



A PAIR OF BOWLS AND COVERS

325 Assay office: London Standard: Sterling
 Date: 1677 Maker's mark: B
 W. (over handles) 4", 102 mm 7 oz 2 dwt, 221 g

Each dish is of octagonal form, rests on an astragal-moulded foot, and has a pair of G-scroll astragal-moulded handles with trifid terminals. The very slightly domed lid is of conforming outline, has a central C-scroll handle and is engraved with a blackamoor crest.

The plain form of these unexpectedly small covered bowls is unusual for their period. Their original intended use is conjectural too. Perhaps they are boxes from a toilet service, but they may equally have been made to hold spices or sauces at table.



A SILVER-GILT PAIL

510 No hallmarks
 Date: c.1735 Maker's mark: John Hugh Le Sage
 H. 2 3/8", 62 mm 3 oz, 93 g

The body is cylindrical, and has four bands of horizontal reeding set against a matted ground. It has a plain, wire swing handle attached to the body by shaped lugs.

Small buckets of this type are usually called 'cream pails', although the defining of the intended contents as cream may be called into question in view of the number of contemporary jugs to be seen. It may be that they were specifically intended for clotted cream which would not pour from a jug.

A SILVER AND BLUE GLASS PAIL

738 Unmarked English
 Date: c.1760 Maker: Francis Spilsbury (probably)
 H. 2 5/8", 66 mm with the handle down 3 oz 7 dwt, 105 g without the glass

The pail is cylindrical, with a beaded rim and a gadrooned base. In between, the body is profusely pierced and engraved with paling through which foliage and flowers are entwined, the flora inhabited by birds. The pail is mounted with a swing handle of twisted rope pattern.

Early pails were usually straight sided (see No. 510). Later, the fashion for piercing them occurred and later still, in the 1770s they were usually tapered.

Although this pail is unmarked, others almost identical in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and elsewhere are either fully hallmarked or marked with the maker's mark only of Francis Spilsbury. This example was probably made by him also. Indeed, he is recorded as maker of 'Cruet Frames, Bottle Stands, Pails, Mustard Pots, and Salts'. He died in 1793 at the age of 60.



A DISH OR 'WATER PLATE'

42 Assay office: London Standard: Sterling Date: 1742
 Maker's mark: David Willaume Jr.
 D. 6 5/8", 168 mm 10 oz 10 dwt, 358 g
 Scratchweight: 11-11

The circular dish with its flat rim is devoid of decoration, but is engraved GW beneath an Earl's coronet. It rests on a shallow collet foot.

The initials are those of George Booth, 2nd Earl of Warrington. Born at Mere Hall, Chester, in 1675, he made several attempts at engagement to marriage before actually marrying Mary Oldbury in 1702. She brought with her a fortune of £40,000. Not long afterwards, having used up her entire dowry to settle his debts – much of it incurred in the purchase of a lavish and extensive collection of plate – they quarrelled but lived together in the same house, Dunham Massey, as strangers for the rest of their lives. In 1739 he published a book on the desirability of divorce for the incompatibility of tempers. Dunham Massey, now National Trust, displays a sizeable amount of his plate.

The 1750 inventory of Dunham Massey refers to this, and its 21 companion dishes as 'Water Plates'. It is remarkably solid.

Water plates may have served the same function as finger bowls.

