

ELX

# “Wriggled” Decoration on Pewter

By

RONALD F. MICHAELIS



Fig. 1. An extremely rare Elizabethan Alms Dish, embellished in “wriggled-work”. C. 1580-1600. Diam. 14 $\frac{3}{8}$  ins.

THE early English pewterers, in the main, relied on good form and good metal to maintain the stability of their productions. It is to their credit that so much of their work still remains with us today, despite the fact that pewter is a soft metal, easily damaged and dented, and of such a nature that its surface could wear away with constant scouring.

Except for inscriptions on pieces donated to, or bought by, the churches, or pieces engraved to commemorate some special circumstance, it was not usual for English pewterers to embellish their wares with purely decorative engraving of any sort until after the middle of the 17th century. In this respect our pewterers differed considerably from those on the European continent.

There is, of course, a limited number of exceptions to this rule, but good examples of purely aesthetic engraving on pieces of pre-1660 could probably be counted on two hands. One such is the Alms Dish (or possibly a Rosewater Dish) shown in Fig. 1, which is probably one of the earliest examples. This dish has a centre

“boss”, surrounded with a raised flange in the well, and a narrow, flat, rim with slim single beading at the edge; the whole piece being decorated all over with simple ornamentation, including rosettes and triangles. It is datable as of late Elizabethan period, or at latest of early James I, say of c. 1580-1610.

There is no reason to doubt that it was engraved contemporaneously. Although bearing a maker's mark, this is of a period before marks were recorded, or at least before the date of the records available today. Any pre-Fire of London touchplates which may have existed and been cared for by the Pewterers' Company were destroyed in the fire, and the touchplates now in their possession are all of c. 1667 and later. Nevertheless the type of the touch itself on this dish may be closely dated by its style.

The form of engraving is not the normal incised work done with a burin, such as might be found on contemporary silver, but is devised by pushing a tool with a narrow chisel-like blade along the metal, at an angle, and actually digging out a zig-zag groove by rocking the blade from side to side as it progresses on its way. Were the craftsman to have engraved on the soft metal by normal methods, this would have cut too deeply, and the piece would very soon have disintegrated. The pewterers found that their own method of surface decoration, whilst remaining visible over a lengthy period of polishing and usage, did not materially detract from the strength of the article; and it was this form of embellishment which remained popular with them for well over 100 years.

In the great majority of instances the designs themselves are crude, although the tool seems to have been expertly used. This was doubtless due to the fact that the pewterer himself, although an expert in metalcraft, was normally no scholar, and would have had no pretensions to art whatsoever. Moreover, had it not been a popular fad for pewter to be embellished to

simulate silver, he would in all probability have preferred to leave his wares quite unadorned.

There is ample evidence that this work was done in the pewterers' workshops, for we find, as early as 1588, that one Andrew Bowyer, a pewterer of London, was fined by the Pewterers' Company:

"for that he did set a stranger to work to grave upon his pewter, when he might have it wrought by a brother of the Company."<sup>1</sup>

About eighteen months later this same pewterer was again in trouble for a similar offence; the Company records state that:

"Whereas Andrew Bowyer hath heretofore been admonished for setting to work a woman to grave upon his pewter, contrary to the ordinances of the house, and hath been fined for it, he is again charged with the like offence, and is adjudged to pay 5s. fine, with a threat of the maximum fine of three pounds for a further offence."<sup>2</sup>

Since it is clear that the pewterers themselves were to be responsible for adding the engraved decoration to their pewterware, this, as stated earlier, accounts for the crudity so frequently displayed in the designs employed. Nevertheless it is this very simplicity of design which lends so much charm to most of their work; for no other form of embellishment seems to suit the metal better.

It was after the re-establishment of the Monarchy in 1660 that pewter began to be more generally ornamented in this way. One may point to numerous examples of late Stuart tankards, plates and dishes, so ornamented, ranging onwards to well into the mid-18th century, when the practice almost ceased, except for the addition of Coats of Arms or Crests, mainly on the rims of flatware. By this time, however, the cruder method of "wriggling" had either been superseded or supplemented by finer line engraving for the smaller areas involved. Whilst an heraldic embellishment on a plate can add some interest for the

genealogist, it has not the same attraction for the collector who is primarily interested in the form and methods used by the craftsmen of an earlier period.

It seems probable that "wriggled" decoration was given a fillip by craftsmen who came to this country in the wake of Charles II, for otherwise it would be strange that pewterers should have remained aloof from such ornamentation for fifty years or so prior to this, except for the few rare examples already mentioned, and for notable specimens bearing cast embossed decoration, to which I have drawn attention elsewhere, but which do not concern us here.<sup>3</sup>

One type of charger, in particular, must receive special mention. I refer to a group of finely "wriggled" large dishes, known as Restoration Chargers. One such, of 20 $\frac{3}{8}$  ins. diameter, incorporating the Royal Stuart arms in the centre, with motto, and around the boogie the

(1) Welch, "History of the Pewterers' Company", Vol. II, p.2.

(2) *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 6.

(3) Michaelis, "Antique Pewter of the British Isles", 1955.



Fig. 2. A fine Charger, engraved with Royal Stuart arms, etc., to commemorate the marriage of Charles II with a Portuguese princess in 1662. Diam. 20 $\frac{3}{8}$  ins.



Fig. 3. Tankard, c. 1675, engraved with crowned lion, and two plates, similarly engraved, c. 1700-25.

legend "VIVAT REX CAROLVS SECVNDVS—BEATI PACIFICI—1662", is illustrated at Fig. 2. The rim is also enriched with Tudor roses, blazing sun motifs, and conventional tulip ornamentation. The date 1662 is, of course, later than the Restoration, and it seems more than probable that this and other similarly dated dishes (of which about half a dozen are known) were intended to commemorate the King's marriage with a Portuguese princess in that year. This theory is put forward by another writer, far more able than I to delve into the historical aspects of the problem.<sup>4</sup>

The delineation of detail on this particular specimen is far from crude and was doubtless the work of a skilled artist. It shows, in all its glory, just what could be achieved by a simple process.

Whereas only one or two examples of pewter tankards are known with engraving relating specifically to either Charles II or to James II, there are nevertheless numerous examples

(4) A. V. Sutherland Graeme, "Pewter Restoration Chargers", in *The Connoisseur*, June, 1942.

executed in their reigns. This may be verified by the dates of working of the makers, who are known by their touchmarks which appear in or on their pieces; for example, the flat-topped tankard in the forefront of Fig. 3 bears the touch of a maker "W.F." (Cotterell No. 5605), whose mark has been found on various pieces which may be dated as from c. 1665 to c. 1685.

The spirited lion with a Crown may well have indicated the people's joy at the return of the monarchy, although it is less certain why a similar design was adopted some thirty to fifty years later, on the plates in the background, unless this, also, was to commemorate the accession of later monarchs.

The plate at right of the illustration was made by Edward Gregory, of Bristol, about 1700-10, and that on the left by Stephen Cox, also of Bristol and, incidentally, a pewterer who had served his apprenticeship with the foregoing master. This plate may be dated around c. 1715-25.

Figure 4 shows an example of more sophisticated "wriggled-work", and adequately displays the excellence to which the method could be brought with care. This multiple-reeded plate bears the touchmark of a woman pewterer, one Martha Fly, of London, widow of a well-known master pewterer, who succeeded to her husband's business about the year 1690. Several somewhat similar plates by this maker are known.

The two small Wine Cups, shown in Figure 5, are exceedingly rare items in themselves, no other examples being



Fig. 4. Plate, with multiple-reeded rim, engraved with cormorant and thistles, made by a woman pewterer, Martha Fly, London, c. 1690. Diam. 8 ins.

known. The style of decoration, however, is typical of the late Stuart period.

