

Successful Collecting in the 1920s.

The Society of pewter Collectors was formed in 1918. In the early days it appears that Stuart Flat Lid Tankards were very scarce and worthy of note. However as the years went by the members did find more. In 1921 W G Churcher and H H Cotterell (joint honorary secretaries and important collectors) did not have one in their own collections - though A de Navarro did in 1904.

The following is a series of extracts from the Bulletins of the Society that relate to collecting Stuart Flat Lids and the general difficulties faced by collectors. The extracts are made easy to find as very few such types of pewter are individually mentioned.

£35 was asked during last month, and possibly has been obtained by now, for a small Stuart lidded tankard, with wriggled ornament and with damaged handle and part of thumbpiece missing.

SPC Bulletin June 1919 - reported by Honorary Secretaries W G Churcher and H H Cotterell

We have notes of two Stuart flat-lidded tankards changing hands since the last circular was issued. One realised £30. the other a considerably higher figure.

SPC Bulletin January 1920

A Stuart flat-lidded Tankard, in fine condition, not engraved, with London Mark, has recently changed hands, the price asked being much in excess of those referred to in the January circular, and prices in general, which in many cases have doubled, are in every instance *very* much in advance of those of but six months ago, and the dealers seem at last to have realised, especially those interesting themselves in fine pieces, that pewter is as profitable a thing to handle as are other antiques, in fact its collection is rapidly passing beyond the consideration of those of modest means.

SPC Bulletin - June 1920

The attention of members is called to a note on Pewter Fakes on page 171 of the Connoisseur for November.

December 1921

It may interest Members to know of the following acquisitions by our colleagues since the last Meeting:—

- A William and Mary covered porringer at auction in London;
- A marked Stuart candlestick in a remote part of South Wales;
- And five further flat-lid Stuart tankards in various places.

The joint Secretaries, neither of whom possesses a flat-lid tankard, in computing that four Members have now some 27 flat-lidders among them, suggest in their best "sour-grape" manner, that such tankards are getting much less scarce than gallon-size baluster measures and Stuart candlesticks.

A *special warning* against fakes seems again desirable. Many plausible forgeries are about, especially in the form of early candlesticks—in pairs, barbers' bowls and small balusters. Chalice also should be very carefully scrutinized. The fabricator principally concerned seems a master of simulation.

January 1921

Items of general interest to Members are conspicuous by their absence from this Circular, for beyond a few small and unimportant collections which have come up for auction at Sotheby's & Puttick's, and some faked "Stuart" tankards and "Master-Salts" which are being offered for sale, the stagnation of the present time seems temporarily to have eclipsed the pewter-world.

May 1922

Many notable acquisitions have recently been made by our members, including early candlesticks and several more flat lidded Stuart Tankards, of which our members now hold a large number of the finest specimens.

W.G.C.
H.H.C.

January 1924

Mr. Alfred B. Yeates then drew the attention of the members to a trade catalogue of reproductions of old-type pewter, such as flat-lidded tankards, candlesticks, salts, etc., of so convincing a nature as to suggest that after treatment at the hands of unscrupulous persons they might pass for original specimens of early pewter. He had therefore approached the Worshipful Company of Pewterers with a view to ascertain if its Court could intervene in the matter and assist in endeavours to check the sale of such reproductions. The Company, however, had been unable to agree to Mr. Yeates' suggestion.

It was considered that good might result if members who were offered doubtful specimens reported them to Capt. Sutherland-Græme with a view to warning other members that such pieces were in circulation.

February 1932 - HHC having resigned the Hon Secs are now W G Churcher and A V Sutherland-Graeme

Since our last circular, Major Richardson has been fortunate in securing three flat-lidded tankards, one—purchased at auction—being a particularly fine example covered with wriggled design, his last acquisition being another William III. example.

May 1924

A report was received from Capt. Sutherland-Græme (Joint Hon. Secretary), who was unable to be present, stating that in accordance with the arrangement sanctioned at the last meeting, he had been in communication with members on the subject of dubious pieces appearing in the market, and had every reason to be satisfied with the results of his endeavours to assist his fellow-members in avoiding specimens of doubtful provenance, work that has already brought him several appreciative letters.

