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The
ANTIQUAE COLLECTOR

A Journal for Lovers of the Old, Rare and Beautiful

SPECIALIST SOCIETIES FOR COLLECTORS

THE doyen of societies in this country relating to antiques is the Society of Antiquaries which was founded in 1707 and which has its headquarters at Burlington House. It began, as collectors' societies do, when a group of antiquaries, as they were then called, met together regularly to talk about their common hobby. But it is not about that august society that this article is concerned, for age alone makes it something of an institution and its interests cover a very wide field. Here we wish to take a look at a group of half-a-dozen specialist societies for collectors which have developed in England since the first World War. We believe they are making a unique contribution to knowledge about antiques for the very reason that they are specialist in nature.

In these groups the collector who has become an enthusiast for certain objects of the past meets others of like mind and interests. He has chances of comparing specimens he has acquired with others owned by fellow-members. Visits may be paid to important private collections. Criticism is free, appreciation is broadened, and knowledge advanced. Members who are often experts in their own line may read papers, and these are usually published in one form or another. Then too exhibitions are arranged where many of the objects shown may be from members' own collections.

When a specialist society becomes established and its membership grows to over three figures, the intimacy and close personal discussions of its early days are hard to retain. This was the experience of the Oriental Ceramic Society when it decided in 1933 to become a company, with formal articles of association. Mr. A. L. Hetherington tells us in his brief history of the O.C.S. (the Society's *Transactions* Vol. 23) that some of the old members formed a coterie known as the Dragons in order not to lose the spirit of former meetings. He quotes what he calls "a scurrilous ditty" written by one of the Dragons, from

which we give two verses, as they express amusingly the atmosphere in which a specialist collectors' circle begins.

Dragons tall and Dragons spare,
 With Dragons short and fat,
 And each of them without a doubt
 'A talking through his hat
 About some pot displayed for sale,
 For an enormous sum,
 At So and So's or you know whose
 Select emporium.

Unfold your tails, the chairman says,
 And swinge them with a lash,
 We only meet but thrice a year
 To talk our balderdash.
 Transactions of the printed kind
 Are quite beyond our powers,
 We may keep minutes but we waste
 The pleasantest of hours.

Railway development in China after the first World War led to the formation of the Oriental Ceramic Society in 1921. Such was the interest in the T'ang mortuary wares then brought to light that a society was formed, under the presidency of Mr. George Eumorfopoulos, to discuss the new discoveries. It began with twelve members, and now there are six hundred, spread over the world.

The oldest of this group of collecting societies is one of the smallest, the Society of Pewter Collectors, founded in 1918. It has been particularly active this year, with two exhibitions.

Then, prompted by similar specialised enthusiasms, come the English Ceramic Circle, founded in 1927 as the English Porcelain Circle; the Circle of Glass Collectors, 1937; the Antiquarian Horological Society, 1953; the Wedgwood Society, 1955; and the Society of Silver Collectors, 1958. There may well be other specialist collecting societies in this country of which we are unaware, and we shall be grateful for any particulars of them which readers can supply.

Museum officials are often active members

of the Societies and play an important part by contributing papers.

Practice varies regarding the admission of dealers and others with trade interests. Some exclude them altogether, but others admit them as members and even use them as advisers, but tend to limit their numbers and powers as members. Subscriptions to the societies are usually from one to four guineas a year.

Through the courtesy of the officers of the societies we are able to give the following summaries of the aims and activities of each.

THE SOCIETY OF PEWTER COLLECTORS.

President, Mr. C. A. Peal. Hon. Secretary, Mr. J. L. Grant, C.I.E., The House on the Bend, Sea Lane, East Preston, Sussex.

MEMBERSHIP is by invitation only of *bona-fide* pewter collectors known to two or more members. Meetings are held four times a year, in different towns each time, when papers are read and pieces submitted for "vetting". A circular is issued twice a year.

The present membership is thirty, with three members in Scotland. A successful exhibition took place at Lincoln from September 29 to October 27, 1962, all but nine of the 300 items being 17th or near-17th century pieces lent by members. The President assisted by a member organised in June, 1962, an exhibition of pewter from Norfolk Churches at St. Peter's Hungate Museum, Norwich. The Worshipful Company of Pewterers has been advised through a sub-committee on the preservation of touch plates dating from the year of the Fire of London. Where funds permit the society takes an interest in restoring Church pewter.

