

# The Canongate, Edinburgh, and Maltese Silver

by Victor F. Denaro

This short article may be regarded as complementary to one which appeared on the September 1968 number of the *Collectors' Guide* entitled 'Maltese Silver and the Red Hand of Ulster', which aimed at dispelling some of the confusion which existed regarding silver marked with an 'open hand'.

The late Sir Charles J Jackson, in his work *English Goldsmiths and their Marks* (London, 1921), suggested that the mark in question might be that on plate of Belfast make. It has now been established that this mark was that adopted by the Maltese Goldsmiths in 1801.

Other marks which may be creating some confusion are those consisting of the letters 'F', 'R' or 'M' surmounted by a stag's head.

In the above mentioned work, on p 512, Sir Charles Jackson illustrated a number of marks used by the Canongate Goldsmiths (fig 1). Most of the marks illustrated include a stag's head couped or erased which was the mark of the Canongate.

In the tenth line of the table of Canongate goldsmiths' marks, Sir Charles Jackson shows one consisting of the letter 'F' surmounted by a buck's head and the maker's mark  $\frac{GIO}{CA}$  which was stamped on an oil lamp, which might have been used as a candlestick. The date is given as approximately 1780-90. There is hardly any doubt that this mark is Maltese and the maker,  $\frac{GIO}{CA}$ , Gio. Carlo Cassar, who got his warrant in 1800 and was appointed Consul for Silversmiths in 1806. Sir Charles further mentions a stag's head over the letter 'R' on a fork.

As the stag's head appears on most of the Canongate silver one cannot lay the blame on Sir Charles for having been misled by this Maltese mark.

The British occupation of the Maltese Islands brought prosperity in its wake to the Maltese craftsmen. However, it seems that irregularities crept into the goldsmiths' craft at this period, as a notice issued on the 1st October 1810, under the signature of Mr E F Chapman, Public Secretary, by order of His Majesty's Civil Commissioner, read that 'to put a stop to the frauds which, to the great detriment of the Public, have of late been committed in regard to the sale of articles manufactured of adulterated gold and silver, His Excellency Lieutenant General Oakes, His Majesty's Civil Commissioner, besides directing the necessary measures to be adopted for the discovery and punishment of the principal offenders, has ordered a new stamp to be prepared and it is hereby notified that the respective Consul of the Goldsmiths and Silversmiths are henceforth to affix the said stamp in the office of the University only, and that, in the presence of the Intendant of Weights, and of one or more of the jurats, and for this purpose two days in the week and certain hours to be fixed by the latter will be appropriated. The Consuls will thus be protected in the execution of their duty, the Tradesmen will not dare to produce impure metals, and the public faith will be restored amongst the Inhabitants whose interest is ever an object of anxious solicitude to His Excellency'.

### CANONGATE GOLDSMITHS' MARKS.

FROM ABOUT 1680 TO ABOUT 1836.

(The dates are approximate, except to the extent that the inscribed dates may be relied on.)

DATE (ABOUT).	MARKS.	MAKER'S NAME.	ARTICLES AND OWNERS.
1680	GC  XED *	... ..	Spoon : Edinburgh Museum of Antiquities.
"	GC  KED	... ..	Spoon, with flat stem, dated 1689: Edinburgh Museum of Antiquities.
"	MZ  MZ	... ..	Two com. cups, carried off 1689, recovered 1697: Flisk.
1696	 GZ  GZ	... ..	Two com. cups, dated 1696: Bolton, Haddington.
1700	P XI	... ..	Wine taster: Messrs. Crichton.
	ASN		
"	 FIS XI	... ..	Do. do. do.
1760	CM  CM	... ..	Table-spoon, † "double drop" back of bowl: Glasgow Exhibition, of 1901.
1763	WC " WC	... ..	Two com. cups, dated 1763: Auchtertool.
1780-90	 CA	... ..	Oil lamp, which may also have been used as a candlestick: Mr. G. Glass. Also stag's head over R, on fork: Mr. Clement Gadsby.
	PG  PG		
1790	 K 	... ..	Tea-spoon (fiddle pattern): The Marquess of Breadalbane.
TO	 K  	M. Hinchsliffe.	Tea-spoons (fiddle pattern): The Marquess of Breadalbane and the Author.
	 E  IP		
1820	   	... ..	Table-spoon (fiddle pattern): Mr. Chisholm.
1836	 K  DG	‡David Greig (?)	Toddy ladle (fiddle pattern): Mr. Dudley Westropp.

FIG 1 Sir Charles Jackson's table of Canongate goldsmiths' marks

The University (or Universita) mentioned in the above Notice was a municipal body, equivalent to a Town Council in Britain. Its members were known as jurats.

