

THE BOLTONS

METALWORKERS

OF

WIGAN

By
Jamie Ferguson

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A second part to this PDF file includes photographs of the styles of Mugs made by the makers referred to in this article.

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INTRODUCTION

The identity of the 18th/19th century Wigan pewterers using a very similar series hallmarks and with the initials EW, GB, WB and B&W (see Fig. 1, a - d) was discussed by Boorer (Journal, Spring 1980) and later by Ricketts (Journal, Autumn 1994). Pieces by the latter two makers in particular are more frequently encountered and have become well known (incorrectly, as it turns out) as those of William Burgoine (WB) and George Bolton with ANOther (possibly 'Wylde') (B&W).



Fig. 1, a - d. Hallmarks of EW, GB, WB and B&W

Through a combination of trade directory entries, wills and other documentary evidence it has now been possible to confirm the identities of these makers as George Bolton (GB), William Bolton and Son(s) (WB) and Ralph Bolton with William Wylde (B&W). EW still remains somewhat elusive, although is likely to be Edward Westhead. Two parallel Bolton family trees have also been constructed, some members of which have not been recorded before, who together represented a well established Wigan metalworking dynasty from at least the early 17th century - and lasting into the 20th.

TRADE DIRECTORY ENTRIES

A relatively comprehensive sequence of Bolton metalworking businesses in Wigan has now been compiled from a variety of trade directory sources. These are shown in the table below:

Date	Name(s)	Other Information
1781	George Bolton William Bolton	Pewterer, ironmonger and metal works Pewterer and cheesemonger(!)
1784	George Bolton William Bolton	Pewterer, ironmonger Pewterer and cheesemonger(!)
1791	George Bolton Robert Bolton Bolton & Son	

1796	Bolton & Son	
1816	Jonathan Bolton Bolton, Executors (ironmongers) Robert Bolton	Market Place Market Place Pepper Mill
1819/20	J. Bolton G. Bolton	Market Place Market Place
1822	J. & G. Bolton Robert Bolton	Wallgate Pepper Mill
1824/25	i) George Bolton & Brothers (& pewterers) ii) Bolton & Wylde William Burgoine	Wallgate Pepper Mill Canal Foundry
1828/29	George Bolton & Co Ralph Bolton	Wallgate Pepper Mill
1830/31	George Bolton & Co Ralph Bolton	Wallgate Pepper Mill
1834/35	George Bolton & Co Ralph Bolton (& coppersmith)	Wallgate Pepper Mill
1838	Roger Bolton Sarah Bolton (William Burgoine)	Standishgate Millgate Innholder
1841	Roger Bolton Sarah Bolton (William Burgoine)	Standishgate Hallgate Licensed Victualler, Standishgate

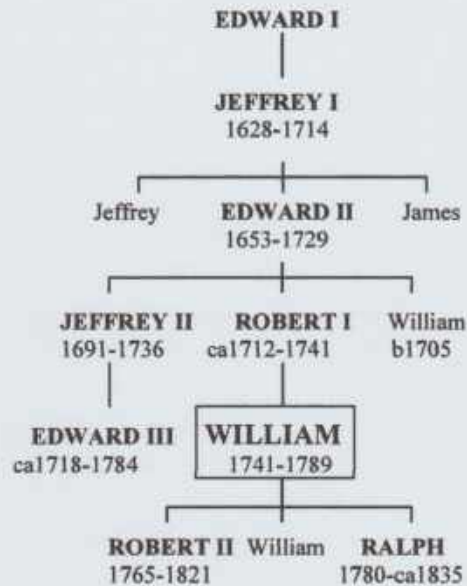
Whereas it has to be accepted that trade directory entries were never always exhaustive or entirely accurate with regards to terminals dates, as will be shown in the remainder of this article, these directory entries are easily explained by two parallel Bolton metalworking businesses operating throughout this period, one encompassing William, Robert and Ralph Bolton (the latter with William Wylde) all based out of Pepper Mill Foundry, and another more complex one encompassing 2 George Bolton's, 2 Jonathan's, a Thomas, a James and briefly William Burgoine (and son - William!) based out of a foundry in Wallgate.

