

ETHN

## TOKENS

# PEWTERERS AND THEIR TOKENS

by George Berry

PEWTER ware abounded in Tudor and Stuart England, and could be found in every room of the house, not just the kitchen. It comprised basins and bowls, porringers and plates, flagons and ewers, tankards and mugs, pepperettes and pounce-pots, candlesticks and inkstands and much more besides.

The Romano-British had used pewter — more than 200 pewter dishes and flagons have turned up in excavations. The Saxons, great craftsmen though they were seem to have ignored the art of pewter-making, which was revived in the early Middle Ages. There is a significant reference to pewter in the minutes of the Council of Winchester (1076), which states that pewter was to *A flagon c. 1760 clearly showing the pewterer's mark*



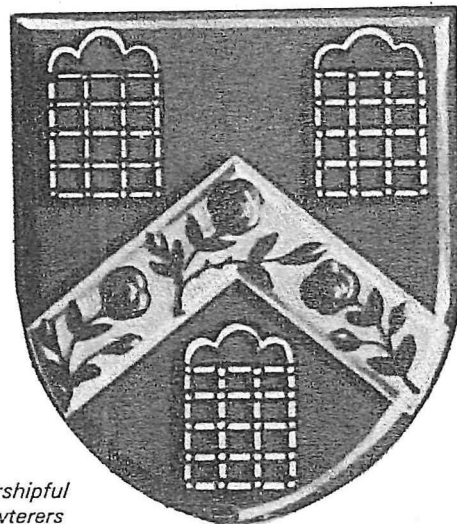
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be used for making chalices for use in poor parishes instead of wooden ones. The inference here is that pewter was considered a cheaper and more common material than wood, but it must be noted that the order was reversed almost 100 years later at the Council of Westminster.

By the 14th century pewter ware had taken over in the medieval kitchen. We read of a pot and salt cellar of "peautre" being worth 4d in 1326 and of four pewter dishes being valued at 6d. William le Peautrer was plying his craft in Cheapside in 1338. Pewterers, like most tradesmen, became organised into craft guilds in various parts of the country including London (1348), York (1419), Kings Lynn (1445), Norwich (1449) and Bristol (1456).

The company of the City of London issued ordinances in 1348, which established standard alloys of two distinct qualities. The first consisted of "fine" pewter of pure tin with some brass. This fine metal was used for manufacturing flat items such as plates or dishes. Pewter of the second, slightly inferior quality contained 25% lead. It was known as lay metal and was used in making hollow-ware, consisting of rounded pots such as measures, ewers, tankards and flagons.

In 1475 the London Company commenced building its own hall in Lime Street. It suffered grievously in the plague years, 1665, losing two masters within the space of two months. Mr. Seeling died on September 9th. His successor, Ralph Marsh was elected in October 14th, and was buried a day later! Pewterers Hall, in common with many guild halls of London was destroyed in the great blaze of 1666, but was rebuilt shortly afterwards on the same site. The company had religious



Arms of the Worshipful  
Company of Pewterers

and social functions as well as responsibilities for the welfare of its members and the control of their craft. An annual festival was held originally in All Hallows Church, Lombard Street, but later in the Church of St Djonis, Blackheath.

The Company regulated hours, conditions of work and employment of apprentices as well as maintaining strict supervision over the quality of pewter made by its members. Apprentices, for instance, were bound for seven or more years, and were expected in summer to work a fourteen hour day from six in the morning until eight at night. They had to live with their masters and were bound to accompany him to Church on Sundays and Holy Days. Journeymen and apprentices found guilty of wasting their master's time were brought to the hall and whipped.

The Company was given the right to have a coat of arms: "Azure, a chevron or between three strikes argent; upon the chevron 3 roses gules stalks, buds and leaves vert." The strikes of tin symbolize the pewterers craft.

The marking of pewter was first made obligatory for members of the London Company as early as 1503, and for the whole kingdom in 1638. It had long been customary to mark gold and silver ware. The first mention of pewter marking occurs in the records of the London Company (1474): "Item: delivered a ponchon of iron with the broad arrowhead for the forfeit mark."

The year 1550 witnessed the first reference to the celebrated touchplate, which consisted of a large pewter plate 1/8 inch in thickness. After serving his apprenticeship and taking up his freedom, each liveryman was compelled to strike on the touchplate an

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impression of his own trademark. An inventory of that year contains the following entry: "a table of pewter with every man's mark thereon." Five London touchplates still survive. The earliest was purchased by the Company in 1668 for 8 shillings. The hall had been burnt down two years earlier, so the plate would probably not have been put to use until 1670 when it had been rebuilt and normal life resumed. The second touchplate was bought in 1674 and used a few years later.

