

# PROCEEDINGS

of the

## Society of Antiquaries of Scotland



Our full archive of freely accessible articles covering Scottish  
archaeology and history is available at  
<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/psas/volumes.cfm>

Society of Antiquaries  
of **Scotland**

National Museums Scotland  
Chambers Street, Edinburgh

[www.socantscot.org](http://www.socantscot.org)  
Charity No SC 010440

## II.

## EARLY SCOTTISH SPOONS.

BY COMMANDER G. E. P. HOW, R.N., F.S.A. SCOT.

In this short article I am anxious to show that, from very early days, a special type of spoon was peculiar to Scotland. Somewhat similar spoons are known to have been made on the Continent, but no contemporary English spoons resemble them in any way whatsoever. This fact appears to have been overlooked by almost all authorities who have written upon the subject; the reason being, in all probability, that so few early Scottish spoons have come to light.

Fig. 1 illustrates a spoon which is in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh. This particular spoon is illustrated and ascribed by Sir Charles Jackson in his *Illustrated History of English Plate*, vol. ii. p. 518, where he describes it as a "hybrid spoon of Scottish manufacture . . .," but states that he has come to the conclusion that the date of its manufacture is about half a century later than the year inscribed on the stem, and that the initials and the date were probably engraved in memory of a deceased person. I hope to prove that this spoon is unquestionably of the date inscribed upon it—that is, 1589. Sir Charles Jackson also states that the very early Scottish spoon illustrated on p. 512 in the above work, bearing the Edinburgh hall-mark for 1591-5, is of the type known to be characteristic of the sixteenth century in England. This spoon appears to be very similar in type to the Dundee spoon illustrated in fig. 4 (fully described later) which bears a much greater resemblance to the other early Scottish spoons illustrated in this article than to any sixteenth-century English spoons that I have yet seen.

In the Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, is a most interesting set of five spoons. These were treasure trove, having been found in a house at Irvine in 1865. They are described in an article by Dr Graham Callander, F.S.A. Scot., in the *Proceedings*, vol. lix. p. 125. It is probable that more than five spoons were discovered, as an identical pair, which unquestionably belonged to the same set, recently came under my notice (fig. 2). I have also been told that another example from the same set was sold to America some years ago, and it is not likely that these individual spoons would have survived had they been separated from the

set before it was originally hidden in Irvine. As can be seen from the illustration, this set is almost identical in design to the Canongate spoon in fig. 1. They bear, on the front of the disk at the top of the stem, the



Fig. 1. Canongate Spoon.

initials I★B, and on the back of the bowl the initials A C, and between these initials what appears to be a Y, but is actually an heraldic device, the Shake-fork of the Cunninghames. The marks on the stem are EH in monogram, on the right of this the Edinburgh town-mark, and on the right of this again GH in monogram. This GH is the mark of

George Heriot, who, as his mark is on the right of the town-mark, was evidently the Deacon. E H, on the left of the town-mark, is the maker's mark, and in this particular case can only be that of Edward Hairt, as



Fig. 2. Spoon found in Irvine.

no other workman of that period in Edinburgh bears these initials. George Heriot was Deacon in 1565-7, 1575-6, 1584-5 and 1589-91, and consequently these spoons can definitely be ascribed to one of these years. Even supposing, as has been suggested, but as I consider exceedingly improbable, George Heriot should have been the maker, and

Edward Hairt the Deacon, the fact that the latter was Deacon in the years 1579-83 indicates that these spoons were made and hall-marked in Edinburgh during the last half of the sixteenth century. This, I think, is sufficient evidence to prove that there is no possible reason for Sir Charles Jackson's assumption that the Canongate spoon was not made in 1589. From the records of the Canongate goldsmiths, recently placed at my disposal by Miss Wood, I find that one George Cunningham, Senior, is known to have been working in the Canongate in the year 1593, and, although another George Cunningham is mentioned in 1628, I think one can assume with comparative certainty that the spoon was actually made by George Cunningham, Senior, in 1589, the date inscribed on the front of the stem. Two spoons, fully described by Dr Callander, and illustrated in the *Proceedings*, vol. lix. p. 121, are very similar to those illustrated in fig. 3. The maker is John Scott, and the Deacon's mark is that of John Frazer, who was apparently acting *ex officio*. The spoons, however, can definitely be ascribed to the first half of the seventeenth century. The stems are wider, and more decorative, and, though the spoons are of later date, they are obviously of the same type as those illustrated in figs. 1 and 2. It is of great interest to note that these were also found in Irvine, and that they also bear initials of the Cunninghame family, and the heraldic device, the Shake-fork of the Cunninghames.

