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## Back from the Dead

ENGLISH PEWTER PORRINGERS FROM A  
RED INDIAN GRAVE IN RHODE ISLAND, U.S.A.

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IN the early part of 1949 I was privileged to have details of an important find of pewter in an Indian grave, near Charleston, Rhode Island. My informant, Dr. Percy E. Raymond, Emeritus Professor of Palaeontology at Harvard University, himself a keen student and collector of pewter, and a prolific writer upon the subject, was able,

its *Makers and Marks*, No. 5470.<sup>3</sup> The porringer at Fig. I is now at the Park Museum, Providence, Rhode Island.

The second porringer from the same grave is of similar size and type, but bears the touch of Joseph Collier, of London, 1669-1712, No. 172 on the London

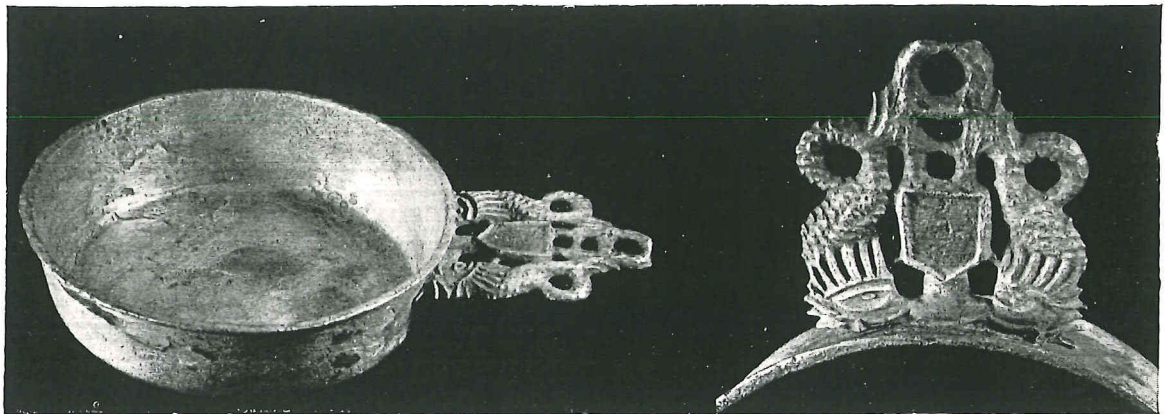


Fig. I. (a) Porringer of c. 1660, from a Red Indian grave, and (b) enlargement of ear.  
Fig. II (below). Porringer of similar type to Fig. I, found in London, and view of base and ear fixture of the same piece.

then, to give me written details only of one of the excavated items, a straight-sided pewter porringer with an ornamental ear formed of a shield with two dolphins as supporters.

I was immediately interested, for this description—such as it was—tallied with a very rare porringer I had then recently had occasion to examine at the Guildhall Museum in London.

The Guildhall specimen was later illustrated in Part III of my series of articles on pewter porringers,<sup>1</sup> and, at that time, I did not know of another English specimen in existence.

The so-called “double-dolphin” ear was then known (in England) on one other porringer of the more familiar “booged” type, i.e. with deeply curved side and bossed centre.

The fact that another, of almost identical pattern to the first mentioned English specimen, had found an honoured home in America was of interest enough, but it turned out that there were, in fact, *two* porringers of this pattern found in the grave.

In due course I received good photographs and further particulars from my correspondent, and one of these porringers is to be seen in Fig. I (a), with an enlargement of the ear at Fig. I (b).

The porringer bowl is of type IV (c), and the ear of type 18.<sup>2</sup> It is approximately  $4\frac{1}{8}$  in. across the bowl and  $1\frac{1}{5}$  in. deep. The ear is fixed to the bowl by the thickened “wedge” formation, which feature I consider to have been in vogue up to c. 1675.

This piece bears, on the underside of the base, the touchmark of a Bell with the initials “T.B.” This mark was re-struck on the London touchplate, c. 1668, and is recorded by the late H. H. Cotterell in his *Old Pewter*,

touchplate (Cotterell, No. 1036). This piece is now housed at the Museum of the Rhode Island Historical Society, also at Providence.

The grave from which these important pieces were extracted is believed to be that of Weunquesh, daughter of Ninigret, Chief Sachem of the Narragansetts. She died about the year 1689 or 1690, and was buried in the Royal Amerind cemetery, near Charleston, in Southern Rhode Island. The Guildhall Museum specimen, of similar type, is  $5\frac{1}{4}$  in. across the bowl, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in.





deep. It was made by John Kenton, London, who struck his touch, No. 250 on the London touchplate, in 1675.

For purposes of comparison this specimen is again illustrated, in two positions, at Fig. II.

So much for the straight-sided porringers with "double-dolphin" ears known up to a few months ago.

I am pleased to be able to illustrate, at Fig. III (a), yet another of this type, which came to my knowledge quite recently. This is in all respects similar to the aforementioned specimens, with the exception that it has a small circular boss in the centre of the bowl, and thus falls into the category of bowl type IV (a),<sup>4</sup> which is a contemporary type.

