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ROYAL OCCASIONS

Commemorated in English Pewterware

By

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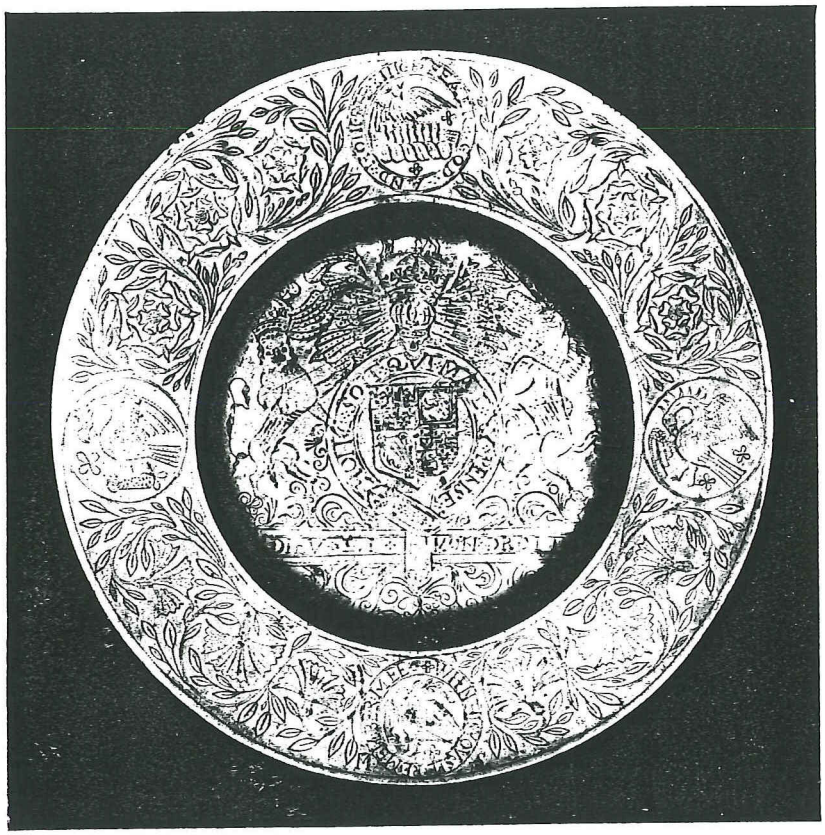

Fig. 1. A fine commemorative charger, with engraved Arms of Charles II, dated 1662. Diameter 22 inches.

THE accession of a new monarch to the English throne has ever occasioned some jubilation among certain sections of the populace, and with it, the hopes of something better auguring for the future. The relief which greeted the restoration of Charles II in 1660 was heralded with tremendous enthusiasm by the Royalists, and was commemorated, in particular, by the pewterers in the production of a series of fine, broad-rimmed chargers engraved with representations of the Royal Arms, and a legend "VIVAT REX CAROLUS SECUNDUS BEATI PACIFICI 1662" (in one instance, at least, the date is 1661).

The fact that the dates incorporated in these inscriptions should be a year, or two years, later than that of the restoration has, so far, not been explained satisfactorily. Charles II returned from his long exile in France and Flanders on May 25th, 1660, and was formally crowned on April 23, 1661. It seems more probable, therefore, that it was the high hopes for a peaceful future with Portugal, upon the marriage of the king with Catherine of Braganza, on May 20, 1662, which really occasioned the large number of chargers with the latter date.

About 20 are known, in all, although, perhaps, at least a half dozen of them are suspect. A superb example, from the collection of the late Sir Henry White-Smith, C.B.E., is shown herewith at Fig. 1. This particular item has been chosen for illustration because it varies somewhat from the more well-known *Vivat Rex Carolus* examples in that, in addition, it displays circular reserves, at top and bottom, the first of a phoenix rising from its ashes, surrounded with the words "FEAER GOD AND HONOUR THE KING"; at the base a dove with olive branch, and the words "WHEN THIS YOU SEE REMEMBER MEE". The initials "M.S." flank the lower reserve, and most probably relate to Mary Shell, for the names "Robert and Mary Shell" are engraved on the reverse.

Little of other types of commemorative pewterware of this reign has come down to us; there is, however, a small wine taster, bearing the initials "C.R." (for Carolus Rex) as part of the relief-cast ornamentation of the ear. This, in all probability, was made

as a coronation souvenir, in the year 1660.

