 1750s in the cities and in the early-nineteenth century in the countryside. Friedrich Tischer found that Bohemia, a major center of pewter because of nearby tin deposits, ceased to house a sizable pewter industry about 1800. In Germany, the decline was attributed to itinerant Italian peddlers selling inferior wares at discount prices. In a small town in East Friesland two widows asked the city council not to license any further pewter workshops because business was so poor. In Germany pewter also suffered from the new fashion of placing Persian rugs on tables and chests. The number of apprentices declined sharply in Germany from 1750, and in Britain, where the decline was also evident, pewterers began to look to exports to relieve a sagging domestic market. Whereas England had exported 150 tons a year in the first decade of the eighteenth century, exports amounted to 1,000 tons in 1790 and 1,500 tons per year in 1800, before they began to drop steeply. Despite the enormous rise in exports, the number of British apprentices dropped from 165 per decade to 35 during the course of the eighteenth century. Just as in the Middle Ages pewterers belonged to metalsmith guilds, they once again, as they declined in numbers, became generalists selling brass, copper and lead.

Whereas in central Europe prisons, hospitals and orphanages became the major surviving market for nineteenth century pewterers, in Britain the public house or tavern provided a last bastion for the decreasing number of masters. An 1826 law changed the size of British liquid measures, requiring publicans to order hundreds of thousands of new pint and quart measures, a significant proportion of which were of pewter. An 1830 law eased the restriction on opening a tavern in Britain and 45,000 new taverns quickly came into existence. A very large percentage of the pewter surviving today are the mugs that were made to meet the new demands of early Victorian tavern owners.

One reason for the steady decline was the increasing tendency of Europeans to favor coffee and tea over beer or ale. Between 1722 and 1833, per capita beer consumption in Britain dropped by 50%. In the same period, imports of tea rose from one million pounds a year to more than twenty million. The first coffeehouse in Europe opened in Venice in 1647 and the idea spread quickly to northern Europe. Overwhelmingly, consumers chose pottery for teapots, coffee pots, and the cups and saucers. The habit of drinking tea from delicate china or porcelain was taken from the Chinese and the efforts of pewterers to dominate this market failed, although many pewter tea and coffee pots have survived.

Porcelain has frequently been pointed to as a serious competitor of pewter from the early-eighteenth century onwards. Wealthy Europeans had imported porcelain, or white gold as it was sometimes called, from China and Japan since the late Middle Ages. For the entire seventeenth century, the Dutch East India Company alone imported some three million pieces. Efforts by Europeans to crack the secret of making porcelain failed until Ehrenfried von Tschirnhaus succeeded by repeated experimentation. In 1710, the King of Saxony set up the first European porcelain factory at Meissen; by 1750 there were twenty manufacturers across Europe located in cities such as Venice, Bristol and St. Petersburg. Thirty-two additional porcelain workshops opened before the end of the century, including one as Sevres backed by the French royal family. Porcelain, which had for centuries been confined to the collections of kings and the very affluent, now was available for every prosperous bourgeois, and by 1800 cheap versions were available to artisans and peasants according to Nadolski. He records the lament of an Osnabruck pewterer in 1786 who complained that even farmers were abandoning pewter for porcelain in assembling their daughters' dowries. Give the Baroque fascination with color, porcelain swept Europe as Tulip-mania had earlier engulfed Holland. Meissen offered 35 complete table services by 1736, and another 47 were added by mid-century. One Saxon Count ordered 3,000 figurines from the Meissen factory. Wealthy nobles competed to own the largest collection. A contemporary German poem waxed ecstatic over porcelain which required a brief rinse to be white and clean, while pewter had to be scoured and even then did not retain its shiny new appearance. The affluent sector of the pewter market disappeared rapidly, seduced by "white gold."

Not far behind porcelain came the competition from transfer pottery, faience, stoneware and glass. The Staffordshire pottery district of England experienced its golden age in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. More than 5,000 workers were employed in making pottery by 1770, more than had ever worked as pewterers. As with porcelain, bright scenes could be painted on the pottery, and it would continue to look new for many years. Pewter, which had once replaced wood and stone because they seemed crude in comparison, now was being rejected as primitive by a new sensibility. How could a pewter plate compete with a bright pottery plate having a colorful picture of the king and queen or, perhaps, Windsor castle?

The pewterer also had to deal with a new type of entrepreneur like Josiah Wedgwood, who thought in global terms in assessing his potential market. Wedgwood employed travelling salesmen, gave satisfaction-or-your-money-back guarantees, and according to his biographer, engaged in "one of the most brilliant and sustained campaigns of consumer exploitation." Different colors were produced for different markets; plain for the puritanical Americans and very bright for the Italians.

