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ENGLISH COMMEMORATIVE PORRINGERS IN PEWTER

By RONALD F. MICHAELIS

Hon. Librarian of the Society of Pewter Collectors

O What's the rhyme to porringer?
Ken ye the rhyme to porringer?
King James the seventh had ae dochter
And he g'ae her to an Oranger.
Ken ye how he requited him?
Ken ye how he requited him?
The lad has into England come
And ta'en the Crown in spite of him.

IT is strange, indeed, that the author of this old Scottish ballad should have chosen the word "porringer" as the theme of his rhyme, for it is with William, "the Oranger", later King William III of England, that the two-eared types of commemorative porringers first came into fashion in England.

It is as well to state, at

the outset, that these porringers with relief cast bosses in the base, and sometimes with a cover similarly decorated, were by no means intended for everyday use but were, undoubtedly, made purely for ornamental purposes and, in fact, generally to commemorate some specific historical event.

Poringers of plain, undecorated type, but otherwise similar in body formation, with only one fretted ear, or "lug", had for long been popular in England for utilitarian purposes, and their use continued long after the commemorative types ceased to be made. By their charm and variety they will always rank as firm favourites with many serious pewter collectors.



Fig. 1. A Commemorative Porringer, with its cover, depicting William III and Mary, circa 1689.

Made by John Waite, London.

Diameter of bowl $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Length overall, from tip to tip of ears, $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

(In possession of Mr. Ledlie I. Laughlin, Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.)

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It is, nevertheless, not with these, nor with a much earlier type of two-eared porringer, which had its hey-day during the 16th century and on into the first quarter of the 17th century, that I intend to devote the following space.

Suffice it to say that, as from *circa* 1625, it had been the practice for English pewterers to make utilitarian porringers with one ear only, but just why the original two-eared types were discontinued abruptly, and just why the one-eared types held the field unopposed for so long, will probably remain yet another of the mysteries which surround the early workings of the pewterers' craft.

It is, therefore, all the more surprising that, as if at a given signal, several pewterers, long established in the traditions of their trade, should turn their attention to the production of a purely ornamental type, not wholly English in conception, but a type which had some strong similarities with contemporary Dutch and other Continental examples.

Since the first known examples of English commemorative porringers bear medallion portraits of William III, or of William and Mary, it is, perhaps, reasonable to suppose that the idea might have been brought to this country by Dutch pewterers in the train of the Oranger king. The fact remains, however, that the makers, whose marks appear on these pieces, were, without exception, established English craftsmen.

Very little has been written in this country about these very interesting pieces, but both the

late Howard H. Cotterell and Monsieur Adolphe Riff, one time Conservator of the Museums of Strasbourg, both eminent authorities on the subject of antique pewter, wrote copiously on them for publication in an American antiques journal during the years 1927 and 1928. Several other writers added photographs and details of specimens which came to light in later years, so that now, with the addition of a few further examples which have come to my knowledge since those days, I have been able to draw up a formidable list of some fourteen or fifteen known porringers, each with distinctly commemorative features.

Pewter collectors on both sides of the Atlantic will be familiar with the two examples which are illustrated in Cotterell's *Old Pewter, its Makers and Marks*. Both of these, formerly in the collection of the late Mr. A. B. Yeates, are now housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London, and, so far as I am aware, only one other commemorative porringer of this type remains in this country. At least six of the others have found a resting place in the United States of America, where it is, at least, gratifying to note, they receive the deference which is their just due, whilst the remainder are either in the hands of museum authorities on the Continent of Europe, or their whereabouts are not now known.

A distinctive feature of all examples in this range is the relief cast ornamentation in the centre of the bowl, and in those which still retain their respective

