

PEWTER TAVERN-POTS

By A. SUTHERLAND-GRAEME



1.—AN EARLY PEWTER POT INSCRIBED "THOMAS HUTTON AT YE FRENCH ARMES IN DRURY LANE." (Middle) 2.—ANOTHER EARLY TANKARD, INSCRIBED "EDWARD — AT YE ROSE & CROWN IN GREEK STREETE SOHOFIELDS." (Right) 3.—TANKARD MADE BY HENRY FREWEN, JUNIOR, OF READING, IN 1699

IT is sad to think that the use of pewter in the inns of Britain has practically ceased. Just as other beverages had, and still have, their appropriate drinking vessels, so was English ale served in pewter pots—and was always considered to taste better in them. But pewter pots must be scoured and polished, which means the employment of the pot-boy; and labour nowadays is costly. So, one by one, city taverns and country inns have discarded their pewter, and even the latest of these, especially if the name of an inn is engraved upon them, will be eagerly sought in years to come.

However, we are concerned with earlier times. It is probable that the pewter pot came into general use in the mid-17th century, replacing mugs of leather and treen. What manner of vessels were they, from which our forbears drank home-brewed? Some of them are illustrated here. It cannot be said that the earlier types possess any outstanding features, but at the turn of the century they became quite decorative (Figs. 5 and 6). Their principal interest, however, lies in the name of the tavern and its landlord, which are nearly

always engraved upon them, with, in addition, his initials and those of his spouse in the familiar trianglewise arrangement on the handle.

Examples of the earliest pots are shown in Figs. 1 and 2. They are stout vessels with tapering bodies and bold sweeping handles. The broad bands encircling the drums are obviously descended from the iron bands which bound the coopered wooden vessels which preceded them. The inscriptions read, "Thomas Hutton at ye french Armes in drury lane," and "Edward — at ye Rose & Crown in Greek Streete Sohofields"; other similar examples are inscribed "Edward Comberford at ye pelican in Teton's Yard in brid lane" and "James Brayne at ye Red Lyon in Black Fryers Near Bridewell Bridg." None of these London taverns now remains, but what visions these titles conjure up!

The makers of the pots illustrated were, respectively, J.C., probably John Campion, a liveryman of the Pewterers' Company in 1662 and Upper Warden in 1681; and James Donne, who was a freeman in 1685; the average height is 6½ inches.

Occasionally the inscriptions were enclosed

in a wreathed cartouche, which is certainly more decorative. This arrangement can be seen in Fig. 3; the inscription reads, "John Little at ye Horse and Jockey in Reading (16)99"; the landlord appears to have suffered from pilferers, since the forthright warning, "If sold stole" is added above the upper band. The arms of Reading appear in the rear. The maker of this fine old pot was Henry Frewen, junior, of Reading, whose father was a member of the London Company about 1620, became a freeman of Reading in 1624, and Mayor in 1653. Another pot of the same design is inscribed "Richard Coleman in Breed, 1687" (Brede, Sussex).

A variation on Figs. 1 and 2 is shown in Fig. 4: the broad bands have become narrow mouldings with consequent loss of scale. This quart pot is inscribed "Edward Hill at ye Red Lion in ye Poultry 1670." It was found beneath the floor when this inn was demolished to make way for a bank. The maker's touch is illegible.

A notable development took place at the turn of the century. The pewterers broke away from austere functionalism and produced



4.—QUART POT INSCRIBED "EDWARD HILL AT YE RED LION IN YE POULTERY 1670." (Middle) 5.—PEWTER POT INSCRIBED "ARNOLD SWINGSCOE ATT THE GRAYHOUND ATT WORDON," MADE BY JOHN THOMAS IN 1698. (Right) 6.—POT INSCRIBED "JOHN WALLHOPE ATT THE BELL ATT TURVEY 1703"

a more ornamental vessel (Figs. 5 and 6). There is a return to the upper broad band, which is ribbed, vertically in one case and curving in the other, and in place of the lower band there is a deep skirting of alternately sunk and raised crescent decoration. The inscriptions read, "Arnold Swingscoe Att the Grayhound Att Wordon," and "John Wallhope Att the Bell Att Turvey 1703" (both in Bedfordshire) respectively. Swingscoe was born in 1666 and died in 1704, and is recorded as an alehouse keeper. John Thomas, the maker of his pot, was a member of the Pewterers' Company in 1698. The Turvey pot appears to be unmarked, but both have the crowned A.R. Excise mark.