Fig. 3 illustrates two spoons from six of this same early type, in the Museum of Antiquities, also described by Dr Callander in the above-mentioned paper, which were found on the Hill of Culrain in Ross-shire about 1859. Three of these have the date 1617 engraved on the front of the stem. The other three are a little smaller, and differ slightly, as can be seen from the photograph. All six bear the initials I★S on the front of the disk at the top of the stem, and on the back of the bowl the initials CM. On all the spoons the only hall-mark is the maker's mark, IH, in a square shield. As there is no assay mark, it is probable that they were made in the Provinces.

The pair of spoons illustrated by Sir Charles Jackson on p. 519, as being the property of Mrs Maxwell, are again of this type, and, from the mark of George Cleghorne, the Deacon, their date can be fixed at 1648-50, or 1655-7. As Sir Charles Jackson states, spoons of this type, with broad thin stems, were not made in England at anything like so early a date as 1640. I think one can therefore presume that, not only was this flat-stemmed type of spoon made and used continuously in Scotland from the late sixteenth century, and possibly earlier, up to the date of the introduction into England of the flat-stemmed Puritan spoon of

Commonwealth times, but in all probability this type was actually introduced into England from Scotland.

The Dundee spoon (fig. 4), which referred to above, is of particular

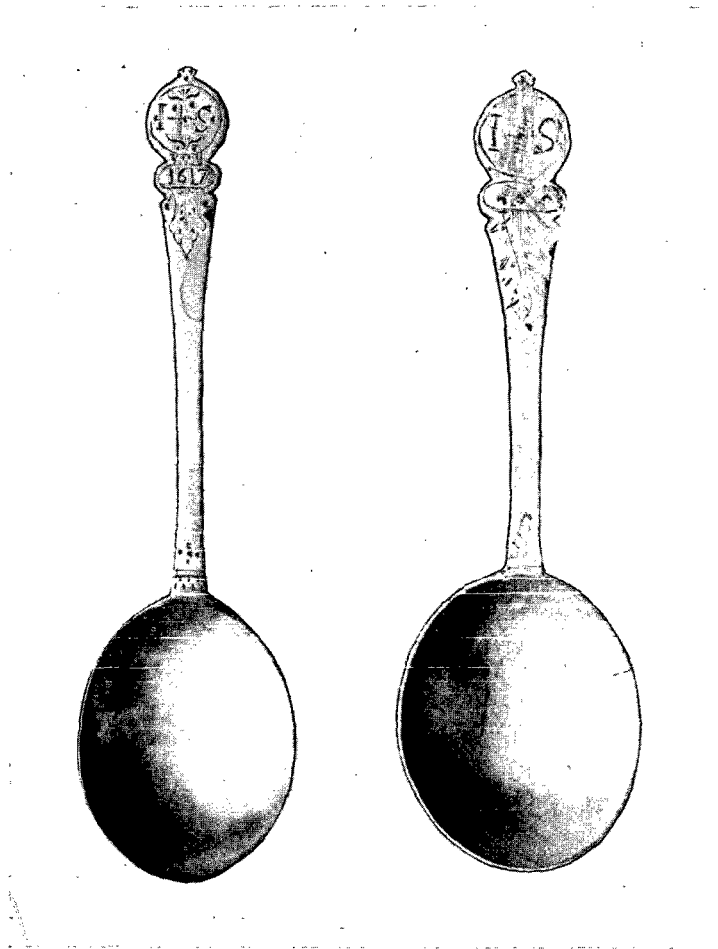


Fig. 3. Spoons from Hill of Culrain, Ross-shire.

interest. The flat stem, which is very thin, does not in any way resemble the English seal-tops of that date, nor did the contemporary English spoon join the bowl in quite the same way, most early Scottish spoons having what might be described as an immature rat-tail. The bowls of Scottish spoons are rounder in form, more like those of Puritan spoons

of the English Commonwealth period. The stems are quite different from those of English seal-tops and apostles, being four-sided, and much flatter and thinner. The finial, though cast separately from the stem, in the same way as the English seals were cast, is soldered on to the stem somewhat after the manner of many English provincial spoons, but cut diagonally across the stem, as opposed to the usual English provincial vertical cut. (The cast tops of almost all London spoons, and some English provincials, are let in with a V-shaped cut.) The top of the spoon illustrated is very narrow, in fact only a little thicker than the stem itself; totally different from any English seal-top that I have ever seen.

