

The Kilner Glass Companies

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Beginning with John Kilner in 1842, the Kilner family continued as owners and operators of glass plants at Yorkshire, England, for three generations. The senior Kilner brought his two oldest sons into the business in 1844, opening a plant at Wakefield – eventually bringing in the younger two sons as well. The firm purchased a factory at Thornhill Lees in 1847 and operated the two until John Kilner's death in 1857. When the senior Kilner died, there was a break in the family. John Kilner, Jr., took over the Wakefield plant, bequeathing the firm to his son, Barron, probably in 1900. The remaining brothers formed Kilner Brothers at the Thornhill Lees factory, opening a new plant at Conisbro in 1863. Eventually, their sons took over the operation. Both groups eventually became limited partnerships (or corporations), operating until the late 1930s. Several types of Kilner bottles – mostly food containers – are fairly common in the U.S.

Histories

As noted in the introduction, into two periods: the Early Period, while John Kilner, Sr., was alive and the Later Period after his death. Although the details have melted into the caldron of history, there was a split between the brothers after the death of their father – a split that confused Toulouse (1971) and Roller (1983) and seems to have been missed by everyone else. As a result, the Later Period will be divided between John Kilner & Sons and the Kilner Brothers.

The Early Period

John Kilner & Co., Castleford, Yorkshire, England (1842-1844)

Along with four other glass blowers, John Kilner built a glass plant in an abandoned pewter factory near Castleford, Yorkshire, England, in 1828. They named the factory the Black Flag. Kilner withdrew from the venture in 1842 to start his own plant (Hodkin 1953:23N; Toulouse 1971:278).

John Kilner and his partner, James William Simpson, built a glass factory on Albion St., Castleford, Yorkshire, England, in 1842. The plant made bottles embossed with “JK” and “JK & Co.” Kilner withdrew from the business in 1844 to begin glass making with his two older sons, Caleb and George (Hodkin 1953:24N; Toulouse 1971:278-279).

Containers and Marks

JK&Co (1842-1844)

Toulouse (1971:278-279) stated that the JK&Co mark was used by John Kilner & Co. from 1842 to 1844, and that was confirmed by Boow (1991:179) – although he may have just followed Toulouse. We have not found an example of the logo.

JK (1842-1847)

Toulouse (1971:278-279) noted that this mark was used by John Kilner & Co. as well as John Kilner & Sons between 1828 and 1857. The 1828 date also suggests that Toulouse felt Kilner marked his bottles with his initials during the years he was associated with the Black Flag.

Although Knittle (1927:441) claimed a J•K / B mark was used on an American Eagle flask made in Pittsburgh, this arrangement is very similar to the one described below with the CB and other JK marks. The Toulouse dates for the JK mark certainly fall into the

range when flasks of this type were made (Figures 1 & 2). This issue,

however, remains

unresolved. The reason for the “B” is currently unknown.

Boow (1991:179) placed the mark as used by John Kilner & Sons. See the Other J section for a discussion.



Figure 2 – JKB flask (McKearin and Wilson 1978:593)



Figure 1 – JKB flask (American Bottle Auction)

Knittle (1927:441) noted that the user of this mark was unknown but that the flask was from Pittsburgh! However, she failed to acknowledge how she concluded the Pittsburgh identification. Although McKearin and Wilson (1978:592-593) illustrated two examples of the flask, they, too, had no idea who the maker was. McKearin and McKearin (1949:340) provided a photo of one flask and suggested it was made at the Keene-Marlboro-Street Glass Works, Keene, New Hampshire, ca. 1815-1824. See the Keene-Marlboro-Street for a history of Keene.

The positioning of the letters is similar to some of the marks used by the John Kilner companies from England (see Kilner section for more information). Although the “B” remains unexplained, a “B” was also present in the “CB / K,” “CB / M,” and “CB / B” marks that were certainly used by the Kilners. Although an English manufacture of an American Eagle flask seems unlikely, this container has never been satisfactorily explained.

John Kilner & Sons, Wakefield, Yorkshire, England (1844-1857)

John Kilner & Sons, Thornhill Lees, Yorkshire, England (1847-1857)

When John Kilner withdrew from his Castleford partnership, he and his sons, Caleb and George, built the Calderwood Glass Works at Wakefield. Along with bottles, the factory produced paperweights and probably other products. In 1847, the Kilners purchased the old Noah Turner Flint Glass Works at Thornhill Lees (Toulouse 1971:279-281). At some point, two younger brothers, William and John, joined Caleb and George in the enterprise. Upon the death of the elder Kilner, John separated from the other three brothers, retaining the old company name at Wakefield, while the remaining siblings renamed the Thornhill Lees as the Kilner Brothers Glass Co. This distribution seems a bit odd. Since John was the youngest brother, he would be an unusual choice for his own factory.

Containers and Marks

Although we have placed the Griffin logo in this section, we have found no evidence to suggest that John Kilner & Sons used any manufacturer’s mark during this period.

Griffin drawing

Pullin (1986:20) attributed a drawing of a griffin to John Kilner at the Thornhill Lees plant from ca. 1795 to 1857. Boow (1991:179) agreed, but he may have just been following Pullin (Figure 3). This was probably used on tableware rather than bottles or jars. The Pullen initial date is of course far too early. John Kilner was born in 1792. He would have been three years only in 1795.

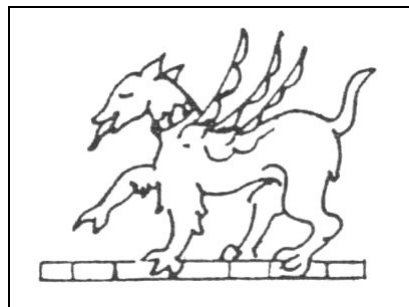


Figure 3 – Griffen (Boow 1991:179)

The Later Period

As noted above, there was an aparent split in the family in 1857 that is little understood. As explained below, this division resulted in two firms, both apparently active well into the 20th century. We will deal with the lesser known operation first

John Kilner & Sons, Wakefield, Yorkshire, England (1857-1900)

John Kilner & Sons, Ltd., Wakefield, Yorkshire, England (1900-ca. 1940)

Toulouse (1971:280-281) was very uncertain about the closing of the Calderwood/Wakefield plant. He noted that the factory remained listed much later than previously believed, including dates of 1894, 1925, and 1928. Although he was unable to resolve the conflicts, he concluded that the plant closed “about the same time that Kilner Bros., Ltd., closed in bankruptcy” – 1937. Roller (1983:182) presented the key to the answer:

No mention of a factory at Wakefield was made in “Fifty Years,” a history of the Kilner firm printed in 1894. According to Cedric Kilner (personal correspondence), John Kilner, youngest son of John Kilner (the firm founder), left the firm in 1865, and at some later date built a glass factory at Wakefield.

Although Cedric Kilner’s date is probably incorrect by almost a decade, it appears to be the only documentation for the split between the Kilner brothers. It is far more likely that the separation occurred upon the death of the senior Kilner in 1857. We will probably never know whether John Kilner bequeathed the Calderwood and Thornhill factories separately or whether the brothers divided them, but the plant name at Wakefield became Cadervale (or Calder Vale) under John Kilner, Jr.

