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Tankards, and Housemarks on Early Measures—PART II

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IN this series of articles I am attempting to put forward information and impressions which have not previously been published, although it has been necessary in parts to incorporate summaries of general knowledge to present balanced facts, and to draw attention to interesting pieces which have not before been illustrated.

TANKARDS. The collector instinctively thinks of the Stuart flat-lid type, and the dome-lid William and Mary, Anne, and Georgian types with straight (or nearly so) sides; and perhaps with less interest the later XVIIIth century type which is rather

ciably narrower than the bottom. In others it was not so tall, but was similarly shaped. By this time the makers had experimented freely in tankards (and flagons) with entasis, the slight swelling which offsets the concave illusion of straight tapering sides. At 1615 it was present in all flagons. It was not necessary in the early squat tankards, but was soon introduced as they grew taller. Then the concave illusion was appreciated as a desirable line. Logically going a step further to increase the effect, some were made with concave sides, as will be seen in Fig. I. This

was evident in nearly all *flagons* from c. 1680 onwards, and lidless tankards of c. 1680-1710. The dome-lid tankards frequently had marked entasis at c. 1705, and reverted to squatness from then onwards, when they degenerated to Georgian grossness in every feature.

Of the bases, much could be written of the detail. Let it suffice to say that starting from being very small, they fairly quickly grew in size, proportion and mouldings, till by 1680 they had reached a stage at which they remained, with little deviation, for a hundred years, after which ring after ring was added.

The handles were at first very thin and light (in fact, too thin) and they were soon concentrated, from being too drawn out into a heavier, more compact shape. In early tankards the top of the handle turned down



Fig. I. Flat-top and dome-lid tankards, with contemporary plates.

Fig. II (below). Wriggled and lidless tankards, with earlier plates.

the shape of a tulip flower. Such a distinctive style as the flat lid, so akin to silver, has long been recognized by collector, dealer and antique shop alike, that there may not be very many to be "found" now; they do turn up, for last year I came across one, and three years ago Mr. Minchin found the best one I have ever seen.

A rarer type of tankard than the flat- and dome-lid, and not so arresting to the eye, is the lidless tankard of c. 1690-1720. Many variations on a theme exist, the theme being one or two fillets round the drum; the variety occurs in the number, position and proportions of these bands. The following remarks touch on tankards of c. 1640-1710.

Generally speaking, from about 1640, the earliest features are, in the body, squatness, in which the height and diameter are about equal. The base, or pedestal, was either non-existent or was one mould, only very slightly larger in diameter than the bottom of the body, or drum. It was certainly very inconspicuous. The handle was very slim, sweeping in an attenuate curve, attached low on the body, with the finial almost touching the table. The lid was rather wide-rimmed, with a shallow perpendicular step to the flat top. On the rim, opposite the handle, protruded one beak-like serration. The thumbpiece was twin cusped, as in the flagons of the same vintage. Such are the features of a tankard of c. 1640-1650.

As forty to sixty years passed, the body grew slimmer, until by 1700 in some it was tall and thin, with the tip of the body appre-



flush with the body, to give a large connecting area, like, as Cotterell noted, the beak of a swan. The beak was later (c. 1700) shortened, so that the full half of the handle made the connection at an angle of about 100 degrees. Realization of the appearance and complaints of handles "coming off in my hand" soon led to a reversion to the heel of the handle being run down the drum a little way.

The finials were almost entirely variations of the shield, sometimes a little bent (which developed into a fishtail design) until c. 1730, when they degenerated to a blob. C. 1685 a rare variety appeared, being a tightly-rolled ram's-horn.

The hard angles of the Puritan years soon gave way, on the lids, to less severe curves. The step became a convex curve, with the flat top apparently (though not really) laid on the top of the mould-

ing. The serrations, too, grew in number, and the "teeth" were even pierced between 1680 and 1690. This attractive but delicate detail was soon discontinued, but the serrations, in bolder form, persisted till c. 1715. The dome was introduced much earlier than is usually realized. It is generally considered to be c. 1705, which is about the time when it came to be accepted as the mode: but it appears in a touch struck No. 420 on the London touch plate, with the date 1685! (Cott. O.P. 5930). This shows a dome-lid tankard with an enormously heavy handle, which I am sure I should have called Georgian. The fact that it was sufficiently established as a style to be worth risking in the probably lifelong die proves the style to originate long before the death of James II. I have seen this touch on a flat-lid tankard, so the same maker obviously met the demand for both styles. The dome is placed instead of the flat top, and often had two or three mild rings of moulding on the concave curve, where it sweeps up to the dome.

