

Moyes of Edinburgh - Marks and Pewter

James Moyes – the last Edinburgh Pewterer

The following is based on an article by Peter Spencer Davies (Edinburgh Pewterers 1750 – 1890) in the Journal of the Pewter Society Autumn 2010 from page 27

and

Genealogical Research by Christine Ellis of Sydney Australia.

James Moyes was born in Edinburgh Parish, Edinburgh Midlothian, on June 11th 1814

There is no indication that his Father John or Mother Clementina had any pewtering connections.

He appears to have lived and worked in much the same area of Edinburgh throughout his life.

He had one sister and three brothers and there is no reason to think they were pewterers.

James Moyes worked at 108 West Bow Edinburgh from at least 1851 – 1870, at 9 Grassmarket from 1872 to 1877, and from 23 Grassmarket from 1878 – 1891. He died in 1891 at the age of 77

He took over the shop of William Scott (IV) - who died in 1849 - and may possibly have served an apprenticeship with him or worked for him.

The Incorporation of Hammermen to which he might have needed to belong in previous times had too few members and money to be able to exert its authority over the trade.

James Moyes set up in business a few years after the Burgh Trading Act of 1846 which in simple terms said anyone could conduct any trade without being a member of a trade association. So it meant that you could do what you want and no-one organisation is going to bully you, any which way.

He was never a burgess or freeman, so never enjoyed any known social prestige within the appropriate trade association or the city. He could have become a burgess by patrimony but there is no record of such status. Some of his pewter bears striking similarity with that of William Scott (IV) which is not surprising as with the shop may have come moulds or even some stock. The date he took over the shop is not known, only that by the census of 1851 that he had done so.

There is no reason to think he was ever prosperous. His business always appears to have been small and he employed only very few staff and no known apprentices.

The West Bow and Grassmarket areas. These would be in easy walking distance of St Cuthberts and of Bristo Street. So it looks as though James Moyes spent his entire 77 years within a very small area.

The West took a right off what is now the Royal Mile about half way up and had a very sharp left in when it then turned down toward the Grassmarket. It was the centre of pewtering and metalworking. It reads as like a warren of jostling noisy workers in cramped quarters. Buildings five and six floors high were commonplace.

1839 – James married Christian Ayton Morrison who was about the same age and he died before her.

1841 - He worked as a Pewterer in Edinburgh Midlothian in 1841 whilst living in Bristo Street, St Cuthberts, Edinburgh . St Cuthberts and Bristo Street are very central to Princess Street.

1851 – James worked as a Pewter master employing 2 men in Edinburgh Midlothian (West Bow) – this was a short walk from Bristo Street beneath the castle.

1861 – he employed 2 men and 2 boys

1871 – he employed three men and one boy – listed as a Pottern – a pewterer and Tinsmith

1881 – he employed 2 men

1891 – he was classified as an employer with no indication as to how many he employed. So it appears he worked until or near death at the age of 77.

Two of his sons worked for a while as Pewterers.

John born in 1841 is seen as a Pewterer in 1861 but by 1871 at least until 1891 he is an upholsterer. Perhaps upholstery paid better.

James born in 1850 was a pewterer in 1871 but a Wine Merchant in 1881 and a Hotel Keeper in 1891. It might be reasonable to suppose that at ages 20-21 both brothers had worked with their father but that the reward was insufficient to keep them working with him. There is no proof of this one way or the other.

Another son George became an architect, and another Thomas, clerk to a brewer and Commercial traveller. There were four sisters with occupations such as dressmaker and domestic service for the two recorded as living to a working age. Apart then from the architect there are no signs of professional aspiration or prosperity.

James Moyes did make a nice quality of pewter and many pieces with his mark have survived and can be seen.

On the 26th of August in 1891 there is mentioned in The Scotsman a sale of his stock and plant to take place on the 2nd of September in his premises at 23 Grassmarket, to include: "quantity of ale and spirit measures, pewter teapots, &c, paraffin lamps and chimneys, cutlery, several sets brass weights, beams and scales, syringes, watering pans [sic], tin ladles and spoons, large and small oil cans, oil pouries, stew pans, dish covers, set of copper scoops, large flywheel, turning lathe, show case, counter, shelving, and a large variety of various other useful articles

This writer has only seen tavern pots and measures made by Moyes but pewterers in the period made Church pewter, plates, and chargers.

Below follow one or two examples of his work and his marks –

A scarcely found mark but used by Moyes is this Thistle



A more often found mark shown on two pieces below but more clearly here firstly is



Imperial Half Pint Measure by J Moyes of Edinburgh who worked 1846 to 1891. Verifications to the rim for Edinburgh including a Crown over a V Orb R also a Crown over VR over 3 . This stands 3 ¾” weighs 422 grams and has J Moyes Edin under the lid. The lid attachment was repaired a long time ago and it has been cleaned.

Charmingly to the front it is marked for * Geddes 141 Grassmarket. (very local business for Moyes)



Imperial Half Pint Measure by J Moyes of Edinburgh who worked 1846 to 1891

Verifications to the rim for Midlothian by two Crown over VR over 479 and HALF PINT to the rim front. . This stands 3 ¾" weighs 418 grams and has J Moyes Edin under the lid. The lid attachment was repaired a long time ago. Year dates for 1882 1892 and 1894 (ie 82,92,94) are stamped to the rim.



