

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

PEWTER

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FACULTY of ART and DESIGN EDUCATION

BY

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Table of Contents

ILLUSTRATIONS	4
INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER	
1. WHAT IS PEWTER?	8
2. GENERAL HISTORY	13
3. <u>BRITISH PEWTER</u>	19
General History	20
Pewterers' Company	23
Items Made	25
4. <u>IRISH PEWTER</u>	36
General History / Items Made	37
Modern	50
5. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS	68
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 70

ILLUSTRATIONS

<u>No.</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Pilgrim bottle, Egypt. 1500.B.C.....	15
2. Decoration on Romano-British pewter....	22
3. William & Mary Tankard.....	28
4. Tavern Mug, height 9".....	29
5. Measures, from 1650.....	32.
6. Ewer 18 th Century, Measure, Inhaling Tankard	33
7. Bleeding Bowl, late 17 th century.....	41
8. Ink Stand, 1783.....	43
9. Dish, late 18 th century.....	44
10 Spirit Measures, 1830.....	46
11. Two handled cup, 19 th C. Communion Cup 18 th	47
12. Snuff Box, early 19 th century.....	48
13. Pouring molten metal into mould.....	54
14. Cleaning and preparation of pieces.....	55
15. Soldering candelabra.....	56

Illustrations cont.

No.	Page
16	Turning inside of beaker 57.
17	Bealin Design beaker 58
18	Baroque Design beaker 59
19	Basic Tankard body, plus selection of handles.. 63
20.	Loving Cup 65
21.	Stirrup Cup 66.

My first impression was that the
country was a very fertile one
and that the people were very
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I was told that the people were
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On the 1st of October I arrived
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much oppressed by the landlords
and the government.

Introduction

My first contact with pewter was in 1976 when I applied for a summer job as an Art and Craft Shop assistant. Luckily this shop was connected with Irish Pewter Ltd. Since then I have been employed by them in my spare time, doing artwork and sometimes etching.

I must admit that previous to this encounter I had never heard of pewter. Through this thesis I hope to convey to you; what pewter actually is (not stainless steel, as one lady tried to persuade me!), its origin, and finally, its uses. Throughout this thesis I will be particularly interested in the social aspect of the metal, what kind of people used it and for what purpose.

Due to the scarcity of material on old Irish Pewter I researched into British pewter. Because of the close link between Ireland and England I believed that in doing so I would give one some idea of the type of work which was done.

Chapter 1

What is Pewter?

At one time pewter was used in place of all those modern innovations which have supplanted it - block tin, electro-plate, china, glass, earthenware etc. Wipe out all items made in those materials from one's home and in their place substitute the same or similar articles made in pewter - one then begins to realise what an enormous industry pewter-making was.

Pewter does not lend itself easily to definition. It is one of the oldest alloys known to mankind. Alloys consisting at one extreme of more than 99% tin and at the other of almost 50% lead can legitimately be designated pewter.

From the late thirteenth century two standard alloys came to be adopted in Western Europe:

(a) The first consisted of pure tin tempered by the addition of relatively small amounts of hardening agents such as copper, bismuth or antimony. This was called 'fine' pewter.

(b) The second was made up of three or four parts of tin to one of lead. This was known as 'lay' pewter.¹

After about 1760, various European countries began to exclude it legally. The absence of it makes pewter completely safe for serving food and beverages without danger of poison. Supposedly one of the reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire was due to the Romans drinking from pewter goblets which contained lead. Lead poisoning is hereditary and so caused

the children, later to become rulers, to have a mental deficiency.

One further distinction remains, the methods of manufacture:

1. Cast Pewterware:

In the past, most pewterware was cast, and today there is a large market for cast pewterware; in addition appendages such as handles, spouts and other ornamentation are usually made by casting and then attached by soldering.

(a) The traditional hand casting method is known as gravity casting, wherein the craftsman carefully pours the molten metal into a specially prepared mould or die. This is usually of gun metal or iron.

(b) Pressure die-casting is a modern mechanised form of casting in which the molten metal is forced by a pump into the metal die. It permits a much more rapid production rate.

(c) Centrifugal casting, into rubber moulds, is also practised for smaller items. This is used by Arelington Jewellery Ltd., a company based in Portlington who specialise in making pewter jewellery for export.

2. Spun Pewterware:

Pewter exceeds other metals in ductility - it can be stretched, compressed, hammered and bent into any desired shape.

Unlike most metals, it does not harden with working so that annealing is unnecessary. Advantage is taken of these properties by spinning.

Surface Finish:

Whereas antique pewter tends to have a uniformly dull grey surface, modern pewterware is available in a range of surface finishes.

In addition to the heavily embossed texture available in some designs of cast pewter, cast and spun items can be polished or buffed to produce surfaces ranging from highly reflective to a softer 'satin' texture. Pewter can be given an antique finish by suitable chemical treatment²

Care of Pewter:

Pewter does not tarnish, with time it mellows to a beautiful soft lustre. Wash it with warm soapy water, rinse and dry with a soft cloth. If it requires polishing it should be done with a metal polish.

¹ John Hatcher, A history of British Pewter
(London, Longmans, 1974)

² Tin Research Institute, Pewter
(Middlesex, Swain and Son Ltd)

Chapter 2

General History

Chapter 2

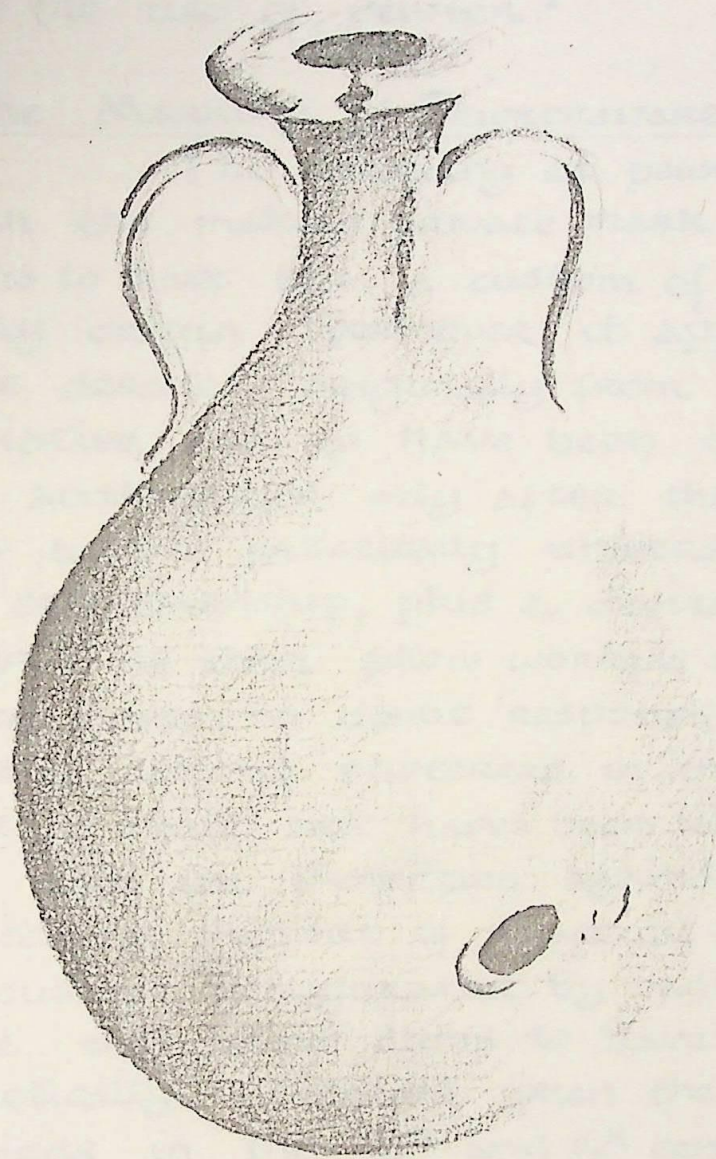
General History

Possibly the most ancient piece of pewter known is the tin 'pilgrim bottle' of Abydos, in Egypt, dating from 1500 B.C. (fig 1). Certainly it is well established that pewter metal was used extensively in Roman Times.

The period of the Dark Ages veils the history of pewter manufacture and usage in Europe. However by the 14th century A.D. pewter was being widely used in place of wood for tableware and other household purposes. Nuremberg was the centre for pewterers in the Middle Ages. From 1363 there were 33 masters of the craft. The export of engraved or etched pewterware was considerable.

The earliest records of a medieval craft guild of pewterers in Europe indicate that such an association existed in the Bordeaux region of France in the eleventh century. During the next three or four centuries, other guilds sprang up throughout Europe, as craftsmen banded together to protect their craft secrets, to uphold production standards and to regularise social conduct!

The craft of pewterware production had spread to North America by the middle of the seventeenth century, workers in pewter forming an important part of the communities of that period. The craftsmen of the so-called 'Colonial Period' produced such everyday items as bowls, jugs, candlesticks, spoons and other household goods.



Pilgrim Bottle, Egypt 1500 B.C.

fig 1.

The years from about 1700 to 1850 represented the peak period of use in pewterware for domestic items.

After 1850 cheap chinaware became available and this led to a decline in the use of pewter.¹

The Marking of Pewterware:

The marking of pewterware with the makers private mark, or 'touch' seems to have been a custom of extremely early origin. Moreover it appears to have derived originally from private initiative and to have been enforced by the authorities only after the custom had become practically universal. Pride of craftsmanship, plus a desire to be as good as their fellow workers in gold and silver, were no doubt responsible for the practice among pewterers in the beginning. But it could not have been long before the need for protection against fraud added the support of practical utility to a custom inaugurated by vanity. At any rate the habit seems to have been practically universal when the earliest records in the 13th and 14th centuries begin to give us definite information. The marking of pewterware became obligatory by Act of Parliament in England in 1503, this was only in 'lay' metal.² In the Irish Statutes of 1697 it said "makers are to have their own particular marks". Again in February 1714 an Act of Parliament for 'the redress of certain abuses in making

pewter and brass' stated that all pewter which has not any sound and is soft metal without the pewterer's name stamped thereupon, the same may be deemed bad pewter and seassable by the Act.³

At first nothing more beyond the makers initials and an ornamental or heraldic device, framed, in a circle or a scroll was used. After many changes in the rules the makers full name was allowed and finally place of manufacture.⁴

¹ Tin Research Institute

² J. B. Kerfoot. "American Pewter"
(New York, Bonanza Books)

³ H. H. Cotterrell, M. S. D. Westropp "Irish
Pewterers' Jour. Royal Society of Antiquaries
of Ireland. Vol. 47, 1917, pp 47-66.

