

MUGS AND PUBS by Trevor Moore

Pewter has been used for many years for the manufacture of measures and drinking vessels in public houses, with the practice of marking to show ownership and inspection to verify capacity. The pewter maker may be determined if there is a touch mark (also known as a pot touch) or hallmark, and sometimes the name and address of the public house is also incorporated.

Below are some examples of the styles of pewter drinking vessels most associated with the pubs

Quart.



Pint Side Spouted Measure.



Beaker.



Footed cup



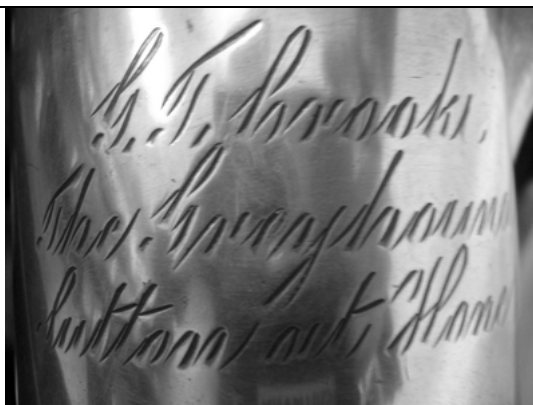
Half Pint



A few names of Public Houses and Landlords who owned the pewter mugs



J Price of the Rose & Crown



G T Crooks of The Greyhound



J Overs of The Green Man



J Overs of the Green Man put this sign of ownership on the thumbpiece

All these marks and inscriptions, if they exist on an item, provide a special level of interest for a collector to identify and associate an old pewter mug with a particular public house. It also opens up a definite line of research to discover if the building is still surviving (perhaps now as a private house) or even better if it has remained as a public house often with a changed name. To stand at the bar with a pub tankard that was used at that spot (or near as) some 100 plus years ago can be quite exciting especially if it is filled with a good ale!

The practice of marking pub pewter ware with engraving to show ownership was a precaution against theft. Early engraved mugs (from the 17th century) are rare but surviving examples from the late 18th century and 19th/early 20th centuries do appear at antique auctions and fairs, sometimes on e bay, and in antique shops. There may also be some in a dusty corner of the old cellar in your local!

Ownership was sometimes shown by inscriptions that may be found engraved to the front of a pewter mug with good legible letters in the earlier (18th century) examples within an oval or circular design. The name of the landlord, the pub name, and the location (town, village); one or all could be shown. Through the 19th century the letter forms become stylish, more difficult to read, and contained in rectangular or wavy edged designs.

Later on the inscriptions, if any, were engraved in a circle under the base and these can be very difficult to read because of the style and often wear. Furthermore, the landlord's name was not shown in full on the front, merely one or more initials and the first letter of the surname. Again these initials are somewhat stylish and not easy to determine. Once established then lots of research into old trade and street directories to pin these names down! Your local library should be able to assist in locating these directories.



Under this mug foot is 'Spotted Dog' followed by the address and also showing the maker and his address.



Under this base this mug was clearly the property of the 'Orange Tree' followed by more address details – not always now easy to read.

These engraved inscriptions are more common on pint mugs than quarts with very few on ½ pints. Inscriptions may also be found on pewter beakers and possibly footed pewter cups. Names and addresses are not common on measures less than ½ pint i.e. gills.

The capacity mark, such as 'pint', is to be found on pub pewter measures and pots. The imperial standard was introduced in 1826. A verification mark indicates that the measure has been officially inspected and the capacity found correct. Most towns had their own inspection mark of various styles, but during the 19th century this gradually changed and a uniform style was introduced consisting of a crown, the monarchs initials (i.e. VR –Queen Victoria) and a number which denotes the location (e.g. 6 is Birmingham, 394 is Hertford county). These punched inspection marks are usually found on the upper rim.



Yates Birch & Spooner sometime in the 1840s made this mug and the makers faux 'hallmarks' are seen on the rim, here to the left of the handle.



