

**The Silver Plating of Pewter
and a Rare Broad Rimmed Plate c1690 (later Silvered)**



Sold by - David Moulson - dmoulson@hotmail.com - Specialist Supplier of Scarce Antique British Pewter -

This is a fine and highly unusual plate by Humphrey Hyatt of London, *Old Pewter* 2502, who was made Free on the first of July 1675. It is unusual for being silver plated, having a non-standard profile and for (perhaps) not being hammered in the booge only being turned on the lathe.

(actually in an odd combination of daylight and artificial light - like in the middle of a November afternoon(!) it is apparent that there is hammering to the booge - but it is difficult to see,- perhaps because of the silvering)

The Plate is 9 inches in diameter with a broad rim of 35% proportions.

Hyatt's touchmark is clearly struck on the back of the rim as is his crowned rose export mark. He was a substantial exporter of pewter to Scandinavia.



Above are the ownership initials appearing to the back of the plate. Research into Swedish ownership marks by Jan Gadd suggest that one letter marks (F above) are an earlier style than the two letter marks (B O above).



Engraved on the upper rim are a set of intertwined initials surrounded by fronds in the style of the late seventeenth century.

There are signs of copper under these initials as if *perhaps the plate was coated with copper before being silver plated.* (no as you will see later that is a wrong thought!)

The writer was told that - "***More work needs doing on the silver plating of pewter***".

So this writer had a look through various reference books to see what had been written on this subject -- only two sections by different authors was found and these are as follows -

Firstly by Peter R G Hornsby

Hammer Work

The basic pewterer's tool was the hammer. Designs could be punched onto the surface of the pewter using a hammer and individual punches or the surface could be planished so as to leave a pattern of hammermarks upon it. Hammering the boogie of plates and dishes was part of their construction but hammering over the front surface was solely undertaken as decoration. The hammer was also used, as in copper and brass working, to raise a pattern on the surface of the pewter. This style of decoration is termed "repose".

Superb latten or brass dishes were made in this style in Dinant and Nuremberg but few examples are known in pewter. There are a few examples from the low countries made in the eighteenth century.

In Britain dishes are found with swirled decoration. Most are by Edward Leapidge or his brother-in-law, Samuel Smith. There is some discussion about whether they were decorated at the time of manufacture or later, but it is generally accepted that the decoration was contemporary.

There are also a group of French repousse dishes with fleur de lys or a coat of arms displayed upon the surface but there have been many late copies made of these designs, often by casting rather than through use of the hammer.

Repose work is also to be found, in a more restrained form, on dishes, plates and other items. Small "pearles" or "prunts" are hammered onto the rim of dishes in Britain and Europe, frequently in conjunction with engraving or punch decoration.

Tankards and flagons from central Europe also have this form of decoration. In Britain the use appears to have been limited to the period 1560-1680 but it occurs in Europe into the eighteenth century.

By the nineteenth century small sheets of metal could be embossed or punched under machine presses to create a similar effect to repousse work and the designs were worked up into small objects, such as snuff boxes.

Originally used as a form of decoration in the late middle ages the use of hammering as a decorative form continued in Europe into the seventeenth century and in Britain until about 1700. It is a rare form of decoration, the surface of the plate or dish being hammered all over in a series of even lines to create a planished effect, sometimes mistaken for the hammered Britannia metal products of the twentieth century. This style of decoration seems to have been restricted to Germany, Holland, and Austro-Hungary though it is occasionally found on British plates and dishes of the late seventeenth century.

The use of punches to decorate the surface of pewter probably originated from decoration applied by leatherworkers in the middle ages.

They used a variety of stamps to produce patterns on belts, purses and costrels.

With pewter two, three, four or more different punches were used and by skillful use of these punches elaborate patterns could be created around the rim of dishes. The fleur de lys, rose and daisy pattern punches are those most often found.

In Europe the punched patterns were usually combined with other forms of decoration such as repousse work or with the use of cast patterns. In Britain it is only found on a group of saucers, dishes and plates from 1560 to about 1700 and there are less than 20 examples of British punch decoration known.

Gilding, Silvering, Painting and Lacquering

All these forms of decoration are uncommon.

The silvering or gilding of pewter first occurred on church pewter but few examples survive. For periods there were restrictions on the use of pewter in the communion service and whether the use of silvered and gilded pewter was a way of avoiding these restrictions or making the objects more pleasing can now never be ascertained.

Two forms of gilding were employed; mercury gilding and the use of gold leaf. For silvering, only silver leaf was used.

Gilding and silvering was used in Germany, France, and the low countries. In France there is some evidence that the techniques were briefly permitted on domestic pewter around 1730 but for other periods its use was restricted to Church pewter.

