[**Captain Bob**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2481-captain-bob/)

* Ship's Master
* 
* 
* Member
* 108 posts
* Location:Sacred Tomato, CA
* Interests:Science, technology, history, military history, etc.

[Posted July 14, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=207170) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=207170)

In another thread, there is much discussion about **Authentic** barrels, casks, kegs, and whatnot. Several units of measure were mentioned that I have only heard of but never seen.

I undertand a hogshead is a *lot*, while a firkin isn't. Two butts make a hogshead (or is it the other way around?) and a tun is just hyüge! Would somebody 'splain these (and any others in common use during the GAOP)?

TIA!

~~Captain Redd Roberts (the pyrate formerly known as Cap'n Bob)

[**Capn\_Enigma**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/139-capn_enigma/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 432 posts

[Posted July 14, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=207176) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=207176)

[Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firkin) is your friend.

[**Captain Bob**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2481-captain-bob/)

* Ship's Master
* 
* 
* Member
* 108 posts
* Location:Sacred Tomato, CA
* Interests:Science, technology, history, military history, etc.

[Posted July 20, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=208393) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=208393)

 Capn\_Enigma said:

[Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firkin) is your friend.

No, Wikipedia is *your* friend. To me, a WebTV user, Wikipedia is a knowledgeable but surly acquaintance who doesn't speak clearly. The text of many Wikipedia hyperlinks is shown in a very tiny font that does not show clearly on my TV screen. The table at the bottom of the referred page contains symbols WebTV does not understand, and the columns do not align properly.

I did, however, gather that a firkin is (for beer and ale, anyway) a quarter of a barrel.

[**Capn\_Enigma**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/139-capn_enigma/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 432 posts

[Posted July 20, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=208394) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=208394)

You need to get yourself a **real** computer, mate. 

[**Captain Jim-sib**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1464-captain-jim-sib/)

* First Mate
* 
* 
* Member
* 264 posts

[Posted July 20, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=208426) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=208426)

"Barrel" is an interesting unit of measure, and its standard depends on the origin of the maker.

In oil field lingo, 1 barrel = 42 gallons.

The origin of this measurement goes back to the 1870's Appalachian oil production when the crude was placed into large 60 gal. barrels loaded on horse-drawn wagons. By the time the wagon got down the hill /mountain, about 18 gallons had sloshed out of a barrel ( 1st environmental spill). To save the crude, a chalk line was place inside the barrel at the minimum slosh level...which turned out to be 42 gallons.

[**kass**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1603-kass/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 1,526 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Easton, Pennsylvania
* Interests:Historical Clothing from the 14th through 18th centuries. Getting all the niggling details right. Dressing up and having fun with my similarly-obsessed friends. :)

[Posted July 20, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=208492) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=208492)

Hey Captain Bob,

This is actually argued about in the post about GAoP Encampments elsewhere in this section. I direct you to [the second page](http://pyracy.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=7305&st=15). About halfway down the page, Fairfax discusses how barrels and casks in the period didn't always hold a "barrel" or "cask" measurement-wise. I don't know anything on the subject, but from his post, I'm suspecting that those the static measurements of barrels and casks are more modern (I know hogsheads are period though). It's not enough to say "a barrel is 35.5 gallons" or whatever. It may be that today. But it wasn't *necessarily* a unit of measurement in the GAoP. And if they're stamping measurements on the tops of casks, that would belie the idea of a cask being a measure at that time.

Read the thread. See what you can make of it. It got wordy for me and I had to go look at pretty clothing to recover... 

[**Rabbitz**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2984-rabbitz/)

* Deck Swabber
* 
* 
* Member
* 21 posts
* Location:Port Jackson, Australia
* Interests:Deck Crew on 19th Century Iron Barque (James Craig)

[Posted July 20, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=208493) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=208493)

As with all things archaeological we have to resist the natural urge to look at things through 21st Century eyes.

The fact is that in times past there really were very few ISO type or enforceable industry standards.

The local cooper would make different types of casks as he would see fit or to suit his available materials. I am sure that "market pressures" would mean he made a cask **around** the size of those that his peers were making and if he was a supplier to bigger industry (ie the Navy) they would be made to a size that was requested.

The same would be true of all sorts of industries, clothing being a prime example. I am sure local influence was stronger than many other factors, so depending where a sailor got his clothes would determine the style, same with casks.

Remember to look through the eyes of someone from the period you are thinking about.

Rabz

[**kass**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1603-kass/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 1,526 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Easton, Pennsylvania
* Interests:Historical Clothing from the 14th through 18th centuries. Getting all the niggling details right. Dressing up and having fun with my similarly-obsessed friends. :)

[Posted July 20, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=208494) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=208494)

 Rabbitz said:

We have to resist the natural urge to look at things through 21st Century eyes.

Oh Rabz! Gooooood quote!

Kass

[**The Doctor**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1278-the-doctor/)

* aka Mad Jack Wolfe
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 3,670 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:╦┐◤︻㍕┻═▄
* Interests:Historian and writer, partnered with the dazzling and lovely Honour Bright.