June 1932

It might be thought that Pewter Collecting really got going with the formation of the SPC. The truth is there were a lot of collectors recorded from years before.

Cliffords Inn Exhibition of 1904 named some 61 collectors exhibiting.

Cliffords Inn Hall exhibition of 1908 named an additional 25 collectors exhibiting.

Provands Lordship Exhibition, Cathedral Square, Glasgow in 1909 named another additional 48 collectors exhibiting.

Mr Charbonnier exhibited at Taunton Castle Museum from 1908 -1912 initially 200 of his pieces and growing to 400.

The four exhibitions listed included perhaps some 2000 selected pieces.

None of these numbers of collectors include exhibits borrowed from numerous Churches.

Thus listed were some 136 individual collectors who contributed to these exhibitions - of whom 28 were named female collectors.

Pieces in known collections can be estimated by counting those shown in photographs of individual collections and those recorded being sold at auction.

In 1903 photographed at his front door in Bradford; William Redman displays 200 pieces.

In a magazine of 1908 some 200 pieces belonging to Charles Rowed are shown.

In a Country Life article of 1904 an unnamed collection is shown to have some 200 pieces

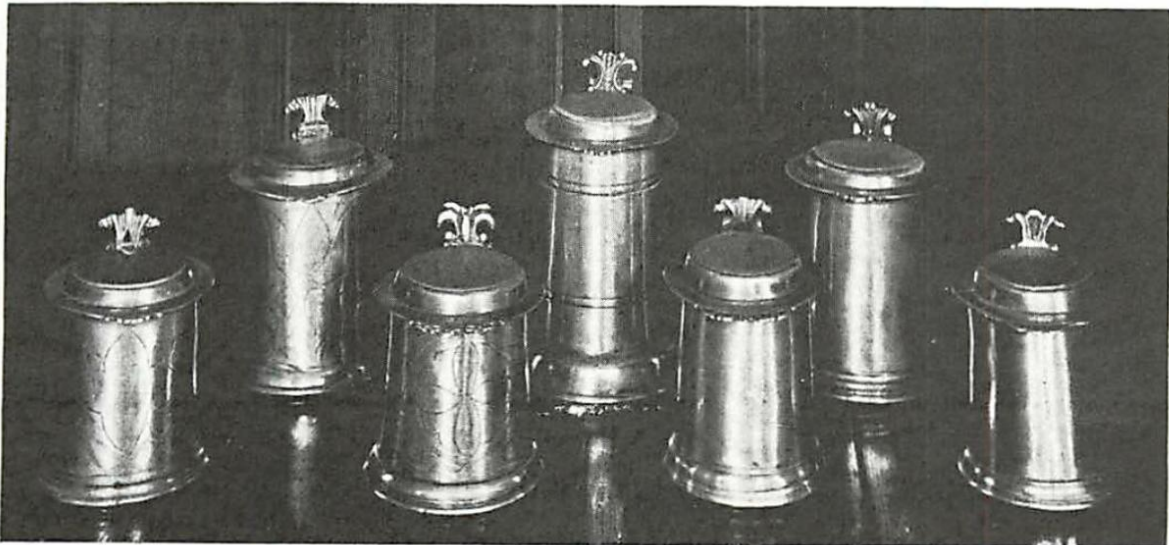
In 1920 at auction a Mrs Gerald Walker's collection of 650 pieces were sold, and also an Andrew Smith of Glasgow's collection of 200 pieces were sold.

Lewis Clapperton an early member of the SPC shows 200 pieces of his collection in an early photograph.

No easy detail is found for A de Navarro, W G Churcher, HHC, Col Croft-Lyons, A B Yeates, all of whom did have many pieces.

So would it be reasonable to suggest that perhaps there were, in known collections, by say 1912 some 10,000 to 20,000 pieces?

Though having written that one can wonder why Stuart Flat Lid Tankards are apparently scarce and worthy of individual note in 1920 and less scarce by 1930. Perhaps it was all down to successful collecting.



Late Stuart Tankards as illustrated by H H Cotterell in the Connoisseur of April 1932 -
article - Dating The Pewter Tankard