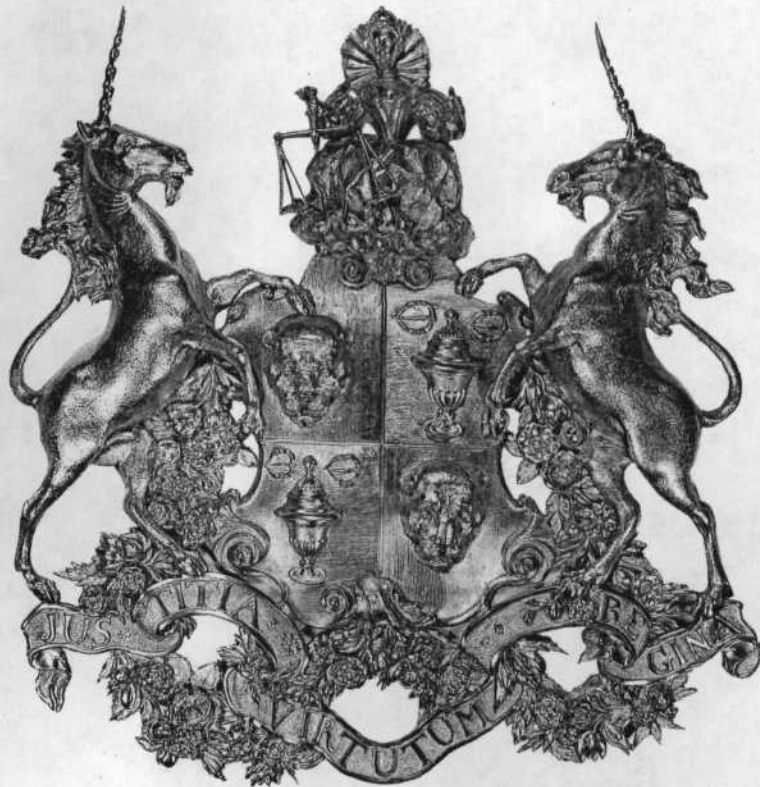


Paul de Lamerie

At the Sign of The Golden Ball

An Exhibition of the Work of
England's Master Silversmith
(1688-1751)



Goldsmiths' Hall,
Foster Lane, London EC2
from 16th May to 22nd June 1990

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Paul de Lamerie 1688-1751

Susan Hare

Paul de Lamerie must rank as one of the stars of that finest period of English silver, the first half of the 18th century. He must also be the most prolific silversmith of his time in England. Yet curiously there is no surviving portrait, nor has research revealed even a printed trade card. The aim of this exhibition is therefore to build up a picture of both the man and his work by displaying a wide selection of his silver together with various relevant documents.

Lamerie was born on 9th April 1688 in Bois-le-Duc (s Hertogenbosch), a town in the Netherlands where his French Huguenot parents were lodging. His father, Paul Souchay de la Merie, was of the French petty nobility as evidenced by the form of his surname: Souchay with its territorial suffix. He and his brother, Jean Souchay de la Chancellerie, appear in a list of French refugee officers in the army of the United Provinces of the Netherlands when, in February 1686, they were paid off for their services¹. His mother, Constance (née le Roux), came from Rouen but members of her family had settled in Amsterdam some years before. Where they met and when they married is not known but, as man and wife, they were admitted to membership of the Walloon Church of Bois-le-Duc on 2nd June 1686². At that same church, on 14th April 1688, the young Paul Jacques Souchay de la Merie was baptized³. In the margin against the baptismal entry is a note that an extract of it was given to his parents on 23rd March 1689. From this we can deduce that they had already decided to move on and had provided themselves with the necessary legal proof of their son's identity. Along with many other French Huguenots, they had chosen to follow William of Orange to England. From the poor-rate book of the parish of St. James's, Westminster, for 1691, it is known that they resided in a house in Berwick Street, Soho, and that they had dropped the surname of Souchay, adopting the father's territorial suffix, de la Merie, in its place⁴.

Nothing is known of young Paul's education but on 24th June 1703, both father and son are recorded in the Roll of Denizations⁵, a legal requirement before the boy could be apprenticed. In a ceremony at Goldsmiths' Hall on 6th August that year, the fifteen year-old boy was apprenticed to Peter Platel, Citizen and Goldsmith of London, for a term of seven years⁶. P. A. S. Phillips inferred incorrectly that as no premium payment was mentioned in the entry, none was paid and that Platel had evidently waived it. He did not compare the entry with any others either before or directly after it or he would have realised that none recorded the premium paid. It was only as a result of an Act of Parliament of 1710⁷ when a duty was levied on all premiums, that the sum had to be recorded. That a premium was undoubtedly paid in his case can be understood from the special payment of £6 to Paul de la Merie senior, in July 1703 from a sum reserved for the relief of French Protestant refugees in the case of hardship⁸. It is significant that application for it was made after denization but before the signing of indentures, so the father had evidently been seeking the required funds before this could take place.

