

Fake marks found on English pewter; “Mundey-ed” and others. - Geoff Lock (S.AUS)

In the beginning...

Some years ago, 1980 to be precise, I travelled to Sydney for my great-uncle's 90th birthday celebrations. Whilst there, a cousin of mine took me to as many antique shops as we could find open including George Auchinouchie at Lane Cove, various markets and some stall holders that might have stocked old English pewter. At that time, the price of antique pewter was considerably higher than it is today, {2010} and I had yet to commence buying from dealers in Britain.

One vendor, Roger Patterson, had a Yates and Birch ½ pint truncated-cone tankard / pot which appealed to me because such pieces were extremely scarce in pewter-starved South Australia. The price was \$90 which was rather high, and exorbitant today, but I bought it anyway and had it posted to Adelaide.

When it arrived, to my surprise, it had a G IV City of London stamp on it that I hadn't noticed which made it all the more appealing to me, not realising then that this shouldn't be the case.

It was some years before it dawned upon me that the mark was “wrong”; i.e. that it had been added to make the pot seem older. It later came out that the well-known pewter dealer, Richard Mundey, had been adding marks for many years on pots and measures which he shipped off to America and sold through several firms such as Marshall and Field. Perhaps this was one of those that he had “aged”?

“Provincial Pewterers” by David Hall and Ron Homer, 1985

After Ron Homer and David Hall's book, “Provincial Pewterers”, was published in 1985, this confirmed that Yates & Birch were in operation from c 1838 to c 1860 instead of the years c 1800-1840 as given by Cotterell in “Old Pewter”. This being some 40 years later, Mundey was horrified at the news and closely questioned both authors as to their certainty of the dates.

In all likelihood, as Ron Homer said to me, the enormity of what he, Mundey had been doing for so many years finally dawned upon him and that he was exposed! Yes, but not caught up with nor convicted!!

“The Richard Neate Touch Plate”, 1996

In 1991, the Pewter Society came into possession of several “Touch plates” that were erroneously assumed to have been Mundey's. The subsequent publication, “The Richard Neate touch plates”, contains detailed illustrations of the marks and also an excellent comparison of fake touch marks against the originals on the London touch plates. However, direct ownership and use of the plates by either Neate or Mundey remained un-proven although suspicions had been simmering for years.

1998 articles in P.S. Journal and 2003 article in P.S. Newsletter

Following the Pewter Society meeting in June 1998, two articles appeared in the Autumn 1998 edition of the Pewter Society Journal. One was by **Dr. John Richardson**, then vice-president, titled “**Neate et al**” in which he discussed the development of fakes and forgeries of old pewter during the early part of the 20th century and the involvement of a known dealer in such products, Richard Neate.

The other article was the text of a paper that was delivered at the same meeting by **Robert Horan**, titled “**Neate et al, fakes and reproductions-the American Experience**”

This was a hard-hitting expose about the questionable activities of Richard Munday and the suspect items that he had been supplying to the American market since World War 2.

In 2001, I wrote a response to Robert Horan's article titled "***Richard Munday; some Australian Evidence***" that was eventually published in the Pewter Society Newsletter in 2003.

In this article, I outlined the various pieces of old pewter of questionable authenticity that were directly traceable to Richard Munday as the source of supply. Several of these pieces are still in museums and were purchased from Munday in the 1960's when he was supposed to have been a reformed character! I only met him once, in 1989, and he had the slipperiest hands that I have ever shaken!

Final nail in the coffin, article by Peter and Trish Hayward, April 2009

This article, by Peter and Trish Hayward, published in the Journal of the Pewter Society in April 2009, provided the conclusive evidence about Richard Munday's long-time faking activities. Titled "Naval bowls and jugs", the article detailed the history of pewter naval mess-bowls that had names of supposed former ships of the Royal Navy inscribed on the body which could be traced to Richard Munday. The contents of this article showed that Munday had used names of ships that hadn't existed in the R.N. at the time he indicated or had never existed at all. Further, eye-witness evidence was presented that proved Munday had been actually seen in the process of stamping marks on pewter in the 1960's and present when pewter reproductions were being made. The witness saw literally 100's of punches on work-benches in Munday's premises for use in marking pieces of pewter, both old and new and stated that he, Munday, didn't see that he was doing anything wrong! Collectors from then and now would strongly disagree!

