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English Pewter Plates Part 1

by Ronald F. Homer

In the title and the general text of this article I shall use the word "plate" in its broadest sense to include all flatware which was used for the serving or eating of food. It thus includes everything from small 4ins. saucers to the largest serving plate of over 2ft. across, whether deep or shallow, round, oval, or of some other shape. Part I will deal with the evolution and date ranges of plate styles and Part II with the decoration which was sometimes used to embellish them.

Plates are among the oldest items of pewterware to be made in Britain. Many survive from Romano-British times, but these are outside the scope of this article which is concerned with the pewter plate from the 14th century until its demise as a utilitarian utensil in the mid-19th century, a period of over half a millennium. The earliest documentary record of pewter plates is found in 1307 when some "dishes" were included in a small cargo of pewterware exported from London. However, before we follow through from this remote period to the time when collectable pewter plates were made, we must look a little at nomenclature.

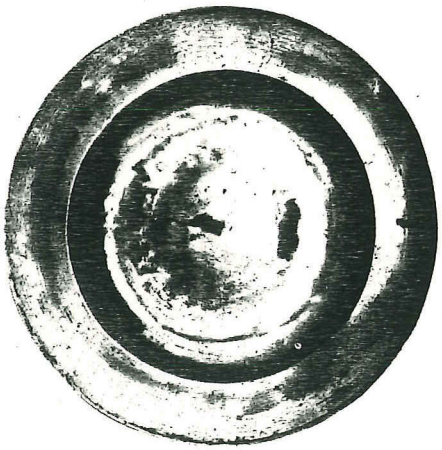


Figure 1. A superbly preserved plate from the Guy's Hospital hoard in the bumpy-bottomed style. Note the finishing marks from the lathe on the face of the rim. c.1500, diameter 13½ins.

Various records from the early 15th century speak of small, middle and large chargers; small, middle and large platters, and similarly categorise dishes and saucers. The weights of these items are given, from which we can deduce that they embrace a range of sizes from about 20ins. diameter down to ones as small as 4ins. or 5ins. Also found are terms which we do not remotely understand. Florentine dishes, Flemish dishes, salad dishes, hollow dishes and counterfeit dishes are but a few. The term "trencher" is found from the mid-1400s onwards. By the 17th century things had become simpler, or at least easier to understand, and the Pewterers' Company in 1676 classified as "dishes" those plates between 29½ins. and 10½ins. across; as "trencher plates" those from 11¾ins. to 7½ins., and as "saucers" those from 7ins. down to 4¾ins. diameter. The overlap between the larger trencher plates and the smallest dishes is curious. Dishes were, however, apparently of sturdier construction as the 10½ins. dish weighed 18lb. to the dozen, compared with the 10½ins. plate at 15½lb. per dozen. By 1747 the term "trencher plate" may have been confined to describing common eating plates as an Order of the Company in that year refers to "large pound", "small pound" and "three-quarter" trencher plates weighing respectively 15lb., 12lb. and 11lb. per dozen. These were thus about 9ins. or a little more across. In other records of the same time these sizes are found described as "ordinary plates".

The classification and dating of plate styles before the middle of the 16th century is very uncertain, though many survive which are undoubtedly of earlier date. These, for want of information, are frequently classified as "Tudor". Their styles are diverse. They may be deep or shallow, have broad or normally proportioned rims, flat or bumpy bottoms, and they may or may not have narrow cast fillets round the edge of the face of the rim. A few, the so-called "bowl-plates", are round bottomed and as such they would not stand on a flat surface. Presumably these were held in the hand while being eaten from. By contrast the bumpy bottom provided a stable ring for the plate to sit on. The best known of these early plates are the group excavated on the site of Guy's Hospital in 1899 which all bear on the rim the device of a crowned feather. One is shown in figure 1 and they are all conjecturally c.1500, though possibly earlier. Another group of early plates and dishes is illustrated in figure 2 and these include flat-bottomed, bumpy-bottomed and round-bottomed examples. All have rims of normal proportions and none is precisely datable.

From c.1550 we are on surer ground. Two broad-rimmed saucers and a broad-rimmed dish some 13½ins. across all with bumpy bottoms, bear what is believed to be the cypher of Elizabeth I, and two dishes 16½ins. across with broad rims are known punched with the date 1585. One is bumpy-bottomed, the other has a flat base to the well. The

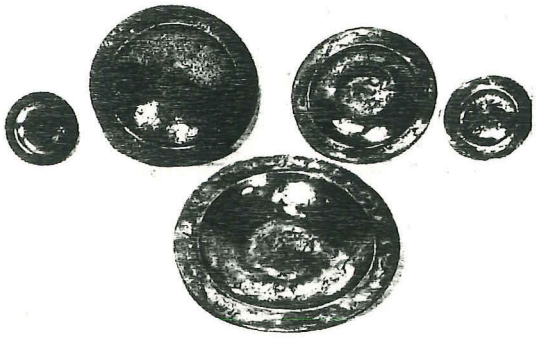


Figure 2. A group of five early plates all 15th/16th century. On the left a flat-bottomed saucer 5ins. in diameter, next to it a bowl-plate 11¼ins. across, and three bumpy-bottomed plates, 6ins., 9½ins. and 12¼ins. respectively. All have plain rims of normal width.

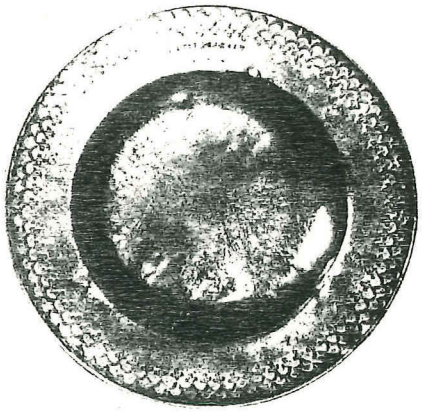


Figure 3. A flat-bottomed, broad-rimmed plate some 16ins. in diameter bearing the date 1585 on the rim. Note the narrow cast reed round the rim. The decoration on this plate will be commented on in Part II.