Peter, or Pierre Platel and his brother Claude originally came from Lille, but they, like Paul de la Merie senior had first sought refuge in the Netherlands before landing at Torbay in 1688 in the train of William of Orange, on the latter's arrival to take the throne of England. He had evidently trained as a silversmith in his native land and received his freedom of the Goldsmiths' Company, by redemption, i.e. purchase, in 1699, entering his maker's mark in June that year. His workshop was situated in Pall Mall 'over against the Duke of Schomberg'⁹.

Paul de la Merie senior did well to indenture his son to one of the most fashionable and elegant silversmiths of the day. Young Paul was one of only four apprentices that he took while in London, and was certainly the most ambitious.

His seven year term having ended in 1711, Paul de Lamerie (as his name was by now spelt) worked on as a journeyman with Platel while he saved up funds and made arrangements to start up his own workshop. On 4th February 1713, he returned to Goldsmiths' Hall to receive his freedom by service¹⁰, and the following day entered his maker's mark at the Assay Office in the Hall, giving his address as 'in Windmill Street near the Hay'market'¹¹.

9. Meinhardt, Duke of Schomberg, whose father had been killed at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, had leased this house in Pall Mall from the Crown in 1694, reconstructing it in 1698. He died in 1719 after which his elder daughter, Frederica, continued to live there. In 1724, she married, as her second husband, Benjamin Mildmay, Earl Fitzwalter, an important customer of Paul de Lamerie.

10. Goldsmiths' Company Freedom Register I, (unpaged) 4 Feb. 1713

11. Goldsmiths' Company Mark Book for Large Workers, Vol A no 1, (unpaged) 5 Feb. 1713

1. Phillips, 1931, p. 6

2. Commission de l'Histoire des Eglises et de la Bibliothèque Wallonnes. Admissions Register, 2 June 1686

3. Ibid. Baptismal Register, 14 April 1688

4. Phillips, p. 8

i. P.R.O. Roll of Denizations, 24 June 1703

6. Goldsmiths' Company Apprentice Register 4, fo. 90v.

7. 8 Anne C.i, XL

8. Corporation of London Record Office. FPRJACQ/3/3

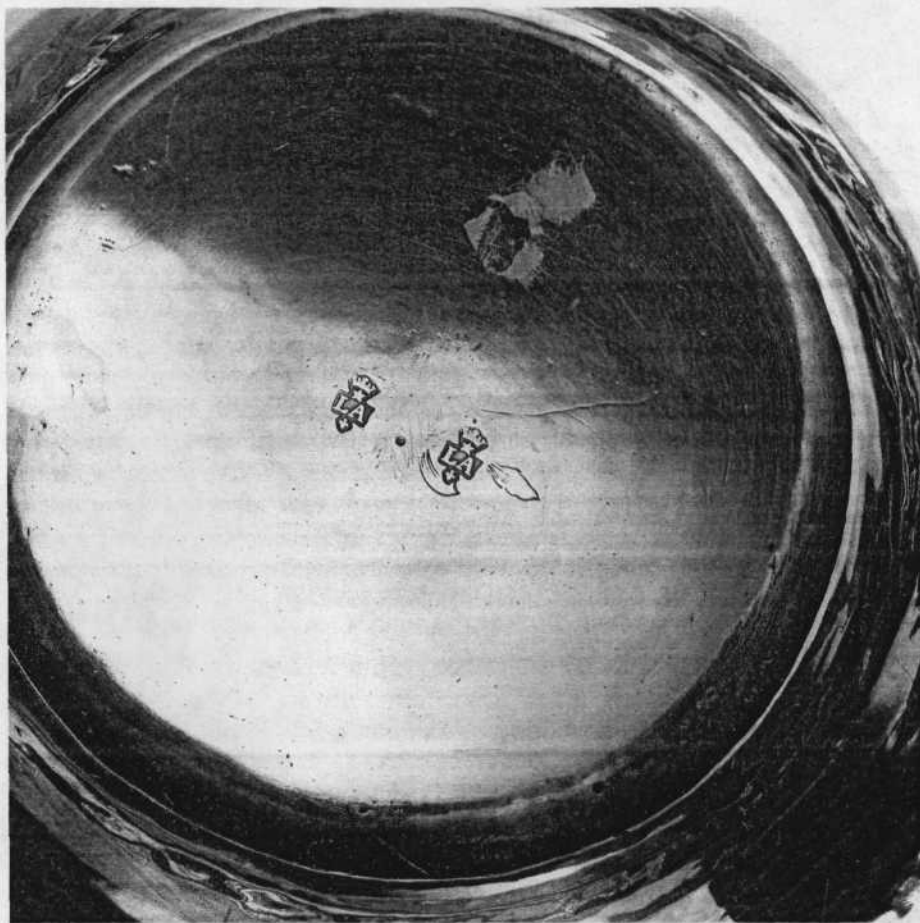


Fig. 1. Paul de Lameric's second mark c. 1716-20 from the base of the Brownlow punch bowl (cat. no. 14)

Evidence of his skills as a silversmith and his business acumen soon became apparent, also his rather devil-may-care attitude to authority. During his early working career, the Goldsmiths' Company minutes record a string of complaints against him from others in the trade. In July 1714 he was fined the large sum of £20 for not having his work hallmarked, and the following November there were further complaints that the sum was still outstanding¹². He was in trouble again in June 1715 because he '*covered Foreigners work and got ye same toucht at ye Hall*'. This was the practice of passing off as his own work pieces made by others, probably Huguenots, who were not free of the Company and did not have registered maker's marks, a service for which he would undoubtedly have charged. By the following July he was up again on the same charge, and this time David Willaume and David Tanqueray were named with him¹⁴.

