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Pewter Salts, Candlesticks and some Plates

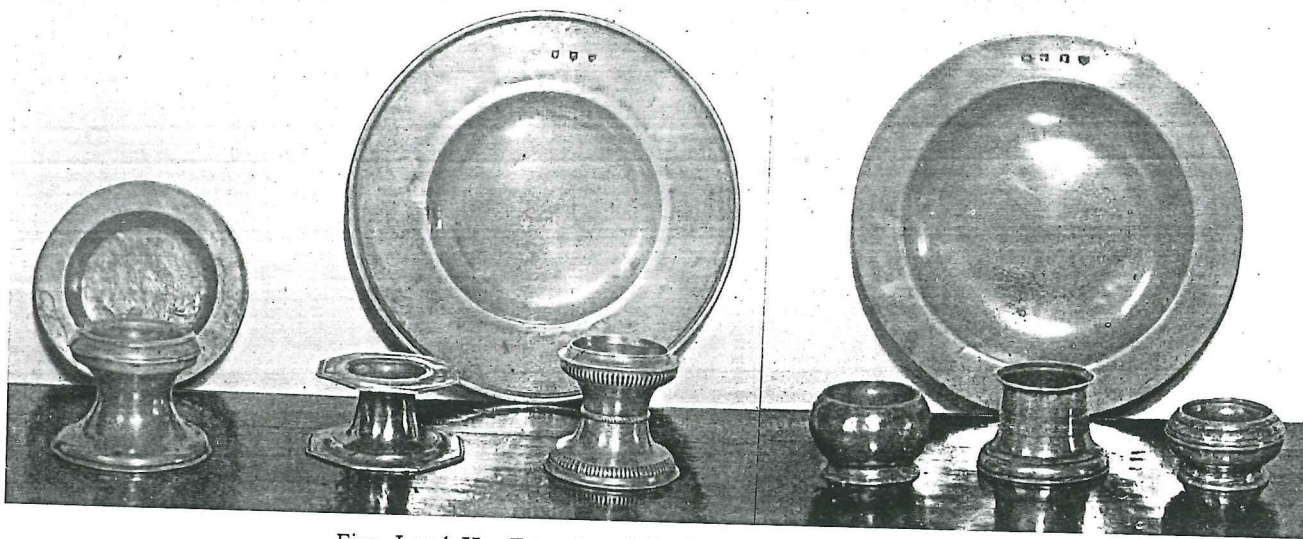
BY CHRISTOPHER A. PEAL

LOOKING back through previous articles on old English Pewter in APOLLO and elsewhere, I have been struck by the paucity of reference to Salts. They are comparatively rare and extremely attractive and pleasing; furthermore, they are diminutive and well proportioned for display. So often the smallest pieces in a collection are pint tankards or measures, and the comparison by graduation of size is lost by the absence of small specimens.

Many collectors delight in recalling the earliest owners of salts, plates and candlesticks which, with their domestic use, received harder wear than church flagons and inn measures of the same period, and I believe it may be for this reason that they are now rare, for the quantity made did not approach that of plates. When recollecting that damaged pieces were not allowed to be repaired by a member of the Company of Pewterers, but had to be replaced, and knowing the ill use, and contact with flame, that

free of the cast ornamentation often associated with this kind, bearing just one mould around both flanges. When I saw this piece in the shop it looked a poor thing indeed; bombs during the war were probably responsible for unearthing it, and, bent up, and with a hole, black with scale, and covered with dust, it had little resemblance to the fine and beautiful creation of a master pewterer that it is; underneath, it is very corroded and scaled, and there is no mark. It is c. 1660-1670, and is $1\frac{7}{8}$ " high and $3\frac{1}{2}$ " across the sides.

As background to these salts, on the left is another diminutive, rare and early piece, a small domestic plate of c. 1630, remarkably small for the Carolean period. The shallow shelving bouge is a very sure pointer to period. This piece should never have been stripped of its scale, for the remaining metal is in one place corroded away completely. It is $5\frac{1}{8}$ " in diameter and $\frac{3}{4}$ " rim. There is an illegible trace of a mark on the front of the rim.



Figs. I and II. Examples of Carolean Pewter Salts and Plates.

repaired pieces would have been subject to, the possessor of salts can take heart in his good fortune. For variety of style within a given period, no class of pewter can compare with that of c. 1660-1710: they were less bound to conservative shapes than other types because they were made for decoration as much as use. They have unfortunately not escaped the fakers' activities, and specimens of salts in circulation outnumber those which can be safely attributed to the period.

In this account I have not included any piece which has previously to my knowledge been depicted. All photographs are of pieces in my own collection.

