

Talking About Glass Steins: An English Glass Stein

By Jim Sauer
Master Steinologist

Nineteenth century English glass makers weren't known for the production of glass steins, but occasionally a piece can be found that shows some effort must have gone into designing and making that type of a drinking vessel. An English stein with silver mounts, as shown in Picture 1, had an appeal that made it a bit difficult to pass up the chance to obtain something so unusual. Concerning the English appearance, there is a definite mix of glass decorating styles from different periods of the nineteenth century that had to be looked at to satisfy a personal curiosity.



A notable feature of the stein is the glass style, known as "Wrythen", which is usually seen on an English dwarf ale glass, which is a small funnel shaped glass bowl mounted on a short stem over a plain circu-



lar foot. A search in the glass reference book, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Glass* by Harold Newman, provided a picture of the ale glass which is reproduced above in Picture 2.

The glass originated in England during the seventeenth century, and with variations remained a popular and a rather inexpensive drinking vessel over several centuries.

Wrythen is described as a vertical decoration of mold blown reeds, ribbing or fluting formed in a spiral or swirled pattern. The same glass reference book explained a method of shaping the glass for this stein. A gather of molten glass on a blow-pipe was inserted into an iron dip mold (a one piece open mold) with an interior of vertical

ribs. The bottom of the mold shaped the base for the glass, and with blow pipe pressure the rib impressions formed the sides. The glass was withdrawn and at that point the glass-maker, using a tool, twisted the malleable glass approximately 120 degrees. This was followed by a final inflation, and shaping, which completed the full spiral shape. The elongated glass body was fire polished to bring out the shine of the heavy English leaded glass, transferred to a pontil rod, and "cracked-off" (separated) from the blow-pipe. Cracking-off was the method of circumscribing the glass with a scratched line and giving the blow pipe a sharp tap to break the glass away cleanly. The lip rim was shaped, the handle attached and the glass cracked-off from the pontil rod, which completed the hot glass process. The glass was then placed in an annealing chamber for the controlled cooling down period.

Back to the stein in Picture 1. The silver mounts certainly catch the eye, as the flat lid and small plain thumb lift (Picture 3) follow the designs of earlier English silver tankards from the Georgian Period of the mid-eighteenth





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century. The lid hinge assembly also resembles attachments from that earlier period.

The silver decorations on the lip and base rims (Picture 4) show a design difference, as the influence of the Art Nouveau style with foliage, rolling curves and scrolling dominate the matching rims.

The three silver pieces are each hallmarked, and also show the initials CJF of Charles James Fox, a London silversmith (Picture 5). The three individual hall-

marks are of a walking lion, the head of a leopard and the letter P. The lion indicates London as the location of manufacture, the leopard head denotes the silver assay hall (the origin of the term hallmark) and the letter P is code for the year date of 1910. The CJF initials were registered to Charles Fox & Co. Ltd. from 1893-1920.

There are four features that are not English, such as the capacity of the stein at 0.5 liter, and the tall tapered shape of the glass followed the style of the Empire Pe-

riod from the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The base is cut with a sixteen point star (Picture 6), a decoration that originated during the Biedermeier Period in the second quarter, and the handle shows the influence of Jugendstil glass designs during the fourth quarter.



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There are many unusual glass steins in a wide variety of styles from the nineteenth century, which is the primary reason glass is so interesting. One hundred years of production and design changes, which have ranged from the most basic steins to the more elaborate pieces of colored, cut, enameled and engraved decorations. The finer glass steins are easily recognized and appreciated by collectors today.

References:

Blair, C. *The History Of Silver*, McDonald, 1987.

Newman, H. *An Illustrated Dictionary Of Glass*, Thames & Hudson, 1987. Picture 2 photo credit.

Phillips, P. *The Encyclopedia Of Glass*, Peerage Books, 1987.

Wheaton Art Glass Studio, Millville, N.J. Information received from a live demonstration of glass making.

Photos courtesy of Michael McArdle

