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SOME EARLY INVENTORIES OF PEWTER IN COUNTRY HOUSES

BY ROLAND J. A. SHELLEY

HIDDEN among the archives of our old country houses there must still remain not a few inventories of goods and chattels taken long years ago, usually on the death of their owners; but sometimes for other reasons.

Among these inventories are to be found particulars of pewter included in the deceased's belongings; and it is hoped that an account of such as have come to the notice of the writer may prove of interest to collectors of the metal, especially—and if in a lesser degree—to antiquarian and historical scholars. One thing that has to be noted is that in few instances is the fullest information given of the pewter recorded in the inventories that will be submitted here. In some cases we have the number of pieces only; in others the number of pieces and their value, in yet others merely weight and value; whilst the number of pieces with their weight and value are stated in but two of the inventories.

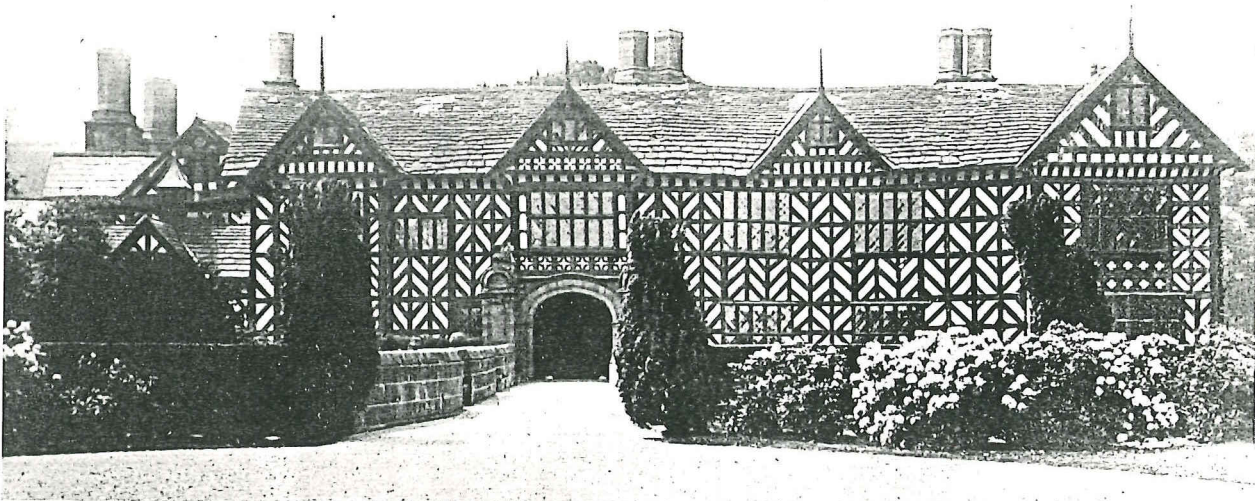
The most important, though not the earliest, of these inventories is that made on 30th September, 1624, at Speke Hall,

- Item v other lytle sowcers
- Item iiij bigg dishes
- Item iij dishes of a lesser sort
- Item viij bigg dishes
- Item viij of a lesser sort
- Item viij of a third sort
- Item xxiiij plates
- Item one dozen plates of a lesser sort
- Item one jellye basen
- Item 2 great pastye plates
- Item 8 lytle pye plates
- Item 2 great voydes
- Item 4 basens for ewers
- Item 4 hand basens

All these do waighe 34 score poundes, & 3 odd poundes, which att 8d. a pound doth come to xxiiijl. xv. iijd.

MORE IN THE STORE HOWSE

- Item 2 great flagons xxvjs. 8d.



SPEKE HALL. North Main Entrance

Lancashire, then the seat of the ancient family of Norris. The apparent need for the appraisal arose from the fact that the Sir William Norris of that day was a notorious spendthrift who had quarrelled with Edward Moore, of Liverpool, and struck him with his sword, for which he was fined £1,000. It may be that this inventory was made when the Hall was mortgaged to John Fleming, Norris's son-in-law, whether to pay for the heavy fine or as the result of long-continued extravagance we do not know; but it was probably due to a combination of these reasons. Besides the pewter recorded below, a valuation would be made of all the other contents of the house; and this course applies to each of the succeeding inventories mentioned here. The value of the pewter would presumably be a trifle compared to the estimated total of the furnishings.