The hall-marks are the town-mark of Dundee, a pot of lilies; and the maker's mark, R. G., shown by Sir Charles Jackson as appearing on Dundee plate of about the years 1631-48. He states that the maker was Robert Gairdine, mentioned in the Dundee records in 1683. Even allowing that the plate of 1631 was made by the Robert Gairdine mentioned in 1683, this gives an unusually long working life to the man in question.

In contemporary writing on the head of the spoon are the initials D F, and on the back of the bowl the initials I D. The same initials appear on the famous Fergusson Mazer, made in Edinburgh in 1576. The spoon and the mazer were supposed never to have been separated until recently, having been handed down together in the Fergusson family. There is not the slightest question that the D F and I D on the spoon refer to the same persons as do the initials on the mazer, which are definitely known to have been those of David Fergusson and his wife Isobel Durham. David Fergusson, sometime tutor to James VI, came of an Ayrshire family which migrated to Dundee. (This Dundee connection would account

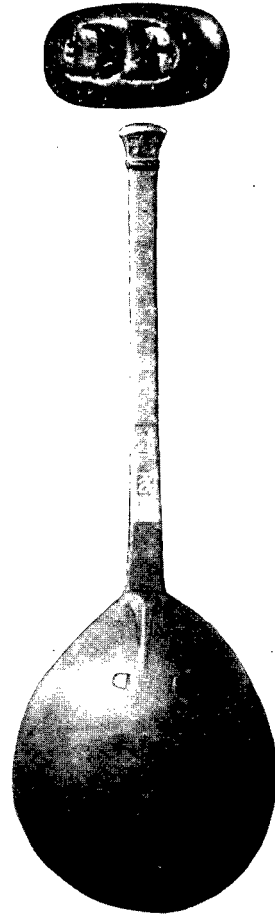


Fig. 4. Dundee Spoon.

for the design round the foot of the mazer consisting of pots of lilies, the Dundee town-mark.) I think there can be no doubt that this spoon was made in Dundee, either at the time of the wedding, or at the time when the mazer was made.

Ascribing this spoon, as I do, to *circa* 1576, the R. G. mark, though possibly that of a Robert Gairdine, is most certainly not that of the Robert Gairdine referred to by Sir Charles Jackson, to whom he ascribes, I consider erroneously, the Brechin Communion Cup, inscribed 1631.

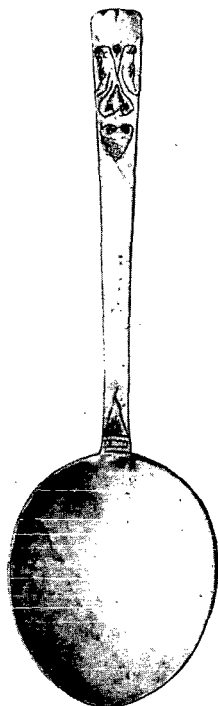


Fig. 5. Spoon dug up in Haddington.

Although it is not apparent in the photograph, there is a very strong resemblance in type between this spoon and the flat-topped Scottish spoons illustrated, the main difference being in the finial, and the fact that the stem is not quite so wide; but I cannot concur with Sir Charles Jackson's opinion that it in any way resembles contemporary English seal-tops.

Fig. 5 illustrates a spoon which was dug up in Church Street, Haddington. In form it is somewhat similar to the English Puritan spoon of the Commonwealth period, though the decoration on the stem is typically Scottish. It is also interesting to note that the bowl is beaten direct from the stem without any sign of a rat-tail, or other support, as is the bowl of the Ayr spoon mentioned later. The marks are that of David Bog, the maker; the Edinburgh town-mark, and that of David Symonstoune, Deacon in 1665-7. As can be seen in the photograph, this type of spoon is a direct descendent from the earlier Scottish spoons illustrated, whereas it was a complete innovation when introduced into England about 1650.

Though a considerable number of spoons must have been made in Scotland, even late seventeenth-century examples are exceedingly rare. Fig. 6 illustrates one of a magnificent set of trefids which I noted recently. They bear the Inverness town-mark, INS; the letter H, which, though yet unidentified, I consider may very possibly have been the date letter for the year 1688; and the maker's mark, R E, which is obviously that of Robert Elphingstoune. This man is known to have been a goldsmith in Inverness in the year 1687, but Sir Charles Jackson states that no example of his work has been found.