For those traditionalists of the period who preferred metal on the table, Britannia metal was offered after 1769 by Vickers of Sheffield as a superior product to pewter. An alloy of tin that primarily used antimony as a hardening agent, Britannia metal had numerous advantages over pewter. It was harder, retained a brighter shine, and was often cheaper because it could be turned out in large sheets, which were stamped or spun. Molds could be dispensed with and unskilled or semi-skilled labor employed at lower wages. Economies of scale were possible and changes in consumer taste could be adapted to more quickly by the makers of Britannia metal.

Most metal coffee and teapots from the nineteenth century were made of Vickers' new invention rather than classical pewter. Brass experienced a revival in the eighteenth century, and with more efficient methods of manufacture took away the pewterer's market in candlesticks. By 1831 a Birmingham census showed 8,334 brass workers and 21 pewterers. The cost of manufacturing glass also became cheaper in the late-eighteenth century and Townsend and Compton, a sizable pewter firm, began making pewter tavern mugs with glass bottoms. Ultimately, of course, glass mugs displaced pewter in one of its last fortresses, the tavern.

The last nails in the coffin of pewter were the developments of Sheffield plated silver in the 1780s and electroplating techniques for silver in France in 1840. Now the citizen who had lusted after silver did not have to put up with a grayer substitute, but could look at real silver, even if it was a thin surface veneer, and without having to pay the price of sterling silver. Many pewterers over the centuries had represented their wares as shiny as silver. This made no sense after 1840, when for a slightly greater price one could have semblance of the real thing.

While all of these competitors played a role in the demise of the pewterer's craft, other more general factors merit some attention. Not only did pewter guilds decline in the eighteenth century, but all guilds had their backs to the wall as a result of the new laissez-faire economic philosophy and the unwillingness of the modern state to accord enforcement powers to trade organizations or any private associations. Guilds were abolished in France in 1791, the Netherlands in 1795, and where they survived, as in Germany, it was in a much weakened condition. Most of the traditional crafts were geared to fulfilling the needs of a local or regional market. With the wave of canal building in the eighteenth century and subsequently railroad building in the nineteenth century, national markets were arising to which an entrepreneur like Wedgwood could adapt; few pewterers, given the mold-centered production process, could think in national terms.

Moreover, the standard of living of urban Europeans, except in the new factory districts, was rising. There was clearly more disposable income, and the shopping arcades of Regent Street in London (the first street designed specifically for shopping) catered to the urban nouveaux riches. Foreigners, and even the poet laureate Robert Southey, marvelled at the new plate glass windows of London streets. In 1807, Southey wrote, "If I were to pass the remainder of my life in London, I think the shops would always contine to amuse me. Something extraordinary or beautiful is for ever to be seen in them...the absurdity of fashion is ever producing something new." Southey's acute eye had noticed an effect of the increased wealth that we still live with today — the tyranny of fashion. In 1779 the ever-perceptive Wedgwood noted the dawning of a new age in his diary. "Fashion," he wrote, "is infinitely superior to merit." Reluctantly, because he was devoted to quality, he came to the conclusion that the public was more concerned with the latest wave of fashion than the merit of the goods to be purchased. When he learned from his agents of the revival of classical taste on the continent (a result of the excavation of Pompeii), he fired those employees skilled in rococo decoration and began training neo-classical designers. As Neil McKendrick points out, "Where once material possessions were prized for their durability, they were now increasingly prized for their fashionability. Where once a fashion might last a lifetime, now it might barely last a year."

The pewter craft was geared to a vernacular world in which local forms were treasured both for their functionalism and for their familiar qualities. By the late-eighteenth century, not only had markets become national, but fashion itself now spread rapidly from the capital cities to the provinces. The local variety and creativity in material culture that had marked a decentralized polity could not survive national integration or the rise of national tastemakers. In furniture design, Chippendale was all the rage and then gave way to Hepplewhite, who was followed in short order by Sheraton. Eighteenth century interiors were influenced in rapid succession by the rococo style, the cult of chinoiserie, and, then, by the classic revival. With better postal service and improvements in transportation, the latest London and Paris styles could be in distant towns in a manner of days. The last bastions of traditional pewter were in isolated regions such as Ostfriesland, where masters were still turning out cast pewter into the first quarter of the twentieth century, and oddly, English prep schools where George Orwell was eating out of pewter porringers in 1915. The combination of cultural centralization and a growing obsession with being up-to-date with the latest fleeting fashion determined the decline and, ultimately, the disappearance of cast pewter. As pointed out earlier, many pewter forms had not changed for centuries. A craft in which there was a great investment in molds could not

readily adjust to seasonal changes in fashion. Pewter and fashion were antithetical to one another.