The cup on the left, which was dug up in Strutton Ground, Westminster in 1925, on an old site upon which Stourton House once stood, may be dated fairly accurately by its maker's touch ("C.R." in a small diamond lozenge), which mark also appears on a miniature posset-pot, engraved with portraits of William III and Mary, *c.* 1690, in the possession of Mr. C. C. Minchin, of Reading.

Stourton House was erected in the early 17th century under the bequest of Anne, Lady Dacre, sister to Thomas Sackville, the first Baron Buckhurst, as a hospital to house twenty poor women and their children.

The other wine cup, at right, with cast gadrooning around the foot, is of almost identical period, although unmarked.

"Wriggled-work" engraving was at its greatest popularity in the fifty year period *c.* 1689–*c.* 1740. This is exemplified firstly by numerous examples of plates, mainly of single-reeded type, dating from *c.* 1690. One family in particular—the Hitchmans of London—is represented by James Hitchman (1701–35), and his son, Robert (1737–60). These two were responsible for producing a very large number of the "wriggled" single-reeded plates known to day. Figure 6 shows an excellent pair of marriage plates by the former maker, *c.* 1715. In a pair such as this, the initials of both husband



Fig. 5. Two very rare Wine Cups, each only 3½ ins. high. The one on the left was excavated in Strutton Ground, Westminster, where THE ANTIQUE COLLECTOR'S office is situated. *C.* 1675.

and wife are shown, the surname initial being placed at the top of the triangle.

It is worth recording that the same peacock and peahen designs were used on plates by other makers, but nevertheless they were undoubtedly engraved by the same hand.

This type of engraving does not appear to have been used to any great extent on 18th century domed-lid tankards, but a few instances are known. So too are a few porringers known, with "wriggled" engraving around the sides or in the base, and in every case the appearance of the piece is considerably enhanced.

Illustrations of the pieces in Figures 2 and 6 are by kind permission of the owner, Mr. R. W. Cooper, of Nottingham; pieces in Figures 1, 3, 4 and 5 are in the writer's collection.

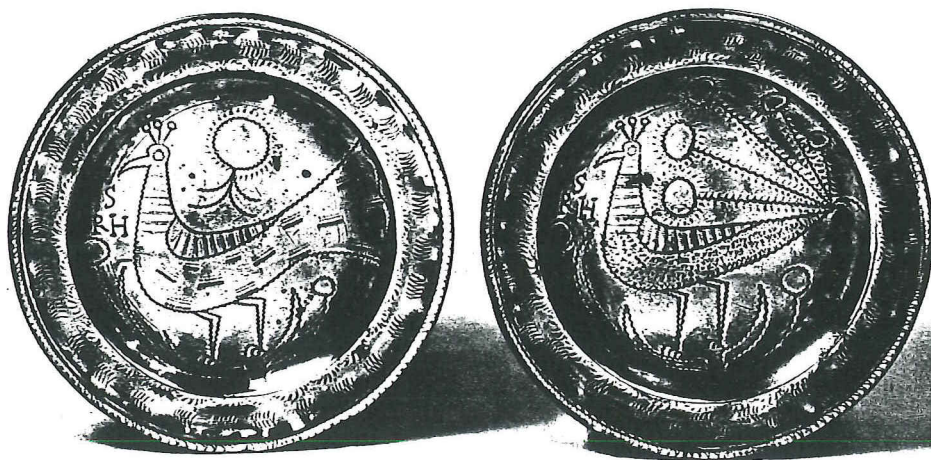


Fig. 6. A pair of engraved Marriage Plates, engraved with peacock and peahen, and initials S R.H.  
Made by James Hitchman, London, *c.* 1715. Diam. 8½ ins.

# Decoration on English Pewterware

## PART II: "PUNCHED" ORNAMENTATION

by RONALD F. MICHAELIS

IN this magazine for October 1963 I wrote about "wriggled" decoration on pewterware, and it is proposed here to carry the study of methods employed by English pewterers a stage farther.

As explained previously, English pewterers have not usually adopted ornamentation of any sort to embellish their wares, but have relied on good form and good composition of metal to enable them to produce articles for the household which would not only serve the purposes of practical usage, but which would nevertheless look well when displayed, as they frequently were, on oak shelving or sideboards.

Pewterware was, for the most part, made in

the forms and styles set by the silversmiths, and when a clean and brightly polished garnish was displayed it would look to the casual observer very like silver, and almost certainly it was intended that it should do so.

Plates and dishes made in early forms, such as those with broad rims, used in, say, the early- to mid-17th century, or those produced even earlier, with narrower plain rim and deeply curved well, with a raised "boss" in the centre, are without doubt the acme of aesthetic design, and certainly needed no embellishment. Nevertheless various forms of ornamentation were applied in isolated instances, possibly at the whim of the customer, who had, perhaps,

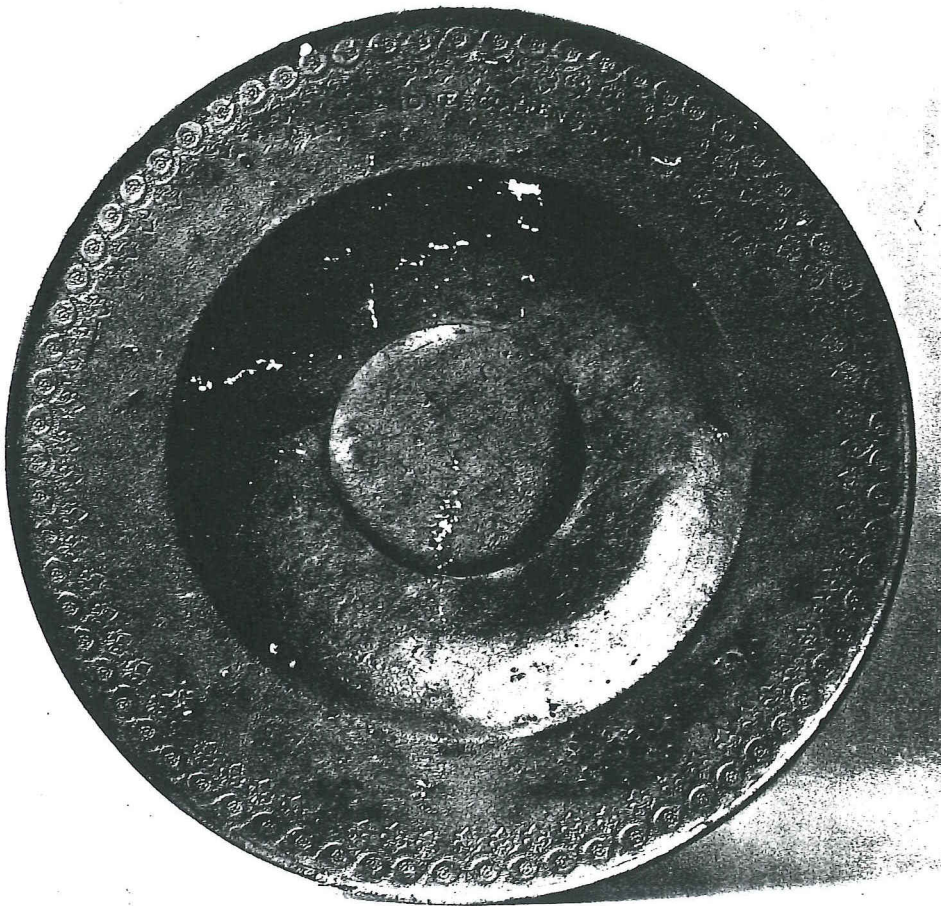


Fig. 1. An early pewter Marriage Dish, 14½ ins. diameter, with "punched" ornamentation, including the date 1585, and the names "IONE COPPEN - SVSAN CHVCRH".

(Shown by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

some particular object in view when ordering his pewter-ware. Most of the earlier pieces which are found with applied ornamentation were made for special purposes, probably as marriage gifts, and some of them bear names, initials or dates which commemorate the event.

