

SCOTTISH LIDDED MEASURES, LAVERS, FLAGONS AND TAPPIT HENS.

Please be aware that this article can only begin to give an insight into these measures and those interested should seek out the sources given at the end of this article for a better understanding. Like a lot of articles on this web site this article is written so the writer can begin to understand these better for himself.

It is possible to collect some Scottish Measures without spending a lot of money. Although with good patina and condition genuine lavers, flagons and some early measures can be costly.

Looking at displays of antiques for sale it can be hard to distinguish (even amongst the little pewter usually available) which is Scottish, unless you know the style. So this article sets out in simple form the types and styles that might be found or seen in these lidded categories.

The dating here is over a relatively short time frame (say 230 years 1670-1900) and they are not easy to date within that frame, not least because some forms remained unchanged for a hundred years or more. But there are clues which will be dealt with after the pictures/photos.

A measure is something to hold a given volume of liquid. A laver is a small lidded flagon used to take the water to the basin used in baptism. The flagon is a larger size of laver used to dispense communion wine. Tappit Hens were made to drink out of.

Auction prices are not given as they are too confusing. Photos rarely show condition and collectors' fancy and scarcity can make values appear strange. Small forms are rare and usually more expensive.

It can be useful to look at the lower handle terminal, the shape of thumbpiece, lid attachment, body and the fillet/s to the body.

This is not meant to be a comprehensive list of all known shapes. It is intended to help with an eye for the style, age, and to give some clue as to purpose. The hope is that those interested will seek out better and more detailed information.

POT BELLIED MEASURES



These together with Tappit Hens were the earliest known Scottish measure. The bellied were not made after the introduction of Imperial Measure and were made only in the North East of Scotland. Bellied measures show a distinct Dutch influence. They have many similarities with Dutch flagons of the 17th centuries. These appear to have been made from 1680 and to 1720 and in a range of sizes from Scots Quart to a NIP or ½ Scots Gill, many bear Inverness verifications, and there is some thought that they might have been made there, and they are found made without lids.

TAPPIT HEN

Scots Pints are shown below which are the commonest found.



The Uncrested (to the right above) appear to have been made from the middle of the 1600s to the middle of the 1800s, and have been found in as many as 35 recorded capacities though the Scots Pint, Chopin and Mutchkin are the more commonly found - pre imperial and post imperial sizes could go from a Gallon down to a quarter gill.

Genuine Tappit Hens often had more lead in them than have the abundance of reproductions and hence expect them to be heavier. A typical un-crested Scots Pint should weigh about 3 ¼ pounds and a Chopin 2 ¼ pounds. Many repros have a spurious London Mark beneath the base. Scots were very thrifty, hence an abundance of repairs in genuine pieces.

TAPPIT HEN (CRESTED)

Seen in the illustration above on the left. Crested Tappit Hens were made only in Scottish Capacities from Scots Pint down to the Scots gill (though only one such gill is known to exist and all smaller sizes are scarce). They appear to have been made between 1730 and 1826.

LAVERS & FLAGONS



H H Cotterell quotes these as communion Flagons made for Scotland by William Eddon Pewterer of London in 1690 to about 1740



Dated 1817 by Robert Kinniburgh of Edinburgh



Glasgow Maker David Scouler 1816 - 1830

Flagons are commonly found in two sizes 10” and 13” in height. They were used for the communion wine. A Laver was used to take the holy water to the baptismal font and are scarce. There appear to be two other. Very small sizes of the same style are extremely scarce and were probably ‘lavers’ to be used in baptism. The style was first introduced by William Eddon of London in 1760. This was rapidly taken up by makers in Edinburgh and Glasgow. They date from 1702 to the beginning of the nineteenth century. They all have flat lids although Edinburgh makers did make ones that were ever so slightly domed. They were made with a twin lobed thumbpieces. Some were made with a spout. Only those from Glasgow were made with a knob on the lid and these first appeared at the end of the 1700s. Most flagons, in contrast to measures of the period, do have a makers mark. This is usually found in the base.

