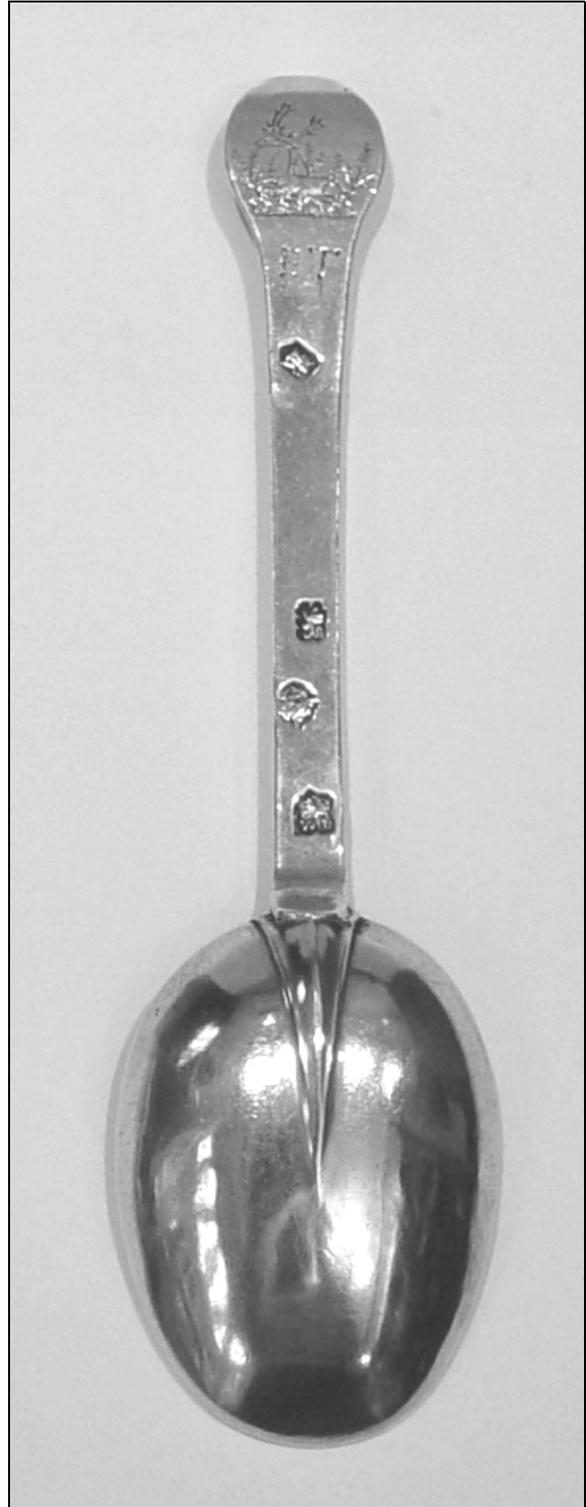


...The Finial...

ISSN 1742-156X
Where Sold £7.50

Volume 16/03
January/February 2006



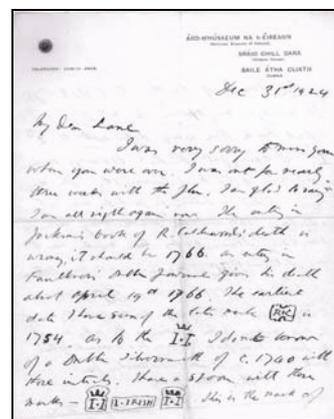
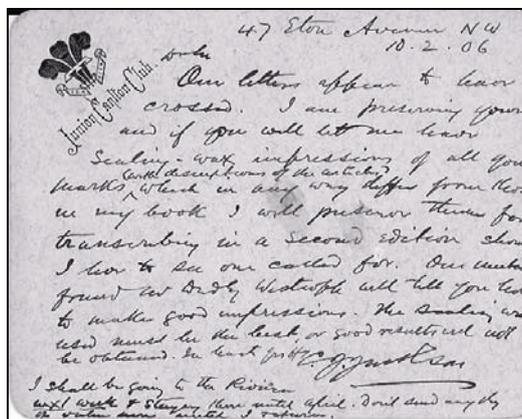
Scottish & Irish Provincial

Letters of Correspondence with Mr David H. Lane

From The Marquess of Breadalbane, Charles J. Jackson & Dudley Westropp

Spoon Club member, Fred Hobson, occasionally (every 2-3 years) visits a particular second hand bookshop, looking for books on Sheffield. On a recent visit he came across a booklet, *The Goldsmiths of Cork* by M.S.D. Westropp, which contained several letters of correspondence. As the book was reasonably priced he purchased it with the thought that it might be of interest to others in the Silver Spoon Club. Well he is right and now Sophie has transcribed the letters, which appear below.

