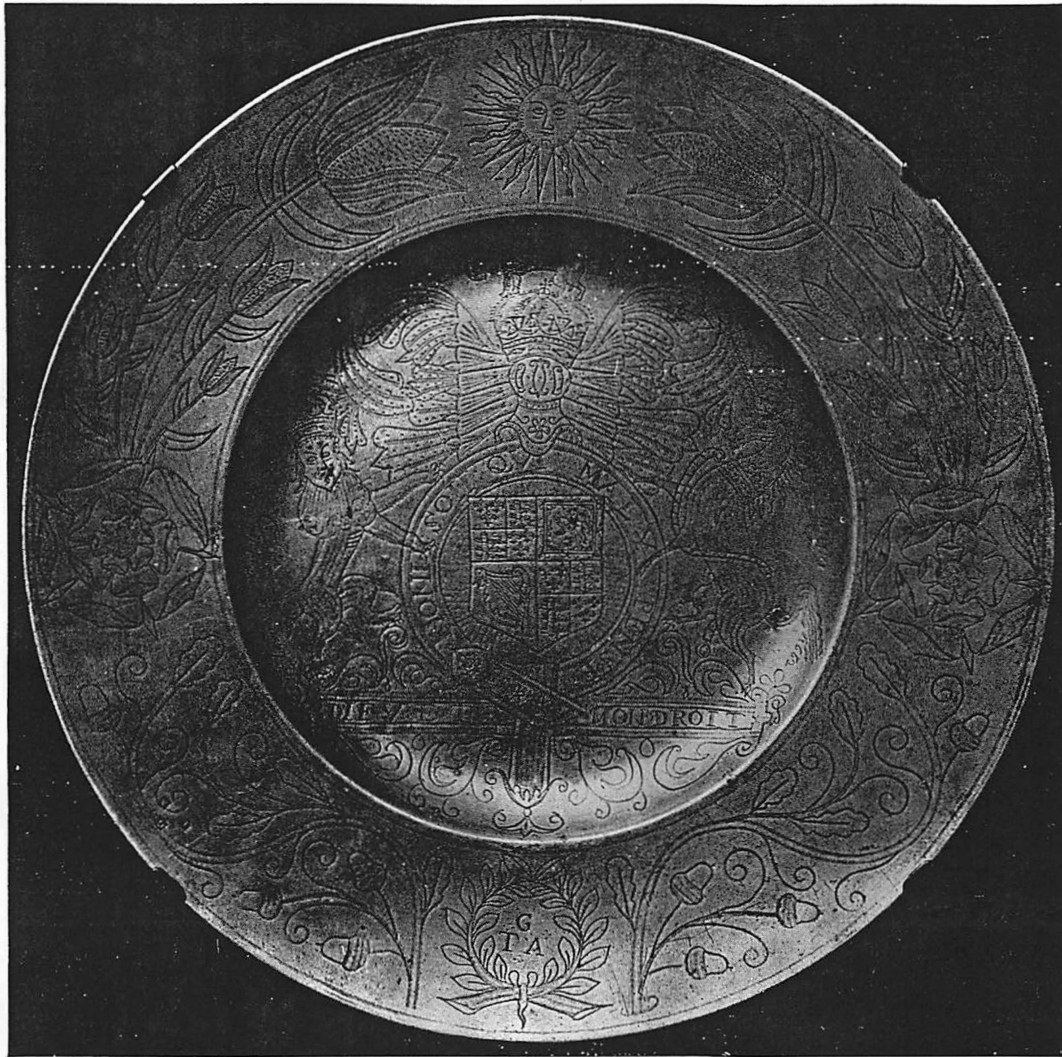


PEWTER 'RESTORATION' CHARGERS

By CAPT. A. V. SUTHERLAND-GRAEME, F. S. A.



NO. 1.—PEWTER CHARGER, 22 IN. DIAM.: THE CENTRE ENGRAVED WITH THE ARMS OF CHARLES II. (AND DATED 1662); THE BORDER ENGRAVED WITH OAK, ROSES AND TULIPS, THE SUN IN GLORY AND THE INITIALS T.G.A.