Plain spoons of the trefid type, made in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and other provincial Scottish towns, though rare, are well known, and though many are typically English in type, some have very striking

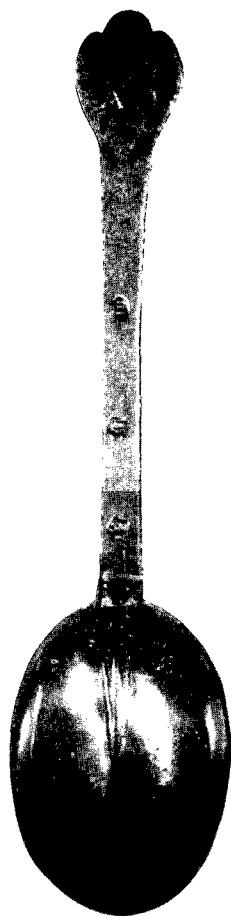


Fig. 6. Inverness Spoon.



Fig. 7. Ayr Spoon.

peculiarities which I have seen only in spoons which I believe to be of Scottish origin.

Fig. 7 illustrates an exceedingly interesting and important spoon which, though of the trefid type, is to my mind typically Scottish. It

in no way resembles contemporary English trefid spoons. The bowl is round and is beaten out from the stem without any vestige of a rat-tail, in the same way as the bowl of the spoon illustrated in fig. 5.

It is marked in three places low down on the stem, and there is no assay mark, from which one can assume that it was made in the provinces. The maker's mark, in two places, MC conjoined, is that mentioned by Sir Charles Jackson as being on a quaich of the seventeenth century, in the possession of Mr J. Barclay Murdoch of Capelrig. He states that it is probably the name punch of Matthew Colquhoun of Ayr, one of the thirteen provincial goldsmiths whose names are endorsed in the draft of the famous letter of the year 1687 or thereabouts. I see no reason to disagree with Sir Charles Jackson's assumption, and the interesting point about this spoon centres round the third mark, only part of which is visible. This mark evidently consists of a complete circle, in the bottom half of which is what is either a turretted castle or a windmill. The device in the top half cannot be deciphered. As the town-arms of Ayr are a triple-towered fortress with, on either side, the holy lamb, and the head of St John the Baptist on a charger, the lower device is, in all probability, the triple-towered fortress, and not a windmill, but until another example of this mark is found, the full device must remain uncertain.

I would suggest that it is probably the triple-towered fortress repeated thrice within a round shield; twice above, and once below. In any case, the spoon is of extreme interest, and with these marks to work upon it can reasonably be hoped that the full town-mark of Ayr will shortly be discovered.

Figs. 8 and 9 illustrate three most interesting spoons, the two with flat stems being most unusual and, though not in any way similar to most contemporary English spoons, they do bear a resemblance to some Scottish and continental spoons of the seventeenth century. As can be seen, they are somewhat similar to the Ayr spoon previously mentioned.

The seal-top and the larger flat-stemmed spoon bear the mark WL, conjoined, struck once in the bowl, and thrice on the back of the stem. According to Sir Charles Jackson this mark is probably that of William Lindsay of Montrose.

The other flat-stemmed spoon bears in the bowl a mark made up of a central pellet surrounded by five other pellets, somewhat resembling a rose. The same mark is thrice repeated on the stem. This spoon is of the same type as the larger flat-stemmed spoon, and would appear to have been made by the same man. I am not yet satisfied that these spoons are of Scottish origin, though as suggested by Sir Charles Jackson, they may quite possibly have been made in Montrose. Were it not for

the seal-top, which is very English in type, I would be inclined to think that Sir Charles Jackson was right.

Fig. 10 illustrates two very early spoons in the Museum of Antiquities,



Fig. 8. Montrose Spoons (front).

Edinburgh. The larger was found in a grave in Brechin, Forfarshire, with pennies of Alexander III. of Scotland, Edward I. and Edward II. of England, and the smaller was found at Windy Mains, East Lothian. They can be ascribed with comparative certainty to the late thirteenth, or early fourteenth century, but neither the stems, bowls nor finials can

be described as being in any way peculiar to Scotland, similar examples having been found in other countries.