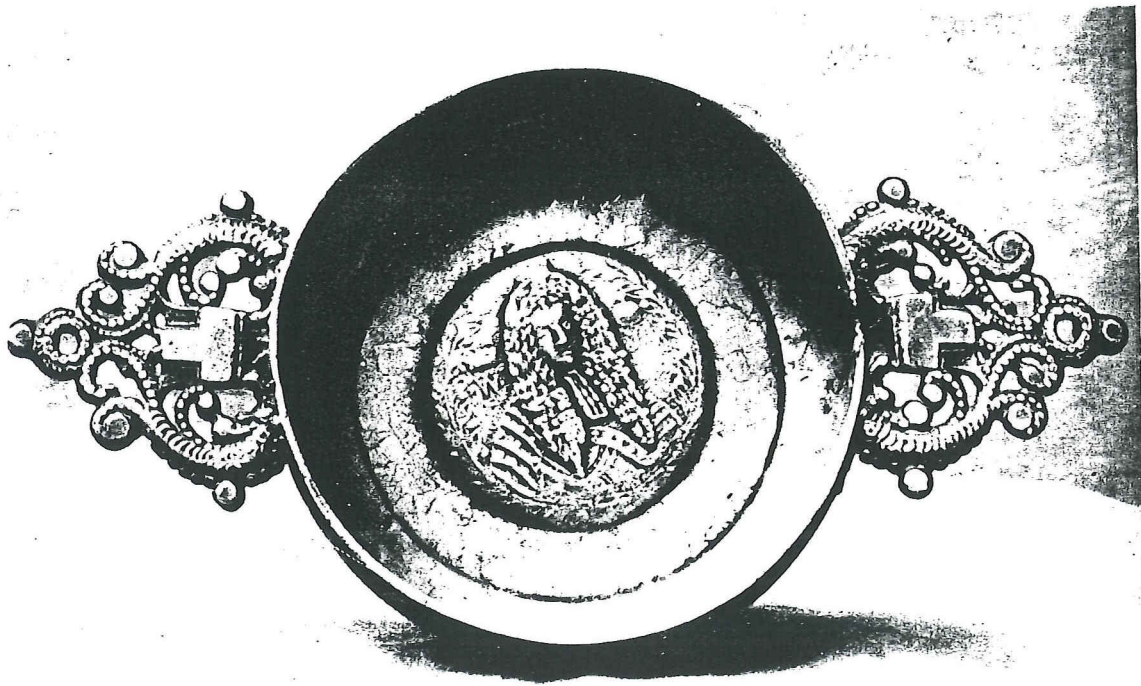


Fig. 2. Porringer with Medallion portrait bust of William III, alone, *circa* 1695. Maker doubtful, but probably Samuel Lawrence, London.

Originally in possession of Mons. Adolphe Riff, Strasbourg.

covers) the incidence, on the cover, of intricate cast ornamentation which is intended to bear some relationship to the bowl design.

It is justifiable to believe that, in the first instance, each known specimen was complete with a cover; this is a practice which was common on the Continent with normal types of porringers, or *équelles*, which were in daily use.

The covers of French porringers, for instance, frequently had three ornamental handles