FLAT LIDDED MEASURES

There were various measures in the early 1800s known under the following headings in referring to the flat lid attachments and thumbpieces

1) Ball and Bar

2) Embryo Shell

Interestingly I cannot find out if they were made anywhere specifically, or the range of sizes available. These perhaps preceded the definite different choices for the same sizes made towards the 1830s in Glasgow or Edinburgh.

BALL AND BAR



Shemmell Sale 2006
Ball and Bar lot 57
c1800
8 fluid ounces

EMBRYO SHELL FLAT LID

These seem to have HAD a number of Edinburgh makers and to be used from the introduction of Imperial measures



Range of sizes Quart downwards



Shemmell Sale 2006 lot 63
Imperial Quart Capacity Robert
Wright Edin maker c 1826



Shemmell Sale 2006 lot 70
Half Pint c1826
made by W Scott Edinburgh



The embryo shell will sometimes have no design on its shaped thumbpiece and then sometimes simple lines to indicate shell strata, all here have this pointed two layer wedge.

GLASGOW DOUBLE DOMED MEASURES



H H Cotterell shows us a range of sizes in these measures acclaimed for Glasgow and most appear to have a medallion for the Imperial Measure to their lids.



However this one in my collection has an Edinburgh maker so clearly each made for whatever market they wanted

Dates for these and the range of sizes is not clear
HHC's illustration looks like it might be quart down.
They were in use in the 1830s.

GLASGOW DOMED IMPERIAL MEASURES

Scarce to find any makers mark on these and viewed as distinctively of Glaswegian make.



Shemmell Sale 2006 lot 68 Imperial Pint c1830-1900 with shell thumbpiece and Medallion or seal to top of the lid.



Showing the half pint medallion and Shell Thumbpiece of The Glasgow dome lidded half pint.



EDINBURGH LIDDED IMPERIAL MEASURES



This illustration from Christopher Peals book page 159 chapter by Peter Spencer Davies shows the two types most likely to be found the first lid is slightly concave and the second slightly convex or bowl shaped.



From the same reference is this illustration showing clearly the dropped belly line.



Many of these measures in gill sizes for example can be found for around £30 to £75 on eBay and elsewhere.
Edinburgh makers often put their names under the lids.
Dating throughout 1826 to 1900.



A TRIPLE DOMED EDINBURGH MEASURE – NOW IS THE TIME TO DRINK



Triple Dome Scottish Lidded Measure

A specific form made to promote specific trading companies.

An unusual Baluster Shaped Measure with spout at front and a scarce triple domed cover of wine quart capacity (32 fl ozs) late 1700s or early 1800s. Characteristic but scarce Scottish Pewterware. To the front here is engraved NUNC EST BIBENDUM some fine reeding round the body above the foot, to the middle fillet and at neck base of spout. The name Of Wm Scott to four small hall marks underneath the lid at OP 4161 of Edinburgh from 1794 son of OP4160 of same name from 1779. Rag mark to the neck. W Scott die cut stamp to the back of the small but elegant plain shell thumbpiece. This piece stands to just over 8 ½” with a footrim just under 3 ¾” and weighs a substantial 978 grams. A photograph of a similar measure can be found on page 83 far right of R F Michaelis book British Pewter. Here under the base a label for a Mr Lawson Tait of Birmingham (collector? Dealer?- when?). Scarce and specialised, so appearing here as a curiosity to end this article on a note that says – this article/effort is but a snapshot of a large, interesting, and collectable subject.

Sources used –

H H Cotterell – Pewter Down The Ages

Christopher Peal – Pewter of Great Britain – chapter 11 Scottish Pewter by Peter Spencer Davies

Auctions Sales from 2006 onwards of The Shemmell Collection, The John Russell Collection, the Keil Collection and The Little Collection, Scottish Pewter Tappit Hen Measures and Their Makers pages 7 -21 Journal of the Pewter Society Volume 19 Spring 2003. British Pewter 1600-1850 The Currier Gallery of Art Manchester, New Hampshire.