

Royal Portrait Spoons in Pewter

A Mystery Unexplained

BY R. F. MICHAELIS

THE questions which arise in connection with the types of pewter spoons under consideration here do not appear to have been dealt with by any previous writer on the subject, and the author has, therefore, ventured into the field not with the idea of being able to elucidate the mystery—for such it will prove to be—but to bring to the notice of collectors the anomalies which are evident, in the hope that publicity may induce someone with more knowledge or foresight to carry the investigation further.

Pewter articles which display royal portraits, in one form or another, have ever been the delight of collectors, and tankards of the late Stuart period with engraved portraits of William and Mary, or of Queen Anne, are among the great rarities of pewter to-day.

Similarly, pewter porringers containing medallions in the bowl, cast with portrait busts of William of Orange, or William and his Queen, are eagerly sought on both sides of the Atlantic.

It is, however, with the more plebeian article—the pewter spoon with royal portrait busts cast as part of the decoration of the handle—that I propose to deal here.

The earliest reign to be commemorated in this way is that of William of Orange, who, with Mary, daughter of James, Duke of York (afterwards James II), came to England in 1688 to claim the throne, firstly on behalf of Mary, as the elder daughter of the Catholic James II, but also with a strong personal claim, being himself a son of William II of Orange, and Mary, daughter of Charles I, Princess Royal of England.

William of Orange was crowned William III of England on 11th April, 1689, and his reign lasted until his death from a riding accident in 1702. Mary, who accepted the throne jointly with her husband, had died of smallpox in 1694. It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that spoons bearing *both* portraits would have been produced mainly over the five-year period 1689 to 1694, or very closely after the death of Mary, and are most likely to have been made at the outset of the reign to commemorate the popularity of the royal pair.

The portrayal of royalty in this way had not formerly been used as a means of loyal expression by the pewterers in England, and it is thought that some of the Dutch pewterers, who undoubtedly would have accompanied William of Orange to England, imported the idea from their own country. This is also evident from the portrait busts appearing in English commemorative porringers; hitherto such pieces had been produced only on the Continent, principally in Holland and France.

The spoon illustrated in Fig. I shows both William III and Mary, and, to confirm the attribution, the initials "W" and "M" are cast beneath the crown at the top of the handle. The spoon itself is of the type known to collectors as "Trifid," "Split end," or "Pied de Biche"—the latter term from its supposed likeness to the form of a hind's foot.

According to the late F. G. Hilton Price¹ this type came into fashion about the year 1663 and retained its popularity, with variations, to the reign of George I. This particular spoon bears, in the bowl, the small touchmark of its maker, David Heyrick (No. 269 on the London touchplate). David Heyrick was made "free" of his apprenticeship on the 28th September, 1676, and struck his mark (which includes the date '76) on the same day.

A feature to which particular attention is drawn is the inclusion of the initials "T.W." beneath a crown which are cast *in relief* on



Figs. I and II. William and Mary.

Figs. III, IV and V. Queen Anne.

Figs. I, II, IV and V, Collection Captain A. V. Sutherland Graeme.
Fig. III, Collection C. A. Peal.

the reverse of the broad end of the stem, immediately behind the royal portraits.

The significance of these initials is the problem which confronts the present writer. There is no doubt that a spoon mould, particularly of this decorative type, would have been an expensive item, and one is reluctant to jump to the conclusion that a pewterer would deface a mould for the benefit of one customer with these initials, who would require, at the most, probably only about three dozen spoons for normal purposes, even in a large household.

The inclusion of the crown indicates, perhaps, that "T.W." might have had some connection with the Royal family. There is, of course, the very vague possibility that the King may have commissioned a quantity of such spoons for presentation to a friend who had served him well in connection with his accession, but no name which links with the initials leaps to the mind.

That the initials are not those of the maker there can, in this case, be no doubt, for we know that David Heyrick was the maker.

An identical spoon is known, and this has all the appearance of having been cast in the same mould; this latter spoon also bears the crown and "T.W." on reverse, so we can trace at least two specimens. Surely the incidence of two examples still extant some two hundred and fifty years after manufacture is indicative of a larger quantity than would normally grace a household?