An 1886 Billhead, however, may be instructive. It was headed “JOHN KILNER / Calder Vale Glass Works / WAKEFIELD” indicating the “& Sons” was either not used during that period or was frequently ignored. A wavy pennant around a drawn bottle indicated that the firm was “Manufacturers / of Case / Confectionery / Wines & Spirit / Ale & Porter / Sodawater Bottles / &c.” It was signed “J. Kilner” (Figure 4).

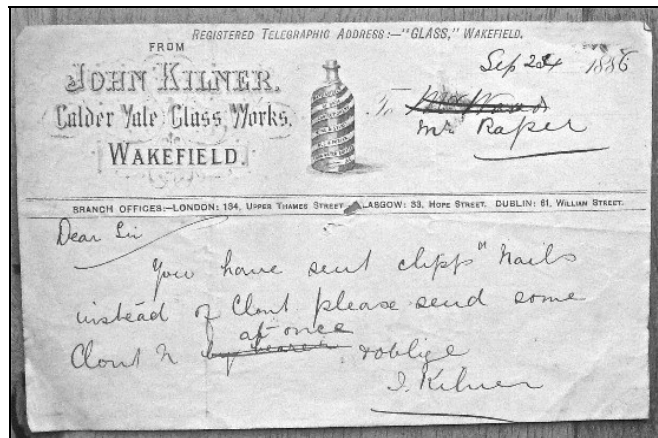


Figure 4 – 1886 billhead (Paul Bloomfield)

We found scant record of the plant, generally periodic mentions in newspapers or journals (e.g., *Chemist and Druggist* 1889:3), often listing both John Kilner & Sons and the Kilner Brothers as separate businesses. At some point, Barron Kilner, the son of John Kilner and a former rugby player for Wakefield Trinity, took over the operation – probably during the reorganization of 1900 that created John Kilner & Sons, Ltd. The avowed purpose of the new firm was to “take over the business of John Kilner & Son, Calder Vale Glass Works, Wakefield, and Farringdon Road, London” with a capital of 30,000£ and Barron Kilner as the “permanent managing director” (*Chemist and Druggist* 1900:777; Wikipedia 2016a). The London address was a sales outlet or office.

Turner (1938:255) noted that John Kilner & Sons used four machines (type unspecified) at Wakefield by 1907. The plant may have been smaller and more specialized by this time. The final listings we have found were advertisements in 1938 and 1939 Air Force lists. The ads noted that “John Kilner & Sons (1927) Ltd. Wakefield” were “Contractors to Public Authorities,” and “Carboy, Demijohn & Winchester Specialists.” The placement of the 1927 date suggests another reorganization at that time, but we have found no more references to it. The plant probably ceased operations shortly after the final ad, possibly ca. 1930

Containers and Marks

BARRON KILNER MAKER WAKEFIELD (1900-1939)

Cedric Kilner’s revelation not only accounted for the unexplained dates for Wakefield, it also explained the “BARRON KILNER” jars that are also embossed “WAKEFIELD” on the body and “KW” on the base (possibly indicating Kilner, Wakefield). These jars were likely made during the period when Barron Kilner was in charge of the plant – 1900-ca. 1939.

Creswick (1987b:77) illustrated a jar embossed “BARRON KILNER / MAKER / WAKEFIELD” that was very similar to the Kilner jars (discussed below). She dated the jar ca. 1910 (Figure 5). Roller (1983:182) had earlier described the jar and noted that the base was embossed “KW.”

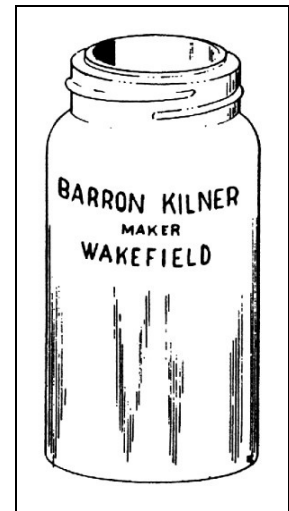


Figure 5 – Barron Kilner (Creswick 1987b:77)

J KILNER & SONS/WAKEFIELD (1857-1900)



Figure 6 – J Kilner & Sons lid (eBay)

“J KILNER & SONS / WAKEFIELD” was embossed on glass inserts for fruit jars as shown in Creswick (1987a:94). According to Creswick, these lids were interchangeable with ones embossed with a KBT monogram that she assessed as being from Kilner Brothers, Thornhill.



Figure 7 – J Kilner & Sons base (eBay)

Although we have seen KBC monograms (Kilner Brother, Conisbrough), we have not discovered an example of the

KBT monogram. These lids were placed on what were apparently product jars, some marked with the Kilner Brothers name, some with “CB / K,” “CB / M,” or “CB / C” basemarks (see the discussion on these “C” marks in the Kilner Brothers section below). This interchangeability at least apparently indicates a cooperation between the family glass factories. Although not mentioned in Creswick, this wording also appeared on at least one jar base offered on eBay (Figures 6-8).

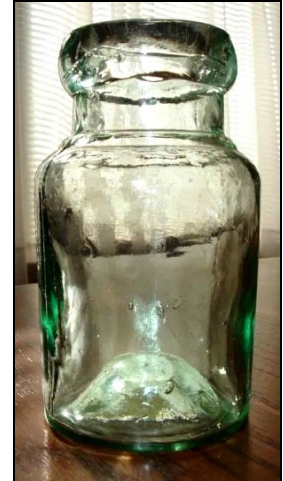


Figure 8 – Wide-mouth bottle (eBay)

J KILNER / WAKEFIELD (1857-1900)



Figure 9 – J Kilner paperweight (eBay)

Although Toulouse (279-280) suggested that “JOHN KILNER / WAKEFIELD” mark was used on paperweights from 1844 to 1847, the only actual mark we have seen on paperweights has been “J KILNER / WAKEFIELD” on the bases (Figure 9). It is possible that the “JOHN” variation exists, but we have not found an example nor have we seen “JOHN” embossed on bottles.

JOHN KILNER / WAKEFIELD (1857-1900)

As noted above, Toulouse (279-280) suggested that “JOHN KILNER / WAKEFIELD” mark was used on paperweights from 1844 to 1847. Creswick (1987a:94) also illustrated a jar with “JOHN KILNER (arch) / WAKEFIELD (inverted arch)” embossed on the heel and dated it ca. 1842-1844 (Figure 10). This mark was very likely used sometime during the 1857-1900 period.



Figure 10 – John Kilner (Creswick 1987a:94)

JK&S / W (ca. 1880-1900)

Toulouse (1971:279) claimed that the JK&S mark was used by John Kilner & Sons from 1844 to 1857, although the only examples we have found included a “W” below the “JK&S.” The Toulouse dates give rise to a question about *why* a company with a single plant would have used the “W” designation at all. Since we now know that John Kilner & Sons continued in business at Wakefield well into the 20th century, it seems far more likely that the “W” would have been introduced after the 1857 split.

Gugler (2005:26) added an interesting dimension, when she reported Australian bottles marked JK&S “plus numbers [e.g., 2615]. In the centre is a letter with a number below.” She indicated that at least one bottle was marked with the letter “W” in the center. Boow (1991:179) claimed the mark was used by John Kilner & Sons in connection with both “T” (Thornhill Lees) and “W” (Wakefield).