Though the above mentioned Notice gave no description of the new stamp, it is practically certain that this consisted of the letters 'F', 'R' or 'M' surmounted by a stag's head.

These three letters indicated the three standards of silver admitted in 1778 by the 'Rohan

Code' of 'Dritto Municipale di Malta' viz: silver of the standard of  $11\frac{1}{2}$  deniers, locally known as French Silver; silver of the fineness of 11 deniers, locally known as Roman Silver; and silver of the fineness of  $10\frac{1}{2}$  deniers, locally known as Maltese Silver.

The fineness of the silver was indicated by the letter 'F' for French Silver, the letter 'R' for Roman Silver and the letter 'M' for Maltese Silver.

A point arises as to why the Maltese Goldsmiths should have marked their ware with a coupéd stag's head. The stag is an animal alien to the Maltese Islands and it is most unlikely that any of the Maltese craftsmen had ever seen a live stag during their lifetime.

Therefore one comes to the conclusion that as the mark of the coupéd 'open hand', probably the Baronet's Badge, was devised by the Maltese goldsmiths as a compliment to Sir Alexander Ball, Bart., His Majesty's Civil Commissioner in Malta, the stag's head was taken from some portion of the crest of Sir Hildebrand Oakes and adopted by the goldsmiths as part of their mark out of deference to the Island's Civil Commissioner.

Debrett's *Illustrated Peerage and Baronetage* (London, 1874, p 364) shows that a buck actually formed part of the Oakes crest. The crest in question is described as follows: 'Out of a mural crown gules, a buck's head erased at the neck proper, gorged with a collar embattled counter embattled or', (fig 2).

OAKES, Creation 1815, of St. GEORGE'S, Hanover Square.



Persevere.

Residence.—Ghent, Belgium.

SIR REGINALD LOUIS OAKES, 4th Baronet, son of Henry Frederick Oakes, Esq., by Mary Dovity, da. of John Ward, Esq., of Huntingdon. Born 1847; succeeded his grandfather, Sir HENRY THOMAS, 1850; educated at Louvain and Ghent.

*Heir Presumptive*.—His uncle, Hildebrand Henry, b. 1829; m. 1852, Sophia, widow of John Bond, Esq., of Londonderry, and 4th da. of J. G. Crump, Esq., of Allan Bank, Westmoreland.

*Arms*.—Argent, on a chevron engrailed sable between three sprigs of oak fructed proper a cross of eight points of the field. *Crest*.—Out of a mural crown gules, a buck's head erased at the neck proper, gorged with a collar embattled counter embattled or.

FIG 2 Debrett's illustration of OAKES coat-of-arms

This would therefore seem to clinch the matter.

The marks under review are comparatively common in Malta, though silver marked with the letter 'M' surmounted by a stag's head is harder to find.

At the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh, is listed a plain heavy beaker (NMA MEQ 364), marked 'R' surmounted by a stag's head (pl 19). This piece, which is gilt inside, was manufactured by Gio Carlo Cassar.

The following items were also seen and noted in Edinburgh by Mr S Maxwell (Assistant Keeper, NMAS).

- (a) a sauce tureen by the same maker (letter 'F');
- (b) five fiddle pattern teaspoons (letter 'R'); maker Gaetano Offennaghel;
- (c) six fiddle pattern forks (letter 'R'), maker's mark 'CO' over an illegible mark;
- (d) a round snuff box (letter 'F'), maker Guiseppe Ullo.
- (e) a standish similar to pl 21, a.

Other pieces with these marks probably exist in Scottish private collections.

In Malta one comes across this mark on all sorts of different silver objects.

Canon Joachim Speranza gave to the Collegiate Church of St Paul Shipwreck a silver gilt chalice (height  $11\frac{1}{4}$  in) manufactured by Saverio Cannataci. This is marked with the letter 'F' surmounted by a stag's head, besides the maker's mark  $\frac{SA}{CA}$ .

Gio Carlo Cassar manufactured a silver oil lamp, locally known by the Italian name 'lucerna', (height  $27\frac{1}{2}$  in) (pl 20, a and b). This type of lamp, never used in England, consists of a long thin silver rod on which is a sliding oil well with two, three or four spouts to contain the wicks. This can be adjusted to the required height. A cover is provided to the oil well which prevents the oil from being spilt.

A coffee-pot (height  $10\frac{3}{4}$  in) standing on three caprine legs, has a domed lid the finial of which consists of a bud and leaves (pl 21, c). The pouring lip is adorned with a festoon of leaves suggesting an Empire influence. The assay-mark is the letter 'F' surmounted by a stag's head. The maker's mark is illegible.

Another fine coffee-pot (height  $11\frac{1}{4}$  in) bearing same assay-mark, was made by Andrea Naudi whose mark  $\frac{AN}{NA}$  is stamped on it.