WILLIAM BOLTON AND SONS, PEPPER MILL ca 1770-1835

William was born in 1741, the only son of Robert Bolton (Robert I), a brazier, and Isabel Brown. William would not have known his father, for Robert I died (aged around 30) one month after his son's birth. However it is clear from Robert I's will that he wanted his wife to continue the business, making a provision *'desiring my nephew Edward Bolton will continue with her and assist her in carrying on her trade and business she allowing him sufficient and reasonable wages for his so doing'*.

The Edward Bolton mentioned here (Edward III) was the eldest son of Robert I's brother Jeffrey II (who had died in 1736) and was 23 years old when asked to work for Isabel. Edward III went on to become a successful brazier in his own right, and it is possible he taught William his metal working skills (although one of Edward III's father's (Jeffrey II) executors was also the pewterer James Banckes III). Although no

will can be found for Edward III, he clearly remained close to William, for shortly prior to his death in 1784 several indentures exist that show that he sold various, but not specifically identified property to William.



Confirmed braziers shown in bold.
The William discussed in

Although Bolton is a very common name in the area the family tree for this line of the Bolton family has been constructed (mainly through various wills and indentures) which record a family of braziers going back into the early 17th century.

William married Catherine Green in 1763 and before his death in 1789 (aged 48) had fathered 15 children(!) – 4 boys and 11 girls. Sons Robert II (born 1765), William (born 1775) and Ralph (born 1780) were alive at the time of his death and feature in his will, in which he is described as a brazier.

Although it is not known if William purchased or inherited Pepper Mill (which was originally only a corn mill), that he did own it is clear from his will which states: '*And as to my Estate and Lands called Pepper Mill and all my stock in trade and....*'. Like his father before him William wanted his business enterprises to continue after his death leaving clear instructions: '*Then as to my Estate called Pepper Mill and the Land and Appurtenances thereunto belonging and all the rest, residue and remainder of my personal Estate to the use and behest of my said son Robert Bolton his heirs ... And it is my will and mind that my said son Robert shall carry on my retail Business in the house where I now dwell (in Market Street) until my son William shall attain the age of twenty one years and shall then give it up to my said son William. And that upon my son Ralph attaining the like age of twenty one years my son Robert shall admit and take my said son Ralph into Partnership with him in the Business at Pepper Mill upon him putting in a proportion of stock.*'

Robert II made significant changes to Pepper Mill in 1793, building a new corn mill besides the original one, moving all brass founding into the original corn mill building, and constructing new workshops and a large steam engine to power his expanding activity. A detailed map of the mill and surroundings (see Fig. 2) was made when Robert II sued a neighbour who was restricting his access to sufficient water!

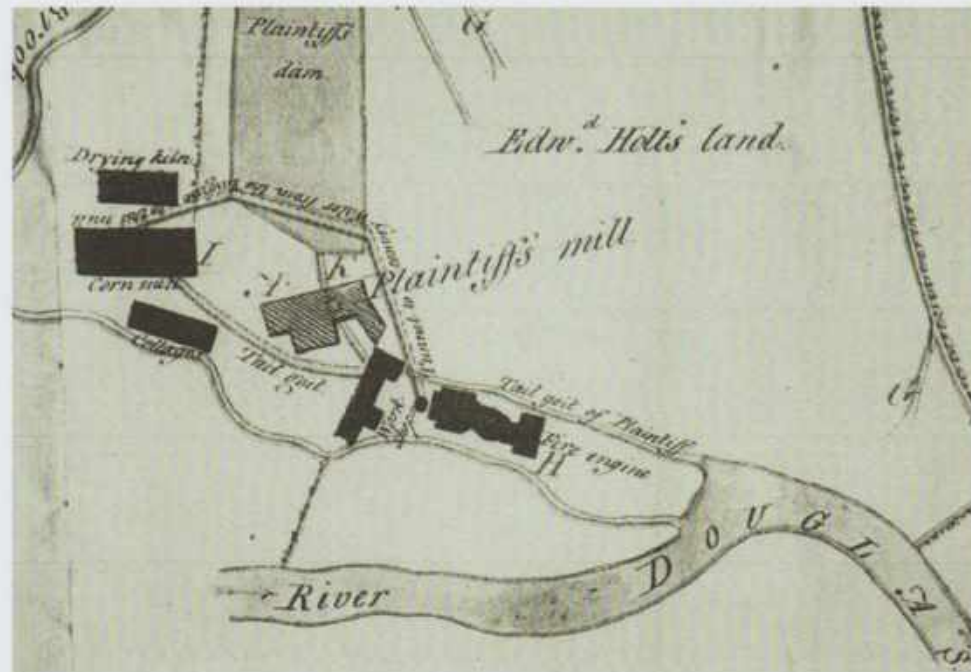
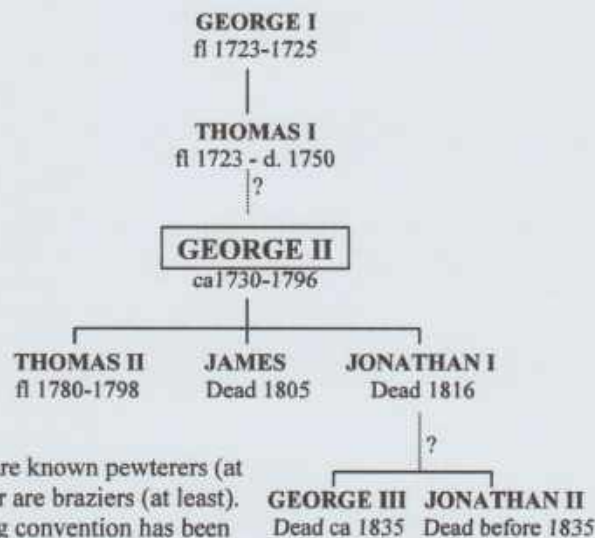


