

Eug

## Spire flagons and double dome lidded tankards of the 18th Century and transitional types of the late 17th Century - a proposed survey.

The enclosed questionnaire could eventually shed some light, I hope, on the mould situation in London in particular for both "standard size" flagons and tankards; who originated one particular barrel shape, who took over the moulds etc. Most London thumb pieces, handles and hinge arrangements do not seem particular to any one pewterer and were possibly bought in.

As with most pewter shapes, they imitated the silver origins. The pewterer skilfully emulated these chased shapes into pewter in the casting mould and on the lathe. The London pewter flagons and tankards are particularly interesting also in another respect. From c. 1720 they show early signs, if not of mass production, at least of a well organised series production with sub-contractors involved, on an almost industrial basis! Most of the London makers' tankards and flagons during almost the whole of the 18th Century show a "family likeness" not apparent from reading Cotterell but which could possibly be revealed by a careful comparison study of the measurements of barrels, lids and handles!

My theory is that:

1. There was no reason for these pewterers to have separate moulds for flagons and tankards as one *flagon* mould could produce them both. In making a *tankard*, the pewterer would simply turn the flagon barrel from the rim down as usual, put in his tankard banding "on route" and turn the barrel off at his usual tankard barrel height (to comply with the measure) and put the cut off lower part of the barrel back in the pot.
2. The same lids were used for the above reason for both flagons and tankards.
3. The same thumb pieces were used as above.
4. The same handles were used as above.
5. Footrings or bases were the only parts requiring different moulds.

Some arguments in favour of the above are:

1. The midriff banding was achieved in the lathe and not in the mould. This is very clear from comparing "*identical*" flagons and tankards where the "level" of these bands vary by anything up to 10 - 15 mm. (Measured down from the top of the rim.) This is out of the question had the banding been part of the mould.

Ron Homer argues that most of the multiple reeding on plates and dishes were part of the mould which is true of course. These reeds, however, could be turned into a bronze mould in a lathe whereas grooves on the inside of a holloware mould would have had to be either hand engraved or produced in the mould from a "positive" pattern which was much more difficult in the early to mid 18th Century. Such a procedure would also limit the use of such moulds for casting of either flagons or tankards as the fashion and character of banding seems to be different for flagons and tankards, also by the same maker. European inventories after pewterers, by the way,

sometimes mention both "a lathe" and also "a great lathe", for turning bronze moulds. Some Guilds encouraged mould making, but it seems that this was strictly verboten in some others.

The above barrel banding protrudes by no more than c. 1½ mm (.040" - .060" seems to be the average) and would be easily achieved by "leaving out" in the course of turning the barrel.

The very rim of the barrel protrudes much more, however; some 4 - 6 mm on the ones I have measured. This feature *could* be part of the mould. Ron Homer refers to illustration No. 38 in *Provincial Pewterers* showing a multi-part bronze mould with a lipped rim included. This is a relatively "modern" mould, however, and I have considerable evidence that this ring was often soldered on top of the barrel during the 18th Century. It is clear to see on the inside of some flagons because of a colour difference between the solder- and pewter alloys. One of two "identical" Richard Pitt flagons shows this line very clearly because of a greyish solder used and some hairline pitting. The other one shows no line at all. Like on casting repairs (holes found after casting, but good enough to rescue), they no doubt used pewter from the pot which matched the original colour perfectly after burnishing. Visible lines and minute gaps are possibly due to a temperature problem.

Could it be that this lipped ring was soldered on to flagons and tankards only whereas unlipped tankards (pots) only received a smaller lip achieved by "leaving out" and shaping when turning the barrel in the lathe?

It will be interesting to follow the succession of pewterers using these moulds which a survey based on measurements could facilitate.

For instance:

The Munden & Grove partnership started in 1760. They worked the generation after William Charlesley who died in 1770. OP p. 110, ill. "e" shows their spire flagon. The foot/stand is taller and wider than Charlesley's, but it would be interesting to have the exact measurements of the *barrel*, which may or may not coincide with those of Charlesley's flagons?

2. If the substantial rim (or ring) of the barrels acted as an "equaliser" between batches of flagons and also between flagons and tankards, it would be easy to suggest that the pewterer would use the same lid mould for both flagons and tankards. (It is probable that the barrel was finished first and the lid then turned to fit the barrel, being the lesser item to adjust, rather than the other way round? There was no need to repeatedly release the lid from the lathe chuck as the barrel could be presented to the lid as the turning progressed.)

3. There seems to be very few styles of thumb pieces. They are mostly of the solid chairback variety; the draped, the "drape-and-drop" and the sharper angled drape with a pierced hole, first seen on the Carpenter flagons, later to appear on Richard Pitt's, style II. John Newham's (earlier) thumbpiece too was a solid chairback but with attractive scrolls or "baby horns" protruding from top corners, a style (and mould?) which was unique to him, but which later appeared on tankards by the American pewterer William Will (the style, that is). A transitional type is the twin cusp.