By 1717, he was already referred to as '*the King's Silversmith*' but again in a complaint '*for making and selling Great quantities of Large Plate which he doth not bring to Goldsmiths' Hall to be mark't according to Law*'. After the committee learned that he was currently working on a large quantity of spoons, they decided to defer action to see if he would bring them in to be marked¹⁵. He was evidently tipped off and sent them in for hallmarking as no further action was taken against him. Rather to the contrary, as on 18th June 1717, he was summoned to a meeting at Goldsmiths' Hall and '*being discoursed with by ye Wardens about his admission into the Livery he accepted thereof*'. Little did the Wardens realise that the previous year he had broken the regulations once again by changing his maker's mark, for no known reason, but

12. Goldsmiths' Company Committee

Book 2, p. 57

13. *Ibid.*, p. 93

14. *Ibid.*, p. 95

15. Goldsmiths' Company Committee Book 3, p. 23

16. Goldsmiths' Company Court Book Vol II, p. 390

had failed to inform the Assay Office of this fact. In 1720, he did so yet again (see p. 29)¹⁷.

Living and working in the close-knit Huguenot community in Soho, it was inevitable that he should meet a young girl of similar social background, one Louisa Juliott, and on 7th February 1717 Lamerie filed an allegation for a special licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury¹⁸. The marriage took place four days later in the church in Glasshouse Street, the minister who conducted the service being the bride's uncle. From that time Lamerie was rated for two houses in Windmill Street. Not only was his business flourishing so the workshop area needed to be expanded, but also the young couple wanted room for a large family. They had six children in all but sadly three of them, including both sons, died in infancy.

Paul de Lamerie took thirteen apprentices between 1715 and 1749 who paid premiums varying between £ 10 and £45, though one, Peter Archambo junior, only appeared on the list as a technical device. His father, Peter Archambo senior, a noted silversmith, was a freeman of the Butchers' Company but wanted his son to belong to the Goldsmiths' Company. The boy was therefore apprenticed to Lamerie on 5th December 1738, but turned over that same day to his father¹⁹. Of the rest, Bennett Bradshaw, apprenticed in 1720, never became a freeman but entered a maker's mark in partnership with Robert Tyrill in 1737²⁰. Another, Abraham Portal, apprenticed in 1740 and free in 1749, is the only one of any note and one of the very few silversmiths to rate an entry in the Dictionary of National Biography, but more on account of his literary activities. Some fine pieces bearing his mark survive but it is likely that he was more a retailer than a practising silversmith. He became a liveryman in 1763 and died in 1809. Samuel Collins, apprenticed in 1732, was still working for his master at the time of his death and was the craftsman entrusted in Lamerie's will to finish making any pieces in the workshop²¹.

In 1722 there was a curious happening concerning one of his early apprentices, which resulted in Paul de Lamerie being taken to court and reveals an unexpected side to his character and business methods. A chimney-sweep's boy found a jewel in the street and brought it to the shop, whereupon an apprentice removed the stones and Paul de Lamerie valued the mount at three half-pence. The boy demanded his jewel back rather than accept that pittance and this resulted in the civil action of '*A rmoury versus De Lamirie*'. It has become case-law on the subject of '*trover*', action to recover value of personal property wrongfully taken or detained²². It is also of interest in that it illustrates that Lamerie maintained a retail business, with jewellery as part of his stock, a fact confirmed by the advertisement for the sale of his stock by auction after his death²³.

Examination of the Sun Insurance records has revealed one little known fact that may well have resulted from the civil action. It is apparent that for a period of about five years Paul de Lamerie was in partnership with Ellis Gamble, a silver engraver, best known as the former master of William Hogarth. On 11th October 1723, Ellis Gamble and Paul de Lamerie, 'goldsmiths', took out a policy to the value of £ 1,000 for goods and merchandise on the property known as the Golden Angel in Cranbourn Street²⁴.

At the same time, Paul de Lamerie, 'silversmith', maintained insurance on his household goods and stock in trade for his premises in Windmill Street, to the value of £500. It would appear from this that he was responsible for the production of the silver goods in his own workshop but that Gamble (who never registered a maker's mark) was retailing them. The latter would have been in the best position for taking orders from the customers for the engraving of arms. That this arrangement broke up in 1728 is apparent again from the Sun Insurance records as, on 18th October, they took out adjoining separate policies²⁵ on their own premises, Gamble for £1,000, Lamerie for £1,100: evidence that he was by then doing exceptionally well in the trade and had the confidence to run his own retail business again.

