

ON THE ORIGINS OF TOUCHMARKS II

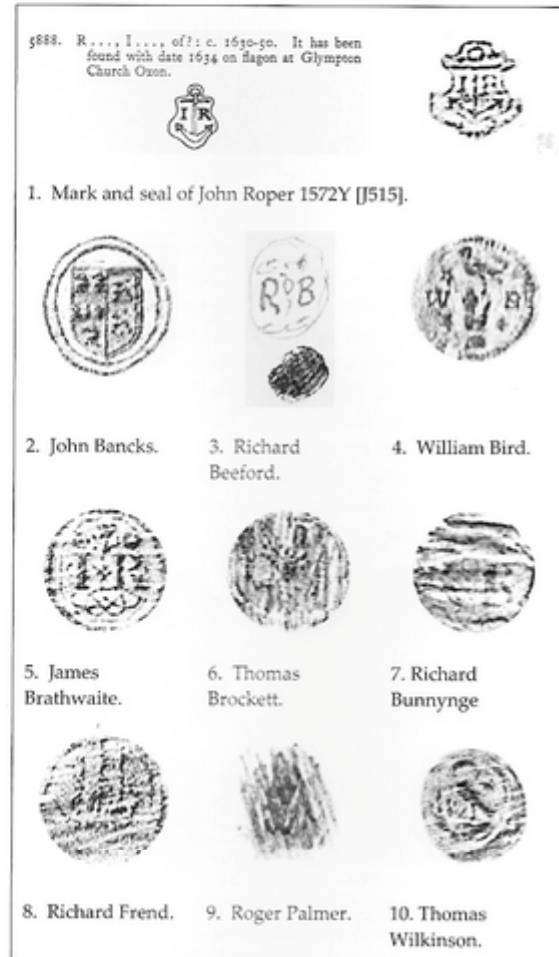
Carl Ricketts

The Society owes a great debt of gratitude to the late Dr. Sandy Law, a Past President. His legacy to us is a wealth of information on filing cards, in notebooks, and loose leaves not all of which were filed in order. We do not know the extent of the original paperwork he left, as after his death it passed through several people. Some of it came to me, and it has been of tremendous value in my work on London pewterers¹. More of his papers were lodged finally in the Society's Library, and last year among them, I discovered some fascinating 'rubblings'. Past President Ken Gordon was a close friend, and some research he did may have given Sandy the idea to look at seals on the wills of pewterers^{2,3}. Regrettably, I am unsure about the source of the seals, but as they all relate to London pewterers, it is probably the Guildhall Library, London.

Possibly, Figure 1 (right) is the most exciting rubbing as it enables us to allocate provisionally a recorded mark to a known 16th century pewterer (or his widow). John Roper was apprenticed in 1561, had leave to open shop and strike his touch in 1573, and paid Yeomanry quarterage until at least 1589. I have no date for his death, which is unlikely to be as late as Cotterell's note at OP5888 would imply (Fig. 1 left). Thus, the 1634 date confounds a definite attribution, although flagons are often found with dates added many years after manufacture. Company records do not mention a widow continuing the business, or a son becoming free, so provisionally I attribute this mark to John Roper (PS13169).

A quartered shield in an oval outline is the seal of John Bancks 1612Y (OP244) who died 1651 (Fig. 2). Next, is Sandy's sketch and a poor rubbing of the seal of Richard Beeford 1618Y who died 1649 (Fig. 3). Then the seal of William Bird 1634Y who died 1651, which is a bird above a hand with 'W' & 'B' to each side, and 3 stars in a beaded circle (Fig. 4). Figure 5 is the seal of James Brathwaite 1641Y who died 1651 leaving a sizeable estate to his son James. The detail is too poor to identify the device(s) in the beaded circle seal of Thomas Brockett 1626Y who died c1652, which might be a figure on horseback (Fig. 6). Although Figure 7 is also poor, as we know it is the seal of Richard Bunnyngye 1569Y (OP693) who died 1577, we can see a large 'B' to the right. Figure 8 is the seal of Richard Frend 1619Y (OP1778) who died 1639, and shows a galleon in a beaded circle. While Figure 9 is unclear, it is known to show a male figure: a warrior with a pike, and is the seal of Roger Palmer 1600Y (OP3496) who died 1646. Figure 10 is the seal of Thomas Wilkinson 1634Y who died 1640, and seems to depict a pelican in her piety.

TABLE 1. SEALS USED BY PEWTERERS



Where the details in a seal are clear, it has been entered on the Database as if it were a mark. Hopefully, later when the mark turns up, it is likely to be identified.

REFERENCES

1. C. Ricketts, *Pewterers of London 1600-1900* Pewter Society 2001
2. K. Gordon, 'Ralph Wilson, pewterer of Chester, died 1697' (illustration of seal on his Will) JPS, Autumn 1984
3. K. Gordon, 'More about Chester - Addendum to article on Ralph Wilson' JPS, Spring 1985

ON THE ORIGINS OF TOUCHMARKS III

Carl Ricketts

I hope by raising these initial thoughts to encourage others to seek more evidence! Once, while listening to the Marsdens talking about Bristol pewterers, I had a 'Eureka moment'. I meant to pursue it further, but you know how it is with retirement and time. Anyway, the thought concerned the use of certain emblems and devices in touchmarks that may indicate a location or address rather than other things.

Even Londoners did not need accurate street addresses like those that we have until well into the 18th century, and the practice of house numbering did not begin until the 1760s. So, how did people give their location before that? Often, they indicated themselves by simple locations, for example, William Dyer was 'at the sign of the Rooke and Trumpet near St. Dunstan's Court, Fleet Street', and Jonathan Cotton was 'fourth from the gate at the South End, East Side of London Bridge'.

Until the records of insurance companies started to be analysed, often all we knew about pewterers' addresses was these general locations from their trade cards and Company records, or possibly from probate records the parish where they died. Indeed, for the vast majority of pewterers we have no location details other than the town where they worked.



1. John Cater of 'London Bridge' 2. Thomas Leach at the sign of in his label. Of the Lions Head in 'The Black Spread Eagle' in Halfmoon Street, on London Bridge 6.2.1726 ^{IPR (Sun #40780)} Bishopsgate Street.

Although we knew the pewterers who used the two touchmarks shown, the significance of the devices in the touches has not been commented upon previously.

Cater (Fig. 1) uses a lion's head in a half moon, and Leach (Fig. 2) a spread eagle! It was only when I began looking into this idea that I realised there may be many more touchmarks indicating the location of the pewterer. I think that this is worth researching to help identify unallocated marks. I hope that others will join me in looking again at the symbolism of the devices in touchmarks.