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# THE ENGLISH SILVER SPOON

BY MRS. WILLOUGHBY HODGSON, F.R.S.A.

*Apollo Oct: 1943*

THE first spoon illustrated, which may be seen in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, came from the grave of a woman, Tumulus No. 2, at Chatham Links, Kent, excavated and published by the Rev. James Douglas, F.S.A., in 1793. It is of silver, with perforated bowl, the handle being set with garnets in projecting sockets; such a description indicates that there was a demand in those early days for things of luxury and beauty.

The word "spoon" comes from the Anglo-Saxon *Spon*, a chip, which would seem to indicate that this article was at first made of wood. Very few specimens in metal of early date can be found outside our Museums, but the subject has many persuasive fascinations, the history of its form and substance being subjects calling to mind the life, habits, and something of the atmosphere of bygone days.

It would seem that in one form or another it came into use as soon as the inhabitants of these islands had acquired the habit of eating pottage, or whatever was their staple food, with decency. Shell, bone, horn, wood and ivory were employed for the bowl, but rock crystal, ivory, serpentine rock, gold and silver were used for those made for kings and nobles in the Middle Ages.

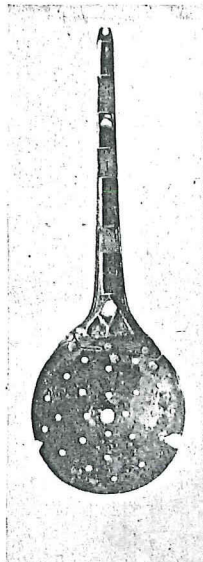
During the XIVth century the metal worker not only used brass and pewter but produced a new amalgam called "Latten," which seems to have been good and serviceable. In that interesting old work, "Hone's Everyday Book," a delightful little episode between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson is recorded. Shakespeare would seem to have stood sponsor to one of Jonson's children. At the christening, however, he looked melancholy and dejected, and being asked the reason by the child's father, replied:

"Ben, I have been considering a great while what should be the fittest gift for me to bestow upon my godchild, and I have resolved it at last."

"Prithce what?" said Jonson.

"I'faith, Ben," answered Shakespeare, "I'll give him a dozen good latten spoons, and thou shalt translate them."

From this same source, "Hone's Everyday Book," another little glimpse is given us of the use of the spoon and of the conditions of tenure by the people of certain Yorkshire boroughs, of their right to graze their cattle on Hutton Conyers Common. On New Year's Day the lord of the Manor held court, every shepherd being required to attend and do fealty, bringing with him a twopenny sweet cake and a wooden spoon. The Bailiff

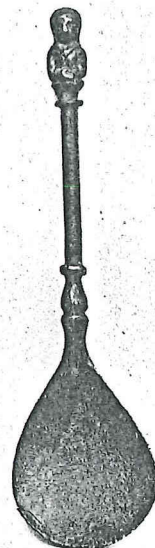


SILVER  
PERFORATED  
Set with garnets

*Ashmolean Museum*

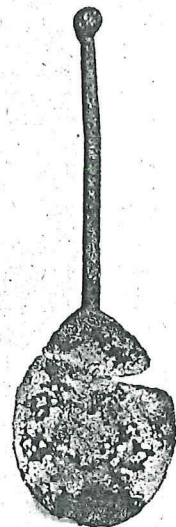


PEWTER, c. 1500.  
Dyamond Poynt



LATTEN, XV-  
XVIth Century.  
Monk's head

*British Museum*



PEWTER, c.  
1430  
Wrythen Knop

to the Manor supplied frumenty, cheese and mustard. The frumenty in an earthenware pot was placed in a hole in the ground, each shepherd being required to eat a portion with his spoon as a proof of loyalty. If he had neglected to bring his spoon he had "Lying on his belly to sup out of the pot," the bystanders amusing themselves meanwhile by dipping his face right into the frumenty.

Anyone collecting old spoons should study ancient documents and inventories such as those of the Court of Hustings, which may be seen in the British Museum, and which give much valuable information as to weight, marks and values. From these old documents one learns that the Plantagenet spoon was lighter in weight than those of the Tudors, and the Leopard's Head, the London Hall Mark of 1478 is frequently mentioned. We may also gather from the accounts of several bequests that spoons with gilt "Akers" (acorns) as a terminal to the stem were either in silver or silver gilt and were much valued.

The "Dyamond poynt" seems to have been the next ornament used on the stem which was generally sexagonal, the gilded terminal being cut with facets like a brilliant.