Such an occasion is represented by the fine dish shown in Figure 1; this is  $14\frac{1}{2}$ ' in diameter, and bears upon the rim the names "IONE COPPEN - SVSAN CHVRCH", and the date "1585". The names themselves were struck letter by letter with individual punches, such punches being stock tools in trade of most

pewterers; and it is interesting to note here that the pewterer obviously had no complete alphabetical set, and was forced to use certain letters from another set, to wit, the two "P's" in COPPEN, and the two "S's" in SVSAN, which are considerably smaller than the others. The design around the rim itself has been built up by the repeated use of three different ornamental punches, (i) the circle at the extreme edge from a semi-circular punch, used twice to form the circle, (ii) the small Tudor Rose in the centre of the circle, and (iii) a large Fleur-de-lys design beneath each circle. The complete decoration adds considerably to the beauty of this particular piece.

Figure 2 shows another dish which one is also tempted to call a marriage dish, for it bears two different pairs of initials, "M.A. - M.B." and also the date "1585". It is probably only coincidental that the date should be identical with the first mentioned piece, but it is signi-

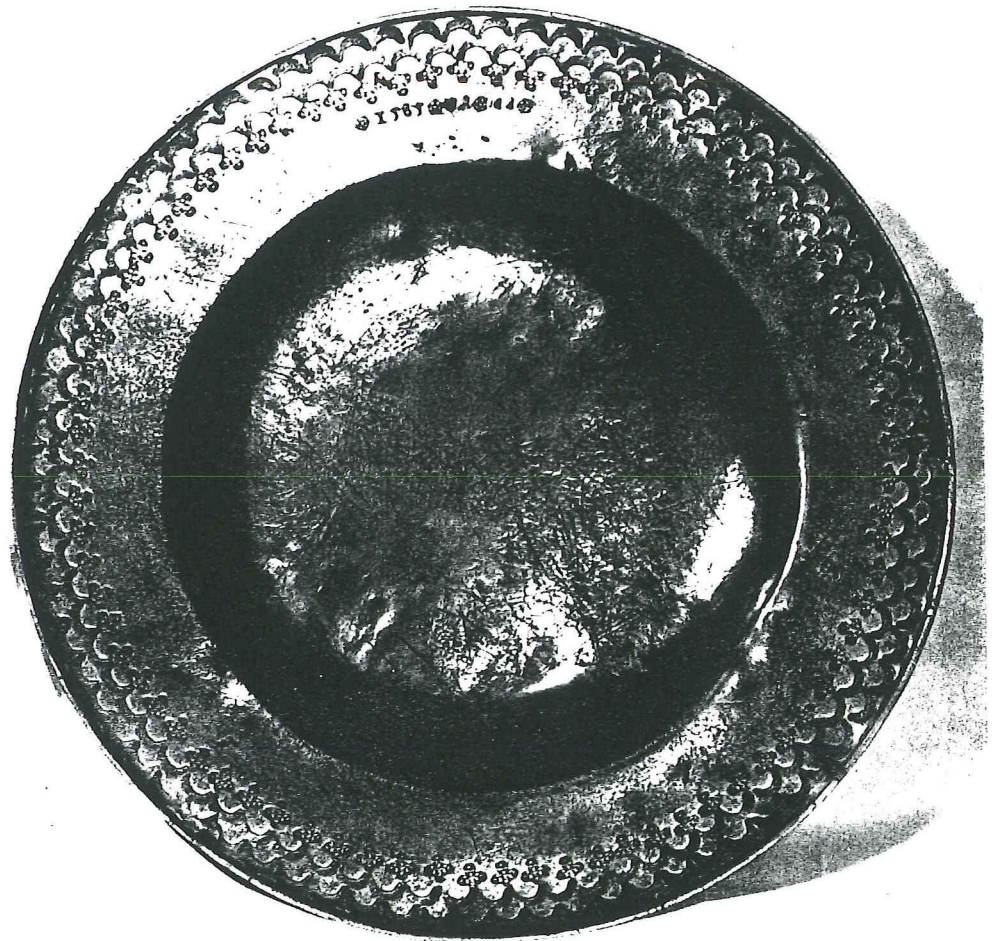


Fig. 2. Another fine and early dish,  $16\frac{3}{16}$  ins. diameter, showing the same date as that in Fig. 1, but with initials of "M.A." and "M.B." (In the Jaeger collection).

ficant that the semi-circular punches on the rim, and small Tudor Rose designs used between the initials, are identical with those used on the former piece, and also that the numeral punches from which the date is struck are exactly similar in style and size to those used on the former dish.

It is almost beyond question that the same hand was responsible for producing both examples.

An additional punched design is used beneath the repeated half-circles on the item in Figure 2.

With pieces so rare as these it is amazing that the two earliest known specimens can be so closely identified, since they have come from entirely different localities, and have been found at wide intervals of time.

Figure 3 shows yet another of these early and extremely desirable dishes, but on this the two punches which have been used on the border

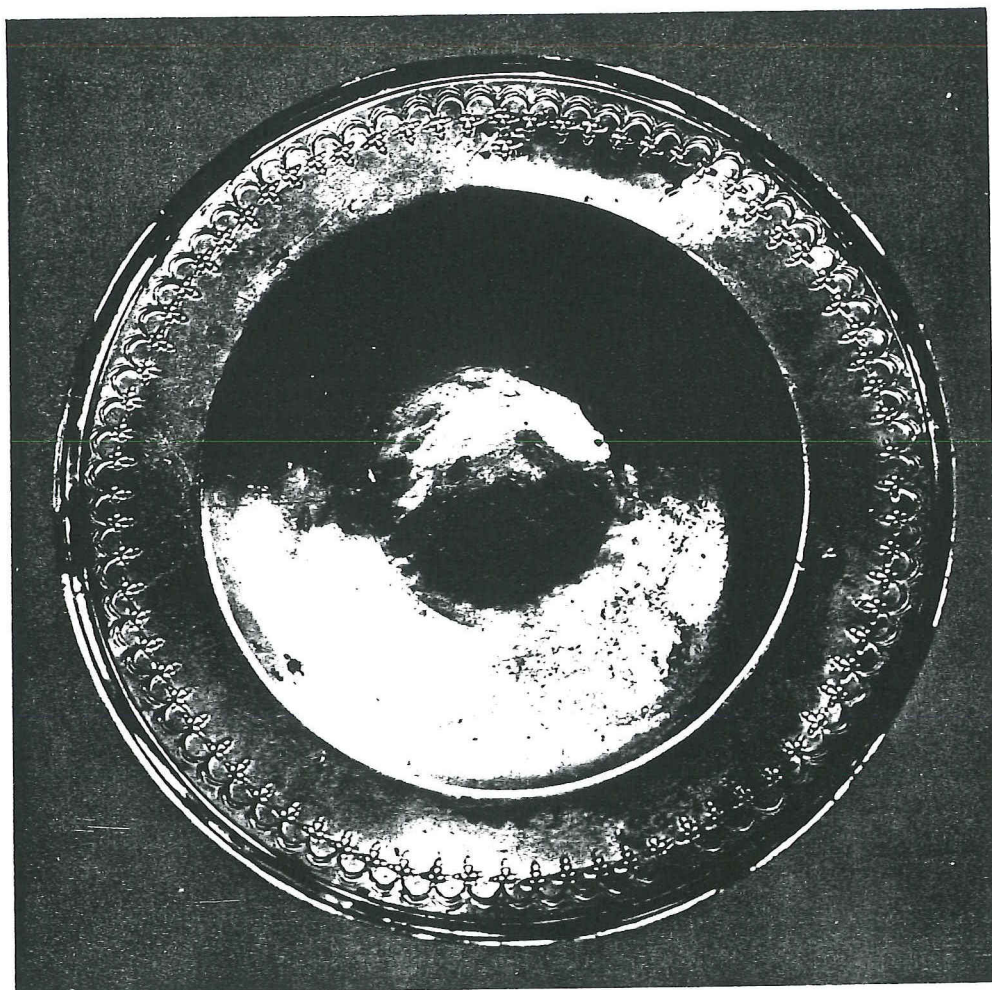


Fig. 3. Pewter Alms, or Marriage Dish, 15 ins. diameter, with characteristic "punched" ornamentation, and the ownership initials "W.C." and "W.H.", c. 1600-20.