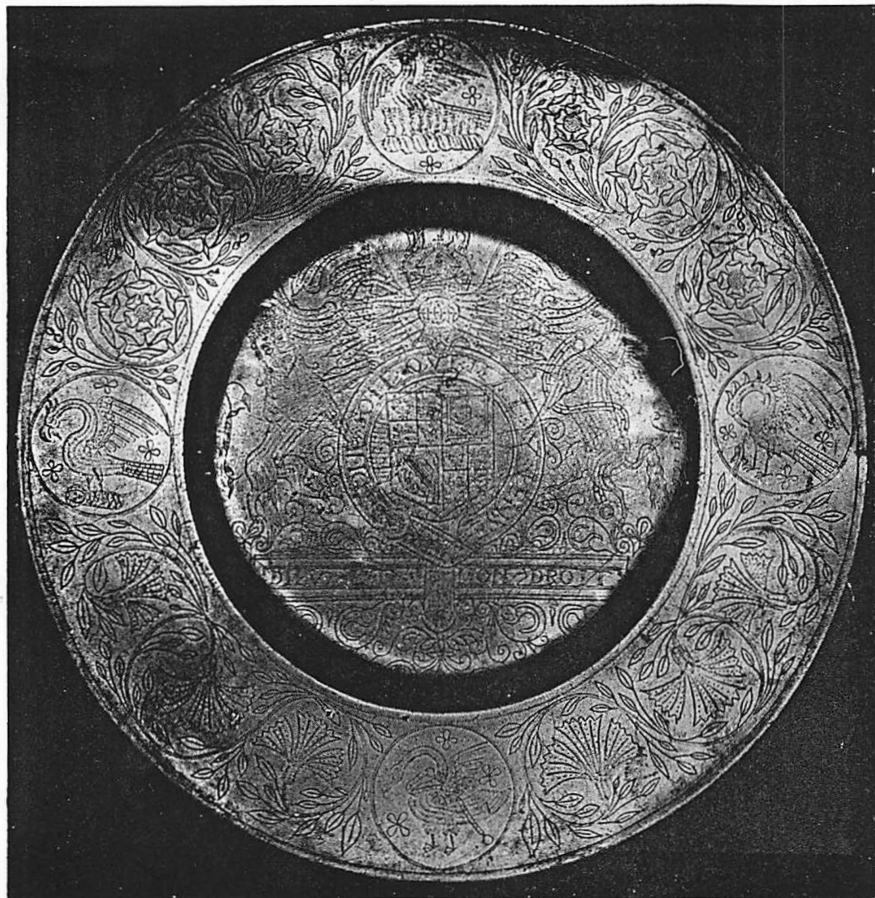
last five years, of a further eight of these chargers has prompted me to undertake further investigations in an attempt to provide a reasonable solution to what had hitherto been a mystery or, rather, two mysteries, namely: what historical event do these pieces commemorate?, and why were they made—as appears to be the case—only in pewter?

There is, unfortunately, little doubt that certain of the eight newcomers are, to put it bluntly, 'fakes.' Pieces such as these are valuable, and where high prices rule, there is, alas, the incentive to produce clever imitations. The seven examples illustrated here have been selected from the complete list of fifteen, and are, in my opinion, entirely genuine, either by reason of an authenticated record of possession extending back for many years, or because of some feature which is not, and probably will never be, reproducible by artificial means, but which, for obvious reasons, is best left unrecorded.

The same could undoubtedly be said of some of the remaining eight examples; they do not appear here either because they are similar in all essential features to one or other of those shown or because satisfactory photographs of them were not obtainable; the remainder are, in my opinion—and I stress that reservation—not genuine.

Turning to the examples illustrated, with two exceptions (Nos. vi and vii) their diameters vary between 20 and 22 inches and all possess the wide rim characteristic of mid-seventeenth-century dishes. The two smaller ones are each 16½ inches in diameter, with proportionately narrower rims.