A chance recording of events leading to the trial in Guildhall of one Robert Dingley for the evasion of payment of duty, gives an insight into how successful a business he was running. Dingley, recorded by Sir Ambrose Heal as a goldsmith and jeweller at St. Helen's Gate, Bishopsgate Street, was in the business of exporting silver wares, mainly by Huguenot craftsmen, to Russia and evidently stored the items until he had a full cargo load. Goldsmiths' Company officials tried to seize his cargo at the Customs House in August 1726 on the suspicion that many of the wares were unhallmarked and that the duty was unpaid. Robert Dingley swore on oath that 18,600oz. of silver, all made since the first of June 1720, had been properly assayed and marked. The wine fountain (*cat no. 37*) by Paul de Lamerie was probably in that consignment. However, there was a further 4,108.05oz. that was not marked, made up of 314oz. of silver by Nicholas Clausen, 53oz. by Pezé Pilleau, 95oz. by Isaac Ribouveau, 568.05oz. by Simon Pantin, 70oz by Augustine Courtauld, 300oz. by Joseph Barbutt, 700oz. by Abraham Buteux. but 2.008oz. nearly half the total, was by Paul de T amerie.

20. Goldsmiths' Company Mark Book for Large Workers, Vol A no 1, 21 March 1737

21. P.R.O. PROB 10/2103

22. P.R.O. Ind. 9629 Hilary 8 George I (1722), p.8

23. Daily Advertiser, no. 6505, 12 Nov. 1751

24. Guildhall Library. Sun Insurance no. 30100

25. IticL. nms. 458R7-H

17. Goldsmiths' Company Review 1984-1985, p.9

18. Lambeth Palace Library. Vicar General's Office. Marriage Bonds. 7 Feb. 1717

19. Goldsmiths' Company Apprentice Register 6, p.261


Paul de Lamerie March 27 1732
 To Sterling March att y^e Goldenball
 Windmill Street St James. 
 P. Canner

Fig. 2. Entry of Paul de Lamerie's fourth mark, 27th March 1732.

Before this could be checked, the cargo was loaded and the ship sailed whilst the Goldsmiths' Company representatives were in the Vine Tavern in Thames Street, whence they had been lured by Mr. Dingley!²⁶

Besides supplying orders for the Russian court, Paul de Lamerie was attracting custom from both the nobility and the wealthy middle class. By 1723 he had already numbered among his clients, Sir William Trumbull, Lord Foley, the Countess of Berkeley, Viscount Tyrconnel, Lord Gower, the Earl of Bristol, as well as the Duke of Bedford. At this time a wealthy patron proved to be the Rt. Hon. George Treby, M.P., whose bills for silver supplied to him between 1720-5, and much of it still in existence, survived until recent times (*cat nos.* 21-7). Probably his most influential client was Sir Robert Walpole for whom he made first the seal salver in 1728 (*cat no.* 50). It is remarkable how many Members of Parliament figure among Lamerie's customers. One wonders how many were influenced by the choice of the Whig leader. However, in spite of his title of King's Silversmith there is little evidence that he was fulfilling royal orders. The silver he probably supplied later to the Prince of Wales was commissioned through George Wickes, and not directly ordered from him (*cat no.* 100). On 6th May 1731 'Mr. Paul de Lamerie was chosen to be an Assistant of the (Goldsmiths') Company and excused the office of Renter, on condition that he paid a fine of forty pounds cash to the use of the Company'²⁷. Shortly afterwards he decided to abandon the Britannia Standard silver in which he had been working so far even though sterling silver had been legal since 1720. He entered his new maker's mark for use on sterling silver on 27th March 1732²⁸ and it is there, for the first time, we learn of his shop sign 'The Golden Ball' in Windmill Street. Charles I had granted the citizens of London the right 'to expose and hang in and over the streets, signs ... affixed to their houses and shops, for the better finding out such citizens' dwellings, shops, arts or occupations'²⁹. 'The Golden Ball' was a popular sign already in use by William Hogarth; Paul Crespin, David Willaume and William Cripps were among other silversmiths who chose it.

Once on the Court of the Goldsmiths' Company from the Company's records we can detect the enormous respect he commanded. In 1736, the Standing Committee was concerned about a new stove grate with its accompanying tongs, shovel and poker, ordered for the Hall's parlour. It was decided that the Clerk should write to Mr. Paul de Lamerie 'to be so kind to the Company as to come & view & estimate the same, and desire him to take such assistance as he shall think proper, the Committee esteeming him one of the best of Judges of that fine Workmanship and ye Company will be very ready to recompense his trouble & charge therein'. This almost grovelling tone was not usual in the minutes³⁰.