*In the collection of Dr. R. F. Homer*

cannot be identified with those on either of the former pieces; nevertheless, a similar result has been achieved.

The type of multiple-reeded rim on the latter example leads one to place a slightly later date upon it, perhaps of *c.* 1600-1620; the punched initials in this case being "W.C. - W.H.", separated by a repeated striking of the ornament used in the border. It is 15 ins. in diameter, and bears upon the reverse the maker's touchmark, of a flower spray, with initials "G.B." in a small beaded circle; a hitherto unrecorded mark.

Only one or two other dishes of this early period and character are known. It is unfortunate that photographs of them are not available so that comparisons of the punches may be made.

No examples of English hollow pewterware, such as tankards or flagons, bearing punched decoration come to mind, for it would have

been interesting to find that the method was, in fact, used for articles in pewter, other than plates and dishes. We do know, of course, that the leather workers frequently used a similar process on saddlery, blackjacks, leather covered trunks, and many other articles.

It is a long step onwards in time before our next available pewter examples of the use of ornamental punches on pewter (in the forthcoming cases embodied with hammered, *repoussé* decoration) and in view of the fact that considerably more space would require to be devoted to it, with its four illustrations, it must, necessarily, be carried over to a future issue.

The writer is indebted to the following collectors and authorities for permission to use photographs and details of the items shown here. Figure 1 by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum; Figure 2, Mr. F. Jaeger, Dorking, Surrey; Figure 3, Dr. R. F. Homer, B.Sc., Ph.D., Wokingham, Berks.





Fig. 4. A superb pair of Alms Dishes, 16 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches diameter, showing both "punched" and "hammered" decoration. Made by Edward Leapidge, London, c. 1730. *In the Peal collection*.

## Decoration on English Pewterware

### PART III: "PUNCHED" AND "HAMMERED" ORNAMENTATION

By RONALD F. MICHAELIS

THE earlier history of "punched" decoration was the subject of an article in this magazine in February 1964, and the story is continued here into the realms of the combined use of both "punched" and "hammered" *repoussé* work.

The pair of Alms Dishes, of 16 $\frac{3}{8}$  ins. diameter, shown in Figure 4 started life as normal single-reeded dishes of a type quite common in the early years of the 18th century. The decoration on them, achieved by both hammering and "punching", brings them into a slightly different category, however, and one far too ornamental for the ordinary home. Pieces such as this were, in all probability, made for use as Alms Dishes, or altar ornaments, for comparatively poor provincial churches which could not afford similar articles in silver. The punched initials on this pair, "A.P." on one, and "M.G.-E.C." on the other, may well relate to the Vicar and Churchwardens.

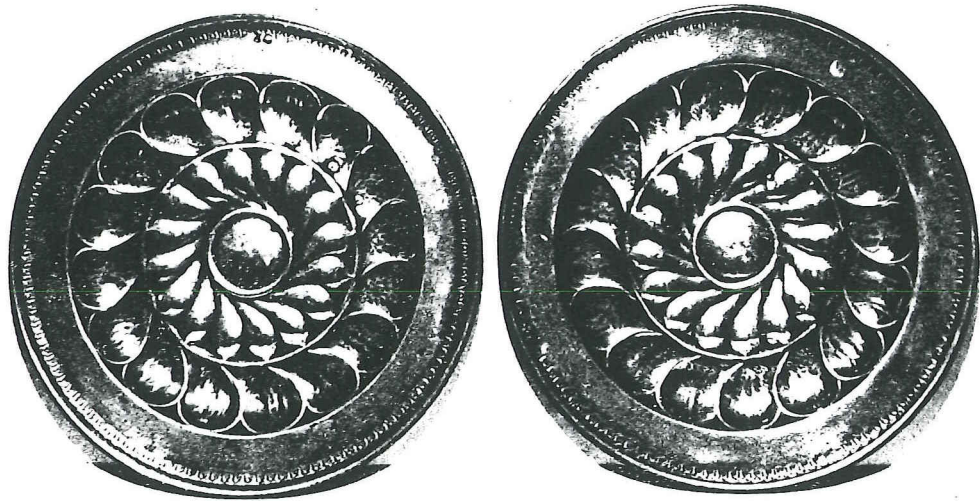
This pair is decorated around the rim with a repeated punched design for which two differing punches have been used, and also (at the base of each individual outer gadrooned "petal") with a small eight-lobed flower punch.

The main central ornamentation is done by a quite different process, i.e. that of beating up the design from the back with special hammers, with the face of the plate laid upon a bed of pitch, or upon a sand bag; this method is only very occasionally used in England. There is little one can say about the process, other than that it is, obviously, a "free-hand" design, probably evolved from a drawing or "template" pasted on the back of the plate, and used as a guide to the hammerer.

The maker of this pair of dishes was Edward Leapidge, of London, (Cotterell No. 2894), c. 1730, and they bear his marks on the reverse. It should be noted that they form a "Complementary pair", i.e. that the gadrooned "petals" of the central decoration lean from left to right in one, and from right to left in the other.

A pair of very similar dishes, shown in Figure 5, are only slightly less in diameter than the former pair, being only 13 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. across, but because of the smaller area in the well, the hammered *repoussé* decoration appears to crowd the surface to a greater extent. An important point to note, however, is that the eight-lobed punch used to decorate the base of the gad-

Fig. 5. Another fine pair of ornamented Alms Dishes, 13½ inches diameter. Made by Samuel Smith, London, c. 1730. In the author's collection.



roomed outer petals is identical with that used on the previous pair. It should also be observed that this, too, is a "complementary pair".

The maker of these was Samuel Smith, of London, c. 1730 (Cotterell No. 4379). Samuel Smith is known to have married Anne Leapidge, sister to Edward (the maker of the former pair) and, to judge from the close similarity of the beaten gadrooning and from the use of identical punches in both cases, it is fairly obvious that the same decorator was responsible for both pairs. These, too, bear initials stamped upon them; "A.C." upon the rim of one, and "S.<sup>S</sup>" upon the back of the other.

A further pair of these highly decorated Alms Dishes will be referred to later in this article. In view of the fact that three *pairs* of them have now been recorded, whereas only one single specimen has come to the writer's notice, one is inclined to wonder whether *all* dishes of this type originally began life with a "twin".

The single specimen shown in Figure 6 is of essentially the same character as those previously shown, but has no "family relationship" whatsoever, so far as the punches used in its decoration are concerned. True it has a close likeness to the others in the style of the embossed ornamentation in the centre; for example, all have sixteen "petals" around the centre "boss", and it would seem that, for this part of the design at least, the same template might have been used on all of them. In this single specimen, however, the decorator has extended his outer ring of petals to the curved booge, which has the effect of leaving a plain surface dividing the two rings of ornamentation, and consequently a far less crowded appearance.

