Some commonly found Irish pewterers marks
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<u>Introduction</u>

This article is meant to help you identify some of the more commonly found Irish pewterers marks. Obviously in selecting what marks to include there has to be some form of judgement and if you cannot find what you are looking for I apologise. In presenting my choice of selected marks I have made use of photographs rather than the traditional line drawings. Many of the photographs have been blown up to help you to identify marks when using a magnifying glass. There can be pitfalls in identifying marks one being that pewterers who were in business for long periods will have used many punches even if they conformed to a general design differences will be noticed when looking at marks in great detail. Such differences may mean the mark you are studying is a fake or may just mean it was made using a different punch.

<u>Joseph Austen et al</u>

The first recorded reference to Joseph Austen, pewterer of Cork, is dated 1791 and the last recorded entry to his family business is in a trade directory is in 1846. That, however, is not the end of the enterprise as it is then taken over by the Gibbings family, ironmongers of 93 and 94 North Main Street, Cork. The Gibbings set up the Munster Iron Company in the 1850s but went on producing pewter with the Austen marks until about 1880. This was one, if not the most prolific pewtering business in 19th century Ireland. The Austen's haystack measures are one of the most successful design of measure ever produced. Below are a selection of Austen marks.
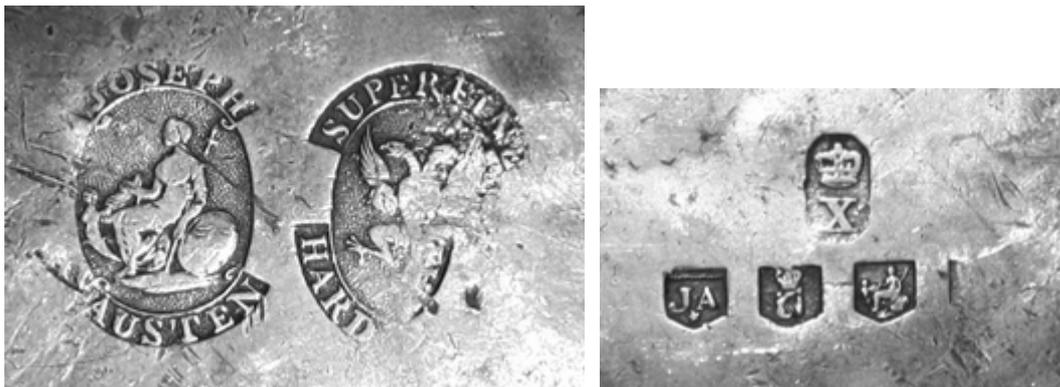
Joseph Austen's touch, label and hallmarks from the period 1790-1825, largely found on plates, dishes and chargers.

Four Austen post 1826 haystack marks. The first, without the Gibbings North Main Street address label, is early. Number 2 shows a good set of marks and number three a much more bettered example. A couple of things are important to note including the shape of the lion and the fact that the address label is a separate die. The fourth touch is of a fake/reproduction mark. Compared to the others it is poorly struck, the lion is different and the address label is an integral part of the touch.

Another rare Austen mark and three different distinctive examples of the Crowned X mark.

Campbell and Co.

Belfast's only known Victorian pewterer. In the early 1850s were operating as ironmongers, later in the century as manufacturing jewellers.

Thee left hand mark was found under the base of a two-handle cup.

Charles Clarke and family

Clarke was established in Waterford as a founder and pewterer as early as 1788 and is believed to have died in 1830. The business was then operated by members of his family until it was passed on to Samuel Wood (see below). Clarke made some hollow ware but is remembered today as a major producer of plates and other flatware.

Charles Clarke's large touches often do not survive very well so the easiest way of identifying Clarke flatware is from the hallmarks.

Clarke's hollow ware mark.

John Heaney

John Heaney was Free of the Dublin Smith's Company in 1765 and is last mentioned in the Trade Directories in 1807. Located for much of his career on the Ormond Quay in Dublin he was a prolific pewterer producing much flatware but also flagons, communion cups, standishes and tavern pots.

John Heany's touch and hallmarks.

A label used by Heaney and other contemporary Dublin pewterers. It reads "ENGLISH BLOCK TIN" although it seldom survives in a fully legible condition. The distinctive border of the label can help with identification even when the wording is unclear.

The Hodges

William Hodges was Free of the Dublin Smith's Company in 1765 and set up business in Exchequer Street Dublin, circa 1790 he was in partnership with his son John who took over about 1800. The enterprise continued at least into the 1850s with another generation joining circa 1830. In the 19th century the business was involved in many non-ferrous metal crafts and pewter making became less important. Increasingly the requirement for pewter was met by material imported from England although subsequently marked with a John Hodges and Son touch.

