

EBK

PEWTER CHURCH PLATE

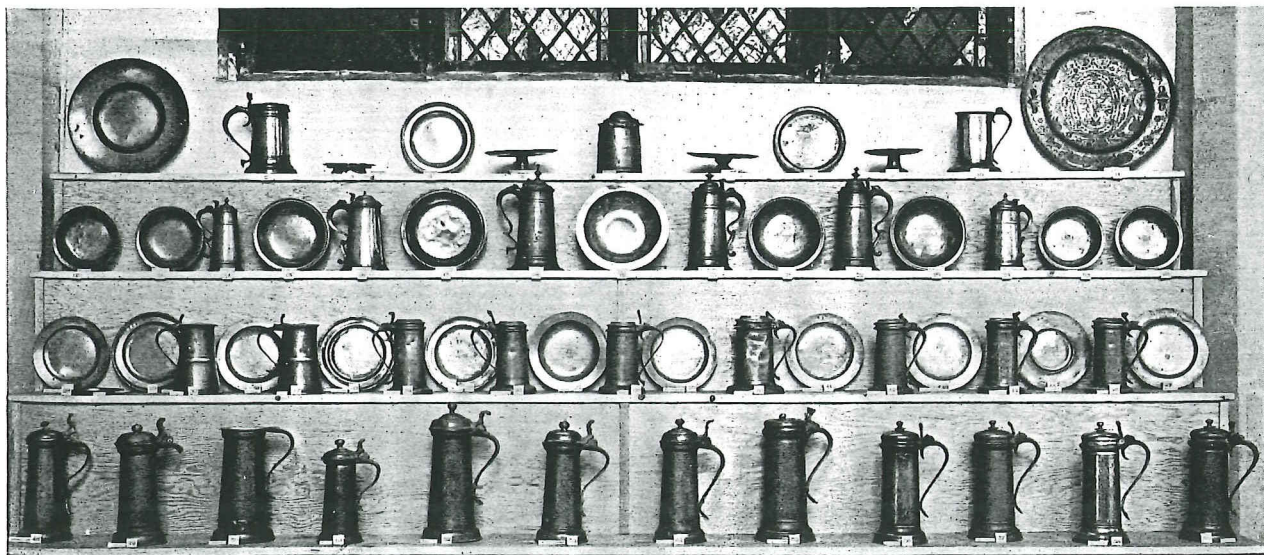
By CAPT. A. V. SUTHERLAND-GRAEME, F.S.A.

AN ecclesiastical Committee was recently appointed to consider the question of the sale of church plate. In its report, the Committee strongly deprecates the sale of church plate of any kind, but where a sale is necessary, indicates the conditions and limitations under which it could be permitted. It also emphasizes the point that church ornaments are held in trust and that alienation of them without Faculty is illegal.

The report is obviously of chief concern to the parish which may be the possessor of, say, an Elizabethan silver chalice, the sale of which would provide much needed funds for structural repairs, etc.; but the matter has been introduced here for two reasons: firstly, that collectors and others may know what the law is with regard to the sale of church plate—a law which, it may be pointed out, is as applicable to pewter as to gold or silver; and secondly, to reinforce the plea of the writer (himself a collector) that these ancient survivals of a once important industry should be preserved in the churches to which they belong. From the beginning of the nineteenth

century up to the first decade of the twentieth scant interest was taken in pewter, which was generally regarded as so much junk, difficult to keep clean, insanitary, and certainly valueless; and during this period immense quantities of old pewter, the work of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century craftsmen were ruthlessly thrown away.

It is clear that the ecclesiastical view was similar, and where vessels were not actually thrown out, they were put away in vestry chests, stokeholes, belfries, and the like, and replaced by glass or electro-plated articles, where it was not possible to provide the costlier silver. In many instances the old vessels were taken into secular use; in others they were given to itinerant hawkers, and by them sold as scrap metal or passed on to a few far-seeing dealers who eventually reaped the benefit of the so-called 'cult of pewter' which commenced early in the twentieth century. So, in the passage of time and through omission from inventories, they gradually disappeared and were forgotten. Today, many of these pieces, restored, and with



No. I.—VIEW OF THE EXHIBITION OF OLD PEWTER IN THE ST. PETER HUNGATE ECCLESIASTICAL MUSEUM, NORWICH, IN 1934



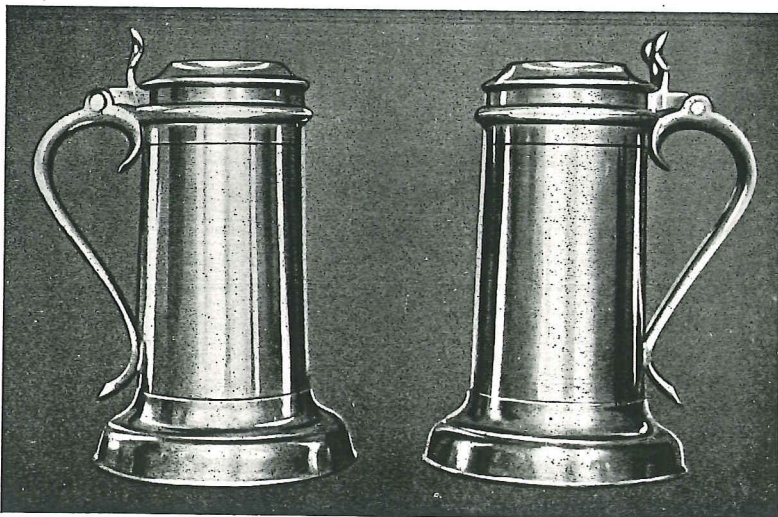
No. II.—VIEW OF OTHER EXHIBITS OF OLD PEWTER IN THE ST. PETER HUNGATE ECCLESIASTICAL MUSEUM, NORWICH, IN 1934

their surfaces cleaned and polished to their pristine beauty of colour, grace the collections of pewter enthusiasts who will ensure their future preservation.

So much for past history. For the present the outlook is bright; a spirit of veneration for ancient heritages is abroad and is rapidly increasing; no longer is pewter despised; it has begun to take its rightful place among historic records of the past; church vessels are being 'discovered' in their former hiding-places and brought into prominence again; inquiries as to period, makers, etc., are multiplying; restoration is being undertaken, and steps are being taken to preserve, safely and

visibly, these undeservedly long-forgotten treasures of the Church.

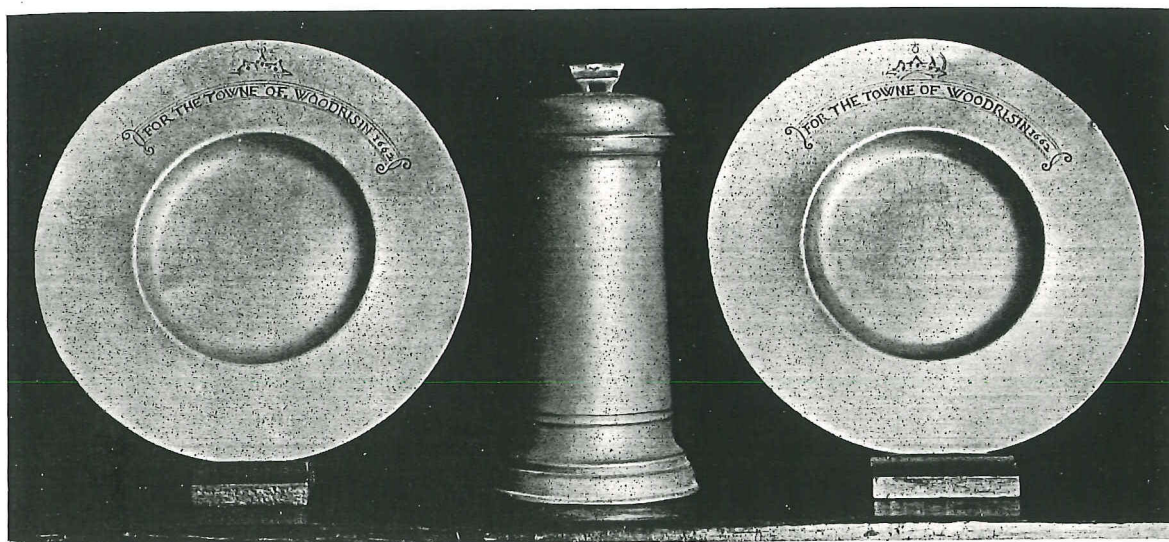
It should be added that hitherto the reference has been to plate belonging to the Church of England; but other churches, and in particular the Church of Scotland, will doubtless be equally jealous to preserve their heritage of old pewter from harm, loss, or unauthorized disposal. As examples of the increasing interest with which pewter is regarded by ecclesiastical authorities, the recent exhibitions at Carlisle (in connexion with the tercentenary of the Diocese) and at Norwich may be cited, and no better introduction to the series of illustrations could be