So, where are we at?

Fake marks on pewter are done so deliberately in order to create an impression that the piece is older and, therefore, more valuable than other lesser pieces.

It's unusual to find 19th century pots with faked marks on here in Australia because there was so much pub-ware pewter exported here from Britain in the latter part of the 19th century, c 1860-1900, particularly Yates & Birch and James Yates.

With the coming of the Great Depression in the 1930's, money for buying expensive old pewter would have dried up in most instances so that a new market for sales would have been needed by the producers of "Reproduction" wares. What better than a range of inexpensive, early 19th century pots that fitted in with Cotterell's recently published "Old Pewter"!

Perhaps this is too simplistic but the opportunity had presented itself and with the influx of thousands of American service-men with cash during the Second World War, a new market was created for unsuspecting, trusting buyers.

As interest in recent, Victorian and 19th century pewter hadn't taken off by the more serious collectors in the pre-war years, it's most likely that reproduction pieces could easily be passed off as genuine.

What better way to do so than to add a few "Early" marks to pots and measures that took their dating from Cotterell and market them overseas, particularly America, home to the many G.I.s and Airmen who frequented the country pubs when on leave in England during the war.

In this way, pewter that was deemed to be over 100 years old was shipped into America without paying any customs duty, providing a lucrative business opportunity for unscrupulous dealers, Munday included. As collectors became more knowledgeable and subjected pewterware to closer scrutiny, it became evident that pewter with faked marks was more common than first thought.

With the surfacing of the fake-marks touch plates in 1991 and the subsequent publication of these marks by the Pewter Society, it has been easier to detect doubtful marks on pieces such as pots and measures. It's curious that marks used by the much maligned Duncomb family do not appear on any of these plates.

Fake or reproduction marks seen on pewter bought in South Australia

{A} Reproduction pieces with faked marks

The first group of faked marks that I came across are the ***“Hall marks” of Ingram and Hunt***. These marks are stamped under the base of a reproduction truncated-cone pint that I bought knowingly in 1977. Also appearing with these marks is a rubbed mark of ***William Wright***.

The surface of this pot was originally a yellowy-black as if it had been chemically treated. Over the past 30+ years, this piece has been “Dipped and Stripped” with a caustic soda solution that has had a cleansing effect rather than making a bright pitted surface which happens when oxide is removed in this manner.

The colouring on this pot resisted stubbornly to several baths and now it could almost pass for an old pot except that the location and mixing of the marks points to its being a reproduction. The lack of a capacity stamp or verification marks also adds to the likelihood of its manufacture as being in the 1970’s.

The fake mark for William Wright appears in M.P.M. in the section “On Fakes”, p 117, mark 6321 whilst the faked “Hall marks” of Ingram & Hunt are illustrated on page 24 of “The Richard Neate Touch Plate”.

In 2009, I purchased a small group of pewter, including an obvious ***reproduction bellied measure***. This is made of light metal, cast in three pieces with a strap handle and gun-metal grey in colour. Beneath the base are the faked “Hall marks” of Ingram and Hunt as well as a capital E within a rubbed rectangle. ENGLAND is stamped below the “Hallmarks”. There are no capacity marks or verification marks. The metal is quite sharp on the upper rim of the body and there are four inscribed lines of reeding on the body above the middle section. It is not a replica but a genuine reproduction for the tourist market that was made in the 1970’s. I was curious to see the same “I & G” marks as on the t-c I had bought 30 years before.

Another replica piece for the tourist market that I acquired in c 2005 is an ***Irish handle-less Noggin*** measure. This piece is of good metal, has a gun-metal grey, even patina with no verification marks. Probably made in the 1970’s, it is marked under the base with an Irish harp above a capital X above a rubbed off-struck DUB for Dublin.

The rims of the piece are quite sharp in comparison to an original. Whilst it may have been made to deceive, I’ll give it the benefit of the doubt ***but*** a novice, as we all once were, might be taken in.

{B} Reproduction pieces with fake marks made to deceive the buyer.

I have two pieces in my collection that are fakes, manufactured and marked accordingly to deceive.

