

This is not accepted as totally correct in 2018

PEWTER ROSE-WATER DISHES

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MARK ON RIM OF
THE DISH NO. VII

THE dishes and chargers which form the subject of these notes cover the period 1600-1680; they are embellished with bosses of copper (or brass) and enamel, bearing Royal Arms and set in circular frames of pewter, raised from the centre. All are

either of English or Scottish make, and in describing them I have used the term 'rose-water dish' by which they are generally known to collectors; it is, however, very improbable that the later examples were used as such.

Necessity for cleansing the fingers during and after the meal in a period when forks were unknown, or at least not in common use, is obvious. It is generally understood that on ceremonial occasions, rose-water was brought round the tables in a ewer from which it was poured by the attendant over the fingers of the diners, who held their hands over the dish or bowl. This may well have been the manner of use of two of the dishes illustrated,

which were made during the reign of James I and VI (Nos. i and ii). Ewers of pewter, such as would have been used with these are in existence, one of which is shown (No. iii). This was discovered in Ludlow Castle, and another is in Dublin Museum; each of these has an enamelled medallion, probably matching the bosses in the dishes which they accompanied; that on the Dublin example being in the centre of the body, while on the Ludlow ewer it stands erect at the junction of the handle with the body. In addition to these, there is preserved in the Parish Church of Biggar, in Scotland, a very similar ewer, though without any medallion; but this was probably used at baptismal services. So far as I am aware, these are the only British pewter ewers in existence.

As regards the later dishes, it seems more likely that they were made for decorative purposes; forks by that time being in fairly common use, the necessity for ablution at table would not exist to the same extent; moreover, these later dishes are much shall-



No. I.—SCOTTISH DISH BEARING TOUCH *L.R.* WITH DATE 1600



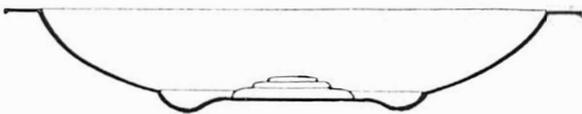
No. II. DISH BEARING TOUCH OF RICHARD WEIR, EDINBURGH



No. III.—TYPE OF EWER USED WITH THE DISHES

lower than the earlier types, and this feature, while obviously militating against their usefulness, would be of definite value in display, as the rim would not cast so deep a shadow. Accepting, therefore, the dishes shown here (Nos. i and ii) as rose-water dishes and that they were used as such in connexion with ewers, I venture to put forward my own theory as regards the later types.

It is commonly understood that in many instances the estates of Charles I's Cavaliers were confiscated and subsequently sold to Roundhead supporters of the Commonwealth and that, at the Restoration, many of these es-



No. IV.—SECTION OF THE TWO-TIER DISH ILLUSTRATED No. I

tates were returned to their former owners or to descendants of them, doubtless through the action of Charles II. It is also well known that much private silver and gold plate was surrendered to be melted down and turned into coinage to assist Charles I in his campaigns, which caused many houses to be completely denuded of plate. Quite possibly this may have been replaced by pewter plate; or such plate may have been purchased by succeeding Roundhead landlords, or, later still, by reinstated Royalists, to make good deficiencies in household equipment.

In any case it would have been intended for common use, and would not, at the time, have been embellished with decorative bosses. My point is that these bosses were mostly added at a date subsequent to the Restoration, by the heads of the reinstated families, to commemorate alike the restoration of the Stuart line, and of themselves to their estates. A careful examination of these later dishes makes it fairly certain that in some instances the bosses are in fact later additions; in the other instances my contention might be met by assuming that some dishes, complete with their bosses, were made specially for the reinstated families with the same idea in view, and did not, therefore, form part of the original household furnishings.

The illustrations (Nos. i and ii) show the type of dish that I consider was used for ablutions between and after courses, that is to say, a rose-water dish proper. No. i shows a Scottish dish of deep section in two tiers (No. iv), $17\frac{3}{4}$ in. in diameter and $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. deep, which is one of a pair in the collection of Professor D. Dougal, M.C., M.D., of Manchester. Its maker's marks, or touches, appear upon the back, and are recorded as Nos. 11 and 12 on the first touch plate of the Pewterers' Craft of Edinburgh, which was a part of the Incorporation of Hammermen of that City; this maker's name is not known, but his initials, *I.R.*, with the date 1600, appear in one of the touches. The boss, of copper and enamel, bears the arms of James I and VI, details of which are shown (No. v). The other dish of this type, illustrated (No. ii) is also of Scottish make, the pewterer in this case being Richard Weir of Edinburgh who obtained his Freedom in the Edinburgh Craft in 1597. His touches (one dated 1600) appear on the back and are recorded on the first Edinburgh touch plate under Nos. 14 and 15. As will be seen from No. vi, this dish is of three tiers, the boss being similar to that already described.

