

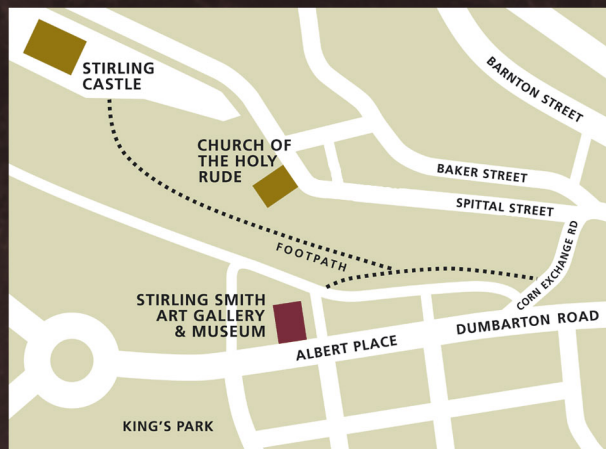


A Grain Gallon, 1707: In civic life, pewter was often used in the production of weights and measures. After the Act of Union in 1707 when Scotland became part of Great Britain, the old weights and measures were discarded and new ones adopted. This grain gallon, which carries the couchant wolf, the symbol of the Royal Burgh of Stirling, was one of them.

A Beggar's Badge for the Fife town of Dysart: Beggars' badges were proof that the beggar was licenced to beg. They were issued by Scottish local authorities from 1650 to 1800. Stirling burgh also regularly issued badges, but there are none in any public collection.



Wolf's Tooth Rattle, 1540s: The infant to whom this rattle belonged teathed by pressing his or her sore gums on the wolf's tooth. The rattle features four copper alloy bells and its stem ends in a whistle.



The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum
Dumbarton Road, Stirling, FK8 2RQ



Open Tuesday to Saturday 10.30am - 5.00pm
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THE NEISH COLLECTION OF BRITISH PEWTER



THE STIRLING SMITH
ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

PEWTER PRODUCTS

Before the products of the mass production pottery factories in the eighteenth century, pewter (an alloy of tin, lead and copper) was the most common substance used for the making of household utensils. Plates, drinking vessels, pots, pans, lamps, candlesticks, snuffers, inkstands and toys were all made of pewter. Pilgrim badges in the Middle Ages were made of pewter, and pewter jewellery making still continues today. After the Scottish Reformation of 1560, churches ordered communion plate, flagons and tokens from pewterers, a practice which continued into the nineteenth century.



Pewterers in Scotland belonged to the Hammermen Craft, the trade guild which regulated all who wielded the hammer. These included gold, silver and blacksmiths, as well as clock makers, saddlers, lorimers and pewterers. Their motto was 'By hammer in hand, all arts do stand' and their patron saint was St. Eloi, who in ancient times had made a golden throne for King Clovis. Most Scottish churches in the towns or burghs had an altar to St. Eloi.



THE STIRLING HAMMERMEN

Between 1599 and 1620 when the town was small it registered four pewterers, a greater number than existed in any royal burgh except Edinburgh. The Incorporation's earliest minute book is dated 24 January 1596 when one Robert Robertson, Deacon of the Hammermen and pewterer, gave a statement of accounts.

It is, however, clear that the Stirling Incorporation dates from an earlier period. In 1604 it was recorded that Robert Bruce, a saddler, had delivered to the new Deacon 'in keeping for the wekfare of the craft, thrie pieces of evidence, with an copies in peper, togidder with two buiks with two pensalls, with ane sucthe.' A latter minute stated the 'evidence' comprised parchment charters and these may well have been the original, earlier Seals of Cause granted to the Hammermen about which to-day nothing is known. The 'two buiks' presumably contained the earlier minutes while the 'pensalls' would have been the flags of the Hammermen - again long lost like the 'ane boxe with twa keyis' that held the craft funds.

THE NEISH COLLECTION

Pewter is immensely popular with collectors world-wide and today, the once-common domestic, civic and church artefacts made of pewter are hard to find. For nearly fifty years, Alex Neish has sought to keep the best of British pewter in the United Kingdom by buying it in the sale rooms. A graduate of the University of Edinburgh, he has identified the Stirling Smith Art Gallery and museum as the ideal home for his collection. His collection has many exquisite, rare pieces, such as this rose water dish (shown left), made by Richard Weir of Edinburgh, for King James VI's palace of Holyrood c1600.

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

Pewter Tankard, 1690:

The tankard is decorated with the portraits of William III and Queen Mary. It commemorates the Glorious Revolution of 1688 when they were chosen as monarchs of Britain over the catholic King James VII.



Beggar's Badge: This rare pewter pilgrimage badge depicts the murder of St Thomas Becket (c.1118 - 1170) on 29 December 1170. Becket was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162 by King Henry II, but fell out of favour as he sought to defend the rights of the church against those of the sovereign. Four knights killed Becket after the king uttered the famous line: 'Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?'