Incidentally, the dishes in Figure 4 have 32 outer petals; those in Figure 5 have 16; and Figure 6 has 31, so it is evident that for this portion of the design a certain individuality was used. Here the similarity ends, for the punches used at the rim and at the base of the outer petals are quite different from any referred to earlier or later in these articles. They are, in fact, not recognisable as *ornamental* punches at all, and it appears that the

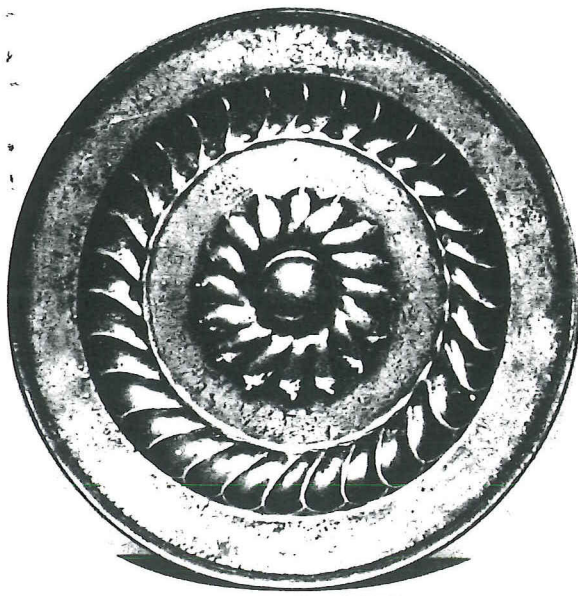


Fig. 6. A fine, large Alms Dish, of the same character as in previous illustrations, but a single item only, 18 inches diameter, c. 1730. (In the Grant collection).

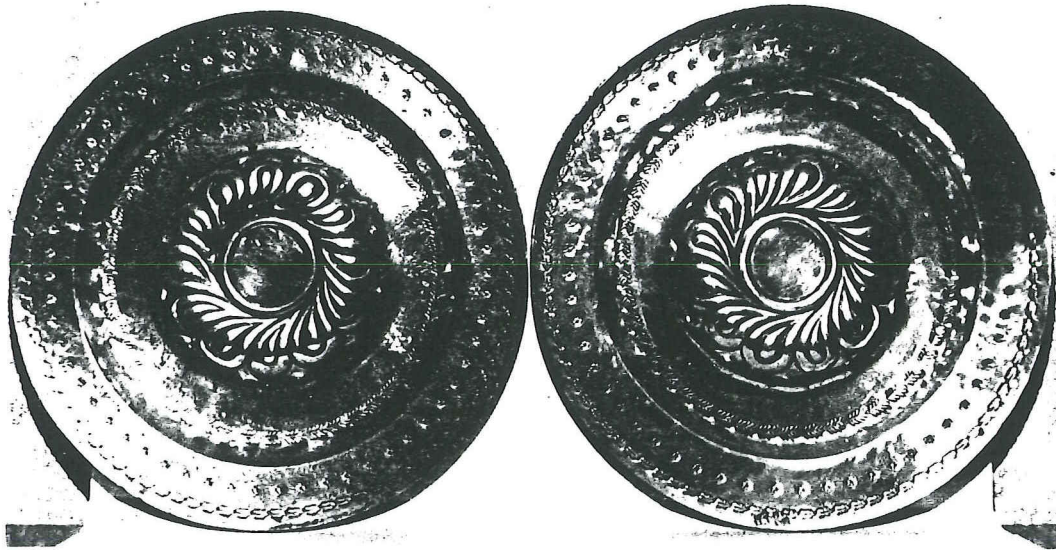


Fig. 7. A pair of unusual plain-rimmed Alms Dishes,  $16\frac{5}{8}$  inches diameter, showing the use of three separate "punches" and a centre "boss" of different character. Maker unknown, c. 1730. *In the author's collection*.

rim decoration was done by a stump-ended "centre-punch", laid at an angle to give a crude "half-moon" effect, and that the oval at the petal base is just a plain-faced punch of no ornamental character other than in its outline shape. For these reasons it is suggested that this single specimen was not decorated by the same artist who was responsible for the previous two pairs.

The maker's touchmark, part only of which can still be seen, contains the Christian name "THOMAS", but his surname is indecipherable, having been detrited in the hammering. The dish is 18 ins. in diameter, and may be dated, around 1730, as the others.

The final pair of dishes, shown in Figure 7, is of approximately the same period, but differs from them in two major respects; firstly that the dishes themselves are of the plain-rimmed type in vogue from about 1720 to the end of the century, and, secondly, for the fact that the hammered ornamentation is quite unlike that used previously.

They do have, however, the common feature of punched decoration on the rim and around the boogie of the well. Here three differing punches have been used; (a) an oak leaf at the edge; (b) a six-petalled flower below, and (c) a larger leaf design, used repeatedly around the curve of the well.

It is unfortunate that the maker cannot now be identified owing to the fact that his marks,

which were struck on the reverse, have been damaged by the subsequent hammering. It is, however, possible still to see some traces of these marks, and a clearly impressed Crowned "X" quality mark. These dishes are  $16\frac{5}{8}$  ins. diameter.

Just as in the case of "wriggled" decoration, there appears to have been a gap of 100 years or so between the abandonment of the first usage and the return of popularity in the latest examples, with periods in between when neither process was used at all. It is possible that the habit of ornamentation was frowned upon in Cromwell's time, when simplicity—and even severity—was a common feature in many fields of artisanship. In the case of "wriggled" decoration it soon regained popularity after the Restoration of the monarchy but, for some unaccountable reason, not so with "punched" ornamentation.

It is somewhat surprising that dishes, made as a pair some two and a quarter centuries ago, should still be found in company with each other after so long a period of time, and one wonders just where they have been preserved in the interim. None of the pairs in Figs. 4, 5 or 7, although of such distinctive character, has any recorded history of earlier ownership than that of their most recent purchase by the present custodians, and it would be helpful to historians if readers of these notes, who happen to recognise any items illustrated here as having been

seen elsewhere, in a church or a private collection, would advise the writer, so that the record may be maintained.

A forthcoming article will deal with "cast" ornamentation on British pewterware, i.e. the ornamentation *engraved in the mould* before the pewter vessel is cast in it from molten metal,

and which, therefore, appears *in relief* on the finished article.

*I am indebted to the following collectors for permission to use photographs and details of their treasures in these notes: Fig. 4, Mr. C. A. Peal, Norwich, Norfolk; Fig. 6, Mr. J. L. Grant, Worthing, Sussex; Figs. 5 and 7 are in the writer's collection.*

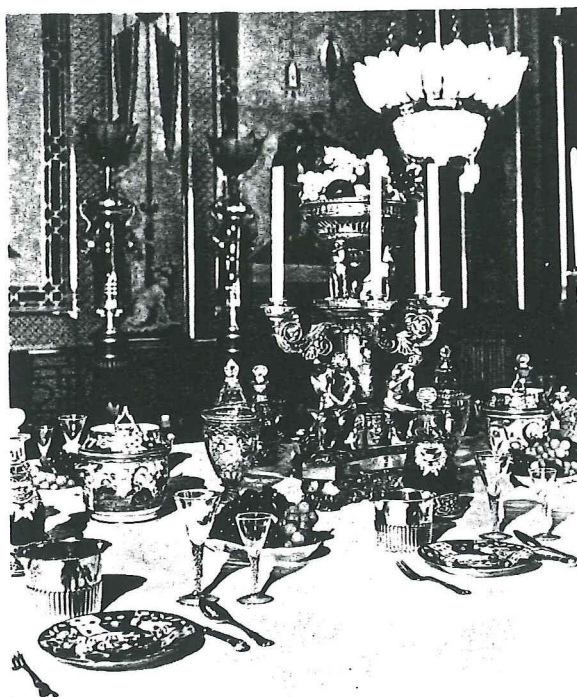
## French Furniture at the Royal Pavilion

GEORGE IV was a collector of Louis XVI furniture, so it is appropriate that this year's Regency Exhibition at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, should include a dozen examples of French 18th century furniture from the magnificent collection of Mr. Edward James, which also includes English and Italian pieces.

A small commode is by Charles Topino. It has the curved but not *bombé* front and sides which he favoured, and the mounts are disposed with meticulous economy, concentrated in the frieze and a central motif of urns. This *ébéniste*, probably a native of Arras, settled in Paris in 1745, was received as master in 1773, but was declared bankrupt in 1789. His furniture is represented at Fontainebleau and in many distinguished collections. There is also a larger commode by him, to the same design, in the exhibition.