4. A "scroll" flagon handle consists of a tankard handle plus the lower circa one third of a second tankard handle, cut off, shaped and soldered together. This practice started early with the solid cast strap handles of John Newham and others and continued with the almost universally used slush-cast handles with slight variations of the ball terminal. The lower extensions vary in length also on "identical" flagons by the same makers. From many examined examples it would appear that this lower, often "V-shaped" section of the slush-cast is made solid for technical reasons. The ball is cut to shape to fit the lower extension and the finished joint is often shaped into an inverted more or less pointed V and other configurations. Had not this part of the handle been allowed to solidify, the joint would have been weaker and any heat adjustment of the angle of the bend been made impossible.

I would also suggest that the three defined versions of the ball terminal; the plain ball, the split ball and the hooded ball all came out of the same mould (different makers of course). If the hood detail did not come out quite right after casting and the handle was otherwise good, some ten seconds' work with a file would transform it into a plain ball! Another ten seconds with the file and we have the ball with a slit - we do sometimes over analyse a bit? It would serve a somewhat better purpose, I feel, if the makers of the *rounded*, lower handle section as opposed to the *V-shaped* lower section (in the mould, I'm sure) could be tagged on to respective flagon/tankard maker. Used singly on tankards, this handle design is excellent. Made up in the form of a "double scroll" flagon handle, it is still attractive to look at, cheap and easy to manufacture but is technically a very poor design which most surviving flagons bear witness of!

5. The bases seem to have been individual to each originator of a particular style of tankard or flagon. Earlier bases seem to have less reeding.

A close inspection of the point where the barrel is inserted in the footring of flagons sometimes reveals a *very* generous aperture of the foot ring. This means that such a footring could easily accept a one inch or so taller barrel which again could be cast in the same barrel mould! (For an extra pint or so capacity?)

Footrings on tankards do not seem to allow for such a procedure and it was not really necessary here as tankards complied with the capacity standards of the day. Flagons on the other hand do not seem to have been made to an exact capacity standard?

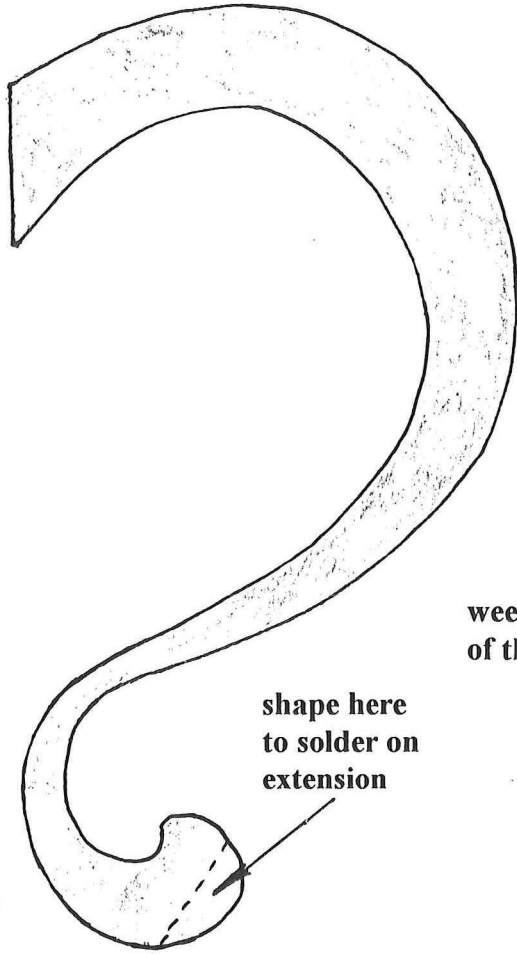
It will be interesting to hear your comments, criticism and hopefully also lots of suggestions!