I have not as yet seen any spoons with seal-tops, apostles or other

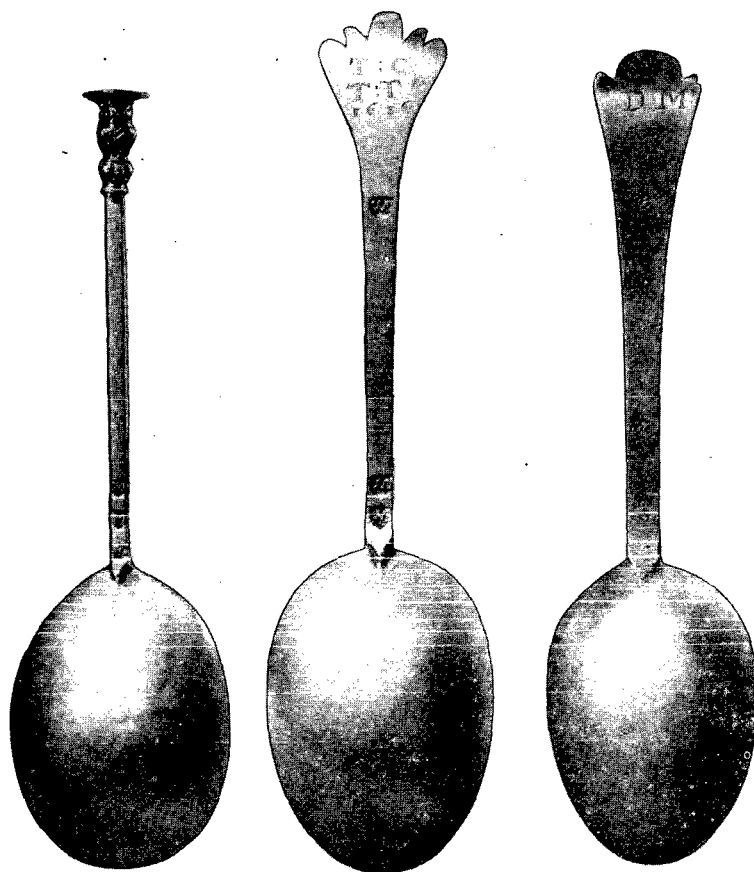


Fig. 9. Montrose Spoons (back).

typically English finials, which I consider to be of proven Scottish origin. There is an apostle (fig. 11), with the mark A B in the bowl, in the Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh. It has a castle struck thrice on the back of the stem, and is ascribed by Sir Charles Jackson to Aberdeen, *circa* 1600-25. I am quite certain that this is incorrect. The A B is

probably the maker's mark, and the castle possibly the early Newcastle mark, as suggested by the late Mr H. D. Ellis in his notes, and by several other high authorities.

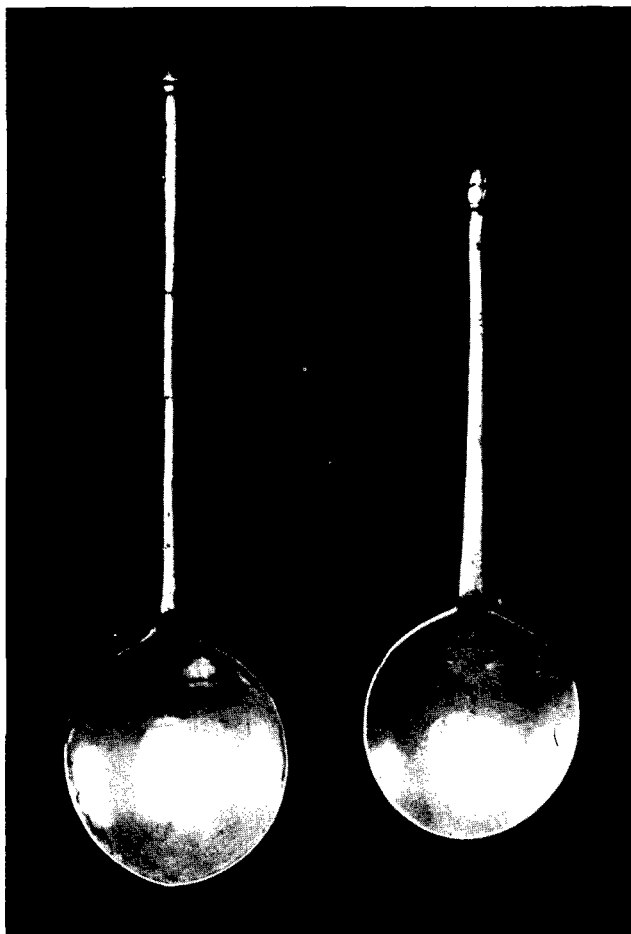


Fig. 10. Fourteenth-century Spoons from Brechin and East Lothian.

