

OLD ENGLISH PEWTER—II

By G. BERNARD HUGHES

FLAT-LIDDED tavern measures with baluster-shaped bodies, of the type illustrated by the central lower piece in Fig. 1, were made from the time of Henry VI to early Victorian days. Their original form was derived from the leather black jack. Six types appeared during those four centuries, each taking its name from the shape of the thumbpiece (Fig. 2): wedge-shaped, hammer-head, bud, double volute, embryo shell, and ball. Their lids were enlivened by at least

one circle upon the top, varying from a thin incised line to a wide shallow gutter. First was the rare stumpy thumbpiece, cast with a heavy wedge-shaped attachment lying sideways on the lid. The slight projection at its uppermost point was sometimes topped by a $\frac{3}{8}$ -in. or $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. ball. Handles were soldered direct and without curving terminals to slightly curved bodies, curves which tended to be accentuated with each succeeding type.

The wedge-shape was superseded during

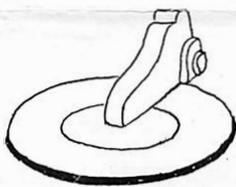
the reign of James I by the rare hammer-head which has the appearance of a double-faced hammer-head laid sideways on the lid. The body between base and lip rim was fuller than formerly. Some handles belonging to balusters of this type, which continued until 1685, were attached to the body by a diamond-shaped strut, cast in a piece with the handle and joining handle to body. The strut was generally of more pronounced proportions in later types.

From about 1680 until 1750 the important-looking bud thumbpiece held the field. It is recognised by being somewhat in the form of an opening bud or fern fronds, tilted forward over the V-shaped attachment which stretched half way across the lid. Twice the size of its predecessor, it accompanied a plain flat handle with a terminal tending to curve outward. This was followed about 1725 by the double-volute thumbpiece, leaning backwards over the handle, and a fleur-de-lys lid attachment. This type continued until Victorian days. In the larger sizes the lid attachment was cast in outline; in smaller sizes the fleur-de-lys was

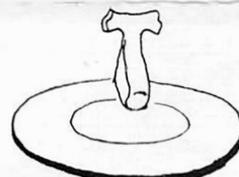


1.—(Left to right) RARE SCOTTISH POT-BELLIED MEASURE, 1690-1720; TANKARD WITH DOUBLE DOME ON THE LID, 1695-1715. EVOLUTIONARY TYPE OF TANKARD WITH FILLET ROUND THE BODY AND DOMED LID. ABOUT 1695. (Lower middle) BALUSTER MEASURE WITH WEDGE-SHAPED LID ATTACHMENT. ABOUT 1520. VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

(Below) 3.—18TH-CENTURY DOUBLE-DOMED LIDDED TANKARD WITH FILLET ROUND THE BODY AND MARKED "PITT AND DUDLEY" WITH A BOW. DOMED-LIDDED TANKARD WITH PLAIN BODY ENGRAVED WITH PORTRAITS OF WILLIAM AND MARY AND MARKED WITH LEOPARD'S HEAD, BUCKLE AND LION PASSANT. VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM



I



II

(Left) 2.—SKETCHES OF LID ATTACHMENTS AND THUMBPIECES OF PEWTER BALUSTER MEASURES: (i) WEDGE-SHAPE; (ii) HAMMER-HEAD; (iii) THE BUD; (iv) DOUBLE VOLUTE

