

EVE



tain craft standards, register pewterers' individual marks or touches and protect both apprentices and public. An Act of Parliament in 1503 gave the Pewterers' Livery Company of London powers to supervise and control the trade. Inspectors identified "false" pieces and destroyed them. Thus by the end of the 17th century the trade had thoroughly accommodated to changes of fashion as well as wishes for quality of material and workmanship. The advantages of pewter were then clear to all. It was strong, durable, hygienic and handsome and thus well suited to the home, the tavern or the church.

Defining pewter in earlier times was relatively easy. Pewterers preparing material for moulding and casting in bronze or gun metal moulds commonly used 112 lbs of tin to between 22 and 26 lbs of lead, that is, in the proportion of 5:1 to 4: 1. This latter mixture was called lay pewter. Particularly tavern pieces rarely survived much longer than 20 years of daily use. Thus many pieces were melted down and recast. Repetition of this process has meant that with modern methods of analysis, pewter today shows an infinite variety of proportions of tin to lead. This applies also to other elements incorporated in

COLLECTING PEWTER

Pewter is a branch of antique metalwork which has much potential for the modest collector.

By R. S. MORTON

British pewter offers its collector many pleasures. Its simple but elegant form contrasts with the more decorated continental. Pewter's colour varies from the subdued silver, to a range of appealing greys. Not least, its restful charm increases in the presence of oak. In addition, many small and pleasing examples made in the last 250 years are modestly priced.

EARLY HISTORY

To make pewter articles, the Romans used tin from Cornwall and lead from the Peak District in the proportion of 3:1. It was not until the 14th century, however, that Europeans began seriously to replace wood, leather, and horn with pewter. The first craftsmen's guild was formed in 1347. It was followed by others in the provinces. The aim was to establish and main-

the alloy for special purposes. Copper, for example, minimises the corrosion known as tin pest and antimony more than bismuth or zinc improves durability by hardening.

Above left, fig. 1. Flat ware (from the left). (a) Plate, 22 cms five-lobed, double reeded outline. Markings include "X", "LONDON" and four incomplete shields, one inscribed "SD"; late 18th century (£95). (b) Plate-warmer, 20 cms; touch mark of Samuel Cocks, registered 1839 (£45). (c) Plate, 17.8 cms; raised rim with corresponding short foot; leaf decoration; marked "KAY-SERZINN" with pattern number; early 20th century (£12). (d) Dish, 38 cms; broad rim with turned edge, "hallmark" of four shields shows a thistle, rosette, face and initials of Wm. Hunter (1749-75) of Edinburgh. Pristine condition (£275). (e) Small oval tray, 25 x 14.5 cms; well-worn wavy and reeded outline; German maker's mark not traced; early 20th century (£12). (f) Plate, 24 cms; marks include "X", "LONDON" and initials 'M, W & L' in triangular formation; early 19th century (£25).



Left, fig. 2. Tankards. (a) Beaker type drum, inscribed "JEP", unusually short skirt with mid-18th to mid-19th century scroll handle. The recessed base declares its home as "The Empress, Kew Bridge" verified 1/2 PINT" (£58). (b) Tulip or baluster drum with skirted base/ PINT' verified by crowned 'VR' and '532'; base declares manufacturer as "James Dixon of Sheffield" (registered 1822) (£25). (c) This combined drum and skirt style is commonly associated, as here, with a glass base; early 19th century (£35). (d) Handsome and homogeneously grey, quart tankard; capacity verification as crowned "VR", "349" and inspector's initials 'LOC'; inside base engraved "ANDERSON, LONDON" and outside base 'Stanley Westmoreland' (£55). (e) Enstasis (convexity) drum with skirt; was popular in Norfolk and Suffolk in mid-Victorian times. Capacity verification is as crowned "GR" with "384" representing town authority and "34" its inspector; a four shield 'hallmark' is incomplete and illegible but not so some circular lettering "FORD OF STOCKPORT" which tells us that "GR" does not stand for George IV (reigned 1820-30) but George V who died in 1936

The 17th century featured the tragedy of the Great Fire of London in 1666. The Pewterers' Hall was destroyed and with it the original series of registered pewterers' touch marks. The series has been re-assembled and maintained and currently runs to about 1000 marks.

