

ETV

Britannia Metal-

A New Perspective



Britannia coffee pot by GEORGE KICHINGS. Ca. 1840.

Photographs
by Alan Anderson



Bachelor size Britannia boat-shaped teapot. Unmarked. Ca. 1815.



Britannia cream pitcher by BROADHEAD & ATKINS. Ca. 1860.



Small Britannia tea caddy by JAMES DIXON & SONS. Ca. 1840.

Part One: The History of Britannia Metal

by DR. JACK L. SCOTT

BRITANNIA SEEMS to be the least understood and most frequently misinterpreted of all 19th century metalwares. The best way to untangle the many misconceptions concerning this often maligned ware is to review its background, the reasons it came into being, and to follow its ups and downs in the ensuing years.

Sheffield, England, in southern Yorkshire, where Britannia metal originated, is the seat of many other "firsts." For centuries, Sheffield craftsmen have been recognized for the high quality of their work in whatever field and the pride they took in it. Until mid-18th century, the main craft was cutlery; Sheffield is still known as the "steel city." Jim Bowie had his famous Bowie knives made there. Stainless steel

originated there, and high quality cutlery is still manufactured in its factories.

In 1759, a second important craft began in Sheffield—silver plate. To provide a new middle class with table and decorative ware less expensive than solid silver, the process of plating was developed which is now generally called "Old Sheffield plate" to differentiate it from silverplate made by later methods.

By this early process, a thin layer of silver was adhered to each side of a block of copper and the block rolled into sheets of the desired thickness. These sheets of "plate," silver on each side and copper in the center, were then made up in the same fashion as solid silver pieces but at much lower

cost. The savings were in the silver content; labor costs at that time were of little significance.

Because the plated sheets, when cut, showed their copper centers, various edges and mountings were devised to hide the copper, creating decorative effects that were new and distinctive to old Sheffield Plate. Great numbers of platers in Sheffield and Birmingham turned out a wide range of articles in this immensely popular ware before 1841 when electroplating was perfected and came to the fore.

A decade or so after Sheffield plate had been introduced, about 1769, James Vickers of Sheffield began to produce a "white metal" which was an even less expensive substitute for silver. His formula was similar to traditional pewter except that antimony and a trace of copper were added to the tin content in place of lead. This change in formula allowed the metal to be rolled into sheets while still maintaining characteristics good for casting; it could be either cast or rolled into sheet stock. It also produced a color much closer to that of silver than the traditional pewter which contained lead.

Vickers and the others who took up the trade, copied the Sheffield plate craftsmen closely in style and method. Pieces were cut or stamped out of sheet stock and carefully soldered together. Gadroon and other decorative borders and edges were soldered in place to complete the total appearance of Sheffield plate. Spouts were cast or stamped in two halves and soldered together. Feet, when applied, were also cast. Until about 1840, the handles of all Britannia tea and coffee pots made in Sheffield were of wood. After that time, handles were also made of cast metal.

In 1792, the term "Britannic Metal" was first used for this "white metal," and by 1800, there were twelve firms in Sheffield producing Britannia metalwares of excellent quality. Just as the workmanship of the Sheffield craftsmen was

in no way of less quality than the silversmiths, the workmanship of the Britannia metalsmiths was no less than that of the platers. The only difference lay in the quality and expense of the materials from which the articles were made.

As the old Sheffield plate trade began to give way in 1842 to electroplate, the Britannia metal craftsmen, capitalizing on their years of successful experience, introduced construction and design innovations of their own. So expert were they that many articles of this rather soft metal are still available to collectors today.

The Britannia metal trade flourished in Sheffield and spread to Birmingham, where the quality was not always equal to that of Sheffield. Wares were being produced in America by 1824, though here again workmanship and design were inferior to Sheffield's.

In 1822 there were 14 firms making Britannia metalwares in Sheffield; by 1879, there were 43. During the period from 1769 to 1900, more than 300 different firms produced Britannia metal in that city. Several do so today. One of them, James Dixon & Sons, which began in 1804, is currently producing Britannia wares along with a complete line of silver and silverplate.

Is It Pewter?

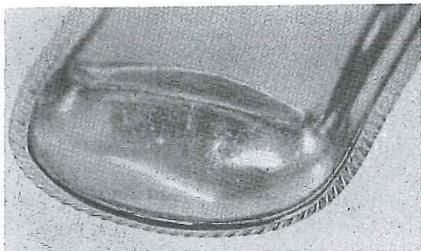
"Is it pewter?" is the most frequently asked question concerning Britannia metal. To put this nightmare of misunderstanding to rest once and for all, the answer is definitely, "Yes, Britannia metal *is* pewter."

From a metallurgical point of view, there is no official or scientific formula for pewter. Pewter is a romantic term given by English speaking peoples to products made of a high tin alloy. People of other countries unabashedly call such articles tin, as *zinn* in Germany, *etaïn* in France. The formula for pewter has always varied greatly. While the basic ingredient



Britannia tea service—teapot, covered sugar bowl, cream pitcher and waste bowl, by JAMES DIXON & SONS. Ca. 1838.