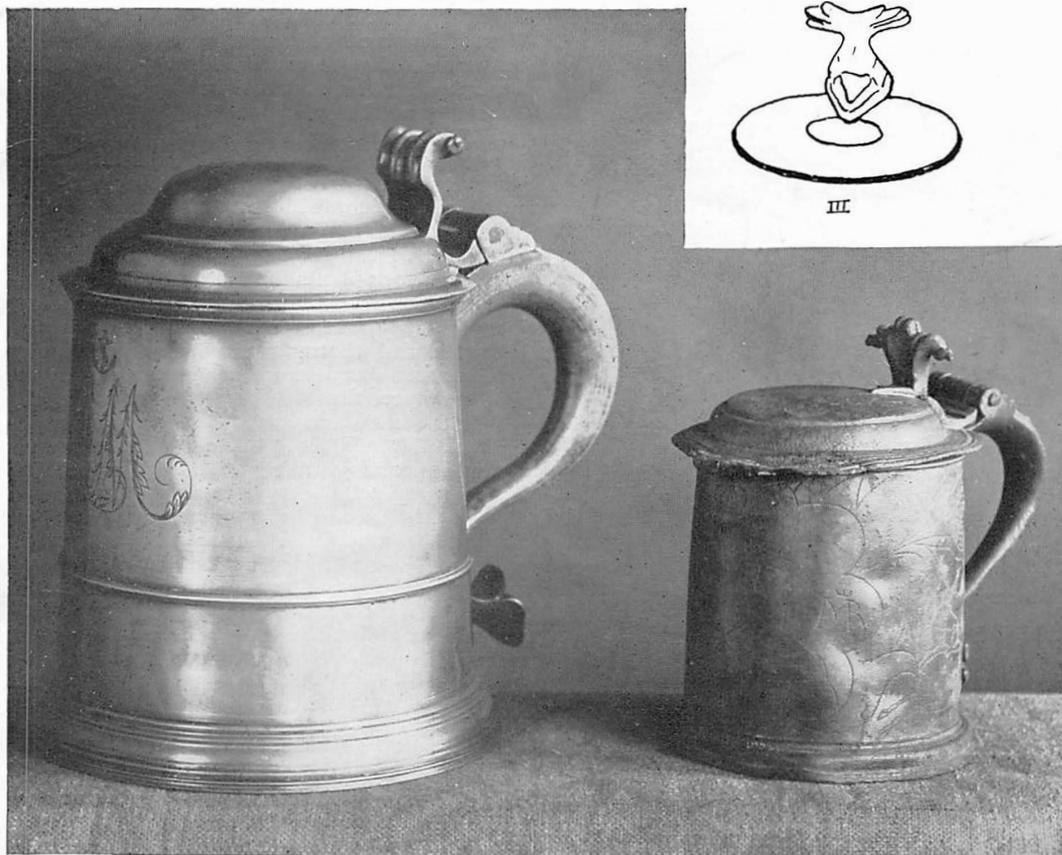


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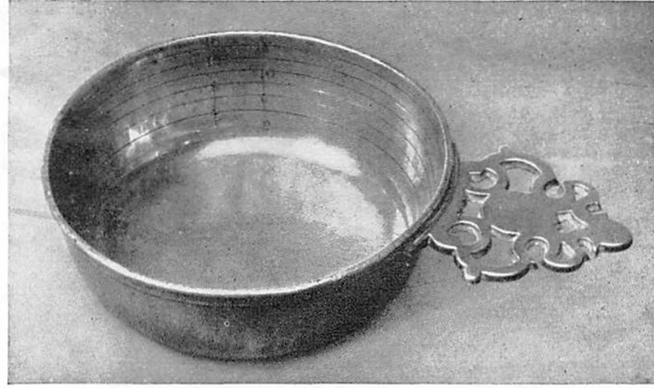
IV

(Below) 4.—PEWTER TEA CADDY. ABOUT 1730. VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM





5.—SCOTTISH QUAIL OF HEAVY METAL WITH SOLID DOUBLE LUG NOT SEEN ON THE ENGLISH PORRINGER



6.—RARE PEWTER BLEEDING-BOWL WITH INTERIOR GRADUATIONS. ABOUT 1670

embossed on a diamond. Characteristics of the baluster measure were now fullness of body; handle terminal developed into a bulbous end curved flamboyantly away from the body: the strut ending in another diamond-shaped piece.

Contemporary with the double volute were the embryo-shell and ball types. The embryo-shell thumbpiece was quite plain, displaying no radiating flutes. It developed into a shell on Scottish pear-shaped measures of the nineteenth century. The rare Bristol measure is similar in form to the copper measures of to-day.

