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TWOPENCE

Church Pewter.

In visiting the churches of the Archdeaconry I have found that most of the older churches have some pieces of pewter. In few cases was anything definite known about the pewter. Occasionally a date was engraved on it; but generally it is assumed that pewter is of little interest or value, nor is much care bestowed on its preservation or cleaning. I set out to discover something of the history of church pewter, and in particular the story of the pewter in our own churches. Pewter has a long history, for in 1175 a Synod of Westminster forbade the use of pewter for church purposes, and bishops were not to bless a pewter chalice.

During the next three centuries it was the custom for a pewter chalice to be buried with a priest. A specimen of such a chalice was excavated at Kirkoswald, and is now exhibited at the church. But there was no other purpose for which pewter was used in the church before the Reformation, and silver was the metal used for the

sacred vessels. During the Reformation, and in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, there was a widespread destruction of church plate. The old pre-reformation plate was frequently melted down, and by the end of the sixteenth century there was probably a shortage of church plate. One of the Canons of 1604 orders that the wine shall be brought to the communion table in a clean standing-pot or stoup of pewter, if not of precious metal; and for the next two centuries pewter was much used for church plate, and especially for flagons. But it must not be thought that pewter was just a cheap substitute for silver. The pewterer was a real craftsman and artist, and his productions were considered worthy of the highest uses, both ecclesiastical and secular.

The golden age of church pewter was during the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth centuries. There were Pewterers working during this period not only at London, but in many provincial centres. Each Pewterer had his official mark or "touch," which was stamped upon his work. Though one can classify pewter into certain definite types, each piece has its own character and distinction.

I had the good fortune to get into touch with Mr. H. H. Cotterell, who is the greatest living expert on Pewter, and he has placed his knowledge most generously at our disposal. I append a brief summary of some of the information which he has given us about the pewter of this diocese which has been submitted to him. This summary is most instructive, and much could be said about the information it presents. It also raises some interesting questions.

It will be seen that though flagons occupy the chief place on the list there is also a fair proportion of patens, alms dishes, and baptismal bowls. Incidentally, why were bowls substituted for fonts during the period 1725-40? There is also the remarkable two-handled Crosby Ravensworth cup, a valuable specimen of a rare type of pewter work. It is not possible to state definitely the maker of all the pewter pieces, but it would seem that during the seventeenth century all our pewter was obtained from London, Wigan, and York, with one exception, the fine Cliburn paten, which was made at Whitehaven. This piece, and possibly the Lanercost Alms Dish, which may have been made at Cockermouth, are the only instances of local pewter. In the eighteenth century we find pieces from Newcastle, and one from Liverpool. The more

modern pewter came from Birmingham. It is interesting to notice that we are rich in pewter of the best period. The pewter of the seventeenth century, sixteen pieces in all, is extremely valuable. But we have also a fine collection of pewter of the early eighteenth century, and very little from those years when the craft of pewtermaking was in its decline. Mr. Cotterell has also given us some idea of the value of our pewter. It varies considerably, from about £50 for the earliest pieces to £1 or so for the latest. But the total value of the pewter on this list is rather striking—well over £1,000—and it certainly suggests that our pewter is too valuable to be treated with neglect or disrespect.

If you wish to study our pewter in more detail there is a unique opportunity at present, for most of the pewter on this list is being displayed at the Exhibition in the Fraternity. There you can see the different designs of the various periods, the character of the pewter from the various centres, and the wonderful attention to detail in the best pieces. Each piece should be observed carefully. Look at its shape, the lid, the thumb-piece, the handle, the mouldings, the base, and, perhaps most of all, at the lovely effect of pewter when it is in good condition and properly cleaned. It must be a rare event for such a collection of church pewter to be shown.

One more comment should be made. About thirty-five parishes so far have availed themselves of the opportunity to learn about their pewter and have it put into proper order, and I think that all of them are pleased with the result. But there are still many parishes which have made no response to the offer that has been made, and it is much to be hoped that all incumbents and churchwardens who have so far taken little interest in their pewter will at once write to me, and allow me to suggest how they may proceed. Who knows what interesting and valuable pieces still lie hidden?

SUMMARY.

Flagons.

- Whitbeck, 1635, maker unknown, centre unknown.
- Cliburn, 1660, maker unknown, centre unknown.
- Great Orton, 1662, I.M., Wigan.
- Walton, 1665, James Green, Wigan.
- Dalston (2), 1675, John Harrison, (senr.), York.
- Millom (2), 1680, John Emes, London.
- Crosby Ravensworth (2), 1690, William Cookson, Wigan.

Cathedral (2), 1690, Francis Lucas, York.
 Ulpha, 1700, W.B., centre unknown.
 Appleby, Bongate (2), 1700, James Letherbarrow, Liverpool.
 Thwaites, 1705, John Hardman, Wigan.
 Barton, 1705, A.C., centre unknown.
 Westward, 1705, A.C., centre unknown.
 Kirkby Thore, 1705, A.C., centre unknown.
 Nether Denton, 1710, John Harrison, York.
 Lanercost, 1710, William Eddon, London.
 Irthington, 1710, William Eddon, London.
 Penrith (2), 1712, maker unknown, centre unknown.
 Staveley, 1715, W. Baldwin, Wigan.
 Wreay, 1720, William Eddon, London.
 Wigton, 1725, Wm. Atkinson, centre unknown.
 Camerton, 1730, William Eddon, London.
 Allonby, 1744, Samuel Ellis, London.
 Thursby, 1750, Robt. Sadler, Newcastle.
 S. Cuthbert's, Carlisle, 1810, maker unknown, centre unknown.
 Warwick, 1810, H.J., centre unknown.
 Mardale, 1811, James Yates, Birmingham.

Patens.

Kirkby Thore, 1660, maker unknown, centre unknown.
 Walton, 1690, William Cookson, Wigan.
 Crosby Ravensworth, 1710, Christopher Baldwin, Wigan.
 Whitbeck, 1710, Christopher Baldwin, Wigan.
 Irthington, 1710, J. Hardman, Wigan.
 Great Orton, 1725, Thos. Cartwright, London.
 Ousby, 1750, Robert Sadler, Newcastle.
 Mardale, 1811, William Hogg, Newcastle.

Footed Patens.

Cliburn, 1690, Thos. Forde, Whitehaven.
 Crosby-on-Eden, 1705, Christopher Baldwin, Wigan.
 Nether Denton, 1710, Hardman, Wigan.
 Camerton, 1720, Spackman & Grant, London.
 Coniston, 1720, J. Brown, Wigan?
 Mardale, 1811, James Yates, Birmingham.

Baptismal Bowls.

Wigton, 1725, maker unknown, centre unknown.
 Camerton, 1730, maker unknown, centre unknown.
 Cliburn, 1740, Henry Salkeld, Newcastle.

Alms Dishes.

Lanercost, 1710, Thomas Grove, Cocker-mouth?
 Penrith, 1712, maker unknown, centre unknown.
 Thursby, 1750, Robert Sadler, Newcastle.
 Beckermeth, 1800, Yates, Birch, & Spooner, Birmingham.

Cups.

Crosby Ravensworth, 1695, George Ford, Wigan?
 Wreay, date unknown, maker unknown, probably foreign.

D. F. CAMPBELL.