Thumbpieces are probably the most conspicuous feature, and nearly all illustrations have shown well and fully the types to be seen. Study of any photographs of tankards, and Figs. I and II

but flamboyant serrations, which extend for $3\frac{1}{2}$ ins., are clearly shown, with the detail of the lid and thumbpiece. This domestic tankard was taken into use by the Church, and its name, "Soulkholm," is engraved on the drum, about a hundred years after it was made. As it is only $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints, this is the smallest church flagon I have seen. Soulkholm was a very small parish. This piece is marked (Cott. O.P. 6028).

Contemporary, or a little earlier, plates are shown, that on the left being a triple reed plate of $8\frac{1}{2}$ ins. diameter, of perhaps c. 1690-95. An outstanding feature is the very regular hammering, which can be discerned in the illustration. The "hall-marks" are those of Timothy Cloudesley (Cott. O.P. 992) and the touch is similar in device but is rounded and beaded, with the initials T.C. In the centre is a narrow rim paten or plate of c. 1685, of very good quality. This is a Norwich piece, the maker being one of the Melchoirs. The "hall-marks" are as Cott. O.P. 3192 excepting No. 4, which is M. instead of I.M. The touch is too defaced for any identification. However, a curious feature is that another set of hall-marks, later in type, is struck on the back. I have been

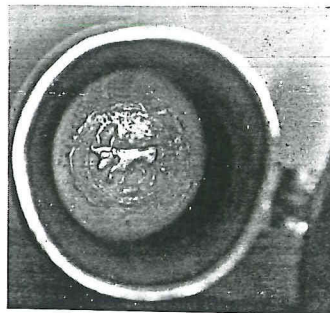


Fig. III. Interior Housemark of wedge measure (Fig. V).

Fig. IV (left). Hammerhead with "King's head" housemark, and a Tudor plate.

Fig. V. Wedge measure, early XVIIth century.



in this article, will convey much more than words, so I will summarize them by saying that they were at first very simple, but did not *evolve*, rather they swung to the extreme of great complexity very soon, for by c. 1665 they had developed into very large and equally beautiful, well-made designs, particularly in the golden age of pewter, c. 1680-1690. Then they became simpler and in my opinion dull and coarse, though practical, in the early Georgian years. The ram's-horn was by far the most usual style for flat-lid tankards, and is c. 1690-1700. The horns were then lopped off, and it became a sort of chair-back, and tobogganned swiftly down the slope of style. Variations at each period are numerous and interesting. The touch mark in tankards is nearly always present, and is to be found on the base, inside; the earlier flat-lid tankards bear the "hall-marks" on the lid.

In Fig. I on the left is a quart flat-lid tankard of c. 1695. It may be a little later, as it is provincial, having been made by a maker of Norfolk. This is noteworthy in showing the concave sides of the body mentioned previously. On the lip of the drum is the weights and measures mark of Queen Anne, but this is by no means proof that it was made in her reign. The base can be seen to be very modest. The handle on this piece is heavy, and does not run down the drum. The lid is rather wide-rimmed, with reeding, and with sharp serrating extending for $1\frac{1}{2}$ ins. The thumbpiece is a typical ram's-horn. The touch is of Henry Seegood (Cott. O.P. 4169) and his "hall-marks" are clearly struck across the lid.

On the right of this is a contrasting tankard, being squat, with very marked entasis. This is a typical dome lid of c. 1705. In every feature it is true to type. In the illustration the more rounded

unable to identify these, as they are very faint. On the right is another type of narrow rim plate, also of very fine quality and, like the last piece, $8\frac{3}{8}$ ins. in diameter. This is unmarked, but in the well, at the top in the illustration, are four stamped stars, the purpose of which I am curious to learn.

In turning to Fig. II we revert to tankards for a while. On the left is shown the only piece which has previously been illustrated (APOLLO, February, 1934, pp. 98 and 99), and the reason for reappearance is for comparison of style and detail—body, base, lid and thumbpiece, and also because it was previously stated to be unmarked. This has a delightful unrecorded mark—L.A. with fleur-de-lys in a heart. It is remarkable how many previously hidden marks, keen eyes looking in the right place, will find by juggling the light to advantage. On the right is a good example of the lidless tankard, showing how decorative and practical a wide base can be. This piece might be c. 1700-1710, and is marked once (Cott. O.P. 5666). It is $5\frac{3}{8}$ ins. high.

