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wrong to make it appear that this country's prosperity depended on coal. What mattered much more than mineral resources were the country's energy and enterprise which would help to obtain and import American coal when British coal resources had been exhausted.

The views expressed by the Government and the House of Commons in those days are naturally the reflection of the belief then common in this country; the belief that our economic position depended upon our brains and the flexibility of our economic structure, not upon the presence of this or that physical asset in this country. It was taken for granted that our national resources should and must find employment in those fields where they would give the maximum return rather than in maintaining,

irrespective of costs, production and employment of labour in certain fields.

What is our objective today? Is it our objective to produce the maximum amount of British coal with only a marginal attention to qualities? Is it our objective to give employment to the maximum number of miners, or is it our objective to provide all users with fuels at the lowest price and with the minimum capital outlay? I realise that strategic and political circumstances must affect our policy decisions. However, I contend that it is now essential that we clarify these issues separately.

Our energy policy now completely hamstringing our industrial activity, and ties up vast resources which could be better employed elsewhere.—*Third Programme*

## What to Look for in Collecting Pewter

By RONALD F. MICHAELIS

I HAVE frequently heard the view expressed by owners of pewter-ware that because a piece does not bear a legible maker's mark it is of comparatively little importance. This view is completely false. If one were to take at random, say, a dozen pieces of antique pewter-ware, and were to examine these closely, it is probable that only about half of them would be found to bear a mark of any sort punched into the metal. Such a mark would be, in all probability, that impressed on the article by the maker himself at the time of manufacture, with the object of enabling him and others to recognise the piece as of his particular workmanship. Other marks may also be found on some items, and I hope to clarify some of these as we proceed.

The practice of affixing a distinguishing mark on objects of pewter-ware has doubtless been employed from time immemorial, and it is not uncommon to find that even Roman pewterers sometimes placed some mark, such as their name crudely scratched, on the underside of vessels. In all probability this was done merely as a matter of pride in a job well finished, in the same way as Roman potters and stonemasons sometimes inscribed a name or device on the pots or brickwork on which they worked.

In later years, however, especially in England, the guilds which controlled the pewterers' trade made laws which were designed to ensure that the maker's own mark was placed on his wares and, furthermore, that each man's mark should be different from another's. In London the trade was regulated by the Pewterers' Company, from its Hall in Lime Street in the City, and we are fortunate that the Company's written records go back to the early fourteenth century.

It is, however, not until the year 1550 that any mention is made of the fact that makers' marks should be recorded in the Pewterers' Hall. The method adopted for this purpose was to have a flat sheet of lead or pewter on which the steel die containing the maker's allotted mark was struck; this mark to be exactly similar to that which he used upon his wares.

From the earliest times the Company had established standards of quality for the alloys which were used in the making of pewter, and certain specific articles, such as plates and 'flatware' generally, were to be made of one quality of metal, whilst tankards, flagons, and other 'hollow-ware' were to be made of another. Tin was the most expensive of the ingredients, and unscrupulous pewterers would sometimes use a lesser amount of

likely pieces to bear readable marks, and since the majority of those still in existence were made during the eighteenth century it is exceedingly likely that the marks will be found recorded in collectors' literature.

*The History of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers of London* was published in 1902, and at the back of the second volume are full-

tin, and a greater amount of lead or other metal, in the melting-pot their wares were cast from.

When these were tested, by men specially appointed for that purpose, and the pewter-ware was found to be wanting in quality, the offending pewterer was in the first instance severely reprimanded, but for later offences could be fined heavily, or even lose the right to practise the trade at all. Therefore it was of major importance that the maker should strike a mark on his wares by which he could be known during his working life.

Not much is known of makers' marks before the time of Elizabeth I, other than that they were, as a rule, exceedingly small, circular marks about a quarter of an inch or less in diameter, usually with initials only of the maker. It is also unlikely that any but the specialist will have found more than one or two pieces which can be safely attributed to the seventeenth century. It is more probable that the average collection will comprise a few plates or dishes of periods around the seventeen-fifties and a selection of Victorian drinking pots of one sort or another. Plates and dishes will be the most



English baluster-shaped wine measure, c. 1600, with the crowned 'HR' mark

*Victoria and Albert Museum*



Queen Anne tankard bearing the crowned 'AR'

sized reproductions of the five pewter touchplates bearing makers' marks dating from about 1640 onwards to the beginning of the nineteenth century. These touchplates are still in the possession of the Company. It was not until many years later that the full significance of the marks was known, for unfortunately no list of the pewterers who struck the marks has been found with the records.

In 1929, the late Howard H. Cotterell produced *Old Pewter, Its Makers and Marks*, and in this he was able to allocate the majority of the touchplate marks to known pewterers, and much research has been done since to establish the ownership of many more. In Cotterell's book, also, the touchplates themselves are reproduced in a much more useful form. Many more marks than those on the touchplates are also recorded, and the true enthusiast will find, in time, that the book is an invaluable reference.

Generally speaking, the early seventeenth-century makers' marks were small and circular, but occasionally were slightly oval, not usually more than half an inch in diameter, the outer edge formed of a series of dots, and thus known as 'beaded circles', or 'beaded ovals', as the case may be. Inside these shapes would be found the maker's initials (with, perhaps, some simple device adopted as his 'trade mark'). Before the end of the century the marks were made larger, and in shapes other than as described, and frequently had the owner's Christian name and surname in full.