Considerably later, after an unaccountable hiatus of nearly half a century, we come to the style which, in its turn, led up to the spate of pewter mugs of the mid- and late-19th century, some of which are interesting, but the majority dull.

The two pots illustrated in Fig. 7 belong to the third quarter of the 18th century; both bear the names of taverns long forgotten and both are well marked. That on the left is engraved "Roger Hickson at ye Duke of Cumberland Cavendish Square." It was made by William Charlesley, who received livery in the Pewterers' Company in 1738, became Master in 1764 and died in 1770. Cavendish-square was laid out during the early 18th century; a statue of the Duke was placed there in 1770 and was removed in 1868. The pot bears the initials of the landlord and his wife, and also an excise mark, this time of William III.

The history of these marks is very confused, as pieces bear the marks of later reigns and others of earlier ones. The sole explanation seems to be that these stamps were more frequently used



7.—TAVERN POTS OF THE THIRD QUARTER OF THE 18th CENTURY: THAT ON THE LEFT WAS MADE BY WILLIAM CHARLESLEY, THAT ON THE RIGHT BY ROBERT PARR

in the capital than in the provinces, and old stamps were used over and over again; whereas when licences were granted in country districts, causing the local authority to function, new punching irons were provided.

The pot to the right is engraved "Rd Applebee Falcon Falconbridge Court Soho," with trianglewise initials as before. Its maker was Robert Parr, a descendant of the famous Old Parr who was reputed to have lived to the age of 152. Parr received livery in 1740 and was Upper Warden of the Company in 1767.

This tavern has also disappeared, but

Falconberg (not Falconbridge) Court lay to the east of Soho-square, close to what is now Charing Cross-road; Parr's business was in Greek-street, close by.

The Reading pot is in the collection of Mr. Cyril Minchin, of Norcot, near Reading; those in Figs. 4 and 6 in the Victoria and Albert Museum; that in Fig. 7 in the collection of Mr. G. J. Gollin, of Ashted, to all of whom, as also to the Trustees of the Cecil Higgins Museum and Bedford Corporation in respect of the Wordon pot, I am indebted for permission to illustrate them. The remainder are in my own collection.

PIGEON-SHOOTING TECHNIQUE By N. T. FRYER

FROM the beginning of the winter I had watched the pigeons flocking into Cae Pound wood. They roosted there in old gnarled thorn bushes, which they shared with 50 or 60 magpies. The magpies flitted in singly at treetop height, but the pigeons came wheeling in high, in flocks sometimes a hundred strong, to descend in a great spiral dive. As the winter drew on more and more migrating pigeons joined the home flocks. It was some time since I had done any pigeon shooting, but this opportunity on my doorstep seemed too good to miss.

So I sent for my decoy. Now, my decoy is no common piece of cardboard cut and fashioned to a fleeting approximation of a pigeon's shape. It has been carved and shaped from a solid block of wood and painted with meticulous care. It has eyes of glass. None but a pigeon would notice it was anything but the real thing. What is more, by having a piece of string attached to it it can be made to move as though it were feeding. Unfortunately, the movement of pulling the cord from the hide causes a disturbance in the grass such as could be made only by some gigantic serpent. You can imagine the reaction in the pigeon world. Reluctantly I abandoned my string. I have been told there are decoys which open their wings at set intervals in the manner of a pigeon alighting. If so, I would dearly love to possess one.