There were eleven measures to a set, ranging from one-twenty-fourth of a pint to a gallon. The old English wine standard was used and measures were tested when filled to the brim: the most common to-day are the half-pint, pint and quart. Touch marks are seldom found owing to the trade custom of not marking measures.

Among the most useful of pewter table utensils were those small shallow bowls or porringers with a small pierced flat lug, ear or handle. They were a development of the earlier and very rare pottangers or soup bowls of thick metal and solid ears, known in Scotland as quailiches (Fig. 5). Pierced ears, usually variations of the trefoil in form, enriched by pierced or fretted design, were usually soldered to the bowl without any additional support to the $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. thickness of their own metal. In the earlier porringers this thickness was more than doubled at the junction of the body. Later, a strengthening bar of squarish section was used, running almost the entire width of the ear. Another type of strengthening was a triangular or semicircular projection curved to fit the bowl, running down from the underside of the ear. English porringers were never given more than one ear: Continental specimens generally had two. Covered porringers are rare and usually commemorative. If one can imagine a time when there was very little earthenware, the importance of the porringer in the English home is readily realised.

There is a tendency to elevate the more ordinary porringers into association with the ancient profession of barber-chirurgion by dubbing them bleeding-bowls or cupping dishes; but there does not appear to be any justification for this. The true bleeding-bowl (Fig. 6) leaves one in no doubt as to its purpose, for around its inner sloping sides is a series of incised parallel horizontal graduation lines. Such bowls are rare in pewter.

Pewter candlesticks were made in great quantities. Until late Elizabethan days they were squat affairs of the pricket type. Then the domed trencher salt was given a short baluster stem and candle-socket, the outer curve of the salt container forming a deep, saucer-like drip-tray (Fig. 7i). Pewterers made a practice of using one mould for several purposes: trencher salts, for instance, were widely used as candlestick bases and as feet for tazzas. In Jacobean days the trencher-salt base was superseded by a taller, heavy bell-shaped base, at first supporting a plain pillar stem, later an elaborate baluster column. Between stem and base was a wide circular grease-ledge or drip-tray. With Charles II came the plain trumpet base (Fig. 7 iii), and for the next forty years the drip-tray found a place half-way up the streamlined stem. About 1680 the trumpet settled

into a round base supporting a plain pillar stem, sometimes knopped, still with a central drip-tray. Almost simultaneously came the octagonal candlestick. Its base, from which rose a plain round or knopped stem, was octagonal in outline, drip-tray and nozzle flange following suit. With William and Mary the octagon feature gave way to the more graceful scallop, and at the turn of the century the knopped stem gave way to a bulbous baluster minus the drip-tray. This style held the field until about 1770, when the round base with its allied variations re-appeared, this time holding aloft either a round pillar or an attractive baluster stem. Eighteenth-century candlesticks of pewter closely followed the basic form of their more wealthy silver relatives.

Pewter candlesticks with round pillars were made until about 1830. In many instances they possess a bayonet catch or "pusher"—a rod going nearly the whole length of the stem centre. Fixed to the upper end of the stem is a disc, to the lower end a brass button by means of which the rod can be pushed far enough up the stem to eject the unburned candle-stub from its socket. Other, and earlier candlesticks, have holes in the sides of the sockets so that stub-ends may be levered out with a wire.