The first is a ***quart lidless baluster with the fake “Hall marks” of Richard Neate***, NR in a rectangle, a rooster in profile facing left within a shield and a griffin’s head, also in profile, facing left, within a shield. These marks first appeared on fake pieces in the late 1920’s or early 1930’s and are commented on by H. H. Cotterell in correspondence between him and A. Sutherland Graeme, dated 18th June 1931. {See p.14, *The Early Years of the Pewter Society*, pub 2000, Edited by David Hall}. These marks are also listed in M.P.M.p.115 under 5896a. At the time when Cotterell was writing about pieces with the “NR” marks, the identity of the forger was unknown but it is now certain that it was Richard Neate, NR being his initials in reverse. This fake baluster is of Imperial quart capacity and was bought by me in 2005 as an example of Richard Neate’s work. It was one of several that were sold at auction in Adelaide in 1999 as genuine even though it was pointed out to the auctioneers that the pieces were reproductions. Four identical pieces are in the Heyward family collection at Carrick Hill, Springfield and were probably bought from Richard Munday in London during the 1950’s. Other “NR” pieces, including a front-spouted “barrel” pint, were in the late Len Evans’ collection which was sold in Dec 2008. They, too, were bought from Munday!!

The second fake piece, made to deceive, is *a truncated-cone pint of Birmingham style* rather than London. I bought this piece recently at an auction in Adelaide because of its fake marks and the fact that it could be closely dated to when it was made. The recent owner had inscribed under the base when he had obtained the pot, 1938-39 and from whom. The piece is of good quality pewter and well made. On close inspection, however, the “Oozy tongue” at the top of the thumb-rest is off-centre to the right and the marks for City of London shouldn’t appear on a piece that is more Birmingham or Bewdley style. All three verification marks on the right-hand side of the upper body are identical to those shown in the “Richard Neate Touch Plate” on page 27. There is a crowned VR, City of London W IV in which the dagger in the top left quadrant is missing, and a rubbed crowned G: IV. All of these marks are shown on lines 1 and 2, being figures 2 and 4 on line 1 and fig.1 on line 2. Accompanying these marks on the upper left of the body is a faked Norwich mark, the differences to the genuine mark being as follows: the three turrets are all the same height with flags and flag-poles, there is no VR as appears on the genuine mark and the passant lion’s head faces left instead of “face-on”. There are also small variations with the lion’s tail and front paws to the original. It seems like a lot of trouble to go to just for a reproduction pewter pint but if made in the 100’s and sold inexpensively, then maybe it was easier to sell pseudo 19th century pieces that few people would question 70 years ago. Whether made by Munday or not is open to conjecture but the marks match those shown.

{C} Faked marks on genuine old pewter

This brings me back to the *Yates and Birch ½ pint truncated cone* pot that I purchased in 1980. This is a genuine piece that has had a City of London G IV mark added to make it appear older than it is. Cotterell gives the dates for Yates and Birch as c 1800-1840 which was un-challenged until the 1980’s. A more astute collector would have noticed that it was most unlikely for a Birmingham piece to have a London G IV mark, especially as G IV marks for Birmingham existed that were used as secondary marks by Villers & Wilkes. When David Hall and Ron Homer were able to prove that Y&B’s working years were c 1838-1860, this meant that it was impossible for the G IV mark to be genuine so it had to have been added much later to “age” it. On closer inspection, the dagger in the upper left quadrant is only a blob.

As well, the “G” is indistinct and the “IV” is more of an “N”, the whole mark being squashed in size. In all probability, it was brought from a London dealer to take people in; it certainly took me in years ago.

The second piece that I have with fake or “Added” marks is a *bucket pint by Bentley and Whelling*. This firm operated in London during the latter 1860’s to 1870’s as a successor to C Bentley whose “Hall marks” are on the upper body to the left of the handle. Beneath these is a crowned G IV over another crown which indicates to the unwary that the pot is possibly from the 1830’s rather than the 1880’s. On closer inspection, a name has been buffed off the front of the pot that may have originally contained clues as to its true age. The piece is in good condition but shows evidence of having been dipped and stripped some years ago. This pint was bought in 2003 with the knowledge that it had been “added” to so that I could use it as another example of Munday’s fakes.

This website has asked Geoff Lock for photos to tie in with this article and hopes to add them later