Several of the liverymen of the London Company of Pewterers, whose touchmarks can still be seen on one or other of these plates, issued farthing or halfpenny tokens to combat the shortage of small change in the city during the post-Restoration years. These men include Samuel Attley of Little Britain, Robert Gisburne of Pall Mall, Stephen Maberley of Broad Street and Henry Napton of Bishopsgate Street. It is also probable that the issue of an Irish token penny was the father of Sir John Fryers Bart, the most celebrated of all 17th century pewterers.

Samuel Attley's farthing token can be described thus,

*Obv.* S.M.A. IN LITTLE BRITAIN  
PEWTERER 1667

*Rev.* The Pewterers Arms

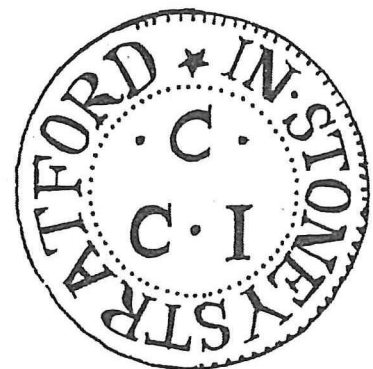
Although no denomination is given, this token was probably intended for a farthing despite the fact that it is almost halfpenny size. Little Britain was a well known district centered on Aldersgate Street. It was often customary on the London pieces to just put the issuer's initials. The M stands for the initial of his wife's christian name. Samuel Attley was elected to the Livery on December 19th, 1667, at the time when the hall was about to be rebuilt. It is significant that his token was issued in the same year. He was certainly quick off the mark to advertise himself as a fully qualified pewterer!

Robert Gisburne of Pall Mall had his token struck in the same year, 1667. He was, in fact, elected to the Livery just three weeks before Samuel Attley — on November 28th, 1667. His token reads:

*Obv.* ROBERT GISBERNE IN THE  
HALF PENNY

*Rev.* OLD PELL MELL PEWTERER  
R.A.G. 1667

The strange spelling of the issuer's surname and his place of business does not matter. Phonetic spelling was quite acceptable in his day. Unlike Attley, Gisburne rose to high office in the City Company: He was elected Steward in 1670, Renter Warden in 1683, Upper Warden in 1689 and finally Master in 1691. His touchmark consisted of a rose



*Farthing token of Christopher Clifton of Stony Stratford*

beneath a crown but unfortunately he put no device on his token. If there had been room, perhaps his mark might have been illustrated.

The third elected Liveryman of the Company to have a token struck was Stephen Maberley of Broad Street. His token, a farthing, was also struck in 1667. It has not been possible to ascertain the exact date of his election to the Livery, but it can be surmised that it was in the same year. Maberley was permitted to strike his touchmark, a dove above a snake, in the year 1671. His token bears the Pewterers' Arms and his address BROADSTREET EAND (End), together with the initials S.E.M. and the date 67.

Henry Napton of Bishopsgate Street, the last of the London pewterers definitely known to have been elected members of the Livery Company, issued his token three years later in 1670. His halfpenny, like Maberley's, depicted the Pewterers' Arms. He was elected to the Livery in 1670 therefore it is no surprise to find that his token bears the same date. He had leave to strike his touchmark, a horseman crossing a river, and the initials H.N. in the same year. He practised his trade as a fully fledged pewterer for only 14 years as he died in 1684.

An Irish pewterer, John Fryers of Clonmel in County Tipperary, issued a penny token in 1668, which reads

*Obv.* JOHN FRYERS 1668 A ship  
*Rev.* OF CLONMEL PEWTERER 1D

He was probably the father of John Fryers, who practised his trade in London in the 1690s. This man was elected to the Yeomanry on June 18th, 1696, becoming a city alderman in 1709 and was eventually knighted. He had leave to strike his touchplate in March 30th, 1693.

We cannot be sure just how many

pewterers issued tokens during the 17th century. More than a dozen, including three of the London pewterers whose tokens we have considered, actually put the word PEWTERER on their token. These include Thomas Heath of Warwick, John Henty of Lewes, Thomas Hutten of Canterbury, Samuel Canner of Tewkesbury and Joseph Sherwin of Ashbourne in Derbyshire; also three Irishmen: Ignatius Brown and Jonathan Butterson of Dublin and Francis Banks of Galway. Only one of their tokens bears the Pewterers' Arms — that of Thomas Hutten, the Kentish man. Incidentally Hutten's token is interesting as being the only penny struck in the entire Kent series. Tankards appear on one of the Dublin pennies (Ignatius Brown) and on the Tewkesbury farthing. A fleur de lys is drawn on the Sussex piece, and a pot of lilies on the Galway penny. These two emblems are particularly associated with the craft of pewter making.

