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*To the Society of Pewter Collectors
with the author's Compliments.
R. J. Michaelis*

EARLY STUART PEWTER

from Cotehele, Co. Cornwall

By
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IN 1947, Cotehele, the most important Tudor house in England, had the added distinction of being the first house to be offered to the National Trust by the Treasury, which had accepted it in part payment of death duties on the property of the sixth Earl of Mount Edgcumbe.

One of the results of this upheaval was that the large collection of family pewterware, most of which had remained undisturbed at Cotehele for upwards of 300 years, was found surplus to requirements by the new Trustees and it came upon the open market in 1956.

Such an important sale gave pewter collectors an unrivalled opportunity of acquiring some superb examples of pewterware dating from the early 17th century which were not only

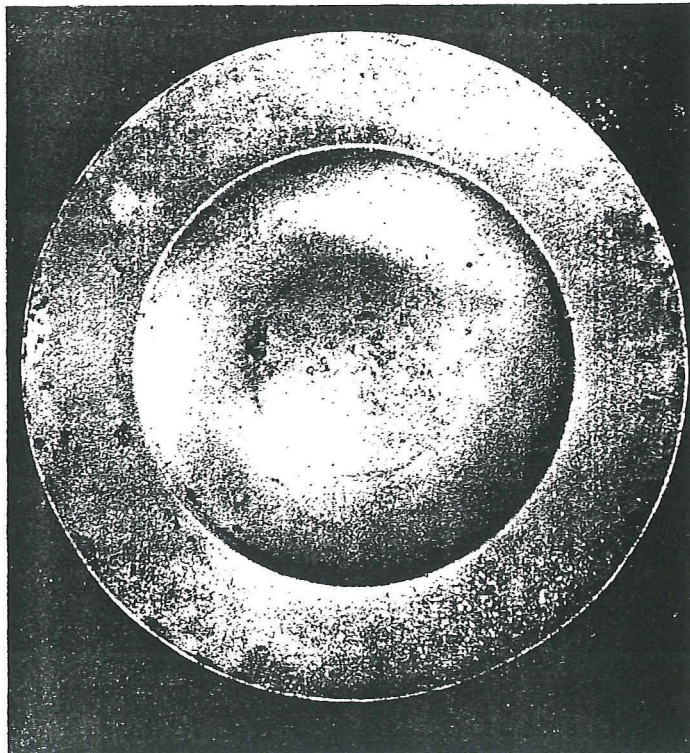


Fig. 1. Fine broad-rimmed charger with centre boss, 19½ inches overall diameter, rim 3½ inches. Circa 1630-40. Initials of Sir Thomas Coteele at top.

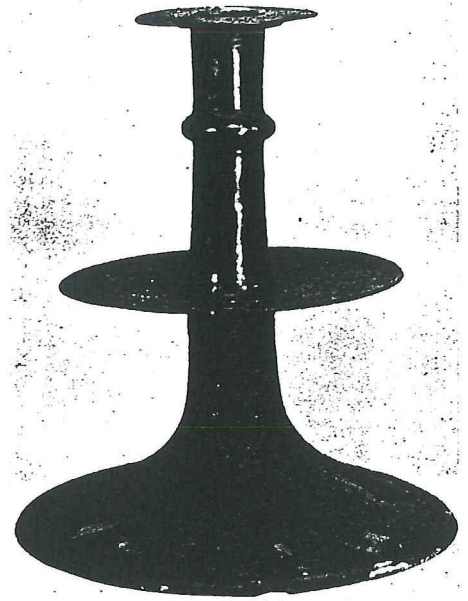


Fig. 2. Trumpet based candlestick, one of a pair at Cotehele, with loose sconce in position. Height 11¾ inches, with a base spread of 9¾ inches. Circa 1650-60. (Photo: Sotheby & Co.)

unique, but which were fully authenticated by virtue of the fact that they had remained *in situ* for many generations.