IN THE CONNOISSEUR for June 1935 I made passing reference to certain large chargers which have been supposed to commemorate the Restoration of Charles II. At that time I was aware of seven examples, all of which had one feature in common—an engraving of the Royal Arms within the Garter, completely covering the well, together with the inscription 'VIVAT REX CAROLUS SECUNDUS BEATI PACIFICI 1662' (in one instance 1661). In referring to these pieces I pointed out that connexion with the Restoration would be difficult to establish, as that event occurred, not in 1662, but in 1660. No further information was forthcoming at that time and the matter remained in abeyance for a considerable period; but the 'discovery,' during the

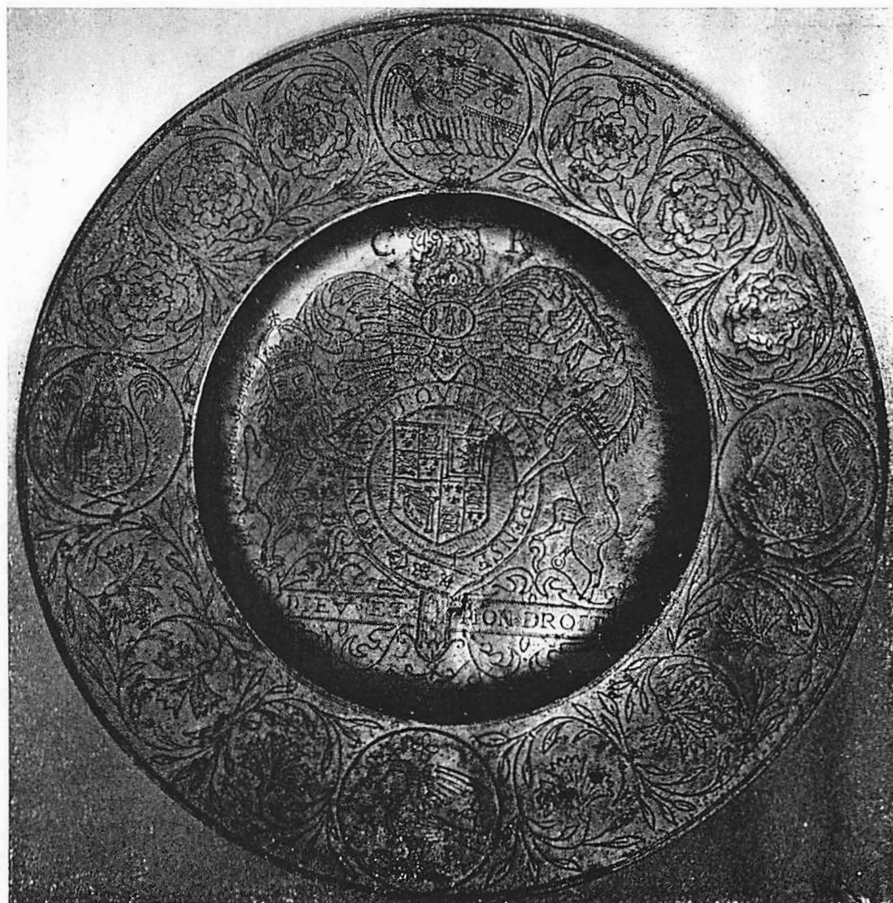


NO. II.—PEWTER CHARGER ENGRAVED WITH ROYAL ARMS & SYMBOLIC BIRDS IN ROUNDELS : SEE NO. VIII

The chief interest of all these chargers lies in the engraving; in every case the Armorial covers the whole well; in No. iv the 'VIVAT' inscription appears in large Roman lettering round the centre of the rim, whilst in No. vi it is contained within a wreath, the date in this case being 1661; in all the other examples the inscription is engraved in contemporary lettering round the booge. The label 'DIEU ET MON DROIT' is placed horizontally beneath the Garter, except in No. vi, where it appears in the booge.

