

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir

I found several items in the latest issue of *The Pewterer* of interest. The Copeland Spoon with the Trifid shaped handle - which is the name that I have always known it to be - brought to mind the many spoons that were excavated from under the sea in Port Royal, Jamaica. You may be aware that the infamous town was destroyed by an earthquake on the 7th June 1692. Many of the buildings beneath the sea still have their walls intact, but much of the town has been devastated over the years by ships' anchors. Some locals swear they can still hear the church bell ringing from beneath the sea!



Much of the pewter discovered during excavations had been made by a small government-run company in Kingston. While on my visit there, I hand-cast and polished a set of the three spoons shown in the enclosed photographs. The originals had all been excavated from the mud covering the remains of that town, and metal moulds made of them.

They are, so I was told, 'William and Mary' spoons, supposedly because those monarchs' faces were on them. I did cast and polish a further pair of the spoons and presented them to a member of the Worshipful Company. I wonder whether they are worth displaying? The member has long since died so I never knew whether there was any interest in them.



I was fascinated by Max Lamb's article and the sand casting - which I would have thought would have been pretty dangerous, as he admits that water and molten metal obviously don't mix too well!!! I had a look at his website, and although much of his work seems to be a bit 'way out' to me, I can appreciate his



knowledge and the hard work he puts in.

The sand cast stool on a beach is a sample of his expertise, but it baffles me how he managed to make a mould of the legs without any sand falling into his 'mould'. I should have thought that pewter of a tin and copper mix would not be strong enough to support a stool of that size and weight for very long; perhaps a touch of antimony would make the mix a little harder?

Re the Grainger Candlestick: I used a search engine to find out more about A. Fynde. The results also proved interesting - more so when the first name to appear was a Richard Munday, pewterer. Is this the Richard Munday who was a member of the Company - I remembered the name when seeing it, and I wonder what he did with my spoons!!??

I mentioned in my last letter that I would try and find the miniature pieces that I and several lathe workers attempted at Englefields. Success! I found them! They are photographed against a standard one pint glass based tankard. All of the miniatures were purely non-production and were cut up from the castings as required from the very many moulds we had - some hadn't been used for many years. You can see that they have not been cast as a solid and in one piece. They have all been turned and soldered by hand - even the hingework.



Derek Weeks

Repairing the bar top at the *Prospect of Whitby*

By John George Barlow

In *The Pewterer*, vol 3, issue 2, we ran the first part of an ongoing article on pewter bar tops. This featured, amongst others, the pub called *The Prospect of Whitby*; that article inspired Derek Weeks to write (vol. 3.3) and, separately, he mentioned the fact that one of his colleagues at Englefields, John George Barlow, had been responsible for effecting some repairs to the bar top.

We asked Mr Barlow for his recollections of the bar top repair job. These are his recollections.

Dear Editor

I was very interested to read the article on pewter bar tops and the description by Derek Weeks of the work at Englefields. Derek was the manager at Englefields when the enquiry came in from the *Prospect* about repairing the bar. Knowing that I was very good at pewter repairs, he asked me if I was interested in the job. Yes, of course I was! But my problem was that I didn't have a car at the time, and I lived about 4 miles away from the Pub.

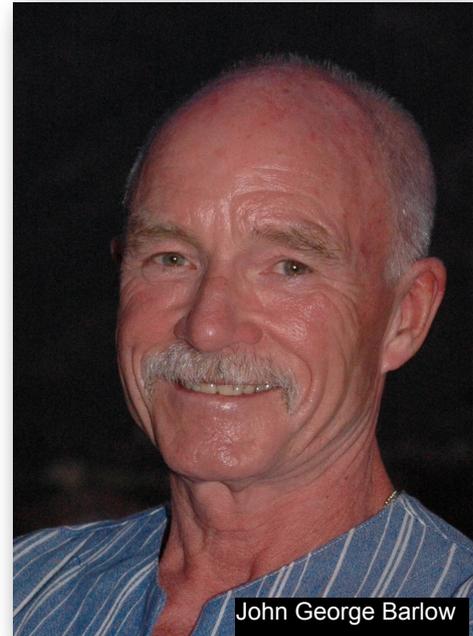
So I cycled to the Prospect to see if the job was viable and financially worth the effort . There were some five or six beer pumps in the middle of the bar; they wanted to remove them and have them clamped to the edge of the bar. I must admit that I thought the pumps looked better where they were; but it looked like a job I could tackle.

But with no car I would have a problem getting my blowers, gas tank, files and all the bits and pieces to the pub. I am not sure how much we agreed as the fee for the job, but I do remember that it was something I could not turn down (I had three young children at the time) so I said I would do it!

Getting all my tools to the pub on my bicycle proved difficult. I do remember strapping most of the tools to my body, but the gas cylinder was the biggest problem. For the life of me I can't remember how I carried it on my bike. I turned up on the first day early in the morning; I'm not sure what time, but I remember it was dark,

I had to work on the bar before any of the other workers arrived as the whole pub was being spruced up – with a lot of care, though, because it had an historical charm. I'm not sure, but I think it dates back to the 1500s when all sorts of thugs, robbers and villains were about.

My most vivid memory was of the sound of the cockroaches scattering for somewhere to hide when the lights were turned on. The Governor of the pub told me that it was impossible to eradicate the pests without ripping the place to pieces and then there would be no guarantee of success, so they were just content to live with them!



I remember there was a chippy, an electrician and someone working on the ceiling; and we all had to work around each other .

There were holes some five or six inches in diameter where the pumps had been torn from the bar; the edges were rough and twisted and not at all flat. My first task was to prepare the surface of the bar to make sure it was flat and smooth. After hundreds of years of mugs and glasses being banged on the bar, it certainly wasn't smooth.

Next I had to make the edges of the holes smooth and not jagged to make it easier to fit a replacement piece of pewter sheet into the holes. Then I had to measure the gauge of the pewter of the bar to get the same gauge to fit into the holes. I made a template of the holes so I could take them back to the factory to make shapes that would fit each individual hole, I would make sure the pieces were slightly larger, by 1/8th of an inch, so as (hopefully) to make a perfect fit.

I stored all my tools away and went back to the factory . The only items that were made there that were flat, and not turned on a lathe, were coasters and table mats. The coasters were too small in diameter, so I cut the shapes of the template out of the table mats and then hammered them on a flat piece of steel to flatten them to a thinner gauge. Obviously, they expanded when hammered but that was fine, as I could file them to shape to fit the various holes.

I arrived early on the second day, scattering the cockroaches again. I filed the shapes to fit as tight as possible and one by one cleaned all the edges so as to allow the solder to run smoothly, I couldn't set the blow torch too high in heat because the pewter sheet, which had been hammered, was fairly thin and too much heat would have melted it and it would then have become useless.

I used the finest flux I had, as that allowed the solder to flow nicely. I do remember that, as I soldered the pieces, the bar top expanded slightly and rose off the bar top; but I was able to push it down neatly. My next task was to file the solder from the joins and smooth them down. I used a carborundum block to help smooth and blend in the surface of the old pewter bar to the new (lead free) pewter.

Once it was level and even, I used a mixture of, I'm not sure exactly and I could be wrong, but I think it was bismuth, nitric acid and tartaric acid (**don't try this at home!**) to obtain the same patina that the old pewter had. It must have worked because the governor was pleased with the end result Altogether I must say that I did enjoy doing the job and was grateful to Derek for the opportunity to do it.

John George Barlow

Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers; and of the City of London

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