Fig. I shows three of my favourite salts. The plain capstan on the left is of very good simple design, in excellent condition, and with a liberal amount of scale on the bowl. It is unmarked, and is early, as evinced by its simplicity and purity, being c. 1680. Its height is $2\frac{3}{4}$ " and base $3\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter, and as this is the largest of some dozen salts I possess it is easy to appreciate their compactness.

The beaded capstan on the right is considerably later in date, being decorated in the manner in vogue in the years about the turn of the XVIIth century. This is marked in the base TL in a shield, the mark of an unknown maker, and is c. 1700. Its height is $2\frac{3}{4}$ " and base $3\frac{1}{16}$ " in diameter.

The salt in the centre is of a type sometimes loosely described as master salt type. This term surely would designate *size*, and not *style*. "Candlestick" may be a more descriptive name, because of the similarity of the hand guards of candlesticks of the period; no doubt its delicate form accounts for the extreme scarcity of this form of salt. This is octagonal in collar and base, and is

The other piece shown is a very fine quality broad-rim reeded paten of the time of Charles I. This bears the touch and "hall-marks" of Cotterell "Old Pewter" No. 5961; it is $9\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter with 2 " rim.

The next group in Fig. II shows on the left a plain bulbous trencher salt. The date 1705-1710 is usually ascribed to this type, but I believe that some are very considerably earlier than this, and in the collection of Mr. J. C. Fenton, the President of the Society of Pewter Collectors, there was a superb pair of Tudor salts of very similar shape to this. This salt has an illegible mark of a type which I would place at the latest as the first half of the XVIIth century. It is $1\frac{3}{4}$ " height and $1\frac{5}{8}$ " diameter at the maximum bulge.

On the right is the authentic 1710 variety, most satisfactory and practical; it bears the crowned initials of the owner M.W. under the base, and a mark, which is half obliterated, not recorded in Cotterell's "Old Pewter." This is $1\frac{3}{8}$ " high and $2\frac{1}{4}$ " in diameter.

The taller salt in the centre is sometimes aptly referred to as the capstan type, but the previous type so named is more appropriate, and this taller salt can well be named the spool: the type is very rare, and dates from c. 1680-1690; it bears the mark A.C., which is hitherto unrecorded. Its height is $2\frac{3}{8}$ " and the diameter of the base is 3 ".

The plate in the background is a plain bumpy-bottom specimen of about 1670 or earlier. The bouge slopes very gradually, and the base of the well is slightly raised in a bump. The maker's "hall-marks" appear on the front of the rim, and traces of the touch are just visible on the back (Cott. O.P.5700). This is an

uncommon type, $9\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter and with $1\frac{1}{4}$ " rim.

Fig. III shows the previously mentioned salts with five more in the front row. On the left front is one which is unique amongst those shown, because the base of the bowl is almost flush with the table—and in fact, unlike all the others, the outline is the container, whereas the remainder have inner containers or bowls. I am quite unable to ascribe a date to this unmarked piece, which is very corroded, the height being $1\frac{1}{2}$ " and diameter $2\frac{3}{4}$ ". Next, and on the extreme right, are two elongated octagonal trencher salts of slightly different lines. They are unmarked, and of c. 1710, and are $1\frac{3}{8}$ " and $1\frac{5}{8}$ " high res-

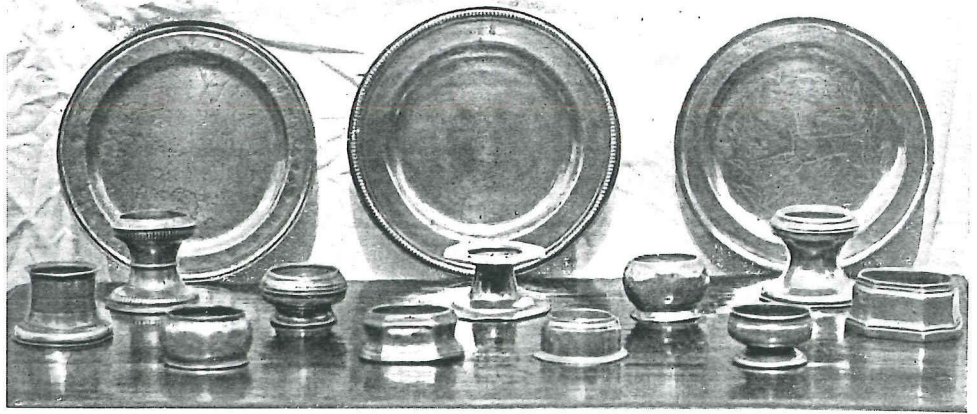


Fig. III. Examples of Pewter Salts and Plates from the XVIIth to the late XVIIIth centuries.