Figure 11 – JK&S / W

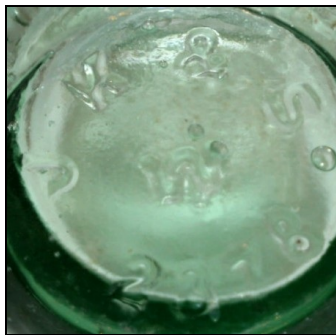


Figure 12 – JK&S / W (eBay)

Creswick (1987a:94) noted two jars embossed with “JK&S / W” basemarks. One was identical to several other jars on the page that had “CB” embossing on their bases (see a discussion of these jars below). Although Creswick dated these 1857-1873, we have suggested later dates in both cases. Although the JK&S logo certainly belonged to John Kilner’s Wakefield plant, both firms (John Kilner and Kilner

Brothers) may have made the jars.

The “JK&S / W” mark was applied to at least product containers and soda bottles sealed with Codd stoppers (Figures 11-13). According to von Mechow (2016), Hiram Codd received his first patent (No. 3,070) on November 24, 1870, to use a marble inside the bottle to seal against a grommet using the force created by the carbonation to hold the marble in place. Codd-stoppered bottles went through several stages of development, and the ones with the “JK&S / W” basemarks were later, probably not made until the 1880s. This logo, therefore, was used during the 1857-1900 period, likely ca. 1880-1900.

JK&S (1857-1900)

Urquhart (1976:128) illustrated the only example of this logo that we have found – “JK&S (arch) / 1938 (inverted arch)” on a product jar (Figure 14). Note that the four-digit numbers on Kilner products often began with “17,” “18,” or “19” – but these were model or catalog numbers rather than date codes. This mark was probably used during the 1870-1900 period – although that should be taken as the “best guess.” A more conservative range would be 1857-1900.



Figure 13 – Codd bottle (eBay)

JK / T (1847-ca. 1857)

Toulouse (1971:279) stated that the Kilners began using the JK / T mark when they opened the Thornhill Lees plant in 1844 and continued to use it until the plant closed in 1920. However, it seems out of character that the firm would have continued to use a mark associated with Thornhill Lees once John Kilner, Jr., had claimed the Wakefield plant and retained the former name at that location. We have yet to discover an example of this logo and doubt that it exists.

JK / W (1847-1857)

According to Toulouse (1971:279), the Kilners used the JK / W format (a configuration that they would continue to follow in succeeding years) during the 1844-1857 period. However, as discussed above, the firm had no need to identify individual plants prior to the opening of the factory at Thornhill Lees in 1847. As with the “JK / T” logo, we have never seen an example.

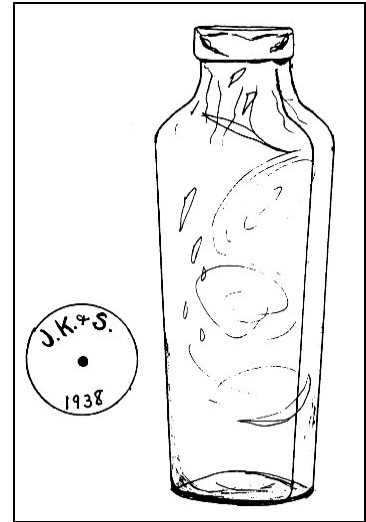


Figure 14 – JK&S (Urquhart 1976:128)

JK / WAKEFIELD

Toulouse (1971:279-280) did not give a specific date range for this mark and noted that it was only used on paperweights. We have never seen an example and have been unable to discover when the Wakefield plant made paperweights.

Kilner Brothers Glass Co., Thornhill Lees, Yorkshire, England (1857-1873)

Kilner Brothers Glass Co., Conisbrough,¹ Yorkshire, England (1863-1873)

As noted above, John Kilner, Jr., took over the Wakefield plant upon the death of his father in 1857, while his brothers, Caleb, George, and William, retained the factory at Thornhill Lees, renaming the firm as the Kilner Brothers Glass Co. Virtually all of the secondary sources stated that John remained part of the team at Thronhill Lees, and all four brothers (Caleb, George, William, and John) patented a bottle-blowing machine in 1860 – but there is no evidence that an actual model was ever built. The ongoing relationship between the brothers is very unclear.

In 1863, the Kilner Brothers established a second plant at Conisbrough, and Caleb retired two years later, leaving George and William in charge. An 1869 ad for the firm listed plants at

¹ This name is spelled many different ways in the literature. The spelling we have chosen comes from the Conisbrough website and is almost certainly the correct “modern” spelling of the name.

Thornhill Lees “near Dewsbury” and “Conisboro’ near Rotherham, Yorks” – plus a London warehouse. The plants made “Medical, Dispensing and Drug Bottles of every description, Soda Water and every variety of Mineral Water Bottles of best quality at lowest prices” (Figure 15).

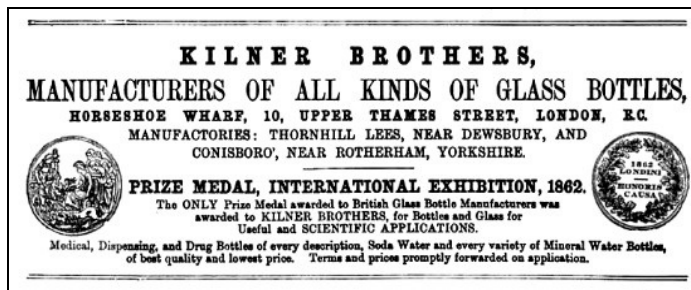


Figure 15 – 1869 ad (*Lancet* 1869)

Nearby residents took the Kilners to court in 1871 because of the coal smoke belching from the chimneys of the factory, and the brothers were forced to convert to gas furnaces – creating a hardship on the company and costing many workers their jobs. The Kilners established a tank furnace in 1873 and became a limited partnership at that time (Brothers Fiver [2016]; Hodkin 1953:24N, 28N; Toulouse 1971:302-304; Turner 1938:251, 256; Wikipedia 2016a).

Containers and Marks

Although Toulouse (1971:302-303) claimed that the Kilner Brothers used several logos that began with “KB” initials, we have found none – with the exception of the KBC monogram and “KB L^D” (discussed in the next section). The ramification of this discovery is that either the Kilners used no marks during the 1857-1873 period or that some other logo was in force. We discuss the “CB” marks in this section even though they may have extended into the “Ltd.” period.

KBC monogram (ca. 1860-1873)

Toulouse (1971:302) noted that the “KBG” mark was used by the Kilners from 1857-1937, and Jones (1951:[12]) illustrated the logo with the words “Age?? Who knows?” Gugler (2005:26) reported a KBG monogram embossed on the base of Australian bottles and also attributed the mark to the Kilners. It is likely that this was a misidentification of the KBC monogram. Boow (1991:179) illustrated a KBC monogram that he claimed was used by John Kilner & Sons. Although he failed to speculate, the “C” could equal Conisbrough, or the letter could be a “G” (Glass). Boow did not specify the type of glass upon which the logo was used.

Urquhart (1976:128) illustrated a jar base embossed with the monogram (Figure 16). The examples we have seen on eBay were on soda, mineral, and sauce bottles

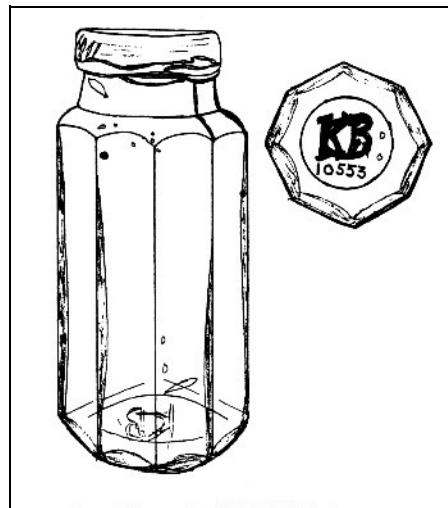


Figure 16 – KBC monogram (Urquhart 1976:128)



Figure 17 – KBC monogram (eBay)

(Figures 17 &18). Creswick (1987:94) noted a KBT monogram on wide-mouth bottle lids, but she did not illustrate the logo, and we have been unable to find examples. Could these be KBC monograms? She also identified lids embossed “J. KILNER & SONS / WAKEFIELD” that were identical to the ones with KBT monograms that were used interchangeably on the same product jars (also see the J KILNER & SONS logo). The bottles we have seen with

these monograms really appear to belong in this era. Our best estimate for this monogram is ca. 1860-1873.

KBGCo monogram

Toulouse (1971:303) ascribed two variations of KBGCo monograms, used on fruit jars, to the Kilner Brothers and dated the mark to 1870. However, the initials “K” and “G” were larger and bolder than the other letters, leading Creswick (1987a:143) to suggest that the monogram was used by the Kern-Gorsuch Bottle Co. Identification and evidence from other sources support Creswick. See the section on the Kearns Glass Companies for more information.



Figure 18 – Soda bottle (eBay)

KBGCo

Toulouse (1971:302) dated this mark from 1857 to 1873, prior to the limited partnership. Boow (1991:179) noted this mark as being used by John Kilner & Sons. We have not seen an example and question the existence of this logo.

KB / T

Although Toulouse (1971:302) attributed this logo to the Kilner Brothers at Thornhill Lees and dated it 1857-1920, we have not discovered the “KB” initials on any bottles or jars without a Limited abbreviation.

KB / C

Toulouse (1971:303) dated this mark from 1863 to 1937. Although the “C” should indicate the Conisbrough plant, we have not seen a single example with or without the Limited designation.

CB / M (1857-ca.1900)

Creswick (1987aL94) illustrated a wide-mouth bottle or jar embossed “CB / M” on the base (Figure 19). She noted that lids for the container (and other similar ones – see below) were embossed either “J KILNER & SONS / WAKEFIELD” or with a KBT monogram. Although we have seen examples of the “J KILNER” lids, we have yet to find one with the monogram.

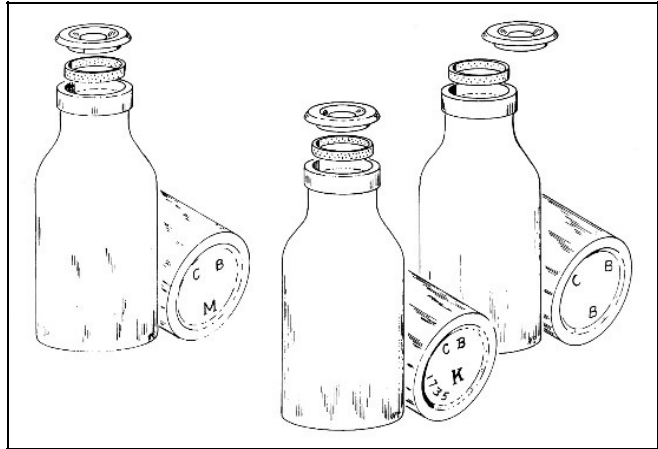


Figure 19 – CB wide-mouth bottles (Creswick 1987aL94)

Creswick assigned these jars to the Kilner firms (all the way from John Kilner & Co. in 1842 to Kilner Brothers, Ltd., in 1937, apparently based on the lids. She noted the color of each jar as “light green” – and the

examples we have seen on eBay auctions were a green color that we have typically associated with English bottle glass. We thus concur with Creswick about the manufacturer likely being either John Kilner & Sons or Kilner Brothers – possibly both – although we suggest a date range of 1857 to ca. 1900, even though the early date is more likely in the 1870s.

We recorded a bottle at the 2004 bottle show in Albuquerque, New Mexico, embossed on the base with “M / CB / 587 / 7 / 7 40” (with the last two along the curvature of the bottom of the base). This is probably an engraver’s error of the Kilner Bros. mark. The bottle had a distinct Owens scar. Toulouse (1971:304) noted that “in 1900 they began the use of the American machine by Charles E. Blue. By 1907 they had four machines at Wakefield . . . and others at Thornhill Lees and Conisborough. In 1920 they installed an Owens AR 10-arm machine at Conisborough.”

The “CB” may be an abbreviation for **ConisBrough** (emphasis added), thus setting an initial date of 1863. Along with Conisbrough (location), the “C” could equal Calderwood (plant name) or Caleb (one of the sons/brothers). We are at a loss for the meanings of the other letters in this section.

C•B / K (1857-ca.1900)

This mark was recorded by Herskovitz (1978:8), who noted five examples on beer bottles at Fort Bowie (1863-1894). These were embossed on the bases of the bottles and accompanied by other codes (2, 1263, and 4175), although he did not go into further detail. He did not attempt to assign a company to the marks. Urquhart (1976:132) illustrated a bottle with a basemark of “C•B / K” with no numbers (Figure 20). These dots (also called mamelons) were common on British bottle and jar bases.

Creswick (1987a:94) illustrated a product jar embossed “CB / K (both horizontal) / 1735 (inverted arch)” that she ascribed to all of the Kilner factories (see Figure 19). An eBay auction showed a similar jar, except that the number was 1492, and the finish (as described above) was more rounded (Figures 21 & 22).

Creswick (1987a:94) also illustrated a jar embossed “KILNER BROS. MAKERS LONDON” on the side (discussed below under the “KILNER BROS.” heading). One base was embossed CB / K 2667 or other mold numbers. This was the same configuration as the jar with “1735” discussed above. It is possible that Herskovitz mistook green fruit jar bases for beer bottle bases, although the Kilners may have also used the mark on products other than jars.

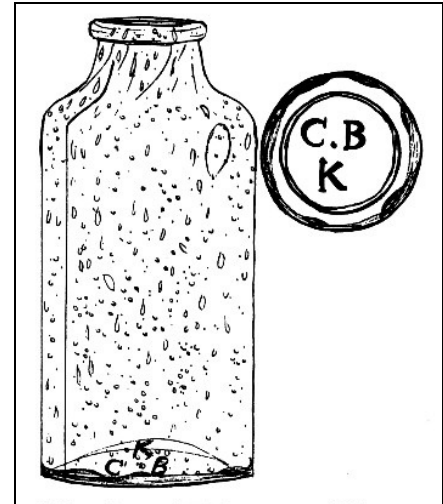


Figure 20 – CB•K (Urquhart 1976:132)



Figure 21 – CB•K (eBay)

This indicates that Creswick made the correct identification of Kilner Bros. as the user of the CB mark. Although Creswick did not specify mouth-blown production for these jars, it is highly probable. The jars were almost certainly discontinued in favor of machine-made products fairly soon after 1900. It is possible that jars without numbers were made earlier than those with the digits.

Wilson and Caperton (1994:63) listed a mark of CBK / 1735 on the base of a “Chow-Chow/English Pickles” bottle in their “Pickle and preserve ware, inks, and miscellaneous bottles” category. They described the finish as “Deep Lip (hand-finished).” Wilson and Caperton (1994:70) also recorded all beer bottle advertising in *The Western Brewer* between 1883 and 1890 as well as samples from issues between 1878 and 1882. Kilner Brothers advertised beer bottles from October 1884 to mid-1885.



