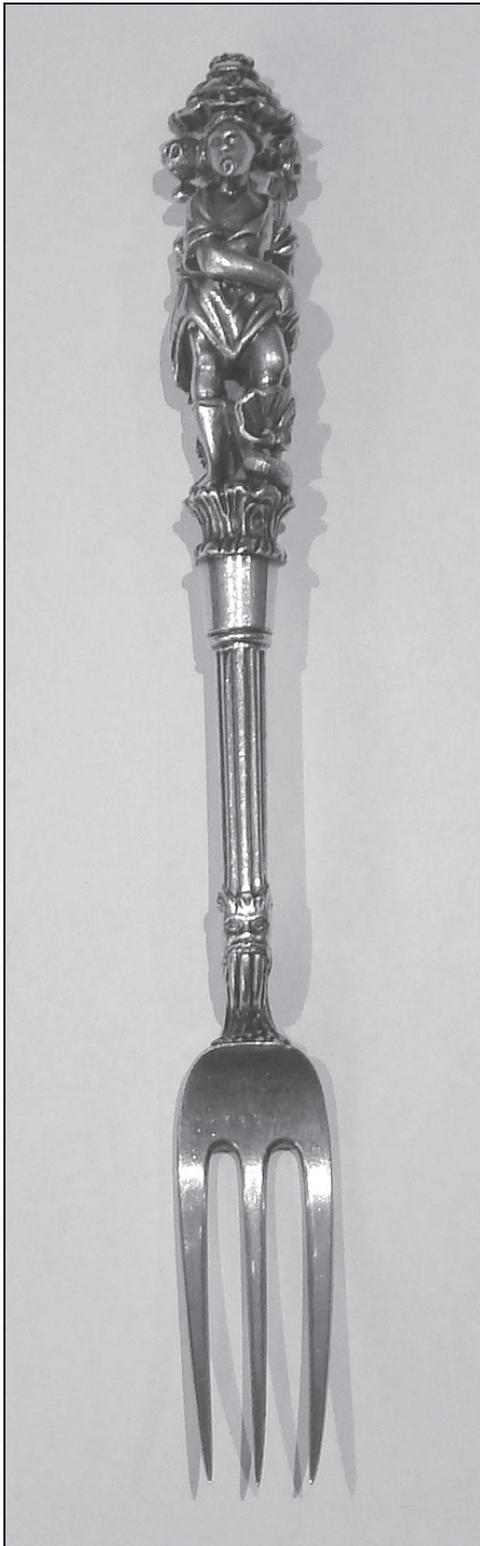


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Unusual Town Marks for Glasgow

By Kenneth J Reid

The Arms of Glasgow (Fig. 1) are described as “*Argent, on a mount in base an oak tree proper, the trunk surmounted by a salmon proper with a signet ring in its mouth, or, on the top of the tree a red breast, and on the sinister fess-point a hand-bell both proper*”. All the components come from stories and legends associated with the city’s patron saint, St Kentigern, also known as St Mungo. Children would learn the rhyme to remind them of the city’s crest, “*There’s the tree that never grew. There’s the bird that never flew. There’s the fish that never swam. There’s the bell that never rang*” (No mention of the ring in the fish’s mouth). The actual tree associated with Mungo was hazel, but is described heraldically and depicted as an oak tree. The bird is a robin.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Prior to 1st December 1784, when all Glasgow silver was required to be assayed in Edinburgh, each silversmith struck his own version of the town mark. Not only should some variation be expected, but indeed several different forms of the town mark are already recorded. The image (Fig. 2) is taken from a Hanoverian tablespoon by James Wright and resembles the town’s coat of arms. Figure 3 illustrates a mark that is a mirror image of the usual arms; this is taken from another Hanoverian table spoon, by Taylor and Hamilton. Yet another mark (Fig. 4) found on a small mug by Robert Luke, circa 1725 shows both the bell hanging dexter and the fish facing dexter. A similar configuration to this town mark is to be found illustrated in *Silver: Made in Scotland*¹ (figure 5:48) on what may be the earliest known Scottish tea caddy extant. It is also interesting to note that Jackson² illustrates and Finlay³ cites the unique mark of William Clerk (admitted 1693) whose name appears within the upper circumference of the town mark (Fig. 5). As in Figure 4, both bell and fish are dexter but, additionally, an upper case ‘G’ appears in the sinister position below the branches of the tree. This unusual mark provides clear evidence of a town mark associated exclusively with one silversmith. The small mug from which Clerk’s town mark is taken also bears a conventional maker’s mark (Fig. 6) so there is no suggestion that the composite town mark with maker’s name was intended to be an alternative to or substitute for the maker’s mark.