Two versions of William Hodge's hallmarks. There is evidence these continued to be used to circa 1830. William Hodge also used a touch of a deer's head on a torse but this a rare and has as yet not been recorded in a good state of survival
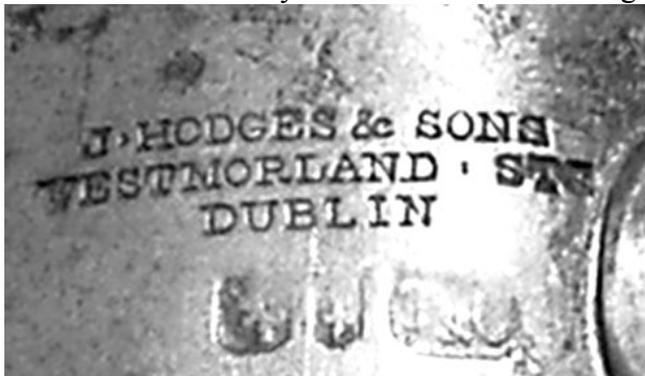
The later mark used by John Hodges and Son. Above the Hodges mark stamped, on the side of a glass bottom mug are the hallmarks of the London pewterers Compton. Presumably made by Compton it was then imported into Ireland by the Hodges.

The Merrys

Martin Merry of Dublin set up his pewter making enterprise circa 1814 and seems to have passed the business on in the early 1840s, firstly to Catherine Merry and then to his nephews Lawrence and Richard after whose death the business was continued well into the 1880s under the leadership of another member of the family. As with most 19th century Irish pewterers there were other strands to their operations. Initially Martin made flatware and hollow ware later the emphasis was largely on hollow ware, in particular on pub pots and measures.

To the left a Martin Merry flatware mark and to the right a typical hollow ware mark. Martin Merry put a stamp similar to the above inside his tavern pots and on measures. L. and R. Merry seem to have continued to use the simple "MERRY" mark on measures but used the "L & R MERRY" mark shown below inside of pots and on the few items of flatware item they made.

The Munster Iron Company

The Munster Iron Company was formed by John Gibbings in the 1850s. The Gibbings had taken over the Austen business circa 1846 and may have been selling Austen products through 94 North Main Street, Cork for some years before that. In practise they appear to have continued using Austen marks down to the late 1870s, when they introduced their own version of the famous Austen touch. The Munster Iron Company survived to the 1960s and was still making pewter measures just before the first World War.

The Munster version of the Austen famous touch, note the difference between the Austen and Munster lion. A separate die is still being used for the address label
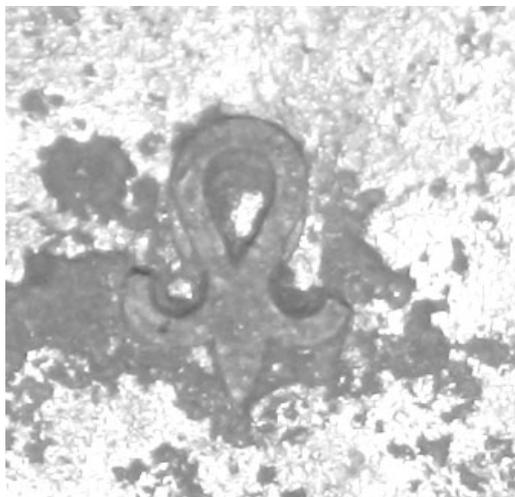
To the left a small device sometimes found under the base of late haystacks. Called by some the little knot and others the 'Omega' device. To the right a simple Crowned harp touch used from the 1870s inside the base of pub pots.

Richard Palmer

A pewterer on Ormond Quay, Dublin between circa 1759 and 1773; he made flagons, communion cups and flatware.

Richard Palmer's large touch shown here is similar to those used by three or four Dublin pewterers of this period. His hallmarks have only recently been recorded and include a strange device, which has been interpreted as a three legged cauldron or cooking pot.

Robert Powell

The 18th century Cork pewterers do not seem to have been as prolific as their Dublin contemporaries, the most prolific appears from surviving plates to have been Robert Powell of Cark and Bandon, circa 1728 to 1769. Robert was succeeded by a son also called Robert.

A Robert Powell touch damaged by corrosion.

Another rarer Cork touch of the same period that shows more clearly what the Powell touch looked like.

Lau(w)rence Purcell

Another 19th century Dublin pewterer believed to have been active between 1830 and 1858, making pub pots and measures and undertaking other metal bashing activities. .

The above is typical of the recorded Purcell marks found inside the base of pots and occasionally baluster measures.

John Robinson

John Robinson seems to have been active in Dublin from about 1720 to his death circa 1758. His touch and his pewter suggest connections with contemporary London pewterers.

Samuel Wood

Samuel Wood took over the former Charles Clarke enterprise in Waterford in the late 1830s and operated it for a number of years making flatware. He uses in addition to the touches shown a version of the Charles Clarke hallmarks

These marks are not shown to scale but so as to more clearly show the detail