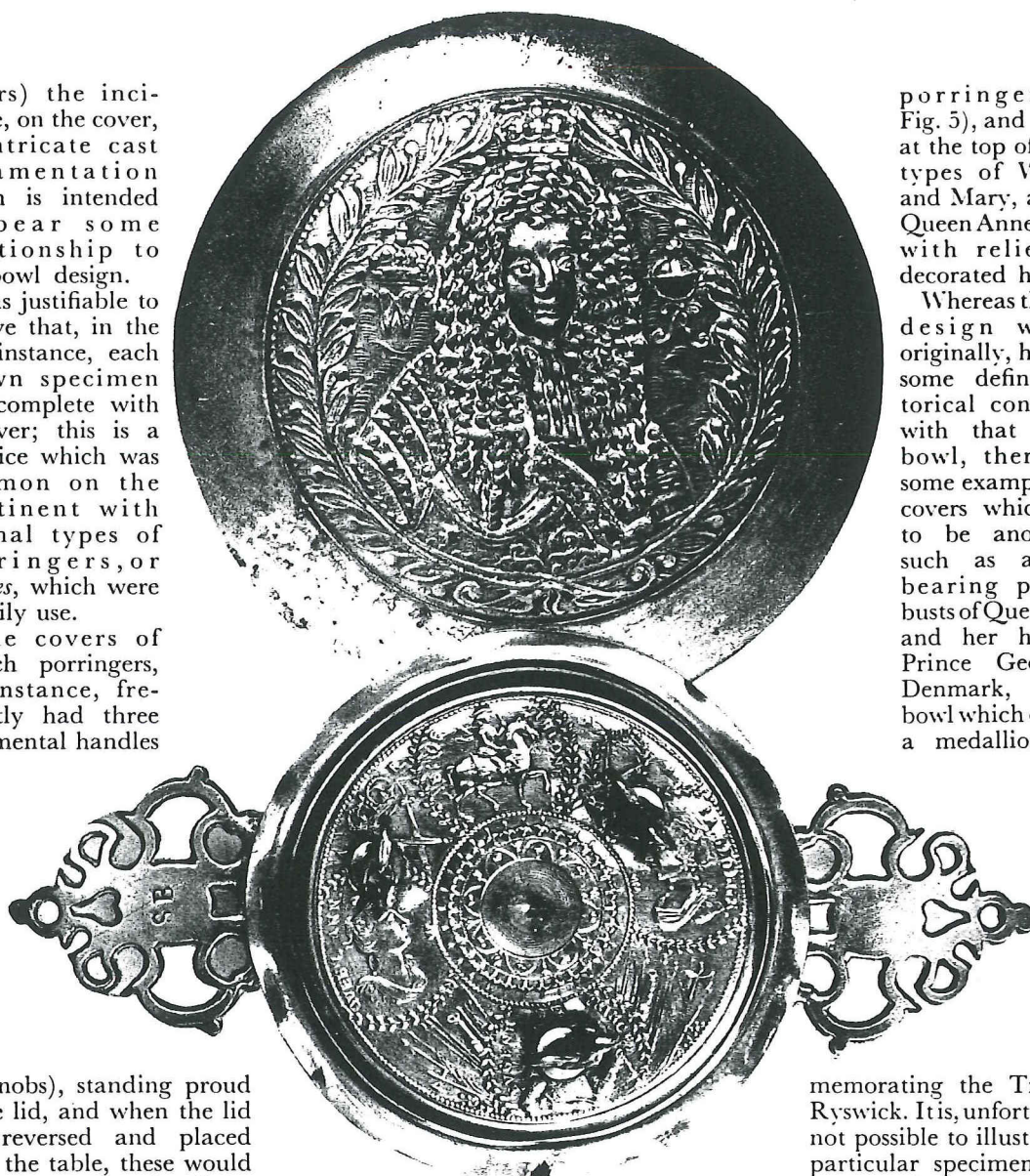


Fig. 3. Enlargement of bowl medallion, and the bowl with its cover; the bowl of circa 1695, and the cover of circa 1704. Made by Samuel Lawrence, London.

(Owned by a Philadelphia family, direct descendants of the "S.B." (Samuel Brown, 1694-1769), whose initials appear on one handle of the bowl.)

(or knobs), standing proud of the lid, and when the lid was reversed and placed upon the table, these would act as feet to keep it off the wood and the cover could be (and was) used as a stand for the porringer itself.

The handles on the covers of our own commemorative types are, in the majority of examples, placed in such a position as to be readily used for this purpose. In only one or two instances is there only one ornamental knob, or motif, placed in the centre of the cover.

These knobs, themselves, are worth a second glance, for they vary in design, some being in the form of a cockerel; others (such as one in the Victoria and Albert Museum) of a lion sejant, set three times on the cover, and yet another having two cherubs holding aloft a crown, repeated three times. This latter is a device which is also prominently displayed in the bowl of at least one

porringer (see Fig. 5), and is found at the top of several types of William and Mary, and also Queen Anne spoons, with relief cast decorated handles.¹

Whereas the cover design would, originally, have had some definite historical connection with that of the bowl, there exist some examples with covers which seem to be anomalous, such as a cover bearing portrait busts of Queen Anne and her husband, Prince George of Denmark, upon a bowl which contains a medallion com-

memorating the Treaty of Ryswick. It is, unfortunately, not possible to illustrate this particular specimen at the present time; it was, however, shown in the American magazine *Antiques* in October, 1927 (the piece then being in the possession of Mrs. A. W. Thayer, of Dedham, Massachusetts, but its present location is

unknown).

The Treaty of Ryswick was effected in 1697 and so it is obvious that neither Queen Anne nor her husband could have had much to do with it! A cover which accompanies that in Fig. 4 would, in all probability, have been the type on Mrs. Thayer's porringer when it left the hands of its maker.

