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THE FLOWING BOWL

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Each age produced, in form and design, its own things of beauty for the unchanging season of good cheer



SEVENTEENTH CENTURY VESSELS. *Left*: A pair of silver-mounted and pewter-lined blackjacks. *Centre*: A silver two-handed beer mug, of a type peculiar to Exeter College, Oxford. *Right*: One of the most finely proportioned pewter tankards of its kind in private hands.

SOON the owners of dwelling houses and taverns will be dusting the drinking vessels which are brought out each year for the Feast of Christmas. It is not important whether they are to contain home-made wine or the products of a famed vineyard. All that matters is that those who toast each other, whatever the occasion may be, are perpetuating an act that has been carried on for thousands of years.

Thanks to the largely unheralded work of the specialist antiquarian, knowledge of the domestic and ecclesiastical equipment of past ages becomes greater with each succeeding year. In 1952, the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem was able to resume field work in Palestine, which had been interrupted by the war. They were particularly active at Jericho, where there is evidence of settled occupation going back to at least 5000 B.C. Every digging of this nature has produced striking evidence not only of the type of equipment which was provided for the dead, but, at the same time, the kind of domestic utensils which were a contemporary feature of the home. The 1953 Jericho finds were no exception, and again included rows of drinking vessels and great skin-covered storage jars.

These finds are of undoubted interest and importance. Equally important are the discoveries which are periodically made in Britain, showing what drinking vessels the early inhabitants of these islands used—bronze, earthenware, stone, glass, silver, pewter, lead. The result is that we have a reasonably good idea of what types, for example, were used during the 460 years of the Roman occupation of Britain.

On the departure of the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons produced their own individual form of design for drinking vessels. This was simple in character, usually displaying a geometric design consisting of a number of irregular dots. Their vessels were by no means confined to earthenware. Some were elaborate flagons in gold and in glass, while others were the celebrated drinking horns, some with richly chased gold or silver-gilt bands, tips and feet. The early pieces of this period include the Pusey Horn, presented by King Canute to William Pusey, and the Horn of Ulphus, given by Ulphe, the son of Thorald, to the cathedral at York in 1006. Another of the earliest extant English drinking vessels is the beautifully executed carved oak Saxon Glastonbury Tankard.

As Plantagenet gave place to Lancastrian, and Lancastrian to Tudor, wooden mazer bowl, pewter tankard, leather blackjack, stately silver hanap and lordly golden grace cup each served its turn as the container from which men of goodwill drank to the well-being of their neighbours. The earliest example of blackjacks are perhaps 15th-century, and the earliest recorded representation of this uniquely English vessel is to be found in an early 14th-century misericord in Malvern Priory Church. The tankard form, as opposed to the bombard, is more general from the 17th century, which also saw the addition of silver rims and mountings as well as decorative features in the handles.

All types were made of two pieces of leather, and were constructed from sammed cattle hide shaped over

sectional moulds, stitched with heavy waxed hemp thread and dried until hard. Large bombards and modest tavern jacks were pitched inside, the more aristocratic tankard form of later times being lined with pewter. There are several examples also in existence, of 14th and 15th century drinking vessels in the form of the poulaine with upturned toe, sometimes carrying a small bell.

Among pewterers, the term hollow-ware means that part of their ware which includes flagons, tankards, measures, pots, mugs and beakers. One of the most finely proportioned pewter tankards of its kind in private hands is that owned by Mr. Reginald W. Cooper, F.S.A., of Nottingham. Its general form has everything desirable about it for study by the intending or established collector, particularly its cover, base and strut from the handle running down the body. The maker of it was R.S., circa 1670, and the cover and body are beautifully decorated with acorns, birds, leaves and portraits of William and Mary crowned with the royal cypher under.

Antique glass is another fascinating pursuit in the study of drinking vessels. Probably no period in the history of England has played a more academically interesting part in the production of historic glass than the 1715 and 1745 Jacobite risings. What had, until its acquisition by the Royal Scottish Museum, been an unrecorded Amen glass, has such connections.

The inscription on its foot suggests that it was made for a Cameron of Lochiel. And it was Donald, the Gentle Lochiel, who, early in 1745, initiated negotiations with James Stuart, the Old Chevalier, and who contributed 800 clansmen to a force which gathered at Glenfinnan under Charles' banner.

Another museum acquisition of a slightly different nature is the Selby Standing Cup, acquired three years ago by the Victoria and Albert Museum. This is in turned pearwood with subsequent mounts of chased silver, the finial with aviform bulb encircled by a zone engraved with lettering: *Remember Thy End, Repent and Amend*, 1620. It had been preserved since the marriage, in 1670, of William Mucklow of King's Areley Hall, Worcestershire, Citizen and Fishmonger of London, with Isabella Selby, eldest daughter and co-heir of Anthony Selby of London.

It is probably the most pleasant and absorbing pastime, for student and connoisseur alike, to consider a few of the internationally important silver drinking vessels with which England particularly abounds. It is fortunate that so many people have had the opportunity, during the last three years, of examining at the exhibitions held at the Goldsmiths' Hall, London, silver objects which they may never in their lives see again. Three pieces of particular beauty in the display of the historic plate of the City of London in 1951 were the gilt Wager-Cup, Vintners', circa 1680; the set of four Wine Cups, Leatherseller's, of 1640; and the Coconut Cup, Vintners', of 1518.

The 7in.-high Wager-Cup is in the form of a milk-maid, whose petticoat forms the cup. Above her head she holds a small cup, and, according to tradition, every Liveryman of the Vintners' Company was required to drink prosperity to the company from the larger vessel, and then the health of the Master from the smaller, without spilling the contents.

An outstanding piece seen at the Goldsmiths' Hall the following year was the gilt Standing Cup and Cover, City of Oxford, of 1665. The bowl, foot and cover are embossed with the royal badges and with flowers. It was given to the Mayor of Oxford by King Charles II as fee for serving in the office of "botely" at the coronation. A pair of Wine Cups of 1634, and salts of 1640, in the same exhibition were the gift to East Retford of Sir Gervase Clifton, a commissioner for King Charles I.

Finally, more fine examples were shown at the Goldsmiths' Hall this year. They included a cup from Merton College of 1661, one of the earliest Oxford college cups; the gilt cup and cover, 1515, from Corpus Christi, traditionally presented to Bishop Fox, the Founder, by Queen Catherine of Aragon; and the especially interesting Standing Cup and Cover, 1680, from New College, known as the Spanish Ambassador's Cup. It has always been thought to have been engraved with the arms of Don Francisco Chacon y Valenzuala, Knight of Calatrava, Count of Molina, Spanish Ambassador to the Court of King Charles II from 1665-1669. Later knowledge, however, has revealed that this cup was given by a second Spanish Ambassador, Pedro Ronquillo, and that the arms displayed are his.



THE SELBY STANDING CUP (*left*) records the marriage of William Mucklow in 1670. *Right*: A gilt standing cup and cover of 1665.