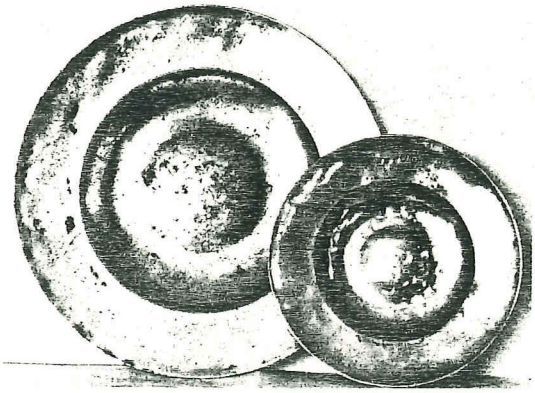


Figure 4. Two later bumpy-bottomed plates with broad rims. Both of these are from the first few decades of the 17th century, but the style began at least as early as 1500. Diameters respectively 20ins. and 15ins. The larger came from Cotehele House, Cornwall.

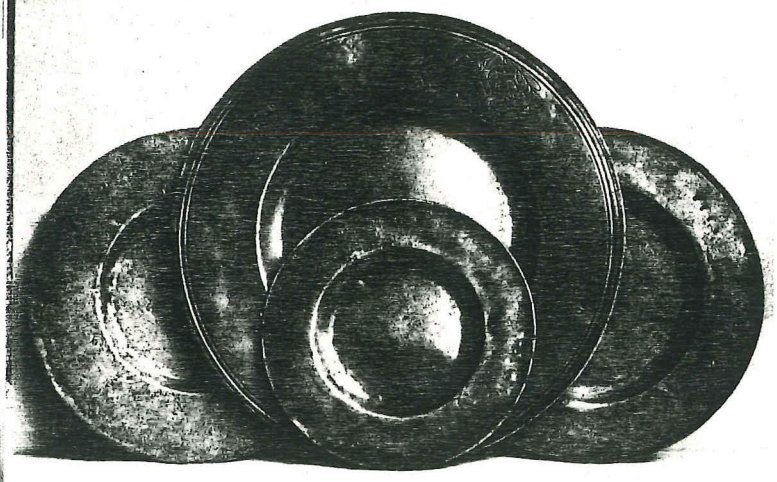


Figure 5. A group of plates and chargers with broad rims dating from 1660-70. The largest is 22ins. in diameter.

Figure 7. A rare West Country variant of the multiple reeded plate of c.1690. Note the hallmarks struck on the face of the well and the very narrow rim.

latter is seen in figure 3 and its decoration will be the subject of comment in Part II. We now also have a number of plates of c.1545 with bumpy bottoms and broad rims from the "Mary Rose". These range from 7½ins. to 14ins. in diameter and they are identical in form to the early 17th century plates shown in figure 4. Clearly this style had a life of at least a century and perhaps very much longer.

By about 1640 the bumpy bottom had disappeared and the dominant and attractively proportioned style was that of the well-known flat-bottomed, broad-rimmed plate in which the width of the rim is normally between a fifth and a sixth of the overall diameter. Mostly these are found in the larger sizes, but a rare smaller sized variant has a rim which may be as much as a quarter of the diameter. This appears to have been made in sizes between about 9ins. and 10ins. across only. It is further distinguished by the total absence of any fillet or beading round the edge which gives it the appearance of having been raised from the flat, and there is some evidence that they were in fact made this way. On the normal broad-rimmed plates and dishes the rim is frequently found enlivened by one or more incised grooves at the edge. Such incised grooves appear also, though rarely, on bumpy-bottomed plates of a considerably earlier date. These various types are shown in figures 5 and 6. By 1670 or '80 the incised decoration gave place to cast multiple reeds standing proud of the surface. At the same time the rim began to decrease in width until by about 1700 it had shrunk to the normal proportion of one eighth to one ninth of the diameter. A rare variant has the rim scarcely wider than the reeding and many of these appear to be of West Country origin. These two types are seen in figures 7 and 8. Both went out of fashion very early in the 18th century.

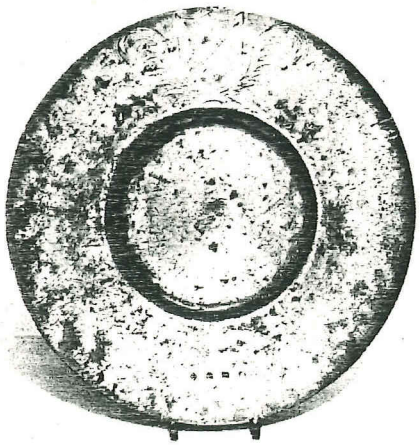


Figure 6. A 10ins. plate with a very broad rim 2½ins. wide. This type of plate seems to have been made only between about 1640 and 1660. Maker Richard Allen of London.

About 1700 the two commonest types of pewter plates appear; those with single reeds to the edge of the rim and those with quite plain rims of normal width. These two styles overlapped totally in date, but the former went out of fashion about 1760 while the latter was made well into the 19th century. Neither shows any recognisable evolutionary features and, in the absence of a known touch mark, dating is usually impossible. The earliest securely dated plain-rimmed plates are probably those recovered two or three years ago from a ship which sank in 1703. Though examples are known with the marks of pewterers who were working before the turn of the century, none can so far be said to have been made before 1700. None was found among the pewter excavated at Port Royal, Jamaica, which was buried in the earthquake of 1692. Both these styles of plate, which are illustrated in figures 9 and 10, have heavy reinforcing fillets on the underside of the rim and this distinguishes the plain-rimmed variety from the otherwise somewhat similar plates of a much earlier date. These have very much narrower fillets.

During the 18th century a number of fancy styles came and went. A group of wavy-edged plates is shown in figure 11 and this type was made from about 1740 to 1770. Octagonal and decagonal plates with plain or reeded rims were made briefly in the period from perhaps 1720-40. Figure 12 shows an octagonal plate and figure 13 a decagonal one. Both are rare. Oval plates are essentially later in date and were made from perhaps 1760 into the 19th century. The London pewterer, Joseph Spackman, together with James Williamson obtained a patent, No. 821, in 1764 for a lathe for turning elliptical plates. All these styles may be found with gadrooned or rope edges (as may the normal round plates) and this type of decoration was used throughout the 18th century. The plate shown in figure 14 was made as late as perhaps 1800 by the Birmingham pewterer, William Tutin.