A fact which seems to confirm the possibility of an interchange of covers is that Mrs. Thayer herself (a lady of English ancestry) wrote to the

(1) See "Royal Portrait Spoons in Pewter" by R. F. Michaelis, in *Apollo Magazine*, June, 1950.

late Professor P. E. Raymond, of Harvard University, as follows: "When I was a child we had eight of these pewter basins. I well remember them being filled with cream—a fine sight. In moving, I kept only one."²

If one considers that these eight porringers were possibly of differing designs, and commemorating different events, then it is quite conceivable (and, in fact, it seems almost certain) that the covers became interchanged some time during their lifetime.

The only other known specimen of a "Ryswick" porringer, in this case with correct cover, is one which was illustrated in the *Connoisseur* for June, 1909, page 121. The name of the owner was not

Fig. 1 shows both porringer and cover, each bearing portraits of William III and Mary. At the foot of the cover design is a monogram formed of the initials "W.R." and "M.R." (William Rex and Mary Regina). The maker, whose mark appears beneath one of the ears, was one John Waite, of London, a pewterer who took his freedom in the craft in 1670, and whose touchmark (No. 224 on the London touchplate in possession of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers) was struck on March 19, 1673. The porringer has a bowl diameter of 5½ inches.

There is a further example by this maker, with similar bowl and cover decoration, but with a bowl diameter of 6 inches, at the Essex Institute Museum,



Fig. 4. Porringer commemorating the Treaty of Ryswick, 1697, and its cover. Maker unknown. (Reproduced by courtesy of the "Connoisseur".)

stated at the time, and the present Editor informs me that it is not possible to say now to whom it belonged, as their records of that date have been destroyed. No original photograph is available, but it is possible to say that the bowl itself is identical to that of Mrs. Thayer's specimen. The bowl medallion shows a full length figure of the Duke of Marlborough, bearing in his hand a banner with the words "To Europe peace I give, Let Nations happy live"; a very definite allusion to the Treaty of Ryswick, 1697. There is further confirmation, however, in that the seven tails of a flail carried in Marlborough's other hand terminate in a tangled mass, forming the monogram of "Ryswick".

The cover shows good full-face portrait busts of William and Mary, the former being almost identical to that in the bowls of the porringers in Figs. 2 and 3. At the top of the cover design appears a crown, and at the foot an orb. The three knobs on the cover are in the form of cockerels.*

Salem, Massachusetts, U.S.A.; another, of similar decoration, also 6 inches in diameter, and by John Waite, is at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and yet another, identical in all respects, but without a maker's mark, is in the possession of Mr. Harrold E. Gillingham, of Philadelphia.

Fig. 2 shows a porringer bowl with medallion portrait bust of William III alone. No photograph is available of the cover, but it can be said that this varies from all those shown in the accompanying illustrations.

The cover bears small medallions of both William and Mary, rather more well delineated than those in Fig. 1; Mary to the left and William on the the right, both facing inwards. At the top of the cover are two cherubs holding aloft a crown,

(2) Note in the Bulletin of the Pewter Collectors' Club of America, No. 16, July, 1945.

*Since the above was written we have received permission from the Editor of *Connoisseur* to reproduce the illustration (Fig. 4) to which reference is made. The somewhat poor quality of the reproduction is due to the fact that our block had, perforce, to be made from the printed page.—Ed.

and at the foot, the monogram initials "W.R.M.R.". In the centre of bowl is the Royal Coat of Arms (or perhaps it would be truer to say the four separate shields of England, Scotland, Ireland and France), each shield being separated from its neighbour by the entwined initials "W.M.". Encircling these Arms is a garter with the legend "HONI·SOIT·QUI·MAL·Y·PENSE".

