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ANTIQUE PEWTER

OF THE BRITISH ISLES

from the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I
to that of Queen Victoria

by RONALD F. MICHAELIS

Honorary Librarian of the Society of Pewter Collectors, Honorary Member of the Pewter Collectors' Club of America

LONDON: G. BELL & SONS, LTD

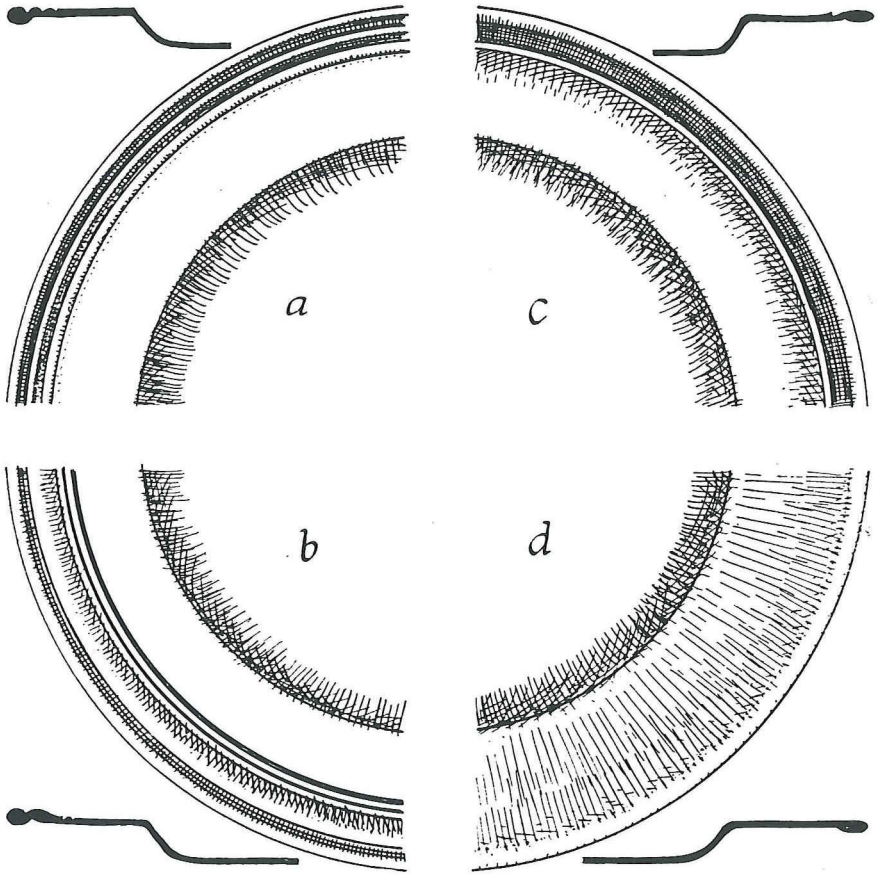

FIG. 1. Types of plate and dish brims:

(*a*) Incised multiple reeding, in which all grooves lie below the flat surface, and are gouged out on a lathe. (Late 17th century.)

(*b*) Cast multiple reeding. This type of reeding is cast on at the time the dish is made, and parts stand proud of the surface. (Late 17th century.)

The above two mouldings are usually termed 'triple reedings'.

(*c*) Single reeding; cast in the mould, as (*b*). (Early to mid 18th century.)

(*d*) Plain rim with no surface reeding, but with a thickened moulding on underside. (Mid 18th to early 19th century.)

Fig. 22 shows both plate and dish with similar triple reeding.

Specimens of this type, bearing known makers' marks, have enabled us to date them during the period *c.*1670–90. From their shape it seems likely that they are the direct evolution of the circular treen platters in use in former times.

Following closely on the heels of the triple-reeded types comes the 'single-reeded' group. All sizes of plates, dishes and chargers were made with one deep groove about a quarter of an inch from the edge of the brim. Plates and dishes, which can date as early as 1690, have been found with this type of reeding, but, in the earlier specimens, the brim itself is slightly less in width than on the 18th-century pieces. Another feature worthy of mention is that the brims are cupped upwards rather more than on former types.

There is very little difference between English and continental plates of this style, and the reader is advised to study the marks closely to distinguish one from another. One sure sign of a continental plate is the incidence of the maker's mark *struck three times*. This does not occur in all foreign specimens, but it does appear frequently. English pewterers did not strike their touch more than twice on one piece, and, more often, only once.

The fashion for single-reeded plates lasted well into the second half of the 18th century, and overlapped, by about forty years, the last main group, which we shall call 'plain rimmed'.

Here there is no facial adornment of reeding, but the narrow raised beading on the underside is slightly more robust than on all earlier types. Plates and dishes (including chargers up to more than 30 inches in diameter) were made in this style, right up to the first quarter of the 19th century, when pewter for normal table purposes seems to have taken its bow. Pottery and porcelain at this time was being produced so cheaply that pewter (which needed much more cleaning and scouring) was relegated to the servants' quarters and, thence. to the attics.

THIS book makes an entirely new approach to pewter collecting. The author has tackled the subject from an unusual viewpoint, so as to help collectors in examining the various objects made in pewter, particularly in the British Isles, in conjunction with the earlier recorded information about the methods of manufacture and the styles in vogue in bygone days.

The records of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers of London have been freely drawn upon. Extracts from them have been included, which should help students and collectors to decide for themselves the merits or otherwise of particular objects, and to gauge the comparative rarity of individual specimens of pewterware.

The features which distinguish the pewter of one period from that of another are made clear, either in the text or by line and half-tone illustrations, and the various classes of pewter-ware have been grouped in separate chapters. There are also a full bibliography, a copious index, and notes indicating the sources of the printed details.