SPEKE HALL INVENTORY, 1624

IN THE STORE HOWSE

Pewter & other things

- Imprimis* one dozen of bigg deep dishes
- Item one other dozen of a lesser sort
- Item one dozen of a third sort, the one halfe lesser then the other
- Item an other dozen of a fourth sort, the one halfe lesser than thother
- Item on other dozen of a fift sort, the one halfe lesser than thother
- Item one other dozen of a sixt sort, the one halfe lesser than thother
- Item one dozen & a halfe of sallett dishes
- Item six porrengers
- Item xij sowcers, thone halfe lesser then thother

- Item 2 cannes London pewter xvjs.
- Item 2 flagons & 2 cannes Wigan pewter xxiiijjs.
- Item 2 other lytle cannes vjs.
- Item 4 ewers viiijjs.
- Item 4 candlestickes vjs.
- Item 6 chamber pottes vjs.
- IN THE DEY HOWSE
- Item viij pewter dishes vjs. 8d.
- IN THE BREAD LOFT
- Item a pewter salt seller jd.
- Item iij pewter dishes xviiijd.

PEWTER IN THE KYTCHIN

- Imprimis*: ij voydes, vj broad dishes, 5 pye plates, 8 sallett dishes, ix sawcers, iiij porrengers with eares & 4 without eares, one collynder, 3 dishes Wigan pewter of a bigg sort, 3 dishes Wigan pewter of a second sort, ix dishes of a third sort, vij of a 4th sort xlvijs.vjd.

FOR THE SERVANTES

- One broad dish, 5 of a lesser sort, 3 deep dishes.
- In all 95 pound att vjd. a pound.

IN THE BUTTRY

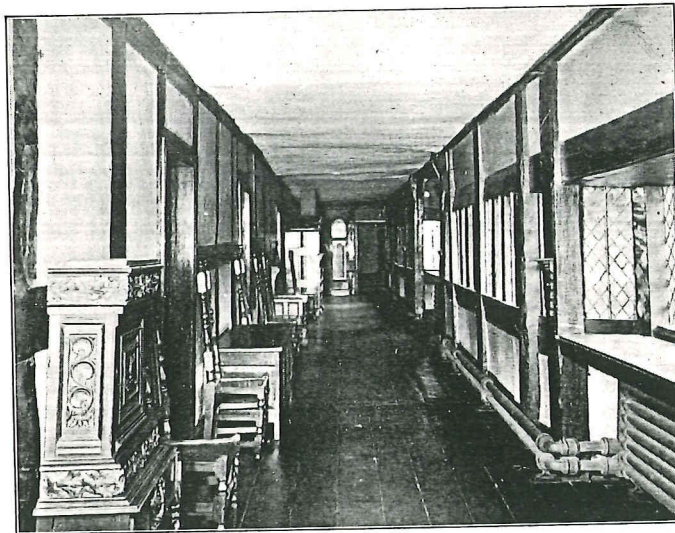
Pewter

- 2 basens & ewers, a toning dishe, 4 voyders, 2 hand basens: 53 pound, att 6d. a pound 26s. vjd.
- 2 cannes one bigger then the other, 2 lyverye cannes, in all 19 pound 14s.

SOME EARLY INVENTORIES OF PEWTER



SPEKE HALL. West Gallery



SPEKE HALL. North Gallery

SIR WILLIAM FAIRFAX' HOUSE AT GILLING, YORKS.

Here it was recorded in 1594 that there were in the "wineseller one quart pewter pott: in the pantrye 2 basins and ewers of pewter valued at xiijs. iiijd. and ij pewter voyders trays



SPEKE HALL. North Porch and Bridge

[trays for carrying out the relics of a dinner], valued at xs. In the kytchine xij sawcers, xij dishes, xij great dishes, xij great platters, xij lesser platters, iiij chargers, sawcers xij, dishes xij."

Of new vessels there were "xij sawcers, xij sallite dishes [salad dishes], ij dozain great dishes, xviiij great platters, xviiij lesser platters, and i charger of the greatest sorte. Valued altogether xiiijli vis. viiid."