⁴ Kerfoot, chapter ix.

Chapter 3
British Pewter

Chapter 3

British Pewter

General History:

Pewter achieved popularity only in late Roman Britain. The advent of British pewter manufacture was the result of a confluence of favourable factors, amongst which the exploitation of Cornish tin deposits is perhaps the most important. Roman commentators dealing with the sources of the Empire's tin speak only of N.W. Spain. However from A.D. 43 Cornwall became important for tin-mining. This was due to the collapse of the Spanish Mines and the increased demand for rich coins called 'antoniniani'. This period from the mid-third to the mid-fourth century appears to have been most prosperous for British tin-mining.

Other factors played an important part in stimulating the pewter industry. In Roman Britain tastes and fashions were moulded anew and the demand for high quality and even luxurious personal and household fittings, grew rapidly under the influence of Romanisation. Romano-British Pewter consisted of plates, dishes, ewers, jugs, cups, bowls, spoons etc.

The distribution of Romano-British pewter is most uneven. The great majority of major discoveries, with the exception of those in London, have been concentrated within a belt of land approximately sixty miles wide crossing central Southern England, with a northern boundary from Portland Bill to Lowestoft.

The manufacture of simple articles of pewter would not have presented serious problems to British craftsmen. The low melting and fusing points of tin and lead meant that the alloy would have been easily prepared by heating crucibles on hearths surrounded by coal or charcoal. Most casting resulted in a rough product, and it was common practice to finish circular objects on a lathe to remove imperfections.

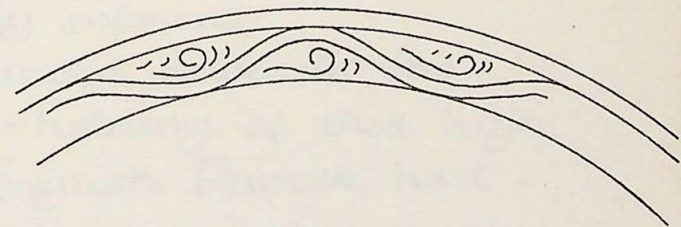
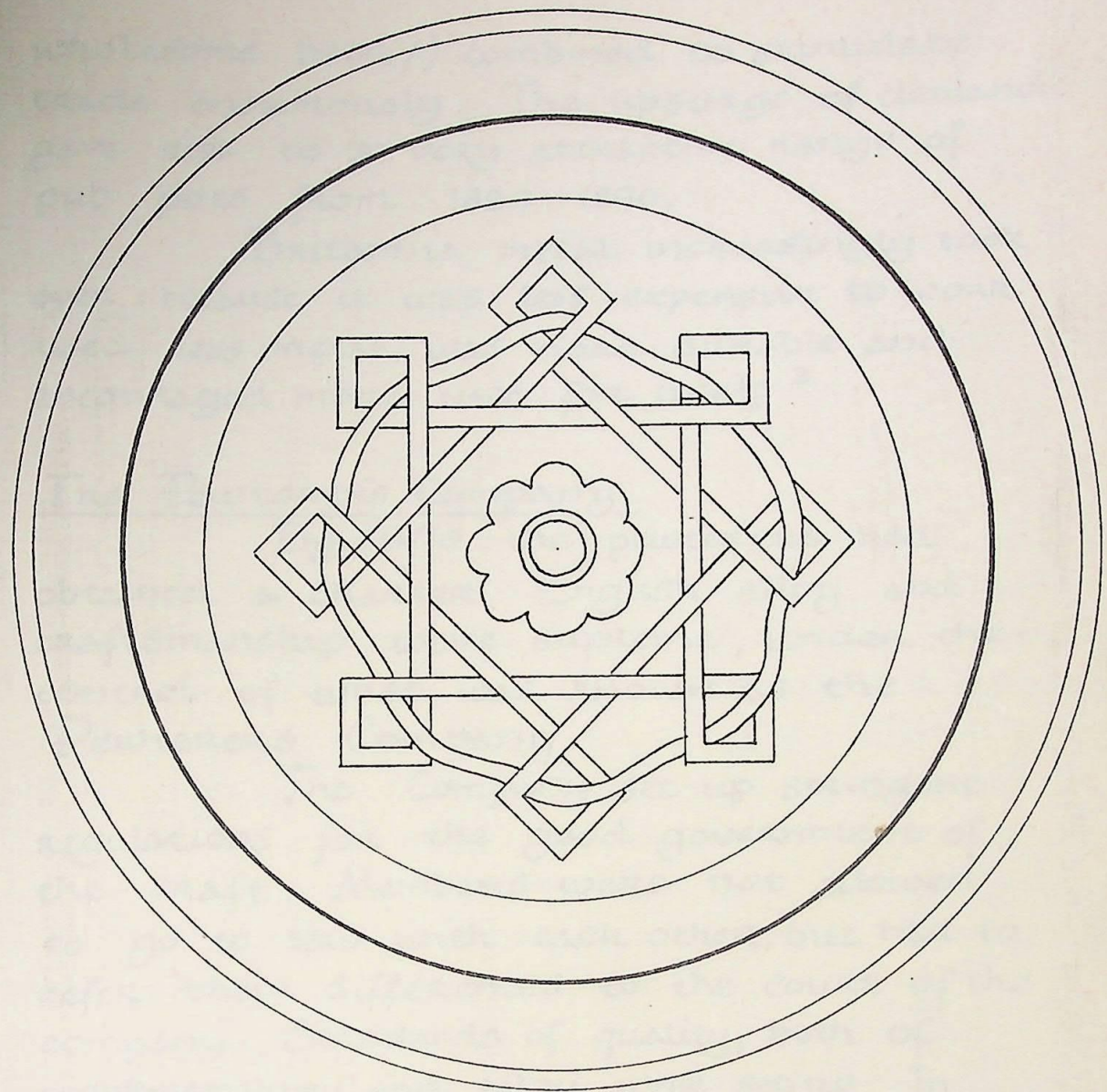
Simple decorations were sometimes added in casting or later with a chisel or a file (fig 2.)¹

When the Romans evacuated, and with the collapse of National Trade and communications pewter disappeared until well after the Normans had taken over.

By the sixteenth century, pewter had become a possibility for all households, and wills of that time show that even the poorest would own a treasured spoon or even a salt.

After the Restoration, styling and craftsmanship were at their zenith, and sometimes tankards, plates and dishes were skilfully decorated with zig-zag wriggling. Styles changed swiftly. But in the Georgian Period competition from other media increased. Pewter was being solely pressed by pottery, porcelain, brass and latterly by its own offshoot Britannia Metal.

The institution of Imperial Measure in 1820 and the opening of a great many pubs thereabouts (national policy to wear the populace off the eroding gin to more



Decoration on Romano-British Pewter
fig. 2.

wholesome beer!) combined to stimulate trade enormously. The upsurge of demand gave rise to a very attractive range of pub pots from 1820-1890.

Britannia metal increasingly took over because it was less expensive to work, used less metal, was more durable and encouraged more uses for itself.²

The Pewterer's Company:

By 1470 the pewterers had obtained a charter. English alloy and craftsmanship were supreme, under the control of what was known as the Pewterer's Company.

The Company set up stringent regulations for the good government of the craft. Members were not allowed to go to law with each other, but had to refer their differences to the court of the company. Standards of quality, both of workmanship and alloy, were set up. In earlier days these, plus hours and methods of work, were strictly enforced.

All this tended towards the attainment and up-holding of that high reputation which English Pewter had achieved.

Contemporary light is thrown upon the apprentices position in a general description of all trades (London 1747)

"Making of pewter consists chiefly of two parts:

1. Melting, casting, turning, which is one person's business, the harder work

and not so healthy.

2. Hammering and planishing which is another; one workman but seldom doing all the operations.

It is an ancient, useful trade. The planishing part is reckoned a pretty employ for a smart youth, with whom must be given as an apprentice not less than £20, whose working hours are from 6-8.

Having made his decision to become a pewterer, the lad looks about for some master craftsman willing to take him as an apprentice. Such a one having been found he is duly bound for a period of seven or more years.

During his apprenticeship he lives with his master and generally is subject to strict discipline. His term of work being duly completed and before he could set up business for himself, he has to become a freeman in the Company. (Several instances are in records of women becoming freewomen in 1713/14).

In order to acquire his touchmark he had to make application to court for it. Before this leave is granted he appears before a court of people he had been working for. As further proof an 'assay' or 'test piece' is required to judge his workmanship.

Towards the middle of the 18th century the Company's faith in their own

powers began to wane. The industry gradually declined after a valiant record of years of usefulness.³

Items made:

Rather than give a boring account of what type of pewterware was made each year I have tried to pick different items which appeal to me and trace their history.

Domestic Tableware:

In the days of Queen Bess, a wooden bowl in which to serve the stew would furnish a newly-weds pantry. Fingers were forks and the sheath knife was 'proper' for each course in the state banquets. Wooden plates for each guest were becoming fashionable to replace the squares of coarse bread. Pewter was the drinking vessel, and naturally it began to replace the platter as well until a 'garnish' became the term to define a complete set of a dozen each platters, flat bowls and small plates.

Tankards:

In the 15th century a boost was given to pewter by the determined effort which was made to eliminate fraud by insisting on the use of pewter pots of stamped capacity in taverns.

Because of the close control exercised over members pewterers guilds were seen by state and civic authorities as being allies in the struggle to ensure

that all vessels used for retailing of wine, ale and beer were of full capacity. The multiplication of taverns had a decisive effect upon the trade; as early as the late 17th century some London pewterers were able to specialise in the manufacture of tavern pots, by the 19th century this branch of the trade was pre-eminent.

Even the shape was sometimes specified. In 1575, one Roger Hawksfor was forbidden by the Court of Assistants to make any more of his special wine pots - 'for that by their greates breadethe in the mouthe, and shortenes throughout, there appeareth a manifeste deceite in measure to all other queenes, maiestes, subjectes receyving wyne.'

The British pewter industry was only saved from rapid collapse by the continued sale of beer pots to public houses. Pewter pots, being cast, could be made more accurately to approved sealed measures than could earthenware mugs. Indeed the publican's most frequent complaint was that so durable were they that customers stole them!