The designs engraved upon the rims differ considerably; the engraver evidently allowed free play to his fancy, using floral decoration, symbolic birds, cherubs and figures; here may be seen the Phoenix, emblem, in this case, of the Restoration; the chained Swan, the Pelican, the Eagle and Child (or 'Bird and Bantling') and the Dove and

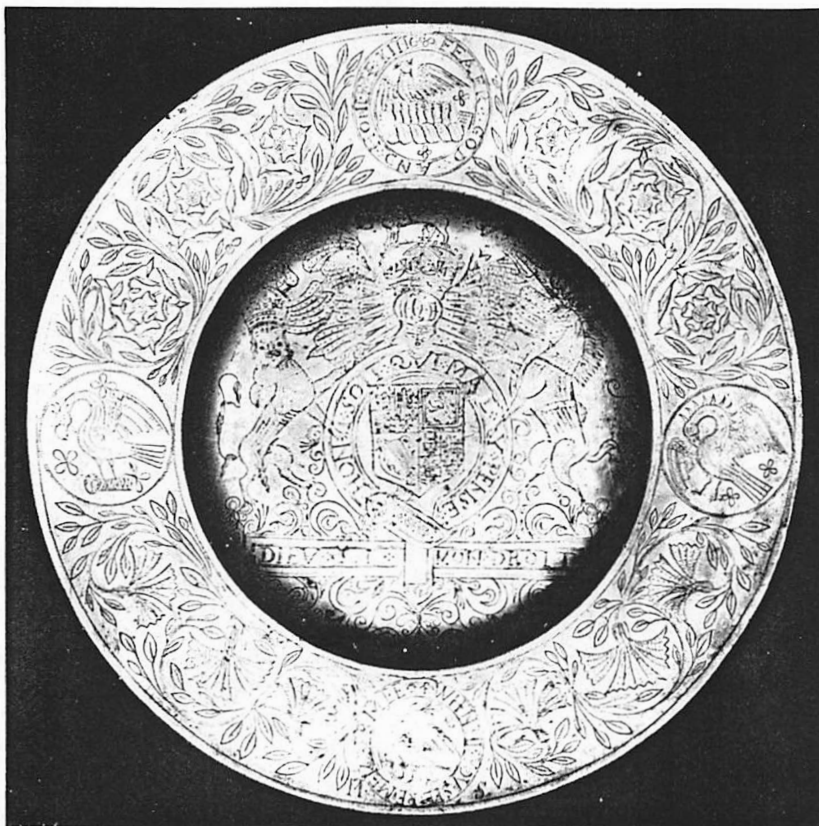
NO. III.—PEWTER CHARGER ENGRAVED WITH ROYAL ARMS, ETC. : 20½ IN. : PROBABLY BY WILLIAM PETTIVER



Olive branch, which may be regarded as representing virtues. In No. iii portraits appear, evidently those of Charles II and his Queen (Catherine of Braganza); whilst in No. iv the king's bust is placed at the bottom of the rim, between the initials C.R.² No. v shows upper and lower roundels encircled by the mottoes 'FEAR GOD AND HONOR THE KING' and 'WHEN THIS YOU SEE REMEMBER ME' respectively. Why were these chargers made and what do they commemorate? The solution of the problem obviously lies in the interpretation of the 'VIVAT' inscription, particularly of the words 'BEATI PACIFICI,' in conjunction with the date 1662 (or 1661). The plain translation of these words is 'Blessed peacemakers,' but they are undoubtedly taken from the Latin Vulgate, where they appear in St. Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount—'BEATI PACIFICI (quoniam ipsi filii Dei vocabuntur),' Blessed are the peacemakers; the word 'ARE' in the English version is printed in italics, indicating that the equivalent 'SUNT' does not appear in the Latin original.