SCARISBRICK HALL, LANCS., 1673

The inventory of this pewter unfortunately does not give the number or denomination of the pieces; but it is interesting to note the varying values.

"Item, pewter in the nursery	xxd.
" twelve score of pounds of pewter of the best at xid. the pound	xxl.
" fifteen pound of ould pewter at eight pence ye pound	xs.
" more pewter in the larder and kitchen, eight score and eleven pound at eight pence the pound	vl.viiiis.
" in the buttery xxiiijl. at nine pence the pound	xviii. iiid. 449 lbs."

The above pewter was that in the old Scarisbrick Hall (see illustration), demolished and rebuilt about 1850. The present Hall was recently sold by Sir Everard Scarisbrick. It is now a Church of England Training College.

SIR THOMAS HOSKYN'S HOUSE AT OXTED, SURREY

In an inventory at this house in 1615, there were in the kitchen "8 dozen of pewter dishes of all sortes, five dozen of sawcers, thirteene candlesticks of pewter, fower pewter flagons."



SCARISBRICK HALL, Lancs. before it was rebuilt about 1850



CHASTLETON HOUSE, Oxon

CHASTLETON HOUSE, OXON

Mrs. Irene Whitmore Jones, the owner of this fascinating old country house, kindly made the following extract for me from an inventory of 1633. A special feature of it is that in this case alone the house still contains a brave array of pewter; a small portion by pewterers who flourished at the time of construction, but mostly by those of the XVIIth century, such as William Burton, Jonas Durand, William Brayne, Robert Nicholson, Samuel Ellis and John Home—all well known to collectors of to-day. The collection would be still finer if Arthur Jones had not had the idea of selling 82 lbs. of old pewter at 1/- per lb. about 1645. But he was an ardent Royalist, and it may be that he wanted every penny for the King's service.

"In the Gallery. Pewter platters of diverse sortes, 8 doz. and 10 platters, one large boale, five basons, two spout potts, seven pie plates, three quart flaggons, two quart potts, one pott costerne [a coaster, a tray or decanter—*Oxford English Dictionary*], one cullinder, one baic pott, one puddinge coffin, ix candle sticks, nine chamber potts, weighing [in all] 443li."

The total value is given as £22 3s. od. Chastleton House has an interesting history. In 1568 a previous building was held by William Catesby, whose grandson, a Roman Catholic, was an originator of the Gunpowder Plot, 1604. Evidently a profligate, he mortgaged the manor to Sir Thomas Leigh, of Stoneleigh, in 1596. Then he got heavily into debt and so had to sell his birthplace to Walter Jones in May, 1602. Walter Jones belonged to an old Welsh family and was distantly related to Lord Burleigh. A wealthy wool-stapler, he was a Member of Parliament for the city of Worcester from 1584 to 1589, and from January to April in 1603. One of his descendants, Walter, married Anne Whitmore, daughter of Richard Whitmore, of Lower Slaughter Manor, in 1697. The Jones family held Chastleton until Arthur, last in the male line, left it at his death in 1828 to "my kinsman, John Henry Whitmore of Dudmaston, Salop"; and descended from him the present owner of the house is, as stated above, Mrs. Whitmore Jones. Among its many treasures is the Bible which Charles I used on the scaffold, and which he gave to Bishop Juxon as a parting gift.

A marked distinction of this glorious old house, which was begun in 1602, is that it is built in one uniform style and has never been altered in any way. The house and gardens are shown every weekday, except Tuesday, from 10 to 1, and 2 to 6; on Sundays from 2 to 4.

PORT ELIOT HOUSE, ST. GERMANS, and CUTTENBEAKE, CORNWALL, 1633

Both of these mansions in the early XVIIth century were in the possession of Sir John Eliot, one of the greatest statesmen and patriots of his time, who opposed the arbitrary measures of Charles I and for his pains ended his days in captivity. That was in 1632. His son John married whilst a minor, and thus a ward of the King, without the royal consent; for which he and those who aided and abetted him were heavily fined by the Court of Wards and Liveries. And so, to meet this liability and to pay Sir John Eliot's debts, an inventory of his household goods was made in the following year.