A reflection on the time was given by a young American Quaker lodging in London in 1796. The family with whom he resided sent out to one of the numerous tap-houses for a pint - 'the tap-house man sends his servant with it to your house and also provides mugs. They are always made of pewter, and have

the owners' name engraved on the side. Every morning the servants from the tap-houses go round and gather in their mugs which they string on a leather strap and carry on their shoulders home.

The rough usage doubtless caused many casualties among the pots and it was common practice for a re-shaper of hardwood to be provided by the pewterers when a large quantity of pots were supplied.

The most desirable set of early tankards were in the Stuart Period (1665 and later), which are of squat cylindrical form, with a flattish, hinged cover and ornamental thumbpiece. Frequently the drums are decorated with conventional scrolls, tulips, artichokes and fleur-de-lis (fig. 3).

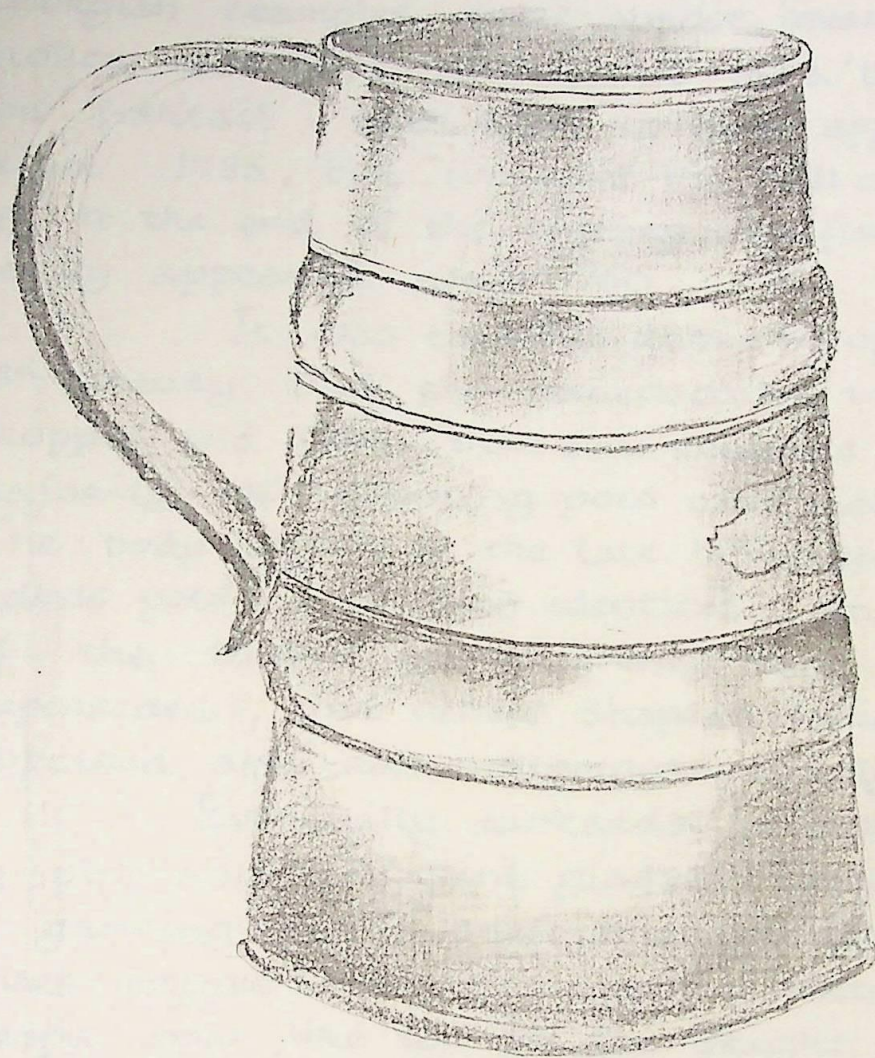
Towards the end of the 17th century there were some very attractive lidless tavern mugs, the body less squat and tapering fairly sharply towards the top. This early form of lidless tavern pot, often with hooped bands around the body seems to have been made over about a 25 year period. (fig. 4).

About 1685 the pewterers introduced a domed cover, which gradually superseded other forms, so that by the turn of the century the flat cover had virtually disappeared. Thumbpieces of the Stuart tankards were of a predominately slim 'ramshorn' type.

In the Queen Anne and Georgian



William and Mary Tankard
height $4\frac{5}{8}$ "
fig 3.



Lidless Taveen Mug
height 9"
fig 4.

examples the 'ramshorn' gradually evolved into a taller 'scroll' and later still the scroll became more like a curved chairback, by which name it is now known by. The Georgian examples were almost, invariably hollow cast and terminated in a 'ball' or fishtail, both seem to have appeared before 1725, but whereas the ball continued up to the end of the century, the fishtail rarely appeared after 1750.

It was towards the end of the 18th century that the domed cover was dropped and from that time onwards the majority of drinking pots were lidless. The body styles of the late 18th century lidless pots had been identical with those of the lidded examples they had superseded, but other shapes rapidly appeared and ran contemporaneously.⁴

Eventually tankards were replaced by pint and half-pint glasses. There was a growing public preference for lighter beers rather than the darker porters. People now like to see the bright clear contents through the sides of the vessel. This change came about in 1880.⁵

Measures:

These follow much the same history as the tankard, being affected by the regulations concerning capacity markings. Measures from 1650 onwards are of baluster form, with a flat hinged cover and projecting thumbpiece. The design of these measures changed as time

went on

(i) Simple 'wedge' or triangular appendage, placed at the hinged portion of the cover. (fig 5)

(ii) With a 'ball' set upon the wedge-shaped section. (fig 5)

(iii) With a 'hammerhead' lying across the wedge. (fig 5)

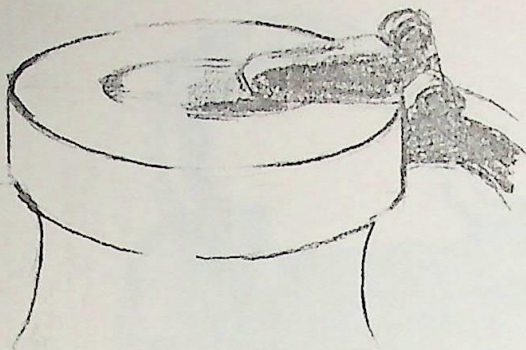
(iv) Next the 'bud' a name supposed to indicate a likeness to buds sprouting from a shrub. This particular thumbpiece was used in conjunction with a pointed 'arrowhead' shape to the hinge-piece which laid flat on the cover (fig 5.)

The handles of the foregoing styles were of plain, curved form, without ornamental terminal. In the very earliest the base of the handle fitted close to the body, but as the body style became shorter and fatter, so too did a change come about in the manner of fixing the handle itself and the body. This remained a constant feature for all later types of baluster shapes

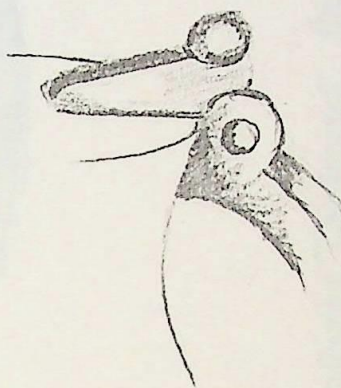
on The next fashion in thumbpieces, the 'double volute' so called because of its likeness to the tops of classical architectural columns. It had a lid appendage in the shape of a fleur-de-lis and the handle terminated with a large ball, it also projected from the body by a strut which was diamond shaped at the point of fixture. (fig 6)

Measures of baluster form were made to conform to the liquid requirements

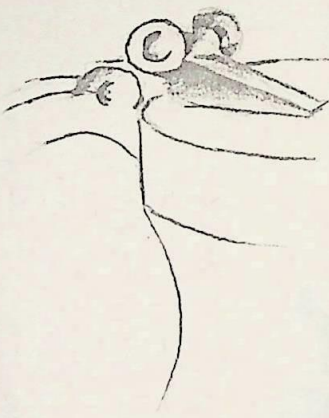
(i)



(ii)

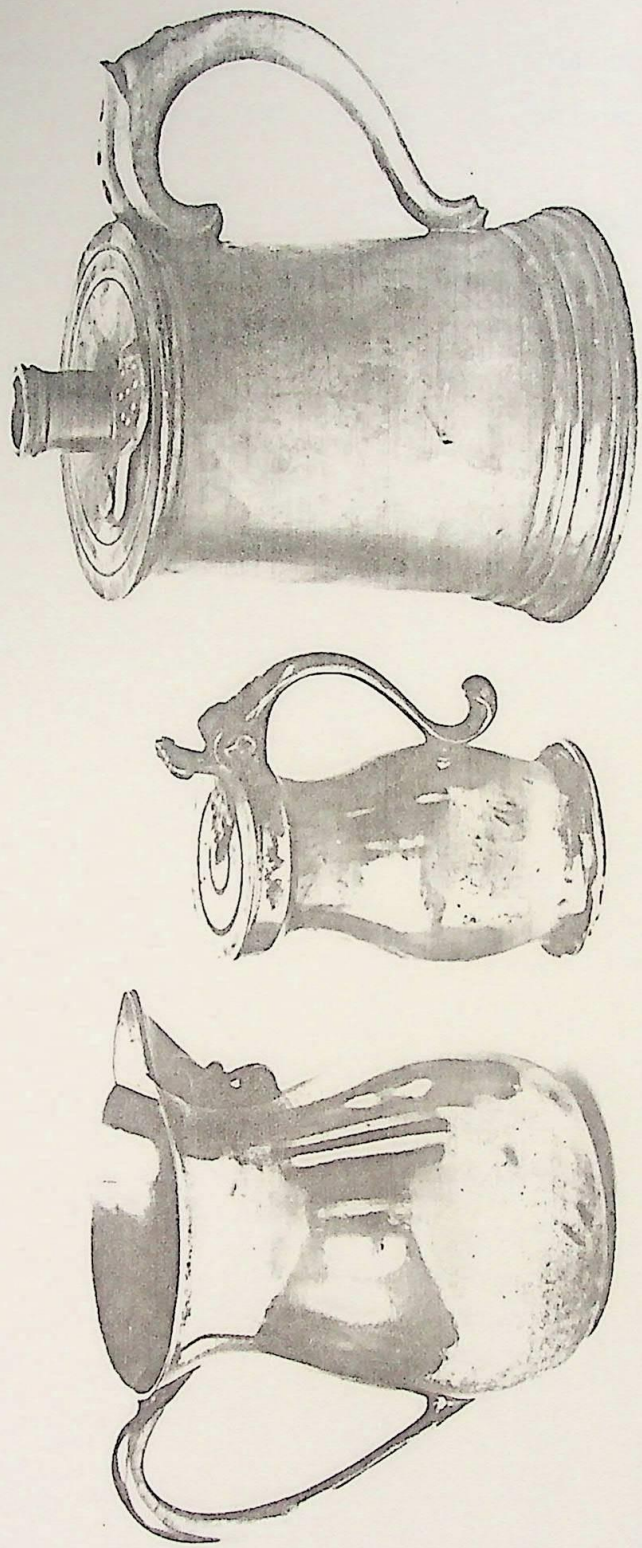


(iii)



(iv)

Measures
from 1650
fig. 5.