The Pewterers' Arms appear on several tokens, which bear no other clue as to the issuer's occupation. We may infer that they were probably pewterers. They include John Benson of Halifax, John Burgis of Bicester, Oxon, Robert Bristow of Wapping Wall, London, John Furnis of King Street, Westminster, John Smith of Coventry, Richard Weber of Barnstaple, Devon and Mary Willis of Cranbrook, Kent. Mary Willis' token is particularly intriguing as one would not expect a woman to be a pewterer. It seems probable too that at the time she was married to a clothier. The initials I.M.W. on the token include those of her husband. Incidentally Robert Bristow proclaims himself to be a cheese-monger on his token, even though it bears the Pewterers' Arms.

A particularly interesting token is that of John Baker of Hull:

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*Obv.* JOHN BAKER Arm holding a hammer  
*Rev.* OF HULL 1665 I.B.

There is no direct clue as to Baker's trade on the token, although it is clear that he is a craftsman who wields a hammer. Williamson informs us that he was a well known Hull pewterer, being elected Freeman of the Pewterers' Company on June 5th, 1662. So he must have been in business on his own account for just three years when his token was issued.

A number of tokens depict tankards, pewter pots or dishes. One or two of them may well have been issued by pewterers. A good example is a farthing of Barnstaple issued by John Webber, which has a tankard as the only clue to the issuer's occupation. Cotterell confirms that John Webber was a pewterer, and shows his mark to be a castle. He also states that his son, John Webber Junior c.1680-1735, was also a pewterer and used a similar trademark. Curiously Richard Weber of the same town, undoubtedly a member of the same family and also a pewterer, depicted a castle on his token. Probably the castle was a family badge. Another interesting farthing, circulating in London carries the obverse legend YE PEWTER PLATTER and the initials T.M.W. The reverse tells us that the issuer worked in GRACIOUS STREET A

pewter platter is exhibited on the token, which may well be a pewterers. On the other hand it may have been issued by an innkeeper at a sign of the same name. This is one of the many riddles to be unravelled in the fascinating and vast series of London trade tokens.

Cotterell links the issuer of a Buckinghamshire farthing, Christopher Clifton, with a record he had come across of a pewterer of the same name of unknown provenance. He illustrates his mark of about 1730, a fleece. The token alluded to by Cotterell was issued by a Christopher Clifton at Stoney Stratford. It is undated but early in style, and was probably struck in the 1650's. The pot of lilies, boldly shown on the obverse, was a favourite device of the pewterer. The fleur de lys was used on an official marking punch at Pewterers Hall, London. A record of 1549 reads: "Paid for a marking iron of the fleur de lys to mark stone pots (lids) with ... 10d." A pot of lilies together with strakes of tin appeared on an earlier punch of Pewterers' Hall.

The Christopher Clifton who issued the token was surely the father or grandfather of the one whose mark appears in Cotterell's book. The parish registers of Stoney Stratford show a Christopher Clifton as churchwarden in 1653. His burial is recorded in 1686. He would be the token issuer. But there are references also to a son Christopher

and a grandson also of the same name. My guess is that it is the grandson whose mark we see in Cotterell. As the token issuer's father was also called Christopher, it seems likely that there were four Christopher Cliftons, in direct line of descent, carrying on the family tradition of pewter-making for almost a century.

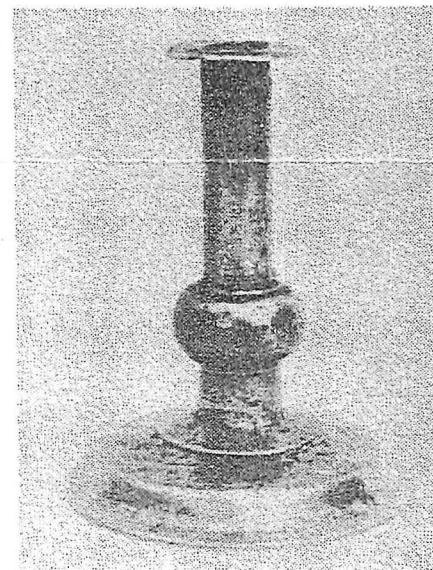
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A typical pewter candlestick c. 1680