Who (or what) was "T.W."? These same initials, together with the crown, appear again on a different specimen of "Trifid" spoon in the collection of Capt. A. V. Sutherland Graeme. The latter spoon also bears a cast portrait bust on the face of the handle, but it is so defaced that we could not say with certainty that it is a royal portrait. The "T.W." and crown vary slightly in formation and are, undoubtedly, from a separately engraved mould from that which was used for the William and Mary specimens.

So much for "T.W."

At least a third William and Mary commemorative spoon mould was in existence, and an example from it is shown at Fig. II.

The portraits vary somewhat from those on the specimen in Fig. I, and the mould is possibly the work of a copyist who has certainly not been able to reproduce the lifelike features of the royal pair.

The maker's touch cannot be deciphered, but it is contained in a shield not unlike that used by Heyrick, and may well be by him.

The main feature of this specimen, however, is that it does not display any cast initials on the reverse.

If the portrayal of the sovereigns, William and Mary, indicates their popularity, with what esteem must Queen Anne have been held in the hearts of the populace? I have been able to reproduce at least six differing *genuine* specimens of "Trifid" spoons bearing

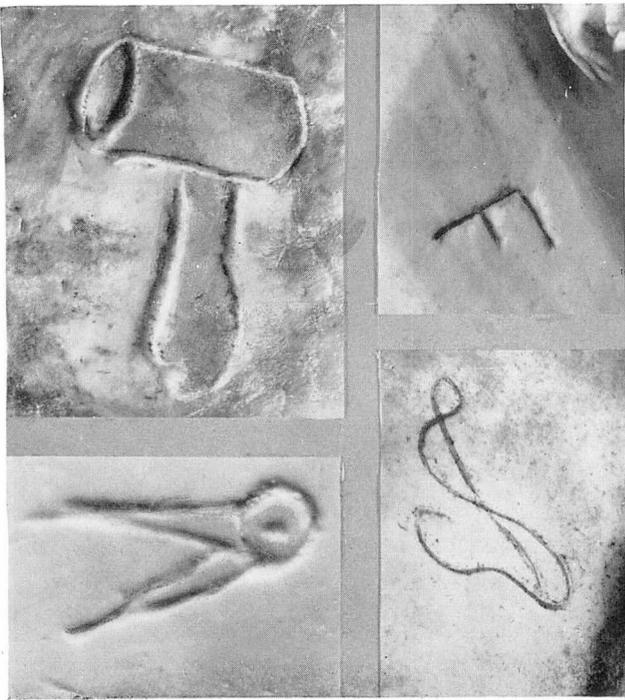


Fig. XII. Marks on Sèvres soft paste biscuit figures. The mark is the signature of the "repairer" and is to be found, incised, on the base. (a) *Top right*. Mark of Fernex (not Falconet as commonly believed). (b) *Bottom left*. Pair of Dividers: Mark of Duru. Publicly identified for the first time. (c) *Top left*. Mallet: Unidentified and unrecorded. (d) *Bottom right*. Mark of Bono. No previous public attribution has been made of this mark, and this identification is based on an autograph note, in the possession of the writer of this article, by the late Comte de Chavagnac.

For instance, "La Baigneuse," Fig. IX, is referred to as 1758. There is no doubt that it was first made in that year. It was a great success commercially and one would assume that it was repeated frequently. It is therefore unlikely that this particular copy was made in that year; it might have been made at any time within the next fifteen years or so.

MISCELLANEOUS POINTS FOR THE COLLECTOR

The projecting extremities of biscuit are frequently broken. The very delicacy of the work, and the distinctness of each detail, is liable to "catch" a careless duster and cause a break. A perfect major piece is rare.