Taste was also changing in regard to interiors and furnishings in the late-eighteenth century. Both were becoming more refined, more sophisticated, showing, perhaps, the influence of women for the first time. William Cobbett, the irascible critic of late Georgian England, observed these changes even in the countryside and described them with characteristic scorn in his 1802 *Rural Rides:* "Everything about the farmhouse was formerly the scene of plain manners and plentiful living. Oak clothes chests, oak bed-steads, oak chests of drawers, and oak tables to eat on — long, strong and well supplied with joint stools. Some of the things were many hundred of years old." Now, Cobbett found "some showy chairs and a sofa (a sofa by all means): half a dozen prints in gilt frames hanging up: some swinging book-shelves with novels... many wine decanters and wine glasses and a dinner set and a breakfast set and desert knives...and worst of all a parlour! Aye, and a carpet and a bell-pull too."

Pewter had fit comfortably into a world of elm-joint stools, oak coffers, yew-wood chairs and strong dark ale. But the new prosperous classes of the nineteenth century, in contrast to their forebears of the fifteenth century, wanted their display cupboards full of the cheerful surfaces of porcelain and Wedgwood stoneware. Their preferred drink was tea or coffee or hot chocolate, and soon they would be founding temperance societies. Pewter, if it were in the household at all, was to be concealed, for it seemed too crude and dull for the plush velvety parlors of early Victorian England, or, for that matter, for their counterparts on the continent. Pewter, once as common as styrofoam or plastic today, was quickly forgotten, even by the museum curators.

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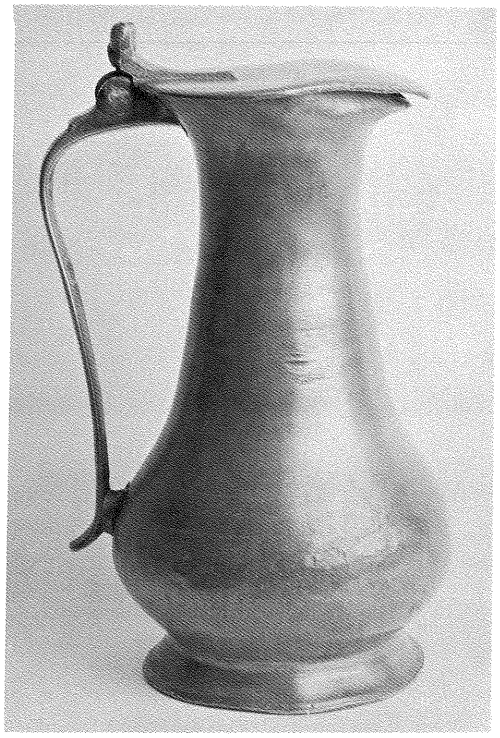
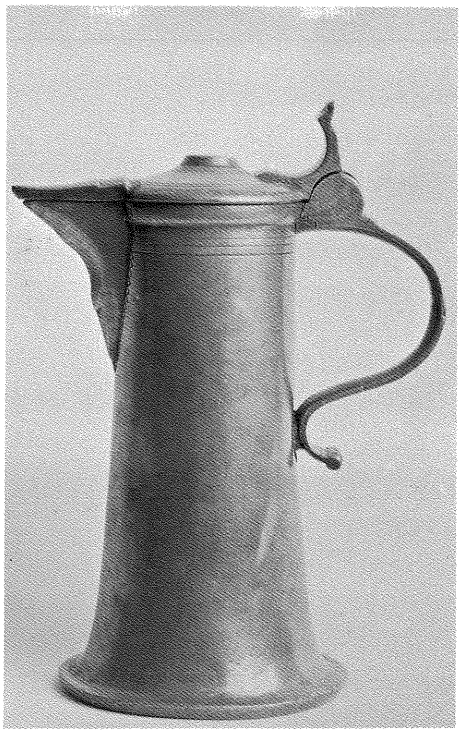


French wine flagon from Falaise in Normandy. Twin acorn thumbpiece and strap handle. Unmarked. 11 inches. late 18th century.