Illustrations from the author's collection.



Close-up of a Britannia candle snuffer tray showing gadroon edge which has been soldered to the rim in the style of old Sheffield plate. JAMES DIXON & SON. Ca. 1830.

is tin in the proportion of 80 to 90 percent, the remaining 10 or 20 percent may be either lead or antimony with traces of copper or bismuth.

The traditional early pewterers who flourished until about 1820, used lead with the tin. The Britannia metalsmiths used antimony. Since lead is dark in color, heavy in weight, soft, and alas, poisonous, the substitution of antimony served to improve an existing product, giving it a better color, a harder body, and rendering it nontoxic. Britannia metal is, then, high quality pewter. According to Earnest Hedges in his *Tin and Its Alloys* (1960), modern pewter, often called "lead free pewter," is made by exactly the same formula as the 19th century Britannia metal.

Various factors have tended to downgrade Britannia metal wares in the minds of collectors and caused them to dismiss as unworthy even really fine pieces.

When Cotterell in his magnificent *Old Pewter, Its Makers and Marks*, wrote that no serious collector would include Britannia metal items in his collection, the remark was taken literally by collectors in general. But it must be remembered that his concern was with pewter of the 17th and early 18th

centuries and he was writing for other purists whose interests did not extend beyond that period. Chargers, tankards, and flagons were their "true pewter," and in 1929 when the book was published, such pieces were still available. The tea and coffee services of the early and mid-19th century "hard pewter" were outside of limits they had set for their interest.

The general collector was also discouraged by the poor quality of much of the "late" Britannia ware. Britannia metal had reached its peak about 1850, and from about 1870, it went into a rather debasing period.

During the years from 1870 to 1910, enormous quantities of electroplated wares were produced in Sheffield and Birmingham. Electroplating, which involves immersing a ready made item into solutions and electric current, did not suit the old Sheffield platers whose system was to cut items from silver-clad sheets and "build" their wares piece by piece. But electroplating did appeal to the Britannia metalsmiths. Their metal plated very well, and since their original function was to produce a substitute for Sheffield plate, the electroplating of their made-up wares brought them even closer to their original purpose. Nearly all the Britannia metal firms converted to electroplate merely by the addition of plating vats. By 1880, almost the entire production of some 50 Britannia metal firms in Sheffield received the additional process of silver plating.

As the industrialization of the 19th century grew, so did the labor movement, and labor costs became an increasing factor in the manufacture of goods. This, along with severe competition, caused many metalware firms to produce wares of poor quality with very thin gauge metal and the lightest coating of silverplate. While nickel silver was also used for plating, Britannia metal was the principal base metal in use. These cheap electroplated wares of 1870 to 1910 gave Britannia metal the reputation for being a base metal for cheap goods, even though many Sheffield firms continued to make high quality electroplated goods with Britannia metal base.



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Britannia Metal-

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Coffee pot by JAMES DIXON & SONS, registered mark of January 1850. (Knob is not original.)



Photographs
by Alan Anderson

Teapot with lion paw feet and bright cut engraving by DIXON & SON, ca. 1825.



Covered sugar bowl with lion paw feet by DIXON & SON, ca. 1825.



Large dish cover by JAMES DIXON & SONS, ca. 1860.

Part Two—James Dixon, Britannia Metalsmith *by DR. JACK L. SCOTT*

NOT ONLY HAS the firm of James Dixon & Sons of Sheffield, England, produced more Britannia metal than any other firm, but the quality of their wares has always been of the finest calibre.

James Dixon, the founder of the firm, was born in Sheffield in 1776, about the time the Britannia metal industry began. His training years—seven years as an apprentice and seven more as journeyman—were spent with two early Britannia metalsmiths, Samuel Broadhead and Richard Constantine.

He established the partnership firm of Dixon & Smith in 1804. (This date has elsewhere been given as both 1805 and 1806, but the Sheffield directory for 1804 clearly lists Dixon

& Smith among the Britannia metal manufacturers in that city.) The work of this firm was of a high quality, and their production included such items as teapots, coffee pots, candlesticks, chambersticks, mustard pots, beakers, segar (sic) boxes, pap boats, goblets, lidded beer jugs, tobacco jars, salts, pepper pots, tea caddies, and spoons. They stamped their wares "DIXON & SMITH."

The partnership continued until 1824 when Smith left the company and James Dixon took in his eldest son, James Willis Dixon, as partner. Their marks then became "DIXON & SON" or "JAMES DIXON & SON."

In 1835, Dixon added his other sons, William Frederick

and Henry Isaac, to the partnership, and the mark was changed to "JAMES DIXON & SONS." This mark is still in use.