There is also in the Museum another apostle spoon (fig. 12) bearing the maker's mark only, stamped in four places, ascribed to George Robertstone, 1616-33. I consider it extremely improbable that this spoon is of Scottish origin as, had it been made by George Robertstone, it would most probably have borne the full Edinburgh hall-marks.

Quite apart from the fact that no other Scottish spoon with a similar bowl is known to exist, the mark G R bears a strong resemblance to that of George Reve of Bath, who made Bath tokens in the year 1638,

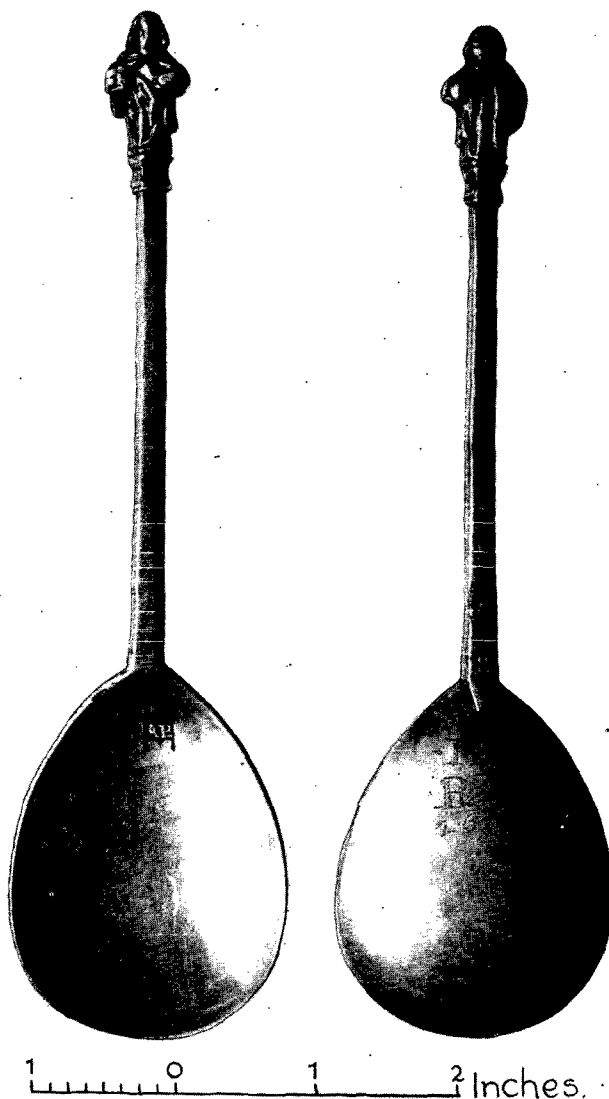


Fig. 11. Apostle Spoon.

and to whom I ascribe this typically English spoon, rather than to George Robertsons of Edinburgh, to whom it is at present ascribed by the Museum of Antiquities.

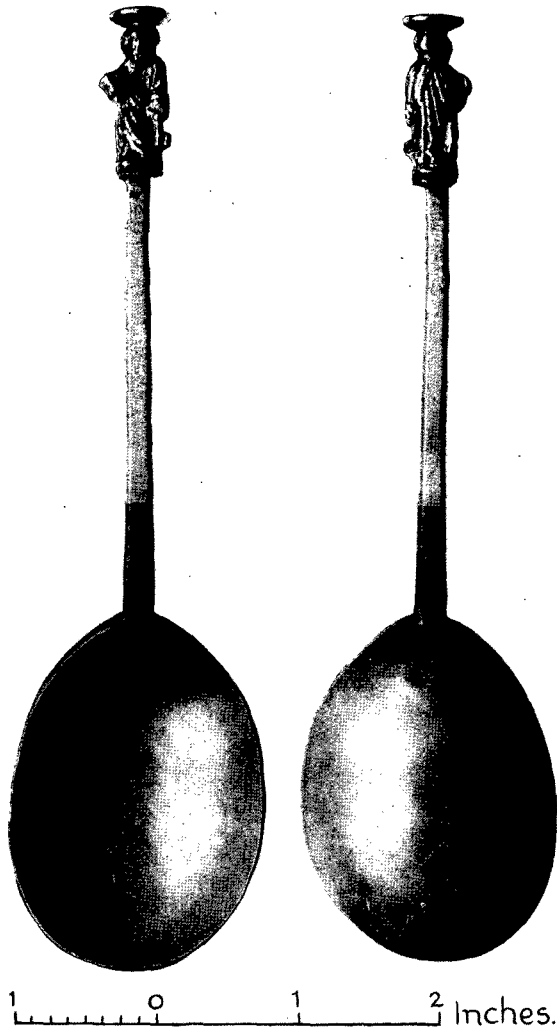


Fig. 12. Apostle Spoon

Fig. 13 illustrates a most interesting pair of trefid spoons which I have recently seen. The marks are a thistle; what appears to be a

catherine wheel; the letter H, similar to the Inverness mark which I suggest as a date letter for Inverness in 1688 (illustrated in fig. 6); and the maker's mark, SS crowned. Similar marks, without the thistle,