This charming item, which has a bowl of only $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches diameter, is shown at Fig. 2. The specimen illustrated is in the writer's own collection, and there is an identical example at the Victoria and Albert museum, in London.

The writer is aware of only one example of pewterware made specifically to celebrate the accession of James II. This is a fine flat-topped tankard, with "ram's-horn" thumbpiece, shown at Fig. 3. The front is engraved with a full face portrait of the king, with the crowned initials "I" and "R", the former having the figure "2" alongside, so that there shall be no doubt as to whom is represented. The tankard is believed to be now in the collection at Colonial Williamsburg, U.S.A.

The accession of William III and Mary, in 1688/89, was prolifically commemorated by the pewterers, again by the engraving in fine "wriggled work", of portraits of these sovereigns on tankards, in the same manner as that shown above, and also by the production of a group of two-handled porringers, with relief-cast

Fig. 3. James II flat-lidded tankard, made by John Donne, London. *C.* 1685/86.
(*Colonial Williamsburg, U.S.A.*)

Fig. 2. Small wine taster, with relief-cast cipher of Charles II. *C.* 1660.

medallions in the centre of the bowl, with similar decoration on the separate covers (see Fig. 4). Perhaps the most popular form taken by makers of coronation mementoes was the addition of relief-cast portrait busts of the royal couple, *vis-à-vis*, on the handles of the "trifid" type spoons which came into fashion just about that time (see Fig. 5).

The two-eared porringer is not a normal English type, and had, in fact, not been used to any extent in this country since *c.* 1600. The combination of the "booged" bowl, with two ornamental lugs, and relief-cast decoration in the bowl, had, however, already gained popularity overseas, and there seems little doubt that the fashion was imported by Dutch craftsmen who followed in the wake of William of Orange.

The same may be said of relief-cast decoration on spoon handles; it is doubtful if such ornamentation on spoons had ever been adopted here until about 1685, but it had occurred, in other forms, in Holland and elsewhere on the Continent, some years earlier. Similarly, it had been the practice for Dutch pewterers to decorate their tall

cylindrical beakers with "wriggled" portraits of William, in head and shoulders form (as depicted on English tankards), or full-length, on horseback; the latter delineation found only in Holland.

There was just as much pride and joy in Holland over the attainment to the English throne of a member of their own ruling house, as there was here over the adoption of an English queen who was known to be favourable to Protestant causes. The two sovereigns each from a different and individually engraved mould, and there may be others yet to be discovered.

Just as today, when any coronation seems to produce a plethora of pottery beakers, plates and other commemorative baubles for sale to the public, the potters, pewterers and others, at the commencement of each reign, made numerous such "trifles" for sale at fairs and markets, and doubtless did a ready trade.

Pewter spoons, of course, could be easily

Fig. 4. Two-eared commemorative porringer, with relief-cast portraits of William III and Mary incorporated in the design. *C.* 1688/89.
(*Essex Institute, U.S.A.*)

were depicted together, in both countries, and the great similarity in the method of portrayal can be laid only to the probability that foreign craftsmen were concerned in the continuation of the practice here. After Mary's death, in 1694, Dutch William is depicted alone, both on engraved tankards and relief-decorated porringers, but only rarely on spoons.

It was at the commencement of the reign of Queen Anne, in 1702, that a great variety of relief-decorated spoons were made, all bearing a protrait bust of the queen facing to the left. They are of the same flat "trifid", or "*pied de biche*" form, popular since 1685. All are decorated with additional ornamentation, in relief, both on the face of the handle and on the back of the bowl (see Fig. 6(b)). The writer is familiar with (and, in fact, owns) seven distinct castings of Q.A. portrait spoons, cast by travelling tinkers and journeymen, and, these no doubt, were produced in great numbers for a few coppers apiece; many undoubtedly were given away as "fairings", or prizes at wrestling matches and other popular country sports.

Not only spoons, but other coronation gifts were made and sold. Fig. 7 shows a porringer of the "booged bowl" type; the single ear of which is a separate casting, applied by "burning on".