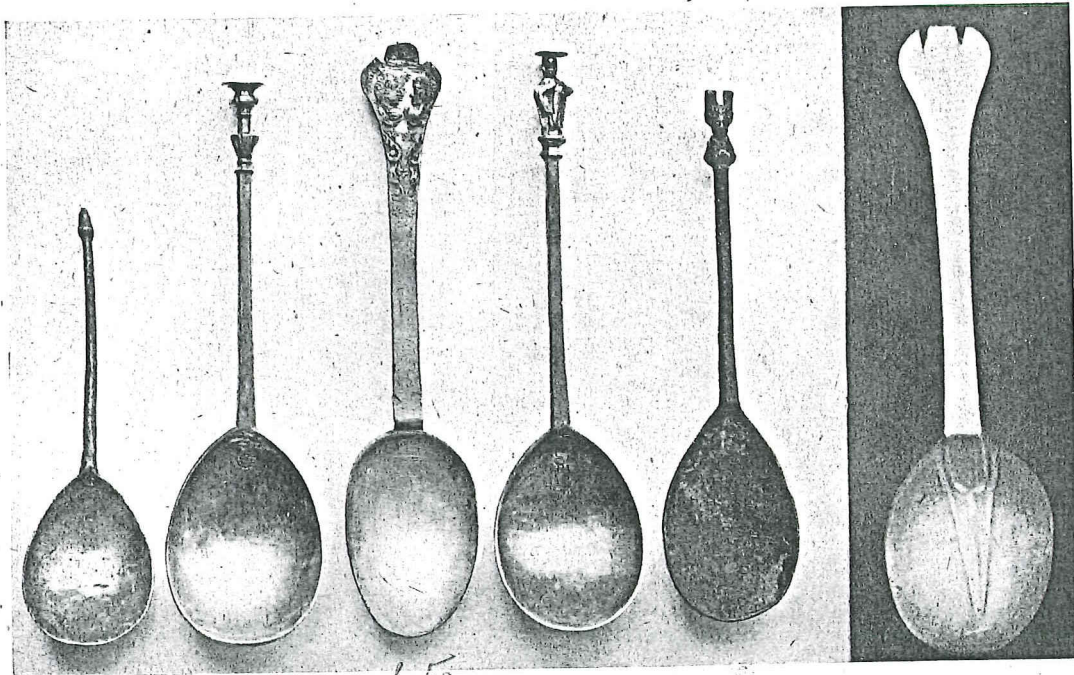
The bust of the Virgin Mary as a terminal dates from the XIVth century and was used till the reign of Queen Elizabeth. These busts were called "Maiden Heads" and their approximate age may be judged by the shape of the head-dress which, of course, varied, the oldest representing the horned head-dress of the XIVth century. Upon a "Maidenhead" spoon in the British Museum of about the year 1545 may be seen a half-length female

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figure, and another example is ornamented with a female bust with arms on one side and the legs and feet bent backward and visible only on the reverse side of the spoon. The spoon with the "rhythen" knop is now very rare, the word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *writhe* (to twist), the device being found as a terminal on a hexagonal stem. (See first illustration, fourth spoon.)

The highly prized Apostle spoon was first made in the early days of the XVth century, each terminal representing one of the Apostles, who may be identified by the symbol he holds. St. Peter, of course, holds a key, sometimes two; St. John a cup; and St. Andrew a cross in saltire. A whole set comprised thirteen and is seldom met with in these days, though recently a set was sold in London. Single specimens are now very costly.

broad oval, the round, square or hexagonal handle being replaced by a flat stem widening out at the top, where it was divided into three curved sections. This style was known as the *ped de biche*, the foot of the hind or roe which it was supposed to resemble. At the other end the stem was continued down the back of the bowl which gave strength to the spoon and was spoken of as "rat-tailed." Sometimes the stem stopped at the bowl, where it was ornamented with arabesques and engraving. The writer has a very fine large "rat-tailed" spoon dated 1713, which belonged to a member of the De La Pole family and which he left her in his will. It seems that this specimen which they called and used as the "porridge spoon," was one of a large set of spoons and forks of the same pattern; their owner and his wife, however,



Acorn head

Seal head

Pied de biche ;  
front

An Apostle

A Maidenhead

Pied de biche, back,  
showing rat-tail  
stem continuation

British Museum

Courtesy of Mrs. Walters

All early spoons were designed with fig-shaped bowls which were widest at the end and became narrow as they approached the stem, and the terminals, known as "knops" were varied.