The business was first located on Silver Street in Sheffield, an area now occupied by an unused trolley barn. In 1822, a larger factory with expanded facilities was built at Cornish Place on the River Don which provided water for power and transportation. Later, when steam power became available, Dixon's was one of the first to incorporate it in their factory. In 1898, and again in 1903, the plant was enlarged. It occupies the same premises today.

James Dixon retired in 1842, (he died in 1848), turning over his position as head of the firm to his son James Willis Dixon. (He died in 1848). Previously James Willis Dixon had "travelled" quite extensively in America as a salesman. He was evidently an excellent one for more articles are to be found here today that were made by James Dixon & Sons between 1835 and 1840 than the combined products of American pewter and Britannia metal firms of the same period. His son, James Willis Dixon, Jr. was born in New York in 1838.

James Willis Dixon, Sr. died in 1876. His American born son, James Willis, Jr. served as head of the firm until his death in 1921. He was succeeded by Lennox Burton Dixon, and when he died in 1941, W. Milo Dixon, the present head of the firm, took over. From its inception in 1804, the firm has been headed by only five men, all of them Dixons and direct descendants of the founder.

Although James Dixon began with the manufacture of Britannia metal goods and the firm has never ceased their production, a wide range of other products was added over the years. From about 1840, Dixon began to produce a variety of hunting accessories, such as powder flasks, shot flasks, shot loaders, canteens and flasks for food and drink, and other items for hunters.

They began production of Sheffield plate in the 1830s, and in 1838, registered the Dixon mark in the Sheffield Plate Registry. From 1850, silverplated (electroplated) wares were added, as well as items of solid silver. In many parts of the world, particularly those countries which were ever a part of the British Empire, Dixon has been—and still is—the leading house for silver and silverplate.

By 1840 James Dixon & Sons had become one of the leading Britannia metal and Sheffield plate firms in the city. Artistic designers were employed to create new and distinctive wares. When the first of the English Design Registration Acts was passed in 1839—it protected all registered designs for a period of three years—Dixon was among the first to register their designs. Registered numbers 338 and 343 of

June 1840 were for a Dixon powder flask and a coffee pot.

The first ceramic design registered under the familiar Registration Act of 1842, which incorporated the diamond shape and coded date letters, was for a pewter-lidded earthenware jug by James Dixon & Sons. Most earthenware or porcelain jugs or pitchers with pewter lids of that time were sold to the public not by the potters but by the Britannia metal firms who had bought the jugs without lids and mounted them with metal covers. Occasionally the marks of the Britannia metal firm will be found stamped on the lid or printed on the bottom of a jug.

Like all other Britannia metal manufacturers, Dixon produced more and more electroplated silver goods after the mid-century. It was the general practice of Sheffield makers in the metal industry to mark their goods with the name of their firm. However, silverplated goods were almost always marked with the maker's initials and his trademarks in four single punches in the same manner as the official hallmarks on sterling. The initials for James Dixon & Sons were J D & S. Frequently the letters E P B M were included to denote "Electroplated Britannia Metal."

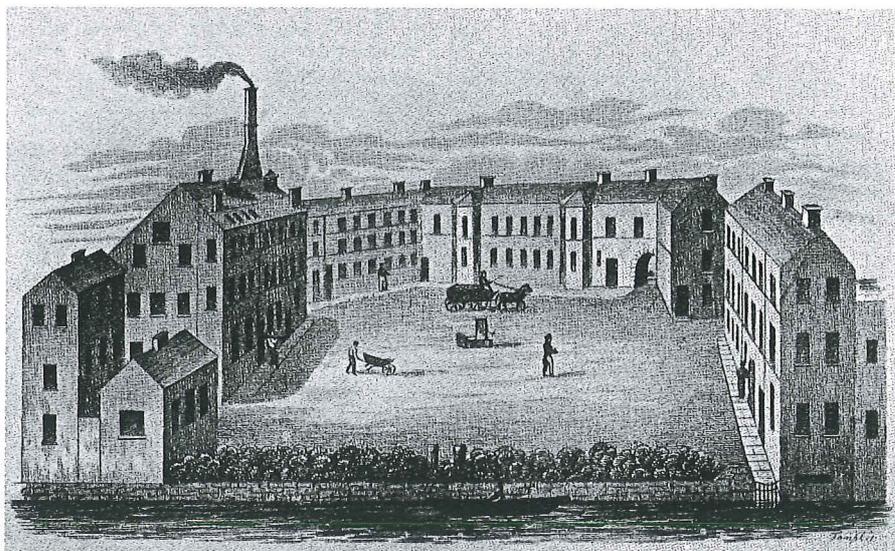
In 1879, two other firms in Sheffield, producing silverplated goods, Joseph Deakin & Sons and James Deakin & Sons, had the same initials as James Dixon & Sons. To avoid confusion with his competitors and to distinguish Dixon wares from all others, James Dixon & Sons registered their Trumpet and Banner trademark. From 1879, all Britannia metal and silverplated wares produced by Dixon bears the Trumpet and Banner trademark.

In 1921, James Dixon & Sons became a private limited company as it is today.

In 1927, when the public began to show an interest in new pewter, James Dixon & Sons put renewed emphasis on tea services and other items made of Britannia metal which they issued under the trade name "Cornish Pewter." The modern sets currently being made by Dixon are distributed under this name. The formula for the metal and the designs of these services are essentially the same as those used in the 19th century.

Dating Dixon's Britannia

Until recently no accurate guide lines have been available for dating wares made by Dixon. Now, careful search of old City Directories and Rate (tax) Books in Sheffield, along with a study of old catalogs, Design Registration Acts, and other sources confirm the following table of marks and dates to be reasonably accurate:



View of Cornish Place in 1822, from an old print.

PEWTER WARE

4458



Contemporary tea service by James Dixon & Sons under the trade name CORNISH PEWTER.

1804-1823—DIXON & SMITH
 1824-1829—DIXON & SON
 1830-1834—JAMES DIXON & SON
 1835-1842—JAMES DIXON & SONS
 1842-1878—JAMES DIXON & SONS
 SHEFFIELD
 1879- JAMES DIXON & SONS
 SHEFFIELD



The word "Sheffield" was not added to Dixon's mark until about 1842. Wares marked "JAMES DIXON & SONS," without the "SHEFFIELD" and having the general characteristics of the period, would date from 1835-1842. Goods marked "JAMES DIXON & SONS, SHEFFIELD," would date from 1842-1879. Those marked "JAMES DIXON & SONS, SHEFFIELD," and having the Trumpet and Banner trademark would date from 1879 to the present.

The words "BEST BRITANNIA METAL" were added to goods dating from about 1840-1860.



James Dixon, 1805

These guides apply to the usual pieces of Britannia metal. There may be some variation in such small items as flasks.

Although a few pieces of Dixon ware have been dated, that is, the date of manufacture placed on the article, this was a most unusual practice. Except in rare instances, the numbers on the bottoms of teapots, even though they may look like dates, are merely the design or style numbers.

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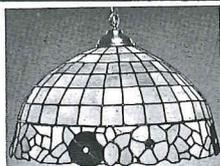
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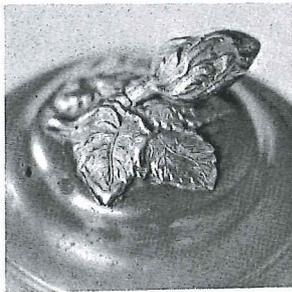
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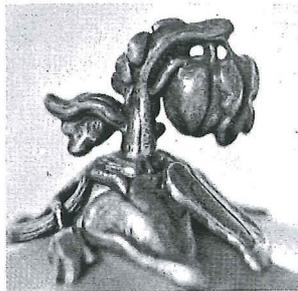
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6

Fig. 1: Wooden knob, 1820-1840.

Fig. 2: Wooden knob, ca. 1820-1840.

Fig. 3: Silver Filbert Knob, silverplate in the style of old Sheffield plate. Ca. 1840.

Fig. 4: Fruit knob, ca. 1850.

Fig. 5: Bird knob, ca. 1858.

Fig. 6: Ivory knob, ca. 1875.

Part Three: Guidelines for Dating Britannia Metal Tea and Coffee Pots

by JACK L. SCOTT

COLLECTORS OF Britannia metal wares, in common with other collectors the world over, want first to know "Who made it?" and "How old is it?"

Most 19th century Britannia metal ware was made in Sheffield, England, and it is not difficult to pinpoint the makers in that city. The Sheffield manufacturers, almost without exception, marked their wares with their name, though in the instance of teasetts, only one of the pieces might be marked. If a piece of Britannia metal is English, and it is marked, it is most certainly Sheffield-made. If English, but unmarked, it was made in Birmingham, for though Birming-

ham makers did mark their traditional pewter, they never marked their Britannia metal wares.

Until about 1834, such Sheffield makers as I. Vickers (the first Britannia metalsmith, who began in 1769), Richard Constantine, Dixon & Smith, and Parking stamped their wares with their name only. Then various makers began to add the word "Sheffield" to their names and, by 1842, all the Sheffield makers were doing so.

From about 1835 nearly all Britannia metalware marks included a three digit pattern or design number, while those made prior to 1835, either had no numbers or a one or two

digit number which either referred to the article's capacity or was the number assigned to the craftsman who assembled and finished the product.

As a general rule, the less contained in the mark, the earlier it is. Wares dating 1870 often include the maker's name, street address, "Sheffield," pattern number, capacity size, and an ornate trademark. Oppositely, wares dating from 1820 to 1834 include only the maker's name. One recognized exception is the firm of Broadhead & Atkin which used their full address in their mark about 1840.

Makers' marks are only one method of dating Britannia metalwares. There are guidelines for dating coffee and teapots, with handles and knobs offering the strongest clues.

KNOBS

Knobs of teapots and coffee pots can also be of help in determining the period in which they were made. Generally, wooden knobs were used with the wooden handles until 1841. These knobs were attached and could not be removed.

About 1830, James Dixon & Son, who also made Sheffield plate, introduced a metal knob of Sheffield plate for use on Britannia metal teapots. These knobs, used on both Sheffield plate and Britannia metal pieces, were made by carefully pressing a thin sheet of silver into a mold, then filling the mold with lead. This gave a solid knob with a lead interior and a silver exterior. These silver knobs gave the Britannia teapots a dressed-up look. Britannia metal teapots with Sheffield plate knobs are rather unusual and are not frequently found.

HANDLES

English teapots and coffee pots were made with wood handles until 1841, at which time handles of Britannia metal were introduced. These first metal handles were made in exactly the same shape as the wooden ones.

By 1845, nearly all teapots and coffee pots were made with metal handles, but no longer were they patterned after the wooden ones. Metal handles after 1845 assumed a wide variety of shapes and designs. A vine handle was extremely popular about 1844 to 1848.

A wooden handle in itself does not guarantee a pot to be pre-1841, for they were used occasionally thereafter but, coupled with other characteristics, it is still a factor in dating tea and coffee pots. In America, Britannia metal coffee and teapots were frequently made with metal handles in the style

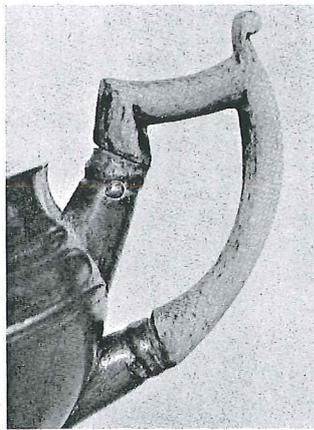


Fig. 7: Wood handle, ca. 1810-1820.

Fig. 8: Wood handle, ca. 1820-1840.

Fig. 9: Wood handle, ca. 1820-1845.

Fig. 10: Wood handle, ca. 1820-1840.

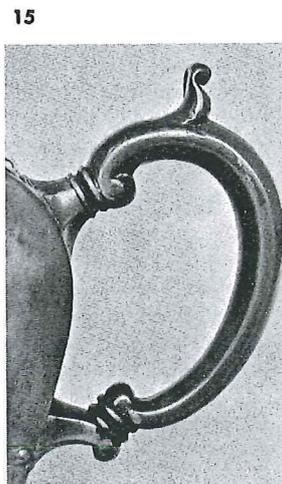
Fig. 11: Wood handle, ca. 1820-1845.

Fig. 12: Metal handle, ca. 1841-1845.

Fig. 13: Metal handle, ca. 1841-1845.

Fig. 14: Metal handle, ca. 1850.

Fig. 15: Metal handle, ca. 1850.



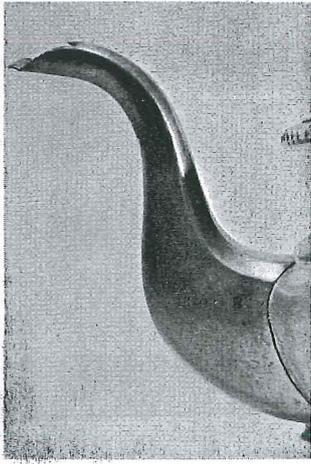


Fig. 16: Smooth spout, ca. 1810-1835.



Fig. 17: Fluted base spout, ca. 1820-1845.



Fig. 18: Embossed spout, ca. 1860.

of wooden ones and painted black. No Sheffield pots were made with black-painted metal handles.

At a slightly later period, about 1837-1845, a second type of silver plate knob was introduced, called the Silver Filbert Knob. This was effected in the same manner as the earlier Sheffield plate knobs, but was more florid in style, including several leaves at the base of the pattern as well as the nut. The entire knob was then soldered to the lid.

The ornate fruit and flower type knobs of Britannia metal that were screwed into place and were removable date from 1837, but did not come into general use until 1845. These decorative knobs covered a wide range of patterns, including acorn, vine, buttercup, lily bud, columbine, vegetable marrow, and spreading vine. They continued in use throughout

the 19th century. Bird and animal forms were added about 1850 to 1875.

After electro silverplating came into wide use, the ornate metal knobs were often silverplated before being attached to the Britannia tea or coffee pots. Traces of old plating can often be found on the knobs of pots dating from 1850 to 1880; this does not mean that the entire article was ever silverplated.

SPOUTS

The spouts used on tea and coffee pots are also characteristic of certain periods. From 1810 to 1830, the spouts were undecorated; they were smooth sided with the top side being flat. From 1820 to 1845, spouts fluted at the base were used almost exclusively. By 1845 slight variations were being made with more ornate decoration being substituted for the fluting. After 1850, a wide variety of spouts were used, some of them very ornate. An embossed leaf design was common between 1855 and 1875.

OTHER MEANS OF DATING

A less obvious method of arriving at a date for Britannia wares is to study their construction. It takes a keen eye and considerable practice; nevertheless, the knowledge of certain construction characteristics is helpful.

Prior to 1830, tea services either sat on a rim base or had one of three types of feet: ball or button; lion paw, or shell motif. The heavier, more ornate feet and bases came after 1830.

Soldering several pieces together to form the body of an object was a method used all through the 19th century. By itself, this type of construction does not help much to determine age. Round items, constructed of one piece with no seams (indicating that it had been spun) would date after the mid-1830s.

Although most Britannia metal wares were made from sheet stock, some were made by casting. About 1840, several firms, including James Dixon & Sons, began to cast coffee and teapots in several pieces which were then soldered together. These pots are much heavier than those made up of sheet stock. Careful examination will reveal the seams in the body. Late in the century (1870-1880), a few firms made cast articles in one piece with no seams.

Other characteristics to look for are simplicity of design, 1800-1830s; gadroon edges, 1810-1830; fruit and vegetable shapes, 1850-1860; heavily embossed bodies, 1870-1880; and bone, mother-of-pearl, and ivory knobs, 1870-1880.

Although electro silverplating was not in widespread use until 1845, Britannia metal wares pre-dating this period are often found silverplated. The reason is that after 1850, when silverplate was so much in vogue, many owners of Britannia metal took their pieces to the platers to be silvered. Hence, goods made by Dixon & Son (1824-1829), some 13 to 18 years before the invention of silverplating process, will occasionally be found entirely silverplated.

In analyzing a teapot to determine the period in which it was made, all the characteristics must be examined. A wooden handle does not necessarily mean pre-1845, but a metal bird knob pretty well dates the pot at 1850-1870. Although bun feet were a characteristic of 1815 styles, these, coupled with a metal handle or morning glory knob would certainly mean mid-century rather than early 19th century. Since many of the styles were carried over and combined with later designs, each aspect must be considered before making a final judgment. A piece will not be earlier than the latest style it embraces.

Britannia Metal-

A New Perspective



Coffee pot, 12" tall, by JAMES DIXON & SONS, ca. 1850.

Teapot with hand engraved chased design and ivory knob by JOHN NODDER & SONS, ca. 1870. This shape, a revival of the 1780-1800 period, dates from 1865-1900.



Photographs
by Alan Anderson

Tobacco box with inside weight and applied gadroon edge in the style of Old Sheffield Plate, marked DIXON & SON, ca. 1828.

Conclusion: Collector's Viewpoint

COLLECTORS ARE attracted to Britannia metal wares for numerous reasons. For some, an occasional piece, such as an inkwell placed on a late Georgian or Federal period desk, completes an authentic setting. For others, the warmth of pewter makes its decorative appeal irresistible. Many choose to build a collection based upon their own interests. Those who collect specific items such as inkwells, teapots, or salts, may want to include a few pieces in a general collection or make a whole collection of Britannia metal.

by DR. JACK L. SCOTT

Collectors who accept the challenge of accumulating the widest variety of goods by different makers set themselves an almost endless task, considering that more than 300 Britannia metal makers worked in Sheffield alone from 1769 to 1900.

Those who prefer to collect a variety of objects without regard to maker also accept a challenge. In 1858, Broadhead & Company offered 25 different items for sale, including plates, mugs, tankards, salts, candlesticks, and flacons, each

category in various sizes and designs. For instance, there were more than 50 different designs in tea and coffee pots, with all of the teapots available in six sizes, from half-pint bachelor pots to large 6 half-pint pots; there were 33 different pewter-lidded jugs. Broadhead & Company was only one of 30 Britannia metal makers in Sheffield that year; the others were as prolific in variety and had their own specialties and designs.

The accumulation of wares by a single maker appeals to many collectors, the most collected being James Dixon & Sons. Since the Dixon firm began in 1804 and is still producing, the collector has a wide range of styles and time periods from which to choose. Broadhead & Atkin produced a large amount of quality wares between 1834 and 1852, and many people prefer to gather items made by this firm during a relatively short period.

Characteristic pieces of a specific period have an appeal to certain collectors. Mid-Victorian pieces are more plentiful than early Victorian. Pre-Victorian pieces are especially difficult to find, but are prizes for the collector who favors the American Federal period.

The most frequently seen article made of Britannia metal is the teapot, which has been in production since 1769. Coffee pots run a close second. Although tea and coffee services included a teapot; coffee pot, sugar bowl, cream pitcher, and often a waste bowl, these sets are rarely found complete today. Waste bowls went into disuse about 1850. Covered sugar bowls, often nearly as large as the teapot, were common up to about 1840-45 when smaller, uncovered sugars came into use.

Other items frequently seen include spirit flasks, mugs, tankards, inkwells with quill pen holes, and salts. Less frequently found are large dish covers, chambersticks, candles-

ticks, hot water dishes, spoons, and wine funnels. More rarely seen are tea caddies and tobacco boxes. Candlesticks, wine funnels, and inkwells were seldom marked with the maker's name, although all other Sheffield-made items were so marked. Miniature metal shoes, used for pincushions, are generally accepted as being pewter; actually they are made of lead and covered with a thin coating of Britannia metal.

Pre-Victorian (prior to 1837) articles are the most difficult to find, though items made from 1840 to 1880 are frequently seen.



Pear-shaped bachelor (½ pint) teapot with melon knob by RICHARD PARKIN, ca. 1885. Bachelor teapots, popular from 1820-1870, are equally popular with collectors today.

A series of cream jugs.



PARKIN, ca. 1814-1860.



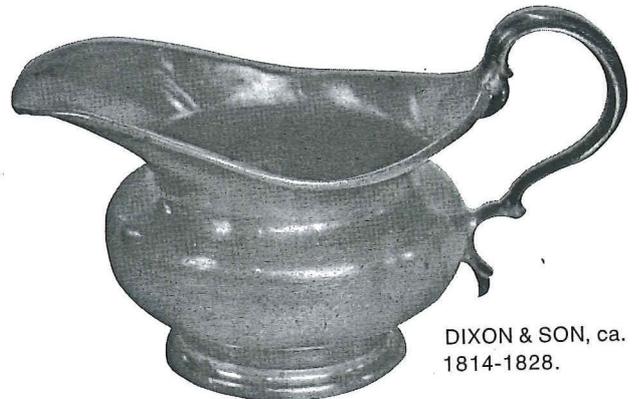
BROADHEAD & ATKIN, ca. 1835.



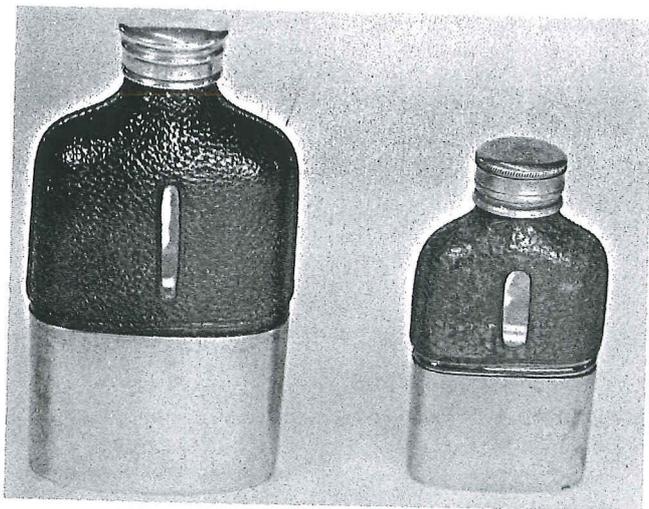
Unmarked with hand chased design, ca. 1860. Although cream jugs could be purchased separately, they almost always were part of a coffee or tea service.



BROADHEAD & ATKIN, ca. 1850.



DIXON & SON, ca. 1814-1828.



Spirit flasks of glass with leather covered tops and removable Britannia bottoms. **Left:** J. DEAKIN & SONS, ca. 1885. **Right:** J.W. HAWKSLEY, ca. 1885. Flasks were also made entirely of Britannia, and many makers, including JAMES DIXON & SONS, BUXTON & RUSSELL, AND PHILLIP ASHBERRY & SONS, made them.

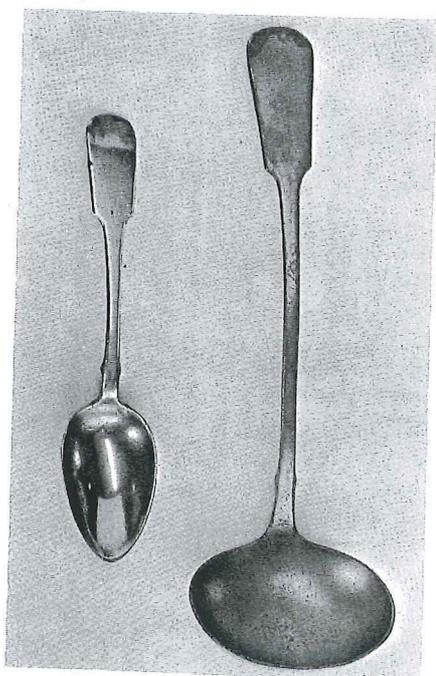
The appearance or patina of antique Britannia metal takes on the characteristics of any old pewter, varying from piece to piece. Some pieces are clean and bright; some are heavily encrusted and dark; many have taken on a soft grey surface that seems to glow. The patina is no guide for determining age. Many early 20th century pieces have been found to be dark and scaled, while pieces dating from 1825, appear smooth and bright.