Other items lent from Mr. Edward James's collection are a Louis XV *secrétaire* by Hansotte decorated with floral marquetry; and Louis XV commodes of *bombé* form, one by J. B. Galet with floral marquetry, the other by J. B. Schmitz with kingwood veneer. Another *bombé* commode in black lacquer with a Chinese temple scene is by B. V. R. B. (Bernard van der Risenburgh), and with it is shown an admirable copy made by W. Bevis, a carpenter on the West Dean Estate. A Louis XV *petit commode* or bedside table is by Pierre Migeon and is veneered with floral marquetry.

Accompanying this French furniture are Beauvais, Gobelins, Brussels and Aubusson tapestries lent by private owners. A set of Dubucourt prints of 1792, the *Promenade Publique*, has been lent by Messrs. Agnew. The

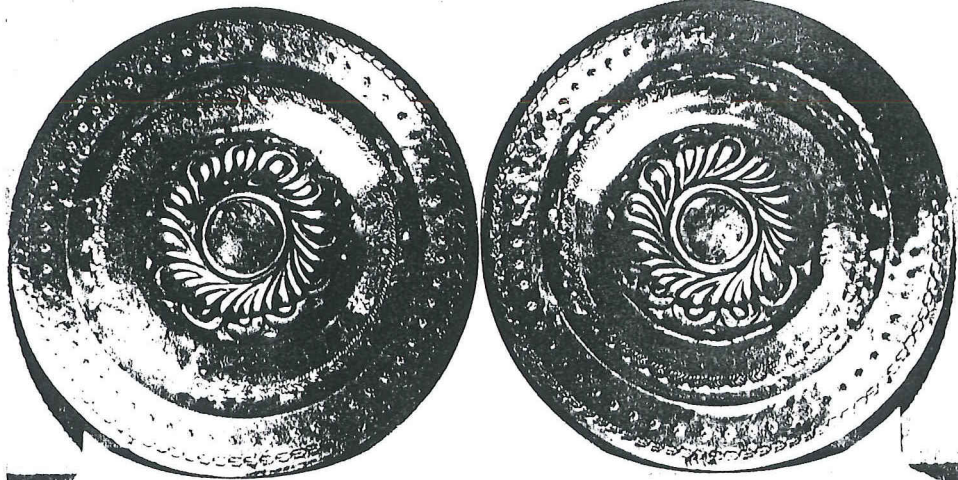


Part of the table display in the Banqueting Room at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton.  
(Photo: Brighton and Hove Herald)

combined effect of the furniture, tapestries, and engravings, together with the ormolu clocks and ornaments from the Pavilion's own collection, is to transform Queen Victoria's bedroom into the salon of a French *château*.

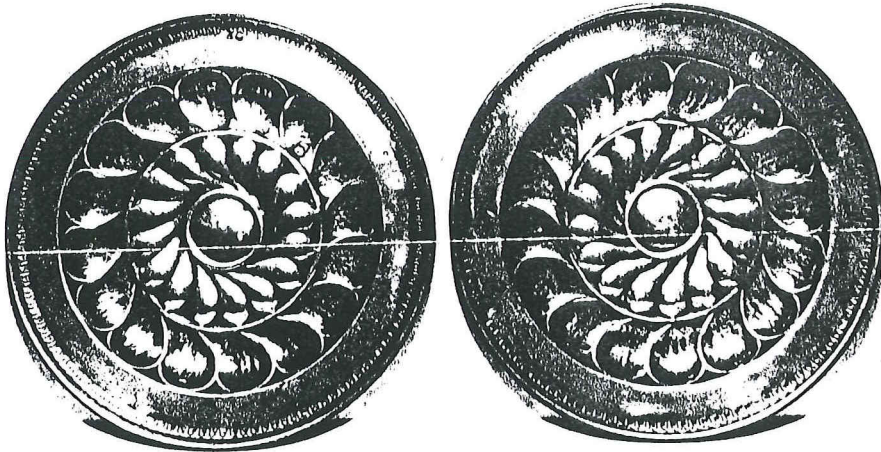
Visitors to the Regency Exhibition this year will find themselves greatly helped by a well-documented guide book. This will enable them to appreciate the history and qualities of such features as the Dolphin and Fesch furniture, the porcelain pagodas and candelabra, and the famous Banqueting Table.

The exhibition closes on September 27.



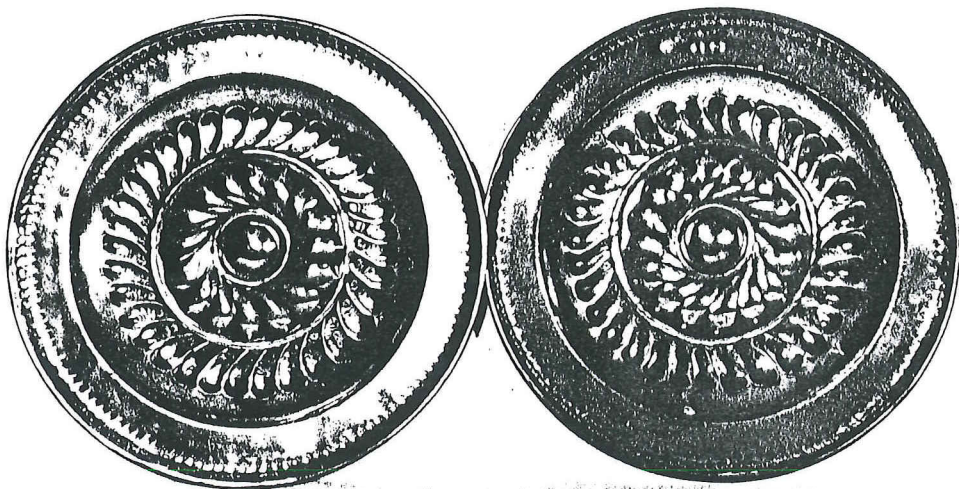
16<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" diam. maker unknown. c. 1730

R.F.M. Coll.



13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" diam. by Samuel Smith, London, c. 1730

R.F.M. Coll.



16<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" diam. by Edw. Reppelge, London, c. 1730

C.A. Peal Coll.

Illustrations used in "Punchel" & "Stammend" Ornamentik  
 on Puderwerk, by R. Gmelin.  
 in "Antique Collector" magazine, Aug. 1964.

# DECORATION ON ENGLISH PEWTERWARE

By  
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## PART IV

### Relief-Cast Ornamentation

PERHAPS the most interesting form of decoration on English pewterware—certainly the rarest—is that which is cast in relief on the surface of some early examples illustrated here.

It would seem that the style evolved from the Germanic potters who, even in the 15th century, ornamented the necks of baked clay vessels with a running “grapevine” motif. Although the process used by them to attain the design was somewhat different, the resultant effect was practically identical. The potters used a wheel, or roller, incised with the motif, and applied this to the wet clay before baking; the pewterers, whose ware was cast in moulds, sectionally, and later joined, could not adorn their hard metal in this way, but, nevertheless, attained a more regular and, usually, more ornamental design in low relief by having the pattern etched (or cut and gouged) on the inner surface of the moulds themselves.

A high degree of skill and artistry was required, and it is more than probable that the artists employed in the embellishment of moulds



Fig. 1. Relief-cast decorated tazza, dated 1616.  
(Photo loaned by Mr. C. C. Minchin).

had, perhaps, gained their experience as wood block cutters, or printing plate engravers. It is unlikely that the English pewterers themselves were responsible for the work.

The method of casting in relief was used in Gothic and early Renaissance times for medallions and plaques in bronze, latten and pewter, but does not appear to have been used to cover the larger surfaces of cast pewterware until, in Nürnberg, celebrated names, such as Nicolaus Horchaimer (1561-1583), and Albrecht

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Preissenzin (1564-1598), appear and until, slightly later, Caspar Enderlein, who became a master pewterer in 1586, brought the process to its acme of perfection. An early exponent of low relief casting of exceptionally high quality was the Frenchman, François Briot, and it was undoubtedly these masters who influenced the English pewterers at the turn of the 16th century. Highly ornamental relief cast pewterware, on the Continent, is classed under the generic title *Edelzinn*, but it does not appear to have been given any special appellation here.

