

ALE JUGS OF THE 19TH CENTURY

This is a fairly dull subject with little research found anywhere, very few Ale Jugs are found for sale, they sell inexpensively, are rarely collected, and about which there is very little information.

However they are really a quite handsome piece of everyday pewter used to serve the thousands of social tavern drinkers mainly in the 1800s era of Victorian prosperity (though starting in this form, likely in Georgian times – George III perhaps).

How does prosperity show itself?

Likely the English Ale jug in Victorian times had size – many were quarts or bigger – yes, others are found but then they are often personalised ones, and owned by individuals whose engraved initials or coats of arms adorn them.

As the Scots were still drinking from their ½ pint measures and less (down to ¼ gill) the English were into Half gallons and more! Maybe the English drank Ale and the Scots drank spirit – but who really now knows? (or cares?)

Here follows examples of a few Ale Jugs found now – some with private collectors and the odd one from www.pewtersellers.com and www.handmkashden.co.uk. And Peter R G Hornsby – Pewter of The Western World ,1600-1850.

Sadly there are no conclusions to be reached, no start, no finish, no definite popular size, only a few with maker's names. This is, if anything - a small symptom of prosperity, in English history, mostly in the 19th century. A very commonplace everyday utilitarian piece of pewter that served the community well , but that even the makers thought little of! (perhaps????)

The unlidded style of ale jug, is far more widely collected and there are more to be found.

Anyone, with more helpful information, is welcome to inform this website and such information will likely be added to it the following six monthly (approx) review.

The first four Ale Jugs are summarised in the table below and the illustrations that follow –

Lidded Ale Jugs

Jug no	Height table to open jug rim in inches	Capacity full to brim in ml./fl ozs	Weight In grams	Marks
1	6.75	2890....101.7	1812	None
2	7.75	2650....93.27	1824	None
3	7.0	2300....80.10	1494	JOC (owner initials to the front)
4	5.75	1180....41.53	1128	<i>Cast Pewter</i> – to the right of the handle – incuse.

1 fluid ounce = 28.413ml. – thus 1.2.3. measurements/capacity is peculiar and maybe the jugs were not filled to the brim, certainly none of them leaked.

The writer was perplexed by number one as it had no neck. With no neck band you can only fill to the brim – but this was 5 imperial pints? What sort of measure is that? The Palmette thumbpiece, open and solid chair back thumbpieces, all speak of the second and third quarters of the 1800s (1825-1875).

As above number one



As above number two



As above number three



As above number four, a flat but double raised, lidded Jug.



Lidded 'ale' jug c1790-1820 – “J * HOLT”

Delightful colour, 8.25” overall height, and base diameter of 4.25”, weighs about 3lbs 10oz. Holds a wine half-gallon, which is unusual for this type of vessel which are often of ale capacity. Distinctive thumb piece, and ownership lettering. 18th century Bristol pewterers favoured wine capacity e.g. all Bristol dome-lid tankards are wine capacity. They also tend to use punched lettering rather than engraved on hollow ware – this jug has ‘J * HOLT’ punched in large letters on rim. Hence it is probable that this jug is Bristol made.



Lidded Ale Jug of good quality. This is engraved to the front for the owner 'Arthur E Fassridge' with a pot touch of the maker John Warne (OPM4968) of London a pewterer from 1796. An attractive lidded ale jug with inside sieve before the spout, strong thumb piece nice handle and heavy base. This stands over 5" tall with a foot rim diameter of 2 7/8" widest point from tip of spout to back of handle of about 6" and weighs 1lb 6 ozs.

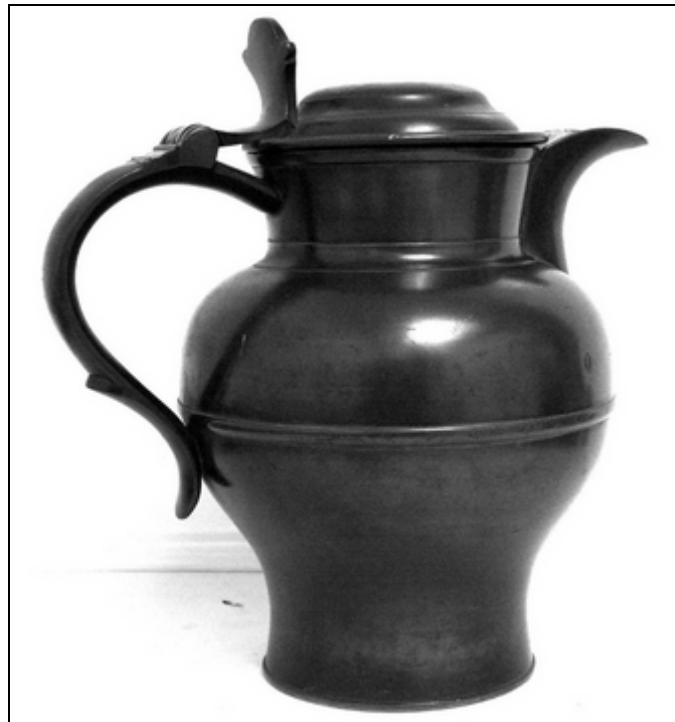




A Flat lidded Ale Jug, open back thumb piece, maker's name to under lid, small drilled hole in lid (but why?)



From www.pewtersellers.com – the only lidded Jug shown on their website and described as follows (edited and shown as sold) – unblemished example, with minimal wear c1850-70. The original 'grille' behind the spout remains intact. No marks except *FFC* engraved in large letters under the base. Medium-grey lustrous original surface patina. 7¾" high to rim, and 9¾" overall.



From www.handmkashden.com – the only lidded ale jug shown on their website and described (edited) as follows (this also is shown as sold) - *A Large Ale Jug of usual form with solid chairback thumbpiece. Excellent colour. Circa 1790. Height 8 ¾".*

The above two reputable pewter dealers then have differing dates for this style and this type of thumbpiece. Not pointing to either being right or wrong but it does just show how little knowledge there is for certain about these pieces.



The next four illustrations are taken from *Pewter of The Western World: 1600-1850*

by Peter R G Hornsby

This first one he calls a form of the 'Oxford' Ale measure. Actually used for Cider, Ale or Wine this was made by Charles Bentley in the 19th century and stands 8" high (assume then it is marked).



The second one following with the open chair back type of thumbpiece he dates to c1790 – the unusual feature which does not show up well here is a hinged lid to the spout.



The third one below is unusual in having a flat base , said to be used on ships, c1840



The fourth and last illustrated by Peter Hornsby (page 235 illus 786-789) is to be the American equivalent attributed to Boardman at 10 ¼” high is of a 3 quart capacity.



This form of Jug was really surprisingly not popular enough for the James Yates successors to bother reproducing in the catalogues found for the period 1900 to about 1983

Only this one example was found and here as you can see it is called a “water jug” and produced some time from 1960-1972 –