We see clearly here another mark within the inside centre of the mug to tell us who made this one

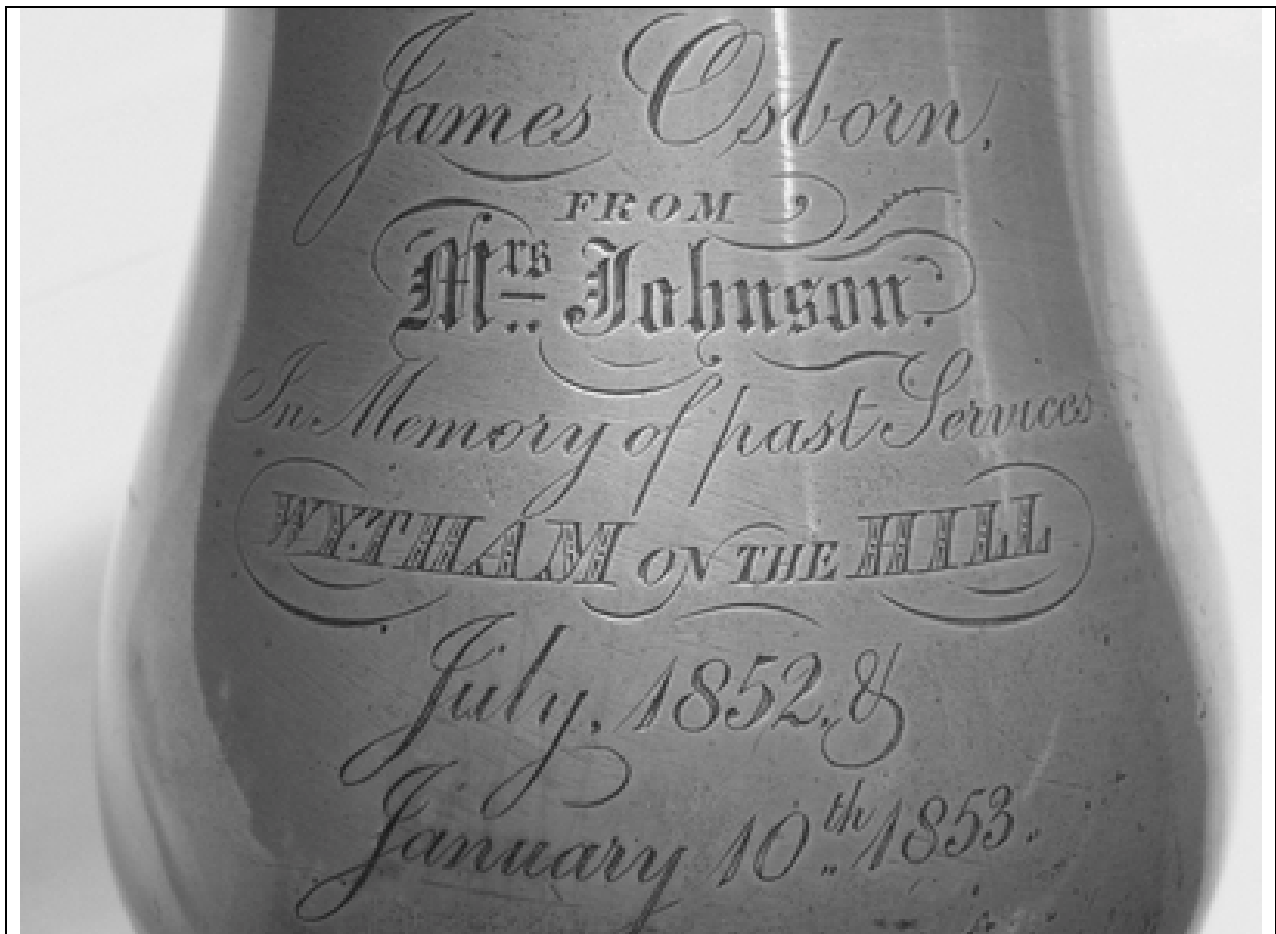
Inspections were often undertaken several times during the life of a pewter measure thus it can carry several marks. Sometimes the marks show different county areas possibly reflecting that the pub pot 'travelled' – pub owner took his measures to a new pub, or maybe sold it on, or someone took a fancy to it!



These various verification marks stamped by perhaps different inspection officers tell us this was made before Imperial Times (pre 1825) it was used in the West Riding of Yorkshire and was a half pint and likely used as late as 1902.

Many pewter items will also carry a maker's touch mark and these may be found on the rim or base inside the vessel. These marks, once identified, will provide the maker's name, place of production, and a guide to the age of the item.

This article concerned the identification of pub tankards, mugs, and measures, and hopefully could open up a new avenue of interest for readers with an interest in collecting pewter with the links to the social history of old inns and taverns.



Here shows a slightly odd use of a drinking measure engraved as a thank you to someone who did something of service that was appreciated.