No. IV.—PEWTER CHARGER, 2½ IN. DIAM. : ENGRAVED WITH ROYAL ARMS : THE KING'S BUST IS SEEN IN LOWER RIM BETWEEN INITIALS AND DATE 1662 : SEE ALSO NO. III



No. V.—PEWTER CHARGER ENGRAVED WITH ROYAL ARMS IN CENTRE : RIM ENGRAVED WITH FLORAL BORDER & MOTTOES AND SYMBOLIC BIRDS ENCLOSED IN ROUNDELS

In what connexion is the phrase used and to whom does it refer?

Perhaps the outstanding event of the year was the marriage of the King; it had a political aspect in that it resulted in the founding of this country's oldest alliance—with Portugal. This result was popular, securing as it did an ally on the Continent; and was regarded as making for the peace and security of Europe. Further evidence in favour of this solution is to be found in the portraits of the King and Queen, principal agents in this pacific settlement, in No. iii.

As regards the date 1661 (No. vi), this is, I think, capable of easy solution.

The marriage ceremony took place on May 21st, 1662, but the formal betrothal was much earlier; and, in fact, as early as July 1661 the King was writing to Catherine as 'My Lady and Wife'; the matter was settled, so far as temporal affairs were concerned, in that year, though the actual ceremony took place in the next. Various other suggestions as to the *raison d'être* of these chargers have been advanced from time to time, but space does not permit of reference to them; all were lacking in historical evidence and none was so satisfying as that set forth above. I may add that the Records of the Pewterers' Company throw no light upon the subject, so that no affair of civic or guild pride was concerned. For whom were they made, and why only in pewter? These questions may, I think, be considered together. From the point of view of psychology I imagine it would not be far wrong to say that not so long ago outward and visible signs of popular enthusiasm were more common in the middle and lower strata of society than in the upper; tangible souvenirs of great occasions, such as jubilees and coronations, were more likely to be found in the homes of peasants than in the mansions of peers. Going back two hundred and fifty years, enthusiasm for the Restoration (which doubtless also had its place in the celebration we are investigating), and for the King's marriage was more likely to manifest itself amongst those who would not normally look beyond pewter for their garnishing than amongst their more dignified and less ebullient superiors who used silver plate. It must be remembered that a great change had recently swept over the country. The austere and puritanical decade had passed away, and, in the atmosphere of freedom from constraint which succeeded it,

who could wonder that the people vented their feelings of enthusiasm and recorded them in tangible form?

One other point remains to be considered.

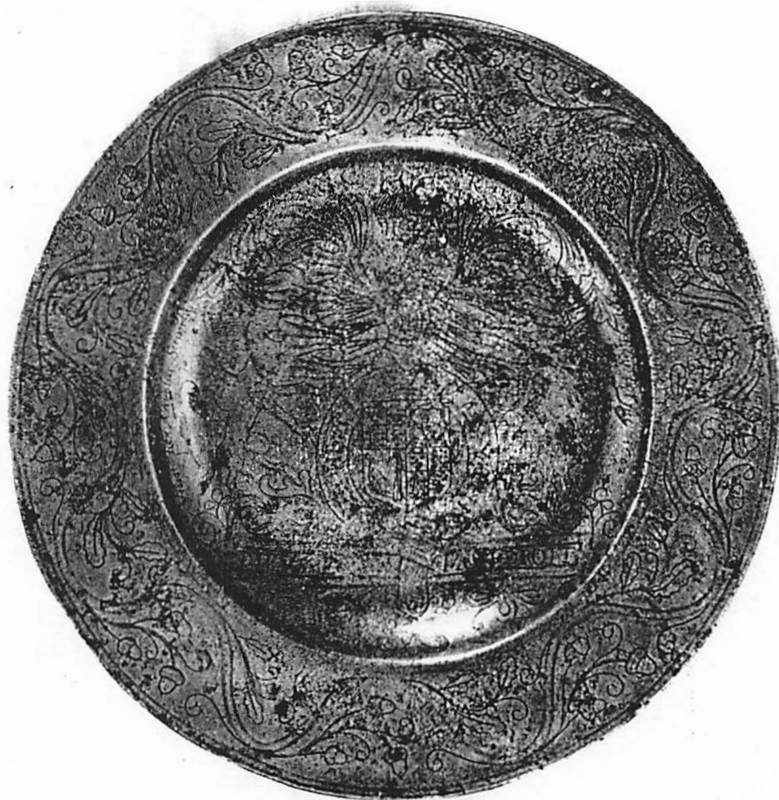
Were these chargers made and engraved specially as souvenirs or were they already existing in plain form and engraved subsequently?

