

# SCOTTISH PEWTER TANKARDS

*From the Georgian Chopin to the Victorian Quart*

By Lieut.-Col. J. S. BISSET

THE study of Scottish pewter tankards is one which has been largely neglected, and standard works on pewter are lamentably deficient in this branch of the subject. No doubt this is partly due to the great scarcity of any examples of really early date, and partly to their comparative lack of beauty and interest when compared with the English lidded Stuart and Georgian types. But the earlier Scottish tankards, in common with other Scottish measures, have a beauty of their own, even when this lies only in their very simplicity and their suitability for their purpose and for the metal of which they are made. The simple yet graceful lines of the tankards shown in Figures 2, 4 and 6 are worthy of the best traditions of the pewterer's craft.



Fig. 1.—Early Scottish tankard, c. 1745, Capacity, one chopin.



Fig. 2.—Tankard by Graham and Wardrop (1776-1806), c. 1785. Capacity, one chopin. Glasgow mark with DG, and ratio mark ( $\frac{1}{5}$  IS)

The complete absence of any examples of *lidded* Scottish tankards is one of the major mysteries of the study of Scottish pewter and no doubt accounts for their partial neglect by the big collector. Whether none were ever made or whether they have all found their way into the melting-pot will probably never be known. To the beginner or the collector with the shallow pocket this neglect is all to the good, provided he is prepared to study the subject for himself *ab initio*. Interesting examples of the 18th century are still to be picked up for a few shillings by the collector who knows what to look for. I hope that these notes, based on all too short study of the subject, may be of some use in the

search. In compiling them I have been indebted to Mr. Templeman of the Weights and Measures Department, Edinburgh, for much valuable information as to the verification and stamping of measures in Scotland.

Some knowledge of the legislation affecting weights and measures since the Union of the Kingdoms in 1707 is almost essential to the study of Scottish tankards. Unfortunately much of the information given by Ingleby Wood in his "Scottish Pewterware and Pewterers" on this period seems to have been derived from unreliable sources—that given on page 156 in particular being almost completely inaccurate.

The Treaty of Union provided that the same weights and measures should be used throughout Great Britain as were then established in England. This appears to have been almost entirely ignored north of the Tweed and, in consequence, an Act was passed in 1824 (and came into force on



Fig. 3.—Transitional tankard, c. 1780. Capacity, one chopin.

## Scottish Pewter Tankards



Fig. 4.—Tankard by Kiniburgh (Robert Kinniburgh of Edinburgh, 1794-1823?), c. 1795-1800. Capacity, one mutchkin.



Fig. 5.—Another tankard by Kiniburgh, c. 1820. Capacity, half-pint. Co. of Edinburgh mark, undated.

It will be seen from the above that one of the best guides to early date in Scottish measures is capacity. A tankard of the old capacities is fairly certain to be pre-1835 and is probably pre-1824. The absence of post-1825 verification marks is a good, but of course not unailing, clue to these old capacities. On the other hand it would seem that Scottish tankards of Imperial capacity were not in general use prior to 1835, and that before 1824 they were probably uncommon. The evidence that one of these was made prior to the latter date must therefore be very clear and unequivocal before it can be accepted without reserve.

I myself have only met with one such tankard. It bears the mark of John Turnbull, Dean of Guild of Edinburgh in 1821.

The earliest Scottish tankard which I have been able to trace is the "loving cup" shown in Plate xxxiv (a) of Cotterell's "Old Pewter." The inscription on the cup,

January 1, 1826) prohibiting the making of new measures of other than the Imperial Standards then laid down, but permitting the use of existing measures provided they were clearly marked with the ratio they bore to the legal standard. This ratio was normally shown by the figures  $\frac{4}{5}$  IS (four-fifths Imperial Standard). In consequence of this permission, the Act, to quote the words of a Scottish witness before Lord Ebrington's Select Committee appointed in 1834 to examine its working, "almost totally failed to be of any use." In view of this a fresh Act was passed in 1835 prohibiting the use of the old measures entirely. This Act seems at last to have had the desired effect.

Up to 1835 the verification and marking of measures was carried out by the Dean of Guild. In that year the existing system came into being and a special Weights and Measures Department was formed by each local authority, which carried out the duties under the supervision only of the Crown. Thereafter the Dean of Guild's mark is no longer seen and the Town or County mark alone is used.

Counties and burghs still used marks of their own design right up to the Act of 1878, and only after the passing of this Act was an attempt made to persuade them to use a uniform stamp—the crown, VR and district number. Even in 1882 seven Scottish counties (including Edinburgh) and nine burghs (including Dundee) were still using their own marks, and it was not until 1907 that instructions from the Board of Trade made the employment of the uniform stamp compulsory. The stamps used, whatever their design, were always provided by the local authorities and have never been provided by the Crown, even to the present day.



Fig. 6.—Tankard by Robert Whyte. Capacity, one quart. Edinburgh mark with JT (John Turnbull, Dean of Guild for 1821), and 14 other marks of Jedburgh, Fifeshire, Kirkcaldy and Selkirk (?).

Another tankard by Kiniburgh is shown in Figure 5. In spite of its Imperial capacity it is presumably at least as early as 1823, when Robert Kinniburgh's business became Kinniburgh & Son.