LATER HISTORY

With the 18th century came many challenges to pewter - earthenware, enamelled ironware, brass, silver, pottery and glass. It met these by diversifications and modifications. The range and style of flatware increased. Serving dishes or chargers were more than 15 inches (40 cms) in diameter; trenchers were smaller and plates or

platters 8-13 inches (20-37 cms). The range of holloware and its styling also showed diversification in terms of flagons, beakers, jugs, tankards, bowls, spoons and cups. The range of articles for the office and for personal use also increased and this continued into the 19th century as the export trade to the continent and America gathered pace.

Modifications concentrated on electroplating at first but this was joined soon by the most threatening challenge to the pewterers' craft. This was the arrival of Britannia metal, sometimes called hard or white metal. It was an alloy of around 90 per cent tin, 8-10 per cent antimony and some 2 per cent copper. It was introduced

3(a).

In the United Kingdom the 20th century opened with Liberty's, the great London store, selling 'Tudric' pewter. It was manufactured by Hasseler. His fruit bowls and cake dishes were especially popular. Tudric pewter's unique feature is its hand-hammered Celtic decoration. Pieces have worn well and no collection is complete without an example, however simple [see Figure 9(a)].

DATING PEWTER

Single touches may identify a pewterer [see Figure 1 (b)] and his dates located in a dealer's guide.



above left, fig. 3. More Holloware. (a) A tankard or measure of this distinctive shape is called in Scotland a tappit hen, "tappit" meaning topped and "hen" from the French "étain" meaning pewter. To facilitate pronunciation of tappit etain, the e, an elision or suppressible vowel, is dropped, so that we have "tappittain" and so "tappit hen". The style started in France and spread not only to Scotland. The twin acorn thumb pieces and the heart shaped lid declare the piece's origin as the Channel Islands, the first feature favouring Jersey; late 18th century (£350). (b) Chalice or communion cup (£185). (c) Goblet for domestic use; patch of tin pest; a four shield 'hallmark' is incomplete but shows initial 'H', a griffin, nil and nil; early 19th century (£35). (d) Spouted tavern pot; three sets of circular bands calculated to minimise denting; "QUART" capacity verified as "VR" over 175" and three horizontal daggers within an incomplete diamond; 19th century (£85).

above right, fig. 4. Eating and Drinking. (a) Spoons of contrasting styles and decoration; circa 1900, bought in Luxembourg (£16). (b) Small, heavy, single lugged porringer; fretting of lug rough and ragged; no evidence of use. The maker's mark on the base appears to be a poor imitation of an Ordeaux pewterer's mark of 1700; from a 20th century Spanish souvenir shop (£5). (c) Typical French wine tasting porringer; fleur de lys monogram common to several Loire chateaux; late 19th century (£12). (d) Half gill measure; the narrow neck of the baluster design is said to minimise the chances of introducing a false bottom; well used; late 19th century (£5). (e) Small measure moulded in two perpendicular halves; detailed decoration shows Cologne Cathedral and Kaiser William I on horseback; mid-19th century (£8). (f) Twin lugged porringer 10.5 cms diameter; lugs are crowns; four shield 'hallmark' incomplete and illegible; only mark is "ENGLAND"; late 19th century (£25). (g) Soup spoon with highly decorated and readily malleable thin handle.

Contemporary spoons are currently made at 6 Rue de Centre, Vevey, Switzerland. The present pewterer and his father included steel wires in handles but not so the grandfather; piece dated fin de siècle (12).



by James Vickers of Sheffield in 1769. With the development of water and steam technology the melted alloy could be machine rolled into thin sheets. These could be hammered over wooden chocks into required shapes. A new skill was thus born so that soon gracefully shaped domestic ware in Britannia metal was widely produced. The working man's ornate tableware at modest cost matched that of his master's silver. In the face of these changes the pewterers' craft of moulding and casting declined with factory closures.

