

## Franks Forage No 16A.

## The Princes Centrepiece



There is another Princes Centrepiece. That shown on the left, in bronze is by Count Gleichen and is housed in the Ballroom Corridor at Sandringham and is dated 1878. On the base are the names "Eddy" and "George" beneath the respective figures of the princes<sup>1</sup>. There are clearly major differences to the one the right, in silver by Elkington which is in the Dining room at Charlecote. This is a good 'spot the difference' exercise! The most obvious difference is the hand in which the rope is held.



Who was Count Gleichen? Victor, prince of Hohenlohe-Langenburg (1833-1891), naval officer and sculptor, and third son of Prince Ernst and Princess Feodore, only daughter of Emich Charles prince of Leiningen and Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfield, afterwards the duchess of Kent; his mother was half-sister to Queen Victoria. He went to school in Dresden but ran away in 1848 and through the interest of Queen Victoria, entered the British navy. Illness compelled him to retire from the navy in 1866. After retirement Count Gleichen devoted himself to an artistic career and set up a studio in St. James's palace where the queen granted him apartments. There he took up sculpture as a profession and produced several busts etc. for important clients<sup>2</sup>. He died at St. James's Palace in 1891.

The Charlecote centrepiece was the work of Elkington & Co. founded in Birmingham by George and Henry Elkington who perfected the art of electro-plating around 1840. A plaque marks the site of their premises in Newall Street. The firm also had premises in London and elsewhere. The figures of the princes are of silver, are hollow and each figure has its own hallmark on one of the shoes<sup>3</sup>. The positions of these marks are such that it is not possible to get good clear photographs of them but the sideways Anchor mark and the date letter e are Birmingham 1879. The initials FE (Frederick Elkington) are clear. Apart from the princes, there are no other marks and the rest of the piece appears to be plated, as can be seen from areas where the plating has worn away showing the base metal which is probably bronze. On the circular base is inscribed "Elkington and Co. London". This would seem to contradict the manufacture as being in Birmingham but perhaps the silver was made there and the plated parts in London.

From the dates above, the Sandringham piece came first and it is known that the Royal Household permitted Elkington to copy items in silver from the Royal Collection<sup>3</sup> apparently with the proviso that they are not exact copies! I would suggest that the Charlecote piece was commissioned from Elkington specifically for the presentation to Captain Fairfax and based on the existing Gleichen piece.

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Notes.

1. Sandringham House guide book p30

2. [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Victor\\_Ferdinand\\_Franz\\_Eugen\\_Gustaf\\_Adolf\\_Constantin\\_Friedrich\\_of\\_Hohenlohe-Langenburg\\_\(DNB01\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Victor_Ferdinand_Franz_Eugen_Gustaf_Adolf_Constantin_Friedrich_of_Hohenlohe-Langenburg_(DNB01))

3. See Forage19A for details of the silversmith and hallmarks