No. III.—A PAIR OF OLD PEWTER FLAGONS BY F. S., OF THE TYPE KNOWN AS "BEEFEATERS," CIRCA 1650-80, IN THE PARISH CHURCH AT HUNSTANTON

made than the views (Nos. i and ii) of the latter exhibition, which was held in the former church of St. Peter Hungate, now an ecclesiastical museum. Here, through the enthusiasm of ecclesiastical and civic authorities, a splendid array of flagons, alms dishes, bowls and plates was assembled, showing that in this district at least, the churches generally had not parted with their pewter. Taking the bottom row in both illustrations, with No. 1 on the left, and commencing at that end, the first seven flagons are *c.* 1615; it is singular that makers' touches are seldom found on flagons of this type; the remaining seven-

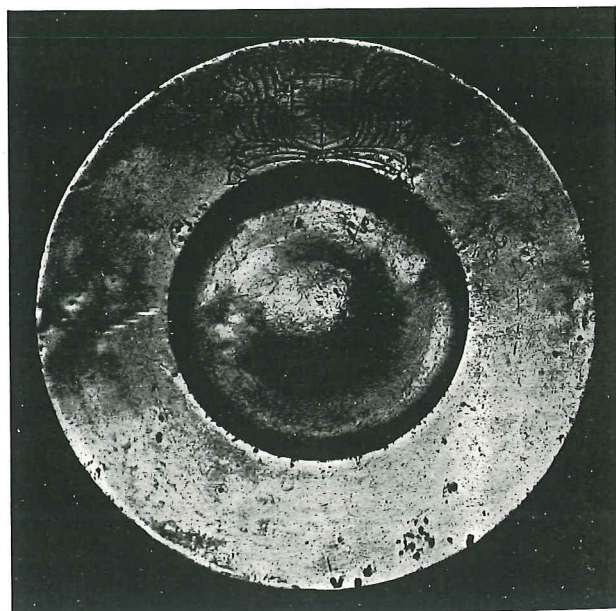
PEWTER CHURCH PLATE



No. IV.—TWO PATENS WITH BROAD RIMS, ENGRAVED 'FOR THE TOWNE OF WOODRISIN 1662,' WITH ACCOMPANYING FLAGON

teen flagons, differing somewhat in detail, are *c.* 1630–45, and are chiefly by one maker, *E.G.*, whose touch includes, besides his initials, the device of a flagon, sure sign that flagon making was his forte. In the next row the first two flagons are of a type almost entirely peculiar to Scotland. One London pewterer, Robert Eden (1689–1732), specialized in this type, however, and was the maker of one of these; next come seven flagons of the type known as 'beefeaters,' from the shape of the lid, resembling somewhat the headdress worn by the yeoman warders of the Tower. The type is *c.* 1650–80. Two are by *R.B.* and five by *F.S.*, two pewterers whose names are at present unknown. The latter also made the fine pair of flagons of this type illustrated in No. iii. These, however, were not in the exhibition, but are the property of Hunstanton Parish Church. Next to the seven 'beefeaters' come nine flagons similar to those immediately below, except for the absence of the knob; seven are by *E.G.* and two by Robert Marten, *c.* 1660. Marten became Master of the Pewterers' Company in 1674 and died during his term of office. On the third shelf are six flagons of later date. The 'broken' handle and general departure from simplicity places them at *circa* 1730–75. On the topmost shelf, the left-hand flagon follows no standard type, but resembles a pair, dated 1688, belonging to

the Tron Kirk, Edinburgh. The various plates, with certain exceptions referred to later, are of ordinary mid-eighteenth century type, and are nearly all by London pewterers. A number of bowls, mostly of the same period, are on the third and top shelves; certain of these were alms bowls and are inscribed with the location of the doors at which they were placed; the remainder may have been similarly used, or were possibly



No. V.—PATEN WITH 10½ IN. DIAMETER, FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE LATE MAJOR RICHARDSON (COUNTY MUSEUM, TRURO)

baptismal bowls. For the rest, the broad rimmed dish on the left of the top shelf is by Robert Marten, *c.* 1670; the octagonal plate is late seventeenth century; there are three or four tankards by eighteenth-century makers, and, on the top shelf of No. i, three early eighteenth-century footed patens, a chalice, *c.* 1800 (No. ii), and other pieces.

Mention has been made of certain plates of particular interest. No. iv illustrates two, together with their accompanying flagon; they are 10½ in. in diameter and were undoubtedly patens; with their broad rims they are much more pleasing than those which surround them. They are engraved 'FOR THE TOWNE OF WOODRISIN 1662' and the touch contains the initials *M.Y.*, probably those of Matthew Young, a Norwich pewterer. The flagon is by *E.G.*, and is inscribed 'Woodrising.' The writer had the privilege of cleaning these pieces for Woodrising Church, as also those in No. iii for Hunstanton Church.

Another beautiful 10½-in. paten is shown in No. v. It belonged to the late Major John Richardson, D.S.O., and, with the remainder of his important collection, was bequeathed by him to the County Museum at Truro. It was made by Thomas Taylor, a member of the Pewterers' Company, who struck his touch in 1670 and became Master of the Company in 1704 and 1716.

Puriton Church in Devon owns the eighteenth-century flagon shown in No. vi. It had lain neglected for many years and was in a sorry condition of corrosion and dirt. The present incumbent wisely decided upon restoration, but the question was one of funds; eventually the matter was brought to the notice of the Society of Pewter Collectors, which had the work carried out. The flagon bears the crude inscription 'John Squire 1731'; the touch is practically obliterated, but may very probably be that of John Dolbeare of Ashburton.

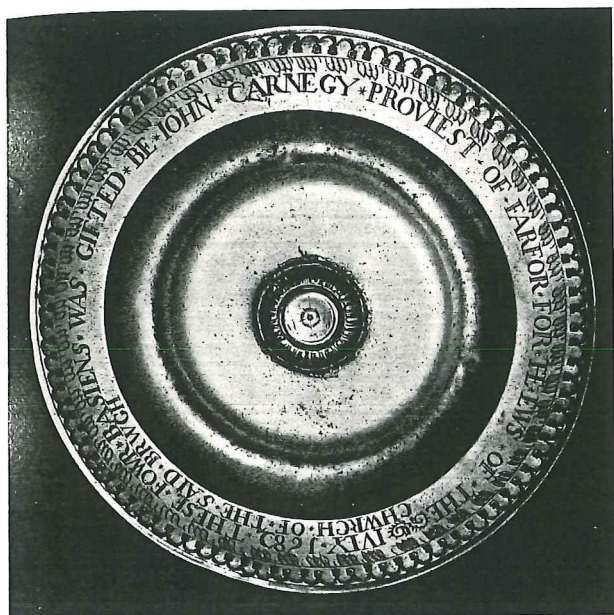
We will next consider four remarkable dishes, two of which are illustrated in Nos. vii and viii. They are the property of the Parish Church of Forfar, and it would not be going too far to say that they are the finest pieces of pewter in Scotland. They are 16½ in. in diameter and somewhat resemble rosewater bowls by reason of the central bosses. The inscription, except as regards spelling, is identical in each case, but the chief exception raises interesting speculations. It will be observed that on one dish the word 'use' is spelt 'ews' (No. x), the correct spelling appearing on the other, as it does on the remaining pair; but this is not all, for a close examination revealed that 'ews' had originally appeared on one of the other dishes also (not illustrated), but had subsequently been partially erased and 'use' superimposed.