The theory, I have advanced above, as to the commemoration of the return of the Stuart monarchy and its supporters is borne out in the case of another type of pewter dish, or more properly, charger, which, however, does not fall within the category we are dealing with; one is shown (No. vii). This type varies from 20 in. to 26

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in. in diameter, and has the broad rim, distinctive of the mid-seventeenth century. It is engraved with the arms of Charles II covering the whole of the well, and the rim is decorated with conventional foliage, crests, roses and thistles. Round the concave junction of rim and well runs the inscription *VIVAT REX CAROLUS SECUNDUS BEATI PACIFICI. 1662*. I know of some eight of these chargers. The largest was formerly in the collection of the late A. F. de Navarro, F.S.A.; another is in that of Mr. Alfred B. Yeates, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.; and the example illustrated is in my own collection, while two are in the Victoria and Albert Museum (one of which, however, bears the date 1661); one or two others are privately owned.

The point germane to my contention is the date 1662. If these chargers were meant, as has hitherto been supposed, to commemorate the Restoration, why, in every case, is the date incorrect? An isolated case might be imagined in which, possibly through an error of the engraver, or for some special reason, this date was cut; but that this should be so in each of the cases to which I have referred points to a definite and common reason. It is true that the King married in 1662, but it is doubtful if the occasion would have been marked in such a manner and, in any case, this possible explanation is refuted by the one South Kensington example dated 1661. I suggest that the real reason for these dates is that they commemorate the restoration to the former owners of their estates.

It is more probable that, immediately upon his return in 1660, Charles II would have been inundated with applications from former supporters of his father, or from their children, requesting that their estates might be returned to them. All these claims would undoubtedly take considerable time to sift and satisfy and this would account for the later dates, which would allow for the necessary time to deal with the many applicants.

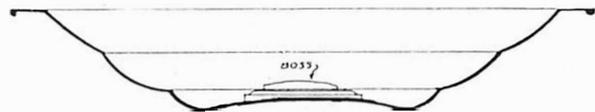
The arms of Charles II. in the wells of these chargers, and the inscription would have been intended as a loyal acknowledgment of their indebtedness, by such families as had been reinstated, to the good offices of their Sovereign. As with these chargers, so with the later types of bossed rose-water dishes. They were



No. V.—DETAILS OF ROYAL ARMS ON BOSS OF THE DISH No. I

either made, complete with their enamelled bosses, or the bosses were added to dishes already existing, in order to commemorate the return of peer and esquire to the estates of their fathers, and there can be no doubt that these large dishes were intended for decorative purposes rather than for actual use. One example of this type of dish (No. viii) is in the British Museum; it bears a touch, hitherto unrecorded, of a tulip in a beaded oval, with the initials *I.P.*, which may stand for James Phillips who was Master of the Pewterers' Company in 1651. On the front of the rim is the mark reproduced here on page 329. It is difficult to determine the meaning of this mark or why it appears where it does. It is no known pewterer's touch, though a somewhat similar one appears on sixteenth-century pewter spoons; in this case it would suggest that it has some reference to the Sovereign, by reason of the initials *C.R.*

Another later dish (No. ix) is in the collection of Mr. Lewis Clapperton, M.A. For



No. VI.—SECTION OF THREE TIER-DISH ILLUSTRATED No. II



NO. VII.—DISH ENGRAVED WITH THE ARMS OF CHARLES II : AND ONE DECORATED LENTICULAR BEADING AND RADIATING RIBS

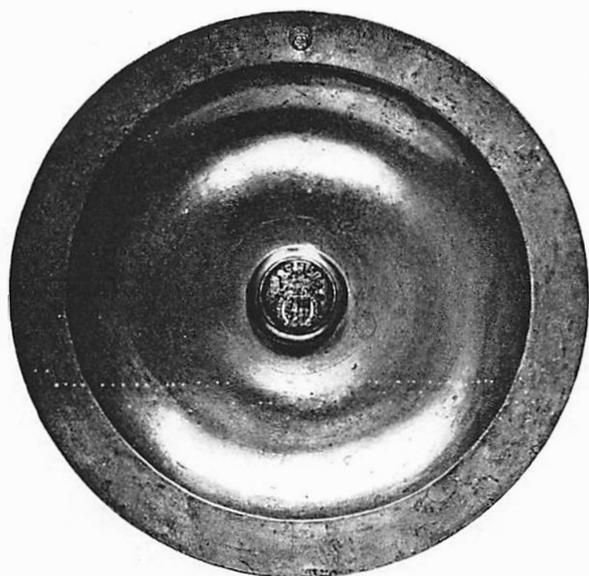
many years this dish was in a lamentable condition of corrosion, which probably accounts for the absence of the touch, as none is visible. Some of the original surface had flaked away altogether, and the whole presented a most dilapidated appearance. Since coming into Mr. Clapperton's possession, the remaining corroded surface has been skillfully removed, exposing the virgin metal. It was, however, considered to be unsafe as well as undesirable to 'work down' the surface; and by comparing this dish with the previous one, which has not suffered to any marked extent, the ravages of corrosion may clearly be seen. This is, perhaps, even more noticeable in No. x, which is a detail of the boss on the Clapperton example, and which shows the pitted surface after the removal of the corrosion.