Figure 22 – CB jar (eBay)

CB / • / B (1857-ca.1900)

Creswick (1987a:94) also illustrated the “CB / B” basemark (see Figure 19). In this variation, the top two letters were in an arch, with the lower “B” below the center. An eBay photo showed a dot in the center of the base (Figure 23). The finish on at least one bottle was crudely applied (Figure 24).

C•B / W (1857-ca.1900)



Figure 23 – CB / • / B (eBay)

ca.1900.

We discovered a green glass lid embossed “C•B / W” at the National Park Service Western Archaeological and Conservation Center collections – excavated at the Tucson Urban Renewal study (Figure 25). We do not know whether the lid would fit the Creswick jars, but it appears to be the correct size. These may have been used by the Kilner Brothers or John Kilner & Sons (or both) during the period between 1857 and



Figure 24 – CB bottle (eBay)

“Z” / CB (1857-ca.1900)



Figure 25 – CB / W (NPSWACC)

product jars, but have no information on them at present.” Although the finish is different from the other jars with “CB” marks, these may have also been made by the Kilners.

Creswick (1987a:27) illustrated a mouth-blown jar with a continuous-thread finish embossed “4 / Z / CB” on the base – where the “Z” had a vertical center post rather than the typically slanted one (Figure 26). One of these jars was offered on an eBay auction. Although she neglected to speculate on the manufacturer or dates, she added: “Several variations of this jar have been reported to us. We believe these are

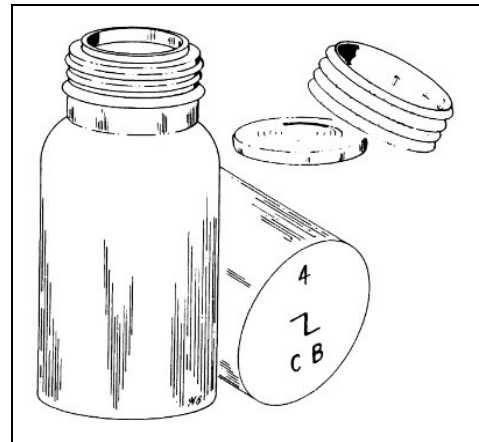


Figure 26 – “Z” / CB (Creswick 1987a:27)

C•B / 3 (1857-ca.1900)

An eBay auction offered this variation of the mark. Creswick (1987a:94) did not include this jar, and the finish of the jar was more rounded than the ones illustrated by her.

C•B (1857-ca.1900)

The only example of a base embossed only with “C•B” and no numbers was illustrated by Urquhart (1976:130). We have not yet discovered an actual bottle with the mark (Figure 27).

Kilner Brothers Glass Co., Ltd., Thornhill Lees, Yorkshire, England (1873-1922)
Kilner Brothers Glass Co., Ltd., Conisbrough,² Yorkshire, England (1873-1937)

Brothers Five ([2016]) noted that George and William Kilner brought their sons – Caleb, Tom, George, William and John Caleb – into the business in 1874. This was probably off by a year – the firm reorganized as the Kilner Brothers Glass Co., Ltd., in 1873, a more logical time for the inclusion of the third generation (Toulouse 1971:302). Most websites agree with the 1873 date for the reorganization, but their path probably leads back to Toulouse. Although we have selected the Toulouse date here, we have not discovered a primary source for the reorganization – even though it certainly happened.

The Conisbrough plant was reported in 1875 to include a four-pot furnace as well as a tank furnace, the latter being used for medicinal bottles, while the larger Thornhill Lees factory had only tanks. Weekly production for the two plants was reported as a quarter of a million bottles (*Crockery and Glass Journal* 1875). In 1880, the firm advertised itself as winners of medals at London (1862), Paris (1875), Philadelphia (1876), and Paris again (1878) (Figure 28).

In 1894, the Thornhill Lees plant had six furnaces, and the one at Conisbrough had two. The Kilners adopted the Blue Machine, an American invention, in 1900 to make jars and had four machines in its plants by 1907. Some factory at Thornhill Lees was using the British machine patented by Joshua Horne in 1901. This may well have been the Kilners, but that is uncertain. By 1914, the two Kilner plants were reportedly using “about forty machines” (type not stated), accounting for about half their production – the remainder doubtless still made by hand (Turner 1938:254-255). The brothers reportedly introduced the Owens machine at Thornhill Lees in 1920 with one on order for Conisbrough (Toulouse 1971:302-304; Turner 1938:244-255).

Roller (1983:181), however, noted that the Owens machines were installed at Conisbrough in 1920 and did not mention the Thornhill Lees plant. Roller and Toulouse were

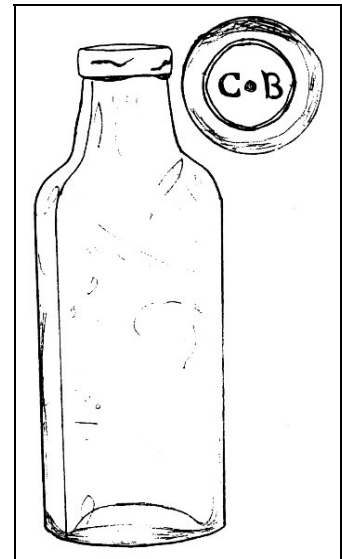


Figure 27 – C•B (Urquhart 1976:130)



Figure 28 – 1880 ad (*British Trade Journal* 1880)

² This name is spelled many different ways in the literature. The spelling we have chosen comes from the Conisbrough website and is almost certainly the correct “modern” spelling of the name.

both in touch with the same Kilner descendant, although each seems to have come away from the interview with different information.

To complicate the issue, on November 15, 1907, the Owens European Bottle Machine Co. of Toledo presented an agreement to the Verband der Flaschenfabriken G.m.b.H. (generally referred to as the “E.V.”), giving the E.V. the power to grant Owens licenses in Europe. The agreement was signed on November 28. One of the fifteen signatories was Caleb Kilner – the one from the third generation (Biram 1958:21N-28N). Unfortunately, Biram did not specify which companies actually used the machines, although ten were in use in Great Britain between 1907 and 1914. It seems strange that Kilner signed the Owens agreement in 1907 but did not receive a machine until 1920.

Caleb Kilner’s obituary (Lindley 2004) described the early Conisbrough factory:

The Conisbrough branch was started with two small ‘Pot’ Shops, each of eight holes and employed 70 people in all. Today [1920] there are six shops with 64 holes, employing about 500 people, many of whom [with their] families are housed by the firm. The Conisbrough branch flourished from the onset, but it involved tremendously hard work. Many small employers in those days worked side by side with there [*sic*] men, encouraging them by there [*sic*] example.

Entour (2007) provided further information about the Conisbrough plant:

The firm . . . flourished until eventually over 400 people were employed there on the 11 acre site; producing beer and mineral water bottles with glass stoppers, as well as containers for pharmaceuticals, and later the ‘Kilner’ fruit bottling jar. Women were employed as well as men in producing the glass marbles for the bottle stoppers, in packing and also washing departments. . . . Many skilled workers were brought into the area from Thornhill when in 1873 the Siemens gas furnace was completed and the gas produced locally could be utilised. More than 300,000 bottles were produced each year.