Following the International Exhibition of 1862 came the flowering of Art Nouveau. It initiated a modest revival so that more decorated pewter began to appear. In England hand-hammered pieces, frequently with added decoration [see Figure 8(a)], enjoyed popularity. The strength and durability of hand-hammered pewter was widely appreciated. On the continent, pewterers concentrated on greater refinement of mouldings, particularly in Germany. The Germans exported a great deal of pewter in the 19th century. The quality of their finely decorated castings is remarkable. The soldering is sometimes undetectable. Pieces may be marked 'tinn', 'zinn' or 'feinzinn'. Popular manufacturers' names include Orivit, Osiris and Kayserzinn. Collectors should not neglect such pieces. The same applies to the small porringers used by the French for wine tasting. These feature a single lug or ring and were commonly worn with a ribbon round the neck on ceremonial tasting occasions. Examples date from pre-Revolution days. More recent examples are sometimes marked 'L'etain fin' meaning fine pewter. Some have also, or instead, two marks - that of the pewterer and his town. For the French influence in Scotland and elsewhere see Figure

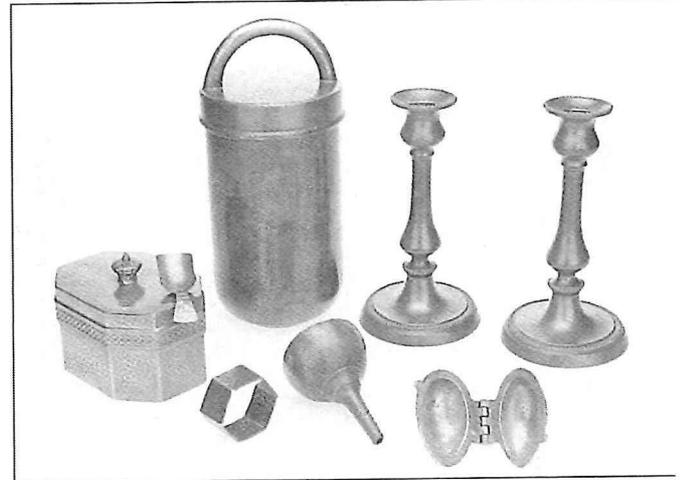
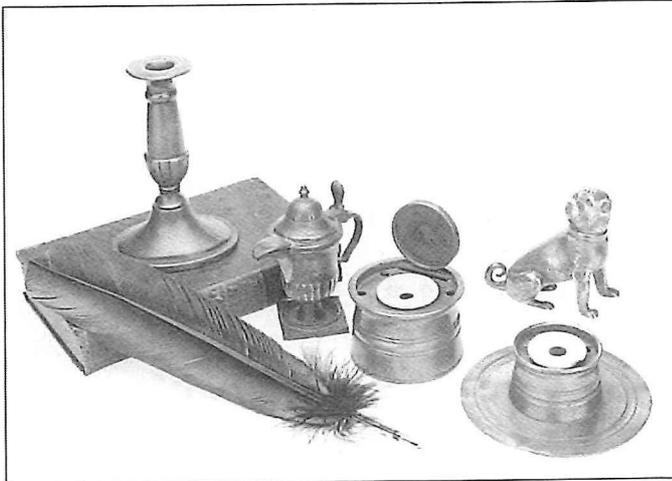
From the 16th century a Tudor rosette was a common mark of quality. Its use by continental pewterers, however, led to its abandonment around 1700 when heraldic devices or religious motifs symbolise a name or town. With growing awareness of lead poisoning manufacturers used less of this metal. Pieces were marked with an 'X', sometimes with a crown, for quality. Some interpreted this symbol as meaning 10 per cent lead. In the 19th century the 'X' quality mark was commonly accompanied by "LONDON" or "LONDON MADE" and less often by "ENGLAND".

It was 1907 before the upper limit of lead was officially restricted to less than 20 percent for eating and drinking utensils.

