

ART. XII.—*Notes on the Postlethwayts of Millom, with reference to an early Initialled Spoon of that family.* By ALBERT HARTSHORNE, F.S.A.\*

*Communicated at Carlisle, Sept. 13th, 1888.*

I should hardly have ventured to bring such an uncertain antiquity as an un-hall-marked spoon to the notice of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquaries, if there were not other evidences upon it by which its history and date may be traced. I will go as briefly as I can into those evidences, and I hope to be able to show that it is possible to date it, approximately, without any of those signs which the researches of Mr. Morgan and Mr. Cripps have made available for use.

I will deal first with the series of initials engraved in the bowl of the spoon. These take it back far enough to give it an interest of its own, and I shall then endeavour to carry it back farther still by the aid of its general appearance and fashion.

This little piece of plate has come down to me from the family of Postlethayt, of Millom, in Cumberland, and it will be convenient to go a little into their history. It is an ancient local name in that county signifying Postle's clearing. There are several thwaites in the immediate vicinity of Millom, — Crossthowayte, Crosbythwaite, Hallthwaites, Birketthwaite, Stonythwaite, Austhwaite, Waberthwaite, Thwaitesgate, and Thwaites, all suggestive of early struggles with nature; the Postlethwayts are, therefore, here on their own ground, in every sense. As to their more particular history, it appears to have been

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\* This paper is, with some slight alterations, the same that Mr. Hartshorne read before the Society of Antiquaries of London, Feb. 2, 1888, and since printed in their *Proceedings*. By the courtesy of the Council of that learned body it is now reproduced in our *Transactions*, and by the same obliging co-operation we are enabled to give an illustration of the piece of silver plate in question. The Pedigree, however, is now printed for the first time. *Ed.*

barely

Pedigree showing the descendants of John Postlethwayt of Millom, co. Cumb.

A star (\*) over the names refers to the Initials on the Spoon

N.B.—The Millom Registers begin 1590.

JOHN POSTLETHWAYT, = ELIZABETH ———;  
of Bankside, Millom, buried 1595. | buried Feb. 20, 1591.

JOHN POSTLETHWAYT, = SUSANNA ASKEW,  
of Bankside, married 1585, first mentioned as of Powhouse, 1605. ("John de Powhouse") of Powhouse, living 1615.  
Par. Reg. Churchward, 1601, died 16 . . ?

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barely touched upon, and that little not very accurately, by Nicolson and Burn. There is a history of Thwaites, which I have not seen.

The principal family in Millom from an early time was the ancient one of Huddlestone, of Millom Castle, who inhabited that fortress till the end of the seventeenth century. Humphrey Senhouse possessed it and writes thence in 1714.

It appears that the Postlethwayts were of Bankside in Millom, and that this estate has been held by them from a very early time. On turning to the parish registers of Millom, which begin in 1590, I find that John Postlethwayt, of Bankside, is first mentioned as such in 1595. His son John, who married Susannah Askew, of Pow House, in 1585, is described as of Bankside, on the birth of his daughter Susannah, in 1595; he is first mentioned as 'de Powhouse' in 1605. Powhouse had been bought from the Huddlestons.

John Postlethwayt, whose initials appear first on the spoon, had a large and patriarchal family. He died after 1615, the year his youngest child Christopher was born. He had three properties in Millom: Powhouse and Lacra, Lowscals, and Bankside. To his eldest son John, John the patriarch left Powhouse and Lacra; this man became ancestor of the Postlethwayts of that ilk, who continued until the end of the last century, when the properties passed by marriage to the Myres, who now hold it. The second son, George, had Lowscals, and after four generations, that branch became extinct, and Lowscals merged into the Myers family.

The third son Matthew, whose initials come next on the spoon, was born 1607; to him the patriarch left Bankside. He married Margaret Hunton in 1636, died in 1682, and was buried in woollen cloth.

