

EBT

WILLIAM EDEN, MASTER-PEWTERER

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

DURING the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries, craftsmanship in England was at a very high level. In all trades men were working whose names to-day are so well known as to be almost household words. To mention a single craft only, that of the silversmiths, there can be few among those who admire fine workmanship to whom such names as Paul de Lamerie, Anthony Nelme or Pierre Platel are not familiar; and the same may be said of nearly all the crafts, such as, for instance, the clock-makers, amongst whom the names of Tompion, Quare and Knibb stand out predominantly. I believe, however, that up to the present no single pewterer has ever achieved posthumous recognition, even among collectors of the metal. The craft of the pewterer was set in a relatively humble sphere, and his wares were designed, and were appreciated in his own times, more from the utilitarian than the artistic point of view; and in comparing the metals, broadly speaking it might be said that Silver was chiefly beautiful and generally useful; Pewter was predominantly useful, but its



No. I.—WM. EDEN'S
'TOUCH': HOUR-
GLASS AND W.E.

innate beauty was unrecognized till the scope for its use had long departed.

Yet old Pewter, especially that of the Seventeenth Century, has a great beauty and charm of its own, as the increasing numbers of its devotees proclaim; the manufacture of it was certainly one of the most important of our

trades, and was strictly controlled by Guilds of which the Worshipful Company of Pewterers of London was the chief, so that nothing but the best was considered good enough. No apology is therefore necessary for selecting one of the leading exponents of the pewterers' craft as a worthy subject for such an article as this.

Our choice, however, is limited, for although the records of the principal English Guilds go back to the Fifteenth Century, and in the case of London, to the Fourteenth, English Pewter of pre-seventeenth-century date is practically non-existent. As has been indicated, little artistic value was set upon Pewter, and when dishes, platters, tankards, flagons and the like were too worn to be of further service, they were either thrown away, or handed over, possibly in part exchange for new wares, and melted down for recasting.

Actually, however, we are still more circumscribed in our choice, as, although a comparatively large amount of pewter dating from the first half of the Seventeenth Century exists, most of it consists of church flagons, which, by reason of their sacred connexion and the lighter wear and tear to which they were subjected, escaped the destruction which overtook the house-



No. II.—COMMUNION 'FLAGON': BY PERMISSION OF THE VICAR OF KINGSTON LISLE, BERKS BETWEEN TWO TRENCHER SALTS, DATED 1693, IN THE COLLECTION OF G. J. GOLLIN, ESQ



No. III.—A PAIR OF FLAGONS IN THE 'SCOTTISH' STYLE BY WILLIAM EDEN HT. 13 IN. TO THE LID : COLLECTION OF THE LATE MR. WALTER CHURCHER

hold wares. Moreover, most of the earliest of these flagons, which may be dated at *c.* 1600–1630, were for some reason unmarked, whilst those which immediately followed them bear the early type of touch in which the maker's initials only occur, with or without a device. As far as London is concerned, no record of these touches exists, all records having been destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666; whilst in the provincial pewter-making centres of England, no records have come down to us at all.

It is wellnigh impossible, therefore, to make choice of a subject from among the pewterers of the first half of the Seventeenth Century, through lack both of knowledge as to their names and of variety in their products. During the second half of the century, however, the pewterers' craft may be said to have reached its zenith, both as regards output and design; pewter ware of every sort, ecclesiastical and household, has come down to us, and from

now onwards it becomes increasingly possible to allocate makers' names to the various pieces. From amongst the leading craftsmen of this period I have selected a pewterer who was working continuously from the reign of Charles II to that of George II, not only for the reason that his business was obviously a large one, but chiefly because I consider that his work represents all that is best in the sturdy and utilitarian design of his times.

William Eden, or Eddon as it was sometimes spelled, was the son of a Warwickshire yeoman, and was born at Brailes in that county. On March 22nd, 1682, he was bound apprentice to Peter Duffield, a London pewterer, obviously of considerable standing in

the Pewterers' Company, since he was twice its Master (1672 and 1688). Eden's apprenticeship was for a term of eight years, but at the end of the seventh he was, on March 20th, 1689, made a freeman of the Company. Subsequently he appears to have continued to work



No. IV.—FLAGON IN 'SCOTTISH' STYLE (HEIGHT 8½ IN.) AND PAIR OF TWO-HANDLED CUPS CIRCA 1720 : IN THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION : THE CHARGER BEHIND IS NOT BY EDEN