Fig. 2. Plan of William Bolton's mill, as expanded by son Robert II. The building marked 'plaintiff's mill' is the original mill and is separately indicated as being used as the foundry. The new mill lies to the east besides the cottages.

Robert II was presumably joined by his brother Ralph in the business in 1801, as their father had willed, with the brothers working together until Robert II's death at the end of 1821. It appears that Robert II did not have any children for none were mentioned in his will (where he was described as a brass founder) nor were any bequests made to grandchildren. Indeed he left his entire estate and obviously beloved 'steam engines and mill-gearing', 'in trust', to 'my friend John Bibby of Liverpool in the said County Iron merchants (one of the Partners in the firm Bibby and Highfield)..' (and his heirs). However John Bibby was obliged 'Upon trust to permit my brother Ralph Bolton to hold and enjoy the same for and during the term of his natural life and if he my said brother Ralph should at any time or times during his life unfortunately become incapable of managing his own affairs then and in every such case and so often but so long as he shall be so incapable I direct that my nephew William Atwell Wylde (son of his sister Hannah and Atwell Wylde) and his Executors and administrators shall have the receipt of the annual rent and profits until he shall be restored to the full enjoyment of his faculties or until his death'. Thus in 1822 the firm Bolton and Wylde was created, which was to last until around 1835/36.

GEORGE BOLTON AND FAMILY, WALLGATE ca 1760 -1835

As shown in the trade directory entries, George Bolton was operating in parallel with William. As far as can be determined they were not closely related. He is Shelley's George II. Birth records for this line of Boltons are generally illusive. There is however evidence that this branch could have been non-conformists, records for which at Wigan are patchy and yet to be indexed or transcribed (even by IGI). From wills and other documentary evidence it seems probable that the following represents the family tree for this line of Boltons - all based at Wallgate.



The first 3 named are known pewterers (at least), the remainder are braziers (at least). Shelley's numbering convention has been followed when adding new names.

The George mainly discussed in this section is highlighted

The first evidence for George II occurs in an indenture of 1764, when as an obviously successful young man '*George Bolton of Wigan aforesaid pewterer*' leased 3 shops under the old Market (Moot) Hall. He clearly went on to significantly expand his metalworking business, presumably as demand for pewter declined, for at the time of his death in 1796 he was described in his will as an '*ironmonger, brass founder, pewterer and brazier*'! His will identifies 5 sons, Thomas II, Jonathan I, James, Roger and John and 2 daughters. Sons Thomas II, James and Jonathan I were the main beneficiaries of business and property. It is clear that George II had already established Thomas II in business for he wills that '*my son Thomas shall within six months after my decease admit my son James Bolton as a Partner in his trade as a brass founder, pewterer and brazier....*'. Failure of Thomas II to have done this would have seen Thomas II's business confiscated by George's executors and sold! Clearly Thomas II was still operating his father's business! Interestingly the first bequest in the will is to the pewterer James Rigby, who was presumably one of George II's pewterers (and no doubt working for Thomas II at the time). The location of the workshops was '*land lying near Wallgate and the Mill House and other buildings thereupon standing and all the works gears and fixtures...*'. Thus like