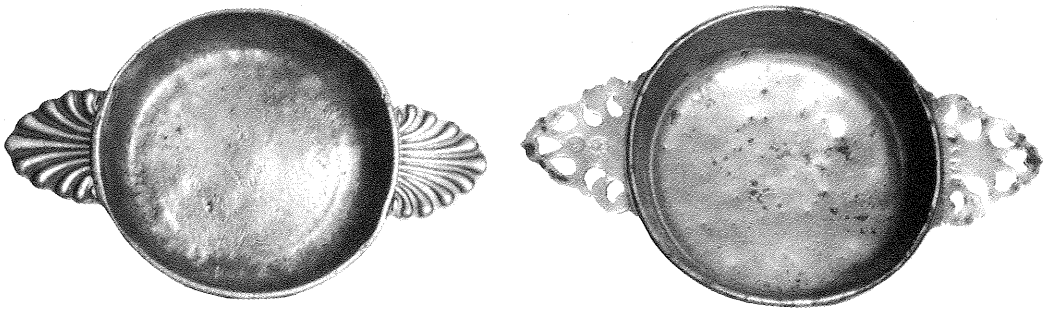
SPOUTED WINE FLAGON WITH ERECT THUMBPIECE Maker: Johann Gottfried Rothe (1767-1804) Nuremberg, Germany c. 1780 10″ Private Collection

Two engraved German tankards.
Left: Tankard with plume thumbpiece and engraved shield from Nuremberg by Johann Georg Marx, 1745-1781. 8 inches.
Right: German tankard from Regensburg with plume thumbpiece and engraved body of man and a woman and flowers. Georg Klade, 1668-1714. 9½ inches.
Collection of William Scollard

Two Swiss Stegkannen with plume thumbpieces. 10.5 and 13 inches, by Abraham Ganting of Bern, active 1743-1770. Collection of William Scollard.

Three Normandy flagons with the city mark of Vitry on the smallest. 8-11 inches, late-18th century, unmarked. Collection of William Scollard.

Two central European flagons
Left: German flagon from Gunzburg, Bavaria, Bodenrosette in base and plouk. 8 inches, c. 1750, unknown pewterer, IBI marked on lid. Collection of Kenneth Barkin.
Right: Swiss spouted flagon from Chur, with erect thumbpiece, 7.5 inches, 1733, mark of Hans Luci de Cadenath, active 1690-1741. Collection of William Scollard.



Left: Double-eared porringer with palmette ears from Languedoc, France. 9.5 inch diameter, c. 1720, unmarked.
Right: Swiss porringer. 11 inch diameter, c. 1750, by Andre Utin of Vevey.
Private Collection

One Portuguese and three Dutch Rembrandt flagons
Left: Portuguese flagon with erect thumbpiece. 8 inches, c. 1700, Ioze Antonio Frias.
Left Center: Dutch Rembrandt flagon with erect thumbpiece, 9 inches, late-17th or early-18th century. Crown Rose and BR, unidentified maker.
Right Center: Dutch Rembrandt flagon with erect thumbpiece. 9.5 inches, c. 1710. Rose and Crown ITH, unidentified maker.
Right: Dutch Rembrandt flagon with erect thumbpiece. 9.5 inches, late-17th or early-18th century, unmarked. Collection of William Scollard.

Jewish single-reeded Seder plate with geometric engravings and Hebrew inscriptions. 11.5 inches, 18th century, central Europe, unidentified mark of tower, rampant lion and IB.
Strauss Collection of Judah Magnes Museum, Berkeley, California

German beaker inscribed with lamb and the words, "Frater Simon Keler. Behold. Because God Wills it." 4 inches, 1628, unidentified mark of grapes and PW
Collection of Kenneth Barkin

French holy oil church box with cast decoration. 4.5 inches, 1772, Laval, France, EC with fleur de lys.
Collection of William Scollard.

Single-reeded broad-rim dish used as Seder dish on Jewish holy days. 14 inch diameter, 3 inch rim, Johann Capar Diebl, Prague Neustadt, Bohemia, active 1706-1720
Rabbi Reichert Collection of Judah Magnes Museum, Berkeley, California

English Social History and Pewter

by Barbara Jean Horan

The story of pewter is part of the social history of Europe, Great Britain, and the United States. The forms and decoration of pewter have reflected the current fashions in both secular and ecclesiastical furnishings and activities.

Within the past three years, my husband and I have been fortunate to add two pieces of finely decorated English flatware to our collection, Figures 1 & 2. As a collector, I can admire the size and general beauty of both the 24″ charger and the 9-7/8″ plate.

Fig. 1 - 9-7/8″ English plate, maker unknown.

Fig. 2 - 24″ Charger by Thomas Powell c1690

But as an historian, I have always been curious about the meanings of the decorations. Both pieces, late of their period in their style of decoration, are engraved (as opposed to more common forms of pewter decoration such as wrigglework or punchwork).

The 9-7/8″ "Hogarthian" plate brim is decorated with multiple curves resembling horns of plenty - reversing the curve in each sub-set of design. A rose is irregularly interspersed with these multiple curves. On the top portion of the brim, Figure 3, there is a griffin with a large crown above its head.

Fig. 3 - Detail of 9-7/8″ plate.