No. V.—A PAIR OF COMMUNION CUPS OR CHALICES MADE BY EDEN FOR THE PARISH CHURCH OF GARVOCK IN KINCARDINESHIRE, SCOTLAND

for his master till, on February 21st, 1690, he was granted permission to set up for himself as a Master-pewterer. On that occasion he duly attended at Pewterers' Hall (which had been rebuilt) and struck his Touch, well known to collectors, of the Hour-glass with his initials *W.E.* (No. i) upon the second of the five Touch plates, the first of which dates back to the year immediately following the Great Fire, and all of which remain among the most cherished possessions of the Company to-day. If evidence be required as to the importance and magnitude of Eden's business, it is to be seen in the standing which he acquired amongst his fellow freemen and in the obvious respect in which he was held, as shown in the records of his further career in the Company.

Called to the Livery on March 9th, 1697, he subsequently held every office in turn, being elected Steward in 1704; Renter Warden 1721; Upper Warden 1729, and, finally, Master of the Company in 1732. Nor was this all, for six years later, on June 2nd, 1738, he was brought back to the Master's Chair to complete the term of office of Robert Jupe who had died during his tenure of the post. It was during Eden's first mastership that we begin to see indications of the gradual decay of the craft, as evidenced by the failing control of the Company. For some time, owing to the increasing inroads of other materials, the pewterers' trade had shown signs of falling off, and the amount of work available did not suffice to go round. This state of affairs gradually led up to the inevitable reaction against rules and regulations which had hitherto been rigidly en-

forced. One of the methods by which the Company controlled the trade was that of systematic searches for faulty wares, carried out in the market towns of England; and under date June 21st, 1732/3, the following minute of the proceedings of the Court of the Company appears:—

'The question being put that the Quarter Search immediately preceding the Election of Master and Wardens be omitted for the future, . . . it passed in the affirmative.'

To judge by the samples of his work which remain to-day, Eden appears to have been essentially a 'hollow-ware' man, that is to say, that he specialized in flagons, tankards and cups, and in a fairly long experience I have seen only one plate bearing his Touch. It is a matter of some interest, too, in relation to his business, that he was one of the few London pewterers who are known to have established Scottish connexions. In view of the fact that many excellent craftsmen were working in the principal Scottish cities at this time, it is somewhat remarkable that Scottish orders should have been placed so far afield as London. In this connexion it is also of interest to note that although as regards tankards Eden followed the usual English designs, as shown in the illustrations (Nos. ii, vi and ix), yet every one of his flagons, so far as is known, was designed in the severely plain style which has always been regarded as typically Scottish. At the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, English pewterers had broken away from the somewhat standardized forms of flagon of the preceding periods, and were to a large extent evolving individual designs, and it would have been equally open to Eden, at least in the later years of his career, to have done the same. Moreover, another famous English pewterer, Jonas Durand, a contemporary of Eden's, had made a fine flagon for Old St. Paul's Church, Edinburgh, of which the design was entirely his own creation, and has no affinity to the traditional Scottish flagon

whatever. Nevertheless, it would appear that Eden remained faithful to the Scottish type throughout the whole of his career.

As far as I am at present aware, only one of Eden's flagons can be definitely allocated to a Scottish church. Many, and, indeed, perhaps the great majority, of the later flagons of this type, made by Scottish pewterers such as Archibald Inglis of Edinburgh or Stephen Maxwell of Glasgow, bear inscriptions, some of considerable length, giving the name of the church, the minister and the date of presentation or purchase. The single example of an inscribed flagon by Eden which has come to my notice, bears the words *Belonging to the Associate (sic) Congregation Edr., A.D. 1742* (Edr standing for Edinburgh). This, besides affording further direct evidence of Eden's associations with Scotland, gives us the additional information that he was probably still at work in 1742, no less than fifty-three years after obtaining his Freedom and sixty after becoming an apprentice; truly a long working life. It is of course not impossible that the inscription is later than the date of actual purchase or gift. Although it may well be that the majority of Eden's flagons were indeed made for use in Scotland, nevertheless, they were not confined to that country, as is proved by the fact that one of them is still preserved in the church of Saint Mary at Aldeby, in the Diocese of Norwich.