Ewer 18th Century, Measure, Inhaling Tankard. (fig 6.)

then in force. The pots, so formed, were
sealed on the rim with a 'capacity mark'.⁶

- ¹ Ronald Michaelis, 'British Pewter'
(London, Ward Lock, 1968).
- ² Christopher A. Peal, 'Let's collect British Pewter' (Norwich, Jarrold Colour Publications, 1971)
- ³ Howard H. Cotterell, 'Old pewter; its makers, and marks.' (London, 1963).
- ⁴ Michaelis.
- ⁵ John Hatcher 'A history of British Pewter'
(London, Longmans, 1974.)
- ⁶ Michaelis

Chapter 4

Irish Pewter

Chapter 4

Irish Pewter

The early history of the pewterers craft in Ireland is shrouded in almost impenetrable mystery. Whereas one sees the Pewterers Guilds of London, York, and Edinburgh, governed by its own masters and wardens, yet no such guild, that is known, existed for the pewterers in Ireland.

The earliest reference to Pewter was a hoard of over two thousand pewter tokens which were found in a 13th century pit in Winetavern Street. The tokens have been interpreted as intended for circulation by tavern keepers among their customers and they appear to date to the period immediately preceding the introduction of the round farthing by Edward I in 1279. Tokens of this type were previously known from small hoards and single specimens found in Britain in France but the Winetavern Street cache contained the largest number ever discovered. The majority bear a figure subject, human or animal, on one face and an armorial device on the other. The subjects include an ecclesiastic with a crozier in one hand and the other raised in blessing, a pilgrim with staff and scrip holding a cup to his lips, an ape with an apple, a pelican and pairs of confronted birds.¹

The first mention of pewter to be found in writing was in the accounts of the Priory of the Holy Trinity at Christ Church, Dublin. It stated that 'the tableware was made of pewter: Walter, the Goldsmith, was paid 9d. for making twelve dishes, twelve plates, twelve sauce-vessels and two large dishes,

the cost of which was 7s.! These accounts were for the years 1337 to 1346.

In Dublin the pewterers formed one of the trades comprised in the Guild of Smiths. The city corporation were quite strict in their rules concerning the sale of pewter. Their records of 1556:

- "Ordained that no pewterer bringing pewter to be sold, out of England or elsewhere, being no freeman of this City, shall sell any of his pewter till the same be brought into the Common Hall, there to be sold only in gross to Freemen of this City upon pain of forfeiture of all such wares as the foreign pewterer shall be found selling contrary to this order, the one half to the spier and tinder and the other half to the Treasury." -

They were also concerned that the pewter being sold would be of high quality. Clauses from an act, 1697.

- (i) New pewter vessels are to be of as good fine metal as those cast in London.
- (ii) Hollow-ware of lay metal are to be according to the azzizes of lay metal wrought in London.
- (iii) Makers are to have their own particular marks.
- (iv) None to have false beams or weights. -

In Cork the pewterers formed one of the trades comprised in the Guild of

Goldsmiths - as can be seen from an extract, dated May 31st 1656:

- "braziers, Pewterers, founders, plumbers, glaziers, sadlers, upholsterers, and the like" -

incorporated by the Master, Wardens, and Company of the Society of Goldsmiths for the City of Cork. The pewterers formed an important industry in Cork during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There is no direct evidence that the other towns in Ireland belonged to such corporations. One only reads of Youghal, where in the reign of King James I, - "each Guild was to have a

convenient place for Assembly and every Guild may yearly choose one master and two wardens, who are to exercise the office for one year and no more." -

As a result of this a Company of Hammermen, comprising of goldsmiths, blacksmiths, pewterers, shipwrights etc., were incorporated in Youghal on 15th Sept. 1657.

In 1714 the people of Ireland were warned against buying counterfeit pewter from travellers, chapmen and others. As a result of these regulations, much of the little known Irish Pewter that has come down to our time is of a very high quality and made from the finest metal. Quite a quantity of the items made were melted down to become rebel shot.

An extract from the Irish House

of Commons Journal, November 1st, 1753;

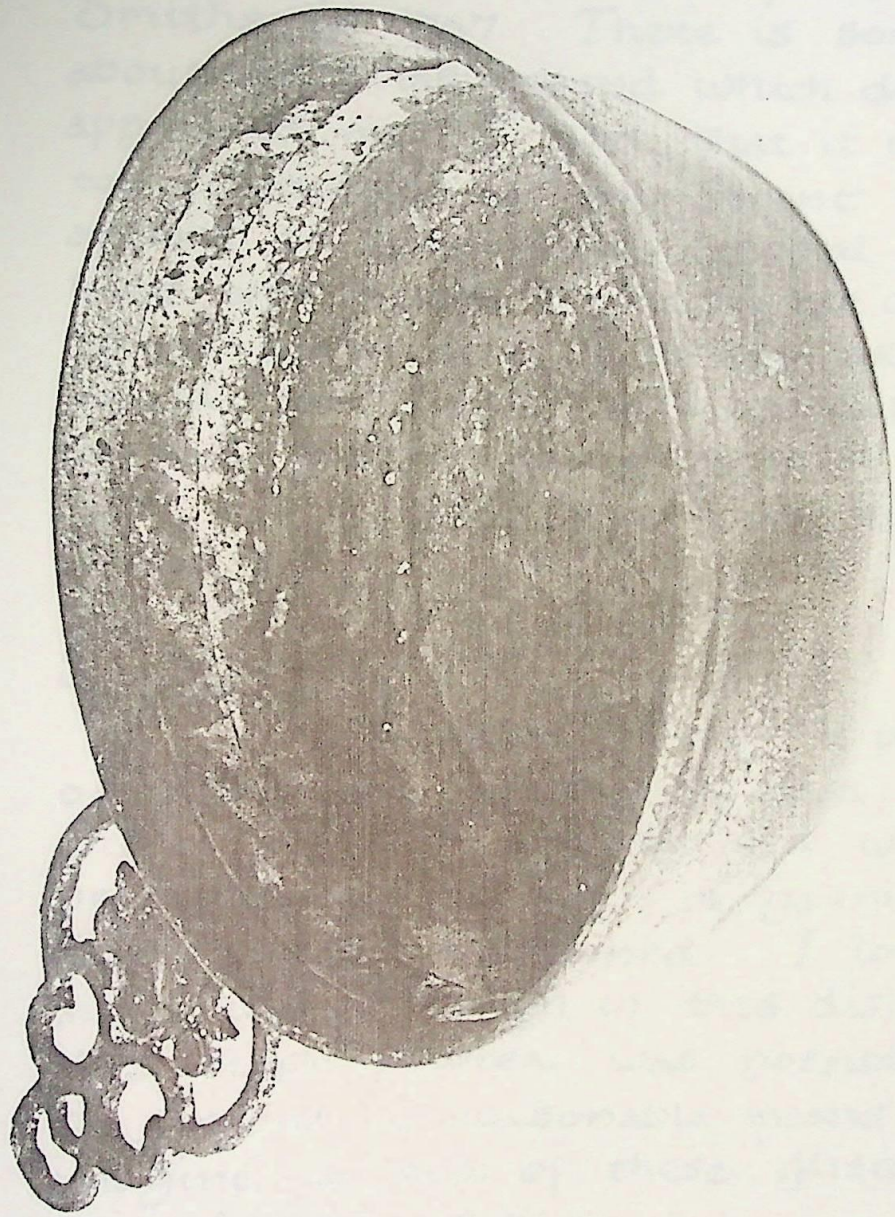
- Petition of the manufacturers of
blocktin in Ireland, stating that
owing to the great importation
of Rouen, Burgundy and
Marseilles earthenware, the trade
of the pewterers is at a standstill².
This must have been a slight exaggeration
because according to a list of Irish
Pewterers given by Royal Society of
Antiquaries of Ireland there were still
people practising their craft, long after
that date. For example, one James
Elwood, pewterer, of Dublin, was mentioned
as only starting in 1777. However
despite these newcomers the pewterers
trade eventually died out.

Items made:

In order to give one some
idea of the type of work which was
produced by the pewterers in Ireland
I picked some of the pieces on display
in the National Museum and had a look
at them.

1. Bleeding Bowl (fig.7)

This is from the late 17th century,
and was found near St. Patrick's Cathedral.
What a gruesome remedy! In days gone
by, it was thought that if one bled the
patient it would relieve the sickness. In
this particular model there are even
measuring lines, by which quantity could
be controlled! They are very similar in



Bleeding Bowl (fig. 7)

shape to what is known as a 'porringer', which was used to hold broth or gruel (fig 7.)

2. Ink Stand (fig.8)

This was made in 1783 by John Heaney, a pewterer and brazier of Dublin. He was warden of the Guild of Smiths in 1767. There is something about this ink-stand which does not appeal to me. I feel that it is almost too functional, to the extent that it appears to have nearly ignored the wonderful lines and curves which pewter can have. What saved this, I believe, are the little round feet. They add a touch of 'humour' to this rather 'heavy' piece.

Also shown are his 'touch' marks.