Paul de Lamerie, senior, died and was given a pauper's burial at St. Anne's Church, Westminster, on 26th December 1735³¹. It is somewhat disturbing to learn that this should have happened when the son was at the height of his success and prosperity. However much the two may have grown apart over the years, it was a callous son who did not even care enough to give him a decent funeral. That he had an interest in his ancestry, however, is apparent. He had engraved family silver for use in the home (a rubbing from one piece survives in the British Library)³² and a book plate was engraved for him by William Hogarth. Within a handsome architectural frame, a cartouche holds three tree stumps (*souche* being the French for tree stump), the arms of the Souchay family of France, the surname which his father had dropped on his arrival in England.

26. Goldsmiths' Company Court Book 13, pp. 9-13
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 200
 28. Mark Book *op. cit.* 27 March 1732
 29. Cited in Lever, 1975

30. Goldsmiths' Company Committee Book 7, p. 105
 31. Phillips, p. 30
 32. Strawberry Hill sale 1842, lot 1288

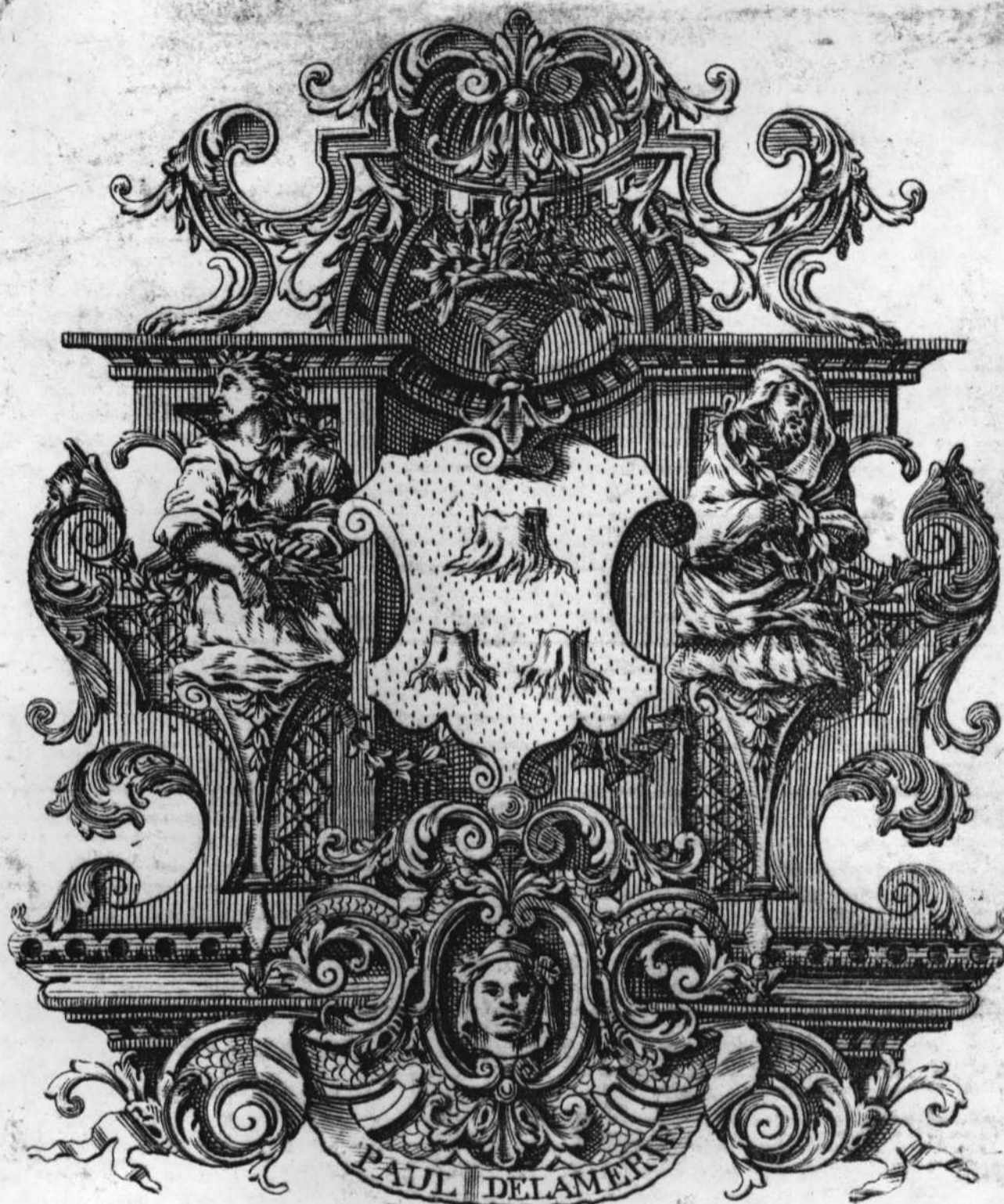


Fig. 3. Bookplate engraved by William Hogarth (Royal Library, Windsor Castle)

The fact he was by this time a man of considerable means is deduced from the considerable investments in property he began making from early in 1733, also from his lending money on mortgage. The first was a parcel of land in Piccadilly with *'the Messuages or Tenements, Erections and Buildings thereupon erected'*, and others followed in 1734, 1739, 1741 and 1743, several in the Westminster area but also as far afield as Gloucestershire (*cat no. 122*).

