

THE GREAT GONARBY CHURCH FLAGON

This article is based on incomplete files and the research of Jan Gadd

In 2002 this flagon was still at the Church of St Sebastian on the outskirts of Grantham Lincolnshire.

It probably originates from the 1200s though much enlarged in the 1400s. It has late Norman capitals on the eastern bay of the northern arcade of columns. The stone carving of the 'frieze' is a remarkable number of interesting carved animals and figures in various positions whose meaning is lost to time. The website illustrates some 18 of them (http://greatenglishchurches.co.uk/html/great_gonarby.html). There are many other imposing carved stones representing on corners and elsewhere figures of authority and perhaps notables of the time.

Jan Gadd starts with asking about the decoration work to the flagon. Given other correspondence Ms Frances Carey might have been at the British Museum where Jan Gadd was known.

This document is comprised of copies of copies and they are not as good as would have been liked. No actual photographs were found. Many pages were repeated several times within the file. This is the best this writer could produce.

Att Ms Frances Carey – prints and wood cuts Dpt

March 17, 2002

Dear Ms Carey,

Two decorated pewter church flagons

It would be marvellous if you could help us with two pieces of identification. The flagons themselves are now identified and were both, remarkably, made in Danzig (Gdansk), now in Poland, by different pewterers with burgerships in 1626 and 1629 respectively. They were probably imported by English merchants or a ship's captain c.1655-60 and both had a well executed secular decoration at the time of export.

The Great Gonarby Church flagon, still at the church

This is a smaller and simpler made flagon, probably sold at the pewterer's shop or at a local fair, a posh equivalent of a Staffordshire 'firing'? The 'engraver', working in the wiggle-work technique which is more common for pewter, left panels for future owners to engrave a name and this flagon was later engraved by the church wardens of Gt Gonarby Church who bought it in 1697, probably after it had served some time in a good private home. What could be an ownership (or a merchant's) mark 'IR' is struck underneath and a local historian is currently working on this.



I have looked at Nürnberg commemorative pewter relief plates of the c. 1620 – 40 period. These plates feature Emperors on horseback (Ferdinand II and III), Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, various 30 Year War generals and even sultans, but nothing

matches this rider who faces left which is unusual? The nearest I can find is a Gustavus Adolphus image,

but he is here facing the wrong way and GIIA is usually depicted as a much 'fuller' figure. He carries his Field Marshal staff in exactly this manner, however. A 1643 print of Prince Rupert also shows his dog but is nowhere near this engraving. I have not been able to locate horseback engravings of Wallenstein, Count von Pappenheim, Wrangel or Oxenstierna, but I may be barking up the wrong tree? The almost 'illuminated' medal on the chest of the rider may be important and give a clue?



+ Michael Bunde. He was apprenticed to Braschke above in 1629 which means that he was Braschke's first apprentice. He started his final year in 1640 and became Master in 1642/43.

Underneath the flagon is a fleur-de-lys mark with the initials 'I.R.' (possibly 'I.B.'). This could be the ownership mark of a local family but it could also be a merchant's mark, possibly in York? (Please note the 'petals' at 11 o'clock and 1 o'clock!) The split stem is unusual and a local researcher could perhaps confirm if this was part of the family crest?

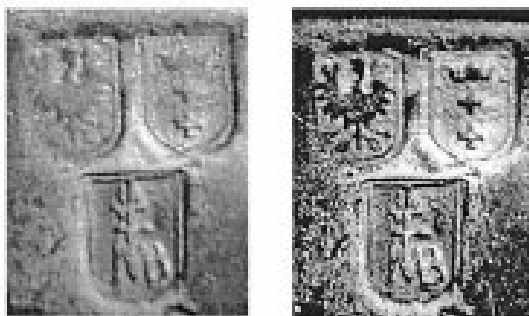


I am giving chase to the engraving upon which the horse and rider was based. The almost 'illuminated' medal on the rider's chest could be significant. The nearest image I have found is King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden who died in 1632.

Great Gonarby Church flagon, Lincolnshire, height 356 mm

Made in Danzig by Michel Braschke, Hintze III:247 or Michael Bunde III:256 (probably too late).

Later engraved with churchwardens names and a date 1697.





OLD PEWTER FLAGON SIDE VIEW



OLD PEWTER FLAGON FRONT VIEW

A none too clear copy photo of the flagon being a copy of the copy found in Jan Gadd's files.

There is also the cutting below and it is not shown from where the information was copied

The church of Great Gonerby, on the hill beside the Great North Road from London to York (familiar to the readers of *The Heart of Midlothian*), is fortunate in possessing a pewter flagon of unusual dignity and beauty. It stands 14 inches in height. On the front is the portrait of the king, probably Charles I. possibly William III. The king is mounted on horseback, accompanied by his dog. The flagon is further richly adorned with punched and wriggled decorations. Inscribed upon it are the names of the donors and the date: "Gonwarby (now spelt Gonerby) Flagon, bought 1697 by K. Kelham and D. Jenkinson, Churchwardens." There are several pewter marks. On the base a fleur-de-lis in an oval. The handle has three shields. On the right an eagle displayed, on the left two crosses surmounted by a crown. The lower shield bears the initials "M. B." The thumb-piece is remarkable. There are probably few, if any, flagons of English pewter its equal.

The Pewter Society

Founded 1918



Hon. Librarian Jan A. Gadd, The Malt House, Upton-upon-Severn, Worce. WR8 6JD
Tel. +44-(0)1684-592677, Fax +44-(0)1684-593837, e-mail janagadd@btinternet.com

Dear Reverend Hopkins,

Church flagon

In the May 1916 issue of the Connoisseur an important pewter flagon with the inscription "Gowarby Flagon bought 1697 by K. Kelham and D. Jenkinson, Churchwardens" was described and illustrated.