I do not think it is possible to give a general answer. They were undoubtedly made during the middle period of the Seventeenth Century, but whether before or after the Restoration cannot now be said. With three exceptions the makers' touches are so detrited that they supply no guide, and of those three, two do not appear upon the touch plates preserved by the Pewterers' Company, signifying either that the maker was not a London man, or that he died before he could obey the company's order to re-strike his touch after the Fire of 1666, which destroyed Pewterers' Hall and the existing touch plates. The other touch is that of a pewterer whose name is not yet known.

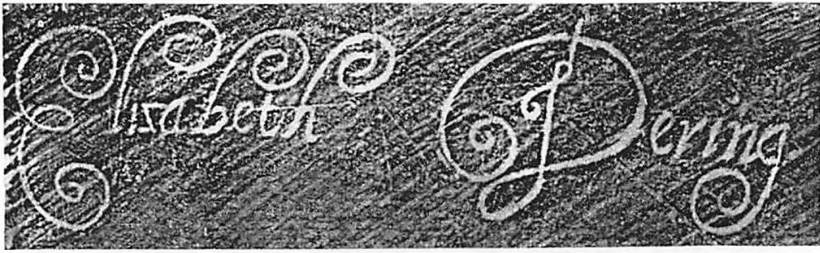
There is, however, one example (No. i) which does give us some information. On the lower part of the rim will be seen the initials of the owners, T^GA, within a wreath; I have frequently referred to these triangles of initials in former articles, and it suffices here to say that T is the initial of the husband's Christian name, A is that of his wife's and G the surname. In course of furnishing their new home, a couple about to marry would lay in a 'garnish' of pewter plate, and it was the common practice to record in this manner their ownership of it; so common, in fact, that the pewterers had a complete set of initial *punches* for this purpose. In this case, some 7 inches to the left of the engraved initials, the same initials will be observed, but applied with a punch. Closer examination will show, moreover, that the 'wriggle' decoration passes across the top portion of the initial G, proof that it was applied *after* the charger was ordered from the pewterer and stamped by him; the engraver subsequently brought the same initials into his scheme of decoration. On the other hand, the motto 'WHEN THIS YOU SEE,' etc., suggests (as in the case of the plate illustrated in *THE CONNOISSEUR* for December, 1941) that the charger was a gift from one partner to the other before their marriage; and if that were so, it is reasonable to suppose that the whole decoration was carried out at the time the piece was ordered.



No. VI.—ENGRAVED PEWTER CHARGER WITH ROYAL ARMS & OAK MOTIF BORDER : 16½ IN.



No. VII.—PEWTER CHARGER ENGRAVED WITH ROYAL ARMS & OAK MOTIF BORDER : 16½ IN.



NO. VIII.—NAME OF A FORMER OWNER ENGRAVED ON THE BACK OF CHARGER NO. II

A final point of interest is that upon the backs of Nos. ii and iv appear the names 'ELIZABETH DERING' and 'HENRIETTA FAYRWETHER CHARING CROSSE' respectively (Nos. viii and ix). The script in the first case is distinctly good and is of the period, but the other is crude and was probably added at a much later date. It would be difficult to hazard a guess as to the connexion between these ladies and the chargers on which their names appear. They may, of course, have been the original owners, but I think it is more likely, especially in the second case, that their possession was of a later period; in that case, too, the words have a ring of the tavern keeper about them. However that may be, I do not consider that their names have any bearing upon the main subject.