In 1927 this porringer was in the possession of Mons. Adolphe Riff, and he then stated that it bore the touch of one Henry Smith, London, a pewterer who did not take his freedom until 1724, nor did he strike his touch on the London touchplate until 1726. It is now believed that this touch was mis-read by Mons. Riff, and that it does, in fact, bear the mark of Samuel Lawrence, of Lynn (Norfolk), and London, a pewterer who took his freedom in London on March 22, 1687, but who did not

strike his touch on the London touchplate, probably because he returned to Norfolk to ply his trade. Following Riff's publication of the information that his porringer bore the mark of Henry Smith, Cotterell checked one of the specimens of similar type, then in the collection of the late Mr. A. B. Yeates, but now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and he stated that the Yeates' example also bore Henry Smith's touch. This specimen has since been examined by myself, and there is no doubt whatsoever that it does *not* bear Henry Smith's touch.

Only one initial "S" is visible on the Yeates' porringer, and Cotterell no doubt assumed that this was of the surname initial of Smith; other

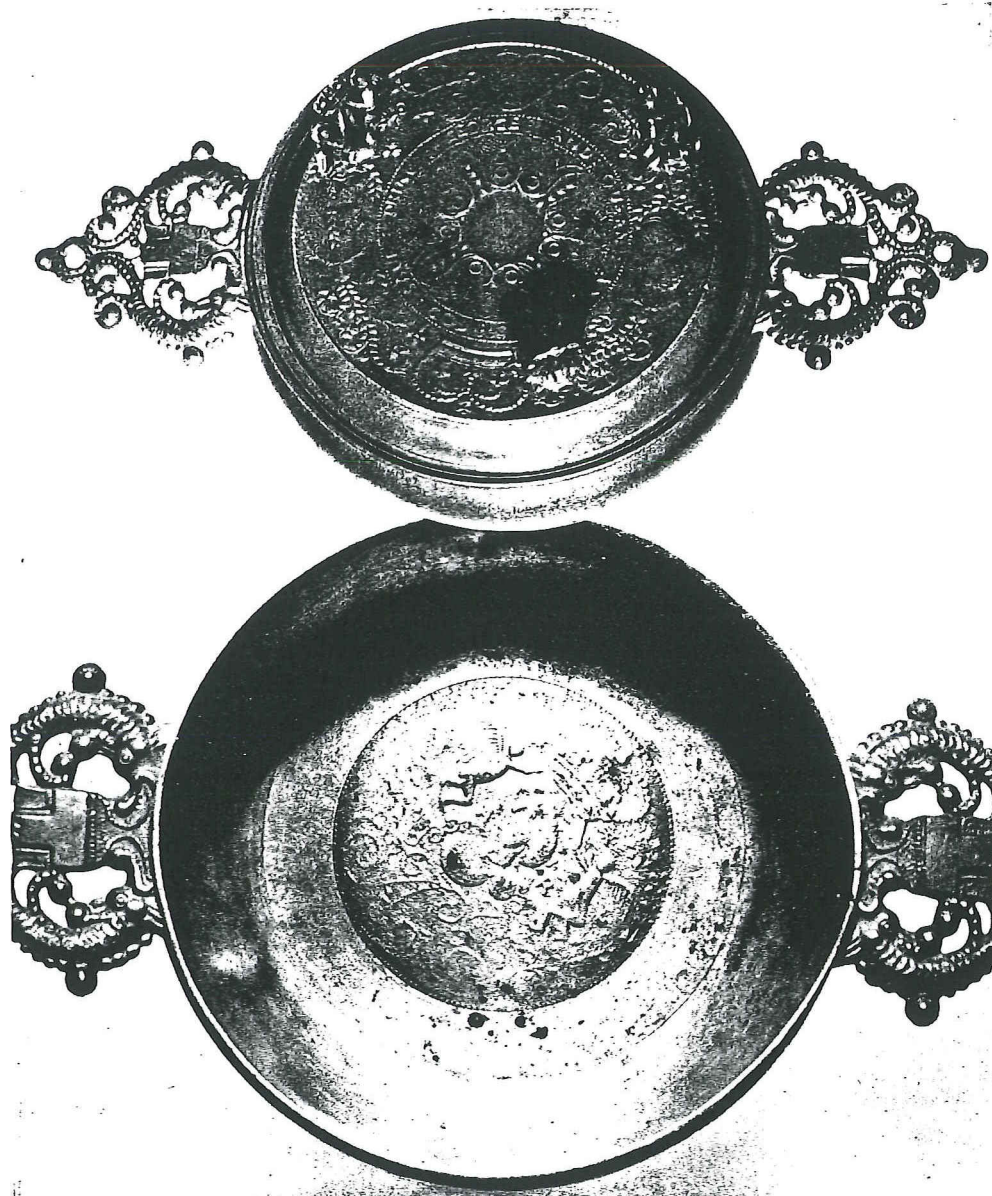


Fig. 5. Porringer with Queen Anne portrait in the bowl, and with cover depicting Queen Anne, and her husband, Prince George of Denmark, circa 1702. No maker's mark.
(In the possession of Mr. A. J. Pennypacker, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.)