In Britain the use of gilding was outlawed. In 1622 for example, two pewterers were accused of "painting", the term then used for gilding their pewter. In the nineteenth century there are examples of silvering by the electro-plate process on britannia metal and examples are found stamped "EPBM" for electro plated britannia metal. Occasionally earlier pieces of pewter were also plated in the nineteenth century.

Painting was occasionally used as a form of decoration in early times but as with painted oak furniture, few examples have survived with their colours intact.

One important example is a Nuremberg bowl circa 1640 with a central cast portrait, the next section gilded and the outer rim of the broad rimmed dish being painted in the style frequently used on Scandinavian treen.

In Europe the only items of pewter likely to be found painted are those decorated in what we call lacquer-work.

This technique was particularly popular in Holland and Germany and was more rarely used elsewhere. The body of the object was painted with a lacquer, usually black, yellow or green and then decorated with colours in the Chinoiserie style. Coffee urns and Chestnut urns were most commonly lacquered, but salts, candlesticks and small boxes are also found. Yellow, green, red and

gold are the colours usually used to paint the patterns over the basic body colour.

Inlay and the Use of Other Metals

There are several instances of the use of brass to decorate pewter. A seventeenth century flagon from Nymegen in Holland has bands of brass and another flagon from the Bakers' Guild in the same town is inlaid with silver. There are other seventeenth century examples of the use of brass with pewter from Germany, Switzerland and Sweden.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries brass-decorated guild flagons were popular in the north of Germany, especially from Kiel, Lubeck and Bremen.

The idea of combining brass and pewter also appears in Britain but in a very limited and specific field. Spoon makers from the fifteenth century had combined brass or latten knobs on pewter spoons. In the sixteenth century there are examples of this technique signed I.G. for James God who was fined for this illegal practice by the guild in 1567.

In the United States a combination of brass and pewter is only found on lamps by R. Gleason in which the optical glass is mounted and shaded with brass.

Cutting and Fretting

Pewter was also decorated by cutting out patterns on the surface. From Holland, Germany and Switzerland come attractive cake dishes with fretted designs.

The punching of holes in cullenders or straining plates could also be turned into a decorative feature, placing the holes to create patterns.

Badges, Medallions and Rosettes

Pewter was sometimes decorated by adding medallions or badges to the surface. Many of these badges take the form of a coat of arms and were probably designed to have the owner's arms engraved upon them. Coats of arms are widely found on German, Austro-Hungarian and Swiss Guild flagons.

Medallions made in the form of a deep cast seal were applied for the same purpose to Nymegen and other Dutch flagons.

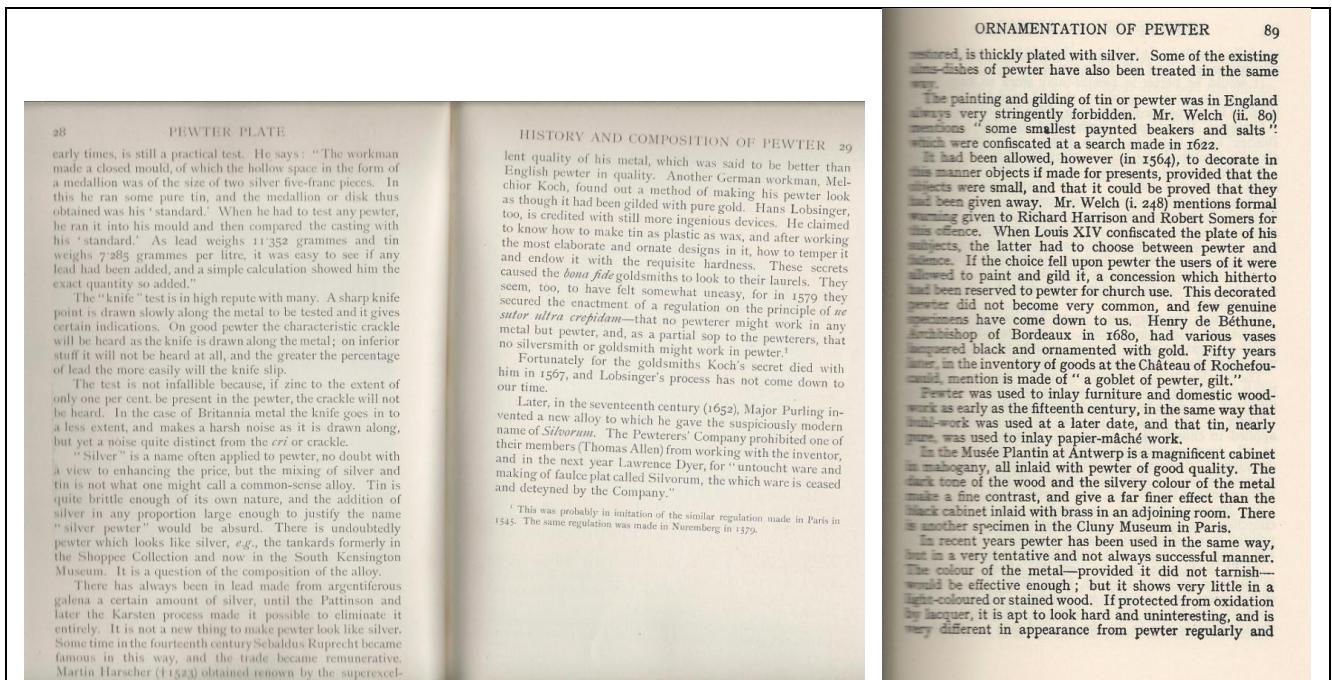
Seals or medallions are to be found upon the top of flagon or tankard lids. Some are blank, perhaps never filled in by the first or subsequent owners, others have initials or coat of arms and still others have cast scenes or buildings amongst other patterns.

