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A GOLD CHARLES II POCKET CUTLERY SET AND THREE GOLD TRIFID SPOONS

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August, 1949.
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IN Tudor and Stuart times, kings, nobles and the wealthy, when travelling, carried their own table cutlery in small portable cases, guests even taking their own when invited to a feast. Queen Elizabeth, for example, on her Progresses, carried on her person a gold "foulden sponne" (folding spoon) and Bonnie Prince Charlie, during his five months' wanderings after the Battle of Culloden, had with him an engraved two-piece silver trifid spoon in a black shagreen case.

I am able to give the first pictures and description of a charming little gold Charles II pocket travelling set of cutlery, the property of a private collector, which has come to light and is of exceptional interest as it is believed to be the only gold one of its kind surviving.

The set is illustrated in Fig. I and the caption describes the pieces.

All seven items fit snugly into a slotted and recessed black shagreen case, enriched with geometric gold pellet decoration, intended to be carried in the pocket. Both set and case are in remarkably good preservation.

The fork bears on one shoulder the almost microscopic mark TE conjoined. There are apparently no other marks on the set.

The case and contents date from circa 1670.

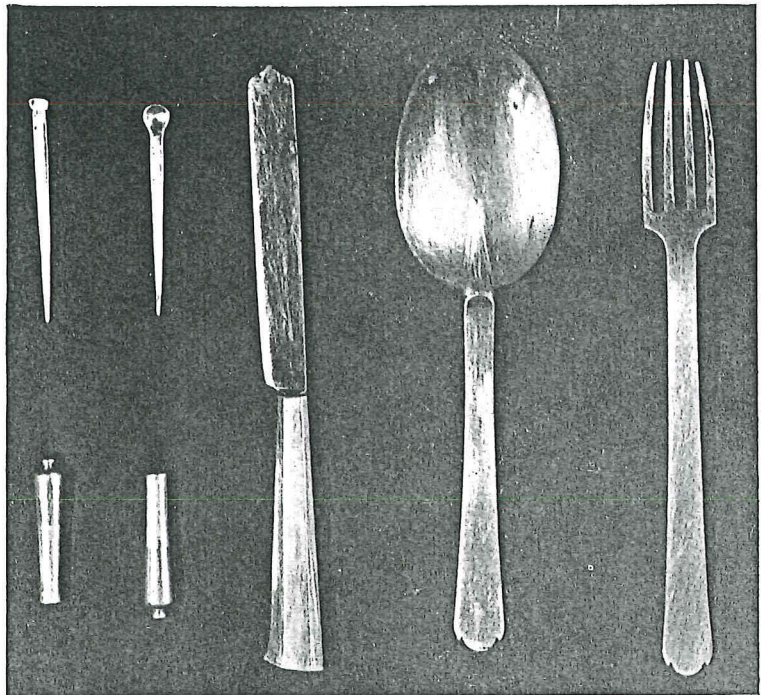


Fig. I. Gold spoon with trifid top and rat-tail bowl, 4 3/4 in. long. Gold trifid-top four-pronged fork, 4 3/4 in. Gold slipped-in-the-stalk knife with steel blade terminating in a Gothic arch, 4 3/4 in. Gold toothpick, 1 3/4 in. Gold so-called earpick, 1 1/2 in. Two gold hollow cylinders, or mounts (? quill-holders) with finial tops, 1 in.

Fig. II (below). Gold trifid spoon, with full London marks for 1681. Maker's mark, RB in shield, cinquefoil below.

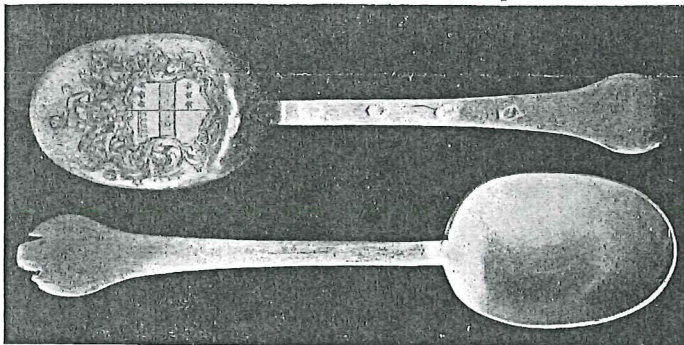
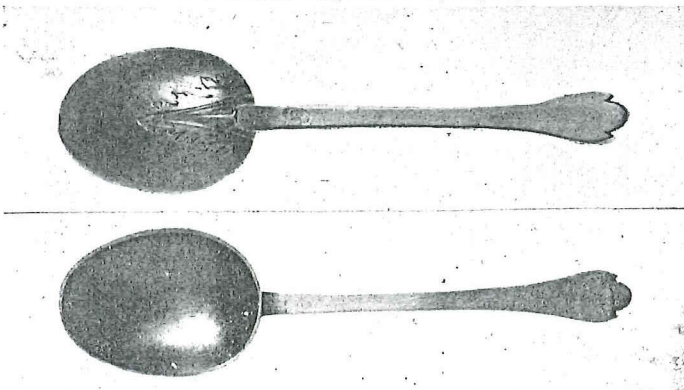


Fig. III (below). Gold trifid spoon, c. 1690. Mark IP, rose below in heart-shaped shield (Bruford).



The total weight of the gold is approximately 2 oz. 5 dwt.

A number of "spones of gold" is recorded in Henry VIII's Jewel-Book; there are also references to them in ancient wills, in inventories and other documents, e.g.:

1296. ix coclear' auri . . . (Wardrobe Accounts 24 Edw. I).

1300. 7 coclear' auri . . . (Wardrobe Accounts 28 Edw. I).

1527. a sponne of golde with a rose and pomegranat . . . (Inventory of Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond). [Camden Society Trans.]

Until about fifteen years ago no early English gold spoon was known to be in existence. In July, 1935, however, a Charles II gold trifid spoon, with full London marks for 1681, caused a mild sensation when put up to auction at Sotheby's and acquired by Crichton. This spoon bore the maker's mark RB in shield, cinquefoil below. It was 5 3/4 in. long and weighed 1 oz. 4 dwt. 18 gr. As will be seen from the illustration (Fig. II), the bowl bore no rat-tail but, instead, the small pointed tongue which was characteristic of the English silver spoon from the early days of the XVth century and before right up to about the 1660's. This reversion to the ancient tongue is often noticed on James II trifids. The back of the bowl of this spoon was finely engraved with armorials. The sale catalogue, in describing it, stated:

"The discovery of an early English spoon in wrought gold is a matter of great interest . . . hitherto no single example has been known to have survived."

Another gold trifid spoon, 4 1/4 in. long, the rat-tail bordered with engraved leaf ornament, was acquired by Brufords of Exeter recently. It was ascribed to circa 1690 and was struck once on the back of the stem with the mark IP, rose below, in a heart-shaped shield. The same mark appears as the maker's mark of John Phillips of Dublin on a communion flagon of 1680-1 in Jackson's *English Goldsmiths and Their Marks*. The spoon is shown in Fig. III.