There was pewter both at Cuttenbeake and Port Eliot; but the former was then the principal seat of the family, and most of the pewter had its home there. It is thus entered in the inventory dated April 6th, 1633:

"*Imprimis*: three great chargers, five greate pewter dishes, foure dozenn and three dishes of other pewter, one dozenn of sallett dishes, three dozenn of trencher plates, twelve lesser plates and seaventeene other lesser plates, foure pye plates and a pastye plate, one longe dishe and three ould sallett dishes." viiil. iiis. xd.

"Item in the Kitchin,
 seaventeen pewter dishes xxxs.
 " thirteene other small dishes and sawcers vs.
 " in the Butterie,
 one little chap and a pewter salt seller, a flagon,
 three pewter candlesticks and three jugs".... viiis.

At Port Eliot was found

"In the Chamber over the Butterie and the room within the same, twenty nine pewter dishes, one dozenn of sawcers and a candle sticke" lvis.viiid.

SOME EARLY INVENTORIES OF PEWTER

As far back as 1820 Cuttenbeake had ceased to be a residence; but Port Eliot still exists. Though in the main comparatively modern, it incorporates some portion of the original house which passed to the Eliots in 1565 from the Champernownes. It is the seat of the Earl of St. Germans, descended from Sir John Eliot.

NORTHWICK HOUSE, WORCESTERSHIRE, 1705

"An Inventory of the Goods, Plate, Jewels and Money in the dwelling house of the late Sir James Rushout, Bart.; taken this 12th day of December, 1705."

On the premature death of Sir James, late in 1705—he was aged only 30—all the contents of the house were appraised for probate. They included much silver and jewellery and other valuables; but it is with regard to the pewter alone that this article is concerned. In the kitchen there was noted the following: "21 old pewter dishes, 9 old small pewter dishes, 10 new pewter dishes, 8 dozen and four pewter plates, 1 large pewter cistern, 2 pewter rings for a table, one pewter stand for a dish and plates, 3 salts, and 4 pie plates." In "the store room next the clock" were 10 pewter dishes of the larger sort, 8 dishes of the smaller size, 2 new mazarines [deep plates], 24 new pewter plates, 6 old small pewter dishes, 36 old pewter plates and 3 pewter measures; 240 pieces in all. But neither weight nor value was recorded. (The above particulars were obtained from a fascinating article in the *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, Vol. XXI, 1944, by E. A. B. Barnard, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S.).

DEAN CASTLE, Ayrshire

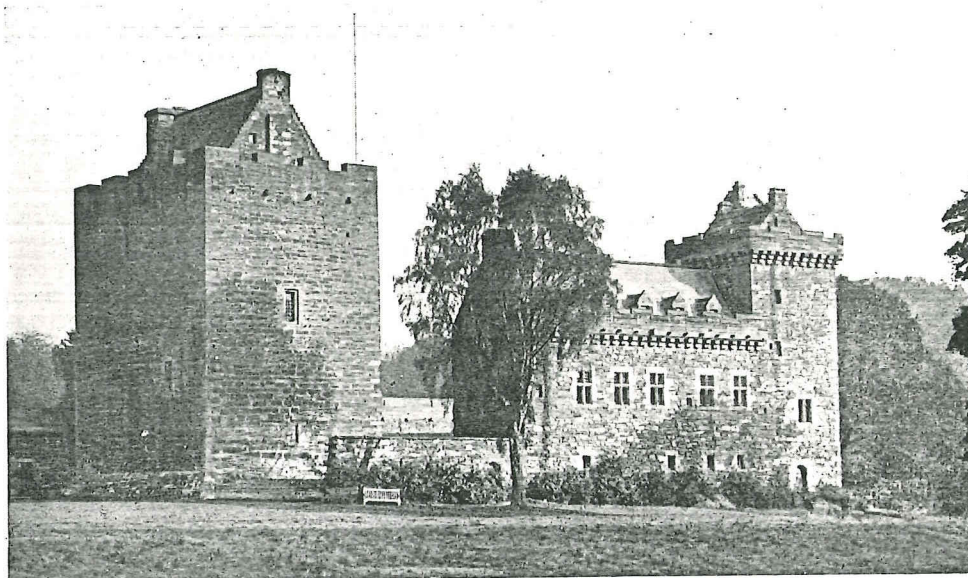
This is the last of the inventories to be quoted. The information hereunder was taken from a document among the Boyd papers, bearing the date 25th July, 1612.