The design of the ear incorporates a Crown over the initials "A.R." (for Anne Regina). Whereas a porringer with this type of bowl is no rarity, having been a familiar household utensil for the preceding fifty years or so, the incidence of this particular ear design upon it links it with Queen Anne's reign, and, almost certainly, with her coronation. This actual

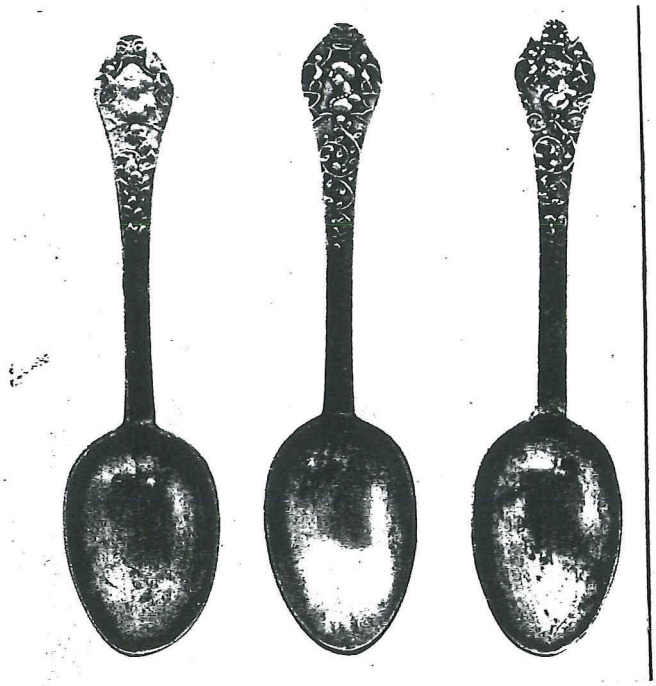

Fig. 6(a). Three different castings of Queen Anne portrait spoons. *C.* 1702.

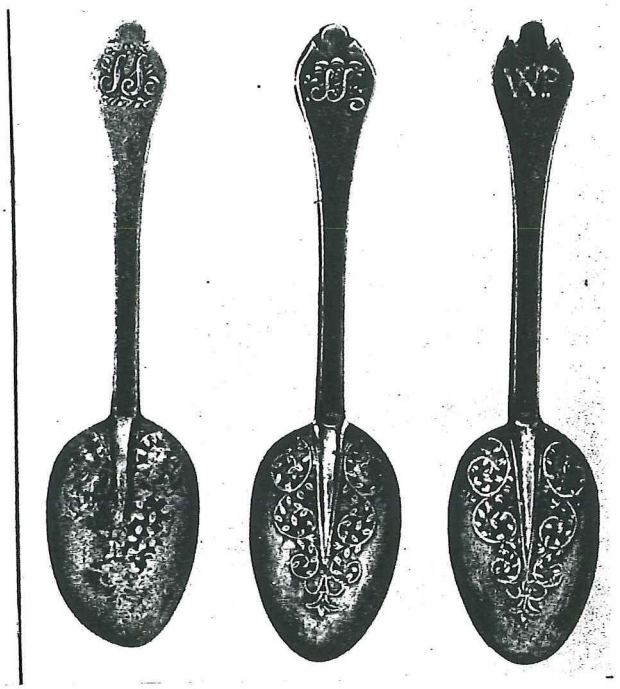

Fig. 6(b). Reverse of the spoons in Fig. 6(a), in the same order.

piece is a very definite rarity—no other specimen having come to light—but it is thought, nevertheless, that similar examples might well have been produced quite prolifically in 1702 or thereabouts, and that they, too, were sold as coronation trinkets for a few pence each.

One or two of the two-handled commemorative porringers (similar in character to those of William and Mary referred to earlier) are known. They bear a relief-cast medallion in the base, of Queen Anne alone, or with her Consort, Prince George of Denmark, who died in 1708. Such pieces are extremely rare, and are unlikely to have been made in great numbers.

One cannot leave the subject of decorated "trifid" spoons without referring to the incidence of the relief-cast initials which sometimes appear on the face, or reverse, of some of them. One known specimen (of Wm. III and Mary) has incorporated in the the frontal decoration the initials "I.D.", whereas others (all of Queen Anne) bear combinations of "S. S." (three variations); "T. W." with a crown above; "W. P.", or "H. D." on the reverse of the broad top of the stem. Some of these may be seen in Fig. 6(b); other combinations of initials may be found.

