

THE ELLESMORE CHALICE

It was in February 1971, whilst the church was preparing for its 125th anniversary, that it was found that the original chalice had been stolen from the church. Dubbed the 'Priceless Chalice' by members of the congregation, it was studded with semi-precious stones and valued then at £300. Made almost 300 years earlier at Augsburg, it was one of the earliest gifts to the church after its consecration in 1846. The chalice was recovered by police frogmen from the Bridgewater Canal at Patricroft, following a tip-off. The stones had been prised out and the chalice was beyond repair.



Beneath the base was a silver disc bearing a Latin inscription and the date 1697 A.D. The inscription had never been deciphered, despite several experts having attempted it. Dr. Taylor, formerly of the John Rylands library, was of the opinion that the Chalice had been presented to the parish of Burghausen, a small town in Bavaria.

Further information on the Chalice was given by Lt. Col. Charles Brocklehurst, of Prestbury, who had a special interest in silver and was an expert for Christie's. After examining the Chalice, he wrote: *'Chalice, silver, gilt, inset with enamel plaques and semi-precious stones. Made at Augsburg, late 17th century. Makers mark, I. M., perhaps for Johannes Miller.'* He also noted that it bore a mark indicating that at some time it had been imported from Holland.

An Easter Day card described the chalice: *It is of beautifully figured silver work containing many jewels: ninety-six rubies and twenty-four amethysts. It has six coloured enamel pictures illustrating scenes from Holy Scripture. It bears the date 1697. This Chalice is only used on the greater Festivals, and will be in use on Easter Day.*

The original Ellesmere Chalice was replaced by another, designed and made by Leslie Durbin, a distinguished silversmith of London. It shows a winged lion mounted above the base, with its wings supporting the cup. It was dedicated on 25 April 1973 (the Feast Day of St. Mark) by the Bishop of Manchester (the Rt. Rev. Patrick Campbell Rodger) in the presence of a large congregation, including the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland and local clergy. [The Duke was then the fifth Earl of Ellesmere]. It took Durbin about two months to complete the chalice.



THE WINE JUG

- CTF over GF. Charles Thomas Fox and George Fox, various marks entered 1841 and 1843
- Walking Lion for all sterling silver made in England. This stamp of the Lion Passant denotes English Sterling Silver which is 925 parts per thousand pure silver. The Lion mark has been used since the mid 1500's and is a guarantee of the quality of the silver.
- Leopard without a crown is post 1820. Hallmarked in London. The Leopard Head denotes the assay office for London.
- Queen's head duty mark shows QV facing left. This shows that duty had been paid on the silver.
- 'L' signifies the year 1846.

The founder of the firm was Charles Fox, 'plate worker' active at 139 Old Street, Goswell Street. He was not apprenticed through the Goldsmiths' Company nor he was a freeman of the Company. Charles Fox registered a mark in 1801 in partnership with James Turner (at 3 Old Street) and a unique mark alone on 5 September 1804.

In 1822 he was succeeded by his son, Charles Fox II, who entered various marks in 1822, 1823 (4 marks) and 1838. Also Charles Fox II was not apprentices nor was a Freeman of the Goldsmiths' Company.

His works shows consistently high quality and the rapid entry of marks suggests a fairly large establishment with varying marks used for different categories of work.

Fox can be considered the last individualist platerworker before the debacle of Victorian mass production.

At the retirement of Charles Fox II the family business was took over by his sons Charles Thomas Fox (born 1801) and George Fox (born 1816). They entered conjoined marks in 1841 and 1843.

Charles Thomas Fox retired from the firm in 1860 and George Fox continued running the firm entering his own mark in 1861. Other marks were entered in 1869 and 1891.

After the death of George Fox his son Robert Frederick Fox (born 1845) continued the trade as C.T. & G. Fox entering his own mark in 1910. The firm closed down in 1921.

A separate silversmith business was managed by other members of Fox family. Frederick Fox (born 1810), another son of Charles Fox II, in 1852 entered his mark at Goldsmiths' Hall entering in partnership with his son Frederick Yonge Fox (apprenticed to John Wilmin Figg, obtained freedom by service in 1852).

Frederick Fox retired in 1867 and Frederick Yonge Fox entered his own marks in 1868. This activity had presumably a short life as these marks were withdrawn in 1870.