Recently joined members building up their knowledge of pewter are advised at meetings.

THE ORIENTAL CERAMIC SOCIETY,

Patron, H.M. The King of Sweden. President, Mr. Basil Gray, C.B.E. Secretary, Lt.-Col. J. D. Gage-Brown, 31B Torrington Square, W.C.1.

THE object of the society is to increase knowledge and appreciation of Eastern ceramic and other Arts. Candidates for membership need not be "experts" or owners of pieces. Membership is by decision of the society's Council, on the proposal of a member. The society's name must not be used for any trade or business purpose. Several meetings are held each year, usually in London, and the society aims at issuing transactions about once every eighteen months.

Originally the society arranged exhibitions in the Loan Court of the Victoria and Albert Museum. After 1945 there was a series of exhibitions in Davies Street, W.1, and since 1953 there have been five exhibitions organised by the society in conjunction with the Arts Council, on the Arts of the T'ang, Sung, and other dynasties. The next

exhibition will be of the Arts of the Ch'ing dynasty and will be held in the galleries of the Arts Council about March-April, 1964.

So far thirty-two volumes of the society's transactions have been issued. It is fair to say that the society during the past forty years has done as much or more for the furtherance of knowledge about Oriental ceramics and works of art as any society of its kind in any field.

THE ENGLISH CERAMIC CIRCLE. President, Mr. A. J. B. Kiddell. Hon. Secretary and Editor of Transactions, Mr. Donald C. Towner, 8 Church Row, Hampstead, London, N.W.3.

THE first president of the Circle in 1927 was Mrs. Radford, and the original vice-presidents were Dr. Bellamy Gardner and Mrs. Donald MacAlister. The title was changed from the English Porcelain Circle to the present one in 1931.

Present membership of the Circle is about 250, including many in America and other parts of the world. Membership is by committee election on proposal and secondment by two members.

The Circle was founded to hold monthly meetings during the winter for the reading of papers and for discussion. From the beginning papers have been published as transactions of which the latest number, Vol. 5, part 3, is now issued (Harrison and Sons, 44-47 St. Martin's Lane, W.C.2 (price £3), from whom any previous part can be obtained). Members receive transactions free.

The Circle commemorated its 21st anniversary by an exhibition of china at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the publication of a catalogue in which every piece shown was illustrated.

THE GLASS CIRCLE, until Oct. 1962 known as THE CIRCLE OF GLASS COLLECTORS.

President, Mr. R. J. Charleston. Membership Secretary, Miss Katharine Worsley, 50A Fulham Road, London, S.W.3.

THE Circle was founded in 1937 by Mr. John M. Bacon (1866-1948) with the support of his friend Dr. E. Frankland Armstrong, F.R.S. He had been a collector of prints, furniture, china, and other antiques but before 1910 Bacon was specialising in glass. After his retirement he used to give unofficial tutorials in his home to those wishing to learn about old glass, and it was from these that the idea of the Circle grew.

Mr. W. A. Thorpe was president from 1937 to 1957. In order to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of its founding, the Circle held a Commemorative Exhibition this summer at the Victoria and Albert Museum when nearly 400 items were shown from members' collections or else on loan from museums and galleries to which they have been given by members. An illustrated catalogue was issued to which Mr. R. J. Charleston contributed the introduction.

To sustain the interest of scattered members, stencilled notes are circulated.

THE ANTIQUARIAN HOROLOGICAL SOCIETY. President, The Rt. Hon. Lord Harris, M.C., J.P. Secretary, Mr. John C. Stevens, 53 Woodfield Crescent, Ealing, London, W.5.

THE society was founded in 1953 at the house of the famous horological collector, Mr. Courtney Ilbert, and Mr. F. H. Knowles-Brown was the first Hon. Chairman. Lord Harris, the present president, is well known as a connoisseur of both clocks and watches. The present Chairman is Mr. T. P. C. Cuss. The aim of the society is to foster appreciation of the work of past horologists by providing a venue for enthusiasts and by arranging lectures, informal talks, exhibitions, and visits to collections. Several Continental tours visiting public and private collections have been arranged by Dr. F. A. B. Ward.