A standish marked 'F' with a stag's head bears the mark of the goldsmith Gioacchino Lebrun (pl 21, a).

Gaetano Offennaghel, Stefano Ittar, Gioacchino Lebrun, Vincenzo Psaila (pl 20, c) and many other Maltese silversmiths manufactured quantities of spoons, forks and soup ladles stamped with the marks under review.

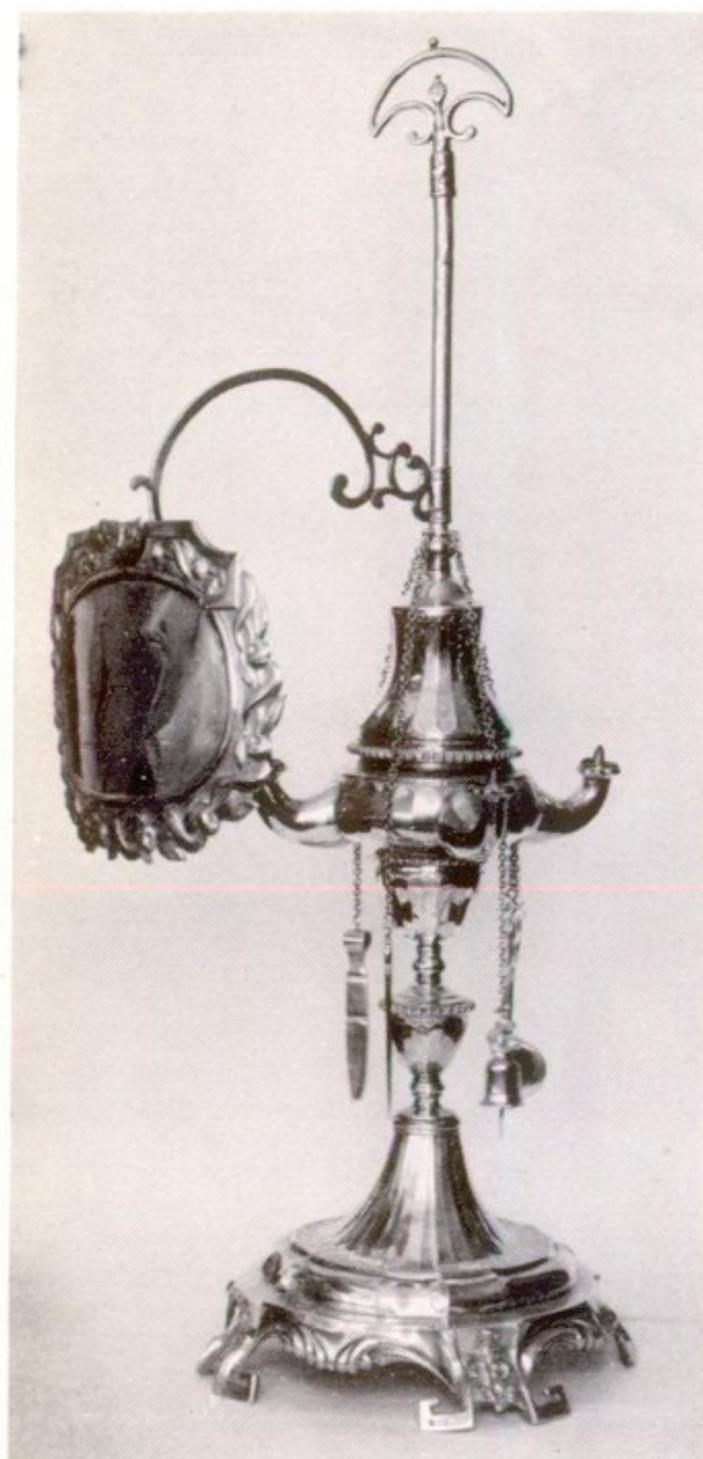
In conclusion, as in the case of the mark of the open hand, one feels confident that this short article may help to dispel any confusion regarding the marks 'F', 'R' and 'M' surmounted by stag's head, and that silver so marked will henceforth be considered as of Maltese origin.