The *Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review* (1922:1716) announced that the Thornhill Lees plant had closed on October 28, 1922, because of “the general depression which has characterised the industry for the last two or three years and in face of increasingly severe competition both at home and abroad.” The Conisbrough factory was between the railway and the river and was accessed via a bridge (still called “Kilner Bridge”). In 1919, the plant was waiting to install an Owens AR machine and had another one on order. The factory closed in 1936 (Conisbrough Castle 2007), and the company declared bankruptcy in 1937. United Glass Bottle Co. Mfg., Ltd. obtained the patent rights to the popular Kilner Jar (Meigh 1960:10; Toulouse 1971:304; Wikipedia 2016b).

Containers and Marks

The Kilners installed Blue machines by 1900 and reportedly installed at least one Owens machine in 1920. Wide-mouth bottles and jars with machine characteristics, therefore, cannot have been made prior to 1900. The date for narrow-mouth ware would be later than that. Most narrow-neck ware in the United States was made by Owens machines until ca. 1910, although that date cannot be *precisely* determined with our current sources – and it is less certain for England. Narrow-mouth bottles were certainly machine made by 1920, with the installation of the Owens machines.

Toulouse (1971:302-303) apparently missed the logos from this period, although he could have mislabeled “KBL” (that he dated 1873-1937) for one of the “Limited” marks. Jones (1961:[12]) showed “KBL^{TD} (arch) / T (at bottom)” from the Thornhill plant; “K.B.L^{TD} (arch) / C (center) / 132 (inverted arch)” and “KBL^{TD} (arch) / C (center) / 10352 (inverted arch)” from Conisbrough (the 132 version is machine made); and two examples of the KBC monogram, one with 10553; the other with no number.

KBL or KBLT or KBLtd or KBL^D (ca. 1895-1937)

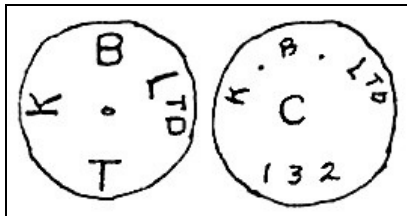


Figure 29 – KBLtd (Jones 1961:[12])

Toulouse (1971:302) dated the “KBL” mark from 1873 to 1937, based on the beginning of the limited partnership in 1873. A blob-top soda bottle reported by Andie Rigby (Rigby 2007) was marked “KBLT” – a

slight difference from the Toulouse recording. A reply by Harry Pristis noted a “KBLT” monogram on the side of a bottle.

The mark was also recorded by an eBay seller as “KBLtd,” and Jones (1961:[12]) illustrated an example (Figure 29). Gugler (2005:26) noted that “KBLtd” was found in an arch on bases of



Figure 31 – KBLd (eBay)

Australian bottles. Boow (1991:179) included the mark as “KBLtd / C” from the Conisbrough, Yorkshire works of the Kilner Bros., 1873-1937. Urquhart (1976:176) illustrated a product jar embossed “K.B.L^{TD} (arch) / C / 365 (both horizontal)” and another embossed “K.B.L^{TD} (arch) / T” in the same place (Figure 30).

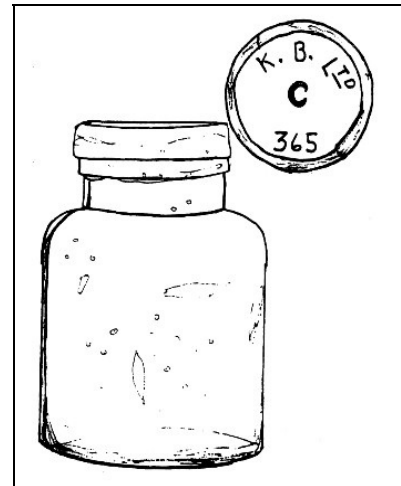


Figure 30 – KBLtd (Urquhart 1976:176)

We have seen three examples of this logo, and all have used the “KBL^D” format. One apparent soda bottle base was embossed “K.B.L^D. (arch) / 12 (horizontal) / 12346 (inverted

arch).” The “L^D” was followed by an unclear digit or letter that seemed to be another “L^D.” The other two marks were on the bases of mineral water bottles (Figure 31). One was embossed simply “KB L^D (arch) / T” – the other “KB L^D (arch) / T / 202 / 1 (all horizontal)” (Figure 32). All of these had crown finishes, limiting them to a post-1892 manufacture (probably no earlier than 1895) – and all but the last one were mouth blown. The Jones reports of “KB L^{TD}” were probably a misreading of “KB L^D” logos. Similarly, the Toulouse “KBL” probably missed the superscript “D.”



Figure 32 – Mineral Water bottle (eBay)

**KILNER BROTHERS / MAKER / LONDON
KILNER BROS / MAKER / THORNHILL LEES
KILNER BROS / MAKER / CONISBORO**

Creswick (1987a:94) illustrated a jar embossed “KILNER BROS. (slight arch) / MAKERS / LONDON (both horizontal)” on the heel and “CB / K / 2667” on the base (Figure 33). She noted that the jars also were found with a “KBT monogram” lid indicating the Thornhill Lees plant. She dated the jar ca. 1857-1873. Roller (1983:181) stated that the KBT monogram was embossed on lids, not on the jars, themselves. Gugler (2005:25) also noted the mark in “two lines on the back of the heel” on Australian bottles.

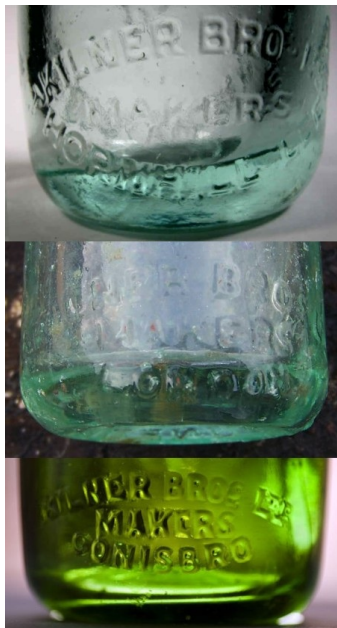


Figure 34 – Kilner Bros. Ltd. (eBay)

Sellers on eBay offered several Kilner Brothers bottles (Figure 34). Two of these were Codd-stoppered bottles embossed above the reverse heels with:

“KILNER BRO^S L^{TD} (arch) / MAKERS (horizontal) / THORNHILL LEES (inverted arch)”

“KILNER BRO^S L^{TD} (arch) / MAKERS (horizontal) / LONDON (inverted arch)”

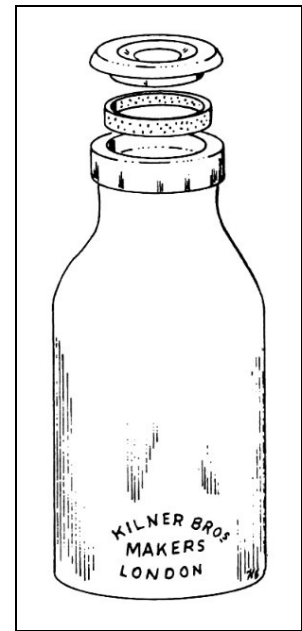


Figure 33 – Kilner Bros. (Creswick 1987a:94)

Another was apparently a liquor bottle with an internal-thread finish also embossed above the reverse heel with:

“KILNER BRO^S L^{TD} (arch) / MAKERS (horizontal) / CONISBRO (inverted arch)”



Figure 35 – Kilner Bros. (eBay)

The final eBay example was a poison bottle embossed:

“KILNER BRO^S MAKERS” around heel with “MADE IN (arch) / 2181 (horizontal) / ENGLAND (inverted arch)” on the base (Figure 35).