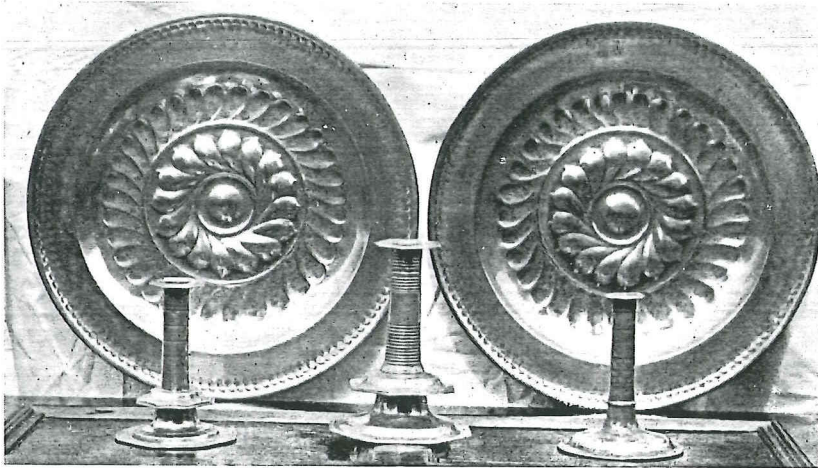


Fig. IV. Pewter Rosewater Dishes, c. 1735, and Candlesticks, late XVIIth century.

pectively, and 3 " and $3\frac{1}{2}$ " in length. On the right of the centre is a shape well designed to withstand being brushed with a coat sleeve. It is c. 1705, unmarked, and is $1\frac{1}{2}$ " high and $2\frac{3}{8}$ " diameter of base. The last piece is late, but quite pleasing in shape, and I think it to be late XVIIIth century.

In the background of Fig. III on the left is a triple-reed plate wriggled with a conventional design of tulips, with a repeated punch decoration round the rim. This is by Moses West of London (Cott. O.P.5060), who is described as a "Country Pewterer." His "hall-marks" were struck on the rim, but the punching and wriggling have mutilated them beyond legibility. It is evident that the decorator was not very interested in preserving the advertising value of the "hall-marks"! This is $8\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter. The plate on the right is later, single reeded, also wriggled, perhaps as late as 1720, by Francis Kingston, whose incomplete touch is under Cott. O.P.5747B. The design is of a hunted stag, with tulips and floral decoration surrounding. The diameter is $8\frac{3}{8}$ ". The plate in the centre is included being contemporary with the later salts shown—c. 1705—and has an attractive rim of lenticular beading, which is by no means common. The traces of the touch and subsidiary marks are too faint for identification. Its diameter is 9 ".

I have previously referred to the resemblance of design of salts and candlesticks; another similarity which lasted for perhaps a quarter of a century is the use of the collar, a very usual feature in these rare and delightful pieces. The collar makes the lower part of candlesticks almost identical with the "candlestick" salt. Comparison of pieces in Fig. I and Fig. IV displays the similarity. In Fig. IV are shown three late XVIIth century candlesticks, two bearing the collar, and the third, the only one I have heard of,

bearing none. There is a slightly earlier type bearing a large knob in place of the collar. The collar I imagine to be a guard for the hand from the dripping molten fat. There is one intriguing question concerning candlesticks. Why are there none to be found made between c. 1705 and c. 1770?

The candlestick on the left is a delightful specimen, unmarked, of c. 1680. The base is decorated with a cast band of grape and floral decoration, which *motif* has been of great use to the faker in the past! I once had, in my early days of collecting, a very pretty candlestick decorated thus: but it was a "dud"! The candlestick on the right is $6\frac{1}{2}$ " to the lip, as is the previous piece. Both pieces bear the spaced ring decoration on the stem, which gives a softer appearance than the close rings. The piece on the right has a round base, decorated with wriggling, and is 5 " in diameter, whereas that on the left is octagonal and is $4\frac{3}{8}$ " across the flats. That on the right is marked on the lip (Cott. O.P.5452), and I place it at about 1680.

In the centre is a fine piece, 8 " to lip, not now in my collection. I must presume permission for publication from its present owner, whose name I do not know—but I am sure his heart is warm from owning such an outstanding example. The touch on the lip is unrecorded.

The pair of dishes in Fig. IV are a riddle to me. Close inspection of the photograph will show the cast lobed decoration to be complementary in each to the other, proving them a perfect pair. I do not know where to turn to find another such *pewter* dish, far less a pair. They are usually known as rosewater dishes, those of silver and gold coming into service at banquets. The presence on one of a single pair of initials and on the other of two pairs, suggests that they are alms dishes, the initials on one being those of the rector and on the other being the churchwardens'. The initials might just as easily be those of the master and the two senior wardens of a Livery Company, making them rosewater dishes. This pair, $16\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter, is comparatively late, being c. 1735, bearing the touch of Edward Leapidge (Cott. O.P.2894). I nearly passed this find over, for seeing them through the window far back in the shop, at first I mentally wrote them off as being in the "Present from Blackpool" class! Fortunately I went in.



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