

Further Thoughts on 18th Century Sadware Styles by John Douglas.

This article, clearly expressed and nicely illustrated helps the collector especially with regard to the slightly more unusual PLATE RIMS on Pewter Plates, that might be found or seen.

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Further Thoughts on 18th Century Sadware Styles

John Douglas

In this article, based on my talk at the Society autumn meeting 2010, the thoughts on styles are going to be restricted to edge decoration and the outline shape of British sadware with a few added comments on construction. The discussion will not include subsequently added decorations such as wrigglework, punch-work or engraving.

1. Circular Sadware

1.1 Edge decoration

The most commonly encountered 18th century plates are round and have either plain rims or, less likely, single reeded rims. Michaelis¹ gave a simple guide to dating 17th and 18th century plate styles in which he said that those with:

triple reeds are late 17th century,

single reeds are early to mid 18th century,

plain rims are mid 18th to early 19th century.

Unfortunately this is over-simplistic. It is a common fallacy to think that styles change sequentially, whereas they overlap, sometimes for many years.

1.1.1 Triple Reeding

Although triple reeds are predominantly of the 17th century they continued to be made in the early 18th century². Examples occur in silver until the 1730s. There was also a revival of interest at the end of the 18th century when Compton, among others, produced sadware with cast triple reed edges.

1.1.2 Single Reeding

The earliest example of a single reed pewter plate that I have noted is one made by Richard Allum, 1690-1710³. So they were definitely being made before 1710, which is in line with Michaelis' start date. However the latest example I found is by Townsend and Compton, PS 9443, whose working dates were 1802-14. So production continued at least until 1802, which is about 50 years later than Michaelis' mid 18th century end date.

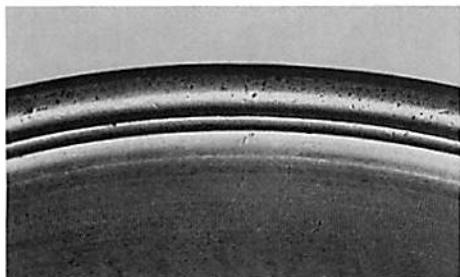


Fig. 1 Single reeded plate by Edmund Embris of Blandford Forum, PS 3157, with extra incised line

The 17th century practice of placing hallmarks on the front of the rims continued until about 1730 after which they were placed on the back. This made single reeds of the early 18th century more attractive than later ones. Edmund Embris of Blandford Forum, PS 3157, further enhanced the look of his single reed plates by adding an incised line as shown in Fig. 1.

1.1.3 Plain rims

Plain rims are the most commonly found 18th century sadware. The earliest examples that I know bear armorial cartouches which are typical of the late 17th century. One plate (Fig. 2) has the touchmark of William Greenbank II of Worcester, PS 4063, who ceased working in 1714 and another, bearing a similar cartouche, has the touchmark of Richard Fletcher, PS 3403, whose working dates were 1678 to probably 1702⁴.

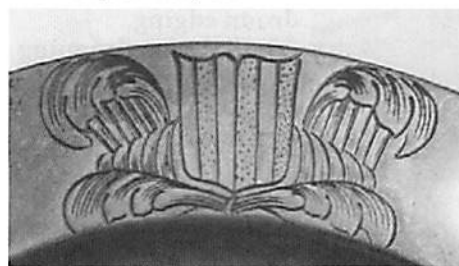


Fig. 2 Plain rim plate by William Greenbank II, PS 4063, of Worcester bearing late 17th century armorial cartouche

It is definitely known that plain rim plates were made in silver in the fourth quarter of the 17th century. On view in Oxford Town Hall is part of a set of a dozen plain rim plates all bearing armorial cartouches and London hallmarks for 1678. I think that these two pieces of evidence support the hypothesis that pewter plain rim plates were made pre 1700, which is about 50 years earlier than Michaelis' date.

The latest example of a pewter plain rim that I have found was by Watts and Harton, PS 9842, whose working dates were 1836-62, which shows that this style persisted in pewter for about 150 years.

Thus plain rims started 50 years earlier than Michaelis indicated and continued for at least 50 years after his date. This shows that some styles were long lasting and that styles overlap. Hence it is not possible to deduce a precise date of manufacture based exclusively on style.