Although large flagons are usually described, in sale catalogues and elsewhere, as church flagons, there is no reason, apart, of course, from inscriptions, why they should not have been made for secular use also, and there is evidence that in certain instances such was the case. In view of the prevalence of inscriptions on Scottish church flagons, it is quite likely that many of those which are not inscribed were made for other purposes; and it is probable that in this plain unadorned type of flagon, Eden saw something at once adapted for either ecclesiastical or secular use and also entirely in keeping with his own views on the design of pewter vessels, views which obviously influenced him throughout his career and which may be summed up as the fitness and suitability of the article for its use, good looks and good taste being achieved by

good proportions rather than by extraneous decoration, either constructional or applied.

To turn to the illustrations: No. ii shows a plain flat-lidded vessel of secular tankard type; actually, however, it is a Communion flagon—for the word tankard seems out of place in such connexion. It is illustrated here by kind permission of the Vicar of Kingston Lisle in Berkshire, for which church it was made. This is evidently one of Eden's earlier works by reason of the type of lid, which, though standing up well above its rim and showing a slightly convex outline, thereby differing from the low and completely flat lids which preceded it, has not yet passed into the domed style of Queen Anne and the subsequent periods. Perhaps the most attractive feature in the design of this piece is the entasis or bulge given to the drum; comparatively few tankards possess it, and it died out almost completely at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century; but where it does appear, it lifts the whole design out of the ordinary run of plain cylindrical drums. The handle and thumbpiece are as plain as could well be, the former being joined straight to the drum at the upper end without the 'swan neck' which would appear to have been more



No. VI.—ONE OF WILLIAM EDEN'S LATER TANKARDS: MADE FOR ECCLESIASTICAL USE THE OVERALL HEIGHT IS 7 INCHES

commonly used by pewterers than by silver-smiths, and the omission of which, in this instance, is, to my mind, the only feature, or lack of it, which detracts from an otherwise faultless design. The serrated projection at the front of the lip, which was a feature of this type of tankard, and which frequently assumed very ornate outlines, is also severely simple; but the general lines of the piece, with the one exception to which I have referred, are most pleasing and satisfying. The measurements of the tankard or flagon are: height to lip, $6\frac{1}{8}$ in.; to lid, 7 in.; diameter of base, $5\frac{1}{2}$ in.

The trencher salts on either side of it are dated 1693, and there is little to say about them other than that they are eminently suited to their use; they are in the collection of Mr. G. J. Gollin, M.A., of London. No. iii illustrates a pair of the 'Scottish' flagons already referred to. They are of massive proportions, measuring 13 in. to the lid, and were in the collection of the late Mr. Walter Churcher, who was one of the first collectors of pewter. A similar flagon, but only $8\frac{1}{2}$ in. in height, appears in No. iv, and with it is a pair of fine sturdy two-handled cups; these three latter examples are in my own collection, and all five may be dated *c.* 1720. The broad-rimmed charger behind is not by Eden.

Somewhat similar in design to the cups are the Communion cups or chalices shown in No. v. These were made for the Parish Church of Garvock in Kincardineshire, and were described in *THE CONNOISSEUR*, October 1934, at which time they were being restored for the church by the Society of Pewter Collectors, one appearing before, and the other after, restoration. They are of unusual size, being $9\frac{7}{8}$ in. in height as compared with the $6\frac{1}{4}$ in. of the handled cups in the preceding illustration.

One of Eden's later tankards is seen in No. vi; by this time the flat lid has been super-

seded by the full dome; the entasis has disappeared; the handle has become more massive, and the thumbpiece, hinge cover and handle finial, following the general practice, have become more ornate, though in this case not to such a degree as in many pieces of contemporary date. This piece, which has an overall height of 7 in., was also made for ecclesiastical use, as is shown by the inscription upon it, *Richard Cock, Church Warden, 1734* (No. vii), though it has been in various private collections for many years.

No. viii is an illustration of an unlidded tankard, or in this case, measure. This again is one of Eden's later pieces, and belongs approximately to the same period as do the two-handled cups; the similarity of the handles will be noted. This was the standard pint measure of Stanion, a village six miles north-east of Kettering in Northamptonshire; possibly it was one of a set of measures of different capacities, the remainder of which have disappeared. The 'Stanion Town Pinte' is the property of G. V. Charlton, Esq., F.L.A.S., to whom I am indebted for its illustration. Standard measures and weights were in common use in all parts of the country, but it is somewhat difficult to understand why this small hamlet, with a present-day population of some 300 souls, and possessing but one inn, should have required a standard measure, or measures, to itself.