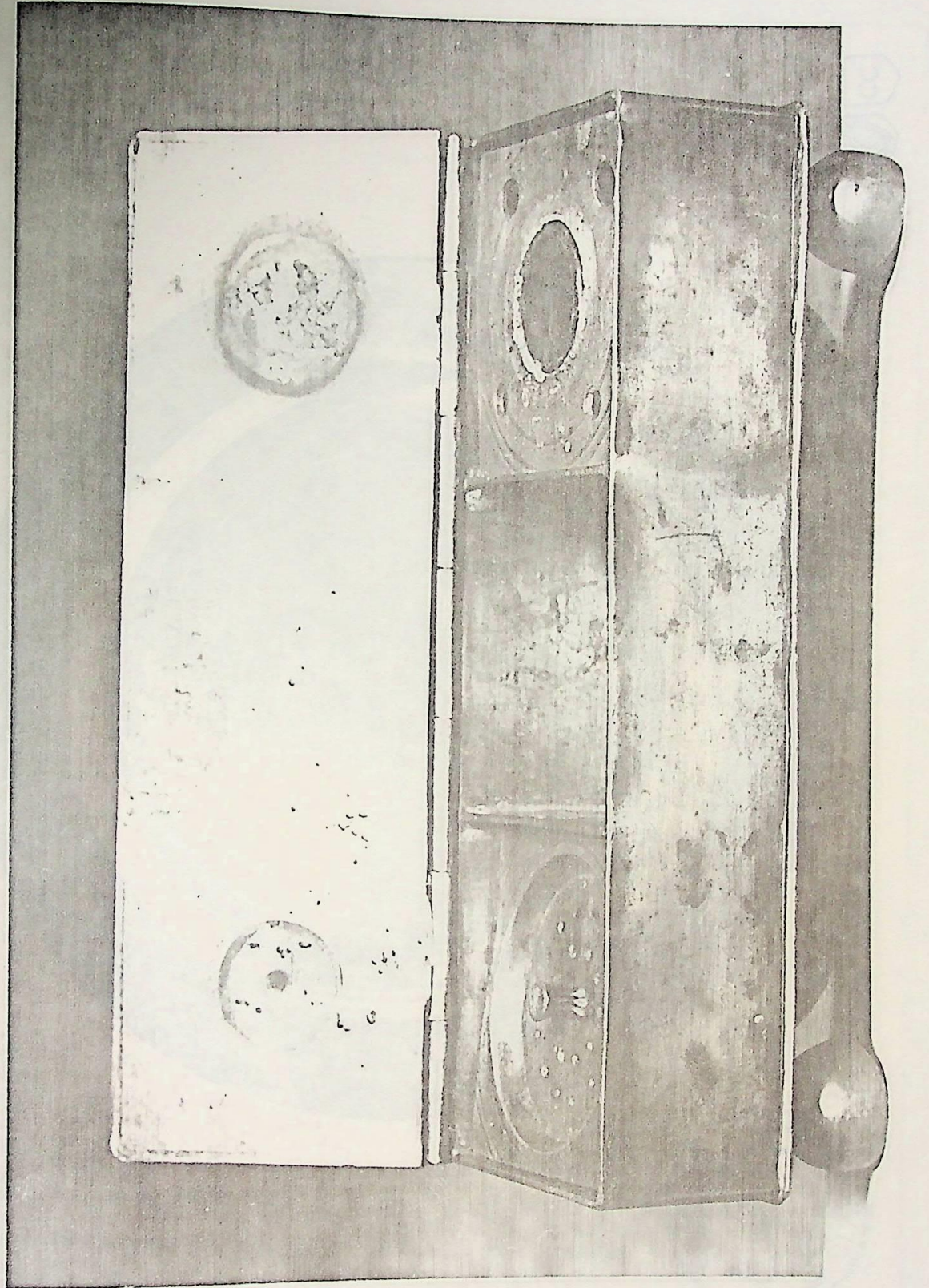
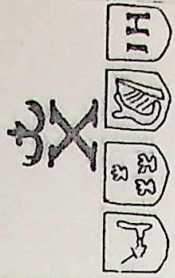
3. Dish (fig.9)

Charles Clarke, a pewterer of Waterford, made this dish. It is from the late 18th century and was probably one a set, or 'garnish' as I have already mentioned. I love the simplicity of design in this dish. At this stage pewter was possible to acquire by anyone of reasonable means. I can just imagine a row of these, glittering on the dresser shelf.

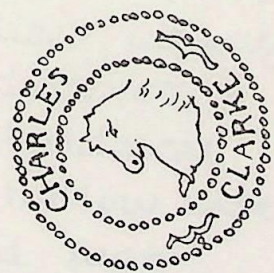
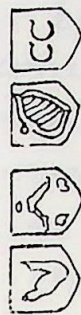
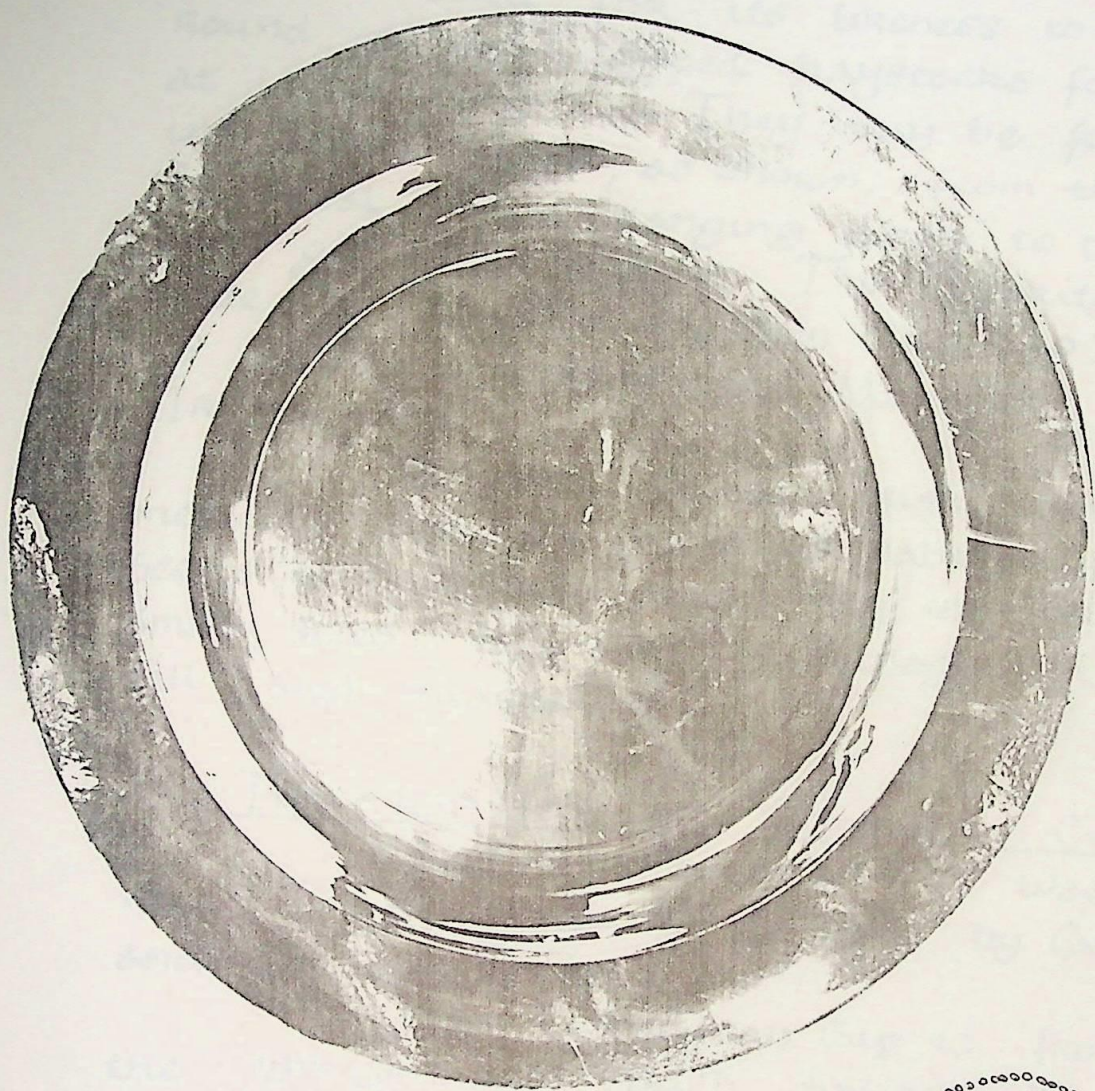
Also shown are his 'touch' marks.

4. Spirit Measures (fig.10)

A set of seven spirit



Inte Stand (fig. 8)



Dish (fig. 9)

measures, made in about 1830 by Austen and Son, pewterers of Cork. This is the first design I have seen which is specifically Irish. It was also known as the 'haystack' or 'harvester' measure. Of an unique form, this measure is so-called for its likeness to the round conical topped haystacks found at that time. They may be found in seven sizes, as shown, from the Imperial gallon ranging down to the half gill / half noggin. The majority were made by Austen and Son (1820-40) or by their successor, the Munster Ironworks.

Another purely Irish form of measure was the handless baluster, which seems to have been made only in four small sizes; half-pint, gill (noggin) half gill and quarter gill.

