

EPQ

Unusual English Pewter Measures

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CONVERTED GILL MEASURE

MEASURES of old English Wine Standard converted to Imperial Standard are not uncommon, and an interesting example is shown in Fig. 1.

This gill (old standard originally) baluster measure with "three feather" thumbpiece¹ was changed to one gill Imperial Standard capacity by cutting the measure across the body, just below the lower junction of handle and body, and by soldering in an extra $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch high ring to rejoin the top part of the measure and the bottom section.

The work has been skilfully done so that at first sight it is not apparent that the measure has been radically altered. The capacity is actually 5.07 fluid ounces (Imperial gill is 5 fluid ounces, compared with the old English Standard gill of 4.163 fluid ounces) so that the error is plus 1.4 per cent—well within the standard of accuracy normally found in such measures.

The base, which externally is concave (see Fig. 2) has obviously been carefully dished inwards, probably by swaging on a lathe. No



Fig. 1. Imperial gill baluster measure converted from old English gill by insertion of $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch section in lower half of measure. Height to lip $3\frac{1}{16}$ inches.



doubt this was a means of making a final adjustment to the capacity of the modified measure—not to defraud by giving short measure as is usually the case when the bottom of a measure is hammered in.

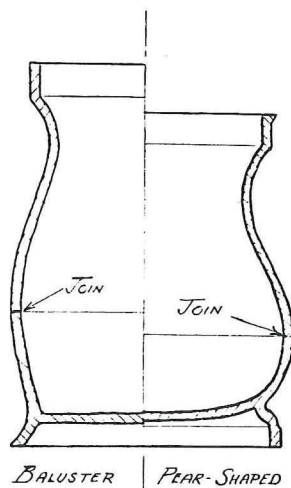
The change from old English Wine Standard to Imperial, which became law in 1824, probably hastened the

Fig. 2. Underside of measure (Fig. 1)—showing concavity of base.

Fig. 3. *Left*: Late 18th century half pint (old English Standard) pear-shaped transitional measure with "Double volute" features. Height to lip $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches. *Right*: A mid-18th century baluster with a "bud" thumbpiece and of half-pint (old English Standard) capacity. Height 4 inches.



(Below)
Fig. 4. Sketch showing comparative proportions and construction of 18th century baluster and pear-shaped half pint measures.



demise of the lidded baluster, which had been the national measure since the 16th century or earlier. With the wholesale scrapping of measures which must have occurred with the enforcement of the new Act, the cheaper, unlidded, 19th century pear-shaped measure was rapidly adopted.

In the earlier pear-shaped, unlidded measures, the only link in style with the "three-feather" thumbpiece type was the bulbous terminal to the handle, and this too soon disappeared.

The reason why the complicated and costly method of modifying the measure in question was adopted is that it was the only way in which the lid feature and the original form could be retained. The more common method was to scrap the lid and merely add a cylinder of metal to the lip of the measure^{2 3}, resulting in an extremely ugly and unbalanced effect. The lid is not the original one. It is cut from a piece of thin pewter and soldered to the thumbpiece. The lid was probably fitted by the pewterer who modified the capacity of the measure and it is stamped on the underside with a crowned X.

*HALF PINT (OLD ENGLISH STANDARD)
PEAR-SHAPED MEASURE*

The measure shown in Fig. 3 is doubtless not

unique but it is certainly one of the earliest English pear-shaped measures which the writer has seen. It is obviously contemporary with the so-called "double volute" balusters, the commonest of all English covered measures of the 18th century.

This measure has a capacity of 8.14 fluid ozs., which gives it an accuracy of minus 2.25 per cent (old English pint equals 8.327 fluid ozs). The deficiency in capacity is due to the body having been deformed to an oval in the upper portion. An early City

of London verification mark is stamped on the lip.

Apart from the difference in body form, it has all the features of the so-called "double volute" measures—"three-feather" thumbpiece *fleur de lys* lid attachment, bulbous handle terminal and lozenge-shaped handle to body attachment—a type which lasted for nearly three-quarters of a century, from the 2nd quarter of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century.

The pear-shaped form of body is basically different in construction from the baluster form. In the former, the foot is as a separate ring, the whole of the bottom of the body section being rounded. In the latter, the foot is an extension of the upper walls of the body,

continuing in an unbroken sweep and the bottom of the measure is usually flat (Fig. 4).

The baluster measure appears to have been completely displaced by the unlidded pear-shaped measure (a most uninteresting type!) early in the 19th century, and as mentioned in the first part of this article, economy may have dictated the change about 1824 when the new Act became effective.

It is easy to describe this particular measure as an interesting transition type, but it is a matter of conjecture as to what factors influenced the change from the baluster form of body to the much less attractive pear-shaped one.

It should be noted that the more conservative Scots did not so willingly depart from the baluster form despite the fact that it was never as popular in Scotland as in the South. Scottish balusters, particularly with ball and spade-shaped thumbpieces, continued to be made to Imperial Standard units of capacity, and are almost as common as the later pear-shaped measures with "shell" thumbpieces and domed lids of Edinburgh and Glasgow type.

1. J. H. Myrtle — 18th Century Baluster Measures — ANTIQUE COLLECTOR, February, 1954.
2. H. H. Cotterell — *Old Pewter* — Page 115, plate XLVII/b.
3. Christopher A. Peal — Notes on Pewter Baluster Measures and their capacities — *Apollo*, January, 1950, Figure 1f. Mr. Peal states that in Suffolk measures were modified by the addition of a band to the rim.

British Antique Dealers' Annual Dinner—International Guests

THE British Antique Dealers' Association held its annual dinner and dance at Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London, W.1, on Thursday, November 5, when the president of the Association (Mr. Henry W. Rubin) occupied the chair. The toast of "The Association" was proposed by the guest of honour, H.E. The Belgian Ambassador (Monsieur Rene L. van Meerbeke) who said that he was glad to pay a well-merited tribute to the work of the Association. The president replied.

M. Jean Cailleux (Vice-President of Le Syndicat National des Antiquaires, Paris) responded to the toast of "Our Guests", proposed by Mr. Geoffrey Hill, M.B.E., a vice-president of the Association.

Among some 380 members and their guests, who constituted a record attendance at this festival, were many distinguished representatives of sister associations in Austria, Belgium, France, Holland, Italy and Portugal whose attendance evoked recognition of the British Association's position as holders of the Presidency of La Confederation Internationale des Negociants en Oeuvres d'Art (CINOA) now in the twenty-fifth year of its existence.

Large parties from the leading art auctioneers and the attendance of representatives from the leading art journals confirmed the cordial relations which exist between all engaged in the antique trade.



Some of the guests at the dinner, including H.E. The Belgian Ambassador.

Two Soho tapestry panels woven in the early 18th century by John Vanderbank in *chinoiserie* designs realised 5,400 guineas at Christie's on November 19.

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A good instance of the high standards possible at a local exhibition was that of "Treasures from Hampstead Houses", held during the last week in October at Burgh House, Hampstead, London. The exhibition was arranged by Mr. Donald Towner, the authority on ceramics, who drew on porcelain, pottery, paintings, silver, etc., from a score of private collections.