The plates in this illustration are approximately contemporary, although that on the left is rather earlier, being c. 1675. It is 12 ins. in diameter, and is broad rimmed, which is very rare in plate size. The rim is $2\frac{1}{16}$ ins. The maker was James Trew (Cott. O.P. 4811) who had leave to strike his touch in 1674, and who was dead by 1681. In the centre is a perfectly good, genuine broad-rimmed paten, with, alas, a faked English touch on this French piece! On the right is a 13 in. single reed wriggled plate, with conventional tulip decoration, of c. 1705. It is by Philemon Angel (Cott. O.P. 94). When I found this piece the scale was so thick and chipped that I could only just detect that it was wriggled.

HOUSEMARKS AND EARLY XVIIITH CENTURY BALUSTERS.

In APOLLO of May, 1933, Cotterell excellently propounded his "housemark" theory, which is fairly generally accepted, with only



Fig. VI.
Half-pint measure of
unknown early date.

one or two collectors unconvinced. Although it is common sense to accept it, I have found one or two facts difficult to digest, and so I subscribe to it with certain reservations, on which I will touch later.

Cotterell pointed out that the rules of the Pewterers Company expressly and energetically prohibited any form of self-advertising; then the marks struck on the lid (on some several times) have no connection with the maker. The maker's touch, which is almost invariably on the rim, is often present as well. But in several well-proved instances the marks appear to be descriptive of the name of the inn, and the initials in the mark linking with the owner's name. Indeed, some contain both name and address of the innkeeper.

However, there is one "housemark" which appears on at least five pieces now in existence. It is very remarkable for five measures from one inn, all of different design, still to exist, when pieces bearing "housemarks" are so scarce! More remarkable still is it that although the marks are at first glance the same, there are in fact three different versions, for the number of beads surrounding differs in three. Bearing in mind the cost of a die in the XVIIth century, at first full of fake phobia, one would say that those with two of the variations are false. But why should a faker make two dies to copy one mark? The pessimist could say that faking has been so lucrative that two at the game happened to choose the same mark to copy, and applied them either to fakes or to plain genuine pieces! As this mark appears on wedges and hammerheads of obviously different ages, I have wondered if it can have some other significance, such as denoting provenance or period.

Before turning to the illustrations in detail, let me drop one iconoclastic bomb. I do not believe that there is such a thing as a wedge baluster! In view of the extremely poor purchase gained on the wedge thumbpiece, contrasting with the very heavy thumbpieces on flacons of the same time, I contend that wedges are hammerheads or "Balls-and-Wedges" which have had their projecting thumbpieces knocked off.

Fig. IV shows a delightful half-pint hammerhead, which can just be seen to bear a "housemark" which I believe to be Cott. O.P. 5769 (King's Head) struck five times on the lid. The lip bears H.R. twice, which does not denote being made in Henry VIII's reign, but merely that its capacity is in accordance with Henry VII's enactment of 1495. Note the bold handle, which fits flush to the body, and finishes $\frac{1}{16}$ in. from the table. I can find no trace of a maker's touch. This piece is well and truly scaled in the right places. Behind it is shown a very early plate, being Tudor of 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ ins. diameter. It is very badly pocked, and when I found it it had exceedingly faint but unmistakable traces of wriggling on it. The bouge and well are one, for it has no flat—the whole bowl is one gentle curve. I can find no trace of a touch, but at the top on the rim can be seen clearly the real Tudor Rose and Crown, struck at this time by the company's officials to denote true quality.

Fig. V shows a quart-sized wedge measure, a fine specimen, bearing on the lip a touch, a flaming heart, with D.B. 1678, similar to Cott. O.P. 5416. It is an obvious family forerunner of this touch and of Cott. O.P. 498B. On the lid, four times, are the owner's initials W^BM. The unique (I believe) feature of this outstanding piece is the "housemark," a bull, this time cast or branded inside the base, which Fig. III shows well.