Figure 6 is the tankard referred to above as bearing the town mark and initials of John Turnbull, Dean of Guild for 1821. The town mark of this year is of especial interest as the three towers of the Castle are represented with spired roofs instead of the usual flat embattled ones. The same mark was used on silver for a short time about this period. This tankard has a peculiarly upright handle and a broad shallow groove in place of the usual fillet. There are also three smaller grooves just above—but not forming

Figure 10 shows two "bell" tankards which may both be dated with reasonable certainty to the first quarter of the 19th century. The chopin on the right, in common with Figures 8 and 9, has the broad flat fillet favoured in Glasgow after the plain drum of the late 18th century, as in Edinburgh was the shallow groove. This broad fillet was sometimes, as in the case of this tankard, divided into three by two deep incised lines.

Figure 11, a mutchkin of "tulip" shape, bears a quartered shield—probably that of Robert Galbraith, though without the usual surrounding label bearing his name. Cotterell dates Robert Galbraith as c. 1840, but he is shown in the Glasgow Directory of 1830. It will be noticed that the upper and lower curves of the belly of



Fig. 10.—Two "bell" tankards. Left, c. 1815, capacity one mutchkin. Right, c. 1820, capacity, one chopin; ratio mark.

part of—the base skirt. These features are typical of the period in Edinburgh.

Figure 7, which bears the Edinburgh Dean's mark for 1833-34, still retains the upright handle but the groove is now a powerful "half-round" fillet.

The "bell" and "tulip" types, as Cotterell calls them, seem to have found little favour with Edinburgh pewterers. Moyes turned out a good many of the bell type in the latter half of the century, but I have never seen an Edinburgh "tulip" tankard.

Figures 8-11 are all Glasgow tankards of the old Scottish capacities. Figures 8 and 9 have the peculiar handle terminal with pointed lobes dated by Cotterell as c. 1780-1825. The earlier date seems a little optimistic.



Fig. 11.—"Tulip" tankard, c. 1825, probably by Robert Galbraith; quartered shield on bottom. Capacity, one mutchkin.

this tankard meet at quite a sharp angle instead of forming a continuously rounded curve as in the later forms of this type.

The above five tankards probably represent the chief Glasgow types of the early 19th century. Whatever the actual date of the individual tankards, as the making of measures of these capacities was made illegal in 1824, the moulds from which they were made were almost certainly in use prior to that date. The common spindle-shaped tankard of the late 19th century does not seem to have been made in Glasgow much before 1848, at least examples with the town arms *within the oval* are not common. This mark was replaced about that time by one in which the arms were placed within a shield, and accompanied by the word "GLASGOW" (or GLAS<sup>w</sup>, etc.) and the last two figures of the date year.

accepted at face value, would indicate that it was purchased in 1690 on the engagement or marriage of A.B. and H.P. (Andrew Butchart and Helen Parker—Cotterell has the names incorrectly). The general style of the body is similar to that of early 18th century lidded Georgian tankards with their straight-sided tapering bodies and low-set, narrow prominent fillets, *c.f.* the centre tankard in Plate lxxii (c) of "Old Pewter" (which Cotterell dates as *c.* 1715) the handle of which is also similar to that of the cup except in size. While, therefore, it is not impossible that this loving cup is a forerunner of the Georgian tankard, the supposition is improbable, and one would normally expect the Scottish type to follow the English. This doubt is increased when one examines the inscription, the lettering of which is decidedly out-of-date in 1690. A probable solution is that the cup was presented to the old couple in 1740 or 1750 on the occasion of their golden or diamond wedding. The raw unpolished condition of the cup itself, with clean sharp edges to lip, fillet and base, otherwise difficult to understand, is then fully explained, as in this case the cup would probably have been little used by the recipients or their descendants but would be carefully preserved as a memento. The present owner, Mr. Alfred W. Cox, received the cup in 1890 from a direct descendant of the original owners, himself an old man of eighty.

The tankard in Figure 1 is, except for the single handle, practically the duplicate of Mr. Cox's cup. Its condition is quite in keeping with the suggested revised date.

Figure 2 is from Mr. Gilbert Hole's collection. One would be inclined to place this tankard at an earlier date than the last, as being derived from the plain drum of the Stuart period. There seems, however, to have been a rever-



Fig. 8.—Tankard by D. Scouler, *c.* 1820. Capacity, one chopin. Ratio mark  $\frac{1}{2}$  IS, faintly visible in photo.



Fig. 9.—Tankard, *c.* 1815. Capacity, one mutchkin.



Fig. 7.—Tankard with Edinburgh mark with  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{JM} \\ \text{DG} \end{array} \right.$  (John Macfie, Dean of Guild for 1833/34), and County of Edinburgh mark dated 1852. Capacity, one quart.

sion to the plain drum in Georgian tankards of the later 18th century, as shown in the tankard on the right in Plate lxxii (c) of "Old Pewter," and Scottish tankards probably underwent a similar process of "decadence."

Figure 3 is a transitional type. The fillet has gone but the handle still has the rather stilted form of that in the "loving cup" and Figure 1, instead of the more graceful sweep of Figure 2 (and Figure 4), while the body is intermediate between the two forms.

Figure 4, with its plain squat drum, appears at first sight to have even earlier affinities, but has the multiple base-mouldings characteristic of late 18th century English tankards. Its simple lines, in contrast with the typical 19th century types, and with other tankards by the same maker (Kiniburgh), incline one to date it as one of his earliest efforts.