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PEWTER OF THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

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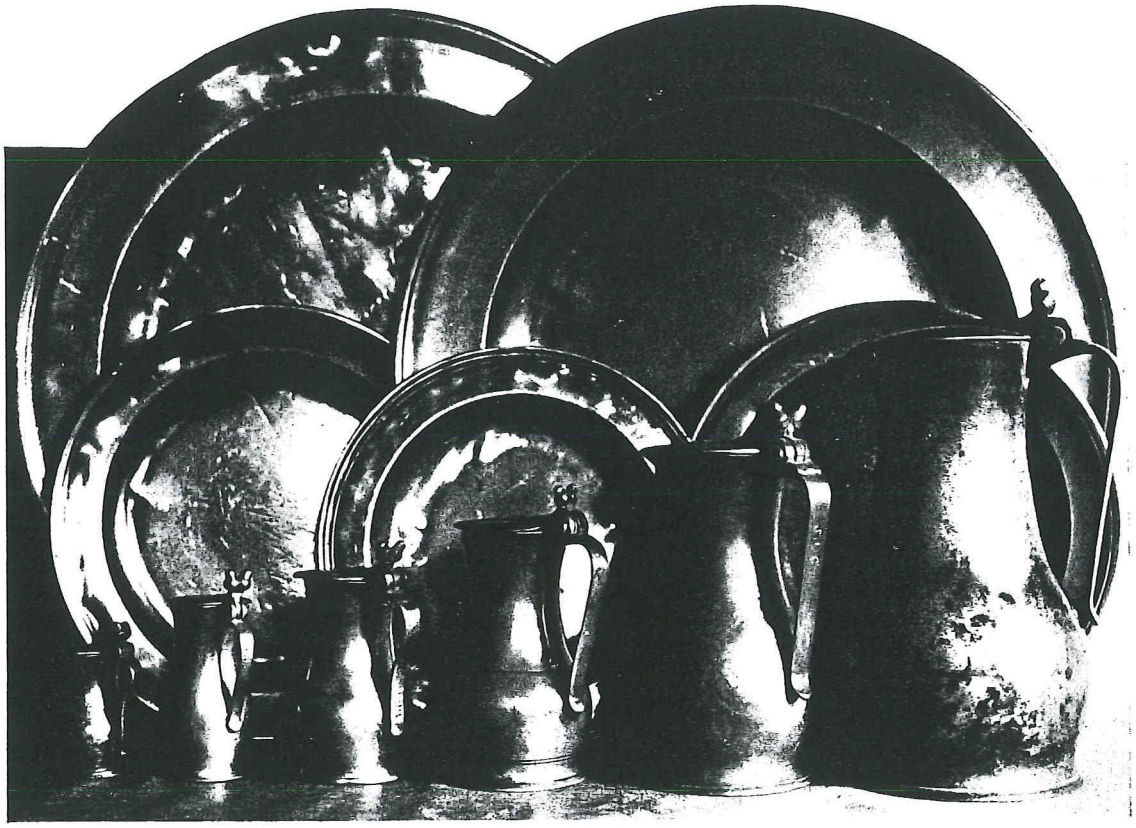

Fig. 1.—A group of Jersey pewter including a set of lidded measures with "pinched" out necks and "twin acorn" thumb pieces.

THERE is no reason to doubt that pewter was used in the Channel Islands to much the same extent as in England, but the only form in which it appears that can be said to be peculiar to the locality is the Measure, comparatively large numbers of which have come down to us, dating chiefly from the early 18th century and usually in good condition. As far as is known these measures, although probably made for the most part in England (and therefore classified as English pewter) were used only in the Islands.

The pewterers who made them are at least seven in number, but it is by no means certain that any of them actually worked in either of the two principal islands, Guernsey or Jersey. Two of them, indeed, though bearing typically Islands names, were actually members of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers of London; and, although this might not preclude their working in the Islands, it is more likely that they were Islanders who had set up in business in London and saw a profitable market in their erstwhile homes.

There are three types of measure, of which two are lidded and one unlidded; as to locality, they are divided broadly into two groups, Guernsey (one lidded type) and Jersey (one lidded and one unlidded), corresponding of course with the locality in which respectively they are found. I say "are found," but actually the bulk of the old pewter has left the Islands. I was recently informed that, prior to the War, one of the principal dealers in Jersey had a collection of 900 pieces, most of which had since gone to English dealers. The fact remains, however, that though it is difficult in these days to find pieces in the Islands, they are fairly easily obtainable in London, and at reasonable prices.