Matthew Postlethwayt had four sons: Hugh a rough-tempered, quarrelsome yeoman, of Swallest in Bootle,  
living

living 1713; Thomas, of Bankside, born 1637; George, of Bankside, born 1639; and John, born 1650. Hugh, the eldest, had three sons, who had families and, living elsewhere than Millom, I have not traced them further. There were also two daughters married. Of Thomas, the second son, I only know that he had a son George, buried in 1769. George, of Bankside, the third son, was an excellent God-fearing man, and his high qualities were transmitted with increased measure to his eldest son, Matthew, of whom presently. He died in 1710, and was buried January 1, 1710-11. A sermon was preached at his funeral from the text: 'So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.' I mention this as tending to corroborate the early settlement of the Postlethwayts here. The original MS. sermon is in my possession.

John, the fourth son—the second I.P. on the spoon—was educated at Whicham, near Millom; from hence he was entered of Merton College, Oxford; he took his degree of B.A. in 1674, and proceeded M.A. in 1678. He was a ripe scholar, and became Head Master of St. Martin's school, London, founded by Archbishop Tenison. On the resignation of Dr. Gale, promoted to the Deanery of York in 1697, he was appointed Chief Master of St. Paul's school. He presented testimonials for that office from the bishop of Oxford, Hody, the famous Richard Bentley, the bishop of Ely, Wake afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, Knipe head master of Westminster, Mr. Evelyn, the bishop of Norwich, the archbishop of Canterbury, and others. Contemporary copies of these are in my collection. In this office he continued, with great reputation as a scholar, until his death, September 26, 1713.

I have gone at this length into the history of the different brothers as much in order to show that I have not swerved to either side of the pedigree in order to make up a case for the spoon, as to demonstrate that it would

not

not be possible to appropriate the three earlier initials to any other individuals. Why the youngest brother, John, took away with him to London—when he relinquished his inheritance in Millom, as he did, to his brothers—the treasured relic of his grandfather, I cannot say, unless, indeed, it was regarded as a talisman for the good fortune which certainly and deservedly followed him in his career.

I possess the bill and full details of his funeral, some invitations to the ceremony, at St. Austin's Church, City, scutcheons of his arms on paper, of which eight dozen were provided for decorating the lying-in-state, and afterwards given to friends; a set of his six silver gilt spoons, his ivory *viatorium*, his complicated telescope walking-stick, and an inventory of the whole of his household effects. Some of his furniture, and plate other than spoons, and many of his personal relics, are also in my possession. I have also several copies of the Sermon, bound in black, entitled "The Christian Schoolmaster," preached at John Postlethwayt's funeral, by John Hancock, D.D. Among other original Postlethwayt documents in my hands are some volumes of the Chief Master's correspondence, part of a series of twenty-eight books. John Postlethwayt left nearly the whole of his property, including estates he had bought at Denton, in Norfolk, to his nephew, Matthew, son of the God-fearing George, whose initials come as the fourth set on the spoon.

Matthew Postlethwayt was born at Millom in 1679; educated by his uncle John at St. Paul's school, he was entered of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, then called Benet College, in 1699. He migrated to St. John's in 1701; B.A. 1702, M.A. 1706. His first cure was at Whicham, in Cumberland, in 1703. He became vicar of Shottesham, in Norfolk, in 1707, and rector of Denton, in the same county, in 1714, where he built the rectory-house, 1718. He was appointed Archdeacon of Norwich and

and rector of Redenhall in 1742, and died in 1745. He married, first, in 1704, Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Rogerson, rector of Denton. She died in 1730, leaving two daughters, Barbara and Elizabeth, and an only son, John, of whom I will speak presently. Matthew married, secondly, in 1731, Matilda, sister of Sir Thomas Gooch, Bart., progenitor of the Gooches of Benacre, and successively bishop of Bristol, Norwich, and Ely. She died in 1760.

In my possession is a volume of Matthew's correspondence, his gold and crystal ruffle buttons, and his miniature portrait by Francis Cufaude, his portrait in oil by the same artist, and another in pastels by John Saunders, and other relics. He was a man of so many high attainments—a knowledge of antiquities being one—that I can do no more now than mention the fact. He is described as a tall, spare, grave man, held in high respect, and seems to have been in every relation of life a worthy scion of that independent race, the 'statesmen' of Cumberland.