Many of these pieces, particularly plates, dishes and chargers, bore heraldic emblems or ownership initials, both of the Edgcumbe family and of other families which had married into it, and, in this connection, it is fortunate that the present Earl of Mount Edgcumbe was able to assist with particulars of the ownership of some of these initialled pieces. For example, some plates and dishes which did not display armorial bearings were, nevertheless, embellished with ownership initials on the face of the rim, such as "M. E." which, obviously, related to Mount Edgcumbe, whereas others bore the initials "T. C." It would have been difficult, without the Earl's gracious and ready assistance, to have conjectured with any certainty on the identity of the original owner of these pieces, and still harder to have suggested how they might have found their way into Cotehele.

It was pointed out to the writer, however, that the initials "T. C." were, in fact, those of Sir Thomas Coteele (or Cottle), of London, whose daughter,

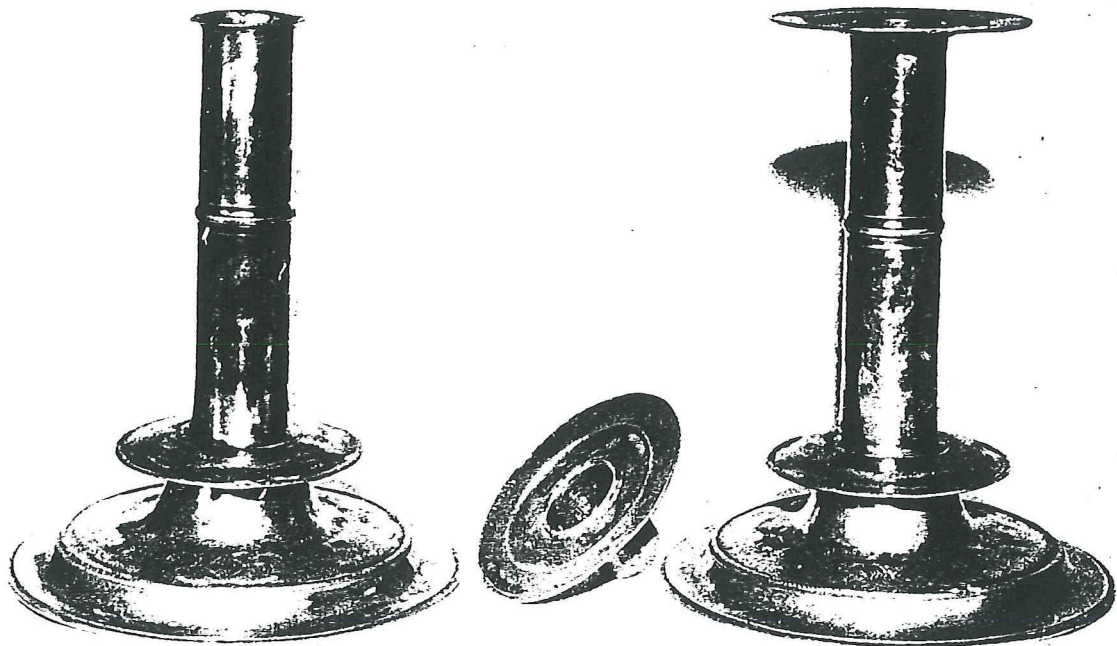


Fig. 3. Unique pair of large candlesticks, with their original sconces. Height $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches, base spread 8 inches. *Circa* 1630-35.

Mary, married Sir Richard Edgcumbe in 1615, or thereabouts.

Mary Coteele was an only daughter, and had two brothers, both of whom died unmarried; Mary, therefore, in due course, became heir to her father's estate.

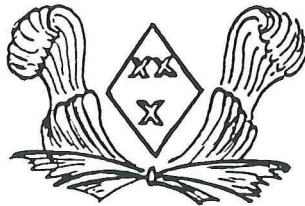
Sir Thomas Coteele died some time before 1640, and it is therefore apparent that the pewter bearing his initials came to Mary—and, thus, into the Edgcumbe family—

either at the time of her marriage, perhaps as part of her dowry, or, more probably, at the time of her father's death. In any event, it is obvious that all the pieces from the Coteele household must date prior to 1640, and quite possibly from some twenty-five or so years earlier, when Sir Thomas, himself, was married.