I have found the letters most interesting, especially when the Marquess of Breadalbane remarks, in 1906, about how expensive provincial silver has become and sees the prices as ridiculous, which has been caused by new publications on the subject and American buyers. Literally 100 years on, has anything changed? – Ed. [As Fred's interest is more related to Sheffield, he has decided to put the booklet and correspondences into this issue's Postal Auction, Lot 5].



Taymouth Castle
Aberfeldy
Perthshire

29th January, 1906

Dear Mr Lane,

I received your letter of 25th regarding the old Perth spoon which you have and which you give the mark as H.Y. Unfortunately the last letter I cannot quite make out on account of the line of the shield. I am always interested to hear about any old Scotch plate, more particularly that of Perth.

A great many years ago I started collecting Scotch local marks, and I did so in all the small species I could find, for the simple reason that I thought they were more unlikely to be forged than larger ones. I had a good deal of trouble to get the list of deacons of the Perth silversmiths now printed in Mr Jackson's book on old plate; as you may easily imagine, it cost me no end of time and trouble to hunt up the various persons who marked with the initials H.Y., and therefore your spoon must be the most interesting one and one which I would very much like to have the opportunity of seeing. Unfortunately I do not very often go to Ireland, but perhaps we may have the pleasure of meeting in London. If so, I should very much like to see your specimen of Perth plate.

Since Mr Jackson has published his book I have discovered one of the unknown initials on page 509. It is that of J.K. (I.K.). Of course I have no documentary evidence, but a year or two ago I met a very old man in Perth who said he remembered a certain old John Keay who was a watchmaker and made small pieces of plate such as toddy ladles and spoons. I therefore think one might fairly surmise that I.K. from 1830 to 1850 was John Keay. If this is so and my old Perth friend is correct, the said John Keay was a descendant of the Robert Keay who was a well-known silversmith in Perth.

It is very difficult to get any large pieces of local Scotch plate. My own belief is that there were few made. I saw lately some pieces of Aberdeen, but the prices asked were so utterly absurd that fond as I am of Scotch old plate and marks I really did not see my way to purchase them. The book which put up the price of old Scotch plate was Chaffers', and I helped him with all the local Scotch marks. Indeed I had a very good opportunity of doing so as I was laid up one winter and spent it assisting the late Mr Chaffers with his Scotch marks. I think there is little doubt that Mr Jackson's book has made Scotch plate almost prohibitory to purchase – at least, that is my experience, for all the local people I knew and who used to write to me occasionally have ceased to do so; the prices they are getting now seem to be more than what one used to pay for the very best London plate.

I have collected a good many Scotch quaichs, but the price these have now reached is simply ridiculous. I was offered one in London last year, but the man calmly asked me £100 for it. It was of course a large one, but the figure worked out at something like £9 an ounce. I believe our American cousins of Scotch extraction will give anything for a Scotch quaich. This is my account for the raise of the price.

I think Mr Jackson's book is certainly the best that has ever been published on Scotch silver. A good many of the items mentioned as being in the Glasgow Exhibition are pieces which I have got. The rev. Mr Burns who described these did not mention to whom they belonged, and I am not at all sorry for this. Many of them were merely exhibited without a name, which may have accounted for their being described in the way in which they have been.

Of all Scotch marks I have come across which are difficult to recognise, those of Aberdeen are certainly the worst. I believe this is to be accounted for by a great many of the marks being those of tinkers – not the individuals we know nowadays, but the man who worked in metal and travelled the country, and who had his own private mark. For instance, in the Kirk Records here there is a sum mentioned as having been paid to so and so, ---, ---, the tinker, for mending the church plate. Then another item, so many crowns melted down for so and so, tinker, for silver to repair the church plate with. Unfortunately the silver plate of this parish has disappeared – whether through the medium of the laird, the minister or the tinker, I have never been able to trace.

Thanking you very much for giving me an additional Perth mark hitherto unknown,

Believe me,
Yours truly,
Breadalbane

Taymouth Castle
Aberfeldy
Perthshire
3rd February, 1906

Dear Mr Lane,

On my return here today from Argyllshire I found the spoon you were good enough to send me and have carefully examined the same.