LEITH ½ PINT -Half Pint Pewter Mug with Acanthus handle by J Moyes of Edinburgh (1846-1891)

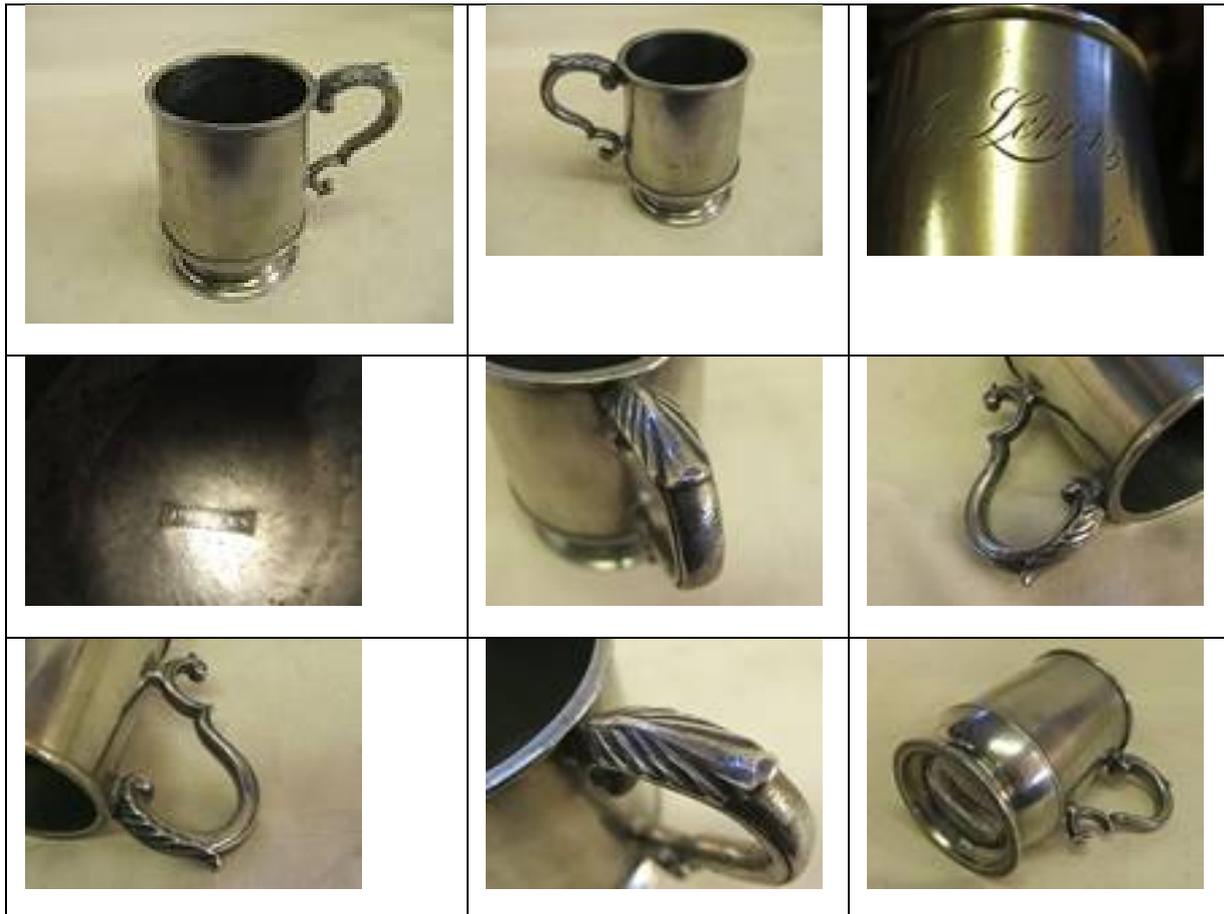
Charmingly engraved to the front for N Weir 23 Coburg Street Leith verified to the right of the handle for Edinburgh in 1862 and a nice crowned VR over 448 for Leith

Well made with the J Moyes serrated edged rectangular label touch within an incised circle in the base. This stands table to rim at 3 ¾" and weighs about 376 grams.



Half Pint Mug by J Moyes with Acanthus Handle.

J Moyes (OPM3317 working 1846-1891) said to be the last pewterer of Edinburgh, in 1872 his shop was in the West Bow. This delightful footed bucket style mug with this lovely Acanthus handle is like most Moyes pewter, really well made and appears to have been the proud possession of one J Lewis whose name is engraved to the front and there are no other marks. It stands 3 ¾" with a footrim of 2 ¾" and weighs over 13 ozs.



Edinburgh 'bottle' measure by James Moyes (OP3317 1870 – 1878) Verified for 1873.

Very few were ever made and it is extremely rare that one appears on the market for sale being the preserve of very specialist collectors. This weighs 1 lb 5 ozs stands 6 ¼" with a footrim of 3 3/8" and a lip rim of almost 3 ¾".



A Scottish Bottle Measure Made by James Moyes

The bottle measure was a Scottish peculiarity that lasted only from 1870 for about 8 years. This mug then is especially interesting as someone has gone to the trouble of adding George III and George IV marks that are rare or simply faked and marks clearly not applicable to this piece. In the base is the remains of Moyes pot touch. The piece stands 6 1/3rd inches and weighs some 708 grams.



A One Pint James Moyes Mug verified for Edinburgh carrying his name in the base and with a delightful ball terminal to the handle Although conical barely so with just 2mm difference from top of cone to bottom of cone. Bold central fillet with incised lines above and below and to the foot. This stands 4 3/4" tall and weighs about 502 grams.



A Half Pint Bottle Measure made by J Moyes of Edinburgh c1874. Edinburgh verification to the side of the handle and J Moyes touch within. Also incise marked $\frac{1}{2}$ BOTTLE. Very scarce.