This early dating is, in itself, a matter of considerable interest, for although similar types of dishes were known to collectors it had, hitherto, not been possible to place so early a date upon them with any certainty, and in some cases dates of *circa* 1675 had been held to be nearer the mark. Here, then, was one major point settled most satisfactorily.

In my first illustration is shown a fine bossed charger from Cotehele, bearing Sir Thomas Coteele's initials on the rim.

The above-mentioned discovery was not the only one made possible by this sale, for among



Arms of Mary Glanville, as engraved on the foot of the candlesticks in Fig. 3.

the more important pieces were included two outstanding pairs of large pewter candlesticks, and two other single candlesticks of only slightly less importance. The trumpet-based candlestick—one of a pair (shown at Fig 2)—is of a type well known to collectors of both brass and pewter, and is normally found in sizes ranging from about 5 inches to 8 inches in height, and can be safely dated as

of Cromwellian or early Charles II period, say of *circa* 1650-75.

This particular pair is of immense size, however, and each piece stands fully $11\frac{3}{4}$ inches high without its separate sconce, and has a base spread of $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Upon the foot of each is engraved the Arms of the Edgcumbe family. This pair of candlesticks was catalogued and shown prior to auction, and it may be stated here that the pieces attracted considerable interest and, in fact, were bid up to a very high price. Collectors were, however, deprived of the chance of acquisition, for at the very last moment it was decided to buy them in from the sale and return them to Cotehele, where, presumably, they will remain in their original setting in the Chapel.

Fig. 3 shows the other pair, complete with their original sconces; this pair is, in the writer's opinion, of first rank importance, not only because

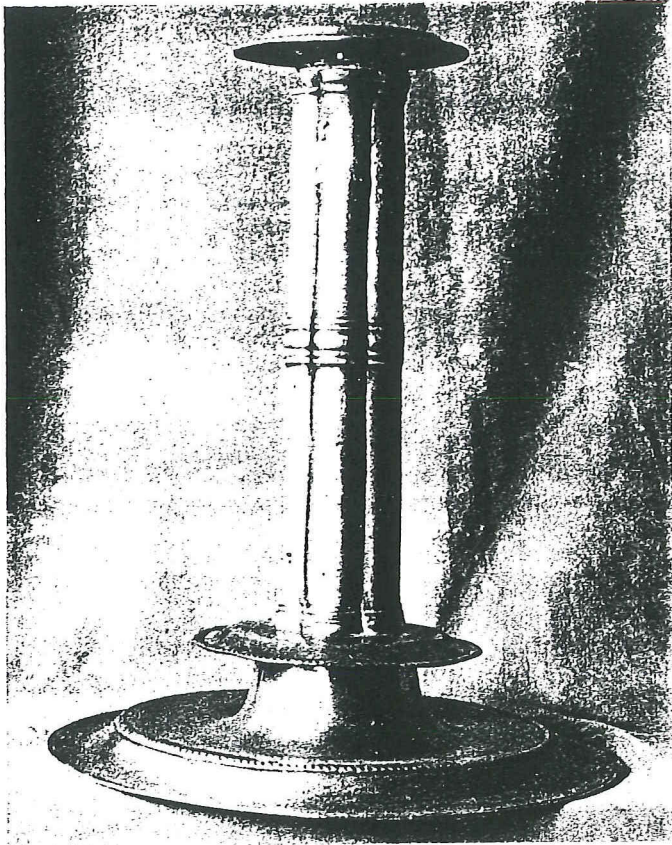


Fig. 4. One of a superb set of four candlesticks at York Minster. Height $11\frac{3}{4}$ inches overall, with base spread of $9\frac{3}{8}$ inches. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter, York Minster.)

of their large size, which is fully $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches in height without the sconces, and approximately $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches overall with the sconces in position, and with a base spread of 8 inches.

They are of a type of which no other identical examples are known, although an unique set of four of the same general type is in possession of the Dean and Chapter of York Minster. Comparisons between the York candlesticks and this fine pair from Cotehele will be drawn later in this article.