I now come to John Postlethwayt, son of Matthew, whose initials appear last on the spoon. He was born in 1711, and educated at St. Paul's school; his portrait in pastels by Saunders, at the age of nine years, shows him in a white wig, and with black eyes, like his father. He was entered of Merton College, Oxford, in 1728. I gather, from family letters, that he was a contrarious clever boy, and a wild, extravagant, dissipated man. He gave his father much sorrow at Oxford, but he was ordained in 1735, 'being well affected to our present establishment both in Church and State,' and instituted to the rectory of Thelveton, in Norfolk, in 1737. But this did not suit him. He then became chaplain on board H.M.S. 'Worcester,' in 1738. The sea was not wide enough for his restless spirit, so he got his discharge after a few months. I have got the papers for his appointment and release. On his father's death, in 1745, he, as a Merton man, obtained

tained the valuable living of Denton. He enjoyed this only for a few years, and came to his end by an accident in 1750. Among other documents relating to him is a volume containing his correspondence, the inventory of his plate, and the bill for his coffin.

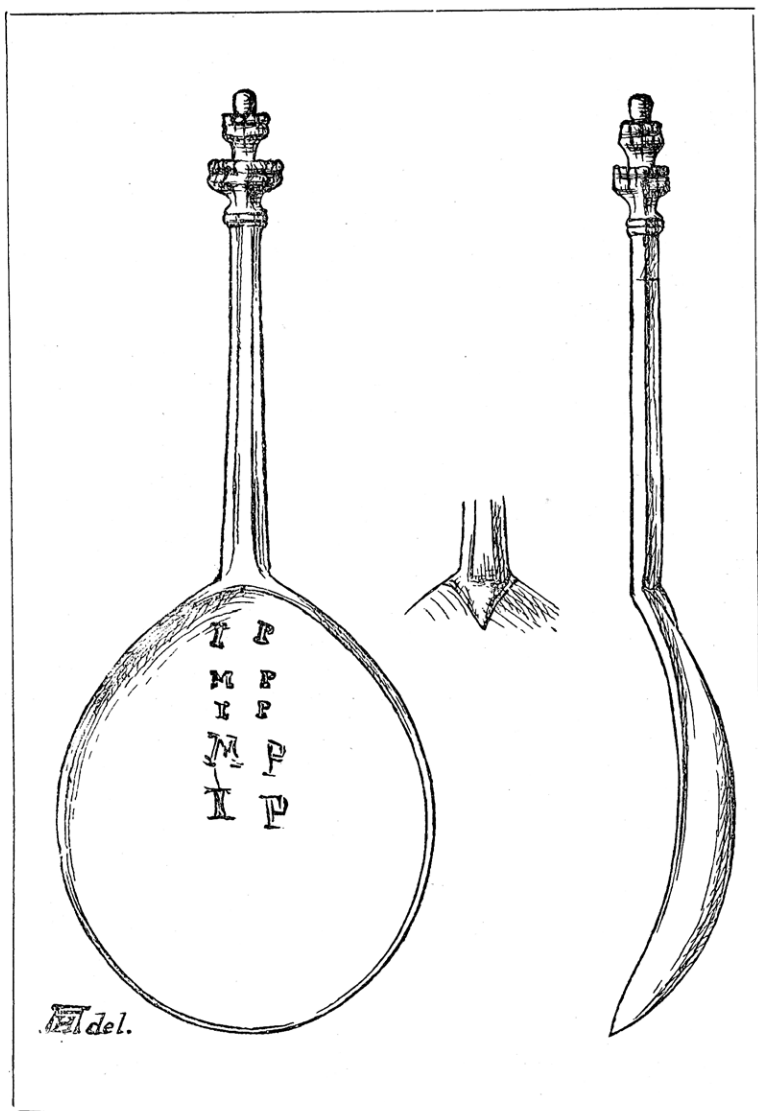
I have now come to the end of my story, as far as the identification of the initials on the spoon are concerned. As to direct documentary evidence, there is only a mention in one of the letters from Elizabeth Postlethwayt, younger daughter, to Barbara Kerrich, elder daughter of Matthew Postlethwayt, to the effect that it was buried in the garden of Denton rectory, together with other valuables, on the occasion of a scare of the Scotch rebels in December, 1745; and the entry in the last John Postlethwayt's list of plate of 1750, in which it is described as 'one old gilt spoon,' weighing one ounce, its exact weight now.