The eminently practical hot water plate was made from the mid-18th century until well into the 19th. Most were made by joining together two normal plates with a strip of pewter round the

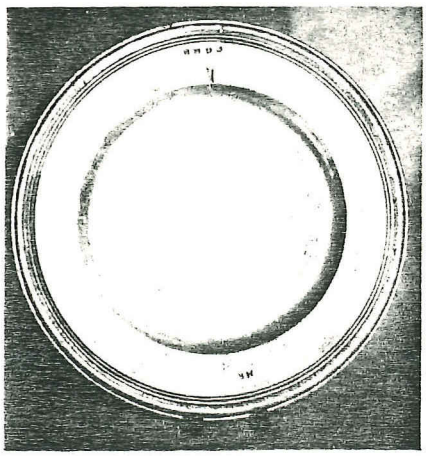
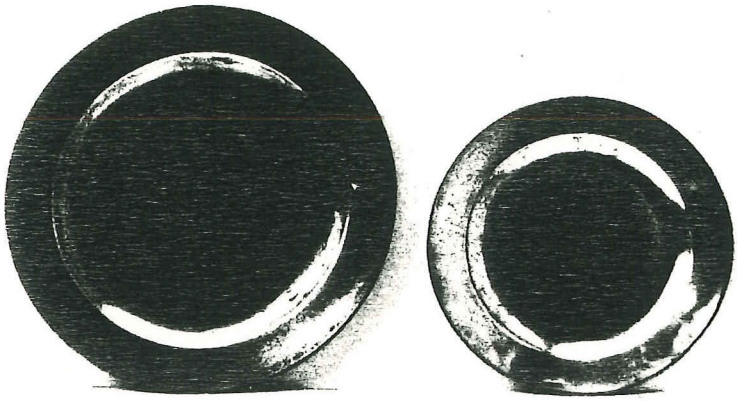


Figure 8. A 20ins. charger with cast multiple reeding and a somewhat broader than normal rim, c.1690.

Main Styles and Approximate Dates of English Pewter Plates

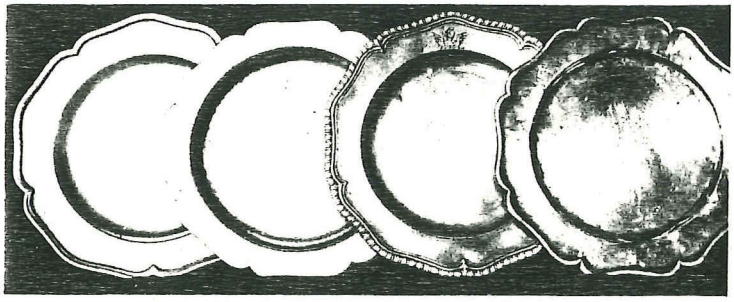
Bumpy-bottomed	
Broad rim, plain	15th century to c.1650
Broad rim, incised reeding	16th century to c.1650
Normal rim	15th/16th century to c.1650
Flat-bottomed	
Broad rim, plain	1640-1690
Broad rim, incised reeding	1640-1680
Broad rim, cast multiple reeding	1680-1700
Very narrow rim, cast multiple reeding	1680-1710
Normal rim, cast multiple reeding	1680-1710
Normal rim, cast single reeding	1710-1760
Normal rim, plain	*1700-1850
Wavy edged	1740-1770
Octagonal/decagonal	1710-1750
Gadrooned or rope edge	1700-1800
Oval	1760-1850
Hot water	1760-1850
Bowl, i.e. Round-bottomed	
Normal rim	Probably 16th century

*Much earlier flat-bottomed plates with normal rims are known. These may be distinguished by a much narrower fillet round the edge of the underside of the rim. They are also frequently shallower and with a steeper bouge.



Above. Figure 10. Two plain-rimmed plates of the type common from soon after 1700 until the 19th century. That on the left by John Duncumb c.1730 and that on the right by Birch and Villers c.1780. 14ins. and 9¼ins. respectively.

Below. Figure 11. A group of wavy-edged plates of the mid-18th century, all about 10ins. in diameter.



edge and a large oval one is shown in figure 15. A few, which have rimless concave tops, were cast in purpose-made moulds. A hinged flap was provided for filling and emptying and handles protected the server's fingers from the hot metal. Collectors are sometimes puzzled by quite flat circular plates which may have a reeded or turned up edge. These are not table pewter, but served as scale pans on shop scales. Some may be 17th century; most are much later. Similar quite flat plates punched with a pattern of holes fitted in the bottom of buckets and functioned as strainers.

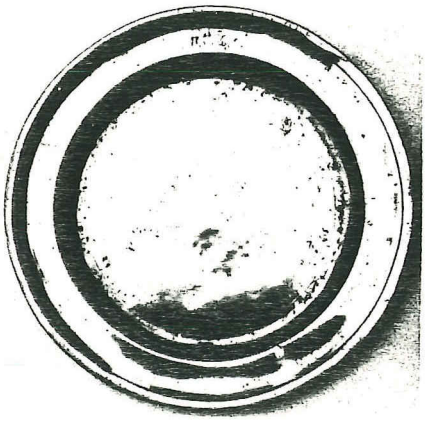


Figure 9. A conventional single-reeded plate of 9ins. diameter. The type was made from about 1710 to 1760. This example was made by Richard Green of Worcester.

The largest pewter chargers known are no less than 36ins. in diameter. One slightly smaller, 34½ins. across with a rim of 7½ins., was sold at auction in 1976 for the sum of £6,500. These however are quite exceptional and perhaps no more than a score exist between these monsters and the largest normal chargers of 24ins. or 25ins. in size. From about 24ins. down the collector of pewter can expect to find pieces from the 17th century onwards, though small saucers are as rare as large chargers. Early plates and dishes prior to about 1600 are of course uncommon, but they may be found at auction or in the hands of specialist dealers. Most have been excavated or recovered from rivers or the sea.