Whereas in Germany such work was produced prolifically, relief decoration was seldom employed in England, and then in a much more restrained way, being confined, in the main, to a few articles made for a specific purpose or individual. It is unlikely that there are more than a dozen or so specimens of date prior to 1650 still extant, although other, undecorated, pieces of English pewterware of coeval date have been found in abundance.

In another place I first drew attention to the limited number of early English relief-cast specimens, and illustrated most of the then known examples.\* I make no apologies for showing some of them again here, and I have been able, also, to

\**Antique Pewter of the British Isles*, by R. F. Michaelis, Bell, London (1955).



Fig. 3. Beaker of unusual form with less formal "arabesque" decoration, c. 1603. (By courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum).



Fig. 2. Late 16th century footed cup with cast "arabesque" ornamentation. (By courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum).

illustrate a few others not then available. The footed plate (or tazza), at Fig. 1, and the "Grainger" Candlestick (not shown again) are the only known pieces of this type bearing cast-in dates; it is a coincidence that these should be 1616 in both cases.

A short description of the footed plate may be of interest to those who have not access to the earlier literature. This magnificent and rare tazza has a saucer-shaped bowl, raised on a hollow stem which is, itself, ornamented with relief-cast floral and bird motifs. The centre medallion of the plate shows a knight in armour, on a caparisoned charger, around which is the wording "WHAT HAVE WE THAT WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED OF THE LORD—1616".

Encircling the edge are sixteen plain shields bearing heraldic devices, including the Arms of the City of London, Arms of the Pewterers' Company, lions, tudor roses, fleurs-de-lis, etc. The incidence of the cast wording mentioned above indicates, with little doubt, that this piece was intended for ecclesiastical use, probably as a paten. The inscription which appears around the flat area outside the medallion was added later, and reads: "The Gift of Thomas Harvy in An<sup>o</sup>. Do<sup>o</sup>. 1621 March 31".

This unique item still remains at the Church of St. Mary, West Shefford, Berks.

The "Grainger" candlestick, now resting at the Victoria and Albert Museum, also bears cast-in shields and similar motifs, and the date 1616, accompanied by the name William Grainger (a well-respected London pewterer who, no doubt, had something to do with the production of the piece).

It is evident that other, undated, examples were produced in England a few years earlier, and it would seem safe to assume that the first of these was made perhaps at the tail end of the 16th century. The Chalice, or footed cup, shown at Fig. 2 is a superb piece in the possession of the Victoria and Albert Museum authorities, and has definite characteristics of the period of Elizabeth I. The writer has handled and examined this thoroughly, and has no hesitation in pronouncing it of



Fig. 4. Flared beaker with insignia of Henry, Prince of Wales, son of James I, c. 1610-12. (Author's collection).



Fig. 5. Beaker with bands of relief-cast ornamentation and wording, c. 1600-10. (By courtesy of the London Museum).

English origin, by virtue of its style and type of decoration, the high quality of the metal, and the character of the low-relief casting which, on English pieces, is usually less sharply defined than on their German contemporaries.

The beaker, of unusual form, shown at Fig. 3, displays a very similar type of arabesque decoration, though not so strictly confined and, by virtue of certain emblems emblazoned on it, one has little reason to doubt its attribution to the period of James I; it incorporates the Stuart arms, and the Rose and Crown (repeated in two of the four large medallions), and the Thistle, the Rose and the Fleur-de-lis in smaller reserves; thus it seems reasonable to assume that it was made to commemorate the accession to the English throne of the Scottish James VI, in 1603.

The two beakers in Figs. 4 and 5 may be dated with even more certainty. The first of these bears four bands of running floral decoration around the waist and foot, and has in the upper and wider band two medallions—that at the back showing

the conventional Crowned Rose, and the other the Prince of Wales feathers (with motto), flanked by the initials "H" and "P", for Henricus Princeps. These initials, combined with the feathers of Bohemia, can relate only to Henry Frederick, son of James I of England, who was created Prince of Wales in 1610. Prince Henry was born in 1594, and even at an early age showed promise of rivaling his father in the favouritism of the Court. When only fifteen, or thereabouts, he was installed in his own quarters at St. James's Palace, London, and it is thought that this beaker was one of, perhaps, a number made for everyday use in the Royal household.

The Prince died of typhoid fever in 1612, and thus the beaker can be dated between the years of his creation in 1610 and his death in 1612. An identical beaker, somewhat derided owing to its burial in a well, is in the collection of Mr. C. C. Minchin, of Bucklebury, Berks.

The next item (Fig. 5) is of almost identical size, style and shape, and it also bears bands of



continuous ornament encircling the waist and foot. Immediately below the lip are two bands of wording, reading: "TO DRINK AND BE MERRYE IS NOT AMISS—AND WITH THY FRED (Friend) ABIDE—THY MIRTH AND DRINKING (MUST) TAKE HEED THOU DOEST NOT (CHIDE), R.B.". This superb beaker is now in the possession of the London Museum, having been found with other objects of coeval date in the cellar of an old house in Cheapside.

There is yet another early beaker attributed to the reign of James I, with cast ornamentation of the Royal emblems to be seen on the former pieces, amplified by the Stuart Royal arms, and otherwise of similar general character, at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

There appears to have been a hiatus of something like fifty years before our next example, which is a superb little Wine Taster, (Fig. 6), with cast decoration on the single, fretted ear, and a cast medallion of a Tudor Rose adorning the "boss" in the base.

The significance of a raised motif in the base is so that, when clean and in use for its original purpose, a small quantity of wine would tend to remain in the hollows and to display its full colour against the bright irregularities of the ornamentation.

This piece is undoubtedly of mid-17th century manufacture, and the initials "C.R." which are cast at the lower part of the ear are almost certainly intended to commemorate one of the two Charles Stuarts. If one may judge from the style of the



Fig. 6. Small wine taster with a cast medallion of tudor rose in the centre; the ear cast with initials "C.R." (for Carolus Rex), mid-17th century. Bowl diameter,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches, depth  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. (Author's collection).

taster itself it would seem more probable that it is of the early period of Charles II, say *c.* 1662.

From this time, and onwards for some twenty-five years or so, relief cast ornamentation was seldom, if ever, used on English pewterware; it appears again *c.* 1690 firstly as a band of decoration around the octagonal foot rim of some salts and candlesticks, as shown in two of the latter in Fig. 7. This decoration is most frequently of the "running grapevine" type, but does occasionally arise as a band of "fleurs-de-lis" repeated around the rim, in the same position.

Candlesticks and salts upon which these bands of running ornamentation appear were made only during the period 1690-95 in England.