Finally, Fig. VI shows a dear little half-pint early measure, which I found in a bric-à-brac shop. It has, alas, neither lid nor thumbpiece, but its very primitive and sturdy curves cry aloud of early date. But what was it? The touch on the lip, F.B., is clearly shown. The most interesting feature escaped my eyes for nine years of pleased possession—on the underneath of the base is clearly, but very faintly, stamped a rose and crown, $\frac{3}{8}$ in. high and $\frac{5}{8}$ in. wide, presumably a housemark. It is fainter than it should be, for mine host at "The Rose and Crown" very craftily tapped the flat base up into a dome, so reducing the capacity!

SHAFTS FROM APOLLO'S BOW

29. Tempered Joy in Heaven

THE cold war between modernism and the traditionalists flared into a certain warmth recently. First, the President of the Royal Academy took the opportunity of the Royal Academy banquet to castigate the moderns in no equivocal terms; and secondly, Signor Giorgio de Chirico on the occasion of the luncheon given in his honour by the Royal Society of British Artists renounced his Surrealist and other pasts and declared modernism to be degraded, dead, and of unhappy memory—not only his own, but all modernism everywhere.

As the sprightly P.R.A. was being broadcast, his utterance from the festive board was a well-timed surprise attack. One imagines that not the least surprise was that of the innocent B.B.C. who can usually be depended upon to safeguard their hearers from the pollution of hearing that side of the argument with almost Muscovite fervour. Horrified listeners leapt to the telephone, but chiefly to protest against the protests which Sir Alfred's tirade was evoking from the rebel A.R.A.'s down the table. Nor was this an instance of *vox et praeterea nihil*; for the press was inundated with correspondence, the bars of Chelsea and the tea-tables of Mayfair buzzed, and Sir Alfred himself received letters and telegrams in incredible numbers applauding his gesture. (There were probably some which tempered this enthusiasm; but in reporting his correspondence to me Sir Alfred did not mention these.)

One realises the difficulties of extempore speech on such convivial occasions, and perhaps the President was not directing his shots to greatest advantage in selecting in his attack on Henry Moore one of the least Mooreish of his works: "The Madonna and Child" in St. Matthew's at Northampton. I should have thought that the lady who reclines in the Tate Gallery and contemplates with a fishlike eye the place where her navel would be if she had one, would have been a more telling example. Nor is Matisse the worst offender in painting. The fun would have been more fast and furious if the President had attacked works hanging at that moment on the walls of the Royal Academy itself. Maybe, however, even the vitriolic P.R.A. draws the line at crying stinking fish despite a certain piscatorial effluvium from Room 11, where dead skates, rays, fishermen and fishstalls in modern idiom are gathered.

The case of Signor Chirico is in some ways even more fascinating, though it did not achieve the *réclame* it deserved. For he is a convert, and—as converts are wont to be—believes not wisely but too well in his newly-found faith. The enterprising R.B.A., having elected him an Hon. Member, invited him to show his recent work. He did. One hundred specimens. They extended from self-portraits in various costumes or none to rearing horses and rear-viewed nude ladies. A very unangelic version of Michelangelo's "Holy Family" hung near a most repulsively realistic female Saint—"The Magdalene," looking all the worse for the departure of the seven devils. When they were hung, I learn, he had them all taken down again, and had the walls coloured a bright cardinal, "making the scene one red." Even that did not redeem the affair. There was here and there an echo of his power from the days when his Surrealistic horses waved sculpturesque tails by lone sea-shores amid the ruins of classic buildings, but for the rest . . . The forces of the traditional have scored little by his deflection into their ranks.

As a sidelight upon this controversy, however, there is reported over three columns of the press the discovery of a new modern artist at Loughborough. This Mr. T. Warbis sent a picture of "Skegness" to a local art show, and *vide* press, "gained the admiration of the public and the praise of critics."

"A fine specimen of modernism by Thomas Warbis. The artist produces not what he sees, but the emotion produced by what he sees. . . . All the more interesting in view of the present controversy in the art world concerning a famous artist's attack on modernism."

Other critics echoing this encomium, the newly-discovered genius was sought in his humble home. He was in his sixth year, and part of the aesthetic effect had been due to the cat walking over his picture and sitting on it. His father, with a forthrightness worthy of the P.R.A., remarked, "I think it's horrible."

A rumour that the cat is to be made A.R.A., and elected Hon. Member of the R.B.A., is, I understand, so far without foundation.