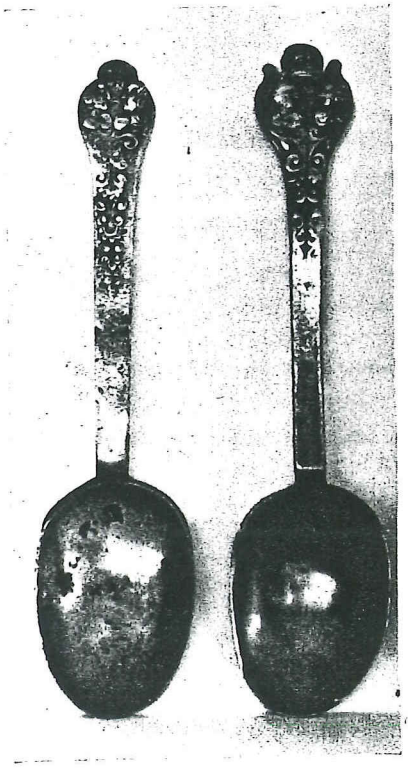

Fig. 5 (a) and (b). Two spoons of "trifid", or "pied de biche" form, with relief-cast portraits of Wm. III and Mary. *C.* 1688/89.

It seems most unlikely that these initials can relate to the maker. Indeed, one might say almost certainly that they do not, for one spoon, at least (that at Fig. 5(a)), bears the Crowned "T. W." at back, *and the maker's touchmark in the bowl*, i.e. that of David Heyrick, London (Cott. No. 2292a).

Unfortunately very few of these spoons are marked at all by the makers themselves; this

Fig. 7. Single-eared porringer, the handle incorporating the Crowned "A. R." (for Anne Regina). *C.* 1702.

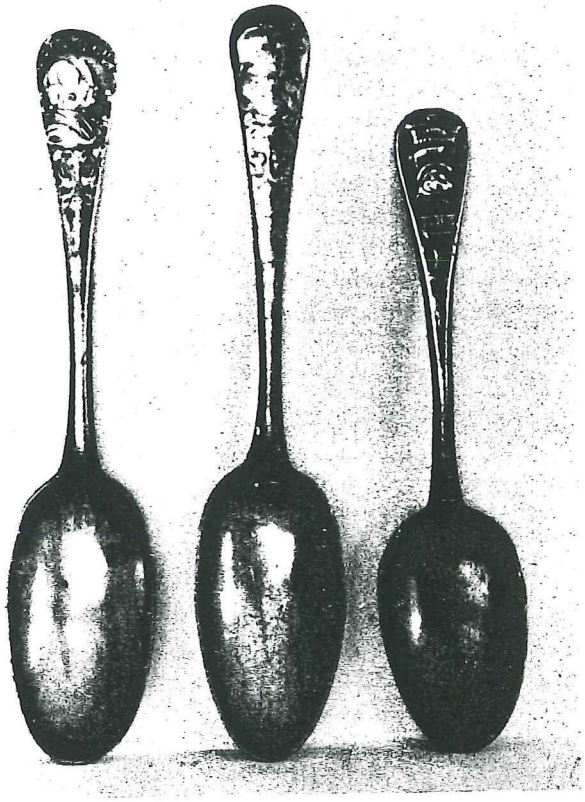

Fig. 8(a) and (b). Relief-cast portraits of George III and Charlotte, *C.* 1661, and (c) George III. caricatured as "Farmer George", *C.* 1810.

may probably be accounted for by the fact that they were made quickly and cheaply at fairs, etc., not always of the best metal or craftsmanship, by journeymen who did not wish to put their names to them, for fear of reprisals from the Worshipful Company of Pewterers in London. It is probable that the makers cut the customer's initials in the mould upon request, perhaps for a few coppers extra, and that they have no more significance than that of a lover's gift to his lass. We may never know the true answer to this mystery, to which I have drawn attention elsewhere.*

The original two-piece moulds for casting a spoon were of a hard and durable bronze alloy, and would have been extremely costly items. It is unlikely, therefore, that they would have been defaced with the initials of one customer only. It would have been possible, however, once a casting had been taken from it, to produce a plaster replica of the mould, hard enough to enable a few dozen copies to be cast from it before it disintegrated. This plaster mould, being so cheap and easy to produce, could be still further adapted (by the cutting into it of initials, etc. *in reverse*) to produce spoons bearing the monogram, or device, in relief, of a particular purchaser.

The fact that a crown accompanies the initials in some cases is not thought to be really significant of any royal or aristocratic pretensions of the buyer, but only what, today, we might term a "gimmick", for the buyer to see his initials associated with a royal emblem.