Two of the dishes were made by one pewterer and the remaining pair by another, though all

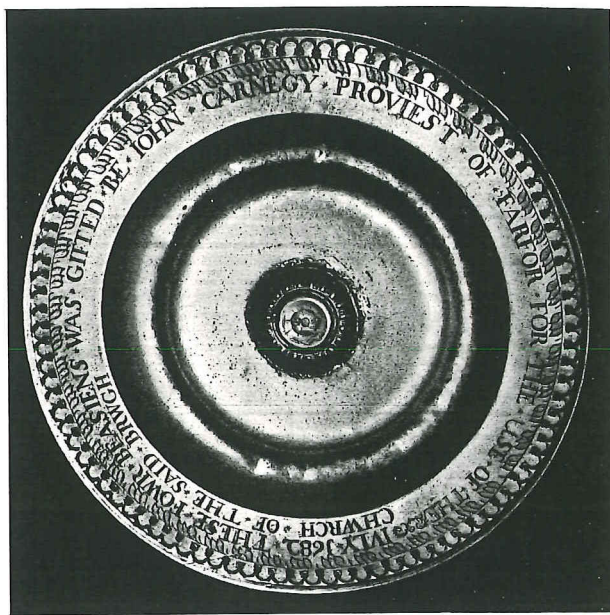


No. VI.—FLAGON INSCRIBED 'JOHN SQUIRE 1731,' AT PURITON CHURCH, DEVON

PEWTER CHURCH PLATE



No. VII.—ONE OF FOUR PEWTER DISHES, MEASURING 16½ IN. DIAMETER : THE PROPERTY OF THE PARISH CHURCH, FORFAR



No. VIII.—ANOTHER OF THE FOUR PEWTER DISHES, MEASURING 16½ INCHES : THE PROPERTY OF THE PARISH CHURCH, FORFAR

four were 'gifted' in the same year; moreover, the makers' touches, though differing in device, contain the same initials, *A.F.* Neither of these particular touches is recorded, but, working in Edinburgh during this period were two pewterers named Alexander Ferguson, probably father and son. The elder became a free pewterer in 1660 and died in 1698, whilst the younger became free in 1678, there being no further record of his activities. Each struck a touch on the touch plate of the Edinburgh Guild, neither of which, however, resembles in any way those which appear on the dishes, being the usual conventional device of the Castle of Edinburgh with initials *A.F.*

In the early days of the Guild, between 1575 and 1620, the craftsmen often struck two touches upon the Edinburgh touch plate, one being the Castle device and the other a separate individual mark. This practice ceased, however, in the latter year, and it may be conjectured that the Guild Authorities, with Scottish caution, put an end to it as tending to fill up the touch plate too rapidly, with the consequent necessity of purchasing another. The pewterers still continued, however, to use secondary touches upon their wares, and this is almost certainly a case in point.

To sum up, it would appear that two dishes were made by Alexander Ferguson *père*, and two by his son, and that the latter, possibly better educated, corrected his father's spelling in one case, but in the other—who knows? A point of minor interest is that, though no so-called 'Hall marks' appear on these dishes, the makers have evidently adapted two of the best known of these marks, the rose and the buckle, as decorative features in the arcaded pattern round the rims. This is not the place to discuss the significance of these marks, but the subject is fully dealt with elsewhere.

I am indebted to Mr. Alexander C. Dalgety, of Forfar, and Mr. James G. Low, of Trinity, Angus, for the following interesting information:

'Proviest' John Carnegy, donor of the dishes, was a Carnegy of Lour, whose father changed his title from Lord Lour to Earl of Northesk; on the Earl's death the estate of Lour went to his third son Patrick, to whom Provost John was brother. At the time of the gift the Scottish Church was Episcopal in form, and remained so until the return of the Presbyterian form of government during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The dishes remained in use throughout.



No. IX.—A FLAGON AND CUPS WITH ENGRAVED INSCRIPTION DATED 1762 : BY ARCHIBALD INGLIS OF EDINBURGH, WHO DIED 1777

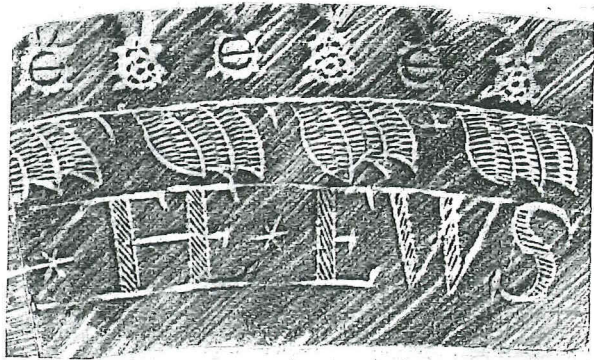
The illustration above (No. ix) is of a flagon and cups engraved 'Belonging to the Associate Congregation of Norham. Mr. Jas. Morison Minister 1762'. The Associate Congregations were in secession from the Scottish Church, and this branch evidently established itself over the border. The maker was Archibald Inglis of Edinburgh, who became a free pewterer in 1732 and died in 1777. He was one of those who struck the 'Castle' touch upon the touch plate, whilst using a different touch upon his wares. The flagon is of the normal severe Scottish type; the spout is a later addition. The cups are of unusual, though not unique, design and are certainly superior in this respect to the egg-cup type which is usually associated with Scottish Communion cups.

It is hoped that these notes and illustrations, particularly Nos. i and ii, which cover all the more common types of pewter church plate, may help to impress upon all concerned the desirability of rescuing and preserving these fine old pieces for all time, for there is little doubt that, despite increasing interest, much still remains to be discovered.

In this connexion, recent correspondence in the Press on the subject of litter in churches

and the desirability of exploration in odd corners with a view to eliminating such items as moth-eaten hassocks and other accumulations of pure rubbish, and the preservation of anything of local or general interest, may quite possibly lead to further discoveries of the kind under discussion.

Apart from the question of pewter, however, it is obvious that the greatest care must be exercised in this matter of 'spring cleaning'; much that might be thought valueless and fit only for the dustbin may, in years to come, be viewed in a very different light.



No. X.—RUBBING OF PART OF INSCRIPTION ON PEWTER DISH SEEN IN No. VII, SHOWING THE OLD FORM, 'EWS' FOR 'USE'

PEWTER CHURCH PLATE—II

By CAPT. A. V. SUTHERLAND-GRAEME, F.S.A.

IN a previous article (THE CONNOISSEUR, October 1936) I mentioned the desirability of preserving to the Churches the many fine specimens of Pewter Plate which they possess, and described several outstanding examples which, for the most part, had been recently 'discovered.'

In the present article attention is drawn to a further series of important pieces which remain in ecclesiastical custody.

