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THISTLE-SHAPED MEASURES. A rare form and one peculiar to Scotland. *From the collection of the author.*

SOME SCOTTISH PEWTER MEASURES

By LEWIS CLAPPERTON

SCOTTISH PEWTER is much less plentiful than English and, though similar to it in many respects, has an individuality and character of its own. In general, too, it is of high quality in both material and workmanship. Some of its distinctive shapes are found in the vessels made for use as standard measures. These are of various shapes, and are today eagerly sought by collectors of pewter. The types have been classified by collectors' terms according to the shape of the body and also, in the case of covered measures, according to the shape of the thumbpiece — a little projection above the handle that one presses with the thumb in order to raise the lid. The numerous shape and thumbpiece types are illustrated in Howard Herschel Cotterell's *Old Pewter, Its Makers and Marks* (1929), in L. Ingleby Wood's *Scottish Pewterware and Pewterers* (1904), and in Cotterell's *National Types of Old Pewter* (ANTIQUES, April, July, and September 1923). More recently examples in baluster and pear shapes, bearing so-called "embryo-shell" and "double-volute" thumbpieces, were illustrated in ANTIQUES for August 1947 (p. 99). These latter forms are not peculiar to Scotland and are more common in English pewter. From England they were introduced to America. Scottish measures in these shapes are quite comparable to the so-called reel-shape and tulip-shape mugs and tankards made by Americans.

Except in the smaller sizes, many of the Scottish measures were used as drinking vessels as well as for measuring and pouring. This was also the case in other countries, particularly in America where apparently the use of standard measures was not enforced even as strictly as in Scotland. According to Ledlie I. Laughlin (*Pewter in America*), sets of liquid measures were made in America in the eighteenth century but no marked examples made before 1820 survive, and even nineteenth-century measures are extremely rare.

Perhaps the rarest, though not the earliest, form of pewter measure peculiar to Scotland is the thistle shape. Individual examples are far from common, and a complete set is rare indeed. Hence the seven examples, in graduated sizes, which are here illustrated are of special interest. They are discussed by their owner, a Scotsman himself and past president of the Society of Pewter Collectors. He also elucidates the relation of the Scots scale of measures to the English, and the regulations governing both. Anyone who wishes to translate the Scots and imperial scale into American terms is welcome to do his own figuring. The Scots pint is equivalent to 3 pints imperial, and to 3.6 pints United States scale. And each of these measures 1.71 liters by the metric scale.

— THE EDITOR

SINCE VERY EARLY in the seventeenth century the citizens of the principal cities and towns in Scotland have appointed an official called the Dean of Guild who, during his period of office, has a seat in the Town Council and has important duties to perform. Among these, until 1835, was examination of the weights and measures in use in his district: those found to be in accordance with the standard measures, he marked, sometimes with his own initials, sometimes with the town's stamp; those that were found to be incorrect he destroyed. The standard measures were established by law and in early days those of Scotland differed in capacity from the English. In 1707, the date of the union of the crowns, the Scots scale was discontinued by the Act of Union, and the English scale was applicable to the whole country. This at least was the legal ruling, but in practice the Scots scale persisted in use in Scotland for over a century longer.

The relation between the two scales was: 1 gill Scots = $\frac{3}{4}$ gill English; 2 gills Scots ($\frac{1}{2}$ pint Scots) = $1\frac{1}{2}$ gills English.

In 1826 an act was passed requiring retailers to conform to the English standard, but this was weakened by permission to continue to use old measures provided they were painted or otherwise marked to show the proportion they bore to the English scale. So this also proved ineffective, and in 1835 a new act was passed, aimed at attaining uniformity of weights and measures throughout the United Kingdom. By his act the Dean of Guild was relieved of his duty of supervision, and inspectors were appointed by the authorities for the purpose of testing weights and measures and stamping them with a crown and the sovereign's initials. However, my fellow countrymen are alwaysaverse to change in their customs, and not until the passing of still another law, the Weights and Measures Act of 1878, did the old scale finally disappear. Within living memory in Glasgow, for instance, both the "wee gill" and the "big gill" have been known (the Scots gill equals $\frac{3}{4}$ of the imperial gill). And even the 1878 ruling, though it definitely stated that the use of local or customary measures was illegal, left some ambiguity in its framing, and today by court ruling the imperial measure in the sale of spirits is compulsory only when it is explicitly asked for.

Thistle-shaped measures are peculiar to Scotland, especially to Glasgow and the west; they are found somewhat less in Dundee. They date from the early nineteenth century, and so far as I know no earlier examples are on record. Though measures of this type were made after the act of 1707 presumably abolished the Scots scale, their capacity is usually according to that rather than the English scale. Of the thistle-shaped measures illustrated, starting with the smallest, the first five measure respec-

tively $\frac{1}{8}$ gill, $\frac{1}{4}$ gill, $\frac{1}{2}$ gill, 1 gill, and $\frac{1}{2}$ pint (2 gills) Scots. Each has its capacity stamped on it, along with a stamp showing that it has been inspected and found to be correct. The $\frac{1}{2}$ pint has the touch mark of Moyes of Edinburgh who carried on business till about 1870; it must have been made when he was a young man. No. 6 is also stamped $\frac{1}{2}$ pint but is larger than No. 5 by half a gill Scots. No. 7 is stamped 1 pint and holds twice as much as No. 6. Thus 1 to 5 are of the Scots scale and 6 and 7, English.

Apparently, when the imperial system was gradually replacing the old Scots system, some makers manufactured measures in the thistle shape according to the imperial scale, but probably these were very few in number. While the various acts enumerated attempted to regulate the capacity of measures, their shape was not restricted until the introduction of the Weights and Measures Regulations in 1907. These made it necessary for measures to empty when tilted to an angle of 120°. Thistle measures could not do this and so were regarded as "facilitating the perpetration of fraud." In the majority of cases, when submitted for verification, they were destroyed by inspectors, which probably accounts for the fact that they are almost impossible to find now. They were made both in brass and copper as well as in pewter.

Another and much better-known type of measure peculiar to Scotland is the tappit hen. This name is properly given to a particular shape only in the size of the Scots pint. Other sizes were made in this shape and they are correctly termed "tappit-hen shaped" measures. The earliest tappit hen I have heard of has a touch dated 1669. Though *tappit* means crested or tufted, these measures were made in three styles: crested (with a spike or finial on the lid), uncrested (with a plain lid), and unlidded. The uncrested is the earliest, and the unlidded is peculiar to Aberdeenshire. The tappit hen, the mutchkin or half pint, and the chopir or quarter pint are the most frequently found but measures in this shape were also made down to the gill, all of the Scots scale. After the English scale became obligatory a few were made of the English scale but these are not often come by. In Cotterell's *Old Preater* (plate 48) is illustrated the most complete set known, consisting of ten, of which five are of the English scale.

Another type of measure common in Scotland in the eighteenth century is that known as pot-bellied. They are also illustrated in *Old Preater* (plate 48), both lidded and unlidded.

I have quoted freely from a statement from the Chief Inspector of the Glasgow district, to whom I am also much indebted for information about the various Acts and Regulations and a demonstration of how liquid measures are tested.



BALUSTER-SHAPED MEASURE. The actual source of this item is not known: it may well be English rather than Scottish, but it represents a type made frequently in both countries in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and also, with variations and much more rarely, in America.



TAPPIT HEN. The plain lid indicates that this is of the earliest type in this distinctively Scottish form.