Makers' marks on pewter sometimes take the form of silver hallmarks [Figure 1 (d)]. This began in the 18th century but the practice was stopped at the request of silversmiths so that by the 19th century names of manufacturers [Figure 2(b) and Figure 6(di)], as well as Trademarks such as MILADY or MANOR PEWTER, perhaps with a pattern number, are commonplace.

Capacity seals are sometimes helpful in dating. They show a crown over initials such as "AR" for Anna Regina; "GR" for George Rex, or "VR" for Victoria Regina. The figures below such markings indicate the town of manufacture and its inspector's number. For example, at one period '6' identified Birmingham; '5', Manchester; '37', Sheffield and '532', Grimsby with London and Glasgow having several numbers. The list was last updated in 1946. Copies may be obtainable by collectors from their local Trading Standards Office.

Reading illegible marks and figures may be accomplished through a photograph or by mak-



ing a rubbing. If these fail, blackening the relevant area with the aid of a candle flame and cleaning the surplus soot by sellotape sometimes reveals the details.

In the absence of helpful markings, or the presence of doubtful ones, confidence in dating comes with familiarity of form, for example, in dating tankards. Visits to museums, handling pieces at collectors' fairs as well as discussions and even disputes with dealers are all essential pleasures of the learning process. The degree of use and abuse evidenced by pewter needs to have regard to its role and whether it was an ecclesiastical, domestic or tavern piece. Patches of tin pest and evidence of re-soldering can sometimes help with dating.

With practice 20th century reproductions and fakes become more readily recognisable [see Figure 4(b)]. Oxidisation of pewter comes largely from the air. If the bottom rim of a piece remains as new the base will not become as grey as the exposed surfaces. This does not happen if an article is chemically aged. Post World War 1 fakes were largely confined to candlesticks and flat lidded tankards.

COLLECTING AND CARING FOR PEWTER

Collectors do well in the beginning to confine their buys to smaller pieces in good condition. Visits to emporia housing several "antique shops", prestigious Antique Fairs as well as local fairs and car boot and jumble sales offer

price guidance and the excitement of a bargain. Hunting for additions to a collection gives holidays at home and abroad an extra dimension.

Pewter collectors are said to be earnest cleaners or dedicated non-cleaners. Many articles need no more than hot water and detergent. Use