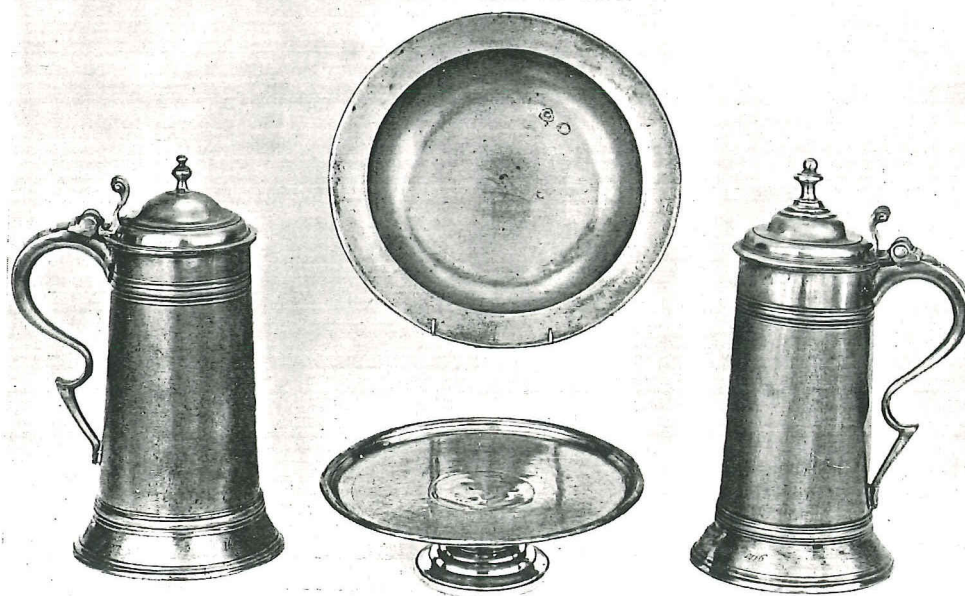
It would probably be correct to say that the ancient plate of nearly every church which possesses any, has been described in various works. With very few exceptions, however, only passing reference is made to pewter plate, and frequently it is completely ignored, possibly because none was known to exist, or because pewter was thought to be devoid of interest. The position in this respect is nevertheless improving, largely through the endeavours of broad-minded collectors who have not hesitated to make known, and assist, often in a very practical manner, to preserve to the

Church its still considerable treasures; and to-day the desirable task of cataloguing, describing and possibly illustrating the pewter Church plate of the various Dioceses or Counties awaits the attention of some enthusiastic connoisseur, who would doubtless, if permitted to search, unearth many long-forgotten specimens of the pewterers' craft.

The group of plate seen in No. i belongs to St. Swithun's, London Stone; though hardly 'early' (a term which, to the collector, indicates at least late seventeenth-century origin), certain of the pieces possess considerable interest for the historian.

We may dismiss the alms plates (one only is shown) in a few words, as they are of common type. They were made by William de Jersey, a past Master of the Pewterers' Company, who was working from 1732 to 1785, and they may be dated as *circa* 1750. The footed paten is *circa* 1740 and measures 9 inches across; its maker was Hellier (or Hellary) Perchard, who was 'free' in 1709, became Master of the Company in 1740 and died in 1759.

The two flagons present certain interesting features. In the first place they were not made for the church. This is established by an inscription encircling the concave base of one of them, which reads 'The gift of John Layland (and) Joseph Watts, *stewards*, for the use of the *Society* 1717.' The corresponding inscription on the other flagon reads 'The gift of John Layland and John Taylor 1716.' Unfortunately, the records of St. Swithun's



No. I.—GROUP OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PEWTER PLATE AT ST. SWITHUN'S CHURCH, LONDON STONE, E.C.

PEWTER CHURCH PLATE



No. II.—ALMS DISH OF THE KIRK OF BELHELVE, ABERDEENSHIRE, CA. 1675
ONE OF A PAIR : THE MAKER'S TOUCH IS PROBABLY THAT OF GEORGE ROSS

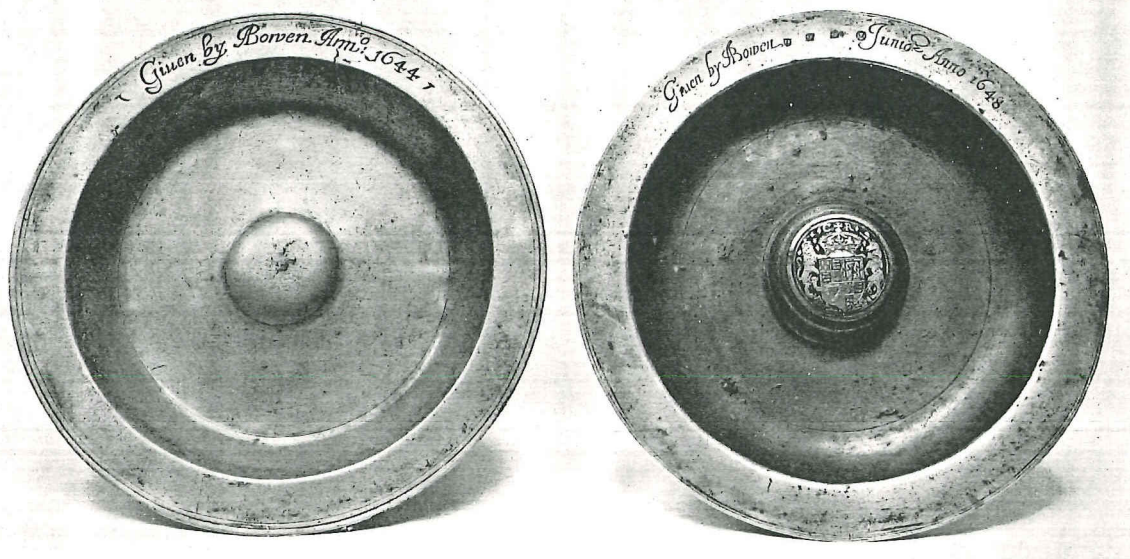
contain no reference to this 'Society,' and it is therefore not possible to state with certainty what it was or how long it existed. Contemporary history, however, suggests a solution which may not be far from the truth. King James II left England in December 1688. William, Prince of Orange and his wife eventually became joint sovereigns, and all persons holding public offices were required to take the oath of allegiance to them. Many of the clergy, however, adhered to the doctrine of Divine Right, and, having taken the oath of allegiance to James, found it against their consciences to transfer their allegiance to another. They were, in consequence, deprived of their livings by Act of Parliament, but nevertheless continued their ministrations wherever they could, and became known as 'Non-jurors.' The result was that many bodies or societies came into existence, differing from the main body of the Church on this issue alone; there is little doubt that they became largely Jacobite clubs, and appear to have existed for a considerable time, probably becoming gradually more secular as their ordained members

died. It is not unlikely that the flagons under review were made for one of these Societies, and that when the latter eventually became defunct, they were handed over to the Parish Church as being the obvious place for their preservation. As will be seen, the flagons are not a pair; moreover, only the earlier of the two has a 'Touch,' the initials *I.P.*, which might have belonged to any one of twenty or more pewterers at this period. All these pieces have been restored and are displayed within the church.

We now turn to a number of interesting alms plates and dishes. The first (No. ii), which has also recently been restored, is one of a pair belonging to the Kirk of Belhelvie in Aberdeenshire. It is 16 inches in diameter and may be dated *circa* 1675. The maker's 'Touch,' visible on the rim, consists of a Crowned Rose with the initials *G.R.*, which is probably the mark of George Ross, who was admitted to the freedom of the Incorporation of Hammermen of Aberdeen in 1664 and became its Deacon in 1672. No. iii shows this



No. III.—THE ABOVE DISH PRIOR TO RESTORATION : DIAM. 16 IN.



