







Fig. 1—A two-eared porringer from the Yeates collection, showing relief-cast work in "Edelzinn"-style Pewter. Probably made by Henry Smith of London, 1724

## DECORATION on OLD ENGLISH PEWTER

*The restraint which early English pewterers showed in decorating their wares was not solely artistic—it was due in part to the stringent regulations of the London Pewterer's Company. There were no English schools of decoration as on the Continent, but there are certain decorative principles found in English pewter which were employed to good, though not frequent, effect.*

By **HOWARD HERSCHEL COTTERELL, F.R.Hist. Soc.**

*A Founder and Past President of the Society of Pewter Collectors*

**B**ROADLY speaking, the early pewterers of this country avoided anything in the form of added decoration to their wares, relying solely upon such mouldings and incised lines as seemed necessary to give strength or to relieve slightly the monotony of too ample a display of plain surface.

A very different state of affairs obtained on the continent of Europe, however, where distinct schools grew up whose whole energies were devoted to the production of highly decorated wares. Such pieces as they produced were never intended for general utility; their purpose was entirely decorative. They were made for show and are known on the Continent as "Show" pewter. France, Germany and Switzerland were the chief centres, but this is not the place to go further into that matter which I am dealing with elsewhere, and this general reference is made merely to enforce the contrast.

The London Pewterers' Company—the titular head of all pewter-making in England—laid down such stringent regulations governing the

sizes, weights, methods of manufacture, etc., of various vessels, that any departure from them brought immediate punishment upon the offender's head. From this it will be gathered that anything in the way of an independent school of thought was impossible, and any attempt to get away from the Company's standards was doomed to failure.

The chief methods of decorating Continental pewter were relief-casting, repoussé, punched-work and engraving, the first and the last being the most popular.

In this country, however, the only one which attained to any importance was engraving, and even this was used but sparingly. Relief-casting is confined within very narrow limits and repoussé and punched work are more or less non-existent. The more one reflects on the enormous output of relief work, even from Nuremberg alone, the more one marvels that the pewterers of this country were so little affected by it. Probably two of the most important examples of English relief-cast work are the well-known



Fig. 2—A small cup from the Yeates collection bearing the touch of William Hux of London, c.1710



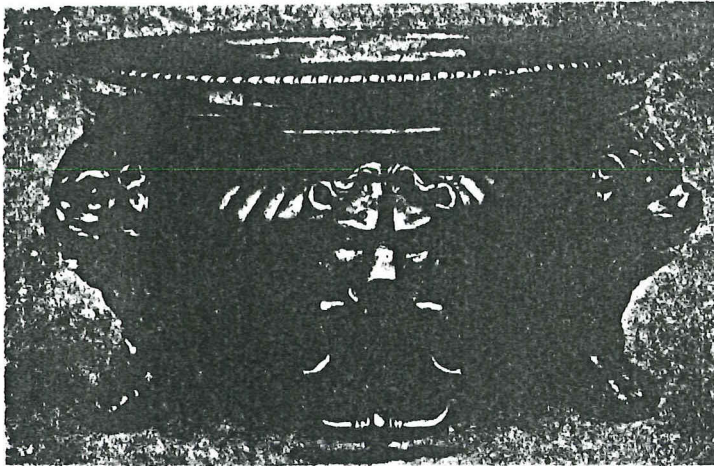


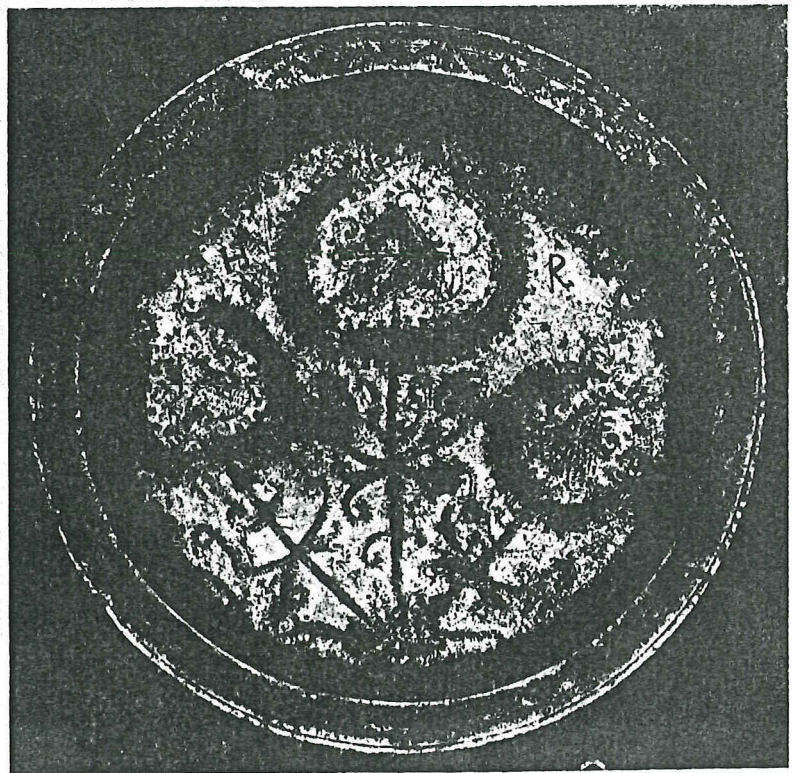
Fig. 3 (left)—A massive wine-cooler (24 ins. long) from the Navarro collection, which is a good example of high-relief casting with repousse and beading. It bears the touch of Jonas Durand and the date 1699