details of the mark are not very clear, but I have now traced Samuel Lawrence's mark on two other William III porringers, with identical bowl medallion to that in Fig. 2, and have satisfied myself, *beyond doubt*, that the Yeates' specimen bears the same mark as the others. This mark was not known to Cotterell, and was not shown in his *Old Pewter, its Makers and Marks*.

Thus, of the five known porringers with William III in the bowl, three definitely bear the mark of Samuel Lawrence, whilst one of the other two is stated to be by Henry Smith. What mark appeared on the fifth specimen is not recorded.

The mark of Samuel Lawrence is a small beaded circle, in which is a standing figure of St. Lawrence,



Fig. 6. Unique example of Commemorative Porringer, depicting the Duke of Marlborough, and its cover which bears a portrait bust of Queen Anne. Probably circa 1704. No maker's mark.
(In possession of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

holding in his hand a gridiron, and with the initials "S" and "L", one on either side. As stated, this mark was not recorded by Cotterell, but that of Samuel's son, Edward Lawrence, is shown, and this, too, also incorporates St. Lawrence with his grid.

Fig. 3 shows one of the aforementioned William III porringers which are by Samuel Lawrence, and the other is in my own collection.

Only the bowl medallion and the cover of that in Fig. 3 are shown. The cover is of especial interest, although it was obviously not the original cover for this particular bowl, for it commemorates the Battle of Blenheim (August 14, 1704), at which Frederick Christian Ginkel, 2nd Earl of Athlone, distinguished himself, as also did Prince Eugene, of Savoy, as colleagues of the famous Duke of Marlborough. This cover incorporates portrait ovals of Queen Anne and Prince George, appropriately named in the margin; at the top is the mounted figure of the Earl of Athlone; and, at the foot, a portrait (obscured) of Prince Eugene. There can be no doubt of the subject of this lower portrait, for the name "Prince Eugene" appears in the surround. The three knobs are in the form of cockerels.

It would seem that this cover might more appropriately accompany the porringer in Fig. 5, or some other with a more definite link with Marlborough than has its present companion bowl.

The fifth specimen of this type was stated by Mons. Riff to be contained in the Museum of

Decorative Art in Dresden, but the authorities were unable to trace this in 1955, and it must be presumed to have been lost in the Second World War.

The porringer in Fig. 5 is of a type of which no other similar example is known. The bowl displays a bust of Queen Anne, with monogram initials "A.R." at the foot, and cherubs holding aloft a crown at her head. This latter device also appears in the cover knobs. The cover itself incorporates profile busts of Queen Anne and Prince George, with a band of wording, reading: "GOD SAUE PRINC GEORGE AND QUEEN ANN". This piece is in the possession of Mr. A. J. Pennypacker, an American collector who acquired it from a Pennsylvania family in whose hands it had remained since its original arrival in the United States.

Finally, in Fig. 6, by the courtesy of the Directors of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, I am able to illustrate for the first time a superb example in the possession of that museum. The bowl of this porringer contains a good full-face portrait bust of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, with legend below, "I. D. MARLBOROUGH", and the cover displays, at the top, a profile bust of Queen Anne, facing to left; the cartouche supported by two full-length female figures; at the foot of the design is a seated figure with a lion, shield and sceptre (or trident), encircled by the word "BRITANNIA". At right and left of the cover, respectively, are representations of the Rose of

England, and the Thistle of Scotland. The three little knobs on the cover appear to represent doves.

The ears of this porringer are of a type found frequently on normal English single-eared porringers, from *circa* 1690 onwards. Those on this particular piece, however, have each lost the tip, which originally would have incorporated a hole by which the porringer might hang upon a wall or dresser.

