

GLASS BOTTOMED MUGS & TROPHY TANKARDS

Glass bottom pots in Silver appear with the rococo style of design towards the middle of the 1700s. Pewter examples perhaps followed and are known about c1780. There is evidence that suggests the pewter types were first made in the West Midlands. A Shrewsbury example is known of with a crowned WR verification mark.

A rereading of British Pewter states that fashion or necessity due to the price of tin created the unlidded market in 1780.

Glass bottom tavern pots (or mugs) are readily found in antique shops, fairs and car boot sales.

Many were made in the early and middle twentieth century as the glass bottom allowed easy advertising aimed at those who frequented pubs, bars, and inns.

In the 19th century (say 1860 onwards) this was also a feature of the Trophy tankard or two handled Trophy cup. It may have kept the price down or it may have been fashionable. These were well made, usually specifically engraved. Many a collector has picked up an impressive lidded tankard only to discover its late 19th century purpose as a trophy clearly marked on it. A large maker of these was James Dixon of Sheffield - a new article on whom is featured this year in this website's Makers & Marks section.

Of the various quirky reasons given for glass bottoms only two now seem reasonable.

Firstly silver smiths introduced glass bottoms to reduce the value of silver used whilst giving an interesting and appealing (at that time) appearance.

Secondly they could have been introduced to allow clients to see the quality of the product being drunk more clearly. Sediment unpleasant to drinkers - could be easily seen!

Elsewhere is recorded a pewterer's (Ingram & Hunt) petty cash book entry referring to the purchase of glass bottoms giving proof of their use before 1807. The I&H hallmarks do not define the date as they were used by the firm and their successors from at least 1770 to 1837.

A verification mark as referred to in the first paragraph would more likely indicate before 1800 though it has been recorded that such a mark was used up until 1825 in Shrewsbury.

Three Wm Ban(c)ks pots found with said hallmarks were likely to have been made in Bewdley between 1767 and 1793. The half pint of the three has a similar (but not identical) handle to those used by Samuel Harrop of Shrewsbury whose mark has also been found on a glass bottomed mug, as shown below.



Although he died in 1779 it cannot be certain it was made before then, as it is not known if his successors continued to use his marks. (Although they did have their own which they used on plates).

So a reasonable conclusion could be that Glass Bottomed Pewter Mugs first appeared in the West Midlands, before 1780, and there is no reason to assume they did not appear before or at the same time as the use in Silver.

Website readers with old, and marked Glass Bottom Mugs might like to share any interesting pieces or unusual information by contacting this website.



Trevor Moore – in another article on this website writes -

What about all these stories of glass bottomed tankards? The most related story is that of the King's shilling paid to recruits for the Navy as a signing-on bounty. Press gangs tricked men into accepting the shilling by passing the coin to them in a pot of ale and when drunk to the bottom the man was deemed to have accepted the shilling and Navy service. Thus using a glass bottomed pot was a protection from such a trick as the shilling would be seen before the ale was consumed. Another story is the ability to secretly observe the movement of other persons in the pub who may be thieves, press gangs, ladies, or just unwanted friends whilst pretending to be drinking but looking out of the glass bottom at the same time!

These stories are still upheld today and often used in the commercial marketing of modern glass bottom pewter mugs. However, the most likely reason, albeit not as exciting as the myths, are that in the old

days the clarity of the ale was usually a good test of the quality and seeing that the ale was free from various dregs, hence the glass bottom; and this was before the introduction of all glass mugs. But don't just believe me as I still prefer the story of the King's Shilling – let us keep our British heritage! Or is that really fiction?

A reader advises that this story arises from men being so recruited into the Army - the Navy recruitment we are told was by being pressed. Either way this has been a popular story.

There is a scarcity of old pewter mugs with a glass bottom that also have a verification mark to authenticate their use in a pub. Many appear to have been for domestic and private use although the owners may well have used them in their local pub. I think that a publican would be wary of using too many glass bottomed pewter mugs and measures for his every day trade because of the strong likelihood of breakage of the glass. I must add that many old pewter mugs of quart and pint sizes with glass bottoms were presented as sports and other memorial prizes and this can also be an interesting area for the collector.

Example 1.