The rest of its tale is soon told—and perhaps soonest by reference to the annexed Postlethwayt pedigree, brought down to the present date. I have run the risk of being wearisome with all these, to a great extent, small annals. I might easily have said less, I might have said nothing, and left the spoon to speak for itself; but having a good deal of Postlethwayt evidence which I found so fully corroborated by the parish registers of Millom, I thought it might not be improper to bring them together in deducing the certain history, for three hundred years, of nothing more heroic than a small piece of silver. I should add, that I have scarcely before faced the drudgery of a pedigree, but I have at least learnt how much out-of-the-way biography may be contained in, or rather stirred up by, a single spoon.

I have now, as I proposed in the outset, to take the spoon on its own merits, with the view of trying to get at its date. In the absence of hall-marks we have to look, first, at its general form, and secondly, at the details of the head.

POSTLETHWAYTS

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SILVER-GILT SPOON WITH INITIALS OF MEMBERS OF POSTLETHWAYT FAMILY. (Full Size).

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As regards the general form, it may be fairly compared with the maidenhead spoon, *circa* 1540, engraved on page 193 of the last edition of Mr. Cripp's *Old English Plate*. These short-handled spoons were probably so made for the convenience of carrying in the pocket, or *gypcière*, at a time when everybody carried a spoon of some kind about with him; and I believe I am right in saying that, unless they were made with folding handles, it was the usual shape from the thirteenth to about the middle of the sixteenth century; and this is also the traditional Scandinavian type. With so wide a margin we can, therefore, get nothing definite as to date from the form of the spoon. We are therefore, driven back upon the head for information.

I take it for granted that the spoon is of Perpendicular date, and English work. But Perpendicular is a loose phrase, for that style had its dawnings at Gloucester in 1330, and lasted in its native purity till the coming of Torregiano in the first decade of the sixteenth century.

We are rather deficient in information respecting the progress of art in England under Henry VIII., but we know how rapidly in architecture Renaissance penetrated Gothic. And as the fashion in plate followed behind that of architecture, we may examine the spoon under notice to see which of the two styles predominates in the head or crope.

Persons who have studied the details of crockets and finials will have noticed how gradually the form of the finial changes, in the course of Gothic, from the graceful foliage of Decorated to the stiffness of the latest Perpendicular. To the latter quality the head of the spoon belongs, and with the exception, perhaps, of the plain pommel on the top, the head is undoubtedly Gothic, with no trace of Renaissance about it.

Allowing for the general lingering of Gothic in articles of silver, and for the continuance of a kind of traditional  
type

type in such things as spoons, I think this one may be on the one count, as early as 1525, and on the other, not later than 1545. I say this with some diffidence, not having had the opportunity of comparing it with other examples of known dates. But I notice that the Wylie chalice, dated 1524, exhibits distinct evidences of the Renaissance, showing that that style had already crept into Gothic plate in that year.

The John Postlethwayt who first put his initials upon the spoon might very well have acquired it thirty years before his marriage in 1585, and this would take it back to 1555; or it may have been his christening spoon, if such were given so early, or it may have been an old spoon which came to him from his father. All this, however, is mere speculation, and, as I said before, I mention any dates before 1585, the year of the second John Postlethwayt's marriage, with considerable reserve.

I have only to add that three first sets of initials have been stamped with single punches, a space for the first set having been possibly cleared by effacing the leopard's face, which should properly be there; the rest are engraved. There are some indications of marks, or repairs, immediately below the neck of the crope, and I should add that the bowl of the spoon was unfortunately re-gilt by my grandmother Mrs. Kerrich about sixty years ago. It is apparent that the entire spoon was originally gilt.

A set of six split-ended gilt spoons before mentioned, which belonged to the Chief Master are noteworthy. They are the work of three different makers, and are hall-marked between 1681 and 1691. They seem to have scarcely been used, and are in the same condition as when they left the workman's hand. They have followed the fortunes of the single spoon.

In the discussion which followed the reading of the above paper before the Society of Antiquaries, Mr. FRANKS said concerning the initialled spoon, that if English, it was of much earlier date than Mr. Hartshorne thought; he was afraid, however, that it was more probably Swedish, but even then of very early date.

ART.