The pewter porringer shown in my next illustration (Fig. 8), is of exceptional interest, for it shows not only a repetition of the "running grapevine", but of the diagonal fluting, or "gadrooning", so typical of the early Queen Anne period, and more frequently observed on silver. This latter ornamentation, which also is cast into the piece and not added later, appears on a

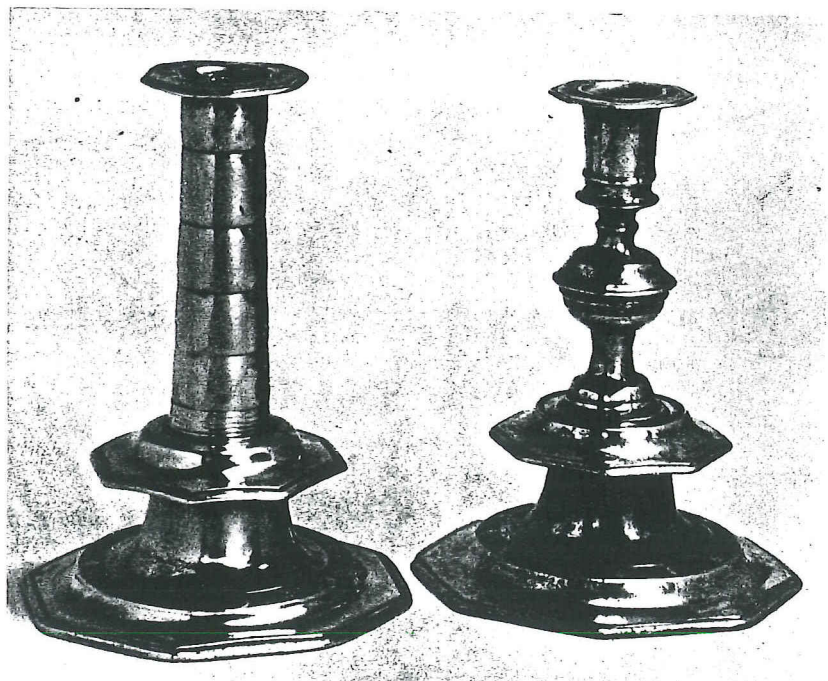


Fig. 7. Two late-17th century candlesticks, with "running grapevine" decoration around the foot. (By courtesy of Mr. R. W. Cooper).

few rare lidless tavern pots of *c.* 1700-1714, and very occasionally around the base of some two-handled posset-cups, some of these having loose covers, also decorated with matching gadrooning.

It was also towards the end of the 17th century that pewter spoons appeared with relief-cast decoration to the face of the flattish handle. Formerly, of course, many spoons had been given beautifully cast ornamental knobs similar to those so well known in silver spoons of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, but for the purposes of this article (which is concerned with decoration of the *surface areas* of particular pieces) I do not propose to do more than merely mention their existence, other than to say that it is to be hoped that some specialised collector of base-metal spoons will write more fully on the multitude of motifs and variations found on them. Many of the patterns used for these knobs are found repeated in silver, but many more were not (so far as is known) ever used by the silversmiths.

To return, however, to the slightly later spoons of *c.* 1688-9 and onwards, which at this time had changed in style to a flattened "trifid", or



Fig. 8. Porringer with both "grapevine" decoration and fluting (an unusual combination), *c.* 1690-1700. (By courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum).

"*pied-de-biche*", it seems that a fervent wave of Royalism pervaded England with the accession of William of Orange and Mary Stuart to the throne, for at this time, and strangely not in earlier reigns, cast embossed portraits of royalty appeared at the broad top of the stem. In my Fig. 9 will be seen two spoons, one with the profile heads of William and Mary, *c.* 1688-9—1694, and one of Queen Anne, 1702-14.

There are several different castings of portrait spoons from each of these reigns, although the general character of each is similar. With the termination of Queen Anne's reign came a temporary departure from this practice, but it seems to have gained a further popularity in the reign of George III, for we find the spoons of *c.* 1760 ornamented with good profile portraits of this monarch and his consort, Queen Charlotte Sophia, whom he married in of 1761. There are two or three different castings of this type, by more than one maker.

Slightly later still, probably during the years of the king's mental indisposition around 1804, came another type of spoon bearing a portrait which can only be described as a caricature of the ailing king with a bucolic (one might also say, alcoholic) appearance; he is depicted wearing a low "beaver" hat of the period, with a

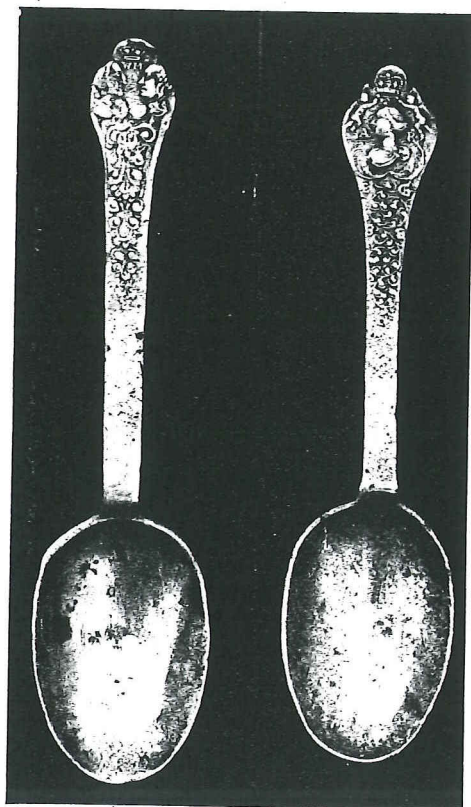


Fig. 9. Two spoons, the first with cast portraits of William III and Mary, *c.* 1688-9; the second with portrait of Queen Anne, *c.* 1702. (From the collection of the late A. V. Sutherland-Graeme).



Fig. 10. Two spoons, the first with cast portraits of George III and Charlotte, *c.* 1760; the second of George III, (a caricature of him as "Farmer George"), *c.* 1804. (Author's collection).



Fig. 11. A two-eared Commemorative Porringer and loose cover, depicting William III and Mary, c. 1688-9-94. (By courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum).

wheat-ear stuck into the band. The portrait is topped by a large royal crown and has, in addition, two cast-in initials "I.H." below the shoulders. It is difficult to assign to them any particular significance, other than those of the individual who ordered the consignment from this mould, although it has been suggested to the writer that they may stand for "Imperial Highness". The portrait itself is obviously intended to represent George III in the character of "Farmer George" which had been derisively applied to him some years earlier (see Fig. 10).

One cannot write upon the subject of cast royal portraits without mentioning those which appear inside the bowls of certain two-handled flat porringers around the period c. 1688-9—1714, and one of which, with its matching cover, is shown in my final illustration. Only about sixteen (certainly less than twenty) of this general character are known to exist, and many of these have now found their way into collections in the United States. Most porringers of this type are still accompanied by an ornamented cover.

Both the internal "boss" and the cover bear relief-cast decoration, mainly depicting royalty but,

in a few instances, showing John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, either in portrait, or in historical commemoration of the famous Treaty of Ryswick (1697). Those with relief busts of royalty may be separated into four main groups, as follows: (i) William III and Mary, (1688-9—94, in the latter year Mary died of smallpox); (ii) William III, alone (1694-5—1702); (iii) Queen Anne on the centre medallion in the bowl, and Queen Anne with her Consort, Prince George of Denmark, on the cover (1702-08, Prince George died in the latter year); and (iv) Queen Anne, alone (1702-14).

Whenever any of these types appears the design has incorporated with it various other emblems, such as Tudor Roses, Orbs and Sceptres, and Trophies of War, etc., accompanied by conventional floral supporting design, and usually with the Royal Cypher "W.R.", "W.R.M.R." (William Rex and Mary Regina), or "A.R." (Anne Regina), as the case may be. The portrait spoons mentioned earlier are sometimes similarly adorned with the appropriate cypher.

A few other English spoons, of "trifid" type, dating around the turn of the 17th century, bear relief-cast decoration, other than royal portraits; for instance, in the writer's collection is a spoon,  $7\frac{1}{4}$  in. long, displaying a "slipped rose" design with Crown above; another is a small "chocolate spoon", only 4 in. long, the complete surface of the handle, back and front, covered in running floral ornamentation. Similar small spoons are known with a cherub's face, between wings, and with a Crown above, on the broad end.

The several groups of articles to which reference has been made more or less cover the field, and the periods of use, of relief-cast surface decoration on pewter in England. To sum up, there were four main periods, c. 1590-1616; c. 1600; c. 1688-1714 and, lastly, c. 1760 to the end of the century, and during the intervals in between each group the process appears not to have been used at all.

This article concludes the present series on the various types and processes of surface decoration on English pewterware.

*Part I of this series appeared in October 1963; Part II in February 1964, and Part III in August 1964. A few copies of these issues are available, and may be obtained, while stocks last, from THE ANTIQUE COLLECTOR, price 6s. 6d. per copy, post free.*