During the XVIth century Chinese porcelain was making its appearance in increasing quantities in this country, and there is little doubt that its decoration influenced the taste of the silversmith who was employed in mounting the lovely Ming blue and white porcelain and the Céladon in elaborately chased silver and silver gilt, the result being that Chinese dragons and other grotesques were employed as pattern for the "knops." Some spoons which bear the mark of a Plymouth silversmith—a saltire between four castles within a ring of pellets, the Borough Seal in 1595, are ornamented with knops of Chinese form.

In 1660 a change both in the bowl and handle took place. The fig shape was exchanged for one of rather

thought they were "old-fashioned," so took them to a silversmith in a neighbouring town, who exchanged them for the same weight in modern silver!

A little spoon which has been the subject of controversy, has a narrow pierced bowl and a thin round stem spiked at the end. It has been variously described as a teaspoon to be used as a strainer when the tea was poured into the cup, the spiked handle being designed to clear the spout, and an olive spoon.

The late Mr. Robert Drane, who had a very fine collection of old silver, once asked me if I had any theory about these so-called "teaspoons" of which he possessed a quantity. When I replied in the negative, he said he believed they were intended to be used in the making of punch, the bowl to extract the lemon pips and the sharp end to pierce and draw out the peel before serving. He also pointed out that a straight stem would

(Continued overleaf)

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# SOME LONDON PEWTERERS *By the late E. ALFRED JONES*

THE following list of names is a continuation of the list which appeared on page 79 of the issue of March, 1943. The list is compiled from various sources, and about exhausts the possibility of further addition, so far as is at present known.