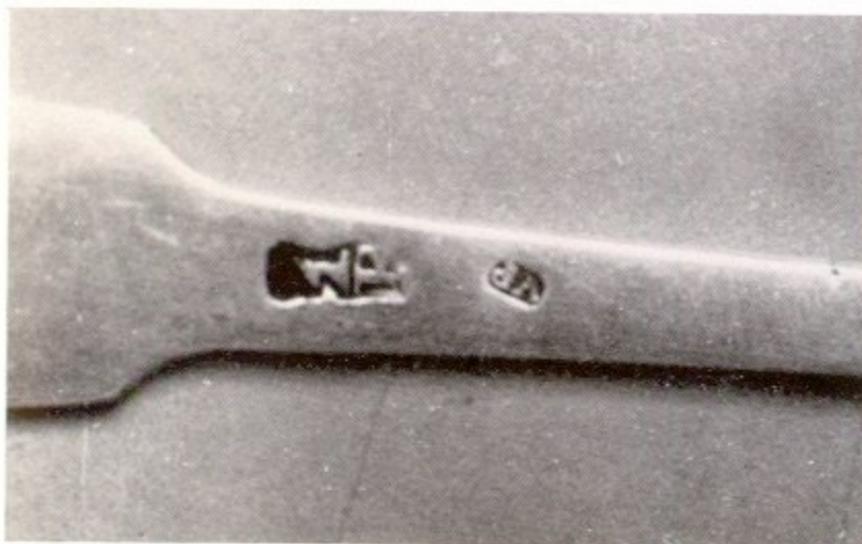
Plain silver beaker (NMA MEQ 364), marked 'R' surmounted by stag's head

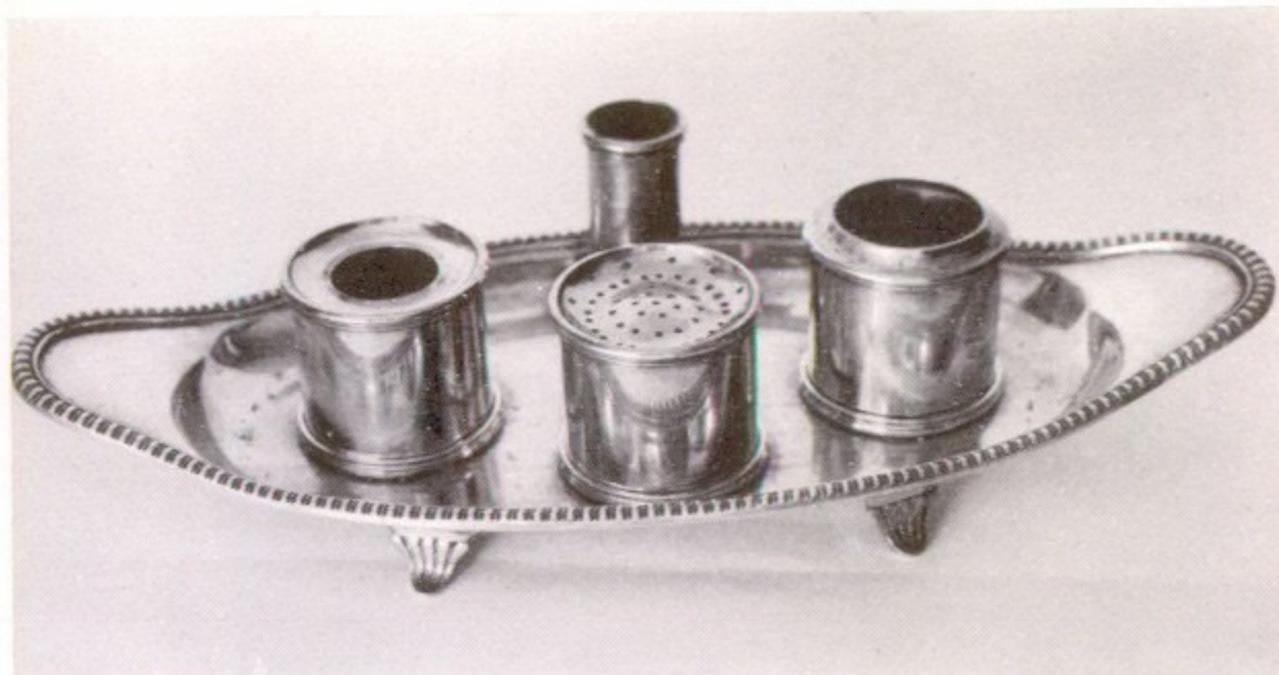


a Silver oil-lamp (height 27½ in); maker <sup>GIO</sup><sub>CA</sub> (Gio. Carlo Cassar); assay-mark on foot of lamp, letter 'R' surmounted by stag's head. (In the collection of Col and Mrs J E Nelson)



b Marks on fiddle-pattern spoon (length 8½ in); maker VP (Vincenzo Psaila). (By courtesy of Mr Anton Azzopardi)





a Standish (11 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 5 $\frac{1}{4}$  in);  
maker Giocchino Lebrun



c Coffee-pot (height 10 $\frac{3}{4}$  in); assay-  
mark 'F' surmounted by stag's  
head; maker's mark illegible



b Assay-mark on standish,  
'F' surmounted by stag's  
head