

EPI

A BERKSHIRE PEWTER TAVERN POT



*When every blessed thing you hold,
Is made of silver or of gold,
You long for simple pewter.*

W. S. GILBERT. "The Gondoliers".



by Cyril C.
Minchin

TAVERN pots can be of great interest to collectors, and the illustrations show possibly one of the finest yet discovered. This example of the pewterer's craft stands 7 ins. to the lip and is inscribed:

"John Little att ye Horse & Jockey in Reading 99" (Ninety-nine being the last year of the 17th century.)

Above the inscription can also be seen the very terse statement:

"IF SOLD STOLE"

thus giving the souvenir hunter of that time little chance of disposing of his booty.

Stamped close to the handle will be noticed the Arms of Reading, proving that the capacity of the pot had been checked for accuracy by a local official. This mark, together with a crowned W.R. (not seen in the photograph) is evidence that these verification marks were stamped in the reign of William III.

Very few of these unlidged tavern pots remain. They were made of fine quality metal and in many cases were inscribed with the name of the landlord and his inn, thereby adding considerably to their interest. The broad bands around the drum may possibly claim descent from the iron bands used on the wooden vessels which preceded them.

Of great interest is the pewterer's touch-mark which is struck inside the bottom of

this pot. The mark shows a blackamoor's head with the initials H.F. in a small beaded circle. Research on the subject suggests that this must be the mark of Henry Frewin, a Reading pewterer who was born in 1635, and died in the early part of the 18th century.

His father, also Henry, born in 1598, died in 1664, was likewise a Reading pewterer, and he seems to have been a man of some importance in the town. The Worshipful Company of Pewterers records that Henry Frewin senior was apprenticed in 1612 to William Hurdman of London for eight years. In the Reading Corporation records it is noted:

"Friday, 17th September, 1624—At this daye Henry Frewin being a freman of London and there using the trade of pewterer, makinge pewter, requesteth his freedome of this towne, being here borne and here to use his trade".

It seems almost certain that his request was granted and that he commenced his trade as a pewterer in Reading in that year.

for in 1628 he has John Pearse apprenticed to him for seven years, and John Wilder in 1635 for a similar period.

The Corporation records show that he was elected Mayor on August 29, 1653. For some time he lived in James Winch's house in Friar Street, he was there in 1649, and his name appears in St. Laurence's Hearth Tax return in 1663.

Both father and son may have had some interest in recasting the bells of St. Laurence's Church. The church records show that at a meeting of the parishioners on May 29, 1662, it was "Agreed that the five bells in the steeple be made into eight tunable bells". Among those present was Mr. Henry Frewin. Again a year later, in 1663: "Item paid Mr. Frewin for tinn put into the Bells £8 13s. 0d.

Some fine well-wrought pewter dishes have been found in Berkshire with Henry Frewin's touch. Two are dated 1679 and 1683, with yet another in Reading Museum dated 1690. 682T

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