- Henry Ayres, St. Alban's, Wood Street, 1657
- Joseph Chafey (Chaffey), Southwark, 1659
- 1143 • William Coulson, jun., St. Gabriell Fenchurch, 1658
- Robert Frethorne, citizen and pewterer of London, and parish clerk of St. Dunstan's in the East, 1657
- George Groome, St. Andrew's, Holborn, 1658
- ? MOLENS 3259 • Robert Mollen, sen., St. Margaret, Lothbury, 1658
- Francis Smerfett, St. Sepulchre's, 1658
- John Smith, St. Michael Bassishaw, 1660
- Peter Smith, St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, 1658
- 4654 • Abraham Taylor, Lambeth, 1660
- Edward Ward, St. Botolph without, Bishopsgate, 1657
- Christopher Weale, St. Mary Bothaw, 1659
- The above from the Index of Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Ed. by T. M. Blagg, 1936
- John Spenser, 1401
- John Saleman, 1400
- John atte Water, 1400
- Edward Newchurch, 1492
- Robert Turnour the younger, 1502
- Thomas Langtofte } founders of the Guild
- William Large } of Pewterers in 1474
- Nicholas Egremond, 1438-41
- 1539 • Thomas Elliot, 1556
- 2 1576 • Thomas Everett, 1623
- Francis Everton, 1626
- 1610 • William Eyre, 1473
- John Ferchyng (Ferthyng), 1376-80
- 1730 • Boniface Fester, 1565
- Hugh Game, 1411
- 1890 • Richard Glover, 1624
- 1917 • John Godeale, 1458
- 1920 • Thomas Goodlok, 1482
- John Grace, 1423
- John Harding, 1413
- Roger Hawkesworth (Hawkeworth), 1599
- Michael Haythwayte, 1555
- Richard Croswayte, dead 1555
- Edward Heath, 1663
- Walter Hengle, 1372
- Thomas Henson, 1621 2268
- John Henxteworth, 1394
- Nicholas de Henxteworth (Heyngestworth), 1351-72
- John Heuxsteward, 1407 2204
- Thomas Hicks, 1685
- Thomas Horewode, 1348
- Alexander Jones, 1608
- Francis Kimberly, 1628 2733
- Richard King, 1594 2711
- Henry Sambrooke, 1608
- William Atte Lee, 1425-26
- William Lely (Lylly), 1403-22
- Richard Lumley, 1436-38
- William Strynger, 1445
- James Mathewoke (Mathews, Mathewes), 1588, dead 1628
- John Megre, 1401-10
- Nicholas Mile, 1324
- William Mills (Milles, Mylles), Master of Pewterers Company, 1565. 3220
- Robert Mollins (Mollen), 1625, 1647 3287
- John Montfort, 1635
- Michael Newman, 1650 3277
- Guy Nicholas, 1395
- Thomas Page, 1465 3479
- John Paris, 1458-82 3509
- Richard Parkins (Parkyns), 1589 3619
- James Phillips, 1634-49 3672
- John de Pontefract (Pomfret, Pountfret), 1316
- Raphe Powell, 1621 3747 Ralph P.
- John Raydon, 1531
- William Redman, 1590 3877
- Edward Rewe, Warden, 1565
- John Robins (Robyns), 1620 3974 2000
- Robert Rose, 1563 4032
- James Mathewes, 1619
- John le St. Albans, 1339
- Henry Sambrooke, 1608
- William Sextern, 1486-88 Sactern 2194
- Thomas Shelton, 1631
- John Silhorn (Sylhorn), 1400-9
- Thomas Siward (Syward), 1368-72
- John Siward (Syward), 1349 4137
- Roger Siward (Syward), 1341-46 4633
- Thomas Southcote, 1382
- John Spencer, 1419-38
- James Matthews, 1628-31
- John Stewarde, 1657 4525 Steward
- Stephen Straunge, 1345
- William Strenger, 1449
- Ralph Strey, 1574
- Henry Sweeting, 1649 4604
- William Telgate, 1404
- John Tucker, 1574 4624
- Robert Turner, sen., 1488
- Andrew Martyn, 1334-45
- Richard Wallenger, 1573 4992
- Edward Ward (e), 1653-56
- William Atte Well, 1443-50
- Richard Wilkinson, of Frynnesbury, Co. Kent, 1565 5157
- Thomas Woodhouse, 1559
- Lawrence Wryte, 1565 5200 Wright
- Robbins, Milk Street, 1637 3277 John
- John Boardman, 1738
- Richard Cleeve, will, 1765
- Jasper Rolles, 1607
- John Cave, 1526 980
- John Sweeting, 1664 4625
- Edward Catcher, temp. Elizabeth 777 Nelson
- Thomas Goddard, St. Botolph without, Aldersgate, died 1687
- John Goddard, died 1719
- Thomas Curteys (Curtis), 1536-1600 (Cur)
- Nicholas Mills, 1536
- Richard Ferrer (Ferrer), 1559
- John Hankforde, 1402
- William Kirkeby, 1403
- Robert Cotte, 1403
- William Byncote, 1404
- John Henxteworth, 1404
- Roger Herley, 1405
- William Telgote, 1405-9
- Thomas Canteys, 1405-9
- John Cursoun, 1406-7
- Henry Coluorde, 1406-7
- John Pouer, 1408
- Andrew Chiefe, 1408
- Richard Glasynge, 1408
- Alexander Hankyn, 1409
- John Parke, 1409
- Thomas Fylkes, 1410-11
- Henry Somerfelde, 1410-11
- John Lely, 1410-11
- Robert Dutton, 1411
- Richard Kelet, 1411
- Thomas Chylde, 1411
- John Cornemonger, 1411-12
- John Grace, 1412

## SPOONS (continued from page 105)

be of little use in clearing the curved spout of a teapot.

Late Georgian teaspoons, thin and dainty, have handles with delicate tracery surrounding oval panels at the end of the stem, designed to hold the owner's monogram. They are, of course, of much less value than earlier and more solid specimens, but they seem to bear about them something of the atmosphere and personality of their past owners.

In a Devonshire village, in the good old days, the Squire gave a silver spoon to be wrestled for by the lads on "Revel Sunday." This was stuck up in front of the gallery in church and the wrestling took place after service. Mrs. O'Neill, in that delightful little book, "Devonshire Idylls," gives a charming account of the last occasion that witnessed the contest, and describes how a lad said

to his sweetheart: "If so be as I get the silver spoon, 'twill be some'at towards housekeeping," and she answered: "Get along with you, what's a silver spoon to do, if you've got no broth in the pot?"

"Parson Tom," a good old Devonian, preached a fine sermon. "You'm bound to wrestle, young men, us have all got to wrestle with Satan, and the braver us can tackle him, the likelier us'll win; and the Kingdom of Heaven is taken by force, therefore quit you like men, be strong."

The lad already mentioned won the spoon. "Please the Lord," he said, "I'll get the fellow to en next year, and then there'll be a pair of us." But next "Revel Sunday" the old Parson was dead, and so was the maid. That was the end of the wrestling, for the new Parson would have none of it.

The English Silver Spoon