This means that the collector cannot demand as high a standard of freedom from damage in biscuit as in decorated china; if he did, he would collect very little. Some people like to "make up" lost figures and so on. Personally, I think this is a mistake. The addition can always be seen: the new paste is never quite the same colour and texture as the old, and the repairing almost draws attention to the flaw. The old drill sergeants used to advise that, if one made a wrong movement at a ceremonial parade, it was wise to stand still and hope not to be noticed; movement was bound to attract attention. Repairing is like movement.

There is often a firing crack in the under side of the base, particularly in the large pieces. This is of no importance.

One small matter may be mentioned to help ascertain the date. The bases of the early pieces are either flat, of one piece, or "stepped" in two flat surfaces. Later the bases became more elaborate and broken up, so that a cross section is "wavy."

It is sometimes said that biscuit is found very rarely, that the total supply in England is minute, and that consequently it is unsuitable for collection. It is true that it is not as common as decorated Sèvres; the man who wants cups and saucers and similar small pieces of decorated ware can walk into twenty dealers in London alone and take his choice; and the man who wants elaborate "museum" pieces can find plenty to choose from at the biggest

dealers. But biscuit is not as rare as is sometimes alleged. The writer has seen, within a few months, three capital pieces on offer: "Pygmalion," "La Baigneuse," and "L'Amour Menaçant"—apart from more than a score of smaller pieces. And a certain amount of difficulty is a stimulant to the genuine collector.

Whether Sèvres soft paste biscuit appeals to any particular individual must depend on his aesthetic sense. If he does not care for it, there is no more to be said; but if he likes it, and wants to collect it, he will find that his hobby has three great advantages over any other usual ceramic collecting mania. Firstly, as I have tried to show, it is easy to be confident—and right—in determining the attribution of a particular piece. Secondly, the subject is small, some couple of hundred models made during a quarter of a century—so that it is easy to learn what to look for. Thirdly, the examples are inexpensive. The normal family's expenditure on cigarettes and flowers would build up a fund sufficient to make a start to a collection within a period of months, and when a good piece has been bought, it is as good as there is; no one, no matter how rich, can have a better copy. There must be few branches of ceramics so "democratic," in which the man of moderate means can make as good a collection as the wealthy man.



CUT-GLASS OF THE XVIIIth CENTURY

(Continued from page 167)

the turn of the century, however, was applied with the requisite restraint to maintain an artistic relationship with form; it was used to suggest, not to exploit, the inherent brilliance of the material, and it did so without in any way interrupting form.

Typical examples of cut-glass of this period are shown in Figs. III and IV. The double-ogee salts fashionable early in the XVIIth century had received some attention from the cutter; flutes, diamanting to the bowls, and scalloping to rims had been the usual *motifs*, and much the same decoration was given to the salts which superseded them, and which retained their popularity into the new century. These were the salts with round shallow and boat-shaped bowls usually set on an oval or rectangular base cut in flat facets. They resembled, on a miniature scale, the fruit bowls of the same period, and in some cases followed the same embellishments—for example, the turning over of the rim in a graceful flange, which was a feature of the bowls and salts of the Irish glasshouses.

They were cut in a variety of patterns. The specimen shown in Fig. IV has a notched rim below which is a border *motif* in shallow relief diamonds; broad flutes round the base of the bowl complete the body embellishments. The decoration is simple and effective, and in enhancing the brilliance of the glass by providing splashes of light, it does no more than relieve a possible monotony.

The oviform goblet shown in Fig. III is of the same period, but the cutting is more ambitious, though not to the point of over-emphasis. It displays the wide variety of cut effects then in the repertory of the cutter; flutes, fans, sprigs, circles, relief diamonds and fine diamonds, stars and pendent semi-circles are all blended in the specimen in logical relationship one with another to form a coherent design.

The specimen is also interesting in that it includes curves and circles in its many *motifs*. Incised curves are among the most difficult to execute, and are avoided by all but experienced cutters. They are made by turning the article *out of line* with the wheel while it is being cut, whereas all other cuts are formed with the specimen held *in line* with the edge of the cutting wheel. This applies to edge-flutes and hollows, which, though curved in outline, are considered straight cuts in the strict technique of cutting.