Pewter plates were normally cast in bronze moulds, some of which survive from the early 1700s and are still in use for casting replicas. They were expensive and records show that they were sometimes shared between several pewterers. In the 19th century cast iron moulds were introduced. The roughly cast ware was finished by turning on a lathe and was then hammered in the bouge to compact and strengthen the metal. This hammering was insisted on by the Pewterers' Company from the earliest times and the serried rows of hammermarks found under the bouge of an unworn plate reflect the skilful work of the craftsman who made it. Occasionally one finds plates of the early 18th century which have been hammered all over.

Marks

Plates, even the earliest, are usually well marked and bear a maker's touch on the underside of the rim or on the base. In the 16th century the touch may be found on the face of the rim and a mark in this position is indicative of an early piece. Note that English pewterers struck their touches normally only once. Plates with the touch struck twice or even three times are almost certainly Continental in origin. From about 1620 pewterers' hallmarks are found on the face of the rim. Later, in the 18th century, they migrated to the back of the rim or the base. As an exception to the general rule the narrow-rimmed West Country plates of the late 17th century may have hallmarks struck on the face of the well. Sometimes a plate may be found with one maker's touch and another's hallmarks. This is believed to indicate that one maker made for another who was the vendor only. Indeed references have been found to a pewterer supplying another with plates "in the rough" to be finished and presumably marked by him. The Pewterers' Company Order of 1747 is informative here as it stipulates that trencher plates shall be struck with the touch of *either the maker or the vendor* (my italics) and the conclusion must be drawn that a plate was not necessarily made by the pewterer whose marks it bears.

Secondary marks may include a crowned "X", a label reading "LONDON" (or some other town) and a label reading "Superfine Hard Metal" or words to similar effect. This last mentioned label appears from the early 18th century and is believed, on the basis of recent analyses, to show that the alloy contains antimony rather than copper as a hardening agent. Originally the "fine

metal" used for plates contained 93% or more of tin, 1%-3% of copper and perhaps 2%-3% of lead, together with traces of other metals. In the 18th century plates with 4%-5% of antimony are commonly found. Some provincial plates, particularly those from Bristol and the West Country, are, however, of leady metal and may contain 10%-15% of this metal. The mark of the crowned "X" was also originally a quality mark, signifying a hard copper-containing alloy, but in later times it was used rather indiscriminately and reliance cannot therefore be placed on it. Replicas cast from old moulds, reproductions and fakes abound and may bear any or all of the above marks in facsimile or in rather crude imitation. Avoid anything with "LONDON" in incuse lettering and look twice at any plate bearing the touch mark of Duncumb (a horse's jamb rising from a coronet) as these dies, or copies of them, still exist and are in use today.

Figure 14. A 10ins. rope-edged plate of about 1800 made by William Tutin of Birmingham, inventor of the antimony-containing alloy "tutania".

Prices

The styles, dates, sizes and degrees of rarity are too diverse to enable other than general indications of prices to be given. Common 9ins. plates of the 18th century with good marks may be found for £15-£20 but similarly sized 17th century multiple reeded plates will fetch three or four times as much, and the narrow-rimmed variant will not be found for less than £100. A 15ins.-20ins. broad-rimmed charger will command several hundred pounds and for larger sizes the price rises disproportionately. Wavy edged plates may be £50 and octagonal or decagonal ones several times this. Hot water dishes appear undervalued and £25-£50 will purchase a good example. Early plates vary greatly in condition and all that can be said about these is that prices would be of the order of several hundred pounds. Deep plates, that would be designated as dishes in modern parlance, may command a small premium. Beware also of paying over the odds for a misleading description. Most so-called "rose-water dishes" are nothing more than rather deep bumpy-bottomed dishes which were used for quite ordinary purposes.

Illustrations are from the photographic archive of the Pewter Society.

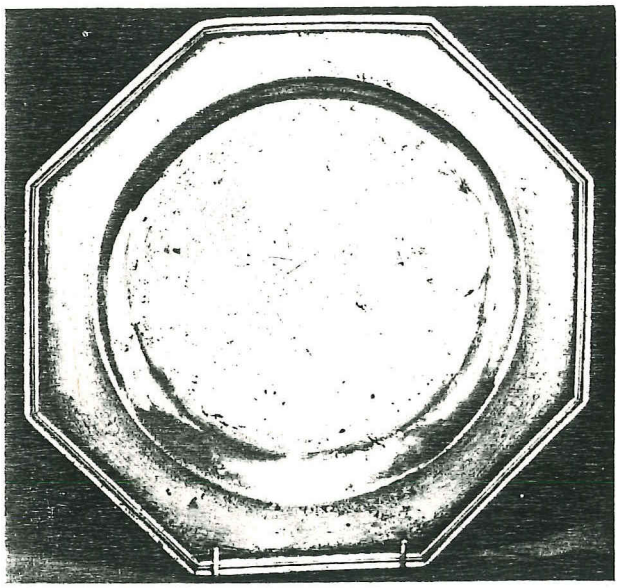


Figure 12. An octagonal plate with cast reeded rim and 9ins. across. Made by James Tysoe of London c.1750.

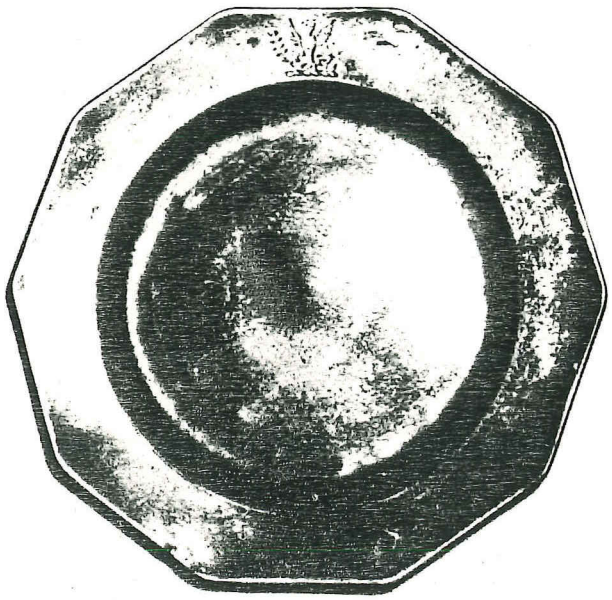


Figure 13. A decagonal plate with a plain rim made by Jonas Durand of London c.1720, approximately 10½ins. across.