"Seventie pewdir plaites; ane dusoun pewdir trunchoris [trenchers]; ten coweris of pewdir; seventeine saisceris [saucers]; twa new Inglis [English] quart stowpis; twa new quart flacownis; thrie ale tyne quart stouppis; twa ale tyne quart flacownis; ane tyne pint stoup; twa new chalmer pottis; four new tyne chandilieris." (In early days the word "tin" was frequently used to denote "pewter.")

Dean Castle is situated near to the town of Kilmarnock. It was for centuries the seat of the noble family of Boyd, to one of whom Robert Bruce gave, c. 1320, a Charter granting the lands of Kilmarnock, Bonnington and Hareshaw, the last-named now being the estate of Mr. Richmond Paton, B.A., F.Z.S., a member of the Society of Pewter Collectors. The ninth Baron was created Earl of Kilmarnock by Charles II in 1661. The fourth Earl lost his head (literally) after the rising of 1745. But previously, in 1735, the Castle was partly destroyed by fire; and for nearly 200 years was uninhabited until Lord Howard de Walden, to whom the Kilmarnock estate descended through the female line from his great-grandmother, Henrietta Scott, wife of the fourth Duke of Portland, gave up Chirk Castle, his Welsh residence, and prepared to make Dean Castle his permanent home. For some considerable time he had gone to great trouble and expense in having the partial ruins restored and made habitable; but unhappily he was not destined to enjoy the amenities of his new home, as, shortly before he intended to move into it, he died rather suddenly on November 5th, 1946. Lord Howard de Walden was a man of the kindest instincts, and was universally liked for his friendly and affable nature.

It will probably have been noticed what a small number of drinking vessels is mentioned in the inventories in comparison with the hundreds and hundreds of dishes and plates. How

are we to account for this? Well, it is possible that pewter was supplanted by glass for drinking purposes in the houses of the upper classes towards the end of the XVIth century. The successful venture of Verzelini in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in the making of Venetian glasses, as they were called though made in England, resulted in these soon being found in wealthy homes. Professor Dover Wilson (*Shakespeare's England*) asserts that for drinking vessels the Venetian glasses were about this time preferred even to gold and silver goblets; he also reminds us that when Dame Quickly was pressing Sir John Falstaff for the debt he owed her, she says: "I must be fain to pawn both my plate and the tapestry of my dining chambers," to which he replies by appealing to her sense of the fashionable usage—"Glasses, glasses is the only drinking" (2 *Henry IV*, II.I.142). And the second part of *Henry IV*, be it noted, was printed in 1600, "as it hath been sundrie times publickly acted." Credence may therefore be reasonably given to the idea that glass *did* displace pewter for drinking vessels in well-to-do households late in the XVIth century; and that this explains why so few pewter flagons and tankards are to be found in the inventories.



DEAN CASTLE, near Kilmarnock, from the south, showing ancient Keep and Castle

COVER PLATE

This fascinating full length portrait of the young King Edward VI reminds us again how greatly English painting in Tudor times was indebted to Holbein, and, on the other hand, how much we have to learn of the work of English artists precisely because the English genius was still overshadowed by the great German.

Holbein died in 1543 when the young prince was only six years old. He had enormously pleased Henry VIII by his paintings and drawings of the child. This picture from the late Earl of Ellenborough's collection shows Edward as a youth, evidently just before he died, so that it dates from eight or nine years after Holbein's death. A life-size work, it must have been one of great importance. There is already that preoccupation with the careful rendering of the details of fine clothes which marked Tudor painting in Elizabeth's reign and gave us the brilliant school of miniaturists led by Hilliard. But there is also that careful drawing of the face and hands which were Holbein's legacy to English art—drawing which succeeds so well because the line gives us a sense of solidity as well as contour. Let it be confessed that Holbein would have managed the placing of the legs better: there is a throw-back to the more archaic English style. So we may ask who is the unnamed artist who could execute a work of such grace and feeling, and await the scholarship which will give us the answer.

Painting in the possession of Leggatts, 30 St. James's Street, S.W.1.