I think the spoon undoubtedly is perfectly genuine, as also the marks. Of course I am only an amateur, and therefore any opinion expressed by me must be looked upon as merely that of an amateur. Undoubtedly the spoon is a curious one, and I therefore ventured to telegraph to you to know whether I might send it to Mr Jackson, the author of 'Hall-marks on Silver' so that he might have an opportunity of seeing it.

I should say that a crest or monogram etc. has been erased from the back of the spoon. On careful inspection of the mark of the eagle I find it is a single-headed one. I cannot trace any initials among those of the silversmiths of Perth which at all resemble H.Y. on the spoon you were good enough to send – in fact I have never seen any maker's mark at all resembling it. The original mark on silver in Perth was that of a lamb with a banner: that was used when the town was called St. Johnstone, the mark of the spread eagle being of later date, adopted I believe when the name was changed from St. Johnstone to that of Perth. The arms of the city being a double-headed eagle, one might fairly suppose that it would be most unlikely that any guild in the city would make a mistake and adopt a single-headed eagle instead. I only once saw anything approaching a single-headed eagle on a piece of Perth plate, and after minute inspection I came to the conclusion that the cause of this was either a defective punch or that the punch had been badly applied.

I know little or nothing of foreign silver, but I fancy I remember having shown to me on one occasion a piece of foreign plate with the mark of an eagle on it which was a single-headed one. The conclusion therefore that I come to regarding the spoon you were kind enough to send me is that it is not a piece of Perth plate but a foreign spoon with a mark very much resembling the Perth one.

In forwarding your spoon to Mr Jackson I also sent him a Perth teaspoon so that he might compare the two eagles, and asked him to be good enough to send the teaspoon on to you so that you might see for yourself. I have no idea of course what opinion Mr Jackson will form regarding the marks on your spoon.

Thanking you very much for giving me an opportunity of seeing your piece of plate,

Believe me,
Yours truly,
Breadalbane

47, Eton Avenue,
NW

6 February 1906

Dear Sir,

I received today from the Marquess of Breadalbane a large hash-spoon belonging to you and a tea-spoon of Lord B's with a letter in which his Lordship explained the belief that your spoon is of foreign manufacture.

I have written to Lord B what I am now repeating to you viz. that neither your spoon nor its marks resemble any foreign spoon or marks that I have ever seen and that your spoon resembles, very closely, British spoons of about 1740-50 which have come under my notice.

A single and double-headed eagle are both found on foreign plate, the single-headed variety is a Frankfurt mark but it differs from the marks on your spoon which I think resemble, somewhat, marks which I have found on Perth plate. The only examples of the single-headed eagle which I have found on Perth plate are of the term of Geo IV c. 1725 but if they were mistaken or misshapen a stamp was made and used which gave the Perth eagle one head instead of two in 1825. I cannot help thinking that the same thing might have happened about 1740-40 which is the period (or about) of your large spoon.

The difficulty in ascribing your spoon with certainty to Perth is that no goldsmith's name has been found which will fit the letters 'HY' in the maker's mark on your spoon.

I am sorry that my opinion conflicts to some extent with that of Lord Breadalbane and that I am unable to carry the matter any further than I have indicated but there are several makers marks found on Perth plate for which the names have yet been found and I cannot for that reason bring myself to exclude definitely your great hash-spoon from being within that category.

I assume that you will kindly return Lord Breadalbane's tea-spoon to Taymouth Castle after you have examined it and compared its marks which are much $\frac{3}{4}$ ^{ths} of a century later than the date to which I attributed your spoon.

Kindly acknowledge receipt of the two spoons.

Faithfully yours,
C.J. Jackson

21 Brook Street,
BATH

9th February, 1906

Dear Mr Lane,

I have heard from Mr Jackson that he has returned you your spoon. He seems to think it is a British spoon and not of foreign make. Of course I abide by his decision when he must have so much more experience in the matter of plate than I can possibly have had. He points out that there is a piece of plate at present in the Birmingham Assay Office with a single-headed eagle on it. If this is so, it certainly upsets my theory that the teaspoon I have with what appears to be a one-headed eagle was merely a bad impression.

With regard to the maker's mark, I can only say that I have never seen such a one in connection with the Silversmiths' Guild of Perth, though I have taken a considerable amount of trouble to hunt up all the makers who were registered in Perth. There is of course another solution to the matter, which is, that it is possible the spoon may have been made by some man not residing in Perth and sent in to the town to be marked. I have come across such cases in connection with this matter in a former letter to you.