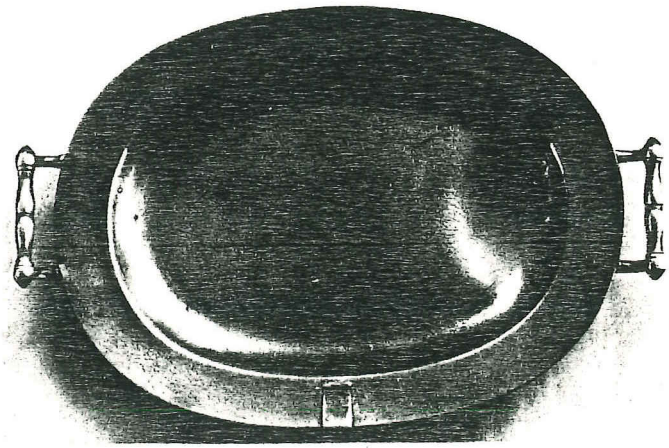


Figure 15. An oval hot water dish 20ins. across the handles made by John Ingram of Bewdley c.1770-90.

Antique Collecting. April 1984

English Pewter Plates Part 2

by Ronald F. Homer

Part 1 (*Antique Collecting* February 1984) outlined the development of the various styles of English pewter plate over some five centuries. For much of this long period plates remained unadorned save for crests and coats of arms applied by the owner. However, during a period of about 180 years, from c.1580 to c.1760, five different decorative techniques were used to embellish pewter flatware. These were as follows: a. punched decoration, b. cast decoration, c. enamelled bosses, d. wriggled work, e. repoussé work. Before considering each of these in turn, it is worth first looking at coats of arms, since the style of these may be useful in dating the items on which they appear, even if the owner of the arms cannot be identified.

Coats of arms

Figure 1 shows typical styles used for engraving arms over the period c.1640 to c.1800. Reference to these styles may be of value in roughly dating a type of plate which was made over a long period, such as the plain-rimmed plate which had a life of about 150 years. It is, however, worth noting that the engraving need not be contemporary with the date of manufacture of the plate. A large household may have employed an engraver once only to engrave all their pewter, old and new, with the arms of the then current owner.

Much heraldic engraving on pewter is pseudo-armorial, and the charges on the shield were never accepted by, or registered with, the College of Arms. When a genuine armorial bearing is depicted it may be possible to identify the owner by reference to Papworth's *Ordinary of Arms*. However, the use of this reference book requires some knowledge of the art of blazonry, and the outcome may be ambiguous since the heraldic tinctures, which alone may differentiate certain arms, are frequently not indicated by the accepted conventional hatching which should be used in outline drawings of arms. Nevertheless useful results may emerge. The arms on the 24ins. charger shown in figure 2, which style dates to 1630-40, were shown in this way to be those of Sir Thomas Walcot impaled with those of his wife, Mary Littleton, and no doubt engraved to celebrate their wedding at Bitterley Court, Shropshire, on 10th December 1663. (For further information on the identification of coats of arms see *Antique Collecting* Volume 12, Nos. 8, 9 and 10.)

a. Punched Decoration

A number of plates and dishes from the late 16th and the 17th centuries are to be found decorated by the repeated application of small punched motifs, usually making up a band of arched decoration round the rim. One such, dated 1585, was illustrated in Part 1, figure 3, and a bumpy-bottomed plate with generally similar decoration and bearing the same date is in the British Museum. On that example the semi-circular punch used for the arch has been applied twice (once inverted) to form a series of small circles, each bearing the centre a stamped Tudor rose. Inside this band of decoration is a circle of inverted fleur-de-lis. Another punch-decorated plate is known with the date 1638, and most examples probably fall between these dates. A dish of about 1600 is shown in figure 3 and this has a pendent group of three acorns hanging below the junction of each arch. This acorn motif is found on several other examples.

The technique appears to have re-emerged for a brief period later in the 17th century, as witness figure 4 which shows a dish of about 1680 with decoration of a very similar type. Here there is no pendent motif, each arch springs from a small rose-shaped punch.

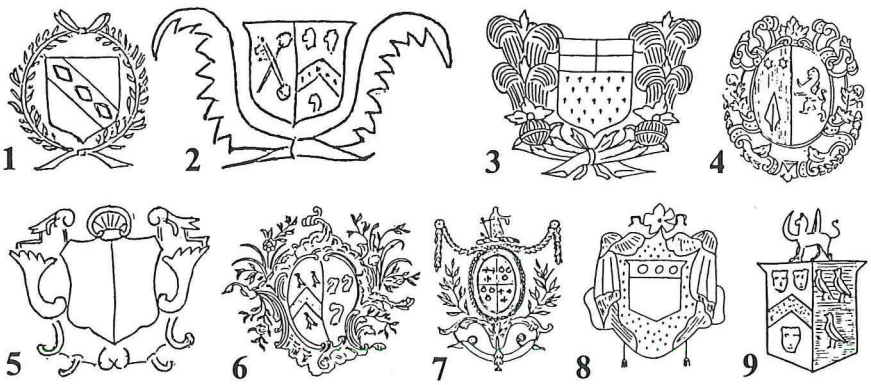


Figure 1. Styles of engraved coats of arms. Approximate dates as follows: 1. 1635-55; 2. 1650; 3. 1650-85; 4. 1700-40; 5. 1720-40. 6. 1730-70; 7. 1770-85; 8. 1780-1805; 9. 1790-1810.