Of the various handles, or ears, shown in these illustrations, those of Figs. 1 and 3 are of a type which is the most common of all on English porringers. Nevertheless, it also appears on some German and other Continental examples, and on many later American porringers. In England it was in use from *circa* 1675 onwards; and during a similar period on the Continent.

The handles on the pieces in Figs. 2, 4 and 5 are, however, essentially un-English in type, and, in fact, have not been found on any other types of English porringer.

Such handles were, however, to be seen on two plain bowl two-eared Dutch porringers which were illustrated in the American journal *Antiques*, and about which a former editor, in an editorial article (July, 1928), asked: "What can these Dutch porringers mean except that our presumably English commemorative porringers are essentially Dutch in type? Cast in England they probably were; dignified with an English touchmark they undoubtedly were. But whence came the moulds?"

My own beliefs are:

(i) that it was Continental influence which instigated the use of *two* ears, when it had, for so long, been customary for English pewterers to apply one ear only;

(ii) that the whole conception of the commemorative porringer, as a type, is of Continental (probably Dutch) origin;

(iii) that some, at least, of the ear moulds were designed by Dutch pewterers in this country, or were, perhaps, imported from the Netherlands; and

(iv) that the pewterers, whose touches appear on all the known marked specimens, must be considered the actual makers and not merely the factors for disposing of pieces made overseas for the English market.

The Pewterers' Company was, at this time, as always, very much averse to allowing the importation of foreign wares which, after all, would have done considerable harm to the trade which it was the Company's function to protect. Nor would the Company allow of the working in England, in their own right, of foreign craftsmen who might have come over as followers of the Dutch king. It is quite possible, however, that such men might have taken service with English master pewterers and, in that event, they would have been required to strike the touch of their master upon any wares produced by them in his employment.

Such wares must, however, necessarily rank as the productions of the men whose touch they bear.

It is doubtful whether any further information on this vexed question is likely to be unearthed from the records of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers. These records have been very thoroughly scoured for information of one sort or another, and whilst they have yielded much new data on London master pewterers and their apprentices, nothing spectacular relating to the workings of the trade itself, not already known, has emerged.

Failing the production of definite proof to the contrary, it seems safe to assume that the commemorative porringer was, in fact, an English production, albeit it might have been conceived elsewhere.

In conclusion I would like to thank the Editor of the American journal *Antiques* for so kindly loaning me the prints of the illustrations at Figs. 2, 3 and 5 (and others which I have been unable to use here), and also the authorities of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, for details and photograph of their own example, shown in Fig. 6.

Fig. 1 is of a porringer in the possession of Mr. Ledlie I. Laughlin, of Princetown, New Jersey, U.S.A., to whom I am indebted for much useful information.

Should any reader of these notes know of the whereabouts of any of the missing specimens, or know of hitherto unrecorded examples of commemorative porringers, the writer would be grateful for the information, c/o the Editor of this journal.

OUR COVER ILLUSTRATION

PERPETUATION of his achievements, consciously or not, is in the mind of every creative artist whatever his medium. When Philip Miller designed his "Physick Garden" for his patron, Sir Hans Sloane, if he secretly hoped to go down to posterity, he achieved his ambition in a perhaps unexpected form. For it could not have then been foreseen that two hundred years later the adaptation of his botanical pictures as decoration by the Chelsea China Factory would rank as the highest treasures of English porcelain collectors.

Rare and beautiful as are the Hans Sloane flower paintings on red anchor period Chelsea plates, they are even more rare and beautiful on the infrequently found large circular dishes of the dimensions of the outstanding specimen owned by Messrs. Tilley & Co. (Antiques), Ltd., and shown on the front cover of this issue.

This dish, which is 14 ins. in diameter, marked with the small early red anchor, was exhibited at the Tournai-Chelsea Exhibition in 1951. It is a magnificent example of Hans Sloane botanical decoration. Bold, brilliant green leaves are set beside a flowering spray, and the scattered flowers on the border, the butterflies, caterpillar, ladybird and insect by the famous "shadow painter" leave a satisfying proportion of the superb porcelain to form a perfect background for the glowing colours.