October 1996  
Jan Gadd

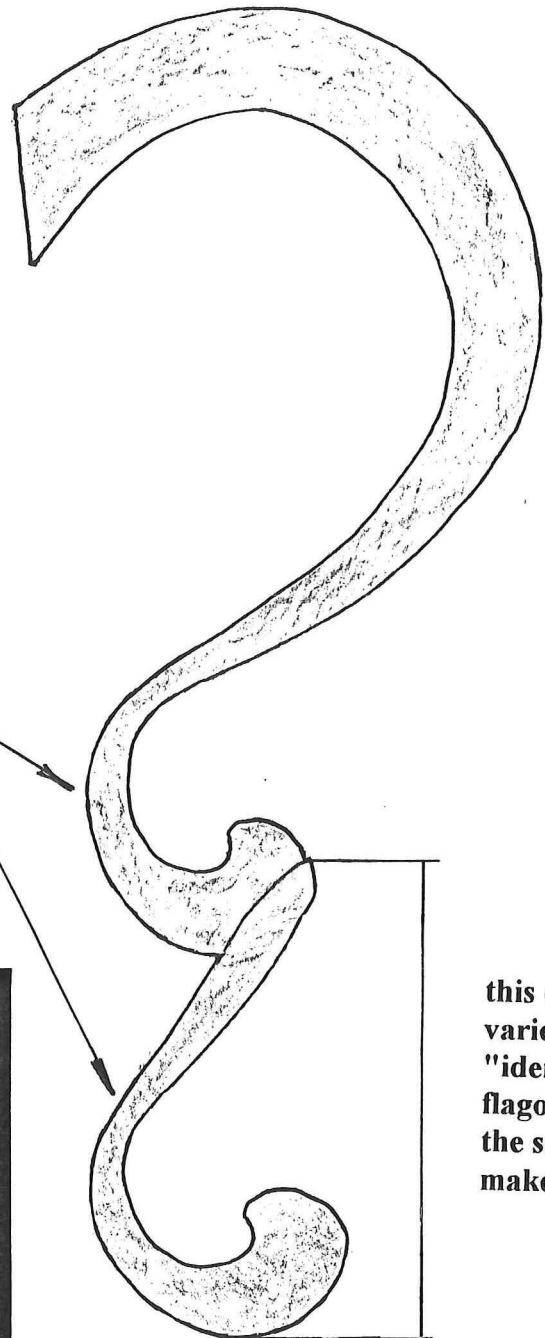
# Slush-cast handles used on both tankards and flagons.

on tankards

on flagons



weakest point of the design



lower section cast in the same mould, then cut off and shaped



Two 12½" flagons by William Charesley, London, OP 888. The photograph shows a. shorter and longer extensions to the handle, b. lower and higher positioning of the turned banding of the barrel (see below handle attachment), c. the ball terminal on the left and the so called split ball on the right. The groove was cut into the normal ball terminal probably with a knife or a file. This lower section of both handle and lower extension is the narrowest and weakest point of the slush-cast and would have to be solid here. The incision could therefore be a control method of a suspect cast, performed so as to also serve as a feature. Further proof of the solid state of this part of the cast is the joint on the right hand flagon where the ball has been filed into an inverted "V".

## English 18th Century Spire Flagons, double dome Tankards and the earlier transitional types - a survey.

Fully evolved types of *Spire Flagons* would have an inverted cone barrel with reeding on the upper half, with or without a spout, double dome lid with a finial (but sometimes without this "spire"), a flared foot with pronounced reeding above and below a *concave* section. The bottom is located on the top of this foot. Mostly variations of the chairback thumbpiece with double scroll, slush-cast handles with swept handle attachment and variations of the ball terminal. *Transitional types* would show variations of these features such as cylindrical barrels, solid cast handles, (sometimes single), different thumbpieces and terminals and lack of reeding on the flared foot.

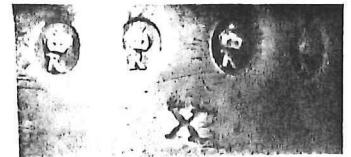
*Double Dome Tankards* would display features similar to the above. Lid finials are rare, handles single and reeding is found on the lower half of the barrel. The foot has reeding above and below a *convex* section. Transitional types would show similar variations as for flagons above.

A.



A. "Identical" pair of flagons by Richard Pitt, London. Note variations of level of barrel reeding, finials, thumbpieces, terminals and length and joint of handle.

B. Transitional Spire Flagon with cylindrical barrel (not quite!), strap handle with "short" barrel attachment, twin cusp thumbpiece, and unreeded lower base. Maker "Crown over R" from a Church in Wales.



B.



C. Double domed tankard by John Thomas, London, with a 1729 date.



D. London silver tankard by Richard Green, 1726.

Please fill in this form as indicated and return to Jan Gadd. Ignore the obvious flagon form below and use it for tankards as well! (Millimetres or careful fractions, please!)

Maker ..... Owner ..... Date .....

If available: Weight ..... Volume .....

height of dome (no spire)

Distance from top of rim to uppermost part of reeding (measured along the barrel)

Height at 90 degrees (put a ruler across the rim)

Spout? Yes  No

Tankard  Flagon

thumbpiece

Sketch of spire

Height of spire (specify diam. or circumf.)

Diameter or circumference at the lowest part of the barrel, just above the base reeding. (Sewing cotton and felt-tip pen could be used to measure the circumference.)

Reeding below concave section (flagons) Yes  No

total height .....

handle attachment (hinge etc. not shown)

If not as below, is handle solid cast? Yes  No

Is lower section of handle clearly round  V-shaped

Measure to top of hinge

Measure to top of hinge

any style handle to be measured as above

Give a Flagon/Tankard-form to a Friend!

top of handle

sketch, if different

Photographs would be appreciated!

terminal

ball

grooved ball

hooded ball

spade

sketch, if different

Position of marks:

Inscription:

Position of inscription:

Marks:

Cotterell OP No. .... Peel MPM No. ....

Other

Position of marks:

X X