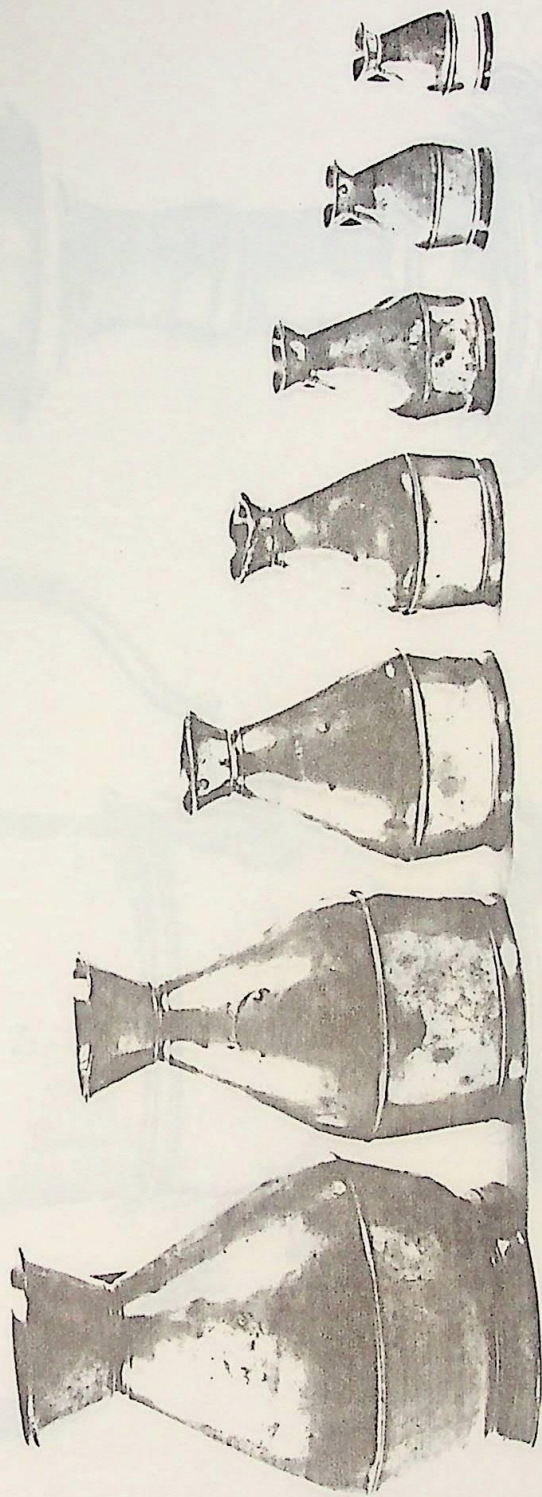
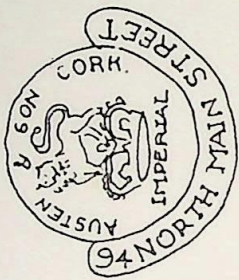
5. Two-handed Cup. Communion Cup. (fig 11)

The two-handed cup was made in the mid 19th Century by Campbell and Co., in Belfast.

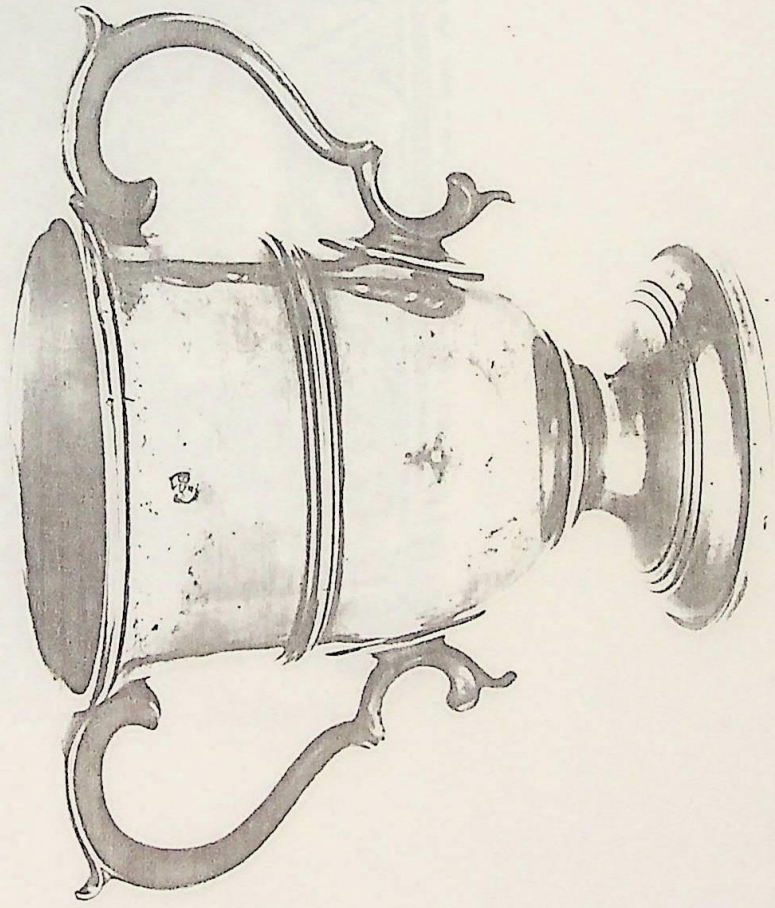
The Communion Cup is from the 18th century. Irish chalices, usually found in pairs, are quite distinct, having a narrow, almost cylindrical, vertical bowl and a wide hollow cast stem with a stepped domed foot.

6. Snuff Box (fig 12)

The size of this early 19th century piece attracted me. (Photograph - twice actual size).



Spirit Measures (fig. 10.)



Two handled Cup. (fig. 11.)

Communion Cup



Snuff Box (fig. 12.)

¹ Breandán Ó'Riordáin " Viking-Medieval Dublin "

² Howard H. Cotterell " Irish pewterers "
Jour. Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland,
Vol. 47, 1917.

Touchmark:

Touchmarking is not compulsory in Ireland to touchmark each piece. However in order to comply with regulations in other countries the tradition is kept up. A point worth noting is that learning in touchmarking must be of equal height.

Modern Pewter

Modern pewterware, as we know it, is considered to have originated in the Netherlands in the early years of this century. From there it spread throughout Europe and to North America.

Pewter is best left to form and line for its beauty, and, unless a very heavy gauge metal is used large flat surfaces are impractical. Curved surfaces, grooves, domes and flares can be planned for use where greater strength is needed.

There is a growing awareness of pewter products in Ireland and they are in increasing demand for a variety of purposes.

Modern Irish Pewter is a thriving industry with two major centres in Southern Ireland. One in Mullingar Co. Westmeath and the other in Timolin-Moone, Co. Kildare, the difference between them being their methods of manufacture. As part of my thesis I visited both factories to find out what is required for the production of modern Irish Pewter.

Touchmarks:

Nowadays it is not compulsory in Ireland to touchmark one's pewter. However in order to (and to) comply with regulations in other countries the tradition is kept on. A point worth noting is that lettering in touchmarks, must be of equal height.

Owl Metalware Ltd. Mullingar Pewter.

The idea for a cast pewter industry emerged during a Bank / I.D.A. meeting in Mullingar in 1973. This get together was aimed at encouraging local businessmen to get involved in small scale industrial projects. Mr. Paddy Collins is the managing director and it was he who kindly showed me around the factory.

There is a very strong link to German Pewter with Mr. Gunther Dore on the board, himself, an established pewter manufacturer in Germany. This was a very wise move, Germany being the home of pewter, where only the highest quality pewter products are assured of success. It also led to the possibility of specialised training of its mainly unskilled staff in Germany which lasted for nine months.

Apart from the growing Irish market, the pewterware is sold to Scotland, Wales, Holland, Germany, U.S. and Canada, export accounting for 60% of Sales.

Methods of Production

This cast pewter is made up of an alloy of 95% Tin, 3% Antimony and 2% Copper. Basically the process is as follows:

1. The operator assembles the hot mould parts together. These are the same temperature as the molten metal so as to avoid cracking. Metal is heated to 400°C .
2. The mould is clamped in a frame

and the molten metal is poured in (fig.13)

3. It is left to cool and the amount of time allowed for this depends on thickness of mould. Then the mould is taken apart to reveal the new casting

Production from that point on is based on particular article:

Candelabra:

4. Assemble base, arms and cups by soldering (fig.14) and (fig.15)

5. Polish, wash, finish and finally pack.

Beakers:

4. Cast beaker is treated with chemical to give it a muted colour.

5. Beaker is now turned on a wood-lathe to give the rims and inside a glistening sheen (fig.16)

6. The piece is stamped, checked and packed.

The first beaker was cast on Aug. 15th 1974. (fig.17)

The whole operation may sound quite simple on paper but having seen it I believe it to be one of intense co-operation. My impression of Mullingar Pewter was one of a highly organised small industry.

Design in Mullingar Pewter:

Looking at the range of goods produced I feel that Owl Metalware are achieving what they set out to do; making what the country knows and wants, then to lead in new, distinctive styles of equal

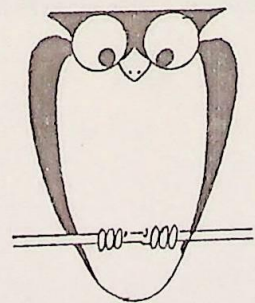
quality.

Some of the designs which they make are Germanic in origin. This obviously was to help them in their breakthrough of the German market. However they now produce an Irish range, namely the 'Bealin' design (fig 17). This was inspired by decorations on the high cross at Bealin, near Mullingar. This cross, in the tradition of Iona and Clonmacnoise was erected about 690 A.D., was damaged in the following centuries, and now only the central pillar and one arm remains.

The designer of this series was Philip Good, architect and director of the firm. It is amazing the amount of detail which is capable of being reproduced. The details which characterise the series stand out in relief on the solid pewter vessels.