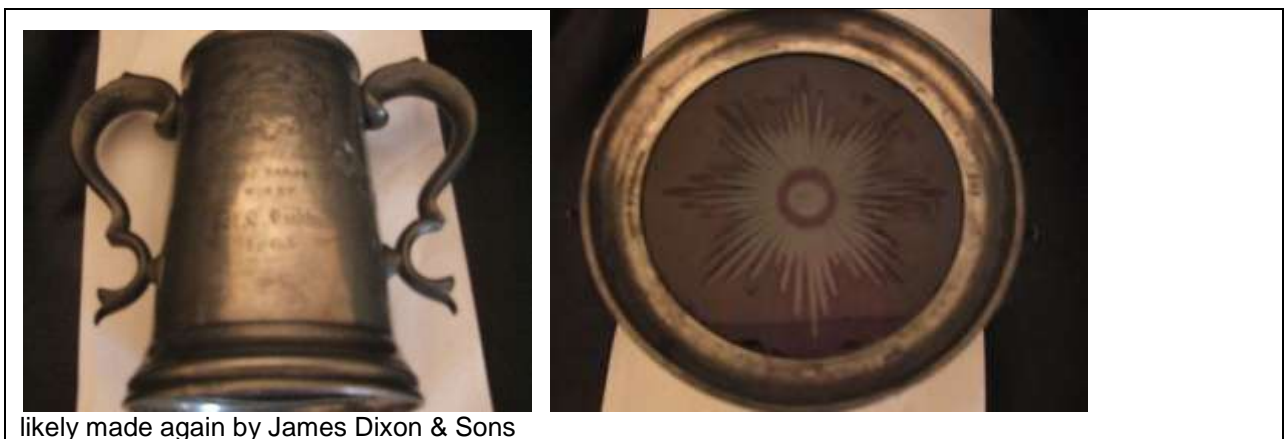


- ROUNDHEAD PEWTER - GLASS BOTTOMED MUG / TANKARD - first half of the 20th Century? (said to be - Roundhead pewter. Trademark used by Samuel Groves of Birmingham England between 1922 and the 1950's.)

Example 2 - JAMES DIXON AND SONS 1851 PEWTER LIDDED TANKARD WITH RUBY RED GLASS BASE



Example 3 -



likely made again by James Dixon & Sons

**1860/65 PEWTER TANKARD old glass bottomed tankard - Strangers Race. Won By C.Gibbs 1865
.....It is 7" in high. 8" 1/2 wide**

Example 4



Pewter trophy tankard for the 1883 Trinity College Oxford Regatta Scratch Fours. Engraved with the Trinity college crest and names the crew as:F.E. Freese (Bow) F. Dun (2) J.W. Young (3) A.R. Paterson (Str.)A.E. Field (Coxon.) The glass bottom tankard measures 19cm in total height and the diameter of the base is 11cm.

Example 5 - Presented to Brig Jat Sharp By WO & SGTS Mess School of Artillery Larkhill 1966 On the base its marked English Pewter Made in England 154 Size Aprox 5 1/2inch Tall & 4inch Diameter



Example 6 - Old Pint tankard with glass bottom, etched with Hoover Limited Football Contest 1938. And engraved with name of player (perhaps) to the front.



Example 7 - Offered in 2011 by www.pewtersellers.com

Half pint glass-bottom mug by Henry Jones, Birmingham c1839-60 (PS5304) his hallmarks to left of handle. These are scarce because once the glass is broken, it is almost impossible to replace with a watertight seal. The glass is intact on this mug. Provenance: Hornsby collection label under base. 4" overall height with base diameter of 3½".



Example 8 - Half Pint Glass Bottom unmarked



Example 9 - said to be -
Antique Liberty Tudric Arts & Crafts pewter 19th hole golf tankard golfing
1910



Example 10 - Marked, "English Pewter" over "Liberty & Co." "Made in England"
and "01352" opposite. 4 3/4" h, 3" mouth, 4" base.



Example 11 - "COHEN'S FOR SCRAP"*On the bottom there are markings*

English Pewter Made in England" Glass bottom is marked "COHEN'S FOR SCRAP 600" 1 Pint

Capacity 4" Base ; 5" High - idea of a date could be before 1945.....



Example 12 -



Retailed by - ROWELL of Oxford and marked by them as well as by Dixons

Example 13 -



19thC glass bottom pewter 1 quart by James Dixons & Sons Sheffield

Example 14 -



THE GLASS BOTTOM ON THIS TANKARD IS IN PERFECT CONDITION. MARKED TUDRIC, 0334 ON BASE RIM.

This implies it was made about 1904

Example 15 - VICTORIAN PEWTER GLASS BOTTOM TANKARD-WINCHESTER COLLEGE BOAT CLUB 1878

A superb Victorian pewter tankard with a hinged lid and glass bottom by James Dixon & Sons. Interesting and finely executed inscription to the front with a wonderful crest of Winchester College. Inscription says: Winchester College Boat Club Junior Pairs A.C.Hill - BOW G.E.Paul - STR H.G.Le Gros - COX Octr 1878 Measures 16.25cm tall.



Example 16 - the seller thinks it about 1850 but perhaps it is a later and better piece by the Britannia Metal Mug makers of Sheffield or Birmingham. The verification mark is interesting and is for Birmingham and an experienced collector thinks this style is more likely from around the 1870s.



Examples 17 – Irish



Two Irish glass bottoms, the Concave to the right is by Merry with typical Dublin punched name. The handle of truncated cone makes it a Munster product. This was bought in Cork and probably dates to circa 1900.

Irish glass bottoms are not common.

Value – they really are not worth much. The examples from the 20th century by and large sell for less than £30 with most under £20 and quite a number below £10.

The Irish are in nice condition and scarce and are likely worth more to a collector.

Trophies often sell in the £70-£80 region though if there is interest in the school, club, association, or a name on the side - they can bring as much as £200.

Trophies might be serious but frankly some of the advertising is amusing, and as such perhaps collectable!

Beware – This collector has come across badly cracked glass pieces, bases replaced with window glass and inserted back in - with all manner of stuff included - such as even window mastic and mortar. Pieces need to be good or of special interest to have any value.

For any real value then look at those in the article shown – but even there they rarely bring as much as a Trophy when that is wanted for a reason.