In December 1737 Lamerie was appointed, with Richard Bailey and Humphrey Payne, as trade members on a *'Special Committee for the Parliament Business'* to prepare a petition and bill designed *'to prevent the great frauds daily committed in the manufacturing of gold and silver wares for want of sufficient power effectually to prevent the same'*. At first sight it could be argued that this was a case of poacher turned gamekeeper, but it transpired that his poacher's blood still ran strongly in his veins. One of the clauses was for the restoration of the

33. Goldsmiths'
Company Archives
GLI, 2, 4, ii

Paul de Lamerie
 Garard Street of W. A.
 Goldsmith June 27
 1739

CF

Fig. 4. Entry of Paul de Lamerie's fifth and last mark, 27th June 1739

Company's right of search. This was within the year in which Lamerie supplied an ewer to Lord Hardwicke, the Chief Justice, which was a 'duty dodger', and there were possibly others, and he was not going to have Company officials search his workshop. He obviously vigorously opposed the clause so it was to be 'entirely left out of the new intended bill'. Having won this point, he failed to turn up to later meetings of the committee. He did however sign the final report and this resulted in Parliament passing the Plate Offences Act 1738/9³⁴. By this Act, all goldsmiths were ordered to destroy their makers' marks and register new ones consisting of initials, but of a different style of lettering from that used before. On 27th June 1739, Paul de Lamerie entered his new mark giving his address as Garard (Gerrard) Street³⁵. Phillips thought that he changed his shop sign to 'Ye Goldsmith'-whh his new address, but Lamerie was merely recording that he was of the Goldsmiths' Company as others, freemen of various companies, were recording theirs in the marks' register. What is evident is that even as a member of the Court, he had still ignored regulations. Although the move to Gerrard Street had taken place early in 1738, he had failed to register his change of address at the Assay Office. It was only as a result of the Act which changed the form of makers' marks, that we have his new address recorded.

One of the reasons for the move is believed to have been the need for larger premises so that he could take in his widowed mother. She died in January 1741 and was buried in St. Anne's Church, Westminster³⁶.

With the addition of Thomas Farren who had also been elected to the Court of Assistants in 1731, it was the trade members of the Special Committee of 1737 who were later commissioned to make a number of pieces of silver for the Goldsmiths' Company, in memory of those previous benefactors whose plate had been sold in 1667 and 1711 to raise money when the Company had serious funding problems. Paul de Lamerie undoubtedly made the most important and spectacular pieces (*cat nos.* 91, 97) and in 1743 he was elected Fourth Warden. He served as Third Warden in 1746 and Second Warden the following year although at that date the move to higher office in consecutive years was by no means automatic. It was only ill-health that prevented him from attaining the office of Prime Warden, for we learn from his will made in May 1751 of '# fowg a«J tedious illness'. He died on 1st August 1751 and was buried six days later in St. Anne's Church, Westminster, as his parents had been, but no trace of a memorial survives.

The will was proved on 8th August. After family and personal bequests, he left detailed instructions for an inventory to be compiled of the stock, for the work in hand to be finished by Samuel Collins, his long-standing journeyman and former apprentice, and for the whole lot to be sold at public auction by Abraham Langford. The stock quoted in advertisements of the sale in the Daily Advertiser in January and February 1752 (see p. 24) gives us a fair picture of the range of his business. We also learn from his will that he had employed a book-keeper, one Isaac Gyles, who was left 40 guineas in recognition of 'his long and faithful services', and also the name of one other journeyman, Frederick Knopfell, who after the sale of stock and tools, entered his own maker's mark in April 1752 with an address in Windmill Street. There is a possibility that Lamerie had kept a workshop in part of his former premises which Knopfell took over after the estate was wound up³⁷. Another point of interest is that one of the signatories to the will was James Shruder. He had been declared bankrupt in June 1749, but his availability to be a witness in May 1751 makes it highly likely that he was in Lamerie's employment, most probably as a modeller.