As so frequently happens when standards are set up, each of these three types is found to

Fig. 2.—A set of Guernsey lidded measures showing the bands round the body and neck, the strut at the bottom of each handle, and more elaborate base than the Jersey measures.

exhibit variations, the most important of which will be mentioned later.

To take the lidded types first: These have several features in common. Their general form and outlines are seen in Figures 1 and 2, which show the Jersey and Guernsey types respectively. The necks are " pinched " out in front to permit of easy pouring (the difficulty of accurate pouring from a circular mouth, especially one of fairly large diameter, does not seem to have occurred to English pewterers till a very late period, which accounts for the numerous cases in which spouts have been added to existing flagons, etc., at later dates). The lids are heart-shaped to conform to this plan; thumb-pieces are of the " twin acorn " type, and are joined to the lids by plain bars of rectangular section.

In these details of neck, lid and thumb-piece, the makers were probably influenced by the French " Pichet " measures of the period (Figure 3) which were undoubtedly used in the Channel Islands at the same time as those we are considering. The Islands still, of course, exhibit Norman-French characteristics to a considerable degree. Their native inhabitants are largely bilingual; and it is of interest to note that French influence played its part even in the manufacture of pewter.

Broadly speaking, the principal difference between Jersey and Guernsey lidded measures is one of decoration. The former type has a perfectly plain body with a base formed by a simple ovolo moulding. It would be difficult to imagine a simpler form, and it is pleasing by reason of this fact.

The Guernsey type is usually relieved from severe plainness by two wide horizontal bands, one round the broadest part of the body and the other half-way up the neck, each band being divided into three by deep incised lines. The base is separately formed of a series of outward sloping mouldings.

This form of ornament is dignified and entirely adequate. The bands or fillets provide just the right amount of relief, but require the more elaborate base to complete the motif, and the decorative effect of this type is as pleasing as is the plainness of the other.

It is, however, precisely in this use of banded decoration that the principal exception to the otherwise generally standardised form of Guernsey measure occurs, as a comparatively small

number of measures is known which, while otherwise of Guernsey type, either omit the bands altogether, or merely outline them by lines in the body. A further difference between the two types is seen in the handle which, in Jersey measures, is usually fixed at the lower end direct to the body, whereas in Guernsey measures a "strut" intervenes. That this is not always the case, however, may be seen in Figure 1, where the largest Jersey measure has a "strut" at the lower end of the handle.

The Jersey lidless type may be dismissed in a few words. It is similar in design to its lidded brother and it is clear that many were actually intended to have lids, as the hinge shoulders have been cast on the handles, but have never been pierced for the hinge pins.

Again, in England, the "crowned X," denoting quality, is usual on best quality metal; but though Channel Islands metal generally falls within that category, the quality mark is rarely found.

Other marks occasionally found on these measures are :—

(1) The stamped initials G.R., probably some form of excise mark. If the letters are of large size and stamped upon the left side of the lip (looking from the handle forward) they stand for George I or II. If on the opposite side, and of smaller size, they belong to the later Georgian period.

(2) A rose, or sometimes a rose and a *fleur-de-lys*; this is obscure in meaning but may have reference to English pewter exported to the Islands.

Fig. 3.—Three French "Pichet" measures used in the Channel Islands during the 18th century.

Various marks, official and otherwise, are found on these measures, but whatever regulations governed them seem to have been very loosely applied. In the case of pewter made for use in England at the same period one can be reasonably certain of finding a pewterer's touch, or its remains, on nearly every piece. In the present instance, however, only the Guernsey measures appear to have been consistently marked with their makers' touches; the largest of the Jersey lidded measures is usually, though not always, marked, as are some few of the intermediate sizes, but it is rare to find any touch upon the smaller sizes or upon the whole range of unlidded measures.

(3) Owner's initials (seen in Figure 4, I.M.L.), and

(4) The stamped label "GUERNESEY" (*sic*) with the initials Ns. L. Ct. (Figure 4). As to this, definite information is lacking, other than that this form of the Island name was in general use at the period in question. The matter is further complicated by reason of its appearance in a few cases on Jersey measures. The theory has been advanced that the initials stand for Nicholas le Couteur, a familiar Guernsey name, and that this person was a retailer of hardware, including the products of pewterers, which he imported for sale in Guernsey, marking them with his initials and the name of the Island.