Usually curves of only fairly large radius are attempted, wheels of small diameter being used, to enable the craftsman to turn the article he is cutting more freely, and thus avoid waviness and irregularity. Irish craftsmen of the 1780-1825 period specialised in curved *motifs* of this description, and many fine examples are found on the decanters, bowls and jugs from the Waterford and Cork factories.

Irish cut-glass is typical of the style in which an agreeable harmony exists between form and decoration. Rarely is a genuine Irish specimen found in which one component is emphasised at the expense of another. If the article was cut at all, in most cases simple but effective *motifs* were employed. The Irish jugs shown in Fig. V illustrate this point clearly. Simple prismatic cutting on the neck, and hollows on the body of the specimen on the left, and pillar flutes on the jug on the right, furnish all the decoration required to make them attractive.

Fig. VI (a) (b) (c). The Queen Anne spoons of trifid type.

Fig. VII. In reverse.
Author's Collection.

her portrait, and it is very probable that there are many more.

There are certainly a small family of fakes of Continental manufacture, which have, of course, been ignored.

Fig. III illustrates the largest of the aforementioned six specimens, and this is $7\frac{3}{8}$ in. overall. It displays the characteristic scroll or vine decoration for the type and, in addition, the cast initials "I.D." can be seen at the base of the ornamentation on the front. Here again is raised the query—to whom do these relate?

Owner's initials, struck from punches, also appear on this piece, on the stem nearer the bowl, but probably refer to a later owner.

The general design of the ornamentation is followed in all the specimens illustrated, i.e., the pair of amorini holding the crown over the head of the sovereign. Only on one or two of the depicted spoons is there a portrait which bears any resemblance to the buxom Queen. The initials "A.R." on that in Fig. IV are conclusive evidence that "Anne Regina" is depicted, however, despite her emaciated bearing!

Little more need be said of the spoons in Figs. IV or V, except that neither bears cast initials (other than those of the sovereign) such as have been discussed.

The three spoons in Fig. VI may, at first glance, appear similar, though small differences in the casting will be apparent to the naked eye under careful comparison. The main differences and (to the writer) the most important features are the initials which appear on the reverse, and which are shown in Fig. VII.

The spoons are photographed in the same order as in the former illustration, and have been subdivided (a), (b) and (c). No maker's or owner's mark, other than the cast initials, appears on any of the three items. (a) and (b) will be seen to bear the cast initials "S.S.," whereas (c) carries those of "W.P." The different engraving of the initials "S.S." indicates two distinct moulds. Spoons from the "S.S." moulds are not uncommon; the writer has come across probably a couple of dozen specimens in as many years, but never from moulds other than the two used here. The late Mr. H. H. Cotterell, in his *Bristol and West Country Pewterers*,² illustrated two similar spoons from the well-known Charbonnier collection, evidently from these identical moulds, and he informed his readers that the spoons were made by one Simon Sanders, a spoonmaker of Langtree, near Bideford. One can only conjecture why so eminent an authority attributed these to a specific maker, and the natural assumption is that it was because of the initials linking with those of a known maker. It would seem that Cotterell had not then come across spoons with other cast initials, for it is very unlikely that so competent a student, and so prolific a writer as he, would have left the matter to rest there.