William Bolton at Pepper Mill, George II was also using an old mill as his base for metal working, although in this case in Wallgate.

George II was obviously still operating the remainder of the business himself, for he instructs his executors to *'value and appraise my stock in trade in the business of an ironmonger and in the retail trade by me carried on in the Market Street in Wigan aforesaid and when the same shall be so valued and appraised make an offer of sale of the same to my son Jonathan Bolton....'*

Following their father's death, Thomas II and James entered into the desired partnership. However this was only to last 2 years as a result of the death of Thomas II. Dissolution of this partnership was formally recorded in the London Gazette on 29th November 1798 (see also Cott. 503B and 505). He presumably died suddenly, for all the possessions of *'Thomas late of Wigan.... Brass and iron founder, deceased'* were passed to his wife Grace by decree. Brother James *'brass founder'* died shortly after in 1805, apparently childless, for he leaves his estate to *'the children of my brother Thomas Bolton, deceased...'* and *'the rest of my brothers and sisters equally..'* It is apparent that brother Jonathan I had already joined James in the business for James allows him to purchase *'my share of the stock and outstanding debts belonging to the brass founders, braziers and pewterers business, in which he is concerned with me as a partner...'*

Jonathan I clearly purchased James share and continued running the business, but only for a relatively short period, for he died in 1816. Although relatively elderly, shortly before his death he attempted to lease his premises, a poster of which has survived and is shown in Figure 9. It is not clear however if this attempt was successful.

Fig. 9.

TO BE LET,
By Private Treaty,
THE BUILDINGS,
Situate near the CANAL BASIN,
at the
Bottom of the Wallgate-Street,
IN, WIGAN,
Lately occupied by Mr. JONATHAN BOLTON,
AS A
Brass Foundery,
AND
Pewterers' Shops,
Consisting of two Clocking Shops, Turning Rooms, Work-shops, Warehouses, and Counting-House; and also the Use of a large Yard, adjoining to the said Buildings, and completely walled in.
Mr. STRETTELL CHADWICK, of Poolstock, near Wigan, will show the Premises; and for further Particulars apply to him, or to Messrs. CLAYTON & GRIMSHAW, of Wigan.
Wigan, May 14th, 1813.
B. LIND, PRINTER, MARKET PLACE, WIGAN.

Jonathan I's will indicates that all his children (none of whom are named) were below the age of 21. However he does provide for the executors *'if they think fit, carry on my trade or businesses of a brazier and ironmonger until the attainment of the younger of my children born and to be born to the age of twenty one years or for such shorter time as my said executors...shall think fit.'*

George III and Jonathan II appear in the trade directory from 1819 and it seems likely these are the children of Jonathan attaining the age of 21. Presumably George III is the elder of the two and takes the lead in the new firm since it rapidly moves to become George Bolton and Brothers/Co. It is this George Bolton III who must have entered into partnership with William Burgoine – which was dissolved on 11th Dec 1824 and noted under Cott. 503A/705A.

William Burgoine was not a native of Wigan, and indeed his family appear to be the only Burgoines in the town. He married Margaret Marsh there in 1797 and had two children Jennet (born 1798) and William (born 1803). In a census of Wigan carried out in 1811 the family are recorded as living in Wallgate and William identifies his profession as soldier! It seems probable that he entered into partnership with George Bolton III, acting primarily as a financial backer, and may have done so to have his own son trained in the metalworking trade for the partnership was dissolved just after son William reached the age of 21! It is also at this point, and for the only time, that William Burgoine (presumably the son) appears in the trade directory (at Canal Foundry - put up for lease by Jonathan Bolton I in 1813!). This does not appear to have been a successful venture, for shortly thereafter and for several more decades William Burgoine only appears acting as a landlord for various public houses in the town.

