

The placing of verification marks under the base on pewter pots and measures.

Introduction.

Members may recall some years ago that there appeared in the journals some questions raised by A.J.Muir, Carl Ricketts and John Richardson about unusual marks found under the base of some measures and pots. { See Journals for Spring 1988, p 113, Spring 1989,p 37, Autumn 1989, p 67 and Spring 1995, p 45 / 46 }

To some extent, the questions raised re the origins of the marks have been answered within the excellent publication, "Marks and markings of weights and measures of the British Isles" by Carl Ricketts and John Douglas by cross-checking through the numerous verification marks and locations contained in this reference work.

In this way, I was able to solve both of John Richardson's queries viz: The MR mark is for Manor Rochdale and the WR over SR indicates the division of Salford-Rochdale, during the reign of W IV. The barred T which also features in Carl Rickett's note is the mark of inspector J Thurman of Weymouth, Dorset Co. c 1835. Both of these pieces are now in my collection.

There remains the lingering thoughts of just how many different examples of verifications exist and why was striking the mark under the base chosen by inspectors in the first place? Since 1986, I have acquired 11 different examples of tavern-ware that have inspection / verification marks under the base and feel that I can add to the information contained in Ricketts & Douglas's work; see p 161. The following is an examination of pieces in my collection.

Body styles as seen with verification marks under the base.

I have examined the pieces in my own collection and have identified only two body styles; {a} Truncated cone and {b} Bellied measures.

This is not to say that other styles such as Tulip, U & Fillet, 2-Band U shape, Bucket & Ridge and Concave were not similarly marked but in my time as a collector, and with the availability of old pewter here in Australia, I haven't seen marks on any other styles.

Capacity of pieces with verification marks under the base.

Marks have been recorded on bellied measures of the following capacities; 1/2 gill O.E.W.S. gill Imperial, pint Imperial.

Truncated-cone pots include 1/2 pint, pint, pint with front spout, and quart, all Imperial capacity.

Maker's marks seen on pieces.

Bolton & Wild, Wigan c 1825-35

Yates & Birch, Birmingham c 1840-50

J. C. Crane, Bewdley c1825-35

Kiniburgh, Edinburgh c1820-35



County / Township / State / Borough / Manor marks.

Bewdley Borough

Manchester Manor

Rochdale Manor
Lancaster County- Division Salford-Rochdale
Wisbech Borough {Wisbech St Peter}
South Australia
Flint County
Gloucester County
Dorset County
Hertford County
Forfar County

Description of mark, including dimensions in mm.

{Page numbers used in this section are from Ricketts and Douglas}

Bewdley Borough :

Crown over WR as shown on p182, measuring 8mm wide by 9mm down.

Struck in middle under base of O.E.W.S. 1/2 gill bellied measure.No other marks, c 1820's.

Manchester Manor:

Crown over GR:IV over O.M as shown on p 167, without year date Mark measures 8mm wide by 10mm down, struck under base that has been "Bumped up"of a 1/2 gill bellied measure which has WR,un-crowned, struck inverted on rim.May be of Birmingham make as similar to mark shown on p 184 for Birmingham town c1790-1825.

Rochdale Manor :

Mark as shown in John Richardson's letter {Journal, Autumn '89 p67} and on p 168 and p 163.

being Crown over GR:IV over J.D over 1830. This measures 8mm across by 12 mm down.

Over-struck by M.R within a circle, letters measure 5mm high by 12 mm across, circle is approx 15mm in diameter. Double struck with smaller mark being Crown over WR over SR, measuring 5mm wide by 7mm down. Numerous marks on rim including IMPERIAL, GILL and G crown IV. Gill measure, type 2b, c 1830's.

Lancaster County, Division Salford-Rochdale.

Mark as shown on p 168 being Crown over GR:IV over J.D over 1831 measuring 8mm across and 12mm down. Also struck with smaller crown over WR over SR measuring 5mm wide by 7mm down. Marks are struck under base of Imperial standard gill bellied measure by B&W, probably Bolton and Wild of Wigan, c 1830's. Has GILL struck on body individual letters.

Wisbech Borough {Wisbech St. Peter}

Mark as shown on p 190, being the cross keys of St. Peter flanked by two small crosses, all within a shield. Mark measures approx 7mm wide by 8mm down.

Struck both on thumb rest of handle and under base, in centre, of Imperial standard gill bellied measure by Yates and Birch, Type 2a, c 1840.

South Australia

Arial font "SM" on thumb-rest and under base of 1/2 gill Imperial bellied measure. Mark is same as in fig.30, p 41, Journal Autumn 2002. Measures 7mm wide by 5mm down. This is the only piece I've seen in Sth Aust so marked in 40 years' collecting. It is usual for a "SM" mark to be accompanied by a crowned VR mark, signifying Standard Measure, Victoria Regina.

Flint County

A small curved mark under the base of a front-spouted truncated cone pint by J.C. Crane of Bewdley. As for Flint Co., p 139, but quite small lettering being under 2mm high and 8mm across. Pint also marked on body for Salop and Denbigh.