Bottles from Thornhill Lees could only be dated 1873-1922, but all others were likely made between 1873 and 1937. The poison bottle appeared to have been machine made, but all the others seemed to have been mouth blown.

Since we have dealt with marks both with and without “LTD,” this may be a conflation of two time periods. However, the bottles appear to have been made during the same era, so we have classified them all as being used by the “Limited” firm.

KILNER BROS DEWSBURY & LONDON

Creswick (1987a:94) also illustrated a jar embossed with “melon ribs” and “N&C / 1258” on the base (Figure 36). The jar had a glass lid embossed “KILNER BROS DEWSBURY & LONDON.” Dewsbury was actually the location of the Thornhill Lees plant, and London was a distribution point for Kilner Brothers’ goods. It is interesting that a jar, apparently made by Nuttal & Co. used a lid made by the Kilners – although this probably indicates that the lid and jar were mismatched. Creswick did not speculate on the date, but the inclusion of the jar in her initial book indicates a pre-1920 manufacture.

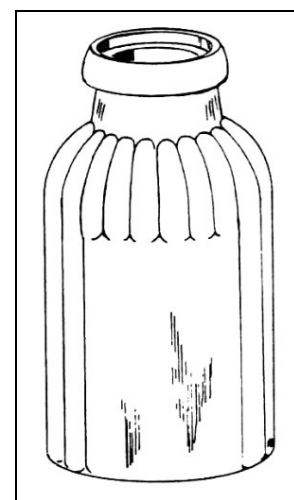


Figure 36 – Kilner Bros. Dewsbury & London (Creswick 1987b:77)

The KILNER Jar

The “Kilner” jars were made in several styles over a long period of time by both the Kilners and by United Glass Bottle Mfg., Ltd., after the Kilners transferred the rights upon the company’s failure (Roller 1983:182). All Kilner jars were made with continuous-thread finishes and topped by glass inserts held in place by metal screw bands. The jars were made from ca. 1910 to the present (2016). The beginning date may have been chosen as the approximate time that the factories had wide-mouth machines; however, as noted above, the firm had adopted American Blue machines in 1900 – probably a better beginning date. Roller (1983:181) illustrated an ad for the Kilner Jar in June 2, 1919, edition of the *Pottery*

Gazette and Glass Trade Review (Figure 37). Although Toulouse (1969:173) only noted a single style of the jar, Roller (1983:181-182; 2011:279-280) described six variations. Creswick (1987b:77-78) illustrated most of the jars. We have elected to follow the Roller chronology.

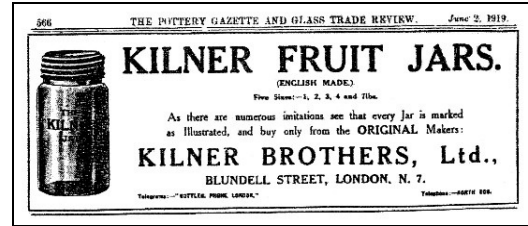


Figure 37 – 1919 ad (Roller 1983:181)

1. THE “KILNER” FRUIT JAR (ca. 1910s)

Roller (1983:181; 2011:279) noted this configuration and dated the jar “c. late 1910s.” He noted that lids were embossed either “ORIGINAL KILNER JAR LID” or “ENGLISH MADE” on top of the lid (Figure 38). Note that the word “KILNER,” on the side of the jar, was embossed in quotation marks. Both Roller and Creswick (1987b:77) dated the jar ca. 1910 – although these could have been made as early as 1900 on Blue machines.



Figure 38 – Original Kilner Jar lid (eBay)

2. THE “KILNER” JAR (ca. 1910-1925)

Toulouse (1969:173) and Roller (1983:181[2011:279]) both discussed “THE KILNER JAR” (Figure 39). Toulouse dated it ca. 1910-1925, but Roller was less confident, placing the range at ca. “late 1910s-1920s.” Roller stated that a large “K” was embossed on the base and showed an ad from June 2, 1919, with an illustration of the jar. Roller also noted that some of the jars exhibited Owens machine scars, indicating a manufacture after the installation of machines in 1920.

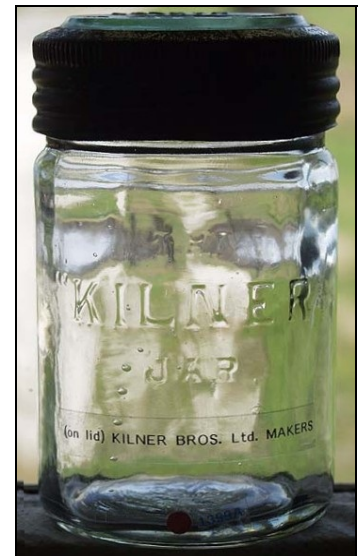


Figure 39 – The Kilner Jar (eBay)



Figure 40 – Kilner Bros. lid (eBay)

Toulouse noted that the lid was embossed “ORIGINAL KILNER JAR LID, and Roller added that other lids embossed “ENGLISH MADE” or “KILNER BRO^S LT^D MAKERS” were also found on the jars (Figure 40). Roller also noted that a variation was ‘THE “KILNER” JAR’ “in large (2-3/4" x 4") letters rectangular plate, green.”

2a. THE KILNER JAR from Conisbrough, Dewsbury, and London (ca. 1920)

Creswick (1987b:77) illustrated another “KILNER” jar, dated ca. 1920s. This was similar to the earlier jar but more “squat.” It was embossed on the front body “THE / “KILNER” / JAR” with “MAKERS / KILNER BROTHERS LTD / CONISBORO, DEWSBURY / AND LONDON” on the lower body/heel (Figures 41). Roller (1983:182; 2011:280) also discussed the jar, noting that it was embossed “1920” at the reverse heel. He noted that the jar was made ca. 1920 “at their Conisboro and Dewsbury plants.” Dewsbury was the location of the Thornhill Lees factory.

The accompanying glass lid was embossed “KILNER BROS LTD (arch) / MAKERS (inverted arch).” Creswick noted that the base was embossed “K.B.Ld. 406., although Roller claimed that the basal embossing was “KBL^D.”

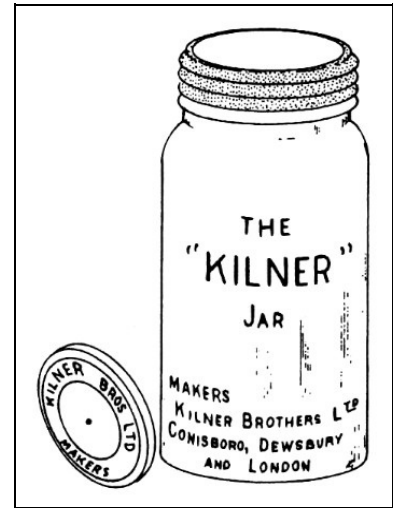


Figure 41 – Kilner Bros. jar (Creswick 1987b:77)

3. THE “KILNER” JAR REG^D

Creswick (1987b:78) illustrated a jar marked with ‘THE / “KILNER” / JAR / REG^D.’ on the front body, with the word “KILNER” in quotation marks (Figures 42). She dated the jar ca. 1910. Roller (1983:182; 2011:280), however, dated the jar ca. 1920s to 1937 by the Kilners and 1937 to 1948 by United Glass Bottle Mfg, Ltd. Roller also discussed and illustrated a variation with “THE” offset to the left and “JAR” offset to the right.