This specimen is exactly 5 in. in bowl diameter, and has a depth of  $1\frac{7}{8}$  in. It bears, on

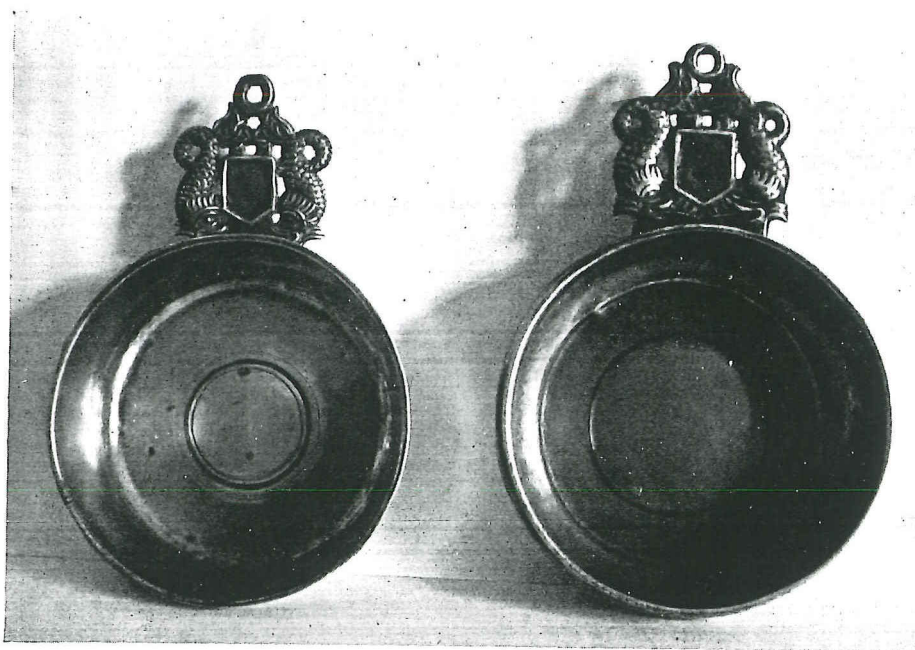
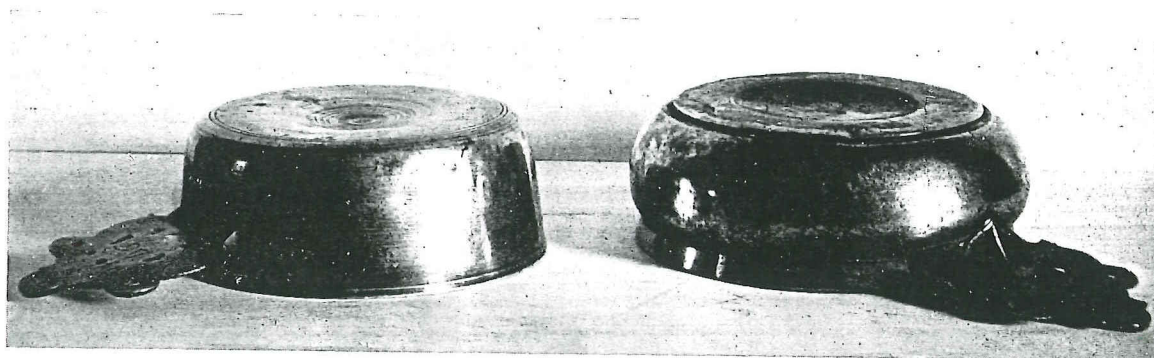


Fig. III (a). Porringer with very slightly different body from foregoing, but with similar ear, c. 1670-75. (b) A "booged" porringer, c. 1685.

Fig. IV (below). Bases of the same porringers.



the underside of the base, the touch of "R.S." surmounted by a crown, which is recorded by Cotterell (No. 5940) as of c. 1690. This touch, however, has been found on flat-topped Stuart tankards of c. 1670-75 and the maker, albeit unknown, was obviously working some 15 years or so earlier than the date ascribed to him by Cotterell.

Lastly, in Fig. III (b), I illustrate a "booged" porringer, also with "double-dolphin" ear. This ear, on a comparatively late type of porringer bowl, must be dated a few years later than the foregoing pieces, but is, nevertheless, a very rare feature, known in only one other instance.

There is a touch of "W.H." within a shield struck upon the face of the ear, but the mark is unrecorded, and it would be impossible to say by whom it was used.

The triangular strut below the ear is a feature to which I have drawn attention elsewhere, and is considered to be a transition between the earlier "wedge" fixture and the later broad "V" bracket, which is the standard fixing on practically all English porringers from c. 1685 onwards.

It is interesting to record that this ear type, which

does not appear to have been used in England after 1685, was adopted by an American pewterer. A porringer, with straight-sided bowl and otherwise very similar to these English pieces, bears the touch attributed to John Danforth, of Connecticut Valley.<sup>5</sup> This maker seems to have had a working life of about 40 years, from c. 1760 to 1799; thus there is a gap of approximately 100 years between its discontinuance in England and its inception across the Atlantic.

There are other instances of the late use, in America, of both English and Continental styles of ear moulds, and it seems likely that the makers probably emigrated from Europe, taking old, or disused, moulds with them, with which to commence business.

<sup>1</sup>"English Pewter Porringers, Their Evolution over 300 Years," Parts I to IV in *APOLLO* for July, August, September and October, 1949.

<sup>2</sup>See Parts I and II, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup>I believe this to be the mark of Timothy Blackwell, of London, who became "Free" in 1640, and is mentioned in the records up to c. 1676. Other members of his family use the Bell motif in their touches.

<sup>4</sup>See Part II, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup>Illustrated by Ledlie I. Laughlin, in his *Pewter in America*, Plate XII, No. 63 (Vol. I). Published Boston, U.S.A., 1940.