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As it is, in spite of its excellence, my decoy has not been a great success in the past. This, I suspect, is due either to my own shortcomings as a layer of decoys, or to the fact that it invariably has to act alone. I remember the first time I used it. The pigeons were coming in to roost and I climbed to the top of a fir tree to fix it, head into wind in the approved manner. As far as I could see it looked like a pigeon which had found a comfortable roost for the night. I had two shots that evening as the pigeons came dive-bombing in, and actually shot both. My companion in the next wood killed a dozen with no decoy. I brought it out again when the snow lay on the ground and the pigeons came in to feed on the kale. I had hardly time to retreat to my hide before the first pigeon came in. It was

also the last. Even so, I have not lost confidence in the powers of attraction and eagerly waited for the post.

It arrived at last, a shapeless, curiosity-arousing parcel. I went along to the local estate agent to ask his permission to start my work of destruction. He was shocked at my request, almost as shocked as I was by his refusal, having previously been welcomed with open arms wherever I suggested shooting pigeons. On reflection I am convinced he feared I had designs on his pheasants, all three of them. I often saw them feeding in the winter sunlight on the edge of the wood. If I had really wanted them, I need not have descended to the use of such a crude and noisy device as a gun. As it was, I was content to wonder idly what would happen when nesting time came, for they were two cocks and a hen. Perhaps they were spared domestic strife, for the pair of foxes which I so often disturbed on the fringe of the wood certainly did have designs on them, even if I had not.

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I opened my eyes one morning and there in the tree outside my very bedroom window was a pigeon. I was out of bed in an instant. Precious seconds ticked by while I hunted for the key of the gun-case, and more while I assembled the gun. Then at last I crept back into the bedroom. The pigeon was still there and, stalking it from behind the dressing-table, I had an easy shot. It fell with a resounding thud, but, alas, in the middle of the road.

It was a time for a quick decision. The road is not a main road but, on the other hand, it is always quite busy in the early morning. If a car came along before I got there, all I would find would be a mangled corpse of little use for the pot. I dashed out clad as I was, in pyjamas and slippers, and retrieved my pigeon. Within half an hour I had shot another, in spite of murmured protests from my wife. She was pleased to eat them later.

From that day onwards we had a steady supply of pigeons for the pot. The tree, a wild locust, was just coming into leaf and the

pigeons seemed to find the leaves to their liking. I evolved a technique which meant quick access to the gun and also speed in retrieving combined with respectability of dress. An old pair of trousers over pyjamas, a mack and a hat comprised my shooting dress. The gun was left ready and the cartridges at hand. The front door, opened 6 ins., provided cover and a rest. From bed to bed it took three minutes.

Now pigeons may not be greatly interested in worms, but they are certainly early birds. The time came when the tree began to flower, when they started breakfast soon after five. Reluctant to awake the neighbours, I would lie in bed watching two or three pigeons devouring the white buds and waiting patiently for seven o'clock. Eventually, the neighbours felt that a rude awakening was better than a steadily diminishing patch of cabbage plants and I was encouraged to shoot at any hour.

There are some, perhaps, who are saying that this was no sport. Maybe they are right. There was no skill in the shooting, but there was a thrill in the stealthily opened door and the bird retrieved from under the wheels of a van.

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It was too good to last, of course. It wasn't that the supply of pigeons ran out; and I had bought another box of cartridges. One morning, though, the dead pigeon did not fall with the usual thud. It remained hanging there in the tree. It was still there two hours later at half-past seven, so I tried to dislodge it with another charge of shot, but with no success. We hoped for a gale and the wind got up before the day was out, but the pigeon only swung gently from side to side.

Now the anomaly is that a bird or a decoy set in lifelike attitude will in general attract others, whereas a bird so obviously dead as mine was is a sure deterrent. So we have not seen another pigeon in our tree. As I write the corpse is still there, with its wings outstretched after the manner of a cormorant on the rocks, except that its feet do not appear to rest upon visible means of support. It remains a monument and a memorial to those other pigeons that went into the pot.