There is nothing else on either side of the plate to give any clue as to its specific maker. On the outer portion of the well of the plate, the multiple curves are repeated in a more elongated pattern which serves as the border for the scene in the center of the plate which depicts one man leading a bear on a leash with a second man walking beside the bear. The second man is carrying a long tapered pole at least five feet in length, probably used in a performance know as "bear-baiting." They are walking out in the countryside as evidenced from grass and trees shown in this engraved scene..

The plate is very similar in overall style to that shown in Peter Hornsby's book, **Pewter of the Western World, 1600-1850,** (illustration #62, p. 48) and **A short History of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers of London and a Catalogue of Pewterware in its Possession,** (illustration #11, p. 29). Both of these references indicate that the engraving is "Hogarthian", meaning of the general style of the English artist, William

Hogarth (1697-1764). Hogarth is considered one of the most important English artists of the eighteenth century. His early apprenticeship was to a silver-plate engraver, and as he developed his trade he became known both as an engraver and as an artist. His general subject matter depicted "genre" painting, scenes from everyday life, as well as satire of English politics and of upper class mores. Because his art style followed much of the Rococo curvature while still emphasizing the sense of line learned as an engraver, he was a popular artist who, we can assume, was copied by many other artists. We can conjecture that it was not Hogarth himself who engraved on pewter, but someone else who also was very skilled and trained as an engraver. The fact that such fine engraving appears at all on pewter was in contravention of guild regulations forbidding such workmanship on base metal.

The activity that the plate depicts is a fine example of a form of popular culture that disappeared probably at least two hundred years ago. This secular form of entertainment reflects pleasure-seeking from itinerant entertainers in pre-Industrial Britain. Roads were beginning to make travel easier but the population had not yet begun to be uprooted in large numbers by the Enclosure Acts of the mid and late 18th century. A stable, sedentary population, while fearful of strangers, still found strangers exciting, exotic, and certainly amusing. Bear baiting or bear performances were common all over Europe from Russia to Britain.

In spite of its popularity among ordinary people, wandering entertainers were still regarded with suspicion and, therefore, were to be regulated along with common harmless tramps. In 1572, a law was passed in England requiring "all fence-s, bear-wards, common players in interludes and minstrels. . . all jugglers, peddlars, tinkers and petty chapmen"[1] to obtain a license from two justices of the peace. The most popular time of the year for such festive entertainment was Carnival, the special religious feast days in the time period just preceding Lent. The most popular place in England for such entertainment was the local inn or tavern. The yard of the tavern was the arena for animal entertainment such as bear-baiting, cock-fights and performing horses. Specific taverns such as "the Bull, the Cross Keys and the Bel Sauvage, all in Gracechurch Street"[2] catered to this type of performance while other taverns were known as haunts of traveling actors and minstrels.

The other major social and economic event which founded a setting for itinerant entertainers was the regional fair. There were two major fairs in England: one, the Bartholomew fair in Southfield on August 25 to coincide with the religious feast day of St. Bartholomew and the second at Stourbridge near Cambridge beginning on September 8 for a period of three weeks. By the time of the Reformation in the 16th century reformers began to object to many forms of popular culture for its emphasis on lewdness, drunkenness, and violence. Bear-baiting was particularly denounced along with bull-fights because of the cruelty to animals. During the reign of James I (1603-1625) he issued a proclamation forbidding unprofitable games, while at the same time he mentioned other forms of entertainment available to the people at the fair. One such entertainment mentioned was bear-baiting. As late as the eighteenth century, this practice of bear-baiting still continued

Fig. 4 - Detail of 24" Charger.

[1]Peter Burke, **Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe**, New York: Harper Torchbacks, Harper & Row, 1978, p. 99.

[2]Burke, p. 110.

to be enjoyed by the common people. This plate is witness to a "sport" still popular enough to be recorded on pewter.

Our 24" decorated charger is fully decorated with the central figure being St. George slaying the dragon, with a small figure of a praying woman with a crown in the left background, Figures 4 & 5.

Fig. 5 - Detail of 24" Charger.

St. George, who is popular and honored all throughout Europe, is shown on his horse as a valiant young man in a short Roman-style tunic driving his lance into the mouth of the upturned dragon. The head of St. George has a large radiating halo, Figure 6. The dragon appears to have a horn and a long wing which is folded below the crocodile-style body, Figure 7. The horse is rearing upward, with decorated harness and a flowing tail. To the right of St. George and his horse appears to be a cliff. Tufts of grass and a rose lay below the dragon. Dentil-style molding separate the well from the 3-1/4" brim with its double reed. A flower and fruit vine with trailing leaves pattern, done partly in wrigglework and partly engraved, covers the entire brim.