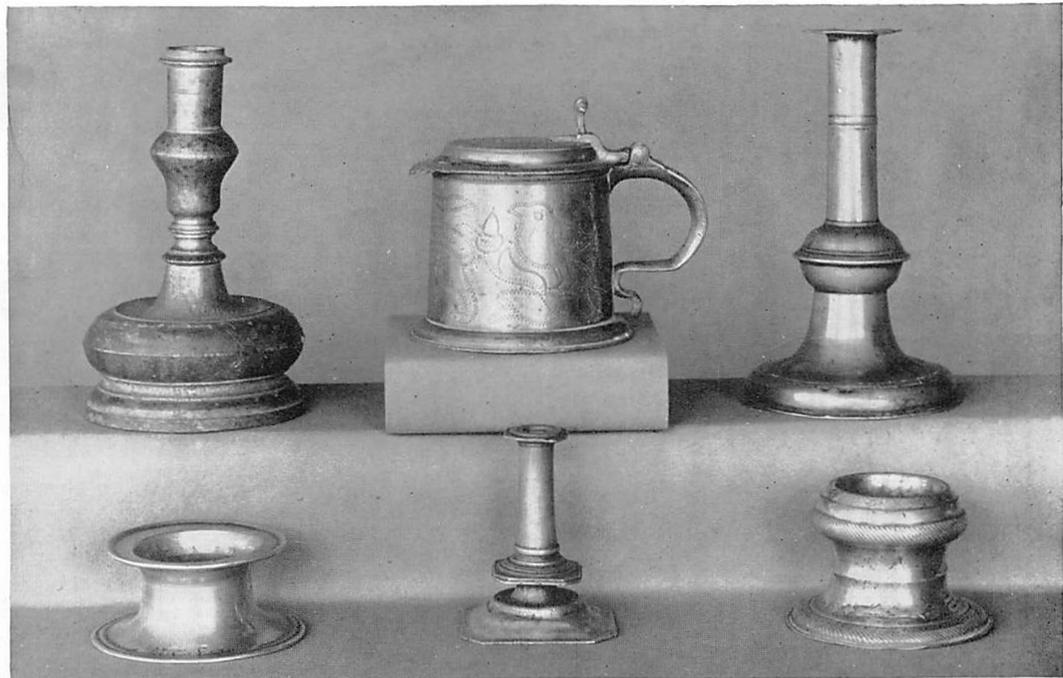
Pewter salts are not difficult to acquire, although early specimens are rare. The term salt-cellar is entirely wrong: the French word for a salt container is *salière*; the proper English term is *salt*. Cellar is a corruption of *salière* and to use the words salt-cellar is equivalent to using the word twice over. The early pewter salt was a solid square, rectangular, or circular block of pewter with a depression in the

middle. These trencher salts are rare, although made until about 1690.

The Restoration was responsible for the spool-shaped or standing salt, sometimes delicately engraved (Fig. 7 iv). About 1675 appeared the octagonal salt, base and rim sandwiching a hollow baluster salt container. Five years later came the capstan salt, plain and with beading. This had a fifteen-year vogue; then it was replaced by the gadrooned capstan (Fig. 7 vi) which continued until about 1720. Trencher salts, more elaborate than formerly, were made from 1705 until 1730. Then came the cup salt, supported at first by a short stem and circular foot: then by four ball-and-claw feet, a style which continued until china and glass sounded the death knell of pewter.

The earliest inkstands, low, circular and entirely plain, belong to the sixteenth century. Early in the following century moulding was added to the base and a hinged lid to the top with a couple of holes for the quills. Then the base developed into a tray. Towards the end of the seventeenth century sand-box and wafer-box were added, the whole thing taking on an air of importance. About 1730 ball feet or claws were added, these being supplanted by lions' heads late in the century.

The collector has many other articles to select from, each with a chronology of its own: hot-water dishes, cruets, jugs, tea-caddies, herb canisters, tobacco boxes, spoons, beakers, brandy warmers, snuff-boxes, etc. Even toys were made of pewter. Furniture for dolls' houses was a distinct branch of the craft and tiny tea services on miniature trays were clever copies of traditional shapes.



7.—17th-CENTURY PEWTER:—(Left to right, above) (i) CANDLESTICK WITH SALT BASE; (ii) DECORATED TANKARD OF CHARLES II PERIOD; (iii) TRUMPET-BASED CANDLESTICK WITH KNOPPED STEM. LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY; (Below) (iv) SPOOL-SHAPED SALT OF ABOUT 1660; (v) OCTAGONAL CANDLESTICK WITH DRIP TRAY. ABOUT 1690; (vi) GADROONED CAPSTAN SALT. VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM