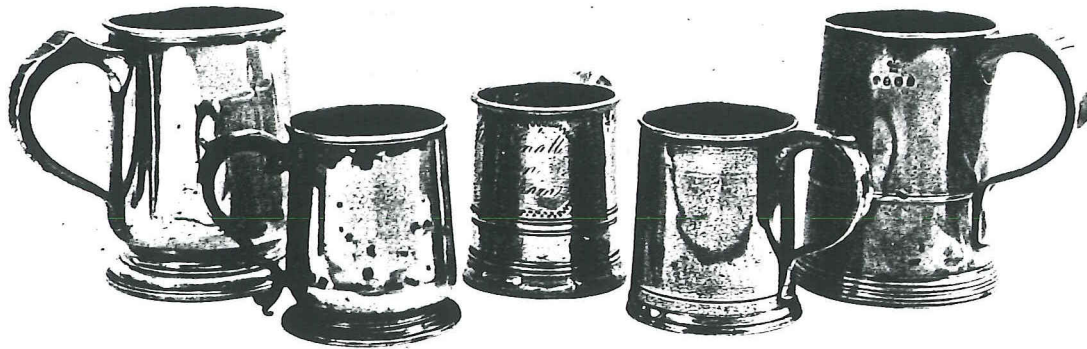


EQP



# ENGLISH PEWTER POTS part 2

by  
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*Left and below: Figure 8a and figure 8b. Some P.I.Ps. Compare with both earlier and later examples. Pre-1825.*



*Below: Figure 9. Barrel. Compare the varied encircling hoops. c.1780-1820.*



As mentioned in the previous part, a study of pot handles and their details is of great importance to all but the dilettante. The handle is made up basically of four details. The handle itself; the thumbrest; detail behind the thumbrest; and the terminal and the sweep bearing it. The solid strap handle ("solid" it does not look; the hollow ones look much stronger, but are often dented in) gave way to hollow heavy-looking German-Georgian style

with the coming of the Hanovers. The latter sounded a rather solemn era in style when economy of overheads appeared to be paramount, and styles were kept in being for a very long time, so minimising the necessity of buying expensive new moulds. So, while many styles were perpetuated, bodies and handles often deviated slightly – so slightly that it was achieved by trimming after moulding (e.g. losing the fillet), or by a very small-part mould –

or even perhaps by a few hammer blows. This might have been the origin of the insignificant-looking (but very significant in fact) "attention" terminal, which may have been the result of some enterprising innovator's ill-temper on a bad casting of a ball terminal. "Attention" I have dubbed the almost nondescript flat end to the handles of c.1815-c.1840, likening it to a soldier's hand at attention, hand pressed flat to the leg.

For a long time the first thumbrest ended in a tongue pointing laxly and flat to the hand. Towards the end of the 18th century, maybe c.1760, this started to give way to a "crank" (a handle with a high point at the thumb bend), with three ridges the palm side of this high point. Later still a pellet was added below a rather dreary, oozing tongue. Let the illustrations give you *your* impressions, not mine. Before this the rather over-ornate "double" or "broken" handle came in possibly c.1770 or even earlier, to start a long and favoured career. Analysis of the shape will indicate that at least it started



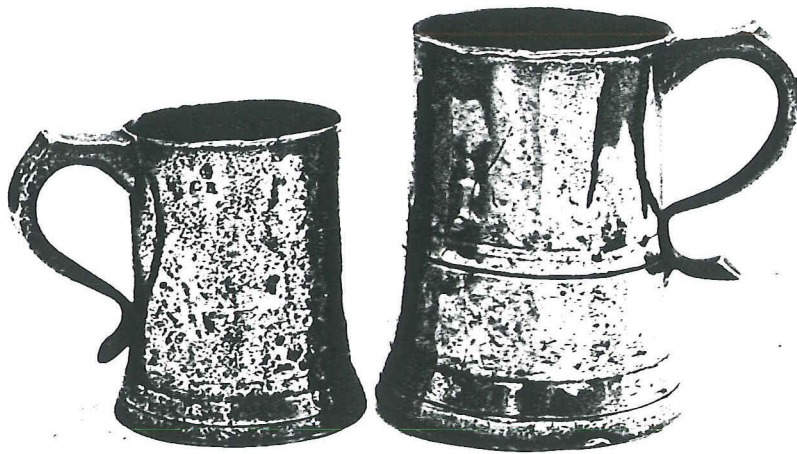


Figure 10. Yorkshire. Note the strong family features, and the differences. Probably c.1800 although the pint (right), particularly, looks much earlier.



Figure 11. Liverpool. Charming little half pint. Other examples vary a little, but are easily recognised. c.1820-25.

by the use of a size smaller mould for the upper curve, joined to a small-mould semi-circular part with a well-shaped split end. Note the different thumbgrips on examples – on one, a frisky little horn; on another you recognise the three ridges; and other varied thumbrests. Such small details are fascinating, and will prove to be valuable to research.

Further, the actual attachment to the body is important, too. The broken handle is always attached to two ovals. Other types are flush at the lower end. Earlier, the upper attachment may be to an oval or a shield-shaped piece of reinforcement, say 1790+. If a flush handle has torn away, this *may* have been earlier still, and was the reason for the succeeding strengthening of the attachment. Soon some grades of pot were made of better alloy, by using antimony and copper instead of the soft lead as the alloying agent. These had the strength to stand up to hard wear. Just prior to this – or perhaps just later (research which you may be able to undertake), extra-heavy lips provided the greater strength. Yes – have a good look at the illustrations, and try to spot the details before you read the captions. Dating has been deduced from general experience, datable makers, pub inscriptions, fitting into sequences, however loosely – and keep the mind open to re-shuffling! In this connection I would now like to be able to redate some of the captions in my *British Pewter & Britannia Metal* slightly, and I am sure that my late friend R.F. Michaelis would like to have been able to do so in his *British Pewter*, which is unfortunately out of print. This is a



Figure 12. Bristol and Bewdley. One fairly prolific Bewdley maker threw in his lot with Bristol fashion. Very sensible base for stability. c.1830+.

very well illustrated little book, largely of close-ups.

Figures 8a and 8b. I had broken off in order to put emphasis on detail, because after c.1750 we enter a sort of latter-day Dark Ages in pots. There was considerable casting around in the detail of several styles, and these are grouped together under the general heading of “Pre-Imperial Pots”. (Imperial Measure was brought into force in 1826.) Dating is loose, since so seldom is the maker (if so marked) of short span, or indeed, of known terminal date. Furthermore, you cannot always rely on the date of inscriptions, because these are often retrospective – anything from one to 200 years, in my certain experience! While the great majority of P.I.Ps. appear to be c.1815-1825, many must date from much earlier. I think a vast number of the earlier ones must have gone into “liquidation” for the desperately needed scrap metal in the Napoleonic War period. And the surge

of c.1815+ pots is answered by the opening of many pubs, and by the increased popularity of beer. They are very varied, with Bristol makers among the leaders, and are too many to enumerate. Suffice to say that if you see a pot a little out of the ordinary it may be Scottish – or a P.I.P. They are more scarce in the half pint size.

Figure 9. The BARREL describes itself, and shows a touch of sales promotion by point-of-sale inference. These date from possibly as early as 1780. A pair I know bear the date 1753, but this, as is often the case, may have been engraved retrospectively. Certainly the majority, very largely pints, are c.1815-1825 full stop! The handles almost always are “broken”; the bands are sometimes raised as hoops, sometimes incised.

Figure 10. There is a rare regional type of truncated cone, the YORKSHIRE, and very attractive are these pots. The quart and pint wear a broad cummerbund, while the only (two) half pints I have seen are plain. Very distinctive points are the delicate fully curved handle with long trailer, and the few simple mouldings of the base. They certainly look earlier than their more likely date of c.1800, conservatively speaking.

Figure 11. Another charming type is the LIVERPOOL. By complete contrast with the Yorkshire, these are distinguished by many bands round the base, alternately convex and concave; and the almost cylindrical body. The crank handle has the attention lower attachment, diamond-shaped. The lip sometimes flares out slightly. Probably c.1800-1820.





Figure 13. *Truncated Cone.* Cumbersome title, but descriptive visually. Probably the most common type, but there are many variations of detail to be seen. See how many subsequent types were made from the moulds inverted.



Figure 14. *Heavy rimmed measure.* Although reinforced for use as a measure they are pleasant drinking pots, c.1830. At about 1860 the heavy pewter lip was replaced by a lighter but stronger brass lip. These late examples carry the otherwise earlier ball terminal.