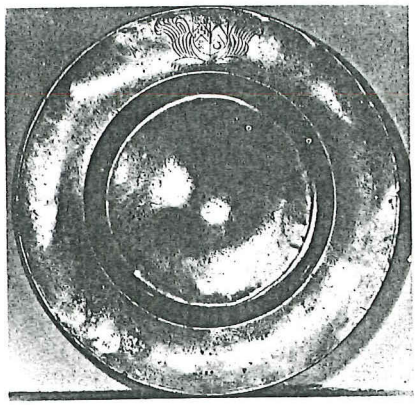


Figure 2. A 24ins. broad-rimmed charger of c.1630-40 with the added arms of Sir Thomas Walcot and his wife Mary Littleton who were married in 1663.

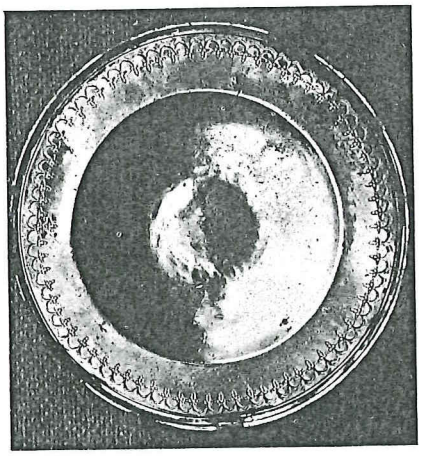


Figure 3. A 15ins. bumpy-bottomed dish with punched decoration comprising an arched circle with pendent acorn clusters, c.1600.

Figure 4. A 20½ins. charger of c.1680 with punched arched decoration and an outer circle of fleur-de-lis.

b. Cast Decoration

Leaving aside the rather incidental running-vine decoration found on the bases of some candlesticks and salts of the second half of the 17th century, it is only for a brief period in the first two

decades of the 17th century that English pewter is found with relief-cast decoration. This normally takes the form of bands of foliage, fruit and flowers, though, rarely, other designs may be found. The number of pieces known is small and most are in museums. There are several tall-stemmed wine cups, a few beakers, a candlestick, a tazza and a few small saucers and pattens. Even so, bearing in mind the general rarity of all pewter from this period, the number of cast-decorated items which survive suggest that it may not have been all that uncommon in its time. A few pieces have been discovered in recent years, sometimes unrecognised for what they were. No large plate is known to me with this decoration (one would be a treasure indeed!), but figure 5 shows a saucer of 5¼ins. in diameter bearing bands of concentric floral/foliar decoration. It may have been an ecclesiastical patten, though it is far too big to fit in the top of the contemporary similarly decorated wine cups, which some believe to have been chalices. Probably it was for domestic use. It is perhaps worth stating that "saucers" were in those times just what their name implies; small plates for holding sauces, and nothing to do with the not-then-invented tea-cup!

Figure 5. A 5½ins. saucer with concentric bands of cast relief decoration, c.1610.

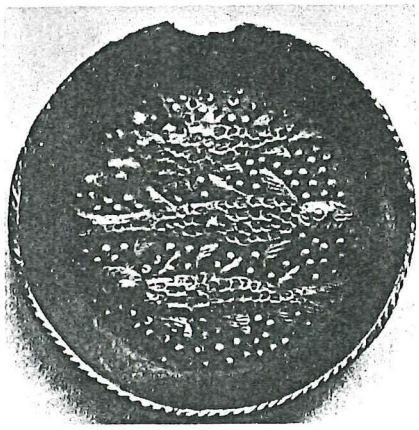


Figure 6. A tiny toy dish just over 1½ins. across with cast decoration in the form of three fishes. From the Thames, c.1600.

In figure 6 is illustrated a tiny toy dish only just over 1½ins. in diameter. This came from a 16th/17th century context in the mud of the River Thames and is quite unlike any other cast-decorated piece I have seen. It is, however, in period with the more generally recognised articles with this type of decoration and, unless it be just a toy, its purpose is obscure. The three fishes could suggest a religious connotation, but what?

c. Enamelled Bosses

A recent survey, carried out by Stanley Shemmell of the Pewter Society, has located nineteen examples of these very desirable pewter dishes. All have a raised boss in the centre of the well to which is applied an enamelled brass plaque. In all cases but three this displays the royal arms. The three exceptions, which belong to the Church of St. Catherine Cree, London, display respectively, a. a sceptre and sword in saltire with "CR", a rose, a thistle and a harp, all crowned, in the angles, b. the Prince of Wales' feathers with the letters "CP" (Carolus Princeps), and c. a double rose. These dishes are dated to about 1630 when the church was rebuilt.

One undoubted Tudor example is known, a rather deep and narrow-rimmed dish with a boss showing the royal arms of England as used from 1405 to 1603. It has a maker's touch which may be that of William Curtis who was master of the Pewterers' Company in 1573/74, and is illustrated in figure 7. Three Scottish examples, two by Richard Wier (who was free of the Edinburgh Guild in 1597) and one by an unknown Edinburgh maker, bear on the boss the initials "IR" and the arms of James I and VI. One of the former was recently sold at auction for the quite exceptional price of £8,000. The remaining dishes display the Stuart arms with the initials "CR". One of these is shown in figure 8 and a close-up of the boss in figure 9. Although to outward appearances there is nothing to distinguish the arms of Charles I from those of Charles II, documentary evidence associated with several of the dishes indicates that they at least belong to the former reign. It appears beyond doubt that they all date from before the execution of Charles I in 1649. It would be nice to think that they were gifts of the king to loyal supporters or favourites, but no direct evidence for this has been found.

These dishes are frequently referred to as "alms dishes", but in view of the ease with which enamel is chipped it seems more likely that they were rose-water dishes for washing the fingers.

d. Wriggled-work

I described and illustrated several wriggle-worked plates and dishes in my article in *Antique Collecting* for March 1982. To recapitulate here rather briefly, the design was executed by walking a narrow-bladed chisel over the surface and the technique was in general use from about 1660 to c.1720. Very many examples of varying quality exist. Some were commemorative of royal or national events, like the magnificent restoration chargers; others celebrated domestic happenings such as weddings and christenings. Others were purely for decoration, though the designs may have symbolic meanings.