Fig. 13. Spoon—Unascribed make.

are mentioned by Sir Charles Jackson amongst his unascribed English marks. No thistle mark being known in England, I would suggest that the spoons are probably of Scottish origin, although the SS crowned is a most unusual type of maker's mark in Scotland at that period.



Although I have been trying to ascribe these spoons for more than two years, I have not yet been able to do so, and I would be most grateful to any of my readers who could throw light upon them. If they are



Fig. 14. Edinburgh Spoons.

Scottish, as I believe them to be, it is the earliest example of the thistle mark.

A point of interest to many readers will be the zigzag assay mark, well seen in figs. 2 and 14. In early days this form of assay mark was invariably used in Scottish assay towns, though, so far as I know, it was

never used in England, except possibly at Norwich and in the East Anglian district, where Dutch influence was predominant.

Since writing the above paper, some other important Scottish spoons have been brought to my attention.

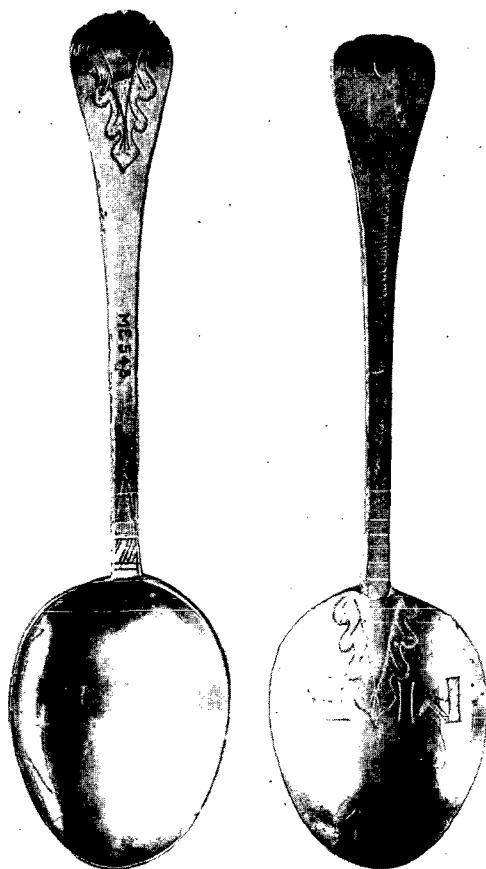


Fig. 15. Aberdeen Spoon.

Fig. 14 illustrates a pair, the property of Sir John Noble, Bart., which bear the Edinburgh town-mark, and the mark of George Craufuird, both as Deacon and maker. George Craufuird was Deacon in the years 1615-17, 1621-2, and also 1633-5, and these spoons can therefore be ascribed definitely to one of these years.

As can be seen from the photograph, they are very similar to the other early Scottish spoons illustrated, and help to prove that this type of spoon was in general use in Scotland throughout this early period.