Since the original purpose of Britannia metal was to provide an inexpensive substitute for Sheffield plate, all of it when it was new had a high gloss shine and was similar to silver in color and appearance. As the wares went into daily use, they gradually lost their bright shine. If they were cleaned and polished regularly, the shine slowly turned to one of the several shades of gray and developed its own lustre. When they did not receive regular care, the surface darkened and became hard, and eventually scaled and encrusted. When wares are very dark and scaled and bent, the patina or scale breaks away, leaving a rough mottled surface. This scaling process has been hastened when the pieces have been exposed to the cold and dampness of cellars and outbuildings.

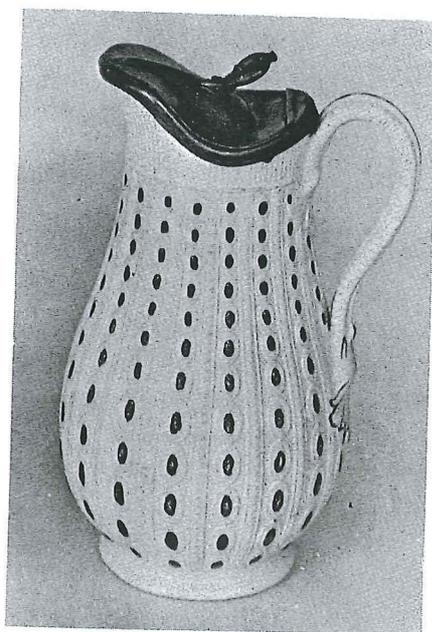
To clean or not to clean? This question has never been resolved. Many collectors feel that the patina represents age and character and should not be removed. Others feel that pewter, to be truly representative of its period, should be restored as closely as possible to its original condition.

Restoration is not an easy process and is best left to an experienced professional. However, restoration can be done at home if great caution is exercised. The hard, built-up patina cannot be polished away, even on a buffing wheel. Items can only be cleaned by immersing them in hydrochloric acid which dissolves the scale and restores the metal to its original color. Care must be taken as the acid not only dissolves the scale but also works on the metal and too much time in the acid bath can damage it. After the scale has been dissolved, the article can be cleaned with very fine steel wool and polished with a good quality silver polish.

A surprising amount of 19th century Britannia metal wares can be found in today's antiques shops and shows. All the examples pictured here have been purchased from antiques dealers within the past four years. A large portion of Sheffield wares were made for export and great quantities came to America. These items rightfully belong with period American settings, for they were in daily use in American homes.



Ladle and spoon by H. (Henry) HOLDSWORTH, ca. 1860. By this date the production of Britannia spoons had diminished greatly due to the wide use of electroplated nickel-silver. The Holdsworth family began making Britannia about 1800; spoons were their specialty.



Britannia lidded ceramic jug, unmarked, ca. 1846. Lidded jugs were often sold by the Britannia metal manufacturers who installed the lids. They are not usually marked but occasionally are found with either the potter's mark or the metal-smith's mark.



Pint tankard with glass bottom by JAMES DIXON & SONS, ca. 1860. A wide variety of mugs, measures, and tankards were made by the Britannia metalsmiths throughout the 19th century.



Snuffer tray by BROADHEAD & ATKIN, ca. 1850. Steel candle snuffers were usually sold with Britannia snuffer trays.

Spinning Wheel

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THIS MONTH'S COVER: Much of the furniture made for children during the Victorian period still survives today in large numbers, partly because the age is still so close to us, and more so because furniture especially made for children was produced in greater abundance than in earlier times. The invention of machines to turn out even greater quantities of furniture also had a part in this affair. Kenneth Ames' three-part article, the first portion appearing on page 8 in this issue, begins with the cribs, cradles and beds produced in the latter part of the 19th century. To follow will be the chairs and high chairs of this period. You can get a fairly good idea of the scale of the objects shown in this article by comparing them with the beautiful doll seated in the high chair on our cover. The furniture is from the author's collection; the doll was loaned to us by Mrs. Arline Elicker.

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Next Month

• Accustomed as we have been to a century or more of conservative styles in men's clothing, it's difficult to imagine a time when gentlemen rather than ladies were the more flamboyantly attired. Esther Oldham traces a history of colorfully dressed men of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, when fans and muffs were correct attributes to a gentleman's wardrobe.

• The makers of the famous Lalique glassware have for years been telling people "if it isn't signed 'Lalique,' it isn't of our manufacture." Now comes Sandra Stout, author of the recently published *The Complete Book of McKee Glass*, to tell us about McKee's "Louvre Glass" line—a real look-alike to Lalique glass. McKee's productions are not marked in any fashion.

• Pottery expert Paul Evans declares the "The differentiation between 'art pottery' and 'studio pottery' often breaks down during the transitional period between the two, roughly spanning the years from 1910 to 1930." As an example of such pottery he relates the story of the Jalan Pottery operated by Manual E. Jalanivich and Ingvardt Olsen in San Francisco for about a quarter of a century, beginning in 1920.

• Marcia Ray continues with her series of articles about Centennial collectibles—this time an article about "Printed Cottons at the Centennial." Cotton printing got off to a slow start in America because, during the Colonial period, England discouraged its manufacture in the colonies.

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