Most meetings are held in London, but provincial meetings have been arranged in Birmingham and Bristol. A quarterly journal *Antiquarian Horology* recording transactions and members' original research is issued, with verbatim transcripts of the more important meetings. Books published have included "Heavenly Clockwork" by Drs. Price and Needham, "The Design of English Domestic Clocks" by Percy G. Dawson, and "Clockmaking in Oxfordshire" by Dr. C. F. C. Beeson.

It is hoped to hold an exhibition of clocks and watches, documents, etc., at the Science Museum in 1963. The society's library is being developed.

THE WEDGWOOD SOCIETY. Committee Chairman, Mr. A. T. Morley Hewitt. Hon. Secretary, Mr. J. K. des Fontaines, Flat 3, 75 Anson Road, London, N.7.

THE society began as the idea of a few enthusiasts who contributed to or visited the Wedgwood Exhibition at Kenwood, London, in 1954. The

first chairman was the late Sir George Barnes.

The aims of the society are to increase the study, knowledge, and appreciation of Wedgwood ware, to promote intercourse between members, and to publish results of researches and also the history of the factory's production. Meetings are held four times a year, and a week-end visit is annual.

It is hoped to issue proceedings every two years. Four numbers of the proceedings have so far been issued, price 10s. 6d. each copy to members, 15s. to non-members (obtainable from Messrs. B. T. Batsford, 4 Fitzhardinge St., W.1). Members not resident in the U.K. receive the latest and subsequent numbers free. A chart giving data in the life of Josiah Wedgwood I is free to members.

Membership is at present around 100 of whom about forty are overseas members, mainly in the U.S. Admission is by the Committee following application to the secretary. No distinction is made between dealers and collectors.

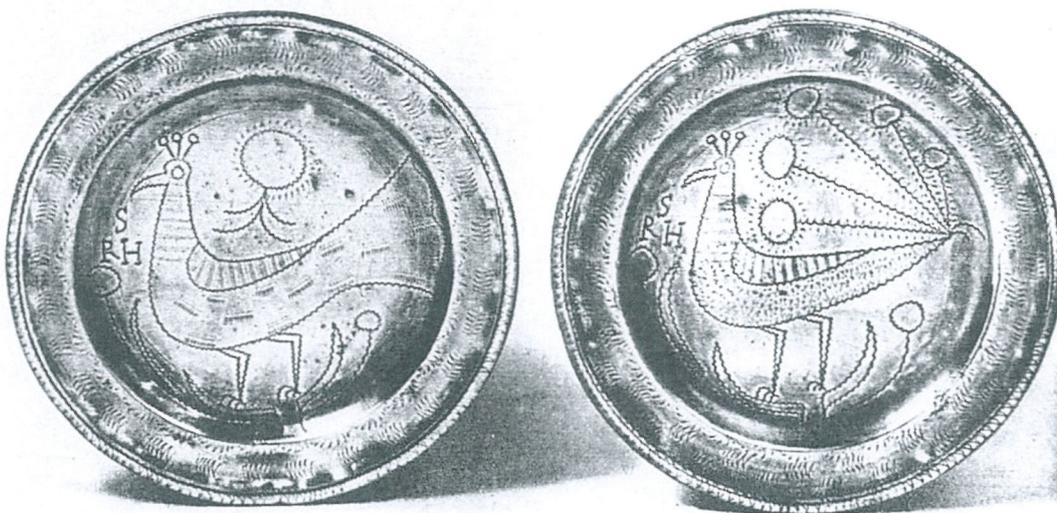
THE SOCIETY OF SILVER COLLECTORS.

Joint Hon. Secretaries, Mr. Gerald S. Sanders and Dr. V. C. Medvei.

THE purpose of the society is to provide opportunity for collectors and students of silver to meet regularly, to discuss and display their pieces, and to hear papers from members and invited experts. Two honorary advisers have been appointed, Mr. C. C. Oman and Mr. A. Grimwade, F.S.A., of Christie's. The membership includes officials of the national museums.

Six meetings are held annually between October and July. At two of these the main business is the discussion of members' pieces. A collection of photographs and illustrations is being built up, and it is hoped later to produce a journal. The society encourages collectors of silver from overseas to become corresponding members.

A pair of pewter marriage plates engraved with a peacock and a peahen. Maker, James Hitchman, C. 1720. Diam. 8½ inches. Lent by Mr. R. W. Cooper, F.S.A., to the exhibition of pewter at the Usher Gallery, Lincoln, Sept. 29 to Oct. 27, arranged in association with the Society of Pewter Collectors.



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