34.12 Geo. II c.26. Plate Offences Act

35. Goldsmiths' Company Mark Book for Large Workers, Vol Bno2, 27 March 1739

36. Phillips, p.34

37. Grimwade, 1976, p.573

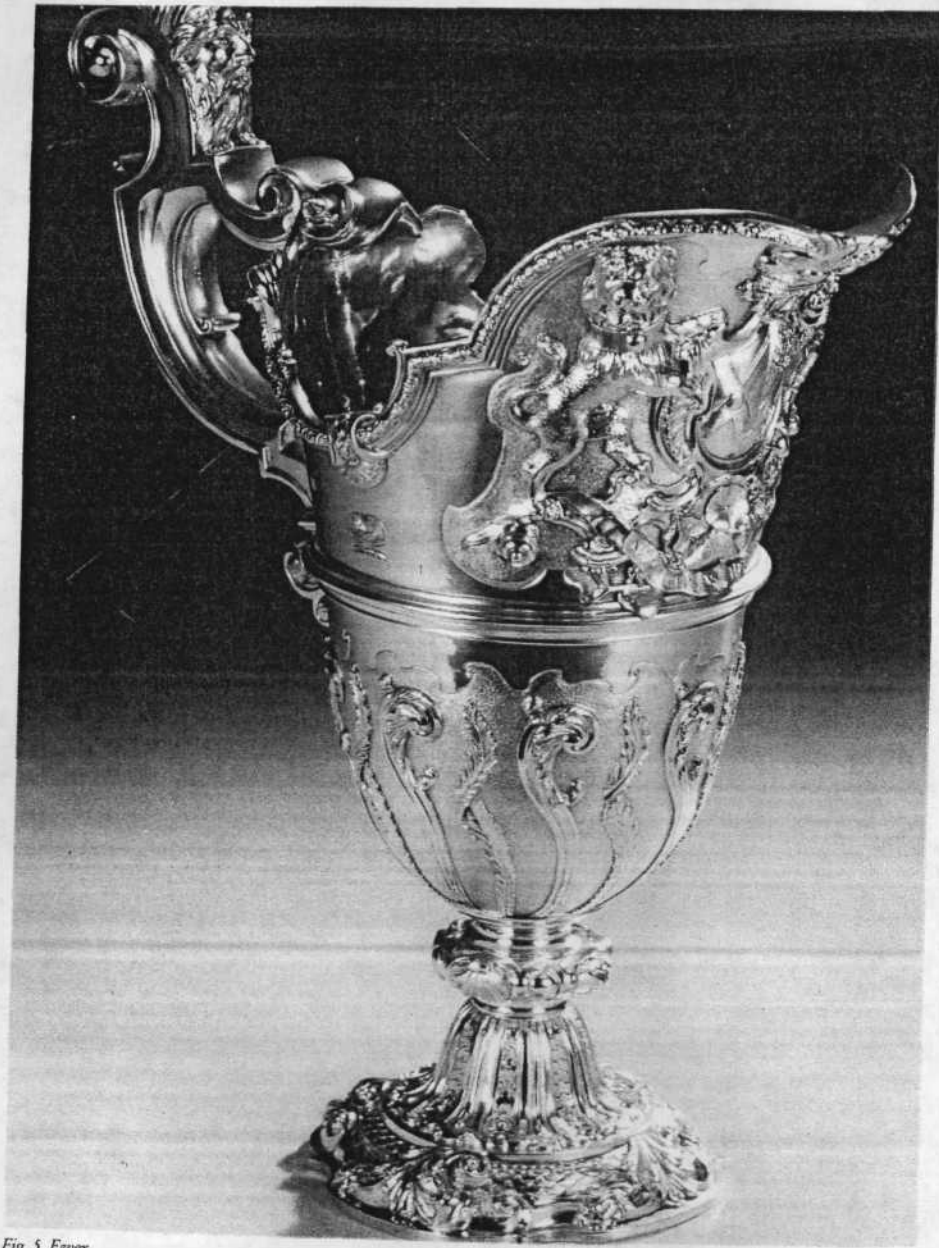


Fig. 5. Ewer with transposed marks for 1736, made for Lord Hardwicke (Victoria and Albert Museum)