A decorative dish of this latter type (No. vii), belonging to Mrs. J. W. Taylor, is 19½ in. in diameter and the largest of the series. The rim and well are decorated with lenticular beading hammered out from behind, while the booge is decorated with radiating ribs, similarly formed. It is probable that the whole of this ornamental work was carried out at a period subsequent to the manufacture of the dish. This is borne out by Mr. Ralph Engle-

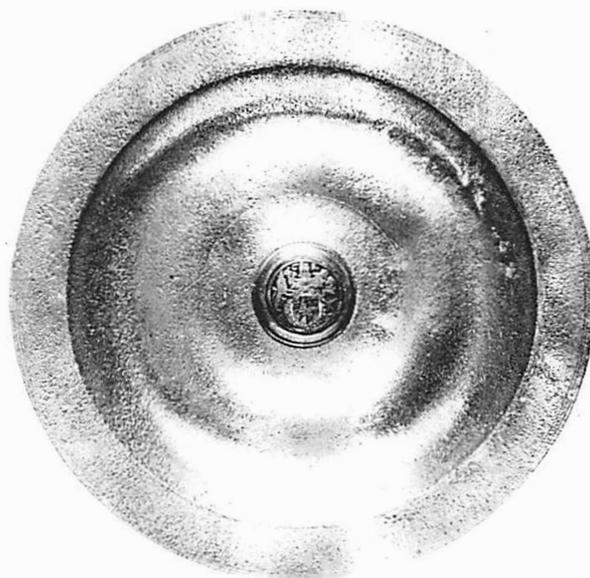
field, master pewterer, whose firm originated in the year 1700, and who speaks with all the authority of tradition and knowledge of his metal. Further, the maker's touch on the back of the rim has been halved by the bead sinkings, so that one portion only can be seen fairly clearly on the flat surface, the other appearing as a blurred mass, sliding away into the hollow of the bead, which is proof that these beads were hammered out subsequent to the striking of the touch. Unfortunately the touch is indecipherable. The history of this dish is uncertain, but it is reputed to be one of a set of six made for Charles I when at York (presumably either in 1640 during the so-called 'Bishops' War' against the Scots, or in 1642, at the beginning of the Civil War).

If this be so, the theory that I have advanced regarding the later types of embossed dishes will not apply to this dish. It is unlikely, however, that such dishes would have been made for use in the King's household at such a time, if at all. They are not of the deep or usable type and it is doubtful if, in such circumstances, Charles would have desired to be burdened with pewter plate, utilitarian or decorative. It is far more likely that, if there be indeed any truth in this tradition, the old

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No. VIII.—DISH BEARING TOUCH *I.P.* WITH TULIP BETWEEN



No. IX.—DISH SHOWING THE SURFACE PITTED BY CORROSION

story of the presentation of pewter plate by the King to replace gold and silver given up by his supporters—a story generally ridiculed by pewter collectors—holds good in this case.

Four alms dishes of somewhat similar design belong to the church of St. Katherine Cree, London. They are presumed to date from the rebuilding of the church in 1628, and may have been presented by Charles I. Each has an enamelled boss: one with the Royal arms and initials *C.R.*; one the Prince of Wales' feathers and *C.P.*; and the remainder the sceptre and sword saltire-wise with the *C.R.* crowned Rose, Thistle and Harp.

One word of warning in conclusion. The enamelled bosses referred to were made for the decoration of other articles besides dishes, for example, horse trappings and harness; and they occasionally appear in sales, described as medallions, evidently having been removed from their former settings. It is known that in one or two instances they have been inserted into late pewter dishes of the Georgian period which have thereafter appeared as 'Stuart rose-water' dishes. The arms on the bosses are generally Carolean, and the whole appearance would have been very deceptive had not the dishes borne the touches of Georgian pewterers and been of

Georgian type; these points would, in all probability, only be noticed by connoisseurs of pewter; while, if the touches were removed, it would be almost impossible for anyone except an expert, and extremely difficult even for him, to see through the deception. And such a dish should be regarded with suspicion.



No. X.—DETAILS OF ARMS ON BOSS OF DISH SHOWN ABOVE