

FAKE HUMPHREY EVANS PEWTER

By Jamie Ferguson

I have for some time been researching particular thumbpieces on various flagons and tankards in an effort to confirm a Wigan origin for them. You can imagine my consternation therefore when reviewing my old Pewter Society Journals to see an item on the front cover of one (Vol 9, number 2, Autumn 1993) that I believe could well be of Wigan origin described as '*A fine dome-lidded tankard by Humphrey Evans of Exeter apparently the only surviving Exeter dome-lid.*' The tankard forms part of the collection of pewter of the late Stanley E. Thomas which is held by the museum of North Devon, the catalogue of which used to be provided to new members on joining the Society until the stock ran out. The tankard is Cat. No. 42. Also featured in the 1993 Journal article (page 45, fig 5) were two unusual wavy edged plates noted as being by Humphrey Evans and '*examples of Exeter's distinctive products*'. One of these also forms part of the Thomas collection (Cat. No. 39), whilst the other formed part of the late Ron Homer's collection and was recently sold at Bonhams (May 2009, Lot763).

Fortuitously my family holiday this year was in Devon and I duly arranged to visit the Barnstaple museum to inspect these items.

i) **The dome-lid.** Figure 1.



A label underneath indicated it was from the Veasey Collection and purchased by Stanley Thomas in 1969. It is a good example of its type, perfectly genuine, and exactly as I had expected, namely all parts being from identical moulds to others I have already handled and recorded (some of which carry marks in the base, and importantly, others which do not). It carried a circular named touchmark of Humphrey Evans in the base as shown in Figure 2.



However, this mark is now known to be a fake. It is struck using punch No.14 on the touchplate of fake marks as described in JPS Autumn 2003 (page 21-36). Clearly some 40+ years ago an unmarked version of the tankard was fraudulently marked to

enhance its appeal and sold on to an unsuspecting buyer. It is certainly not of Exeter origin!

ii) The wavy edged plate. Figure 3.

This unusual plate just didn't feel right! It was quite heavy, poorly cast and finished and had a distinct leady feel about it. It also carried the touchmark and hallmark for Humphrey Evans and a crown X as shown in Figure 4.



All of these marks are also now known to be fake, the majority of which also appear on the previously mentioned touchplate of fake marks. Punch No.14 is used again and the hallmark is made up from punch Nos. 103, 104 and 124 (the leopard's head is not on the plate – so this punch is 'missing'?). Interestingly the crown and the X must be struck separately for the crown appears alone under punch No 79 (the photo of which is illustrated on its side and is heavily struck).

Another pair of plates very similar to this also appeared in the Bonhams sale of the late H. W. Keil (October 2008, Lot 656) and were unsold. These likewise carried a touch and hallmark made using the same punches, photographs of which appear on the Pewter Society database (see PS3183 where both fake and genuine versions of all these marks can be found for side by side comparison), although in this case the crown above the X was struck using punch No. 142. Ron Homer's plate is also undoubtedly a fake. It is understood that in preparing their catalogue Bonhams had

access to material from Ron Homer's records resulting in the following catalogue entry "*a narrow rimmed wavy edged plate bearing pseudo marks of Humphrey Evans, Exeter*".

It is not known if these plates were made as out and out forgeries or are genuine items which have then been fraudulently marked (if so they are probably 'continental'). However the fact that four plates have now been identified must surely mean that others are likely to exist and should be avoided.

I hope this article serves as a warning to researchers, collectors and dealers alike to be ever vigilant when researching, buying or selling pewter. Everything may not always be as it seems. Do follow things up, and in particular check marks against those known to be fake!

Jamie Ferguson