[Posted July 20, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=208495) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=208495)

Rabz, mate... if only I could get you to talk such sense to a great number of archaeologists, I'd be very happy. And my wife would hear a lot less bitching. :)

[**Cire**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1387-cire/)

* Ship's Master
* 
* 
* Member
* 113 posts

[Posted July 20, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=208496) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=208496)

My eyes aren't 21st century. I nicked em from a mad scientist who had a store of pickled eyes ranging from 16th to 20th century... sadly they weren't labelled...

[**Cap'n Pete Straw**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1898-capn-pete-straw/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 1,516 posts
* Location:Chicago area (Bartlett) Illinois
* Interests:Global travel; Writing children's books (unpublished as yet); Civil War reenacting; Fencing; Lord of the Rings; Batman; Planet of the Apes; Marx Brothers; Monty Python; Warhammer; antique medical equipment; costume and prop design and production; Theatre (always theatre -- life really IS a stage)... I guess I should add "Pirates" to the list, no?

[Posted August 8, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=211978) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=211978)

 Cire said:

My eyes aren't 21st century. I nicked em from a mad scientist who had a store of pickled eyes ranging from 16th to 20th century... sadly they weren't labelled...

No, they were labeled... Thay came from an *"Abby"* someone.... er... I think the name was *"Abby Normal".*



Although this question seems to have been answered, the following is from the book *The Sea Rover's Practice* by Benerson Little:

**Barrels:**

*anker:* approximately 8 gallons of liquid, especially brandy or wine.

*firkin:* half of a kilderkin or 8-9 galons. Of butter, weighed 56 pounds.

*kilderkin:* 16-18 gallons. Of butter, weighed 112 pounds.

*rundlett:* 18 1/2 gallons. Often used for gunpowder.

*barrel or half hogshead:* 31 1/2 gallons. One barrel of beef weighed 225 pounds.

*tierce:* 42 gallons (36 of beer to allow for leakage and evaporation)....

*hogshead:* 63 gallons (54 of beer). A hogshead of sugar weighed between 1,000 and 1,600 pounds.

*tertian or puncheon:* 84 gallons (or 72 of beer).

*pipe or butt:* 126 gallons of wine (or 108 of beer for leakage).

*leager:* a water barrel of 150 gallons.

*tunn:* 252 gallons.

[**Captain Bob**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2481-captain-bob/)

* Ship's Master
* 
* 
* Member
* 108 posts
* Location:Sacred Tomato, CA
* Interests:Science, technology, history, military history, etc.

[Posted August 9, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=212011) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=212011)

 Cap said:

Although this question seems to have been answered, the following is from the book *The Sea Rover's Practice* by Benerson Little:

[snip!]

Thank'ee Cap'n Straw! I find that if I just shut up and listen long enough, eventually I'll get a usable response.

[**LongTom**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2786-longtom/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 629 posts
* Location:San Francisco or thereabouts
* Interests:"If I was a blackbird, could whistle and sing..." (Hm. I guess I must be a blackbird.)<br>Makin' hats, really big ones.<br>WizKids Pirates series games.

[Posted August 9, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=212143) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=212143)

 Cap said:

Although this question seems to have been answered, the following is from the book *The Sea Rover's Practice* by Benerson Little:

(...)

*tierce:* 42 gallons (36 of beer to allow for leakage and evaporation)....

*hogshead:* 63 gallons (54 of beer).  A hogshead of sugar weighed between 1,000 and 1,600 pounds.

*tertian or puncheon:* 84 gallons (or 72 of beer).

*pipe or butt:* 126 gallons of wine (or 108 of beer for leakage).

(...)

The "leakage and evaporation" angle sounds a little odd to me. I don't see why beer would leak or evaporate worse than some other liquid. On the other hand, over time beer might produce pressure in the vessel. Leaving an air space would make it less likely to rupture, since the air space is considerably more elastic, with regards to pressurization, than the liquid is.

As usual, this is just a conjecture. Anybody with more information, feel free to correct.

[**MorganTyre**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2806-morgantyre/)

* First Mate
* 
* 
* Member
* 291 posts
* Location:South Texas
* Interests:Sailing, rigging, snorkeling, spearfishing, diving

[Posted August 10, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=212336) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=212336)

 LongTom said:

The "leakage and evaporation" angle sounds a little odd to me. I don't see why beer would leak or evaporate worse than some other liquid. On the other hand, over time beer might produce pressure in the vessel.

Just a guess but you might have answered your own question. If the beer were to develop pressure then leakage might be considerably more. If there is a small leak "below the waterline" of the beer and then the beer gassed then the beer would leak out until the pressure equalized or enough of a vacuum developed to hold in the remaining liquid.

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted May 2, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=findComment&comment=399265) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/8037-firkin-measurements-or/&do=reportComment&comment=399265)

Firkins. I love that word. It According to Little, it means 56 pounds of butter. Mmm. Butter.