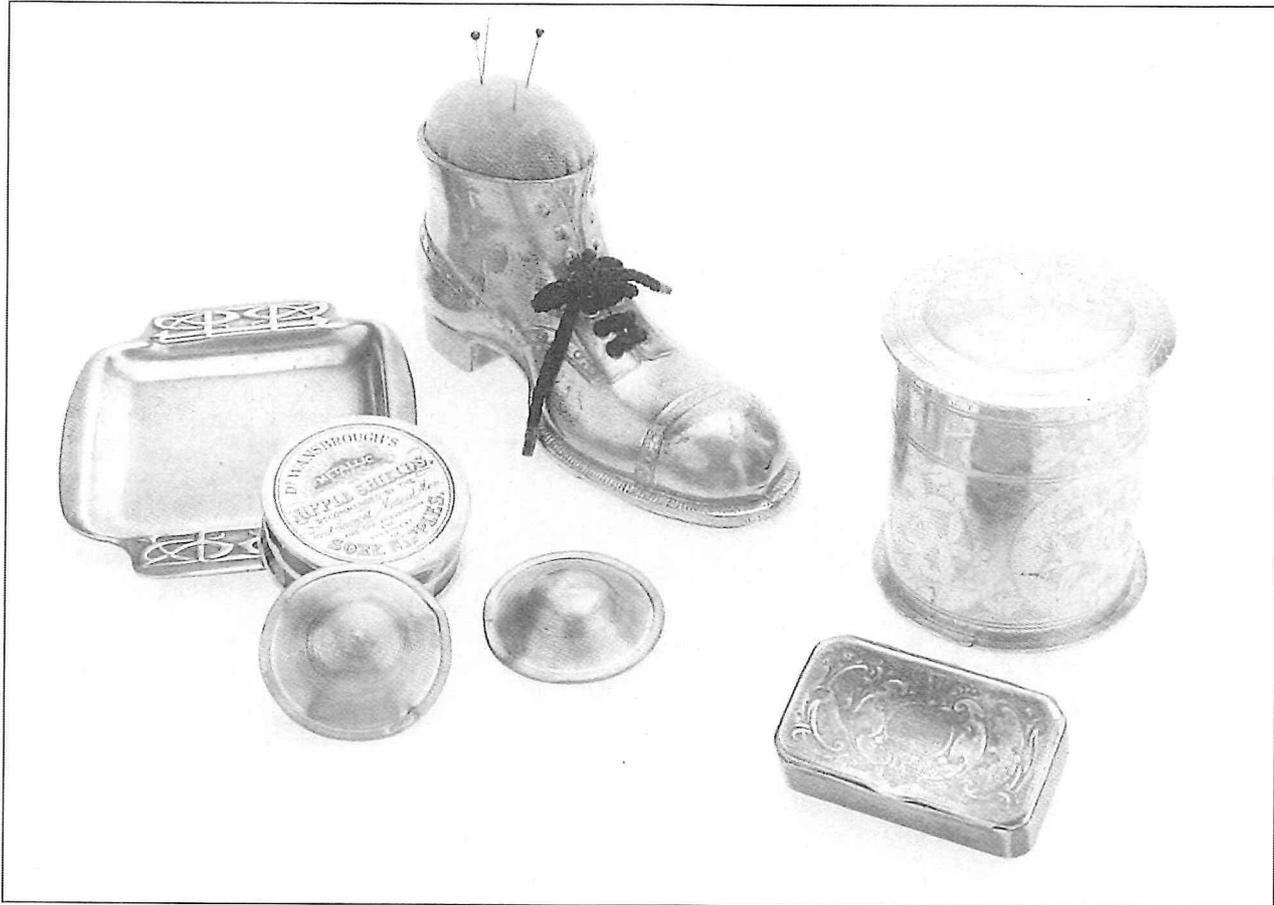
Top left, fig. 5. Cups and Beakers. (a) One of a pair of domestic cups in quality pewter, 8.4 cms tall; unmarked; early 19th century (£185 the pair). (b) Beaker with appealing colour and patina; the engraving, calculated to improve the grip is guilloché ornamentation occasionally seen particularly in 16th, 17th and 18th century continental architecture and furniture. The base touch mark resembles that used by Carl Behmann (1831-1894) and his grandson (died 1942) of Oldenburg in Germany; 20th century. Found in Majorcan street marked (£8). (c) One of a pair of ½ pint size Irish noggins; quality of pewter confirmed by "X" on base; capacity verification is by crowned "VR" and "88", late 19th century (£132 the pair). (d) Beaker; moulded in two upright halves with four panels featuring a celebration of the life of the German composer Richard Wagner; 19th century German manufacturer's name and pattern number on base (£17).

Top right, fig. 6. Table Holloware. (a) Salt cellar, 5.7 cms high; top edge hexagonal, base rim circular, badly stained. May have doubled as a candlestick or ashtray; circa 1900 (£10). (b) Mustard pot with blue liner and spoon; mid-Victorian (£7). (c) Foreground: Pair of salts in quality pewter; the griffins add weight and so stability; late 18th/early 19th century (£25 the pair). (d) Background: Two pepper pots in contrasting qualities of pewter but common baluster style: (i) left, is stamped James Dixon & Sons, Sheffield and so late 19th century (£24); (ii) right, mid-Victorian and evidences hard usage (£10). (e) Two more salts; (i) left, Light-

weight quality pewter; cabriole legs with lion heads, interspersed with floral decoration and dragonned edge; late Victorian (£5); (ii) right, The light-weight, full-bellied body shows no evidence of soldering, suggesting it is of Britannia metal. This view is supported by the "bright cut" decoration. The ball feet are of heavy pewter. Rare. (£5).