Gloucester County

Two circular marks, being Gloucester Co and Gloucester No.7 struck in centre under base of Imperial quart truncated cone by Yates & Birch. Marks as shown on p202 Diameter of smaller Glou Co. is 7mm and larger, Glou. No 7, is 9mm. Also double struck with 90, possibly for 1890. This would be rather late for this type of verification marking.

Dorset County

Marks are as shown in article by John Richardson {Journal Spring '95, p 45-46} and as illustrated on p 233. J Thurman was an inspector for Weymouth c 1835, hence the combined J&F mark. A circle, halved, is struck in centre under base, being 7mm diameter. Both crown and Thurman's mark are 7mm across by 7mm down as is the Dorset {R.D} mark.

Forfar County

Main mark is IMP GILL overstruck by a large 2, together with Co.FOR and a rubbed large Imperial crown. Faint stamped initials of D.H. Imp Gill measures 3mm high by 15mm wide, "2" is 4mm by 8mm, O.FOR is approx 21mm by 4mm. Marks are struck under base of Imperial 1/2 pint truncated cone by Kiniburgh, c 1820's, Edinburgh.

Hertford County :

This is an un-recorded mark of William Nunn of Hertford. Initially, I thought that it was a maker's mark but was unable to locate any known maker. On checking Hertford marks, William Nunn used a mark W N between a crowned shield containing H. {See p.197} This could easily be confused with WR, the monarch's insignia and I am suggesting that Nunn might have used the NUNN, HERTFORD to avoid any possible prosecution.

The mark measures 2mm by 11mm for Nunn and 2mm by 19mm for Hertford being struck one above the other under the base of a truncated Imperial pint pot. Also has a separate mark of two concentric circles of diameters 4mm and 8mm struck in centre under base. Body has 1 over H as well as post 1878 mark for Hertford, VR 396.

So, why strike marks under the base ?

Local "Idiocynocracy" ?

The first reason that I would suggest is that striking under the base could be described as being a local idiocynocracy in various locations up to about 1840. Local Manorial marks of Sir Oswald Moseley and J Dearden have year dates prior to 1835 being 1826, 1830 and 1831. These indicate that the piece was verified in that year as conforming to the standard of G IV of 1826.

Some inspectors acted independently as to where they placed their verification mark in keeping with what Ricketts and Douglas call "Anomalous jurisdictions that were literally laws unto themselves". {This would gradually change with the introduction of police officers to act as inspectors from 1840 onwards.} The Hertford inspector is a good example of this as he used a large mark, NUNN over HERTFORD that would not lend itself to being stamped anywhere else except on a flat surface.

Size of marks used ?

The next reason that I am suggesting is the size of the marks themselves. It would appear to me that in most cases, the size of the stamp would require a reasonably large and flattish surface, particularly on small measures of 1/2 gill and gill capacity. The curved nature of the body of pots and measures is more suited to small stamps unless individual punches are used. From my observations, large marks are best suited to being struck on a flat surface such as the underside of a pot or measure. The upper rim of small 1/2 gill and gill measures would not provide sufficient surface area for the verification stamps to be legible. This is very much the case with the mark of J. Dearden which measures 8mm by 12mm, Nunn's 2mm by 11mm over 2mm by 19mm and those struck in Forfar that collectively measure 21mm by 21mm. I suspect that the stamps used had a flat, not curved, face which would further require a similar surface to be struck on.

Prevention of "Wear and Tear" of verification mark ?

A further suggestion is the "wear and tear" or rubbing away of marks that are struck on the body of pieces and slowly become illegible through either long use, handling or regular cleaning. Marks that are struck under the base have no contact with table tops because they are elevated by the skirt of the pot or measure. Likewise, they are less likely to be rubbed away by frequent handling as one doesn't normally hold a piece in that fashion.

It is also less likely to be polished or regularly cleaned underneath so that marks would not deteriorate quickly.

Honesty of Inn-keeper, Publican; preventing "short measure".

We have all come across pieces that have been "Bumped-up" at some stage during their life time. This was a ploy used by Inn-keepers, Hoteliers etc universally by which the capacity of a pot or measure was altered or reduced by bumping up the bottom so that the customer wasn't receiving the full amount of drink that they had paid for. A small reduction in volume of a fluid oz in a 20 oz pint meant an increased profit margin to the vendor. Similarly, smaller measures could have their capacities reduced by a fraction without being too noticeable by the customer.

In order to prevent unscrupulous proprietors from taking advantage of their customers, or perhaps because of complaints made, it is quite feasible that some pewter-ware was deliberately verified underneath the base in order to ensure the honesty and "Fair trade" of the publican.

It is curious that the 1/2 gill O.E.W.S. bellied measure in my collection has both a WR mark on the rim and the crown over GR:IV over O.M, measures O.E.W.S., has been "Bumped-up" in the base yet also verified afterwards for Imperial standard.

So, when were these verification marks in use?