Again, speaking generally, in the case of English pewterers the main touch would be struck once only on the back of plates and dishes, but this touch was sometimes supplemented by a subsidiary mark depicting the rose and crown, sometimes also with the word 'London' (or some other town name) incorporated in the framework. Foreign pewterers also used the rose and crown mark, but there are differences in style which are apparent when they are compared side by side. Foreign pewterers frequently struck their mark twice, or even three times, on an object, and this practice is often the main distinguishing feature between the two.

On English plates and flatware it may be found that there are four smaller marks (usually on the front), set in a line in the same manner as silver hallmarks, and these may also be classed as subsidiary marks. Their purpose was twofold. Primarily, they were placed there to give the impression, at first glance, that the pewter-ware was of silver and thus give a fillip to the snobbery of the owner. The Goldsmiths' Company of London on several occasions complained to the Master and Wardens of the Pewterers' Company of this practice, and asked for its discontinuance, but without lasting result. Secondly, these marks came to be used for a definite purpose. In most cases the initials which appear in one or another of them will be found to be the same as those in the maker's touchmark, but occasionally the two will be found not to agree, and the theory has now been accepted that, in such cases, the touchmark on the back of the plate will be that of the actual maker, and that the simulated 'hallmarks' will be those of the middleman who, although a pewterer himself, had the plates made for him by another pewterer, perhaps specialising in flatware, who worked 'for the trade'.

The marks on pewter plates are generally clearly visible even though the piece is, perhaps, a couple of hundred years old; examples of plates and dishes may be found, however, of which the backs have been highly polished, and nothing but the faintest semblance of a mark remains. Such plates will, in all probability, have come from some district of Wales, where it is the almost universal practice to turn the face of the plates towards the wall for cleanliness' sake, and to keep the backs highly polished to give the dresser an elegant appearance.

Pewterers marked other types of pieces in different ways, and it is a surprising fact that men working in widely separated areas usually selected the same spot on a similar article for the

impression. For example, the earliest types of flagons, produced in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, had the mark (if it appeared at all) on the back of the handle. Later flagons and tankards up to the end of the eighteenth century will be found to have the mark struck on the base inside the piece. Often there will be a deposit of corrosion or dirt inside these early drinking pots, and the mark can easily be overlooked if not searched for carefully. Measures of baluster form, with a flat, hinged cover are never marked in that way, but the mark (again where it appears at all) will be found round the lip somewhere near the handle or, very occasionally, on the lid itself.

The types of mark which seem to confuse most collectors are those multitudinous small stampings which are sometimes found round the rims of nineteenth-century tankards and measures. They should not be confused with makers' marks—indeed, makers seldom marked their pewter in this period. These small punched devices are, in fact, those applied by local area inspectors of weights and measures, and merely signify that, from time to time, the piece has been tested for capacity and found correct. Excise stampings of this type were not confined to the nineteenth century, but were more prolifically used at that time.

Some early seventeenth-century baluster-shaped wine measures have been found with a punched mark of hR, surmounted by a crown. This mark is believed to relate to Henry VII (or, rather, to testify that the measure conforms to the standard set up in that reign). The original capacity of measures of Henry VII are deposited in the Jewel Tower at Westminster. Excise stampings of WR and crown; or AR and crown, relate to William III and Queen Anne, respectively; and GR marks are sometimes followed by the Roman numerals for II, III, or IV, according to the reign to which they relate. William IV marks are merely the initial W followed by a crown and the Roman IV. Victorian stampings will generally be self-evident by the inclusion of the



An example of imitation 'hallmarks' (bottom) used by a London pewterer on a plate of c. 1680. At the top are the owner's initials

initials VR somewhere in the device.

The fact that a piece of pewter bears a dateable Excise stamping does not necessarily place it as having been made in the reign in which it was stamped: it could be much earlier than the stamping, but it could not possibly have been made later. Although HR relates to measures conforming to the standard of Henry VII, such marks were used, at least in London, to well into the eighteenth century. Similarly, a mark of WR and crown, which originally would have been struck in the reign of William III, has been found on much later pieces, and it is evident that the inspectors sometimes used old punches to signify their examinations, without due regard to the device of the punch.

It is problems such as these which lend so much charm to the collection of old pewter, and the enthusiast will learn to study things other than marks in deciding the age or relative merits of his pieces. As in the collection of old porcelain, there are criteria of shape and quality in pewter-ware which should be taken into consideration first, and only then should the mark be examined to confirm or confute the diagnosis arrived at. Some of the finest pieces of old pewter have no visible marks at all, for it is a regrettable fact that many pewterers ignored the oft-repeated edicts of their Guild in this respect; but good pieces should not be despised for this reason.

Some genuinely old pieces have been 'embellished' with faked touches, supposedly to enhance their interest or value; and many faked pieces of otherwise rare style have been made, complete with a replica of an old or well-known mark, mainly to ensnare those collectors who place more reliance on a maker's mark than they do on the knowledge which can come only after a long and diligent study of their subject.—*Network Three*