The reigns of the first two Georges do not appear to have been commemorated by the pewterers. Perhaps there was less joy and merry-making on these occasions, since their accessions were not especially popular with large sections of the public.

In 1761, however, upon the marriage of George III to Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenberg-Strelitz, only one year after his coronation, the pewterers produced several differing models of the long bowl spoon bearing the relief-cast portraits of the sovereign and his Consort.

The makers, in particular, who are known to have put their touchmarks upon them, were John Vaughan, and William Bache, both of London. Examples of their spoons are shown at Fig. 8(a) and (b). At least three different castings are known to have been produced.

Finally, at Fig. 8(c) is seen a spoon, believed

Royal Portrait Spoons in Pewter, "APOLLO" Magazine, June, 1950.

to represent George III in later life, at a time when he had become somewhat a figure of pity and derision through his feebleness of mind, probably in, or around, 1810, and upon which he is caricatured as "Farmer George", with puffed cheeks, and generally bucolic appearance, with squat beaver hat upon his head (with a feather protruding forward from the band). This design is surmounted by a crown, and has the initials "I. H." cast in relief below the neck.

This is one of a set of four which came into collectors' hands some years ago, and which has since been dispersed—the writer, however, was fortunate enough to acquire one specimen, and the whereabouts of another is still known.

(*The items in Figs.* 2, 5, 6, 7 *and* 8 *are in the author's collection.*)

Books for the Collector

NEW BIOGRAPHY OF TURNER

J. M. W. TURNER. A critical Biography. By Jack Lindsay. 274 pp. 34 monochrome, 4 colour plates. (Cory, Adams and Mackay. 63s.).

MR. JACK LINDSAY'S new biography of J. M. W. Turner will take its place alongside the late A. J. Finberg's well-known life of 1939 as one of the two most reliable accounts of our greatest English landscape artist. He has made use of Turner's verses, scribblings, and lectures to build up a more personalised portrait of Turner's complex nature than Finberg attempted in his strictly objective approach. We begin to understand for the first time the kind of inner conflicts that went on in the mind of this creative but much misunderstood genius.

His home life as a child did much to build-up Turner's craving for security. Hence arose his parsimony over money, which however could be allied to surprising generosity. He had strong sexuality, but his creative needs drove him away from the usual means of sexual security—marriage and a normal social life. Mr. Lindsay finds in Turner a deep need to be left alone, to hide himself and his work away. For the first time we understand the tension of the artist's relationship with Sarah Danby, by whom he had two illegitimate children. We also begin to see Turner alongside Constable as a predecessor of the 19th century French Impressionists; more in his vision and in the cleavage between the artist and the public than in the development of actual techniques.

There are illuminating chapters on Turner's relation to the world of poetry, on his theory of colour, and on the marvellous later experiments in the 1830s and 1840s. One indication of the thoroughness of Mr. Lindsay's researches is that there are thirty-three pages of closely packed notes, apart from appendices.

1,200 DOLLARS FOR A SHELL

SHELL COLLECTING: An Illustrated History. By S. Peter Dance, pp. 344. 35 plates and 31 figures. (Faber & Faber. 63s.).

IT is seldom that such an attractive book on conchology and its historical developments appears on the market. Mr. Dance has given us a most readable account of the fortunes of shells and the interesting and unusual people associated with them. It should appeal not only to the conchologist but also to those interested in antique treasures in the form of shells, many of which have long and diverse histories. For those unfamiliar with shell collecting, it may come as a surprise to discover that shells are bought and sold almost as actively as stamps, and this book will give them some of the inside story of this fascinating sphere. For the professional, the long bibliography and collection details are sure to be most welcome.

Collecting sea shells has been a pastime of mankind for thousands of years. In the third century B.C., Aristotle probably wrote about Molluscs, but it was not until the mid-18th century that Carl Linnaeus produced a system of classification of Mollusca, (shells amongst other life), using the familiar binomial system of description employing Latin. Large collections were gathered, chiefly by the nobility and persons now famous in biological circles worked on them. Such names as J. Sowerby, Lamarck and d'Orbignyi come to mind.

Later, shell collecting became a popular hobby and people, most notably Hugh Cuming, amassed vast collections. Today in line with the trend in other fields, market prices are soaring, and a specimen of the greatly prized *Conus gloriamaris* sold recently for 1,200 dollars in America.

For a good book on this most fascinating subject I heartily recommend this work. It fills a void in its own field. J.D.H.