Nos. IV AND IVA.—TWO OF FOUR PLATES AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH, MILDENHALL, SUFFOLK : POSSIBLY BY THOMAS BUTCHER

dish prior to restoration. Nos. iv, iv_a show two of four plates (two of each type) belonging to St. Mary's Church, Mildenhall, Suffolk; they are among the most interesting pieces that I have ever seen. They were presented by one Adam Bowen, who also gave a silver-gilt chalice and paten to the church. They measure 10½ inches in diameter and were made by a pewterer whose Touch (No. vi) contains his initials

T.B., possibly Thomas Butcher, who was elected to the office of Steward of the Company in 1635, became Upper Warden in 1652 and died two years later. The earlier pair have plain bosses beaten out of the plate metal from the rear, and each is inscribed 'Given by A. Bowen Anno 1644.' The second pair is inscribed 'Given by A. Bowen Junio Anno 1648'; they are distinguished, in comparison with the former pair, by reason of their very beautiful bosses. These are applied from the front and each is formed of a circular moulded mount of pewter containing a plaque of the Royal Arms in brass and enamel surmounted by the initials *C.R.* for Charles I (No. v).

The use of such emblems at such a period as 1648 calls for some comment. Civil war had convulsed the land from 1642 to 1646, in which year Charles surrendered and became virtually a prisoner in the hands of the Parliament; further Royalist risings, however, took place in 1648, and the Parliamentary General Fairfax was ordered to quell the insurrection in the eastern counties; in pursuance of this aim, he drove the Royalist forces into Colchester, which

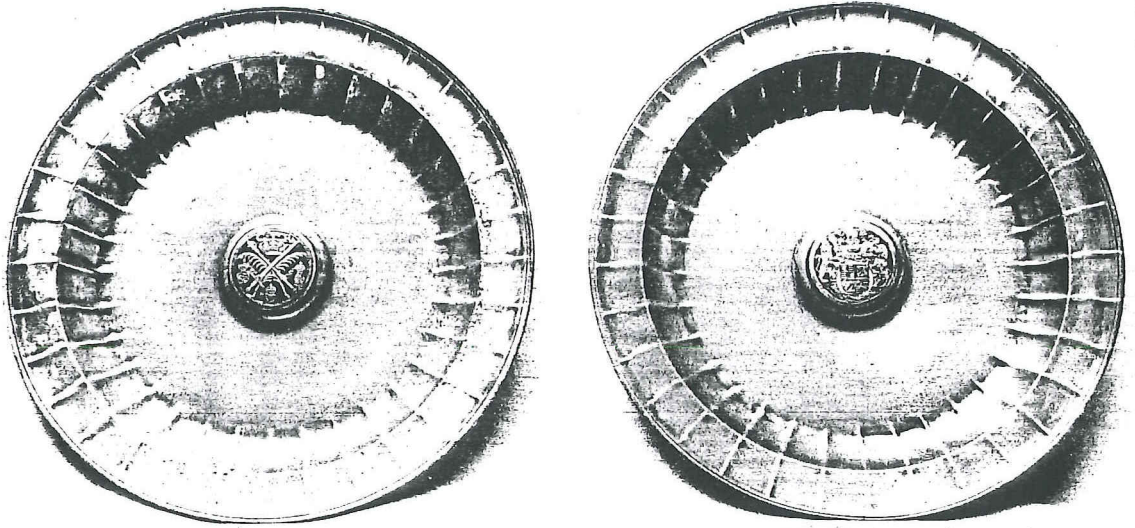


No. V.—PLAQUE IN ENAMELLED BRASS WITH ROYAL ARMS & INITIALS OF CHARLES I : ON THE 1648 BOWEN PLATES



No. VI.—TOUCH *T.B.* ON THE ABOVE

PEWTER CHURCH PLATE



No. VII.—ALMS DISHES WITH ENAMELLED BOSSES MADE FOR ST. KATHERINE CREE CHURCH: IN THE GUILDHALL MUSEUM

capitulated shortly afterwards. In the following year Charles was brought to trial and executed. It was during this last phase, whilst Fairfax was subduing the eastern counties, that Bowen presented these two plates, bearing the Royal Arms, to Mildenhall Church *in the eastern counties*! It may of course be said that the Royal Arms were the emblem of Monarchy and not of the Monarch; but, as against that is the fact that the individual cypher *C.R.*

surmounts the Arms. Whatever the circumstances may have been, the point is not without interest. Incidentally, one of these plates



No. VIII.—ENAMELLED BOSS ON ONE OF THE ABOVE DISHES



No. IX.—COMMUNION FLAGON OF TANKARD SHAPE: C.A. 1689

had not been completely cleaned when it was photographed, and No. v shows large patches of corrosion which have since been removed.

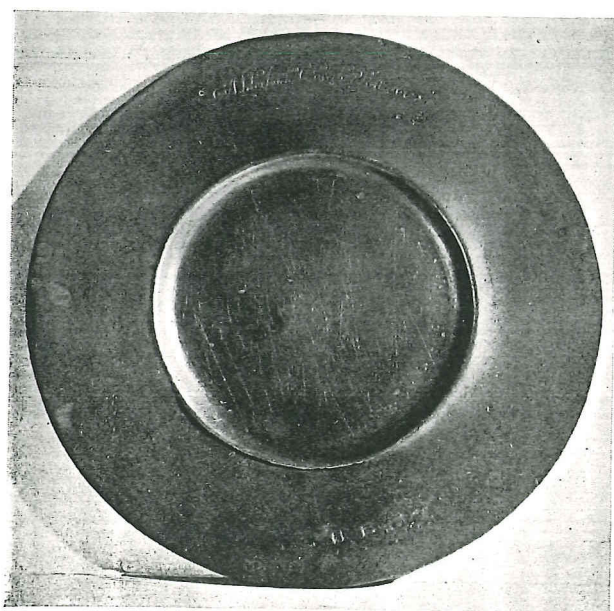
St. Katherine Cree Church in the City of London was partly rebuilt in 1628-31, at, or about, which time four remarkable alms dishes were presented; that they still exist is possibly due to the fact that the church escaped the Great Fire. These dishes are 14 inches in diameter and are decorated with richly enamelled bosses, each bearing a different device. Those illustrated (No. vii) show (right) the Royal Arms surmounted by the initials *C.R.*, and (left) the Sceptre and Sword of State in saltire, with palm leaves, the four spaces being completed with the Royal initials and the emblems of England, Scotland and Ireland, crowned (No. viii). These two dishes are in the Guildhall Museum; the remaining pair, which are in the church, have bosses showing (a) the Prince of Wales's feathers with initials *C.P.*, and (b) a double rose; this last dish has been silverplated. All four dishes are further ornamented by ribs radiating outwards through booge and rim. There are no indications of any maker's mark on any of these dishes, and their extreme lightness, to-



No. XI.—DETAIL OF THE ENGRAVED INSCRIPTION ON THE ALDERFORD PATEN

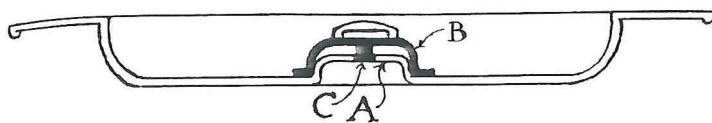
gether with the colour of the metal and other indications, make it tolerably certain that they are not of English manufacture.