As has been said, seven pewterers are known to have made Channel Islands measures. These are :—

(1) John de Saint Croix, who joined the Pewterers' Company in 1729.
(2) Joseph Wingod, joined the Company in 1721 and became its Master in 1767. His business was at Tower Wharf.
(3) A. Carter, a London maker, circa 1740, of whom no records appear to exist.
(4) James Tysoe, of Westminster, who joined the Company in 1733, became Renter Warden in 1764 and died in 1771.
(5) John le Nevew, circa 1740, unrecorded in London and possibly resident in Jersey, where the name is fairly common.
(6) William de Jersey, a London maker who joined the Company in 1732, was Master in 1773, and died in 1785, and whose place of business was at No. 38, Cannon Street.
(7) An unknown maker of Jersey lidded measures who used a stork as his touch.

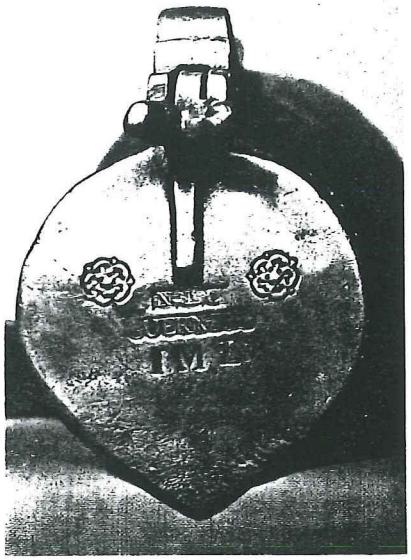

Fig. 4.—A Guernsey heart-shaped lid showing a rose on either side the initials Ns. L. Ct., and stamped "Guernesey." The initials I.M.L. are those of the owner.

An interesting sidelight upon a possible trade relationship is found in the case of the first two mentioned pewterers.

No mention has hitherto been made of what are known as "hall marks" for the reason that they are never found on Channel Islands measures. These marks were, however, very frequently used by English pewterers. They usually consisted of four small punches, three of which contained some simple device, and the fourth the maker's initials. They are called "hall marks" by reason of their similarity to those used on silver. But whereas the regulations of the various Guilds of Goldsmiths and Silversmiths necessitated the stamping of their marks (which was usually done at the Hall of the Guild or Company—hence the name) the Pewterers' Company had no such regulation (being only concerned with touches and the quality mark), and these so-called "hall marks" appear to have been merely imitations of those used by silversmiths, and the devices chosen at the whim of the individual pewterer. The latter, however, nearly always introduced his initials into one of the punches (which, incidentally, is a most valuable help in identifying a maker whose touch was badly struck or has become worn out or affected by corrosion).

John de Saint Croix used four hall marks on plates, but the initial punch contains, not his own initials, but the letters I.W. Is it not possible that these stand for Joseph Wingod? If so, it would point to some sort of partnership between them; and when it is added that de Saint Croix made Jersey measures only, whilst Wingod confined his attention to Guernseys, interest is increased.

Another minor point is that on Guernsey measures made by Carter, the initials S.M. nearly always appear. These are probably those of the importer as mentioned earlier.

To those with a hankering after old pewter I suggest that an admirable and comparatively inexpensive start might be made by building up a set of two at least of the three types which have been mentioned. A full set of the Jersey lidded type comprises six measures, and of Guernseys three only. Of unlidded Jerseys there are five, the largest size being omitted. A most effective display is obtained by arranging two sets at opposite ends of a shelf with the largest sizes outermost, descending to the smallest in the centre, with, say, a 14 or 16 inch pewter dish at the back in the middle. The *tout ensemble*, if the pieces are well polished, is delightful. They can usually be obtained from those London dealers who specialise in old pewter, and arrangements can no doubt be made for the pieces to be cleaned and polished if necessary.

(I am indebted to Mr. A. E. Kimbell of Messrs. H. & A. Kimbell, for the loan of the photographs reproduced in Figures 1 and 4).

THE Editor of THE ANTIQUE COLLECTOR invites readers to submit "Test Your Knowledge" questions and answers, based on a particular subject, on the lines of those that have been appearing in recent issues. There should be six or seven questions in each set.