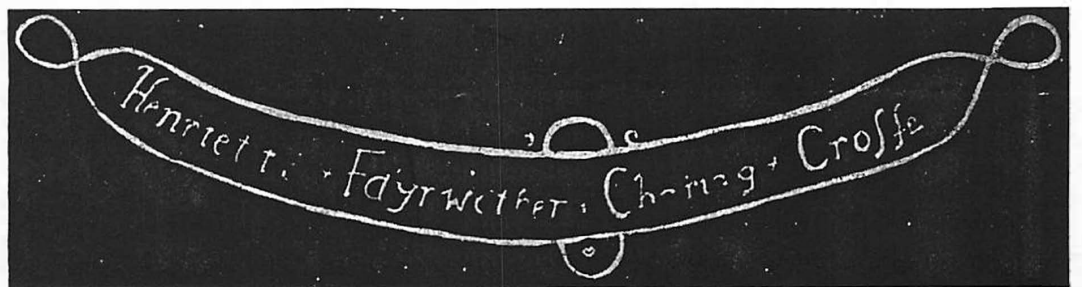
So far, except as regards the subjects depicted, I have said nothing about the actual engraving. As to whether base metal takes kindly to extraneous decoration, there are two completely opposed schools of thought; one side holds that some enlivening of an otherwise dull expanse of grey metal is necessary, and the other, whilst admitting that much of the decorative work of the Continental craftsmen is finely designed and beautifully executed, contends that beauty in pewter is sufficiently marked by purity of form and outline and correct proportion as between mass and detail. As we are not here concerned with questions of principle, I would merely give my opinion: that, if decoration was demanded, the English pewterers of the Seventeenth Century—that high-water period of their craft—seem to have evolved a technique which harmonizes completely with the simplicity of their products. By that I do not mean that the standard of workmanship is high, for indeed the engraver of precious metal produced results of a finer order, rendered necessary no doubt by the greater importance of the medium in which he was working, and of the client whose order he was executing, as well, perhaps, as by the greater hardness of the

metal itself; but that the workmanship is of that 'homely' quality which blends with pewter. Small errors, minor crudities, proclaim the human touch to a far greater extent than is to be found in the mathematical and more machine-like work of the higher grade craftsman.

The spelling in No. v, the upper and lower roundels out of plumb in No. iii, in which is also an heraldic error in connexion with the Unicorn—unforgivable, probably, if engraved upon a silver tankard—these cannot be considered out of place on the 'poor man's silver'; they are, as is the metal itself, essentially *of the people*. In the examples illustrated appear both 'wriggle' and line work. The former was produced by means of a flat tool working at an angle of 50 degrees and pressed forward with a regular rocking motion from side to side. Line work could be produced either by a sharp tool which, working like a plough, gouged out a minute sliver of metal as it moved, or by a punch used, continuously or intermittently, to form a line.

In conclusion, I would add a word of warning to all who are interested (and who is not?) in such tangible records of historic associations; it is prompted by the more recent appearance of further chargers of this type, but 'inspired' by other events of an eventful period, such as the Great Fire (1666) and the Revolution (1689); whilst I am not in a position to offer any opinion upon these pieces, their appearance, hard upon the evident success of the doubtful pieces already referred to, is, to say the least, suggestive, and I would counsel a very careful examination of any charger which purports to commemorate any of the many memorable events of the Seventeenth Century.

Nos. i and ii are the property of the Victoria and Albert Museum and No. vi belongs to the British Museum, to whose respective authorities I am indebted for permission to illustrate them. No. iv is in the collection of Mr. Geoffrey J. Gollin; No. v in that of Sir Henry White-Smith, C.B.E.; and No. vii in that of the Rev. Oscar E. Brooks, to all of whom my thanks are also due. No. iii is in my own collection.



NO. IX. LABEL ENCLOSING NAME AND ADDRESS OF A SOMETIME OWNER ENGRAVED ON THE BACK OF NO. IV