

Director's Choice – Timo Koopman
The Leopard's Head & Fleur-De-Lys East Anglican Tankard



17th Century Tankard Norfolk, probably Norwich c.1678; unidentified maker.
Available at Koopman Rare Art

Our focus this week is this superb and pristine 17th century flat-lidded tankard that highlights the skill of the goldsmith and wealth of the patron in 17th century East Anglia. This gorgeous tankard featured in the exhibition last September at St Peter Mancroft Church. This exhibition explored the owners and lives of a number of pieces in the exhibition and included some copies of the Norwich Civic Plate.

St Peter Mancroft Church houses the treasury displaying some of Mancroft's remarkable collection of church silver (one of the finest of any parish church in the country) including the Glean and Thistle cups, and other historic artefacts and artworks. Church plate is also on display here from the neighbouring church of St Stephen.

Norwich during the Middle Ages and until 1700 was the second largest city in England and the centre of the weaving industry. It possessed sixty medieval churches, thirty-one of which are still standing and all built before 1500. In addition, it boasted of seven major monasteries and twenty lesser ones. Other pointers to the importance of Norwich at that time are its wealth of medieval deeds approaching 10,000 in number, its large numbers of recorded apprentices, and not least its considerable number of goldsmiths. Between 1300 and 1700 goldsmiths became freemen at the rate of one every six years so obviously the citizens and the gentry from the surrounding countryside had money to spend on luxury goods. (1)

Its prosperity was founded primarily on the manufacture and export of textiles. This cloth trade, focused particularly on woollen and worsted textiles. Merchants sold Norwich cloth throughout England and across Europe, especially to markets in the Low Countries. The arrival of skilled Dutch and Flemish Protestant refugees in the second half of the 16th century strengthened the city's textile industry by introducing new weaving techniques and products.

The large population of Dutch and Flemish immigrants influenced many aspects of Norwich culture, including craftsmanship and decorative arts. Silver produced in Norwich often reflected artistic trends from the Netherlands, one of Europe's richest commercial centres. These continental influences can be seen in the forms and ornamentation of surviving silver vessels from the period.



Beaker originally belonging to the Dutch Church Norwich. Maker's mark of William Cobbold c.1530 – 1585. Norwich & Castle Museum & Art Gallery

In the 1560's and with the reformation of the church there was a demand to convert chalices and other church plate formerly used for mass. From records in churches, wills and inventory plate lists available in Norfolk and Suffolk we can see that the majority of silver items fall into two categories. Those that were used for worship and those that were used to entertain. From the proportion of surviving objects in churches to those that are secular, it is evident that there was a large amount of recycling of plate that went on and the refashioning of silver plate for the patron in the latest style was a profitable one indeed.

The wealth of the city and surrounding towns created a strong demand for luxury goods, including silver plate, and helped establish East Anglia as one of the leading provincial centres of English silversmithing.

As a result, Norwich became a city of wealthy merchants, craftsmen, and civic officials. Their wealth was displayed through impressive parish churches, grand merchant houses, charitable foundations, and the ownership of valuable household goods. Silver objects such as cups, tankards, spoons, salt cellars, and communion plate were important symbols of status and prosperity. Even relatively modest households might possess some silverware by the late 17th century.

The success and wealth of the goldsmith in Norwich, Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth created a powerful gild. An important milestone came in 1565, when Norwich was granted the right to assay and hallmark silver. This meant that silver made in the city could be officially tested for purity and marked with local hallmarks. Norwich became only the second provincial town in England, after York, to possess such privileges. The hallmarking system protected buyers and enhanced the reputation of Norwich silver throughout the region.

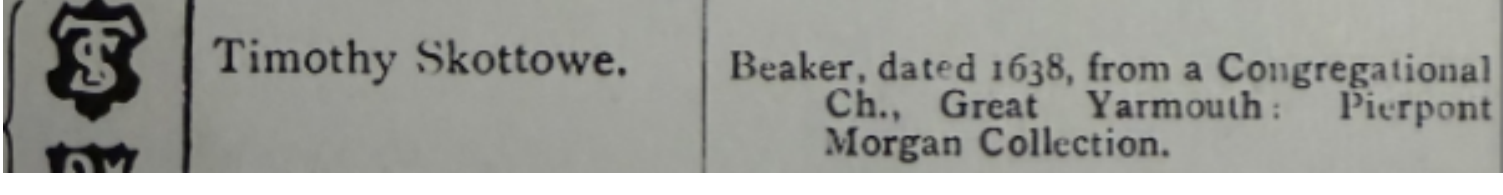
The 17th century saw the emergence of several notable Norwich silversmiths. Among the most important was the Haselwood family, who operated one of the city's leading workshops. Arthur Haselwood and his descendants produced a wide range of silverware marked with Norwich hallmarks. Their work demonstrates the high level of craftsmanship that existed in the city.

A particularly remarkable figure was Elizabeth Haselwood, who continued the family business after her husband's death in 1684. She is the only known female silversmith working independently in Norwich during the 17th century and produced silver objects that are now found in museum and royal collections.



Hallmarks as found on the main body of the tankard
The leopards head and fleur-de-lys group c.1649 -c.1683

Christopher Hartop dedicated a chapter of his wonderful book East Anglian Silver 1550 – 1750 on this elusive maker. Certainly, six church pieces and a further seventeen secular objects are recorded with this group of hall marks that comprise of a lion inspired by the London town mark, a leopard's head without the crown, a TS/ST conjoined hallmark, a fleur-de-lys and a capital Roman 'G'. Timothy Skottowe a Norwich goldsmith has been touted as one possibility and Christopher Hartop has suggested this hallmark was possibly used for some time by another goldsmith and assay master Edward Wright. (2)



Entry in Jackson for the hallmark of Timothy Skottowe pg. 317

The longevity of these hallmarks on recorded pieces is some 34 years and further questions arise in that Timothy Skottowe dies in 1645. The Church plate that survives bearing this hallmark exists in churches all located in or around Norwich, so it is reasonable to assume that our goldsmith's workshop was based in Norwich. (3) One thing is sure, the quality of the objects is always good, and this is seen once more in this glorious, lidded tankard with its pinpricked decorated initial of A.Y and A.K together with the date 1678 on the handle. Interestingly, this tankard last appeared on the market on the 27th of February in 1981 when it was sold by Sotheby's, New York.



Details of the Pinpricking on the handle

One other similar tankard is known by the same maker in a private collection. It is illustrated in Christopher Hartop's book published in conjunction with the exhibition at Norwich Cathedral Treasury 23rd September -17th October 2004. Pg 84 item 61.

References:

Norwich Silver and its Marks 565 -1702 ; The Goldsmiths of Norwich 1141 – 1750 by G. N. Barrett. p. 11
East Anglican Silver 1550 1750 Edited by Christopher Hartop p.72
East Anglican Silver 1550 1750 Edited by Christopher Hartop p.71

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