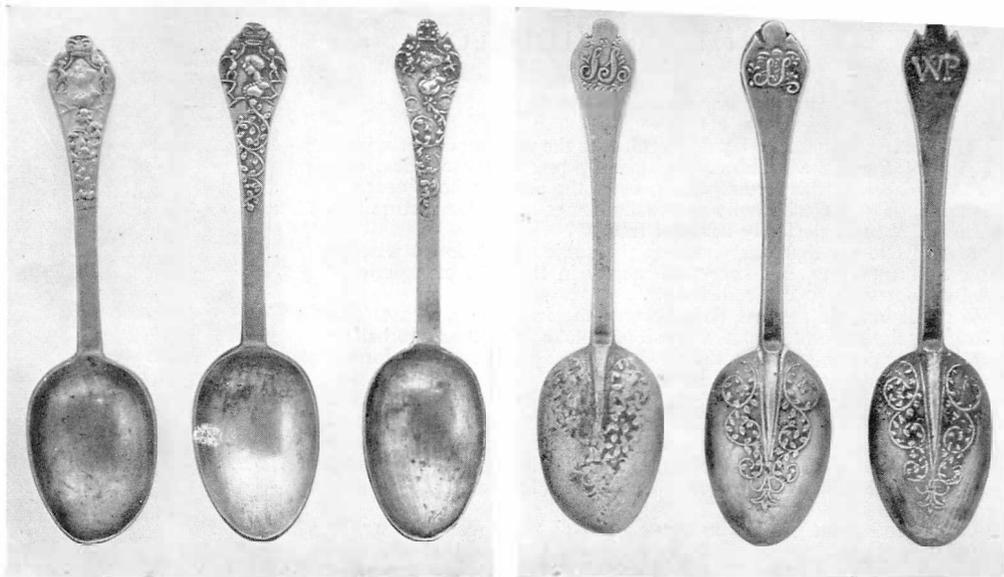
George III is the third, and final, sovereign known to have been lionised by the pewterers in this fashion, and Figs. VIII and IX show two specimens, of later type, bearing portraits of George III and his Queen, Charlotte Sophia, of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, whom he married in 1761.

Fig. X depicts the reverse of the spoon in Fig. VIII, showing the marks of the maker, John Vaughan, of London, and also the so-called "leaf-drop" at the base of the stem. This is identical with the shape of the silver Hanoverian pattern spoons.

The two illustrated specimens vary slightly in the handle finials, but both are by the same maker. Two or three different moulds are known to have been used for this type.

Our London museums could, collectively, show quite large numbers of these various portrait spoons, with or without initials, but in no metal other than pewter. With the prolific use of latten for spoons one would have expected to find examples of portrait busts in that metal, but no such example is known to the writer.

It would seem, also, that the type was never made in silver, and in this connection I contacted Mr. Norman Gask, the well-known collector, and author of *Old Silver Spoons of England*,³ who replied that he did not recall ever having come across the royalty type of spoon in that precious metal, nor was the Worshipful



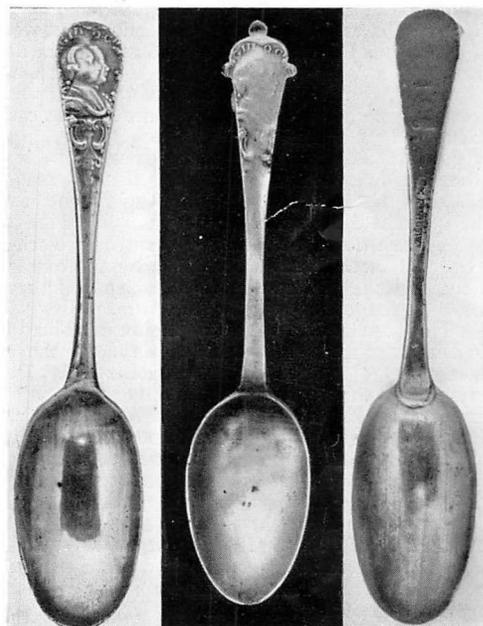
Company of Goldsmiths able to trace any silver specimen. There can be little doubt, therefore, that they are a type peculiar to pewter, and in this fact alone, pewter collectors lucky enough to possess a specimen or two may congratulate themselves on being the owners of pieces truly representative of the pewterers' craft.

As for the mystery of why they were produced only in pewter, and why they sometimes bear cast-in initials, which may relate to the maker or may indicate the original recipient, I am unable to put forward any solution—my only hope now is that some further light may be shed by a more capable pen.

¹ *Old Base Metal Spoons*, London, 1908.

² Published by the Committee of the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, 1918.

³ Batsford, 1926.



Figs. VIII and IX. George III and Queen Charlotte.
Fig. X. Reverse of Fig. VIII.

Fig. IX, Collection Captain A. V. Sutherland Graeme. Fig. VIII, Author's Collection.