In Christianity, the figure of St. George is well-known as representing the triumph of good over evil. In popular cultures in Europe, he was supposed to protect the people from war. Wooden monumental sculptures of St. George slaying the dragon

Fig. 6 - Detail of 24" Charger.

can be found in churches in both Sweden and England. But this theme also appears in icons of the Eastern Orthodox churches. In a source from this Christian tradition the legend is explained as follows: "in a lake in Lybia there lived a terrible dragon, which the local inhabitants, who were pagans, worshipped as a deity and propitiated by giving him their children, one after another. When the turn came for the daughter of the local king, Elisoba or Elizabeth as she is called in icons, to be thus sacrificed, St. George appeared on a white horse and with the words 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' charged the dragon, brandishing his lance, and having struck him with great force through his mouth pinned him to the ground, while his horse trampled him under its hoofs."[3] This bit of religious mythology would explain the presence of a praying woman on the left side of this charger.

Fig. 7 - Detail of 24" Charger.

[3]Leonid Onspersky and Vladimir Lasaky, **The Meaning of Icons,** Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983, p. 137.

But the religious significance of this story can also be found from reading Revelation, the last book in the Bible. This book was probably written around 100 A.D. by a man named John in which he describes a series of visions written for the early Christian church facing severe persecution. The fifth vision is the beast from the sea with a satanic character. Many Biblical scholars have interpreted this vision as the anti-Christ, even associating the beast with Nero, who in the end will be overcome and destroyed by the Lamb. But in the meantime the beast was worshipped and feared until an angel of God proclaimed the condemnation of the worshipers of the beast. The visions go on to describe the final judgment with avenging angels destroying the terrible beast (who is in every way the antithesis of Christ). The descriptions of the beast conjure up an image of a dragon.

From this background of symbolism originating from Scripture and religious mythology I would like to return to the England of 1688-1700, the dates when we know that Thomas Powell, the pewterer, whose touch is on the charger, worked. Figures 8 & 9. England in 1688 underwent a bloodless Revolution which resulted in William and Mary being invited by Parliament to become King and Queen so that a Protestant, not a Roman Catholic, would occupy the throne. The anti-Catholic sentiment remained very strong in England even after 1688 as shown by the Act of Toleration (which while granting freedom of worship to all Protestants denied this same freedom to Roman Catholics) and finally by the Act of Settlement in 1701 which guaranteed that all future sovereigns would be Protestant. At that time the Pope was viewed by many in England as the anti-Christ.

Fig. 8 - Touchmark of Thomas Powell


Fig. 9 - Hallmarks of Thomas Powell

Decorated pewter of this period is well-known for its political messages -- i.e., beakers and plates showing the two monarchs - William and Mary. Political consciousness was abundantly evident in many actions and statements of the common people as well as from members of Parliament. Therefore, I would like to conjecture that this charger was not just expressing a religious theme, but was also illustrating the victory of good (i.e., Protestantism) over evil (i.e., the anti-Christ, the Pope - Roman Catholicism). The extraordinary nimbus around St. George's head would seem to give him divine status, closer to the rank of an angel, rather than merely a saint. Is it coincidence that the fair damsel to be rescued is named Elizabeth and that St. George is also the patron saint of England? Art has frequently been the handmaiden of politics. This finely decorated charger, by its size and workmanship is an impressive piece - why not assume it carried an important political message as well to all who viewed it?

A Unique Baluster Measure

by Alex R. Neish

Excavated from the River Thames in 1975 was what seems to be a unique baluster measure. Initially it was dated as being circa 1540 because of its unusual foot which is different from any other known to exist except one on another measure excavated from the wreck of the 'Mary Rose' of that same period.

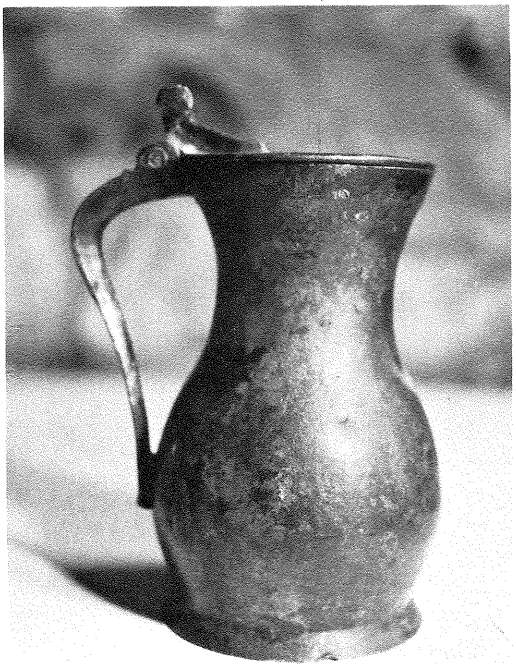
Now, however, it is known to be from 15th century. The Museum of London has

confirmed that it was excavated from the mud eight feet below the river bed when the tide is fully out which places it in the period 1450-1500. While its style bears an affinity with the early English slim balusters (see Plate 811 in Hornsby's 'Pewter of the Western World') it is nevertheless distinctly fatter and its shape different from any other of the known first balusters.