Coins were also used as seals and special commemorative medallions are found soldered to the lids of tankards especially those from Scandinavia. Portraits include Oscar (1844-59) and Charles XIV (1809-1819) from Sweden and Frederick IV (circa 1785) from Denmark.

There are a few British and American examples; a John Will tankard has a medal of Elijah and British tankards include examples with a medallion of John Wilkes.

Secondly by - H J L J Masse - Pewter Plate - Ornamentation Of Pewter -

references to Silvering of Pewter



Thus it appears that in England this type of decoration, silvering or gilding, was illegal from the middle 1500s to the later 1600s.

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Of this Pewterer and Silvering - the well known and respected authority on Old Pewter - Jan Gadd - writes -

You can of course silver plate any pewter object, although it was surely not within the rules of the WCOP (*English Pewterers Guild - Worshipful Company Of Pewterers*) at the time for the pewterer to embellish items in such a fashion. We would have known more about it of course, had it been a regular procedure.

This leads me to believe that such plating was done more often than not at a (much) later stage.

Sheffield and later Birmingham made numerous items in flatware in Britannia metal, and copper alloys from the 18th century on, for the sole purpose of silver plating.

If you consult books on Sheffield plate you will see that the method gradually improved. The early 'proper' (silver leaf) plating can be exposed by experts for the simple reason that the early platers had severe problems covering edges properly. Electroplating is a later invention and has nothing to do with the 'regular' old pewterers' efforts - all after-silvered. This is why you will not find any 'experts' in connection with silvering of guild cast pewter in any country.

Not a very interesting subject for pewter collectors as explained above.

Humphrey Hyatt is a rare pewterer in English collections.

"**Anthony Rolls**, from Launton nr. Bicester, some 15 miles from Bledington, an exporter of note, apprenticed to John Sweeting from 1637, free 1645. (**Humphrey Hyatt** of Swedish Royal pewter service 'HERS' fame - was one of his apprentices). His apprentice John Redhead was free in 1676. He was born in Childs Wickham near Broadway, only a couple of miles from his famous exporting contemporary Thomas Shakle of Willersey. It is probably not a coincidence that Nicholas Kelk too was apprenticed to John Sweeting and turned out to be one of the greatest ever exporters of pewter."

The crowned rose was originally owned by the WCoP and **used only on exported pewter** until the Court orders were gradually 'relaxed' and eventually used also for domestic pewter. I wrote an article on this subject called 'The Crowned Rose as a secondary touch...', published in the Journal some years ago ([with kind permission elsewhere on this website - Makers and Marks section](#)) where you can follow the gradual demise of this powerful symbol (the secular crown symbolizing worldly power above the purity symbol of Mary, the rose).

This English touch/symbol was treated with respect in most European countries from the 15th century. Remember where the tin came from - and the London pewterers' concession!