No. ix shows a vessel which in secular use would be called a tankard, though the name seems hardly appropriate in the present case. It is the property of the church of St. Michael, Beguildy, Radnorshire, Wales, where presumably it was used as a Communion flagon. This dome-lidded type of tankard may be said to have made its appearance during the first years of Queen Anne, *i.e. circa 1705*; prior to that date flat lids were the rule. From the inscription round the medallion, it would seem, however, that this particular piece was made in or about 1689, some fifteen years before the type became common. Whatever Touch may have existed is no longer discernible, so we are left in ignorance as to the maker, who must have been one of the first pewterers to adopt the domed style. The medallion bears portraits of William and Mary, and the inscription around them reads 'Long live the Prince and Princess of Orange' which fixes the date of the piece. Secular tankards of the preceding type were frequently embellished with Royal portraits, usually very conventional, carried out in incised 'wriggle work'; in the present instance the medallion appears to have been cast, worked up, and applied to the drum. If this is so, one would have expected to find other examples, as the moulds would be expensive, but, as far as I am aware, no other specimen exists. Historically, it is interesting to note that we have here a case which is the direct opposite of that which has been presumed in connexion with the St. Swithun's flagons. No qualms of conscience as to his position relative to the Divine Right appear to have troubled the then incumbent of Beguildy, who permitted such an outward and visible expression of loyalty to the new rulers to appear upon his church



No. X.—PATEN AT ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S, ALDERFORD, 1663

PEWTER CHURCH PLATE



NO. XII.—DIAGRAM SHOWING METHOD OF FIXING THE BOSSES TO PLATES

plate. It is, of course, possible that the tankard was of secular origin, and was presented to the church at a later period, a comparatively common occurrence.

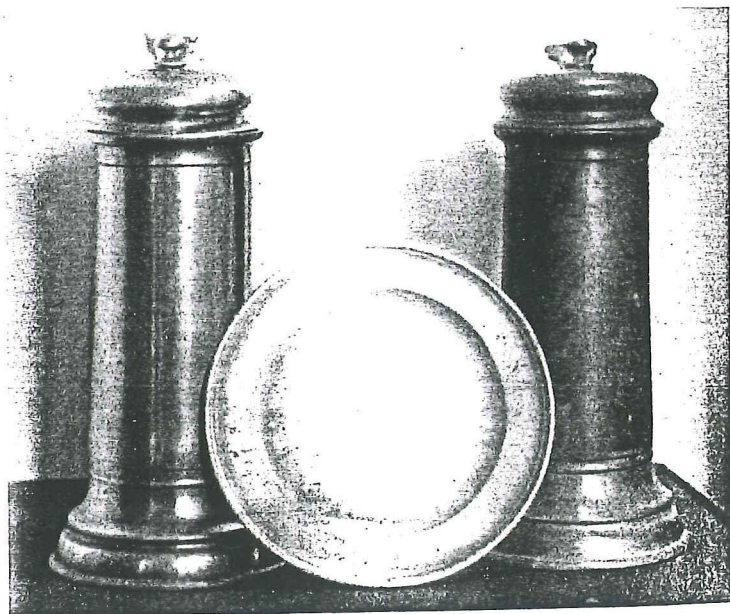
The next illustration (No. x) shows a paten of beautiful proportion belonging to the church of St. John the Baptist, Alderford, Norfolk, and dated 1663. Though but $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, it has a rim 2 inches wide; its maker was *T.M.*, probably Thomas Melchior, the senior of a well-known pewtering family in Norwich. The engraved inscription is very good, but, as the piece has not been cleaned, does not show up very well, and the detail (No. xi) has been worked up from several different rubbings.

Finally, two Communion flagons from the church of St. John the Baptist, Symondsburry, Dorset (No. xiii). These magnificent specimens measure no less than 15 inches in height overall; their maker was *R.A.*, possibly Robert Austin, who filled all the offices in the Pewterers' Company and was Master in 1659. The flagons are *circa* 1640. The plate is of common type, but is of interest as being the work of a local pewterer, George Lester of Dorchester, first mentioned in 1681, whose chief title to fame is by reason of the terrific 'dust up' he had with the Mayor and Corporation of his town, whose chest he had rifled. For this misdemeanour he was 'removed from being a Capital Burgess.'

My thanks are due to the clergy who have permitted me to illustrate the pieces in their charge, and especially to those who, notwithstanding the busy life of a widespread parish, have made time to have the photographs taken.

Postscript.—Since writing the above, I have received from my friend Mr. A. T. Isher of Cheltenham

some details as to the fixing of bosses which provide food for thought about the Mildenhall plates (No. iv); it appears that no joint was made between the edges of bosses and the surface of plates; the method employed being that a circular portion of metal was first hammered out from the back of the plate to form a seat for the boss proper; the latter was provided with a pewter 'lug' on the underside which fitted into a slot cut in the seating; the boss was placed in position and the 'lug' fused from the back (see No. xii, in which 'A' is the seating, 'B' the boss and 'C' the 'lug'). The 'plain bosses' referred to as appearing on the earlier two Mildenhall plates are evidently the seatings, and one can only speculate as to the reasons why these two plates were not completed, whilst the remaining pair, at what one imagines to have been a more critical time, received their very Royalist bosses. We can but be thankful that part at least of Adam Bowen's gift was completed and that it remains to delight us to-day. It may be added that these beautiful and historic plates are still in use in Mildenhall Church for taking the offertory; to prevent damage to their surfaces they have been provided with blue velvet mats.



NO. XIII.—PEWTER AT SYMONDSBURY, WITH TWO FLAGONS OF ABOUT 1640

PEWTER CHURCH PLATE—III

By CAPT. A. V. SUTHERLAND-GRAEME, F.S.A.



No. I.—FLAGON OF C. 1690 AT RYE PARISH CHURCH, SUSSEX

IN THE CONNOISSEUR for October 1936 was commenced what I hoped would be a series of articles dealing with interesting pewter vessels still, for the most part, in the churches to which they belong. The second of the series appeared in April 1940, but thereafter the years were occupied by sterner affairs, and it is only now that a sufficient number of interesting specimens has accumulated to warrant a further article under the same title.

Place of place must be given to the fine flagon at Rye Parish Church (No. i), not only by reason of its distinction of design and its noteworthy thumbpiece—unique, as far as I am aware—but also because, with its advent and that of the flagon shown in No. ii_a, the time would seem to have come for considering this design as a definite type, since several others of very similar form and outline have long been known, one of which appears in No. ii_b; another, minus its cover, was illustrated in THE CONNOISSEUR for June 1949; whilst two others, the properties respectively of the Church of Benholme in Angus and the Tron Church in Edinburgh, were illustrated in THE CONNOISSEUR for February 1939, when they were shown at the Exhibition of Scottish Art at Burlington House.

The salient features of these vessels are the

skirted foot and the flat cover, the latter differing from the well-established 'beefeater' type chiefly by the absence of the final concave-sided top section.

The Rye flagon is one of the finest examples of hollowware craftsmanship that I have seen. It gives the impression of great sturdiness, as a pewter flagon should, and any suggestion of unwieldiness is offset by the multiple mouldings encircling the cover, drum and foot. As for the thumbpiece, it was a stroke of genius to convert the plain flat design seen in No. ii_b into the heads of eagles. It suggests that the pewterer was aware that this was a special case requiring individual treatment, which, in a way, was true, for the flagon was made for a congregation of Huguenot refugees who found asylum in Rye after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685; whether the eagles' heads have any significance in this connexion, however, I am unable to say.

Its later history is set forth in an inscription engraved upon the drum, which records that it was presented to the parish church in 1860 by a descendant of the refugees.

The touch, which is upon the handle, is too corroded to be decipherable, whilst of the so-called 'hall-marks' struck across the cover, only one, a buckle, is visible.

The height of the flagon is $8\frac{1}{2}$ in. to the top of the cover, of which the diameter is $4\frac{1}{2}$ in.

No. ii_a shows a flagon of similar though plainer form, belonging to the Church of Saint Martin-by-Looe in Cornwall; the principal difference in detail lies in the thumbpiece, which is of the 'twin-bud' type normally associated with baluster measures of the late Seventeenth—early-Eighteenth Centuries, though it lacks the usual wedge-shaped connexion to the cover.

The dimensions are: height 10 in.; diameter of cover $5\frac{1}{4}$ in. The touch is unreadable.