There were also many other less common rim types in the 18th century.

1.1.4 Gadrooning

A big influence on design was the influx of Huguenot craftsmen after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. I suspect it was they who introduced gadrooning into England as the earliest dated English silver example that I have found was on a plate hallmarked in 1686! This style of decoration consists of thick and thin ridges usually slanting. These ridges can either spiral out clockwise, Fig. 3(c) or anticlockwise, Fig. 3(a), or even be radial, Fig. 3(b). The repeated ridge pattern of thin, thick, thin, shown in Fig. 3(a) is the most common, whereas on radial gadrooning the most common pattern is alternate thick and thin ridges Fig. 3(b). In this example the gadrooning does not extend to the edge but is set back. This practice was popular in the late 17th century as can be seen on an octagonal saucer formerly in the Little collection⁶. The gadrooning on the Edward Leapedge plate, Fig. 3(b), is also accompanied by a single reed on the inside, which increases the visual appeal.

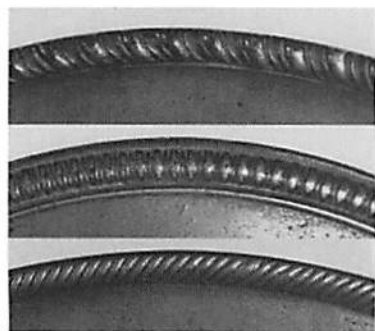


Fig. 3 Variations of gadroon edging.

(a) Spiral gadrooning

(b) Radial gadrooning by Edward Leapedge

(c) Rope edge by William Tutin, Birmingham, PS9539, 1783-1825

When all the ridges are slanting and of the same width the edging appears like a rope and is often called a rope edge. An example is the plate by William Tutin, PS9539, Birmingham, 1783-1825, which is shown in Fig. 3(c).

Gadrooning continued with varying popularity from the late 17th century into the early 19th century, sometimes in conjunction with other decorative features, which will be discussed later.

1.1.5 Beading

With the start of the Neoclassical period in about 1770 beading became a popular decoration and of course it appeared on sadware. However beading had been employed as an edge decoration from at least the first half of the 18th century. For instance it appears on a round plate by John Carpenter (1711-47), PS25. By the third quarter of the century the beads were smaller and on a raised reed which is set back from the edge as can be seen in Fig. 4(a).

Sometimes the effect of beading was simulated by punching a series of small circles around the edge. This can be seen in Fig. 4(b), unfortunately the hallmarks on the rear

are too worn to decipher the maker.

The revival of interest in triple reeding at the end of the 18th century sometimes leads to an edge decoration of a combination of beading and reeding. An example of this is shown in Fig. 4(c) which has incised reeding with beading on the outer edge. Although it has the appearance of a 17th century plate it bears the touch mark of Edgar Curtis & Co of Bristol, PS 2148, so it must be circa 1795!

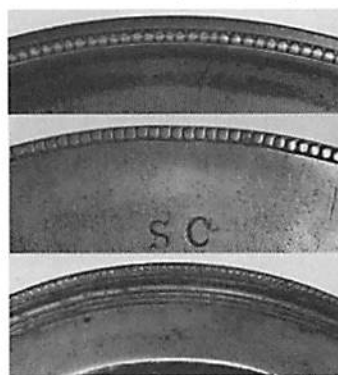


Fig. 4 Variations of beaded edge:

(a) Small beads on a raised reed.

(b) Simulated beading produced with a punch.

(c) Combined bead and incised triple reeding by Edgar Curtis & Co, Bristol, PS2148, 1793-1801

2. Alternative Outlines

There are many other exciting outlines to the popular round shape.

2.1 Polygonal Sadware

The simplest variation and to my eye the most pleasing is polygonal, which incidentally is the least common. The earliest polygonal form, apart from Roman pewter where square plates are known, was octagonal. Octagonal silver salvers of the Charles II period are known as are 17th century octagonal pewter saucers⁵.

Octagonal sadware is found with multiple reed, gadroon, lenticular bead and rope rim decoration as well as a plain rim. I pointed out in a previous article⁶ that polygonal pewter plates were converted from plain rimmed circular sadware by trimming the edge and that the decoration of reeding or gadrooning was added in strips after the plate was cast. The junction of gadroon strips can clearly be seen on the plate in Fig. 5, which is by Townsend & Giffin, PS13459, 1770-78. Trimming can often result in unsymmetrical polygons as can be seen in both Figs. 5 & 6.

