

# ...The Finial...

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# An Unusual Drop on Scottish Provincial Tablespoons

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From the considerable number of Scottish Hanoverian tablespoons that I have handled, I have noted a particular design feature common to a few originating in Scottish provincial burghs and, as yet, I have not seen this on either Edinburgh or English Hanoverian spoons. There appears to be an elongated drop, running more than one quarter of the way along the back of the bowl. Unlike a conventional rattail, which becomes progressively thinner toward its end, the drop on these spoons has a distinctly thicker rounded end (Fig. 1).

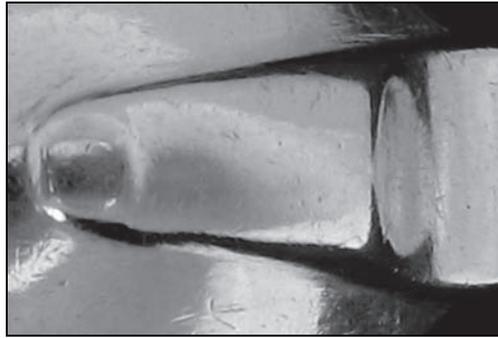


Fig. 1

In the 1960s, Joy Scott Whyte carried out an extensive survey of over 900 Scottish spoons, mainly in the collections of several museums, but some in private hands. She reported her findings in two articles, the second of which was entitled '*Scottish Silver Tablespoons*'<sup>1</sup>, but which included hash, serving, table and dessert spoons, her total sample being 535 spoons. Of these, 78 were Edinburgh or provincial Hanoverian tablespoons 'with drop junction'. Whyte included a diagram of a 'composite' spoon, which among its features showed an elongated drop which she annotated as a strap, but which is not mentioned in the text on Hanoverian spoons. I can only assume that among the tablespoons inspected, the feature to which I now draw attention was absent, or if present was not considered sufficiently different to merit comment within the group of tablespoons with a drop junction.

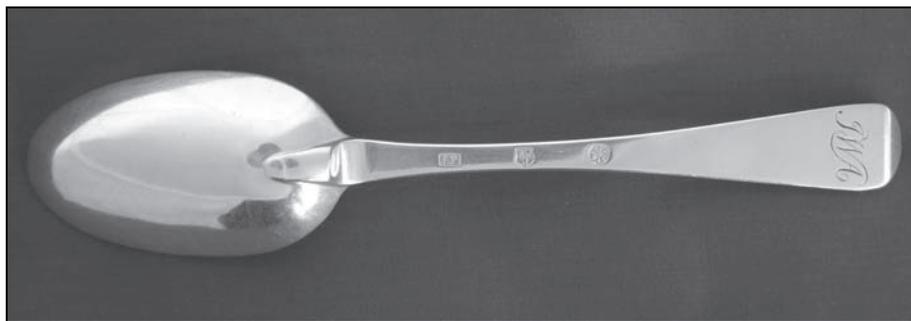


Fig. 2

The first spoon (Fig. 2) on which I noted this unusual drop was made by Alexander Forbes of Aberdeen (Fig. 3), who, according to James<sup>2</sup>, worked between 1728 and 1753. He was an accomplished silversmith who made, among other things, an extremely fine Scottish bullet teapot thought to date circa 1730/5, highlighted on a BBC Antiques Roadshow, broadcast from Hopetoun House.



Fig. 3

Two further spoons show a similar type of drop although there appears to be a more pronounced ridge along the drop before the thickened end (Fig. 4). The 'FB' mark on these spoons is now attributed to Francis Brown of Elgin<sup>3</sup>, 1728 – 1752 (Fig. 5). As each spoon bears different engraved initials, Brown's design was not unique to one client. It should be noted that in recent years the 'IB' mark has been variously ascribed; Turner<sup>4</sup> suggested John Baillie of Inverness while others have thought that it may be that of James Brown who was known to have worked in Perth in 1724.

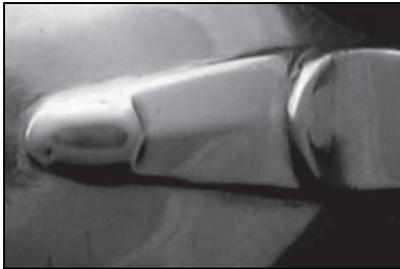


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Another two spoons appeared in the catalogue<sup>5</sup> of Woolley & Wallis's sale of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009. I am very grateful to Rupert Slingsby and to Woolley & Wallis for providing the images of these spoons and their marks. Lot 73 was by George Robertson of Aberdeen (Fig. 6 & 7). James suggests that this silversmith worked between 1708 and 1737, although Jackson<sup>6</sup> indicates 1727 as the latest mention. Lot 198 was the rare Hanoverian spoon by Thomas Forbes of Elgin (Fig. 8 & 9), although Moss<sup>7</sup> suggests from similar marks that the town of origin was more likely to be Banff than Elgin.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

These spoons, which appear to belong mainly to the second quarter of the eighteenth century, from Aberdeen, Elgin and Banff are unusual among Scottish Hanoverian tablespoons. From these few examples it would be difficult to assert with confidence that their design is uniquely Scottish provincial or confined to these silversmiths. Perhaps among the readership similar spoons that show this type of drop are known; they may be by other makers from the towns already mentioned, from other provincial burghs or even from Edinburgh. It would be fascinating to learn of them.

#### References

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