I cannot say how very much obliged I am to you for giving me an opportunity of inspecting the spoon, and I am sure Mr Jackson was also glad to have an opportunity of seeing it.

I must apologise for the delay in replying to you, which was caused through my having to come here for a course of baths.

With kind regards,
Believe me,
Breadalbane

47, Eton Avenue,
NW

10 February 1906

My dear Sir,

I am much obliged by your kind letter, and I thank you for placing at my disposal your notes on marks which I shall be very pleased to make use of.

If you will kindly let me have your 'correspondence' I will place them where they will be useful should a second edition of the book be requested.

Yours very truly,
C.J. Jackson

47 Eton Avenue NW
10.2.06

Dear Sir,

Our letters appear to have crossed. I am preserving yours and if you will let me have sealing-wax impressions of all your marks (with descriptions of the articles) which in any way differ from those in my book I will preserve them for transcribing in a second edition should I have to see one called for. Our mutual friend Mr Dudley Westropp will tell you how to make good impressions. The sealing wax used must be the best, or good results will not be obtained.

Yours truly,
C.J. Jackson

I shall be going to the Riviera next week and staying there until April. Don't send anything of value until I return.

County Club,
BATH

14th February, 1906

Dear Mr Lane,

I have to thank you for your letters of 8th and 10th. The little Perth teaspoon arrived all safely.

Unfortunately I have no old silver here, nor any of my notes, and therefore must rely entirely on memory. I have somewhere at home a very full list of the Dundee silversmiths, dating back a considerable time. I cannot of course say from memory whether the initials D.McL are among them or not, though I rather fancy that there was a McLean who made silver in Dundee.

With regard to the Perth marks, there seems to be no doubt now that at one time there must have been a punch used in Perth of a single-headed eagle. I have one small piece of plate – a teaspoon, I think, - with this mark, but I always thought that it was either a defective punch or that the punch had been badly used.

However, Mr Jackson says that there are two specimens in the Birmingham Assay Hall with this particular eagle. Therefore one must naturally conclude that there was such a mark. My single-headed piece has the letters R.K. and in a square.

I have not some across the initials J.U. in connection with Perth, nor do I remember the letter S being so late as 1800. One might possibly be able to find out in Perth whether there was anyone who made silver and whose surname began with a U. A good many tradesmen settling in Perth in the early part of the eighteens I believe did so outside the borough boundaries, for the purpose of avoiding having to join the Guilds and pay the fees etc. – I forget the proper term for so doing. My authority for this statement was an old man – a gunmaker in Perth – whose father settled in this way a little after 1800. There is a place – now a village only – close to Perth, of the name of Scone. I believe that this place at one time was of far greater importance than at present, and it is just possible that the S may have stood for Scone, and the J.U. may have been some local watchmaker and silversmith who lived there. The only way one could find this out would be by hunting out about and enquiring of old Perth people in the neighbourhood, and I shall certainly do this when I go north.

I know the Dundee mark is I.S. and the W., and I should think from memory that the date 1760 for the same must be pretty correct. I have one or two specimens myself with this mark.

Curiously enough, Messrs. Crichton Bros., 22 Old Bond Street, London, sent me some rather nice little bits of old Scotch silver – Inverness, Greenock and Perth. As I have all the marks, they are of no use to me. They are not expensive, and are all I should say undoubtedly genuine and worth anybody's while to pick up who is on the lookout for local Scotch plate. Perth has the maker's mark W.R. – from memory, William Wright.

Believe me,
Yours truly,
Breadalbane

DUBLIN MUSEUM,
KILDARE STREET,
Dublin, **June 12th 1908**

My dear Lane,

Very many thanks for letting me see the spoon. As far as I can make it out, I think it is a bird's head erased, with mouth open, thus; - *. I should say that it is probably Scottish as numerous similar marks were used provincially in Scotland. The shape of the spoon is more like Scotland than Ireland.

I have got several more Cork goldsmiths lately. The 'SM' on your cream jug dated 1759 may be Stephen Mackrill mentioned in 1743. I also got two others of which I have marks and had no means to fit them before, 'SB' Stephen Broughton 1746 and 'RP' Robert Potter 1750. I found that John Mawman was a pewterer not a goldsmith.

I hope you are quite well now,

Yours sincerely,
Dudley Westropp

National Museum of Ireland
Kildare Street
Dublin
Dec 31st 1924

My dear Lane,

I was very sorry to miss you when you were over. I was out for nearly three weeks with the flu. I am glad to say I am right again now.