Above left, fig. 7. For the office. (a) Candlestick, 1 cms, round drip top, oval base and modest decoration suggest early 19th century; unmarked (£18). (b) Ink decanter; practical design and over-decoration suggests late Victorian manufacture; rare (£25). (c) Inkstand. Typical banded, capstan form in fine condition with good patina (£38). (d) Ditty incorporating a substantial base as an accident prevention feature; badly stained (£22). (e) Pounce pot; (Pounce is finely ground cuttlefish bone which has the capacity to prevent ink from spreading on unsized paper.) Moulded in two upright halves; external evidence of soldering. The animals' features have an air of attentive intelligence and devotion. Victorian craftsmanship raised to the level of art (£140).

Above right, fig. 8. Kitchen Holloware. (a) Teacaddy and spoon; the caddy is hand hammered with added moulded band to body and finial to lid. It is late Victorian. The spoon handle is delicately engraved (£35). (b) One of a pair of six-sided, hand hammered napkin rings, early 20th century (£5 the pair). (c) Ice-cream maker, 25 cms with handle; heavy, in good condition with evidence of regular use; late Victorian (£20). (d) Funnel as used for filling wine carafes or bottles from the barrel (£10). (e) Pair of candlesticks, 20 cms; the restrained elegance of the design is enhanced by the dragon decoration; each has a candle-end ejector; typically Georgian i.e. late 18th century (£140 the pair). (f) Chocolate or marzipan egg mould; mid 19th century (£25).



bove, fig. 9. Hers and His. (a) Pin tray with Art ouveau decoration; modest example of Tudric ewter, popular from 1903-20 (£22). (b) Pair of nipple shields in original box; diameter 4.5 cms; circa 150; rare (£20). (c) Pincushion; late Victorian (20). (d) Snuff box, 6 x 3.5 cms; chamfered corners; prevent tears to waistcoat pocket linings; launchline hinge to prevent jamming by snuff; side lid base decorated all over by engraved dotted es. The lid, slightly depressed by regular tapping, is generously decorated with C-scrolls typical of the 18th century; unmarked (£35). (e) Tobacco box; quality pewter; moulded as two air-tight cylinders; the outer with overall delicately engraved decoration; maker's mark is German; early 20th century (£35).

ight, fig. 10. Is it pewter? (a) It looks like it but is o light and has no evidence of a solder line. It is te 18th century Britannia metal. The ornate style itates 18th century silver (£20). (b) Pepper pot; e weight suggests pewter, the colour, silver; there no evidence that two pewter moulds have been ldered to make the base. Cleaning reveals copper the top. A 2 mm square of peeling at the foot veals grey. Is it Sheffield plate or electroplated wter or Britannia metal? (A silver replica, raved with the insignia of the 43rd Regiment of ot is in the Victoria & Albert Museum.) Truly a izzling piece. Any offers? (c) Trinket box. Weight id detailed decoration suggest moulded pewter. ie meeting edges of lid and base are 2 mms wide id twice turned. The appealing highly reflective ack finish is of quality japanning. What is the etal? Where and when was the piece made? It ars no markings (£40). (d) Candlestick, 21 cms; e classically elegant style with linear decoration is miniscent of the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14); e colour is mostly the grey of old pewter but more otedected areas look like silver; judged to be an ample of 18th or 19th century poorly applied and dly abused electroplated pewter (£5).

of an impregnated wool such as Duraglit may be helpful. Thereafter the occasional application of a cloth gently moistened with paraffin oil or a light dusting with talc and application of a dry chamois suffices to maintain and improve patina. Patches of tin pest call for the application of spirit of salts (dilute hydrochloric acid), one part to two of water, for 15-20 minutes followed, after rinsing, by the application of a mild abrasive such as cornflour in almond oil.

The following books will be found of help and

might be found at a book stall in a collectors' fair:

1. "Antique Pewter of the British Isles" by R.F. Michaelis. Published by Bell, London, 1955.
2. "Pewter" by John Bedford. Published by Cassell, London, 1965.
3. "English Pewter Touchmarks" by R. Jackson. Published by Foulsham, Slough, 1970 and 1993. (It has a useful bibliography)▲