★ CONTENTS ★

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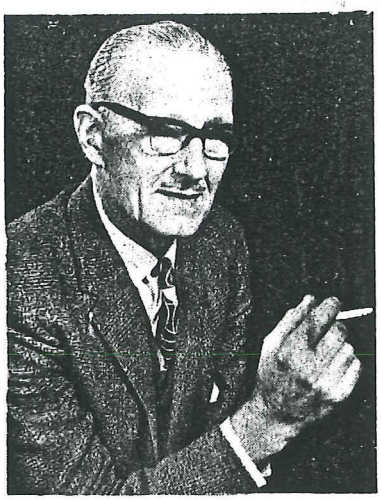
ANTIQUES

How he made his greatest pewter find



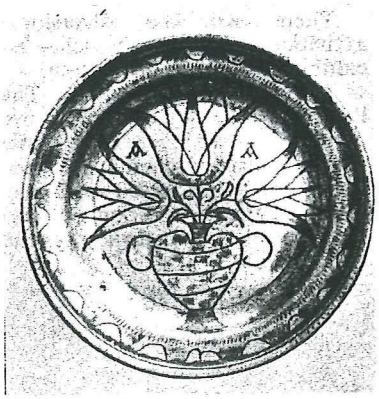
Mr Ronald Michaelis, who writes on pewter both here and in the United States, has been a collector for nearly 40 years.

The country's leading authority on antique pewter, Mr Ronald F. Michaelis, whose interest in the subject began when he used to collect milk from the farmer's churn in his mother's pewter measures, has just written a book on British Pewter.*

Lavishly illustrated it is intended both for beginners and serious students and has detailed captions to indicate the main features of the pieces shown.

Mr Michaelis has been a student of pewtering history and a collector of antique pewter for nearly 40 years. 'At first I collected everything, becoming more discriminating as I got to know the subject. Strangely enough when I ceased to be a Civil Servant and decided to make use of my knowledge of collecting by opening an antique shop in Croydon, I never dealt in pewter because as a member of the the Pewter Society of Great Britain I wasn't allowed to. That is one of the rules of membership.

'I suppose one of my greatest pewter finds was when I went to a bazaar in Lewes, the gifts for which were given by County families. I bought a broad rimmed pewter dish which was black and covered in hard scale. When I cleaned it I found it was engraved with a scene relating to a tavern, The George and Dragon, with the initials of the innkeeper and the date 1662. I paid £15 for it and now it must be worth about £300.'



One of a pair of marriage plates with single reeded rim, both rims and base engraved in ridled work with lily pots and initials, made by James Hitchman of London c. 1730. This type of reeded rim is essentially of the 18th century from about 1700 to c. 1780 and appears on larger dishes over this same period. Riddled plates of this character were produced in pairs and were intended as wedding or betrothal gifts to the individual whose initials are included.

Mr Michaelis has been honorary librarian of the Pewter Society for twenty years and in 1968 was elected an honorary freeman of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers, who recently made space in their Hall for the Society's collection of fakes and reproductions of old pewterware, amassed as an object lesson to the unwary.

The trade of pewterer was once one of the busiest and most important in the country and though its activities began to wane towards the middle of the 18th century, pewter was still being made on quite a large scale into the 1820's.

In spite of its importance and the growth of a Pewter cult at the end of the 19th century even in the early 1900's there was still no textbook on the subject.

For those who want to see a fine collection to get their eye in, the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge has a notable one and an exhibition Pewter Through the Ages, from Romano British times to the present day, is being held at the Museum and Art Gallery, Reading, from September 20 till October 31.

**British Pewter: a collector's monograph. Ronald F. Michaelis. Ward Lock and Co. 25s.*

MR. MICHAELIS ON PEWTER

ANTIQUE PEWTER OF THE BRITISH ISLES. By Ronald F. Michaelis. (Bell, 22s. 6d.)

THE pewter collector has had scanty fare served up in the way of published books on his subjects in the last twenty-five years. A new generation of collectors has matured since the late Howard Cotterell's *Old Pewter: Its Marks and Makers* was published in 1929. This and its companion classic, Charles Welch's *History of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers* (1902), lose none of their authority with the issue of Mr. Michaelis's new book, but it is fully worthy to stand alongside them because of its scholarship and additional information.

The author, who is the Hon. Librarian of the Society of Pewter Collectors, and a much-appreciated contributor to this and other art journals, writes as a collector for the primary needs of the collector—identification, dating, classification, the knowledge that gives the collector himself the ability and confidence to judge the merits, the genuineness and the rarity of individual pieces. He has set out, in a moderate-priced handbook, to cover as much new ground as possible between the reigns of Elizabeth I and Victoria. The text runs to some 112 pages, but no one should be misled by apparent lack of bulk. There is more concentrated information than is to be found in many a book half as long again. And it is followed by forty pages of plates, photographs of pieces mostly from the author's and other private collections.

Mr. Michaelis groups his pewter-ware into different classes for each chapter—dishes, drinking vessels, measures, candlesticks, porringers, and so on. Among Miscellaneous Objects none is more intriguing than the complicated castor oil spoon. (An elderly neighbour in the reviewer's village keeps his, not in a collector's cabinet, but in the medicine cupboard where it has been since his grandmother's day.) There are also chapters on Decoration, Makers' Marks, and Collecting. The bibliography refers of necessity principally to articles contributed to art journals as far back as 1907. These form a tailpiece to each chapter. In two instances he refers to this journal as *The Antique Collector* (*U.S.A.*), which may be a slip made previous to his possession of the records.