To return, however, to the pair shown in Fig. 3, there is an armorial bearing engraved upon the foot of each, and it has been ascertained by reference to the College of Arms that these arms were originally borne by Sir John Glanville, of Broad Hinton, Wilts., who is recorded as having borne "azure, three saltires or" at the time of a 17th century Visitation of Oxford.

Sir John Glanville had three daughters, the first, Margaret, married Richard Baskerville in 1635; the second, Mary, married Piers Edgcumbe (son of the Sir Richard Edgcumbe and Mary Cotechele mentioned earlier) in 1636, Mary then being twenty years of age; whereas the third, Elizabeth, remained unmarried.

The Arms on the candlesticks, a drawing of which is reproduced herewith, are contained in a lozenge and, therefore, refer to an unmarried lady, and not a widow, of the house of Glanville. Mr. W. Verco, the Rouge Croix Pursuivant, has kindly written to say that "His (Sir John Glanville's) daughter Mary would bear the same Arms in a lozenge, as shown in the rubbing you sent me, until the time of her marriage, which you state was in 1636, after which she would impale her Arms with those of her husband".

It appears fairly certain, therefore, that the candlesticks bearing the Arms of Mary Glanville were brought into the Edgcumbe family at the time of her marriage, since it is apparent that she would not have used her arms *in this form* at a later date, and thus we can date this particular pair of candlesticks at a much earlier period than would have been possible without this information.

Having established, by reasonable deduction, that this pair of candlesticks cannot be later than 1636 it is, therefore, safe to say that they are the earliest datable pair of English pewter candlesticks known to collectors and *ipso facto*, perhaps the most important in the country.

At an earlier period in this writing I likened the Glanville candlesticks to those at York Minster, and for the benefit of those of my readers who are not familiar with the latter I append an illustration of one of the set at Fig. 4. The late Howard H. Cotterell, in conjunction with a member of the Society of Pewter Collectors, Mr. James C. Fenton, of Cleckheaton, Yorks., had these York Minster candlesticks fully restored to their original condition and, at the request of the Dean and Chapter, had loose sconces supplied to them, the originals having been lost.

Cotterell found that each candlestick had impressed upon its base a maker's mark bearing initials "F.L." in a heart-shaped cartouche, and he put forward the theory that this was, in all probability, the mark of one or the other of the two York pewterers, Francis Lucas, father and son; the former recorded as being "free in 1684", whereas the second obtained his freedom in 1704-5, and is mentioned in various connections up to 1732-3.

It had always been my contention that the York candlesticks were of a type which was earlier than of the late 17th century but, lacking means of identification other than by the maker's touchmarks upon them, Cotterell's theory of provenance and manufacture had, perforce, to be accepted. It seems to me, however, that with the Glanville candlesticks as a pattern for type, the great similarity between the two suggests a much earlier date for the York candlesticks, and I hold the

personal belief that the maker "F.L." was probably not either of the men suggested, but a much earlier maker with the same initials. It is not possible to put forward the name of an alternative maker simply because our records of pewterers' marks earlier than, say, the 1650s is too meagre, due to the fact that the London Pewterers' Company touchplates were lost in the Great Fire in 1666, and only those pre-fire pewterers who survived the fire were able to restrike their touches on the new touchplates which were brought into use in 1667-8.

It is, of course, also possible, and perhaps even probable, that "F.L." was a York, and not a London pewterer, but even so the York records are, themselves, incomplete, and no touchplates for that fraternity have come to light.

Comparison between the Glanville and York candlesticks will show that, apart from the larger proportions of the latter, the base section, from the drip-pan downwards, is identical, even to the "rope" moulding around the rim of both drip-pan and foot. The stems of the York set, however, differ materially from those of the Glanville pieces and, in fact, from any others in pewter in this country; they are "quatrefoil", or (when looked at section-wise) may be likened to a four-leaf clover in shape. It has been suggested that this type of stem was made in replica of the stone pillars supporting the roof of the Minster itself, and this seems a reasonable assumption.