Fig. 6

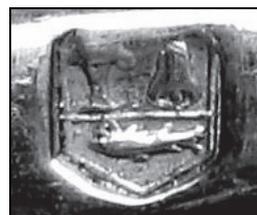


Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

We have seen in Figure 4 one mark employed by Robert Luke. However another of his town marks has been found depicting separate elements of tree, bell and fish within a shield (Fig. 7) in a most unusual configuration. One also notes that both the ring in the salmon’s mouth and the bird on the tree would appear to be absent. This mark is struck on a double drop Hanoverian tablespoon and I wondered if it were a unique representation of the arms. I was delighted and intrigued to have had my attention drawn to a similar depiction of the arms of Glasgow engraved on a communion cup of the Barony Ramshorn Kirk (Fig. 8); this cup, although unmarked is thought to have been made by John Luke circa 1704. Although not identical, the similarity between Robert Luke’s town mark and the engraving is remarkable; the latter shows the presence of the ring and the robin. While Glasgow’s motto is usually seen in its contracted form “*Let Glasgow Flourish*”, the engraved elements are surrounded by a longer version of the motto on four sides of a square ‘*LORD Let Glasgow Flourish through the preaching OF thy word*’. A silver cup, with the same engraving and date, (possibly the same cup) was sold by Bonhams in The Scottish Sale August 2005. The catalogue compiler commented, “*This interesting piece, which is an earliest surviving item of Glasgow-made secular*

silver hollowware, is modelled on a contemporary communion cup” (sic). Lyon & Turnbull’s catalogue of Scottish Silver and Accessories (August 2010) has one lot comprising another communion cup from the Barony Ramshorn church; this cup has a similar, but not identical, engraving and bears the date 1721. The maker is John Luke junior and the cup is described as having a “de structured” town mark. Close inspection revealed that the tree and bell had been interchanged (Fig. 9), the ring is present and the elements are in a circular punch. Thus these two marks would appear to be unique to their respective makers. In the same catalogue there is a very fine waiter by Robert Luke bearing his deconstructed town mark.

Those unaware of the hazel branch association with St Mungo may not be surprised that the town’s coat of arms has always depicted an oak tree. However the mark (Fig. 10) that appears on a bottom-marked Old English tablespoon must also be considered unusual. The tree does not conform to any other representation of an oak tree; this mark too appears to be unrecorded. The individual branches can be seen and are bare, and the robin, although conventionally positioned centrally on top of the tree, is large and prominent. The sequence of marking on this spoon is not uncommon, that is, the town mark and the maker’s mark are each struck twice (Fig. 11). The maker’s mark, ‘PF’, is most likely to be that of Peter Frazer, a goldsmith who obtained his burgh ticket in 1781 and whose essay was a gold ring⁴. Turner⁵ also attributes the name Peter Frazer to the initials ‘PF’ in his directory, but no corresponding mark is illustrated on the accompanying disc.



Fig. 11

The Glasgow town mark (Fig. 12) which appears on a pair of sugar tongs is irregular. The ring is large and seems almost to be a separate element within the arms and the bird here no longer sits atop the tree. Otherwise the elements of bell and fish are similar to Figure 3, in which the coat of arms is a mirror image of that which is found conventionally. Stylistically the pair of sugar tongs (Fig. 13) is of late 18th century design with feather-edge, bright-cut decoration and circular shell bowls. For a pair of Scottish sugar tongs, the bow is characteristically broad and curved. The maker’s mark ‘BP’ (Fig. 14) may be that of Berry Parkhill, a jeweller and goldsmith who served his apprenticeship with Milne and Campbell and who was admitted as a burgh and guild brother of Glasgow on 18 Sept 1783.⁶



Fig. 12

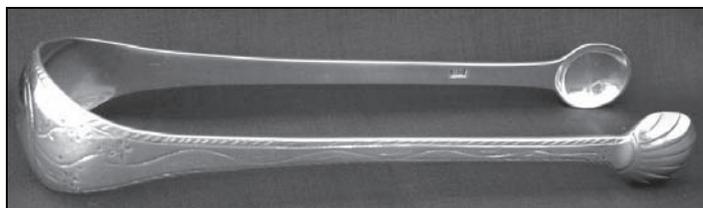


Fig. 13



Fig. 14

It is no revelation that Scottish burgh silver offers a variety of marks from one location or even by one silversmith. Glasgow was a provincial burgh and its silver, prior to 1784, has been seen to bear different representations and adaptations of the town’s arms. However the marks illustrated above (Figs. 7, 9, 10 & 12) may augment what has previously been understood as the range of Glasgow town marks. Perhaps it is reassuring that the elements, even when arranged in a way that does not strictly conform to the arms of the burgh, are so distinctive that they can readily be attributed to Glasgow. It would be interesting to learn if any other unpublished representations of the arms exist as struck town marks.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank and to acknowledge the permission given by the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland to illustrate William Clerk’s marks from the mug within their collection. I am indebted to George Dalglish of National Museums Scotland for his invaluable help especially for alerting me to the Barony/Ramshorn communion cups and in suggesting a possible attribution for the ‘BP’ maker’s mark. Thanks also to Shapes Auctioneers, Edinburgh for use of the image of the engraving (Fig. 8), to Lyon & Turnbull for the image of the town mark (Fig. 9) and to Colin Fraser for his encouragement.

Notes

1. *Silver: Made in Scotland*, George Dalglish and Henry Stuart Fotheringham, 2008.J
2. *Jackson’s Silver & Gold Marks*, Revised by Ian Pickford, 3rd Edition, 1989.
3. *Scottish Gold and Silver Work*, Ian Finlay, Revised by Henry Stuart Fotheringham, 1991.
4. *History of the Hammermen of Glasgow*, Lumsden & Aitken, 1912.
5. *A Directory of Scottish Provincial Silversmiths & Their Marks*, Richard W Turner, 2003.
6. Records of Burgesses and Guild Brethren of Glasgow 1751-1846.