The entry in Jackson's book of R. Calderwood's death is wrong, it should be 1766; an entry in Faulkner's Dublin Journal gives his death about April 19th 1766. The earliest date I have seen of the later mark 'R+C' is 1754; as to the [crowned] 'I.I.' I do not know of a Dublin silversmith of c. 1740 with those initials. I have a spoon with these marks [crowned]'I.I.' 'I.IRISH' [crowned]'I.I.'. This is the mark of John Irish of Cork c.1748-75. The marks on my spoon are not perfect but I don't think there is any dot after the 2nd 'I'.

I have not got Richard Harvey's name in my list of Cork Silversmiths. He may have worked in silver or perhaps was only a dealer. However his mark may turn up some day.

I came across two marks new to me, lately – [script]‘G.H’ ‘STERLING’ probably George Halloran of Limerick c.1770-80; and [script]‘JS’ ‘STERLING’ c.1780-90 on a 3 leg sugar bowl, probably one of the Cork makers. John Sheehan is the only one of the period I can find. It may be a variation of the mark.

With all good wishes for the New Year.

Yours sincerely,
Dudley Westropp

National Museum of Ireland
Kildare Street, Dublin
Jan. 5th 1925

My dear Lane,

Very many thanks for your letter and the note from Wallace. I have examined the setting of the marks you sent and I think the mark is ‘I.L’ not ‘I.I.’ I have a spoon of 1751 with the mark and have seen others in which the ‘L’ looks somewhat like ‘I.’ The part between the upright stroke and the dot seems to be broken-thus ‘I.’ Even from the setting it looks like this. Look at the marks carefully and see if they are not ‘I.L.’

The pair of candlesticks must be nice. I should think they are early Queen Anne. I saw a pair some time ago here c.1715-20 marked ‘M.S’ ‘STERLING’ I don't know who MS is.

I have Purden's name in Limerick in directories of 1824 and the Christian name is Samuel. I think he died about 1846.

I return Wallace's note with thanks. Yours,
Dudley Westropp

National Museum of Ireland
Kildare Street, Dublin
Jan. 14th 1925

My dear Lane,

I have had a good look at the piece of silver and the following is the best I can make of the marks. The salts are certainly ‘I.L’, I think. Probably John Letablere. The ‘177’ on the fish slice looks to me like some consecutive number which was stamped on a collection of plate. I don't think it has anything to do with the maker. The ‘W.H’ ‘STERLING’ on the fork is almost certainly William Heyland. At least I have no other maker of those initials about the date c.1810. The ‘W H’ on the spoon c.1775 looks to me more like a Dublin mark. There are 2 or 3 WHs one the plate that used to be in its assay office 1765-1812. None however have the serrated edge.

I have noted D.CORBETT'S different stamp- I have not seen this variation before.

The teaspoon with ‘JOHN KEENE’ was made by Samuel Neville and Keene was probably the seller, the date is either 1807 or 8 and no John Keene appears to have had any plate assayed then.

The teaspoon with ‘STERLING’ and ‘e’ is difficult to make out. The letter looks like ‘e’ but I never saw a Cork mark with small letters. I am afraid it is beyond me.

I remember the marrow scoop with ‘SS’ *** on the quay long ago. It may be American. There were one or two 18th century American Silversmiths with initials ‘SS’. It does not look Irish.

The teaspoon with ‘DB’ I do not know. It may be English or Scottish. It seems rather thick for an Irish spoon of the date c.1810. I am afraid the information is not much but these odd marks are difficult to trace.

I return the postal order as we always pay postage.

With kind regards, Yours sincerely,
Dudley Westropp.

National Museum of Ireland
Kildare Street
Dublin
Jan 27th 1925

My dear Lane,

Very many thanks for your letter. Curiously enough I had seen the 'SM' freedom box here. The arms are those of Dublin. I put the date somewhere about 1750 or 60 or perhaps later. I could find no freedom given to any Heron. I can find no Dublin Silversmith of these initials in the late 18th century. There was Stephen Mackerill of Cork 1743-63, but why should a Dublin freedom box be made in Cork? Perhaps Mackerill was in Dublin before he came to Cork, but that looks too early for the box. If you have an exact drawing or rubbing of the George Hodden mark of 1754 I would be glad of a copy, as these dated marks help in other cases.

Yours sincerely,
Dudley Westropp

-O-O-O-O-O-O-