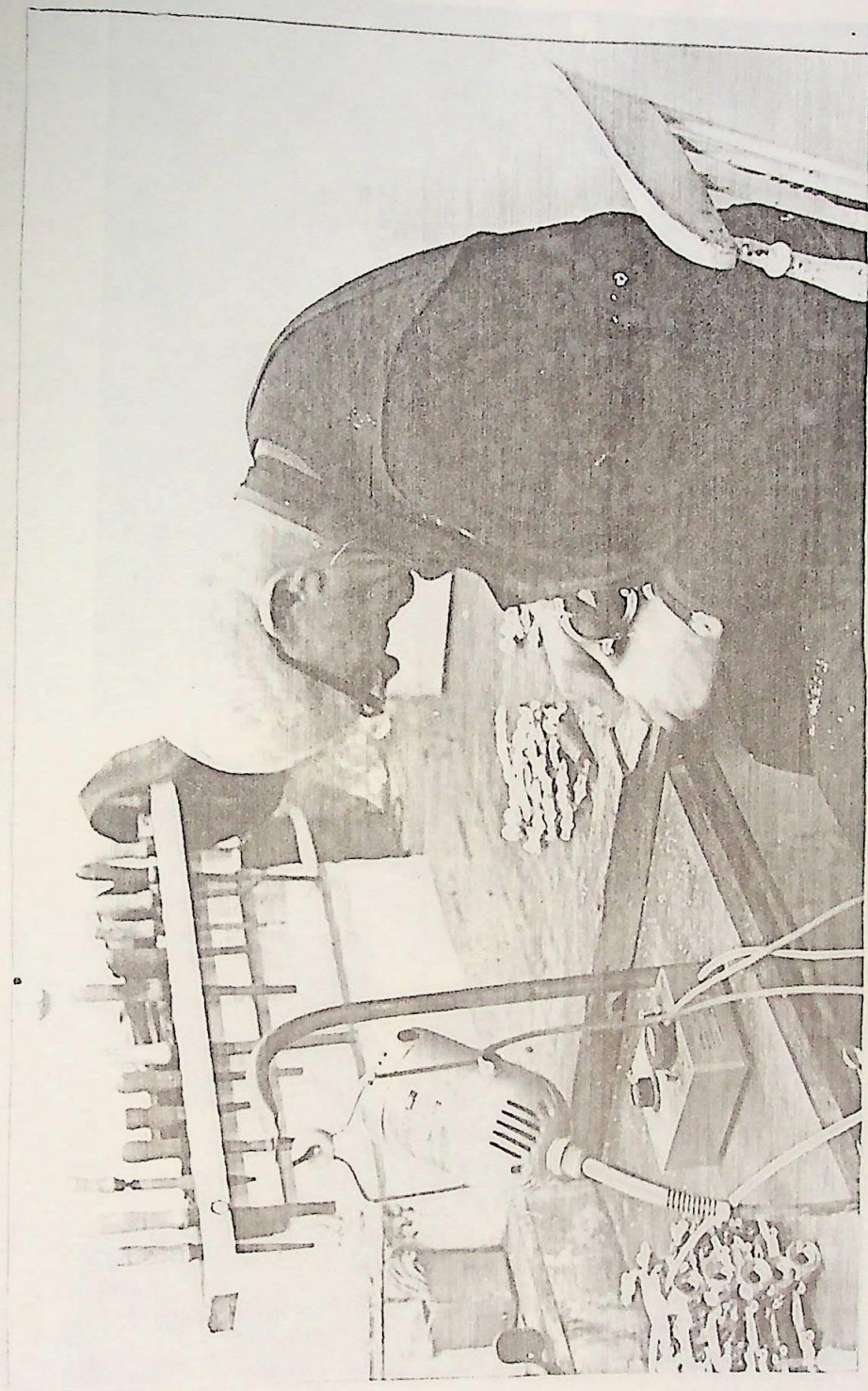
Touchmark:

Every piece of Mullingar pewter is hand-stamped with a tiny image of an owl. The motif idea of the owl was chosen because of the proximity of one of the midlands famous lakes, Lough Owel. There is also a collectors value attached to each piece - every item is marked with a letter denoting the year of production - The first year A, second B and so on.



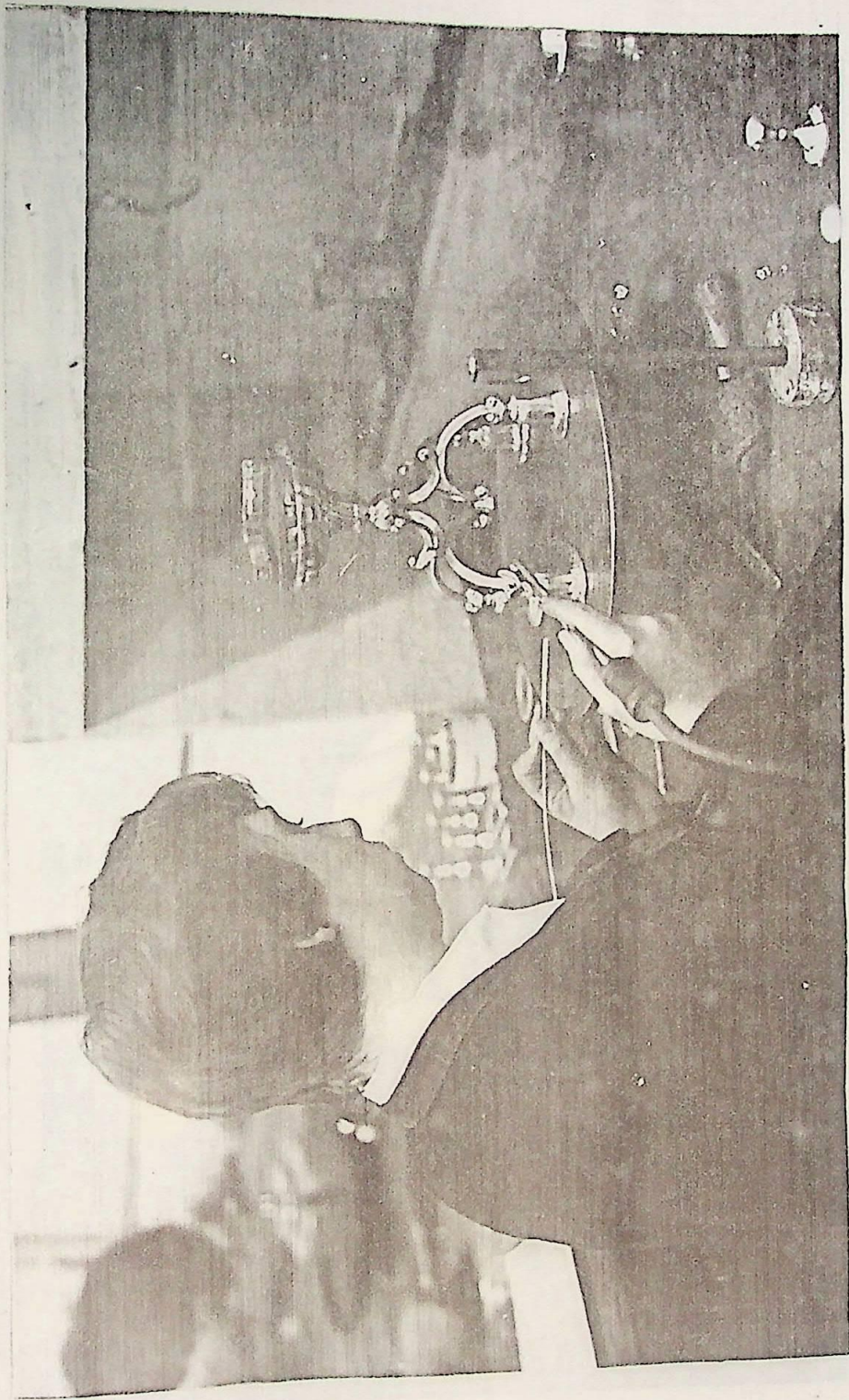


Pouring molten metal into mould
fig 18.

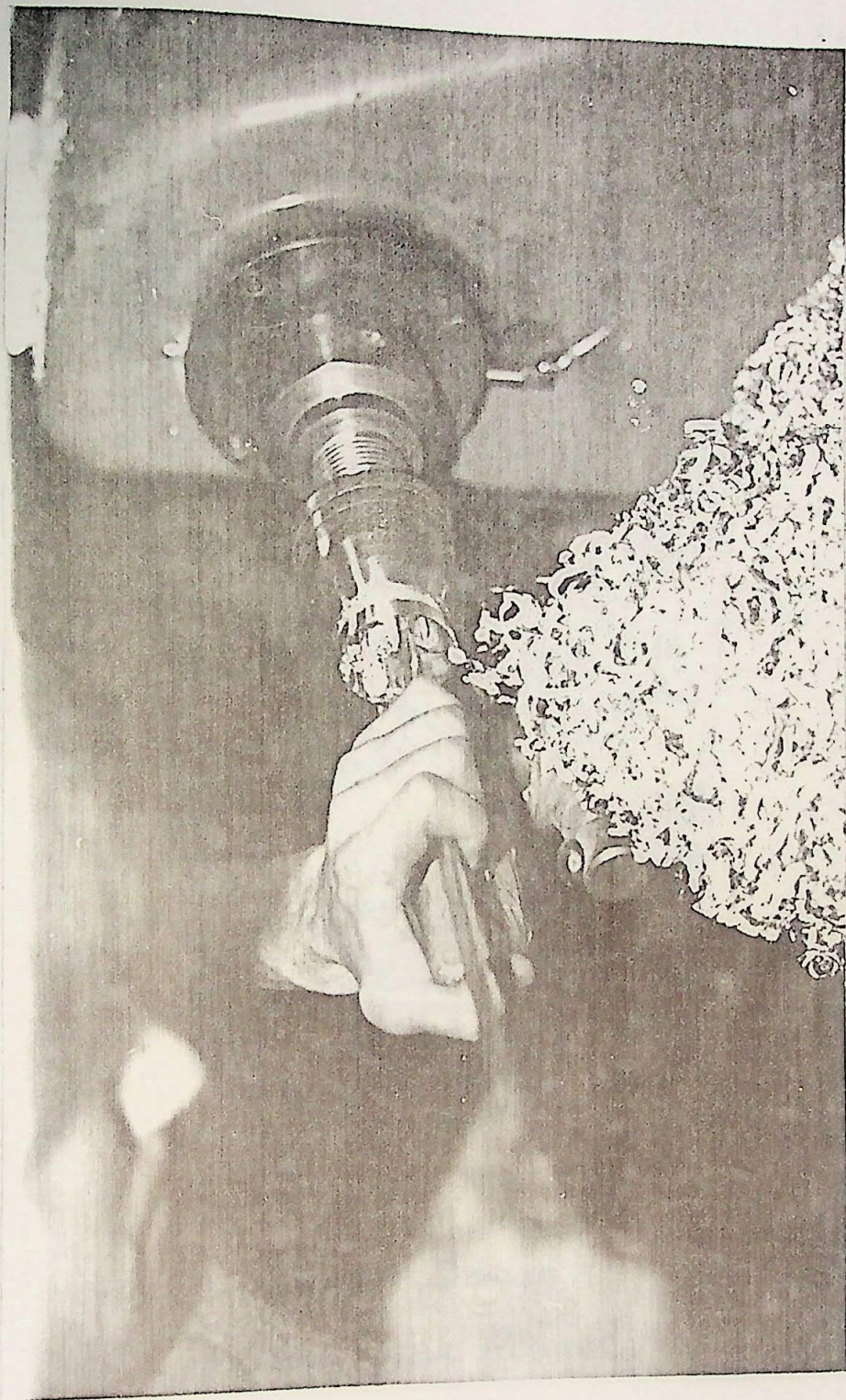


Cleaning & Preparation of pieces for Assembly.

fig. 14.