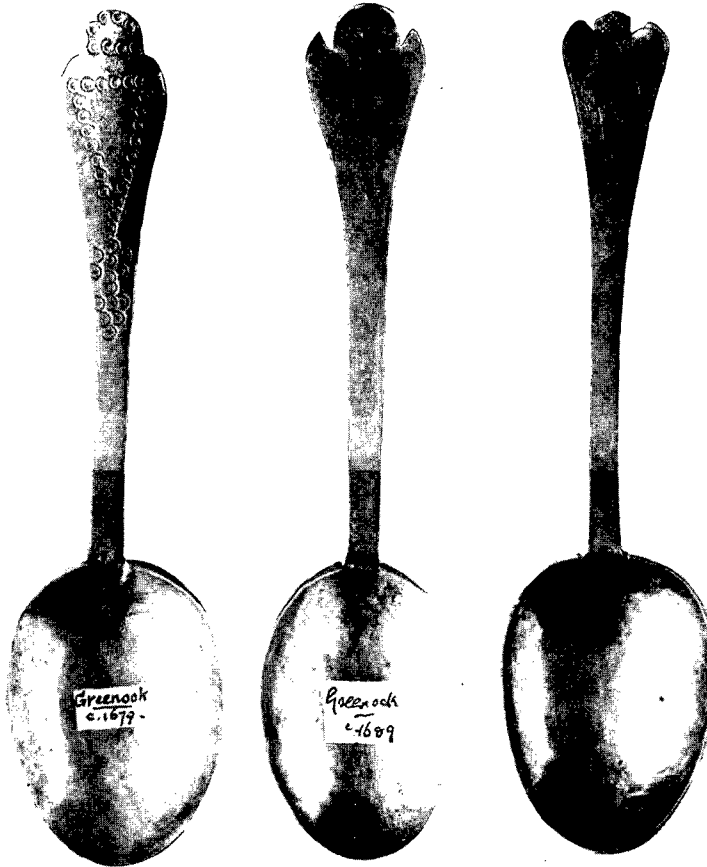


Fig. 16. Two possibly Greenock Spoons and another (front).

Fig. 15 illustrates a most interesting spoon at the Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh, which I had previously overlooked. It bears on the back of the stem A G for A. Galloway, Aberdeen, 1672-8, stamped twice; and the assay mark. On the top of the stem, and also on the back, are engraved the initials R P, and on the back of the bowl the initials

MB; all in large capitals. The floral pattern on the front of the top, and on the back of the bowl, is typically Scottish, and in the latter place it is so drawn as to suggest a rat-tail, although this feature is quite

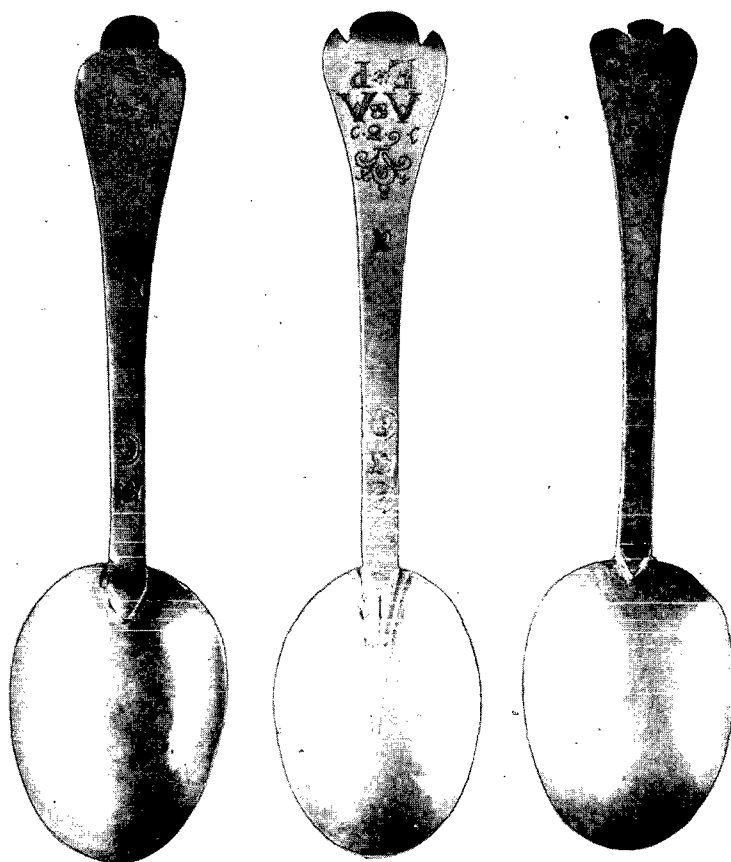


Fig. 17. Two possibly Greenock Spoons and another (back).

flat and not raised. There is a strong similarity between this spoon and two of those illustrated in figs. 8 and 9, tentatively ascribed to Montrose.

Figs. 16 and 17 show two spoons ascribed to Greenock by the late Mr H. D. Ellis, and one similar in type to other Scottish spoons, also from the Ellis collection.

The same marks appear on each of the first two spoons. They are similar in type to other Scottish spoons illustrated, and I consider that Mr Ellis's ascription may be correct. It is hoped that some local antiquary will be able to throw some light upon these previously unrecorded marks.

The third spoon is also of similar type, and bears a crude maker's mark once in the bowl and four times on the stem—apparently S L.

My thanks are due to the National Museum of Antiquities for their kind permission to reproduce figs. 1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12 and 15; to Sir Charles Fergusson for fig. 4; and to A. M. Sharp, Esq., for fig. 7.