Six sided plates were made in silver but are very rare in England and pewter examples are even rarer. I have only

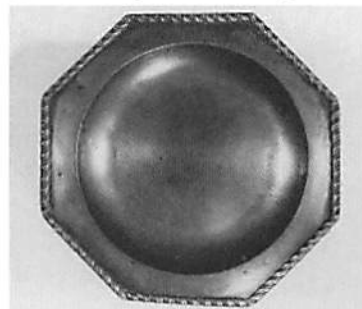


Fig. 5 Gadroon edge octagonal plate by Townsend and Giffin, PS 13459 showing an irregular octagon

seen one example which claimed to be English based on a crowned X on the back of the well. This example, shown in Fig. 6, has obviously also been cut down from the round judging by it being so irregular and also that the rim is without any strengthening reeding along either the front or back of the edges.



Fig. 6 Plain rim hexagonal plate. Very unsymmetrical indicating having been trimmed. No maker's mark. Courtesy Tony Chapman.

Today ten sided and twelve sided pewter plates are uncommon. They also were made by trimming the edge of round plates, probably sales did not justify the expense of having specially made moulds. Extra evidence of cutting down round plates can be seen on the back of the decagonal plate by Jonas Durand, PS 3006, shown in Fig. 7. Here the moulded reed which is usually found on the back of plain rims has been added in strips. It can be seen that one of them has been added over the touchmark! This raises the interesting question "at what stage of manufacture were touchmarks applied?"

The larger the dish the more straight sides can be made around its circumference. Twelve sided dishes of about 12" are known but rare, and larger ones are even rarer.



Fig. 7a Front of plain rim decagonal plate by Jonas Durand, PS 3006/7



Fig. 7b Rear view showing strips of beading added over the touchmark

2.2 Wavy edge

In the 1730s a variation of the straight sided polygon was introduced which had serpentine sides. This style, pewter collectors now call wavy-edge. These are found with plain

rims, a single reed, double reed, multiple reed or gadrooning – see Fig. 8 (a), (b), (c), (d) & (e). A survey of silver plates⁷ revealed that gadrooned and reeded wavy edge plates were popular between 1732 and 1823 with a surge between 1765 and 1785 and a revival in the early 19th century. These dates coincide with the "Rococo" and the "Rococo Revival" periods. From the working dates of the pewterers making them, pewter wavy edge plates were made from at least 1747 to 1829, which is completely compatible with my observed silver dates.

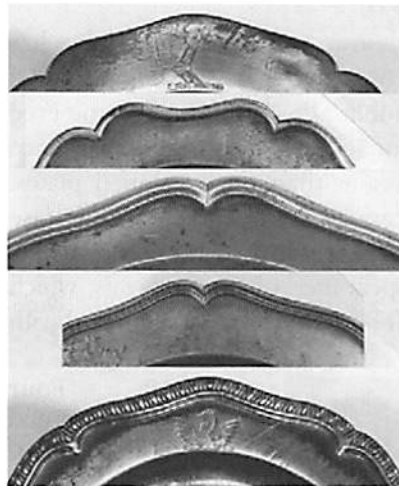


Fig. 8 Various edge decorations on "wavy edge" plates. (a) plain rim (b) single reed (c) double reed (d) multiple reed (e) gadrooning plus reeding

The most popular outline for pewter wavy edge plates is five lobed followed by eight lobed then six lobed. Surprisingly in the survey of silver plates⁶ no eight lobed plates and only one six lobed plate was found. I am aware of only one marked English pewter six lobed plate. It was by Edward Leapidge II, PS 5795, had a multiple reeded edge and was in the Michaelis sale⁸. There is however an unmarked pair with a single reeded edge in the Treasury of Chichester cathedral.

Having more than five serpentine lobes around a 9¾" plate would be too fussy. For this reason the wavy outline on eight lobed plates was modified to have fewer curves between the cusps. The omission of the middle "bump" in the lobe when the distance between the cusps is small can be seen in Fig. 9b. On dishes larger than 9¾" in diameter the number of lobes is usually increased.