Ricketts and Douglas suggest that the most probable time frame for this peculiar placement of verification marks is c 1820 to c 1850. {See p 161.} From the examination of the pieces in this report, I would agree that this is the most likely scenario and support it with the following:

The crowned WR on an O.E.W.S. 1/2 gill mark is c 1790-1825

Dated marks include 1828, 1830 and 1831

Yates & Birch were manufacturers of pewter from c1838-1850's

J.C. Crane went out of business by the late 1830's

J Thurman was an inspector in Dorset from c 1835

Kiniburgh was a pewterer in Edinburgh c 1820's-1830's

Quartern for Gill terminology seems to have died out by c 1850

SM mark seen on South Australia verification is c 1850's

W Nunn was an inspector in Hertford from c 1835

In conclusion, this article has been presented in order to add to the knowledge of collectors about an area that has had no previously detailed published research. The suggestion made are there to be criticised, rebuffed or added to by those of you who are closer to, and have far greater access to pewter-ware that falls into this topic. Such is "The Tyranny of Distance."

Geoff Lock. March 2008.



The placing of verification marks -- under the base on pewter pots and measures.

Some years ago, John Richardson wrote two letters about marks that he found under the base of pewter pot-bellied measures. {See articles in Journal Autumn 1989 p 67 and Journal Spring 1995 p 45/46}. Two of those pieces have been in my collection via John since the mid 1990's. The excellent publication, "Marks and marking of weights and measures of the British Isles" by Carl Ricketts and John Douglas provided the answers to some of the questions raised by John and also assisted me in decyphering the marks on several pieces in my collection that are all marked UNDER the base. This was the topic for our last lunch-time get-together here in South Australia back in June this year. I was able to display 10 pieces with different marks and can add to those locations listed on p 167 of Ricketts and Douglas's "Marks etc" as I have an example from Flint Co, Bewdley and Gloucester Co. The pieces displayed by me were as follows, with pages listed from Ricketts and Douglas on which marks appear that members can refer to.

1/2 Gill O.E.W.S. pot-belly measure with Bewdley Borough mark as per page 182
Bought in Portobello Rd, Nov 2001



1/2 Gill O.E.W.S. pot-belly measure with Manchester Manor mark of Sir Oswald Moseley as per p 167 Ex-Richardson collection c 1995



Gill, Imperial standard pot-belly measure {As per article Autumn '89 p 67} Marks are of Rochdale p163 and Rochdale Manor p 168. Ex-Richardson collection June 1994.



WR SR



Gill, Imperial standard, by B&W, transitional period with D-V handle. Mark of Rochdale as per p 163. Purchased from Albert Bartram April 1986



WR SR

Gill, Imperial standard pot-belly measure by Yates & Birch with cross-key mark of Wisbech Borough {Wisbech St. Peter} as per page 190 on top of handle and under base. Purchased Adelaide June 2003.



Gill, Imperial standard with SM struck on top of handle and under base. The SM mark is identical to that in fig 29 p 41 in my article "Verification marks found on 19th century British pewter in South Australia" Journal, Autumn 2002 p 40 / 41. Purchased Adelaide, May 2004.

SM

1/2 pint, Imperial standard truncated cone with scroll handle, by Kinniburgh. Has Edinburgh mark on body {CO ED} and 2 IMP GILL CO. FOR as per p 121. Purchased Adelaide in Oct 2000.

2 IMP GILL
CO. FOR

Pint, Imperial standard pot-belly measure {As per article Spring '95 p 45/46} Marks as for Dorset Co, p 233. The combined TF mark is for J. Thurman, inspector of Weymouth c 1835. Ex-Richardson collection July 1995.



Pint. Imperial standard front-spouted truncated cone by John C Crane, Bewdley. Mark as for Flint Co, p 139. Ex-Richardson collection, purchased November 1998. A beautiful piece !!

FLINT CO

Quart, Imperial standard truncated cone by Yates & Birch. Mark as for Gloucester Co, p 202. Purchased Adelaide August 1992.



Hope that these notes make interesting reading and add to our knowledge. Best wishes.

Geoff Lock August 2004.

Geoff Lock

1 Bewlley Borough



Size varies with
measure capacities.

R+D P182.

2 Manchester Manor



R+D. P167

3 Rochdale Manor
R+D. P168



WR
SR



4 Lancaster County
Salford-Rochdale.



Date unrecorded
R+D p163, 168.

5 Wisbech Borough
(Wisbech St. Peter)



R+D p190

6 South Australia
SM

Unrecorded.

7 Flint County



R+D p139

8 Gloucester County



R+D p202

9 Dorset County



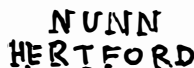
R+D p233

10 Forfar County.



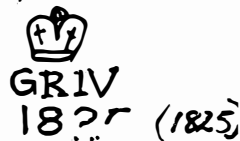
Unrecorded

11 Hertford County



Unrecorded

12 Oxford Town



Unrecorded.
(Ex J. Douglas Collⁿ)