For the reasons stated earlier, comparatively few liquid measures made of pewter have survived, probably the best known being those belonging to the city of Stirling, which are preserved in the Smith Institute there. The weights, being solid and made of copper, brass, or iron, suffered little damage in the passage of time, and were therefore not so readily discarded, and examples of them may be seen in many local museums.

It is of interest to compare the lettering of the inscription, bold and somewhat plebeian, with that shown in No. vii, which is of lighter type and better executed; the former seems to conjure up visions of mine host in the homely atmosphere of his tap room, gauging the content of his tankards against the



NO. VII.—INSCRIPTION 'RICHARD COCK, CHURCH WARDEN, 1734' ENGRAVED UPON THE ECCLESIASTICAL TANKARD BY WILLIAM EDEN ILLUSTRATED IN NO. VI



No. VIII.—THE 'STANION TOWN PINT': THE STANDARD PINT MEASURE OF THE VILLAGE OF STANION IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE : MADE BY EDEN : PROPERTY OF G. V. CHARLTON, ESQ

standard of Authority, whilst the latter, more austere, speaks of the religious life of the community. In addition to its inscription, the measure bears various marks, among them Eden's 'hall marks' (so called), very faint after years of cleaning, and excise marks of the reigns of William IV and Victoria, together with the stamped initials *S.M.*, which may be those of an excise officer or other authority. One wonders at the absence of Georgian excise marks, and altogether this little piece arouses interesting historical speculation. The outlines are unusual, showing a decided bulge immediately above the base and a slight concave beneath the lip, both indicative of transition from the straight-sided cylindrical style of Queen Anne period to the regular pear-shaped style of the Georges. This latter type appears in the last illustration (No. ix), for which I am indebted to its owner, Mr. Roland J. A. Shelley, F.R.Hist.Soc. It is of importance showing as it does that Eden, in his long career, ran through the whole gamut of English lidded tankard styles. Mr. Shelley has only recently acquired this piece, and owing to the urgency of the matter, kindly had it photographed before some necessary repairs had been carried out.

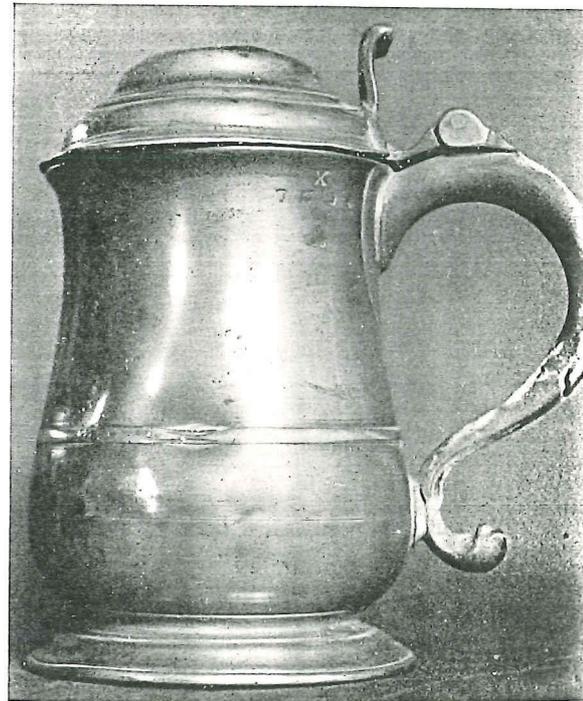
It is, perhaps, unfortunate that no details of a more personal nature concerning William Eden are known; when it is considered that he worked in the reigns of Charles II, James II, William and Mary, William III, Anne, George I and George II, it is impossible to

imagine that, as a leading craftsman in one of England's most important industries, he was entirely unaffected by the stirring events of his times, especially after he had assumed high office in an important Livery Company.

He had seen James II into exile; the final union of England and Scotland at the end of the House of Stuart and the success of the House of Hanover besides many other notable changes, which could

but have had some influence upon the Company to which he followed and the Company to which he belonged.

Nevertheless, we can only say of him throughout the changes and chances of working life, he, perhaps more than any other man, helped to make the work of the English pewterer respected throughout Europe.



No. IX.—A TANKARD BY EDEN IN THE PEAR-SHAPED GEORGIAN STYLE : IN THE COLLECTION OF ROLAND J. A. SHELLEY.