No. ii_b takes us from Cornwall to Norfolk where, in the Parish Church of All Saints, Morston, is another fine example of the same type of flagon. Its height is 9 in. and



No. ii_a.—FLAGON OF C. 1690 IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARTIN-BY-LOOE, IN CORNWALL



No. ii_b.—FLAGON, C. 1670: ALL SAINTS, MORSTON



No. IIIa.—FLAGON, CIRCA 1635, AT ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, SOUTH TAWTON, DEVON: SEE NO. IIIb

its cover 5 in. in width. When this flagon was shown at the Exhibition of Norfolk Church Pewter in Norwich in 1934, the catalogue described it as the work of Robert Marten, a London pewterer who became Master of the Worshipful Company in 1674, the year of his death.

To illustrate the outstanding feature which separates all the foregoing from the well-known 'beefeater' type of flagon, two illustrations (Nos. IIIa and b) are given of one of the latter.

Here is plainly visible the concave top section of the cover, to which reference has already been made.

This fine example belongs to the Church of St. Andrew, South Tawton, Devon, which name, together with the date 1685, is stamped upon the back of the handle (No. IIIb).

This is a West Country piece, and partakes of all the good qualities of such. Its maker was Robert Clothyer, of Chard, Somerset, who was working between 1670 and 1710.

Quite a lot of his work exists, and his business must have been an extensive one.

It seems to be quite a common custom, especially in the trade, for any unusual piece of flat

ware to be given an ecclesiastical background. For instance, narrow- and broad-rimmed plates are called 'patens' or 'paten-plates,' and deep bowls 'alms-dishes.' It is probable that ninety per cent. of them have no claim to have performed any church function; and it is therefore refreshing when an undoubted example comes to light.

A beautiful early alms-dish is shown in No. iv. It is one of four, the property of the Church of St. Bartholomew-the-less, in the City of London. The illustration shows the underside, which is finely engraved with the inscription: *Robert Goffe and Thomas Shrub Churchwardens in y^e Parrish of St. Bartholomew y^e lesse in y^e yeare of our Lord 1648* *. The dimensions are: diameter 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.; across well, 9 in.; depth 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. The touch and 'hall-marks' are clear; the former (No. v) contains within a beaded circle the initials H.R. above a heart and a crescent; the second of the four 'hall-marks' includes the initials M.F. These varying initials are puzzling, but such differences frequently appear and often point to a succession in business. In any case, the date of the inscription is eighteen years prior to the Great Fire, and the touch does not appear upon the first of the touch-



No. IIIb.—THE SOUTH TAWTON FLAGON, SHOWING INSCRIPTION AND DATE ON HANDLE

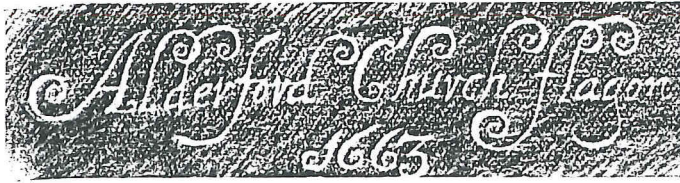


Nos. IV & V.—ALMS-DISH, CIRCA 1648, AT THE CHURCH OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE LESS, CITY OF LONDON: AND ABOVE, TOUCH MARK OF SAME



No. VI.—PATEN FORMERLY AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN-LE-GRAND YORK, ONE OF THE LABELS INSCRIBED WITH THE DONOR'S NAME, 1675

PEWTER CHURCH PLATE



No. VIIa.—INSCRIPTION ON DRUM OF FLAGON AT ALDERFORD, NORFOLK

plates preserved by the Pewterers' Company, which is a fairly certain indication that its owner was dead before that catastrophe.

The dishes have evidently been most carefully tended throughout their three hundred years of life, and are now, with the passage of time, in probably a more perfect condition, if such is possible, than when they left H.R.'s workshop. *O! Si sic omnia.*

I consider the plate illustrated in No. vi to be a paten. Ecclesiastical plates were used for three purposes: as patens; as flagon stands to 'preserve the cloth and carpet from spillings of wine'; and as alms-plates. This finely proportioned piece could not have belonged to the third category; its shallow well would make it quite unsuitable for the purpose. It is also unlikely to have been a flagon stand. Nothing is known of any flagon having been in its parent church of Saint Martin-le-Grand, which is in the City of York and is now known as Saint Martin, Coney Street; but the date upon the plate places it as earlier than the 'York'-type flagon with which so many Yorkshire churches were furnished; whilst the well-known early types of flagon would have preceded the plate by at least a quarter of a century, so that, in either case, any close connexion between plate and flagon is practically ruled out.

Apart from these considerations, however, it is, I think, unlikely that this plate would have been so well engraved had it been intended merely for such a utilitarian use. On opposite sides of the rim are two ribbons, one of which contains the name of the church whilst the other bears the record of presentation: *Ex dono John Yeates Gent, 1675.* The script is very good and, in fact, all the circumstances point to Sacramental use. The maker, I.B., is not recorded in Cotterell, but a rubbing of the touch, together with a manuscript note, was added by him in his personal copy of *Old Pewter, its Makers and Marks.* This paten is not now at the church, but is in the keeping of the Yorkshire Museum, to whose authorities I am indebted for permission to illustrate it.

Before coming to my final pieces, I have inserted two inscriptions, the first (No. viia) because hitherto I had never seen the word 'flagon' actually engraved, although it has always been the term verbally applied to these vessels of the Church. Such inscriptions as have introduced a title at all—and they are few—have usually been in Latin, the word used

being either *Lagena* or *Amphora*. The inscription she appears upon the flagon of Alderford Church in a 'beefeater' similar to that in No. iiiia, made by Seagood of Lynn, who was 'Free' in 1656 and a his stock and moulds for sale in 1682, describing 'all good and fashionable.'

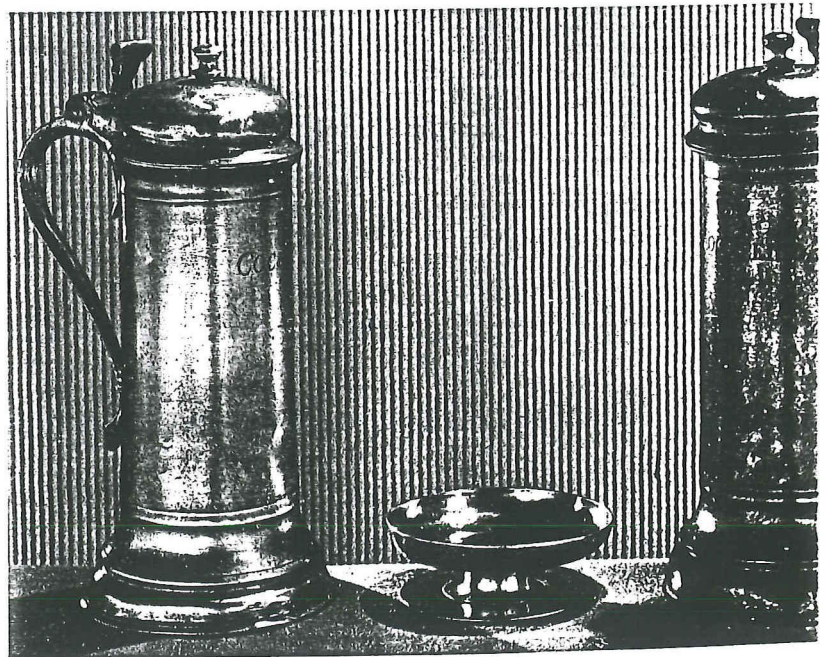
The only other example of engraving which



No. VIIb.—THE INSCRIPTION ON THE DRUM OF A FLAGON AT FISHERTONANGER CHURCH,

English name to the vessel, so far as I am at present given in No. viib; this appears upon the drum of 'beefeater' flagon, this time at Fishertonanger Salisbury, and the word used is the plebeian *com* reminiscent of the oft-quoted wording of the XXth of James I and VI: 'Wine we require to be brought Communion Table in a clear and sweet standing stoup of pewter, if not of purer metal.' Incidentally the word 'stoup' is used in the Session records of Cathedral to describe two vessels presented in 1171. The word actually engraved upon them, however, is 'a.