The stems of the Glanville candlesticks are completely circular, with only a narrow band of moulding about halfway up the stem. There is a trace of a maker's mark on the lip of one only of these pieces, all that can be seen of it, however, is the one initial "S" (it is not possible to say of whether Christian name or surname) with part of its encircling beaded outline.

Finally, attention is drawn to the fine broad-rimmed plate shown in my last illustration. This is only one of a long set which had, at one time, formed part of a table garnish at Cotehele. The plate may be dated fairly accurately as of early Charles II period, and it bears the Edgcumbe Arms (Gules, on a bend ermine cotised or, three boars' heads couped argent) engraved upon the rim. These Arms would, of course, have been in use by all heads of the house of Edgcumbe, and it is reasonable to assume that the plate under consideration was in use during the lifetime of the Piers Edgcumbe, whose wife had owned the candlesticks already noted.

All plates of this service have an overall diameter of 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches and a rim width of 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches: each

bears an unrecorded pewterer's touchmark struck once or more on the back, consisting of the initials "N.D." and a pelican with spread wings balancing upon a log, in a beaded circle.

The plate is of a type which collectors have habitually called "patens", solely because plates of similar proportions have occasionally been recorded as used for holding the bread in the Eucharist in some churches.

Had this plate turned up on its own it might well have received the same appellation, but in this particular case we have evidence that it had purely domestic associations.

Another use to which these shallow, broad-rimmed plates were put was as stands for church flagons; the broad brim catching any drips of wine which might tend to soil the altar cloth, and the shallow depression forming a snug fit for the flagon's base.

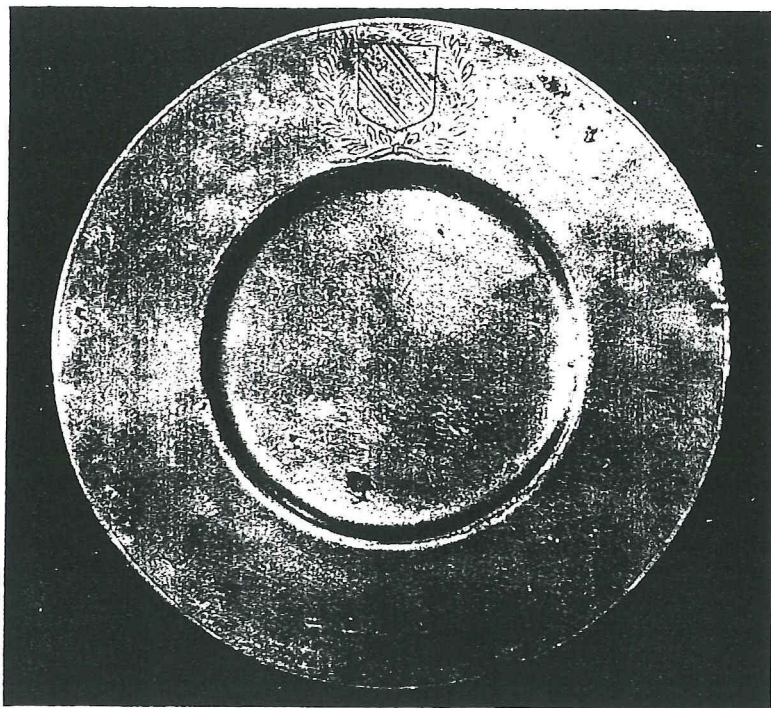


Fig. 5. Rare type of broad rimmed plate, engraved with the Edgcumbe arms. 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches overall, rim 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Circa 1650-60.

The few pieces dealt with in detail above are only a tithe of the many pewter treasures which graced this household and, in many ways, it is a pity that they have been allowed to leave their time-honoured habitat; but in the main the greatest rarities have been absorbed into well-known English collections, where they will continue to receive all the honour due to them.

With the exception of the candlestick at Fig. 2, and of the York Minster candlestick, shown in Fig. 4, the illustrations are of pieces in the author's collection.