This flagon pre-dates the inscription by some 50 years and I have just discovered from correspondence with Dr Newman at York Minster that another flagon by the same maker belongs to the Church of St. John the Evangelist in York.

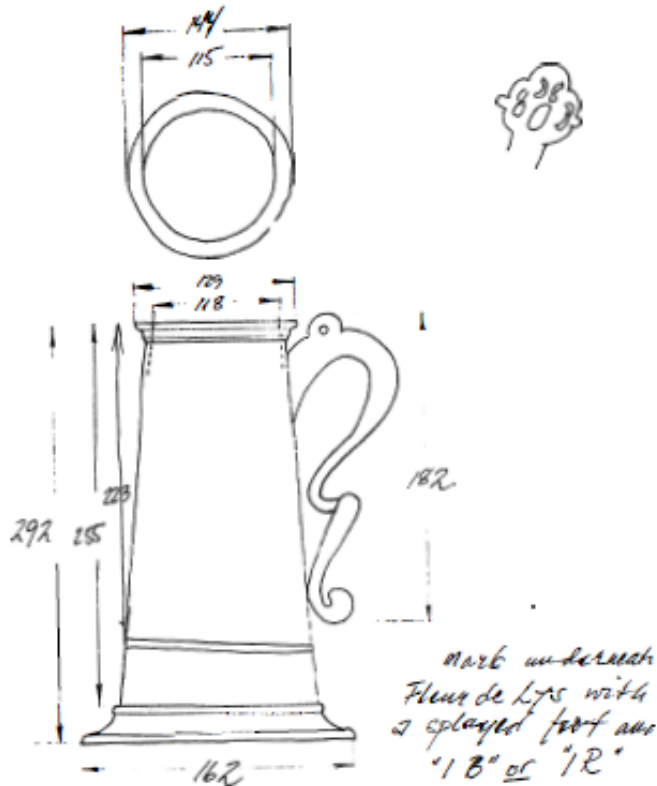
Is this flagon still in your possession and would it be possible for me to pay you a visit when your flagon could be measured and recorded?

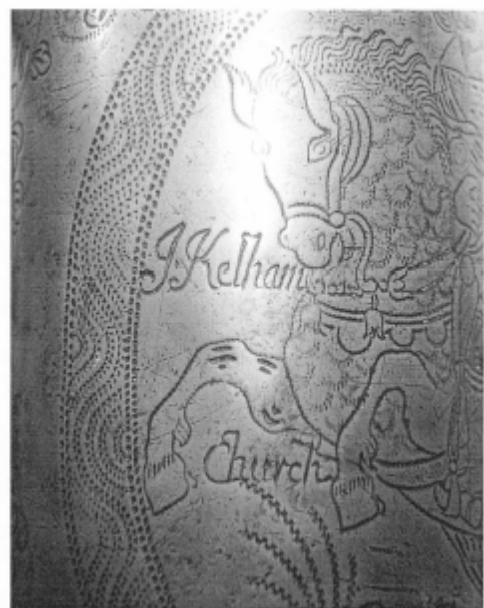
I am attaching this letter twice as 'rich text format' and also as Word ME.

Best wishes,

Jan Gadd

GREAT Gowarby Flagon
17/6-2000





An undated letter from Jan Gadd around 2002-2003

Dear Reverend Hopkins,

Below is a report summing up what I learnt to date about your very fine flagon.

The Great Gonarby Church Flagon

Your flagon was made in Danzig (now Gdansk) possibly c. 1660-70 and probably imported by a merchant or as private cargo by an English ship's captain which happened. The St John Church flagon too, now in the York Minster Museum, was made in Danzig by another pewterer with similar dates to yours which is very exciting and the Danzig connection possibly not therefore a pure coincidence!

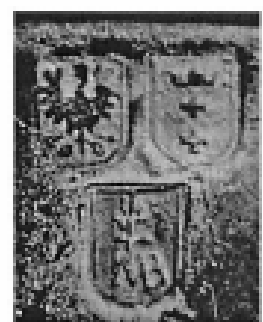
The engraving with the Field Marshal etc. was executed in Danzig in the so called 'wriggle work' technique and the engraver left a field at the top for a future owner to engrave a name. The flagon had in my opinion a good, secular home nearby for some 30-40 years until the church wardens bought it and engraved the name of the Church in the space provided by the original engraver and also their own names and the date 1697. You can see that this secondary name engraving interferes with the original which would not have been the case had the names been put there by the original engraver (see attachment).

Professor Erwin Hintze researched Danzig before the war and listed all pewterers there in chronological order from 1366 in Vol III (out of seven covering Germanic states) of his famous work 'Die Deutsche Zimngiesser'. All archival documents concerning Danzig pewterers were then kept in the City archives:

1. All Court books from the Pewterers' Guild and their Journals.
2. List of Master pewterers.
3. List of Journeymen and their Masterpieces etc.
4. List of Apprentices.

Hintze illustrated his archive research with marks from objects available to him as you could see from the copy I brought. The earlier the pewterer, the rarer an object by him, of course, and mid-17th century objects are rare. No objects/marks were available to Hintze but the Master initials 'MB' on your flagon coincides with the names of two pewterers during this period (and no other) :

+ Michel Braschke, born in Köslin, he started his final journeyman year in 1627 and became Master (Engl. 'Freedom') in 1629.



The importance of this flagon of Lincoln and the other in York is the light they give to the activities of York Merchants in the middle of the 1600s – the time of the Commonwealth. This writer would be pleased for more information or for being able to scan in and use original photographs.