Finally (No. viii), the plate of Holy Trinity, C Sussex. The illustration shows the magnificent 14½ in. in over-all height, together with another vessel stated to be a paten, and indeed it could be anything else. There is a pair of them, exact copies. The photograph was purposely taken when the paten was half finished, in order to emphasize the beauty



No. VIII.—TWO FLAGONS OF CIRCA 1628 AND A PATEN AT CUCKFIELD PARISH CHURCH (Concluded on p. 124)

The Johnson Collection at Philadelphia will contribute the beguiling *Portrait of a Young Man* by Antonello da Messina which, as a work of about 1475, is an extraordinary fusion of the ideals of Humanism and the Middle Ages.

Flemish masters will include Jerome Bosch, with his *Adoration of the Magi*, which was once in the collection of the Earl of Ellenborough and is one of the earliest works of this master. There will also be paintings by Dirk Bouts and Jan van Eyck, the latter represented by the well-known *St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, which for many years has been in the Johnson Collection. *The Portrait of Dorothea Berck* by Franz Hals will come from the Baltimore Museum, and Memling's *Madonna and Child Enthroned* from the William Rockhill Nelson Art Gallery. The event promises to bring together a representation of American collections which will make this the most important painting exhibition of the year.

In the meantime, the Department of Decorative Arts has been making some interesting acquisitions in celebration of the jubilee. Among these is an unusual example of Philadelphia cabinet-making in a carved mahogany sideboard table of exceptional size which is confidently attributed to Thomas Affleck and is thought to have been made for Levi Hollingsworth. Bills for the mahogany are still in existence.

Another acquisition here is one of the extremely rare examples of the Bonnin & Morris china factory in Southwark, Philadelphia, which was in existence about 1770-2. Less than half a dozen examples are in existence, the new acquisition being a salt in the form of a shell decorated in underglaze blue. All of the work from this factory is earthenware, decorated in underglaze blue in the manner of Bow and Worcester.

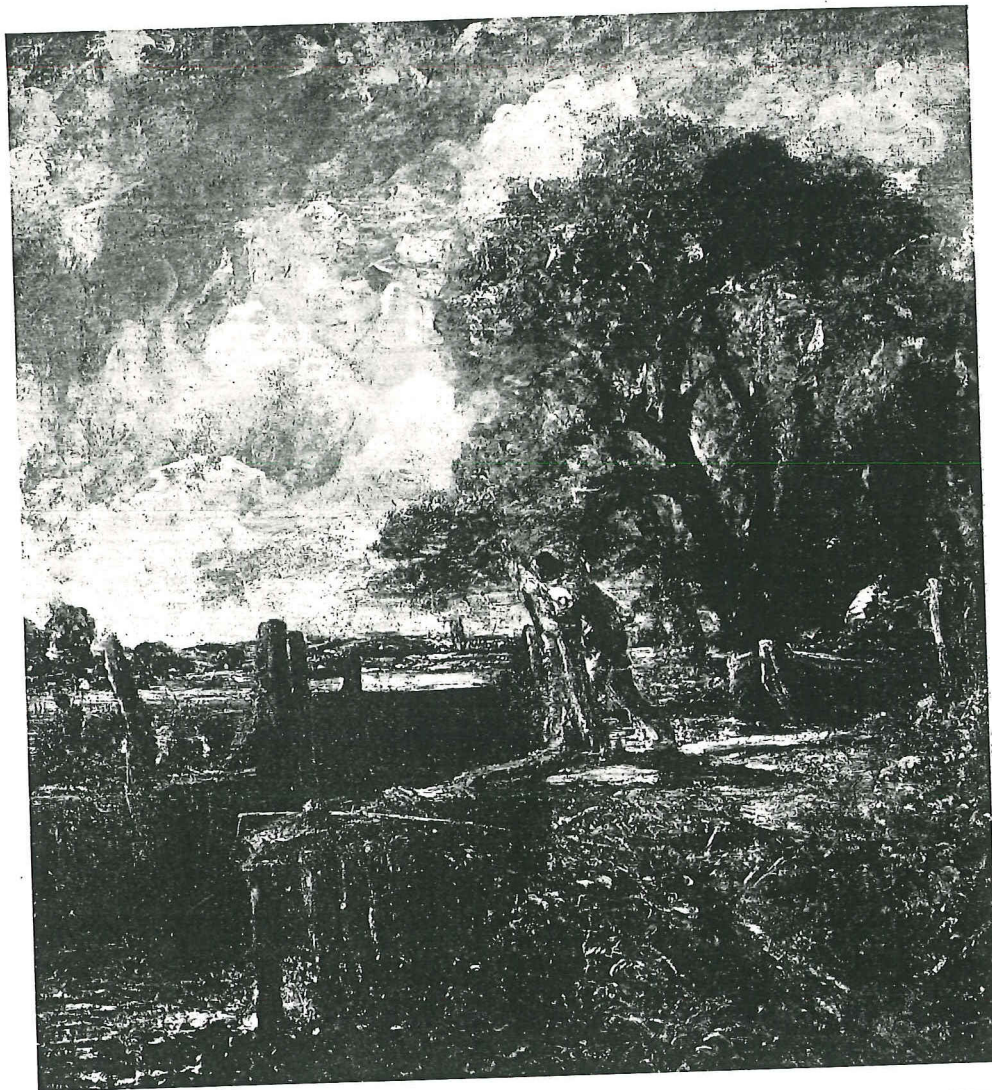
Also there has been acquired a group of Bartram family silver, most of it by Philadelphia makers, which belonged to the great botanist, John Bartram, who founded the first botanical garden in America in 1728.

PEWTER CHURCH PLATE

(Continued from page 123)

metal in its proper condition.

These flagons are referred to in Vol. XIV of the *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, under the heading 'Sussex Church Plate,' in a quotation from what is called *The Church Book*: '1628. Bought Two faire new pewter Flagons, fellows, with Cockfield engraved on them' (the actual word is 'Cockfeild'). By this is established the fact that the type to which they belong, usually referred to as the '1635 type,' appeared some seven years earlier, although by reason of two small details they might almost be classified as transitional between the 1610 and 1635 types; these details are (a) the very embryo flat seating to the cover knop, and (b) the unpierced thumbpiece. The earlier type had no knop seating and its thumbpiece was solid metal, whilst in the later type the seating had developed in width and



THE LOCK, DEDHAM : BY CONSTABLE : PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART : FROM THE MCFADDEN COLL.

the thumbpiece was pierced by a heart. The maker's touch is, as is usual in the 1635 type, struck upon the handle, but although both are quite free from corrosion, they have been so carelessly applied as to present a meaningless jumble of forms.

The joints between the cast bases and the rolled drums are concealed behind the topmost base mouldings and are very rough within. The lettering is poor, especially as regards those letters which are curved. These vessels each hold 5 pints.

The patens are outside my experience. They measure 6 in. across the bowls and 2½ in. in height, and resemble wide and squat cup salts. The stems are sealed in on the underside and are there inscribed 'Cockfield' in a circle, the 'field' being correctly spelt in this case. They are unmarked and difficult to date, but by reason of the lack of black patina, and the superior lettering, one would suggest a much later date than that of the flagons. No record of their purchase appears to exist.

Note.—Since completing this article I have traced another case where the word 'flagon' is engraved. This is, or was, at Lancing Church in Sussex, where the vessel bears the forthright inscription: 'This is Lanfing Church Flagon bought by John Campion, Churchwarden.'