Figure 15. *"U" and Fillet.* Very dignified, and are of the earlier years of the 19th century – perhaps some earlier.

Figure 12. Yet another regional type flares out at the base of truncated cones a little later. These are from BRISTOL (and Bewdley) and are not scarce. (Bristol makers were enterprising and occasionally you may come across interesting varieties.)

Figure 13. The TRUNCATED CONE had a very long run. We have mentioned it a couple of times, with no fillet, which it probably adopted about 1815. Then it ran almost unchanged for about fifty years. The metal and the handle details will tell you most – apart from makers' marks and various verifications, for which we have no space here. (*British Pewter & Britannia Metal* carries a verification district/number table – see brief references at end.) They run from quart to half pint, with rare gills.

Figure 14. Obviously a sub-style but more truly measures – but as I use one habitually for home-brew they are included – are the HEAVY-RIMMED pots, first c.1830 with pewter rims, latterly with brass rims, c.1860+. It is curious that the latter bear the much earlier ball terminal to the handle – alone. Quart to half pint.

Figure 15. "U" & FILLET is very dignified, always with the broken handle, and may have run from c.1790-c.1830. The earlier appear to be a shade more squat. The same body, but looking completely different, is the TWO BAND (figure 16). The illustrations clearly show the distinctiveness. Both run from quart to gill. The gill size in all types is sometimes engraved as a birth or Christening gift.

Figure 17. Perhaps it may be a surprise to bring in GLASS BOTTOM pots here, but some of these are pre-Imperial, some just after. In fact, in silver they date from c.1770. Beautifully made, of superb alloy, they only disappoint in the weak appearance of the top, where there is no lip, or bead; and this is accentuated by the surfeit of narrow mouldings round the



Figure 16. *Two Band.* The incised bands supplanted the fillet shown in figure 15 and, while the same moulds were used, the types look quite different, and I think usage only, not manufacture, overlapped.



Figure 17. *Glass Bottom.* Always of superb metal. But why, oh why, no lip? They look unfinished, and are not pleasing to the mouth. The fussy plurality of base rings accentuates the bareness. But some are proved to be pre-1826.



Figure 18. *Bucket and Ridge.* How else to describe it? The earlier, c.1830+, carry the fillet, sometimes incised bands. Later, c.1860, and less pleasing aesthetically, the fillet was omitted.



base. I have several with markings indicating manufacture from c.1800-1826. They reappear c.1850 as trophies for rowing, shooting and athletics.

Figure 18. I think that the most attractive 19th century pot is the BUCKET AND RIDGE – a little more ornate than other styles, but to me it typifies the better Victorian design.



Figure 19. Tulip. A poor but accepted description. The bare body of the example, despite the gentle shape, looks unfinished, perhaps because the later ones were of harder metal, and are usually not dented. These ran on into the 20th century.

They appear with fillet in pint and half pint, seldom in the quart until they appear later without fillet but with rectangular handle which, although looking late, was in evidence from about 1835 at the latest, probably earlier. I also have a gill without fillet, but these are rare.

Figure 19. The TULIP reappears. Rather stark. It has run from early 18th century (but do not claim this without good evidence). This runs from quart to, occasionally, the gill.

Figure 20. The CONCAVE, so beloved by film and TV producers for Saxon to Victorian settings, is the most easily spotted of all the 19th century types, and has an almost unique handle which seldom appears elsewhere. This is the only style on which the pouring spout is practically never found. There are some regional variations, for instance in Scotland the concave curve is broken by a convex hump round the base. I have never seen a gill, but the "barmaid's" pot is not desperately uncommon.

Finally, ending on a note of miserable deterioration – and not illustrated – is the "square" handled truncated cone, without bead, and its twin misery, the inverted truncated

cone with loop handle. These are c.1890+.

References:–

*British Pewter*, R.F. Michaelis (Ward Lock, out of print).

*British Pewter & Britannia Metal*, Christopher A. Peal (Gifford, £2.50).

*Let's Collect Pewter*, Christopher A. Peal (Jarrolds, 50p – this is confined to 19th century).



Figure 20. Concave. The concavity varies, and probably the squarer examples are the earlier. Note particularly the handle and thumbrest. c.1850+.

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