Fig. 5 (below)—An English mid-seventeenth century plate, 8½ ins. diam., from the Clapper-ton collection. The delicacy of its engraving resembles the needle work of the period

two-eared porringers in the Yeates collection. Obviously, these pieces subscribe in every way to the term *Edelzinn* (Aristocratic pewter; *i.e.*, not for use); even the insides of the bowls are decorated with low-relief devices, rendering them totally unfitted for a practical purpose. See Fig. 1, probably made by Henry Smith of London, 1724Y.

In this same class must be included the bands of *Fleurs-de-Lys* or grape-vine decoration, which are applied to the base-collars of certain types of late 17th century candlesticks and to certain *Pied-de-Biche* type spoons of the same period. Not quite within the same designation are the mugs, tankards and two-handled cups in the Navarro, Yeates and other collections, and the type of which will be best appreciated by a study of the charming little handled cup shown in Fig. II., from the latter collection, and which bears the touch of William Hux, of London, c1710.

A fine instance of high-relief casting in combination with slight repoussé and beading, is seen in the end view of Mr. de Navarro's massive wine-cooler, some 24in. long, Fig. III. This wonderful piece is struck with the touch of Jonas Durand, of London, which bears the date 1699, though the mark was used, with this same date, by Jonas senior and junior until past the middle of the 18th century. But such pieces as these must be regarded as the exceptions which confirm the rule,



for they tend to prove how limited was the use of relief ornament in England.

It was in collaboration with the engraver that the English pewterer came nearest to establishing an individual style, though this manner of decoration was so universally practised that no particular nation may claim copyright in it.

There is a difference between English engraving





Fig. 4--The wriggle-work is a feature of the decoration on this fine late Stuart tankard from the Hunter collection. The acorn, rose and crowned lion designs are all typically English.

and that of all other countries, however—a difference in the manner of treatment and in the subjects chosen. Where on a continental piece would one expect to find our typical acorn, crowned lion, tulip and bird, as depicted on the fine late Stuart tankard shown in Fig. 4, from the Hunter collection, the lid of which is covered with our characteristic rose? The accentuated and clearly executed wriggled-work on this piece is worthy of special note. Another very beautiful and typically English piece, so delicate in the manner of its handling that it resembles the needlework of its period, is the fine little narrow-rimmed plate, Fig. 5, some 8½ in. in diameter, from the Clapperton collection. It is of mid-17th century workmanship.

In my concluding picture, Fig. 6 is depicted one of the finest Stuart chargers which have come down to our time. It is interesting in its every particular; the splendidly conceived and executed Arms of Charles II in the centre, with Garter, motto, helm, crown, crest, mantling and supporters; the Royal initials "C.R." flanking the crest; the well-planned and spaced foliated decoration which adorns the rim, with its quaint little picture of a bowman at the top. These with the master's "silver-marks" adorn its face, while on the back is struck one of the earliest touches on the existing London Touchplates (No. 13 on the first touch plate), that of Nicholas Hunton, which bears the date 1662. Apart from all this, its size—it is 2ft. 2½ in. in diameter—is most impressive.



## Magnificent Stuart Charger in Pewter



Fig. 6—A superb Stuart charger, struck on the back with one of the earliest touches on the existing London Touchplates—that of Nicholas Hunton, with the date 1662. It measures 2 ft. 2½ ins. in diameter and is from the Navarro collection.

It was my privilege to "discover" this fine piece and to ensure its remaining in this country by bringing it to the notice of Mr. de Navarro, its present proud possessor. These then, represent the decorative principles permitted to the English pewterer, and even of these the best is very far from general. The innate love

for plainness was such that it was proof against the lure of all side issues, and though to-day one can admire a finely engraved plate or tankard, it is the plainer pieces which hold our greatest affection and which have won for English pewter the high place it has occupied throughout the ages.