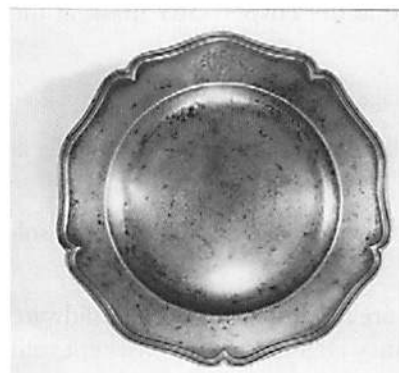


Fig. 9a Comparison of the outline of lobes on 5-lobed and 8-lobed plates.



Fig.9b Comparison of the outline of lobes on 5-lobed and 8-lobed plates.

Recently a previously unknown variant with four lobes has come to light. It appears on a pair of Irish plates attributed to William Hodges of Dublin, PS4776, who became Free in 1765. Having just four lobes means that the distance between the cusps is greater than on five lobed plates. This allows extra elaboration on the curves. In this case the “bump” has become an outward pointing cusp which gives the outline the appearance of flower petals, which can be seen in Fig. 10. The outer edge is decorated with gadrooning.

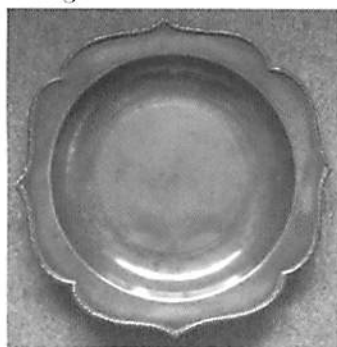


Fig.10 Four lobed gadrooned wavy edged plate by William Hodge of Dublin, PS4776. Courtesy Carl Ricketts

2.3 Rococo Decoration on the edging of “Wavy Edge” sadware.

About the same time as the introduction of the serpentine edge, rococo decoration became fashionable and shells and foliage were added to the edging on these “show-off” plates with the result that many interesting variants were produced. A few of them are listed below and can be seen in Fig. 11.

- (a) Gadroon with foliage at the cusp.
- (b) Gadroon with foliage at the cusp + satyr mask at the apogee.
- (c) Reeding with cast foliage along the reeding.
- (d) Reeding with cast foliage along the reeding + shells at the cusp & apogee.
- (e) Reeding with incised foliage on reeding + shells soldered at apogee.

These extra decorations are not found on circular sadware but only on those with wavy edges. This is consistent with

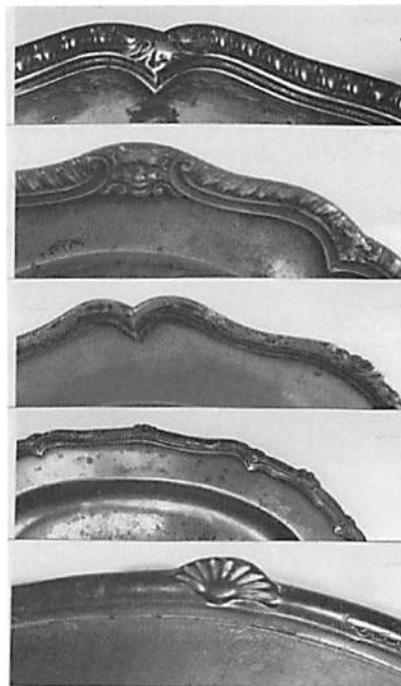


Fig.11 Five Rococo period variations of gadrooning on wavy edge sadware. See (a) to (e) above.

wavy edge sadware being used for show where expense would be lavished on the more elaborate edge decoration. Interestingly in silver the most commonly found edging is the more elaborate gadrooning, which is the most impressive edging, whereas the most commonly found edging in pewter is the more simple multiple reed.

2.4 Construction

As was the case with polygonal plates, the edge decoration was applied in strips with the joins at the cusps.

Most English pewter wavy edge plates have flat rims whereas Continental ones are often cupped and have a radial ridge at the position of the cusp. Most of the English ones with radial ridges had the ridges pressed in after casting. This is illustrated in Fig. 12, where the Chamberlain label has been struck before the ridge was created. This again raises the question “At what stage of manufacture were touchmarks applied?”