With a hammerhead thumbpiece, its height to the lip is 7 1/8 inches, with lid and base diameters of 3 7/8 inches and 4 3/16 inches respectively. There are clearly visible heavy turning ridges on the lid top and underneath its thick surface an anti-wobble protective ridge of the kind that carried on in Scotland for the next four centuries.

Two extremely interesting features exist. One is a medallion showing a heart inside a surround that is crudely welded into the base inside. The other is its extreme weight for such a flat lidded measure - just over four pounds in fact.

Both of these suggest a throw-back to the Hanseatic measures that came into being on the Continent in the first part of the 14th century. They too tended to have medallions set into the inner base or into the lid as a talisman against evil and bad luck. They too tended to be extremely heavy and R.M. Vetter speculated - since they tended to be found in the trade lanes of the sailing ships -that this weight was designed to prevent their toppling over as the ships lurched under the waves.



A Unique Baluster Measure. Alex R. Neish

Richard Mundey has described the present baluster as 'almost certainly Henry the Eighth and English' It may be, therefore, that serving the same function, it marks a transitional shape before the squat Hanseatic flagon and what became the glory of the slim, hammer-headed English baluster some half a century later.

Protected by the mud, the baluster's condition is gilded and excellent except for a slight depression on one side and a small hole in the base caused by some pointed instrument.

Treasures From The Thames

by Alex R. Neish

Surfacing recently were three outstanding pieces of British pewter for centuries hidden in the mud of the Thames and now shown in the accompanying photograph.

The deep bowled porringer with the twin treble lobed handles has a diameter of 7 inches and measures 9 7/8 inches from extremity to extremity. It is similar to a very distressed one illustrated in the Pewter Society's pamphlet "Pewter - a Handbook of Tudor and Stuart Pieces" now in the Museum of London collection. Excavated at St. Paul's Stairs, this porringer is attributed to the mid-sixteenth century.

The present example, however, carries on the underpart of one lug the touch of a crowned double headed hammer. Being more commonly found in the 15th rather than the 16th century, this could suggest that this type of porringer normally associated with around 1550 - in part due to a smaller one found in the 1545 wreck of the "Mary Rose" - is in fact slightly earlier in its origin.

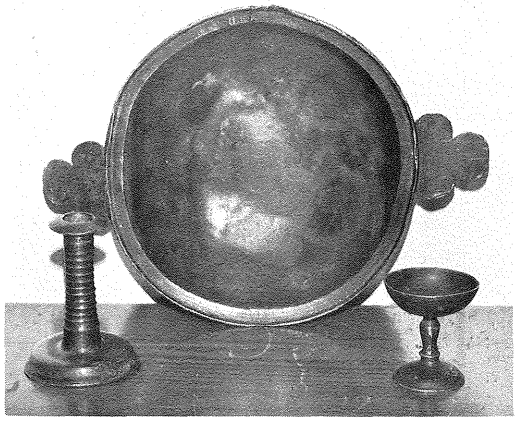
The newly located example seems to be the largest of its kind so far recorded, being fractionally bigger than the important one belonging to the Museum of London.

For this reason it dwarfs the second object in the photograph - a probably unique wine goblet with decorated body and foot that stands but two inches high. The diameter of the cup is a shade under two inches and around it are traces of a faint leaf decoration

and what appears to be illegible gothic lettering. It is thought to date from between 1550 and 1600 and probably had a religious origin.

On the left there is shown a taper candlestick from the second quarter of the 17th century. It again would again appear to be the only example of its kind known. Its height is 3 1/4 inches and the base diameter 2 1/2 inches. The stem has been heavily turned to form the design. Its condition is impeccable and like the other two items it is elegantly covered in nature's gilding.

These three pieces show that there is still much to be known about early English pewter despite all the research to date.



Treasurers from the Thames. Alex R. Neish

Rufus Dunham and Eben Smith A Connection?

by H.H. Sandidge

After contemplating the two illustrated lamps in our collection for 20 years, I finally noticed the similarity between the fonts and burner arrangements. The taller lamp, 9″, bears the small straight line touchmark by R. DUNHAM. The shorter lamp, 6½″, bears the small straight line mark E. SMITH with the number 17 incised below. Both fonts are identical, 2¾″ in diameter, 2¾″ tall indicating that they came from the same mold. The pewter font domes on each are also similar. A brass burner cap to take a camphene burner has been applied over the original rim of the Smith lamp which still has the original brass thread insert, similar to that on the Dunham lamp.