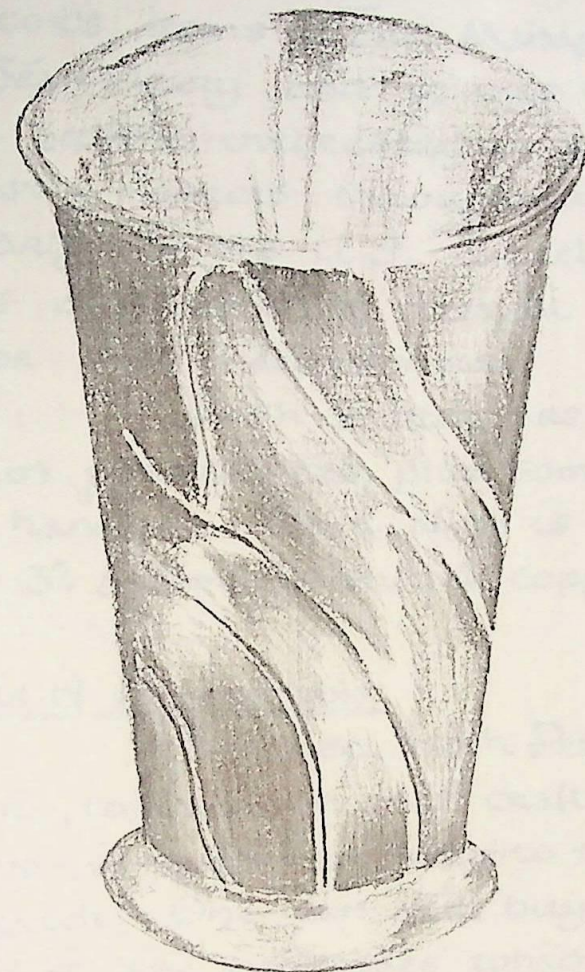
Soldering Candelabra
fig. 15.



*Turning inside of Beaker
fig 16*



'Beatin' Design
Mullingae Pewtee
fig. 17.



Baroque Design

Mullingar Pewter

fig. 18

Irish Pewter Ltd.
Timolin~Moone (Co. Kildare).

Situated in an old mill, Irish Pewter began production in 1973. Pieces which were then made are now regarded as collector's items. The Managing Director is Mr Séan Cleary and it was through him I first became interested in pewter. The firm have markets throughout the World, particularly in the U.S. Lately, however, there is a renewal of interest in Irish people for this precious metal.

Irish Pewter are concerned with spun pewterware, plus some cast pieces, usually handles. Their alloy is made up of 96% Tin, 3% Antimony and 1% copper.

Methods of Production:

Because Irish Pewter Ltd., undertook to restore this craft after centuries of decline it was necessary to train everyone from scratch. One can still buy student pieces, examples of the processes which each student to the craft has to accomplish. Now there are ten people employed full-time.

Their range of tankards is perhaps the most popular of the products. Here, briefly are the stages necessary to make one:

The handle: These are hollow, and made by casting. The molten ^{metal} is poured into a book-type mould. After a brief interval it is inverted to pour any still molten metal back into melting pot. This results

in a thin shell of metal solidifying and so when the mould is opened, a hollow cast handle is obtained.

The Body: This is spun from flat sheets. Circles or shapes of a pre-determined size are cut and held on a lathe between a 'shaping chuck' and a follow chuck. The 'shaping chuck' is the inside shape of the item that is going to be spun.

The spinner shapes the pewter by manipulating it with various shaped tools. This is a highly-skilled section of the work and fascinating to watch. It could almost be likened to the way a potter works.

The Base: This is spun from a circle over a forming chuck.

Assembly: This is done by soldering, the craft of the metalsmith, which indeed is a craft requiring great expertise. Because of the low melting point of pewter, the solder is very close in melting temperature. Therefore this area has to be dealt with in an extremely delicate way so as not to melt the actual tankard!

Buffing: Buffing smooths out any imperfections in the metal after spinning and soldering. A second and finer buffing with sand leaves the tankard ready for any finish from mirror to heavy sateen.

Polish: Irish Pewter Ltd. usually finish

their pewter with what is called the Irish Polish. This polish, which was researched into, could be compared to newly made pieces in the 16th and 17th centuries in Ireland. Polishing is usually done with fine cloth 'mops'.

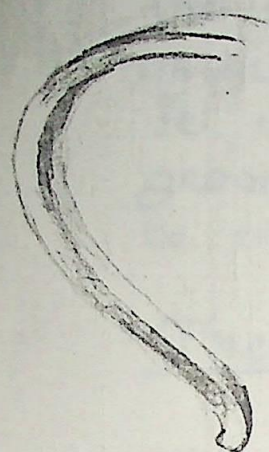
Before packing, each piece is examined thoroughly to ensure that no unwitting error or flaw occurred during manufacture.

Design in Irish Pewter Ltd.

Irish Pewter design and make a vast quantity of products only some of which I will make more obvious. Their goods range from tankards, measures, plates, beakers to jugs, stirrup cups, loving cups, coffee/wine goblets etc. Always, there seems to be a story attached to the item. For example:

Tankards: They have a wide range of tankards from a mini (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz), which also teams up as measure/christening mug, depending on design, right up to a full one pint tankard. Designs of handles for large tankards can be seen in fig. 19

One of their most popular tankards is the glass-bottomed King's Shilling Tankard. This dates from the times of the Press Gangs, when 'recruiting officers' would drop a shilling in the beer of unsuspecting clients of the Inns. If the customer finished the beer, he was regarded as 'accepting the King's Shilling' and therefore was press ganged into the service of the King. The glass base gave the clients of the inn an opportunity to check



Cambridge



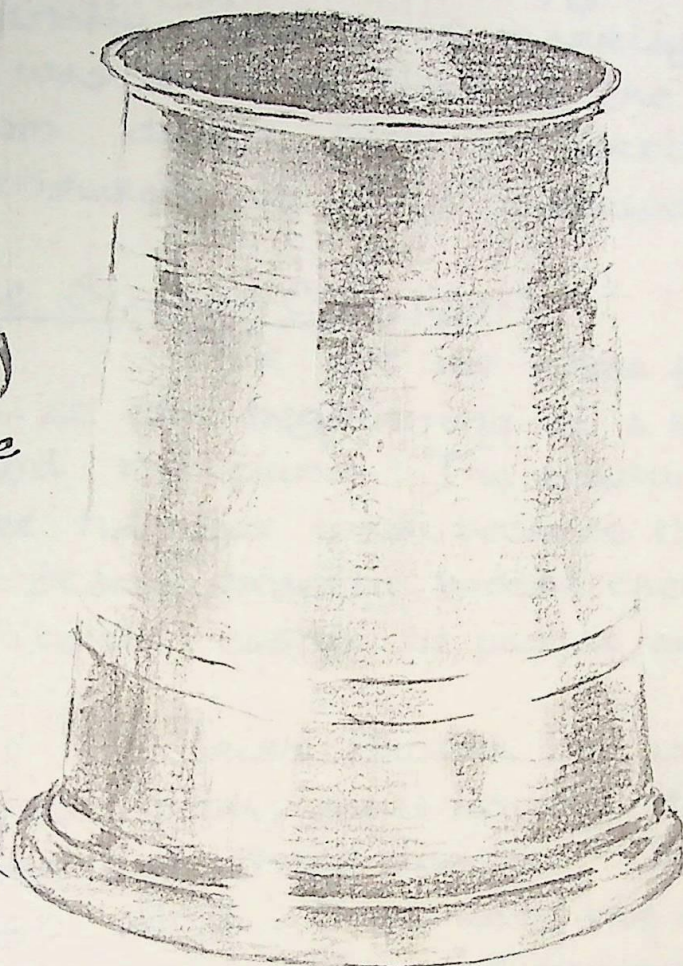
Lion



Gibraltar.



Wellington



Basic Tankard Body
plus selection of handles
fig. 19

that their beer had been "contaminated" with the King's Shilling.

The Loving Cup (fig 20)

This could be compared with the two handled cup in fig 11. This was originally used in a marriage ceremony. It was believed that if the bride and groom drank from it, fertility would be ensured in their married life.

The Stirrup Cup (fig 21.)

This got its name from being used at the beginning of a hunt to pass around the punch. The reason for the three handles was, because the horses would not stand exactly beside each other, the cup could easily be passed around.

Irish Pewter Ltd is a very much go-ahead firm, continuously designing and trying out these designs. One particular design which I admire, not only in appearance but for its ingenuity, is the Irish Coffee Goblet. This is so designed that various sections of the cup can be used for measuring the ingredients needed. Also while one's coffee remains piping hot the stem remains cool. A touch of humour is added, with an etching called 'the twisted man' on the cup.

Etching plays an important role now in the life of Irish Pewter. Family crests are a very popular etching at the moment, on tankards. It is also in great



Georgian Tankard.

*Loving Cup
fig. 20*



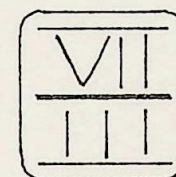
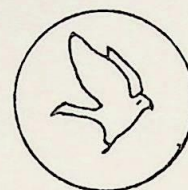
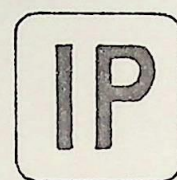
*Stirrup Cup
fig. 21.*

demand for presentations and commemorative occasions.

Touchmark:

The Irish Pewter touchmark consists of three symbols.

- (i) Initial
- (ii) The Merlin crest, which is a symbol of the area.
- (iii) The date in Roman numerals:



Having written this thesis I
have to agree with something I once read
- 'Pewee - an agate metal'.

Throughout the decades it has
continued and it has always fitted in
with the life of the time. It fascinated
me to watch the roles which pewee had
to play - one time the possession of the elite,
to keep an everyday item and finally in the
present day a combination of the two; a
collectable item but also an object which is
used in the home.

Many people helped me in writing
this thesis.

Bill Clancy, John Power Ltd.
Paddy Collins, Mullingar Pewee Ltd.
Michael Kenny, National Museum of Ireland.

To them, and everyone else who
helped me, I give my thanks.

Michael Kenny

Chapter 5

Summary & Conclusions

Having written this thesis I
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Throughout the decades it has
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Many people helped me in writing
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Séan Cleary. Irish Pewter Ltd.

Paddy Collins. Mullingar Pewter Ltd

Michael Kenny. National Museum of Ireland.

To them, and everyone else who
assisted me, I offer my thanks.

Marcella Keane

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