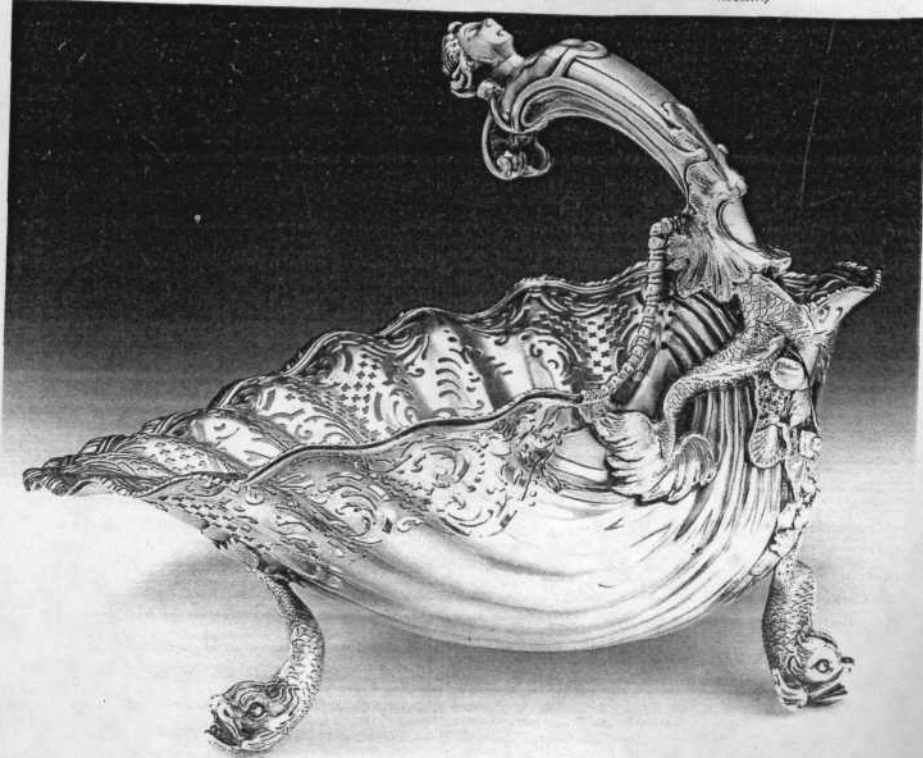


Fig. 6. Basket with maker's mark of Phillips Garden, 1747 (See page 28 and cat. no. 113)

'Last night the corpse of Mr de Lamerie, Silverworker to His Majesty, was interr'd in a handsome manner in St Ann's Church, Soho. His corpse was followed to the grave by a number of real Mourners, for he was a good man, and his Behaviour in and out of Business gain'd him Friends. By his Death the Post of Lieutenant-Colonel in the Westminster Militia is become vacant'¹⁶.

Maybe hearing stories about life as an army officer from his father as a child had fascinated him, but it was not until after his father's death that he actually followed up this interest. The Goldsmiths' Company minutes from 1736 usually referred to him as Captain, from 1743 he was addressed as Major. It may have been the increasing activities of the Jacobites and fears of the consequences of the restoration of a Roman Catholic monarchy, that led him to join this volunteer regiment. Sadly, the Westminster Militia was not given official status until later in the century, nor did its officers wear a special uniform previous to that time, so nothing could be exhibited to illustrate that aspect of Paul de Lamerie's career. It is however perhaps worth mentioning that he was the sole member of the Goldsmiths' Company at that period to be addressed by his rank as an officer.

The London Morning Penny Post mentioned Lamerie's death, noting that he was '*an eminent Silver Worker*', but the London Evening Post was more fulsome, recording that Humphrey Payne had died the same day (actually the day after), but that of the two silversmiths Paul de Lamerie '*was particularly famous in making fine ornamental Plate, and has been very instrumental in bringing that Branch of Trade to the Perfection it is now in*'^m.

Paul de Lamerie had been fortunate in learning his trade from a master of the quality of Pierre Platel, one of the most fashionable and skilful interpreters of the French *Régence* style with its well proportioned forms, balanced ornament and architectural motifs, the designs often based on engraved illustrations by Daniel Marot. He was also fortunate in living and working in the refugee community of Soho with its own cultural identity and where conversation was still mainly conducted in French. He was able to mix with artists in other fields besides silversmithing and he proved to be particularly receptive to the many ideas being exchanged around him. It was this eclecticism as well as his tough attitude to business that marked his success. Others in his sphere proved not to have this successful combination; for instance, Ellis Gamble, his former partner, Paul Crespin, that fine craftsman with whom he often worked, James Shruder, who may well have become his modeller, Abraham Portal, a former apprentice, and Phillips Garden, who may well have purchased some of his tools and casting patterns at the sale in 1752, all in their turn went bankrupt trying to run their own businesses.

At the start of his career in his own workshop, the astute Paul de Lamerie had been willing to carry out orders for plate of simple design in the English Queen Anne style to please his more sober patrons, yet proved perfectly capable of producing really elaborate pieces when the opportunity arose, such as the wall sconces (*cat no. 8*) and the Sunderland wine cistern (*cat no. 36*). He was able to coax a conservative-minded patron such as George Treby with plain silver objects (*cat nos. 21-3*) until the latter was lured into commissioning important pieces such as the more fashionable cup and the charger of 1723 (*cat nos. 25,26*), and then the sophisticated toilet service of 1724 in the *Régence* style (*cat no. 27*) as a gift to his future wife.

It was, however, the advent of the rococo style to which he responded most successfully. The essential characteristic of this style is movement and the need for novelty and innovation perfectly suited Lamerie as a designer. The workshop was producing a vast range of objects and obviously the same casting patterns were in use many times, yet seldom were objects made that were identical. Even his many baskets, a field in which he specialised, were constantly varied in the patterns of their piercing. However he was at his most inventive on the small scale especially with coffee pots, from the strange pear-shaped version of 1731 with overlapping scales (*cat no. 67*), to his most exceptional examples where the sculptural form and decoration unite so successfully, in the two jugs both dated 1738 (*cat nos. 85,101*). Paul de Lamerie's reputation was such that he was the only 18th century silversmith who was remembered by name, rather than just by the style of his silver and the 19th century rococo was a conscious movement, albeit unsuccessful, to recapture the fascination of his work. In 1911, Sir Charles Jackson wrote that '*in recent years, examples bearing his mark have been competed for with avidity*'. Exactly the same could be said today.

38. *General Advertiser*, 9 August 1751

39. Phillips, p.40