4. THE “KILNER” JAR IMPROVED REG^D

Yet another jar was embossed ‘THE / “KILNER” / JAR / IMPROVED / REG^D.’ on the front body. Creswick (1987b:78) dated this one ca. 1930s (Figures 43). Roller (1983:182; 2011:279) dated the jar 1948-1969 by United Glass Bottle Mfg., Ltd. He also noted that the base was embossed “KBL^D.” The lids were embossed “IMPROVED / “KILNER” / JAR” (Figure 44).

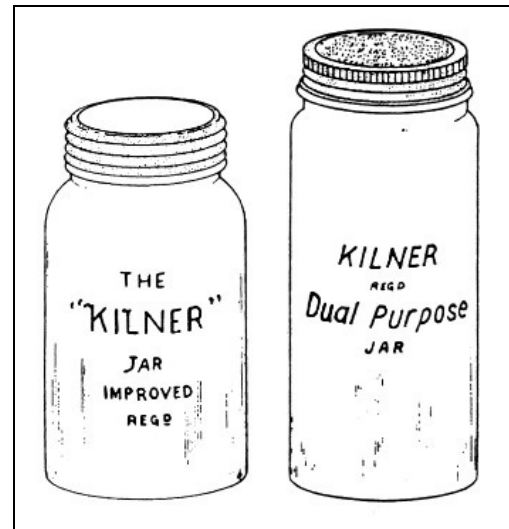


Figure 42 – Kilner Bros. jars (Creswick 1987b:78)

5. KILNER REGD DUAL PURPOSE JAR

Creswick (1987b:78) illustrated a final jar embossed “KILNER / REGD / DUAL PURPOSE / JAR” that she dated ca. 1930s (see Figure 42). The sealing disk for the jar was embossed “USE ONLY ONCE FOR PRESERVING (arch) / SEALING DISC KILNER / REGD. / DUAL PURPOSE / JAR (all horizontal) / LEVER WITH COIN TO BREAK SEAL (inverted (arch).” As usual, Roller (1983:182; 2011:280) proposed a different date range, this time, 1969-1978, by United Glass Containers, Ltd.

6. KILNER / EST. 1842 ®

Kilner jars remain popular in England and elsewhere in 2016. In 2008, the Kilner Jar website (Denyer 2008) sold rubber sealing rings for the “Original type Kilner Jar” (many of which were *not* embossed with the Kilner name), sealing rings for the “Improved type Kilner Jar,” rings for the “1960’s type Kilner Jar,” and sealing disks for the “Dual Purpose type Kilner Jar.” The availability of the sealing rings allows the various jars to continue to be reused.

The trade mark (No. 574,434) for the “KILNER” name (without the quotation marks), shown in Creswick (1987b:156), was registered in the United States on April 27, 1951, by United Glass Bottle Mfg. Ltd. The “applicant claimed ownership of British Registration No. 516,931, dated October 16, 1930. This suggests that United obtained the rights to the jar in 1930, six years prior to the closing of Kilner Brothers. It would be instructive to find the original British trade mark or patent on the Kilner jars. If it occurred in 1910, that would explain the Toulouse and Creswick initial dates for the jars.

Roller (1983:303-304) placed a postscript on the Kilner jars with two jars embossed respectively “Ravenhead KILNER Jar” and “Ravenhead KILNER REGD Jar.” These were made by the Ravenhead plant of United Glass Containers from ca. 1977 to at least 1983. Ravenhead Glass, founded in 1850 by Frances Dixon and John Merson, Ravenhead became part of United Glass Bottle Mfg., Ltd. in 1913. The plant



Figure 43 – Kilner Jar Improved (eBay)



Figure 44 – Improved Kilner lid (eBay)



Figure 45 – Ravenhead Kilner (eBay)

produced a style of jar with the Ravenhead brand name that is considered a Kilner jar (Figure 45). Ravenhead went into receivership, and the factory was razed in 2001 (Wikipedia 2016c).

In 2016, several variations of the jar remain for sale. Some are embossed “KILNER (in an arched box) / EST. 1842 ® (horizontal); others have “KILNER ® (stenciled in an arch) / EST. 1842 / The / Original / & / THE BEST (all horizontal with the final two words stenciled in a tail extending from below the ampersand)” in red Applied Color Lettering on the front (Figures 46).



Figure 46 – Current Kilner jars (Rayware 2016)

Discussion and Conclusions

For the most part, the histories of the various Kilner firms are reasonably complete. Of course, the chronicles can – and should – be refined by future researchers. However, most of the important dates are in place. One thing lacking is a genealogy of the Kilner family. Various sources (noted in the text above) always placed Caleb and John as the two older brothers, William and John, Jr., as the younger ones – usually naming John last. A Kilner descendent also identified John, Jr., as the youngest. If John, Jr., were the eldest, the concept of primogeniture would have placed him in control of one factory. The reason for the older brothers sharing, while the younger one received his own factory still needs explaining.

There is no agreement between members of the Bottle Research Group about the meaning of the term “mamelon.” A mamelon is a large round protrusion extending from the center of the base of a mouth-blown bottle. The protrusions discussed in this instance were small dots in the center of the base. These dots were very common on British bottles made during the 1870-1900 period, although those dates are not well researched. However, these marks are *not* definitive and may or may not appear on any given bottle. For example, we have two eBay photos of wide-mouth bottle bases embossed “CG / B.” One has a dot in the center; the other does not (Figure 47)..



Figure 47 – CB / B variations (eBay)

Most of the logos appear to be identified and dated as closely as current data and methods will allow. Tightening up the date ranges is another job for future researchers. Two marks, however, remain less certain than we would like. One is the “CB” series, most

with raised dots or mamelons in the centers of the bases. The color and style of the bottles almost certainly guarantees that they were produced in England, and Creswick (1987a:94) noted a “CB” basemark on a jar otherwise labeled with the Kilner Brothers name as well as several wide-mouth bottles with “CB” basemarks that were sealed with lids that identified either Kilner Brothers or John Kilner & Sons. While this is a very positive identification, we have found no satisfactory explanation for the meanings of the letters: CB / K, CB / B, CB / M, CB / W or the CB / 3 and “Z” CB logos. We have speculated on some meanings. C could indicate Consibrough, Caleb, or Calderwood. K, of course, could equal Kilner, and W could be Wakefield. But why would “CB” be combined – ConisBrough? Other letters – the second B, M, or the odd “Z” logo – make no intuitive sense.

The second issue concerns what may have been the first container marked by the Kilner family. This was a flask embossed “J•K / B” in an oval below an American eagle. There is no question whatsoever that the design of this flask was American. Similar flasks were common in the U.S. during the first half of the 19th century. However, the premiere flask researchers, McKearin & Wilson (1978:593) were unable to resolve the meaning of the letters, settling on a possible Keen-Marlboro-Street glass house manufacture, probably based on the “K.” We have suggested an affiliation with Kilner based on the similarity of this logo with later marks – but we note that this hypothesis is currently untestable. Hopefully, future research will uncork the closure to this effervescence.

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