

Broad Rim Plates

A pair of these plates were recently examined in a Church in
Yorkshire

by Jon Burge and John Bank

The Canon and Churchwarden of a village Church in Yorkshire kindly supported our request to examine the pewter owned by the Church.

Amongst this pewter was a pair of 10 3/16" plain-edged broad-rimmed plates with unusually wide rims. Both have the hall marks (Pewter Society 15063) for William Adams I (Pewter Society 117) on the front rims, and previously unrecorded versions of the William Adams I maker's marks on the back of the wells.

The marks depict Adam and Eve holding a bitten apple observed by a serpent on a fruit tree ; and the initials W A. The marks have some similarities to previously recorded marks for William Adams I.

The association of William Adams I with these plates suggests that they were made between circa 1643 and 1677, which is consistent with the style and fabrication of the plates. The 2006/7 NADFAS survey of the contents of this church mention pre-1697 purchase documentation "For one great can (flagon) and two plats 16s" but sadly the survey does include the date of that entry. The plates are listed in the church inventories of 1723 and 1888.

This paper is provided to the Pewter Society to document this new mark and its ware on the PS data base; and since this type of plate is so rare, to be included in the PS "interesting pieces" documentation should the PS consider this appropriate, where it will become available to anyone interested in old pewter, and broad-rimmed church plates in particular.

The plate measures 10 3/16 inches in diameter. The rim measures 2 1/2 inches. This is a rim ratio of 49.1%



A survey of broad rims by Carl Ricketts in JPS Aut 1991 p58 recorded just three with similar rim ratios:

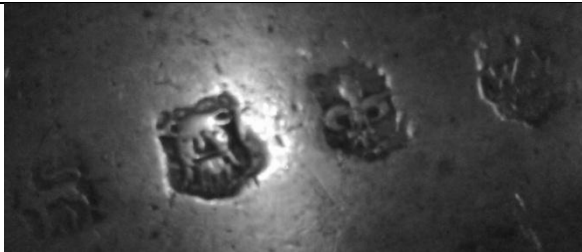
1. Fig. 310 in 'Pewter of the Western World'. Measuring from the photograph, this was calculated as 48.4%. It is difficult to make accurate measurements from a small photograph.
2. From an Albert Bartram sales catalogue a 10" plain rim by Richard Allen which was quoted as 48%. If measured from a photograph the figure must be regarded as approximate.
3. JPS Autumn 1987 p40 by 'TG' (PS4219). Owned by a PS member, measuring from the plate itself, it is 47.8% (65mm rim, 272mm overall diameter).

Comments and summary of known plates above with thanks to Peter Hayward.

Both plates are by the same maker - likely William Adams I working in London from 1643 to around 1677.

The marks found on the plates are as follows -

The marks found on the plates show a heart-shaped object where Adam and Eve's hands meet which is a bitten apple, which is also the focus of attention of the serpent.



One plate's hall marks show clearer the longer legs to the lion, the almost bearded man look of the leopard head and the clearer fleur-de-lys



This other plate produced perhaps the best hall mark due to different lighting using a pen microscope.

A pair of broad-rimmed patens such as these would be most suitable for use in communion services, the wells containing wafers of unleavened bread, the first ceremonially held up and broken, and the pieces placed on the broad rims for distribution. If the first plate is depleted an assistant could take it to be refilled, while the second is used. A similar case could be made for church flagons which usually appear in pairs.