In figure 10 is illustrated a fine broad-rimmed charger with pleasing decoration

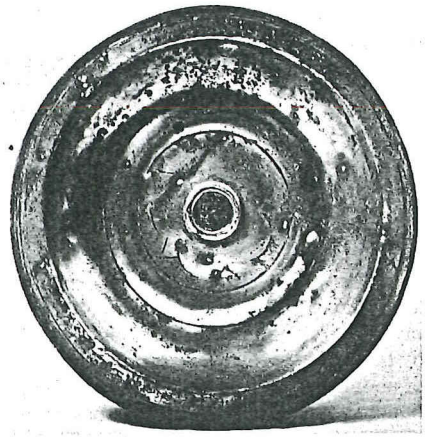


Figure 7. A deep dish of c.1580 with the Tudor arms on a small enamel boss, 9¾ins. in diameter.

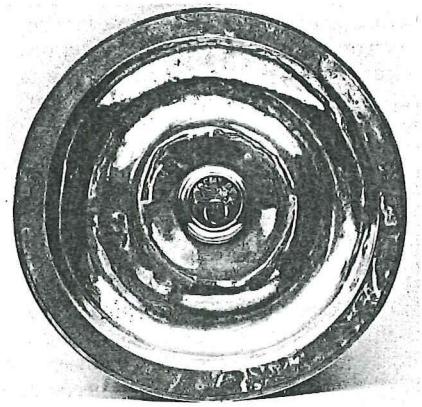


Figure 8. A 16½ins. dish of c.1640 with the arms of Charles I in enamel.

Figure 9. A close-up of the arms of the dish in figure 8.

of a dove and flowers and foliage. The other two illustrations show oddities. In figure 11 is seen a bumpy-bottomed plate which, to all appearances, dates from the late 16th century — yet it is wriggled. The pattern is purely geometrical and quite unlike the generally found designs of the 17th-18th centuries. It could represent a rare survival from an earlier era of wriggled decoration, or it could be a plate which was decorated, albeit in an unusual way, when it was perhaps a hundred years old. For the moment it must remain an enigma. In figure 12 is shown a decorated plate which can only be described as bizarre. There is no reason to doubt that the decoration is of the same date as the plate, c.1665, but, save for the letters "A" and "B" in the well and elsewhere, it defies interpretation. Perhaps it was a wriggler's practice piece!

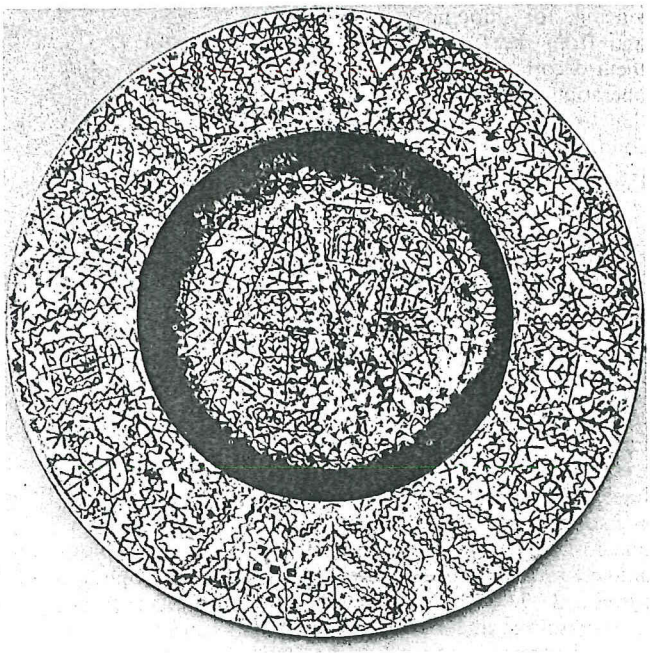


Figure 12. A broad-rimmed dish of c.1665 wriggled all over. The letters "A" and "B" appear in the well and on the rim, otherwise the design appears meaningless.

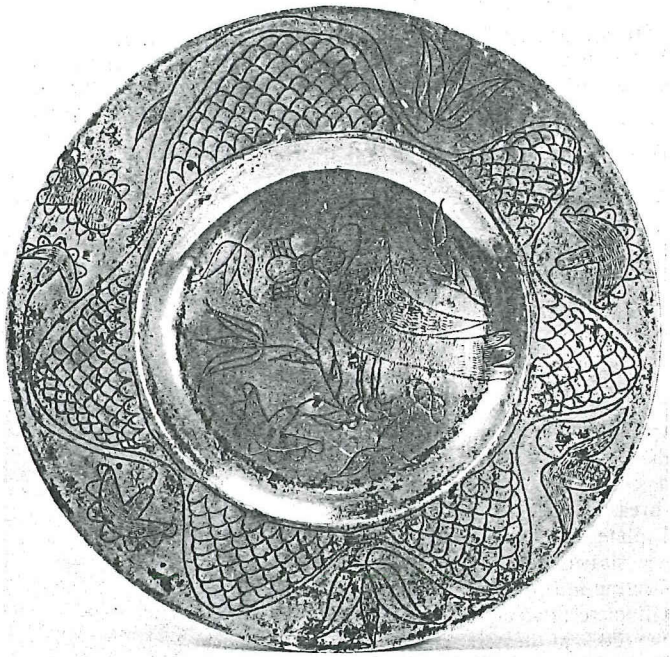


Figure 10. A fine wriggle-worked broad-rimmed plate of c.1665.

Figure 11. An early dish, probably of the late 16th century, wriggled all over with geometrical designs.

e. Repoussé Work

A number of pewter plates, all some 15ins. to 18ins. in diameter, have decoration in the form of embossed swirling "petals" filling the whole of the well. Clearly it was applied by hammering the finished plate over a former of some sort and it is found on plates which can be dated by their styles or marks from about 1700 to 1760. In addition the rim may be decorated with small floral punches. Sometimes "handed" pairs may be found in which the petals swirl clockwise on one plate and anti-clockwise on the other. Such a pair is shown in figure 13.