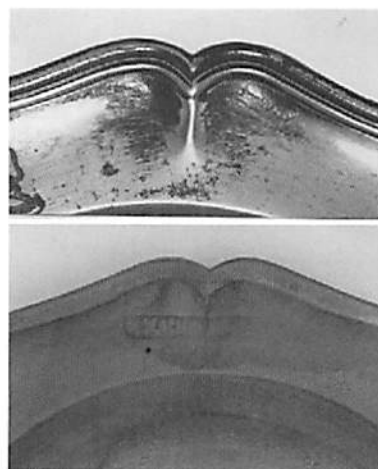


Fig.12 Front and back view of the cupped rim of a 5 lobed wavy edge plate showing that the ridge was created after the Chamberlain label.

3. Anomalies and Enigmas

3.1 Octafoil

Another outline is multifoil which consists of a series of arcs. Although I have seen English octafoil salvers in both silver and brass, prior to 2010, I had only seen one piece of English pewter sadware with an octafoil edge. That was a 17¼" diameter dish with a double reeded edge shown to me by an American collector who had bought it in Stockholm. It had the hallmarks of Alexander Cleeve and a rubbed touchmark of either Bouchier or Bouchier & Richard Cleeve. By coincidence Jan Gadd was present and had with him a 9" octafoil plate by Sven Bengtson Roos of Gothenberg bearing the date-letter for 1786. Jan, who has talked to us about the export of London pewter to Sweden by several makers including Nicholas Kelk, pointed out to me that Alexander Cleeve succeeded to Kelk's business. So it is highly likely that the business continued to export to Sweden. At the Bonham's, Chester sale on 12th May 2010 there was a set of 6 dinner plates, 3 soup plates and a 16½ inch dish; all double reeded octafoils with the clear touchmark of Bouchier & Richard Cleeve, PS 1729 & OP 963 – see Fig. 13. On the backs of all these items were the "ownership" initials "A:M:S" in non-English looking script (Fig. 14). Jan Gadd has confirmed that the style is typically Swedish. As the only known examples of English octafoil sadware have a Swedish provenance, here is an example of English pewterers manufacturing objects in a non-British style specifically for export.

Incidentally again the reeding was applied after casting and the joins at the cusps can be clearly seen.



Fig.13 Octafoil dish with applied double reed edging by Bouchier & Richard Cleeve, PS 1731.

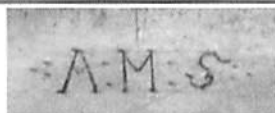


Fig.14 Swedish style ownership initials on the back of the rim of Fig.13

3.2 Undulating edge

The final example, Fig. 15, is an enigma. It has an undulating edge with 18 lobes and really qualifies for the term "wavy edge", but that term is already used for a very different profile. The rim is narrow with a plain edge and resembles that on strawberry dishes, but the bouge is

neither ridged nor deep. As there is no reeding on either the top or back of the rim it is possible that the edge has been trimmed. There is a small armorial crest on the rim which was obviously applied after any possible trimming and the touchmark of Elizabeth Carpenter, PS 1506, is on the back.

4. Concluding remarks

Not all styles of 18th century British sadware have been discussed and some, which have been, were long lasting and were also popular in the preceding or following



Fig.15 Narrow plain rim dish with undulating edge with crest on rim and touch of Elizabeth Carpenter, PS 1506 on reverse. Courtesy Peter Hayward.

centuries. However I think that I have shown that there were many interesting styles of sadware in the 18th century other than single reed or plain rims.

Acknowledgements

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Notes and References

1. Ronald F. Michaelis, *Antique Pewter of the British Isles*, London 1955, pp 23-26,
2. Tony Chapman, *17th Century Flatware, A talk at Creaton, Pewter Soc. Newsletter 49, Summer 2010, p 8*
3. John D. Davis, *Pewter at Colonial Williamsburg*, p 84, plate 90.
4. Ibid, pp 94-98, plate 104
5. Sale catalogue of Little Collection, Christie's, 1st May 2007, lot 115
6. John A. Douglas, *Non circular British plates*, J. Pewter Soc. Autumn 1985, pp 37-44.
7. Sale catalogue of Michaelis' Collection, Sotheby's, 12th November 1973, lot 42.