CONCLUSIONS

As with other centres of pewter making, standalone pewterers and pewtering declined markedly in Wigan during the later half of the 18th century and early 19th as the craft was absorbed into general metalworking businesses including iron/brass etc. Indeed it has been estimated that there were less than 10 such businesses involved at any one time during this period in Wigan (as compared to over 80 a century earlier) and including names such as Ashton, Aspinall, Bolton, Fairbrother, Gornell and Taylor. Where did all the earlier families (viz: Banks, Fords, Langshaws and Baldwins etc) go?!

From the surviving pewterware it is clear that both of the Bolton families discussed in this article continued to use old moulds. Whether these moulds were passed on through family connection or freely purchased from a business that had ceased trading remains an entirely open question. It can however point to a Wigan origin for these types and makers.

The survival rate of Wigan pewter of this later period appears to be low by comparison with other centres, due in part to the low numbers of people involved, but probably also as a consequence of the quality and thinness of alloy used, for many

items are worn, split or repaired – and clearly have had a 'hard life'. The vast majority of surviving marked pewter also appears to come from these two Bolton families. Indeed the identity of the wares of all the other makers is still a mystery. What is now evident is that William Burgoine is not one of them!

Neither Pepper Mill nor Canal Foundry now exists. The former is now under the site of Wigan Magistrates Court on Darlington Street, with Canal Foundry originally on the canal side adjacent to the Wigan Pier Industrial Museum.

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- Miscellaneous documents from the Wigan Records Office:
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 - Property conveyance papers between Edward and William Bolton, D/NC 9/4/21-22
 - Lease of shops under Moot Hall by George Bolton, D/DX ApG. 8
 - Sale Notice for Jonathan Bolton premises, D/D Lei. Add. 4/3
 - The 1811 census records for Wigan

ILLUSTRATIONS OF WIGAN MUG STYLES

William Bolton and Family

Edward Bolton
ca 1745-1784

William Bolton

ca 1765-1789

'PEPPER MILL'

Robert Bolton

1789-1821

Ralph Bolton

1801-1821 with Robert
post 1821- ca1835
as Bolton & Wylde

Bolton & Wylde Mugs



The Quart Sequence (1)



The Quart Sequence (2)



The Pint Sequence



Base Variety



The Half Pint Sequence



Mugs based on 15 floz Pint (1)

None by B&W



30floz

Mugs Based on 15 fl oz Pint



Tulip Body Shape

Imperial



Bolton & Wylde Imperial Measures



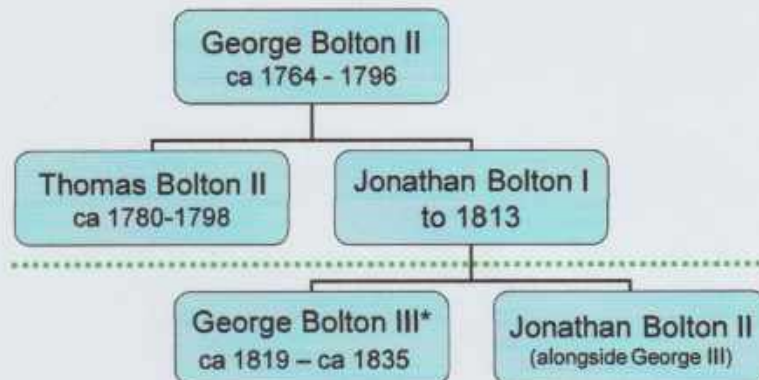
Earliest had plain (type 1) bodies. Those with double lines are later

William Bolton Pre-Imperial Measures

'OEWS' Series (at ca 18floz)



George Bolton and Family



* With William Burgoine until 1824

Truncated Cones

George II phase



Quart

Mugs based on 15 floz Pint (1)

George II phase



15floz



Mugs based on 15 floz Pint (2)

George II phase



30floz

Edward Westhead (ca 1763-1773) ?



30 floz



George Bolton III ca 1819 on (1)

Imperial



Half pint

George Bolton III ca 1819 on (2)

Imperial



gill



½ gill



quart

Other swan-necked handles



Samual Baldwin (ca 1784 – 1838)

(?)