There has recently been much argument among collectors, myself included, as to whether this type of decoration is contemporary with the date of manufacture of the plates, or a later addition. Some collectors would have it to be a recent addition. My belief is that it was done in the 18th century, but that plates which were no longer new may have been embellished in this way during the (probably) brief period when it was fashionable, perhaps between about 1730 and 1760. Certain it is that thick hard oxide patina is found on plates decorated in this way, and this convincingly precludes any recent reshaping since hammering would flake it off. There are at least some Continental plates of the latter part of the 18th century with similar repoussé designs, though the details have a "foreign" appearance to them. All in all they are reminiscent of the brass dishes produced in Germany and Holland over a century earlier, and this has led to suggestions that they were decorated abroad. I do not find this at all con-

vincing, for shipping pewter plates to and from the Continent just to have them decorated seems scarcely a viable operation. On balance I am persuaded that the decoration was applied in this country about two centuries ago.

Prices

The most readily accessible decorated pewter plates are those with wriggle-worked engraving. Examples may be had for £200 or so, though finely decorated broad-rimmed chargers could command ten times this sum. Repoussé plates sometimes appear at auction for a few hundred pounds, though pairs command a considerable premium. Early plates with punched decoration are likely to fetch £1,000 or more if in fine condition. The later charger shown in figure 4 was bought recently at auction for £500. Cast decorated plates are unlikely to be met with, though a small patten, 3 7/8ins. in diameter, was recently sold at auction for £460, nearly twice its estimate. As for dishes with enamel bosses, they are for those with long pockets indeed and several thousand pounds would be a likely price.

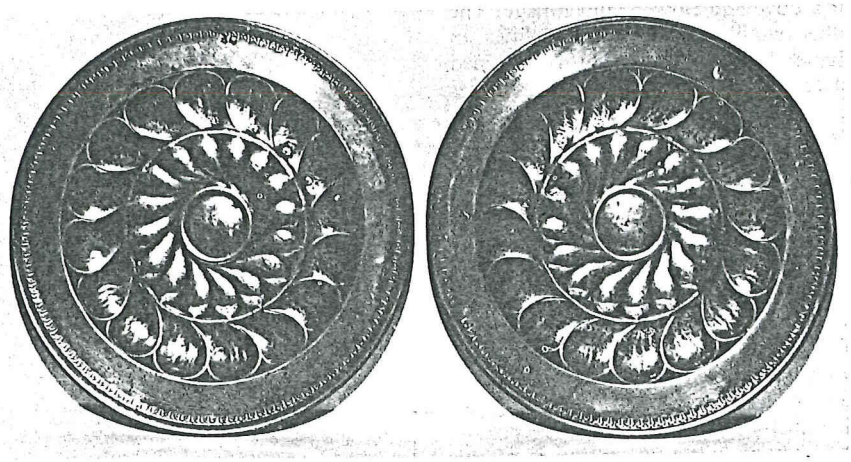


Figure 13. A fine pair of repoussé decorated plates of the single-reeded type of the mid-18th century. Note that they form a "handed" pair.

Figure 1 is by courtesy of Mr. John Douglas and figure 5 is reproduced by kind pemission of The Museum of London. Other illustrations are from the Pewter Society's collection of photographs.

The King of Oudh's Dessert Service

by Major G.M. Malone

"A most interesting piece of evidence that Spode II's wares were not purchased solely by the British in India is provided by the supply of an extremely elegant china service to the King of Oudh. The decoration incorporates an interesting crest of a katar, a dagger of Mahratta origin with fish supporters." So writes Mr. Leonard Whiter in his book on Spode, page 93, published by Messrs. Barrie & Jenkins in 1970.

Messrs. Christie, in their Irish auction catalogue dated 3rd/4th August 1979, give the following description: The Royal crest consists of "two green fish flanking the initial M with a gold crown above, within a border of pink and gilt scrolling, foliage and flower-head swags".

The service was made for the King of Oudh, Asafud Duala, in about 1818. A pattern recorded in the Pattern Book of about 1817 is very similar to the one that was used for the King of Oudh. The service was ordered through the East India Company, and it is generally believed that it was "acquired" by a British cavalry regiment, probably in 1856, or maybe a year later, as a trophy of war. After the siege of Lucknow, the capital of Oudh, the King's treasure, Lucknow itself, and even the King's tableware were seized. The 9th (Light) Dragoons (Lancers) were present on that occasion, and their present-day successors, the 9th/12th Royal Lancers (The Prince of Wales) have loaned an ice pail to the National Army Museum.

The following twenty-four pieces are known to exist:

A very fine ice pail; see illustration (by courtesy of the Department of Equipment and Applied Art): in the National Army Museum, Chelsea, S.W.3.

A fine two-handled cup on pedestal (height 10.7cm), a breakfast cup and saucer and a small plate (20.3cm in diameter), the latter showing much wear: in a private collection in England.

A cake plate, 25.2cm diameter, two cups and saucers, and two 20.3cm dessert plates, iron-red scrip marks: in a private collection in Ireland.

A two-handled crested goblet, 13.3cm, red scrip mark: in Ireland (?)

Two plates, each 25.2cm in diameter, in the Spode Collection; one of them has SPODE written in capitals — the other in script. Both of these show extreme wear.

A cup and saucer — the cup has the Royal crest within a gilt circle opposite the handle, together with a 25.2cm cake plate: in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland (on loan, and dated c.1810).

Two 20.3cm dessert plates and two saucers, iron-red scrip marks: in Ireland.

Food for thought

1. How many other pieces exist, and
2. Why should two-thirds of the known pieces now be in Ireland?

It must be presumed that the original service was extensive, suitable for the King to provide a banqueting service for his innumerable guests. Unfortunately there are no records at Spode headquarters to indicate what the size of this service might be. Neither can I suggest why so many of the pieces have found their way to Ireland unless the regiments who "acquired" the table service in the first place were stationed in that country in the years which immediately followed the Indian Mutiny.

In the preparation of these jottings I have received the greatest of help and advice from a distinguished collector in Stoke-on-Trent ... without this assistance these notes would not have been written.

ANT COLL APR 1984