All of this similarity could possibly indicate a connection between Smith and Dunham. Comments anyone?

Rufus Dunham & Eben Smith.
H.H. Sandidge

EDITORS NOTE:

Similarity of lamp fonts (or bases and stems) does arguably indicate use of similar molds. However, brass burners and brass thread inserts are more problematical. Because of the relative constancy of the thread gauges and sizes, it is not inconcievable that brass fittings for pewter lamps were made by other manufacturers for use by the pewterers rather than by the individual pewterers themselves.

Condition

Peter Hornsby

Collectors differ considerably in their attitudes when buying for their collections and two clear views exist. On the one hand are those collectors who feel able to buy items which they might never otherwise obtain even if these are in poor or damaged condition. On the other hand there is the school which holds that only items which are in good condition are suitable for purchase. Put starkly like this, it might appear that both groups are taking up an entrenched position.

Some damage can ruin an otherwise important object. If no regard is paid to

condition, then a collection may become no more than an accumulation of 'refuse' pieces. Yet on the other hand there are some pieces which are so rare that a good conditioned example might never appear on the market at all. Both points of view need further examination.

The collector with some skill in restoration can enjoy the work, creating something out of less. It is also true that many collectors can never hope to buy fine examples of the really rare things such as flat-lid tankards, early flagons, Stuart candlesticks and the like. If damaged examples are not acceptable, then they will never be owned. However, it is true that lesser items are also acquired by collectors because they come at bargain prices. But bargains are not always what they seem! It has been my experience that collectors who in the early days buy damaged pieces often find that they grate upon them ten years later, and some indeed rue the day they made some of their damaged purchases.

On the whole dealers advocate collectors buying what they can afford and take the point of view that a damaged piece is better than none. There is no doubt that such a point of view is also in the dealer's own interests. If dealers and collectors limit themselves to items in good condition there is less to buy, less to sell and less profit to be made.

Clearly there is a ready market, at a price, for objects not in pristine condition. Perhaps the best advice is for collectors to buy the rarest and best conditioned pieces that they can afford, even if it means fewer purchases and more hunting. Such a viewpoint might be based on both aesthetic and economic grounds.

Whilst there are always a few truly unique items which surface, most items are repeatable. It seems to be, on aesthetic grounds alone, better to own one really fine conditioned piece rather than settle for several second bests. In the first excitement of purchase damage may be discounted, but it does seem to worry some people later. But this can only apply when one has the funds to buy the fine condition item, and if they do actually exist. Who, for example would ever turn down a Roman piece just because it was damaged? There are too few Roman pieces to be so selective. The same is probably true with medieval pewter, but would be much less true with 18th and 19th century examples.

Probably the middle road lies in the true rarity of things. Buy good quality objects when you have a genuine choice within your price range and only venture into the poor conditioned pieces when they are genuinely rare and normally highly expensive. Sadly not all collectors follow this advice and some have been disappointed to find how badly their collections are rated currently in relation to the high prices that fine quality items are fetching. In economic terms it is now clear that, unless the present trend is reversed, damaged pewter will make far less than similar objects in fine condition. This was not always so. Ten years ago a James I flagon with a small hole in the base or a repair to the handle would make f700, and a fine example perhaps f850. A damaged flat lid tankard would sell for around f850 and a good one at perhaps f1000. More recently, to give only two examples, several good James I flagons made over f2000 while damaged examples have sold under the hammer for between f550 and f800. Likewise at a recent sale one slightly damaged wriggled flat lid made around f1800 and a fine example over f3000.

In general terms, ten years ago damaged rare objects made between 80% and 90% of the price of fine conditioned examples, but this is no longer true. The discount for damaged pewter can be as high at 50-60%.

Few collectors buy pewter for ultimate profit. Most collectors, on the other hand like to think that they have spent their money wisely and that if a collection does ever have to be sold, that it will raise a fair price. It is possible that the current premium for fine quality antiques will be eroded, but I suspect that this will not occur. The trend, I suspect, is in the other direction.

When antiques could be bought for a few pounds, people did not have to think too carefully about a purchase. Now however, fine things are costly. Pewter still ranks, perhaps, amongst the undervalued items on the market, but nevertheless a good piece costs a lot of money; as a consequence buyers have become more selective. If you are going to pay a lot of money for something the natural tendency is to want the best. So that in all fields, fine quality antiques are vastly more costly than damaged examples. So long as prices stay high the market pressures will continue to increase the costs of good items and diminish the relative price of damaged ones.

Editors Note:

The preceding article was originally published in The Journal of the Pewter Society, Spring 1985 and is reprinted with the kind permission of The Society and Peter Hornsby.