A silver plated Tureen by Joseph Spackman - 1749 - 1799
(so when was this plated?...ed)

(further notes from Jan Gadd)

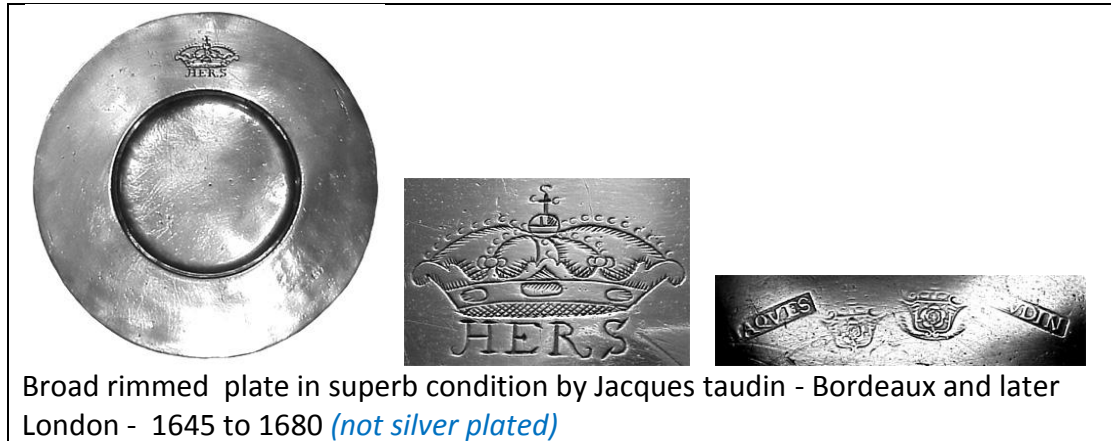
HERS - stands for Hedvig Eleonora Regina Suecia. She ruled Sweden very well during the Regency of King Karl (Carolus) XI, waiting for her son to grow up.

She had a great sense of humour and there are many descriptions of her belly-laughing at the antics in Court of some pompous foreign ambassadors.

She refurbished no less than eight Royal Palaces which is where all these services come in

I attach a *(photo of)* HERS broad rimmed plate in superb condition (by Jacques Taudin, Bordeaux and later London) which broke the Swedish price record for a single plate some years ago. (Pewter collectors competed with 'Royal provenance' collectors.)

Working for many years with pewter at several Swedish museums, especially the Nordic Museum and the National Museum in Stockholm I recorded a large quantity of London (and some York) flat ware. I was then able to 'expose' all these pewterers, almost unknown in English museums and collections, as exporting specialists.



Copper -

I don't think the copper deposit is an overlay at all. In order to silver plate, you will have to acid treat the surface or to treat it electronically. Some such individual efforts will release the copper contents of the pewter to the surface. In your case it is perhaps more likely that a previous owner tried unsuccessfully to remove the silver plating, perhaps by reversing the poles in an electrolytic bath (or worse) when such release of the copper would occur.

(in daylight the copper is difficult to see other than around the monogram - whereas in the photos it is everywhere apparent)

Inquiry made of the above mentioned WCOP resulted in this reply from a long experienced collector and pewterer -

Do not confuse silver plating with silvering. Silver plating on pewter would be achieved by the electrolytic process using cathodes and anodes in a bath of an electrolyte and the application of an electric current which was not available until the mid 19th century. Silvering was achieved during the 17th century by the physical application of a silver salt such as silver chloride which was applied several times. This is how the early clock chapter rings and spandrels were silvered.

I believe that your enquirer's dish was probably silver plated in the late 19th century. It was customary to plate first with copper to achieve a good reception for the silver.

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It was interesting then to read more about Silvering of Pewter in -

Made in Sheffield - The Story of James Dixon & Sons Silversmiths - by Pauline Cooper Bell...

Electroplated Nickel Silver - EPNS - is a technique by which Silver is deposited on a base metal using an electric current. The process was patented in 1840 and is still used today.

Silver is deposited on the base metal (often an alloy based on copper, nickel and zinc - though other alloys can be electroplated and other metals can be coated).

(This plate being a better quality item made for export clearly contained some copper.)

The process certainly enabled manufacturers like Dixon's who took it up, to produce good quality products, something of a halfway house between the cheaper Britannia Metal products and those made from sterling Silver.

This process should not be confused with Fused Plate or Sheffield Plate which are very different processes.

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In 1994 Dr Ron Homer wrote a short article for the UK Pewter Society Journal on Silvering/Gilding of Pewter. He seems to conclude that the examples he has seen were silvered after 1840 by electrolysis when there was apparently a fashion for doing so. Previous mention as with the Shoreys in 1708 of silvered wares he thinks referred to silvered brass. There simply did not previously exist a reasonable method of a giving a permanent or reasonably fixed coating of silver to pewter. One of the big problems was that pewter melted at such a low temperature in relation to many other metals and very thin layers would not apply easily or would be soon absorbed into the pewter.

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Conclusion -

This is a high quality, exported plate, much later silver plated.

(Made around 1690 and before 1704 - Silvered in the 1800s - likely after 1840)

Some years later a collector (perhaps) tried to remove the silver plating, with only limited success, but fortunately causing no damage.

So a rarely found piece, over 300 years old which led to this short article, on an interesting but rarely researched subject.

Any other comments would be welcomed.