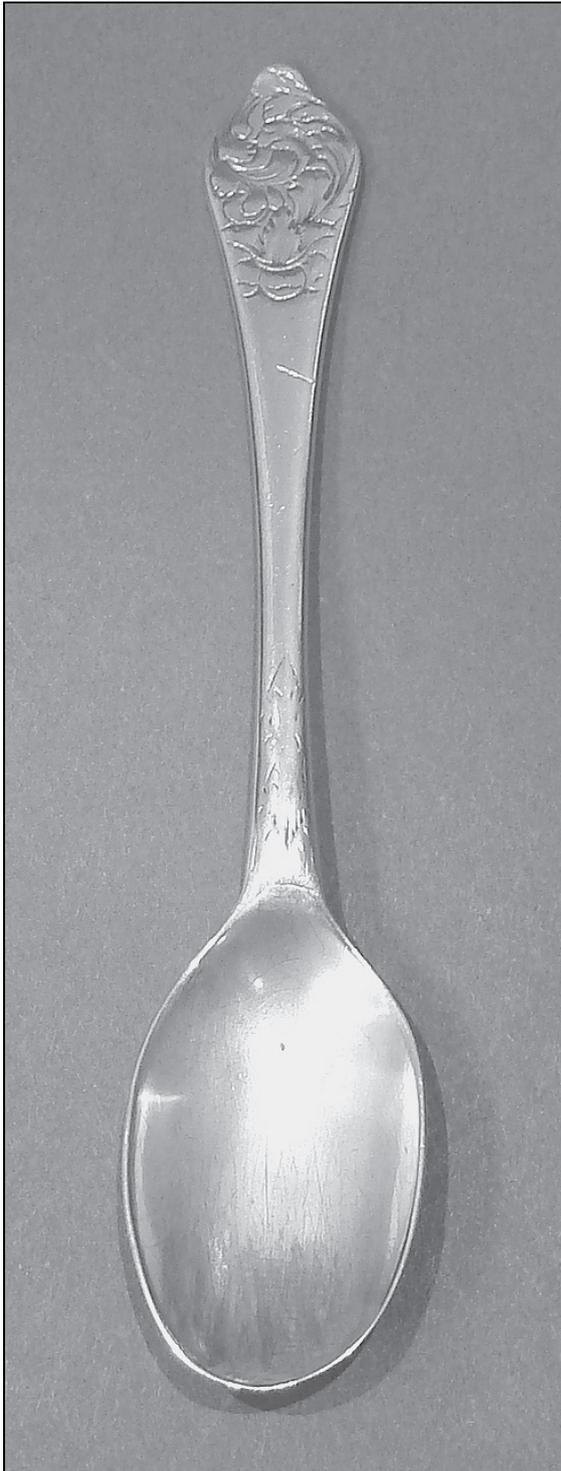


...The Finial...

ISSN 1742-156X
Where Sold £8.50

Volume 19/06
July/August 2009



Andrew Davidson and The Edinburgh Assay Office

By Laurence Joyce

Andrew Davidson (circa 1800–46) used several different marks on his silver, usually in combination alongside his ‘AD’ maker’s stamp. These included a portcullis taken from the coat of arms for Arbroath, a five-petalled rose for Montrose, a pot o’ lilies for Dundee and a strange mark resembling a pineapple, sometimes referred to as a crowned head.



Fig. 1

One of a pair of tablespoons (Fig.1) bought recently in London’s Portobello Road Antiques Market, is marked ‘AD’ / Pot of Lilies / Pot of Lilies / Portcullis, the other with the maker’s mark ‘AD’ and Edinburgh marks for 1836 (Figs. 2 & 3). Page 588 of *Jackson’s Silver and Gold Marks* lists a similar set of Edinburgh marks for Andrew Davidson for the years 1838–39. These two spoons are marked with the numbers 11 and 12 in script and have apparently at one time been part of the same set.

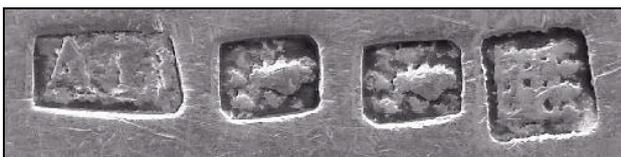


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

The important thing about the year 1836 is that this is the year of the Gold and Silver Plate Act (Scotland): ‘*An Act to fix the Standard Qualities of Gold and Silver Plate in Scotland, and to provide for the assaying and marking thereof. 13th August 1836*’. One of the purposes of this Act was to ensure that all silversmiths working in Scotland should submit their wares to either Glasgow or to Edinburgh to be assayed and marked. Failure to do so could incur a penalty of £100 for ‘*each Piece of Gold or Silver Plate so sold, exposed for Sale, or exported*’. The counterfeiting of punches was considered a Felony, and the possible penalty was transportation for life.

Although it would be unwise to draw firm conclusions from the marks on these two spoons, which may not have been manufactured in the same year, they do indicate that Andrew Davidson was submitting at least some of his silver to Edinburgh for assay in and around 1836.

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