

Edgar Breffit & Co.

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Edgar Breffit & Co. was an English factory, producing bottles from 1844 to 1921. Although the firm was absorbed into the United Glass Bottle combine in 1913, it retained its own identity until 1921. Breffit made the Lea & Perrins bottles used in the United States until ca. 1877 but produced the ones used in Canada until ca. 1920. Other Breffit bottles also found their way to the American shores.

History

Edgar Breffit & Co., Castleford, Yorkshire, England (1844-1913)

A firm, styled Winterbottom & Jessop, purchased four acres of land at Ryebread Hill from Lord Houghton in 1834 and erected the Ryebread Glass Works. Edgar Breffit acquired the business in 1844 and renamed it Breffit's Glass Works. By 1868,¹ E. Breffit & Co. had become the proprietors of the Aire and Calder Glass Bottle Works (Toulouse 1971:79; von Mechow 2015). Toulouse (1971:79) stated that "the official name of the factory itself became the Aire and Calder Glass Bottle Works, thus fixing its position near the junction of these two rivers and the Aire Canal, only a couple of miles northwest of Castleford." The sources are unusually vague about this transition. Since we can find no earlier information about Aire & Calder, it is likely that Breffit renamed the former Ryebread factory – but this is logical conjecture rather than historical fact.

In 1873, the firm advertised under both the Breffit and Aire & Calder names. By 1884, Edgar Breffit & Co. had become a limited liability company (Ltd. or Ld.). The plant was operating five machines by 1907. Breffit became part of United Glass Bottle Mfg. Co., Ltd., on

¹ Since Lea & Perrin bottles, embossed with the ACBCo mark used by Aire & Calder, were found on the SS Republic, sunk in 1865 (Gerth 2006), it seems likely that Breffit had acquired the factory by that time. Unfortunately, we have been unable to discover any history of the plant prior to the Breffit period.

March 31, 1913, although the firm retained its own identity until 1921 (Lunn 1981:8; RLG 2004; Turner 1938:255; von Mechow 2015). Cannington, Shaw & Co., Nuttal & Co., Alfred Alexander & Co., and Robert Candlish & Son, Ltd. combined in 1913 to form the United Glass Bottle Manufacturers, Ltd., and Breffit joined later that year. The firm continues to be Britain's largest glass producer (see the section on United Glass Bottle in the "U" Volume for more information).

Edgar Breffit & Co., Ferrybridge, Yorkshire, England (1864-ca. 1883)

About 1845, the Yorkshire Glass Bottle Co. opened its factory at Ferrybridge, making blackglass bottles. The proprietor – a Mr. Thatcher – vacated the plant ca. 1854 and moved to Blaydon. Greenbow & Co. leased the plant at some point prior to 1859, but that firm, too, was gone by 1864 (Spencer 2011).

Edgar Breffit took over the lease in 1864 as an auxiliary to his Castleford factory. William Bagley operated the plant for Breffit. The factory had a single furnace with four pots, working two shops in shifts on each pot. During the 1860s, Breffit installed a second, slightly smaller furnace, virtually doubling the capacity of the plant. Bagley resigned in 1871 and opened his own glass factory at Knottingly. Breffit closed the plant in December 1883 or January 1884 (Spencer 2011).

Containers and Marks

ACBCo (at least 1865-ca. 1920)

Under Breffit & Co., the Aire & Calder Bottle Co. made Lea & Perrins sauce bottles from at least 1865 until ca. 1920 and may have made the bottles as early as 1840. John Duncan's Sons, the U.S. bottler of Lea & Perrins received permission from the parent company in London to produce and bottle the sauce in the U.S. in 1875. Shortly thereafter (probably ca. 1877), Duncan commissioned bottles made with its initials on the base. Since Duncan had severed the English umbilical cord, it is virtually certain that the bottles were made in the U.S., although we have found no evidence to identify the manufacturer; therefore, U.S. bottles with the ACBCo mark would have been made prior to 1880 (Figure 1). Aire & Calder continued to

manufacture Canadian Lea & Perrins bottles – and, almost certainly, those used in Britain – until ca. 1920 (Berge 1968:189; Gerth 2006; Lunn 1981:8, 14; Rinker [1968]:27; Rock 2001:611). See the Other A section and/or Lea & Perrins for more discussion.



Figure 2 – Aire & Calder stopper (Museum Victoria 2013)

In our treatment of the ACBCo logo in the Other A section, we expressed some debate about whether the glass house was actually called the Aire & Calder Bottle Co. (versus, for example, Aire & Calder Glass Bottle Co.). Current information on the internet – including several bottles, lids, and stoppers embossed “AIRE & CALDER BOTTLE CO.” – clearly demonstrates that the factory used that name (Figure 2). For

example, the February 27, 1875, edition of the *British Mail* called the firm “Aire & Calder Bottle Co.” There is virtually no question at this point that Aire & Calder, operated by Breffit, was the maker of the Lea & Perrins bottles with the ACBCo mark.

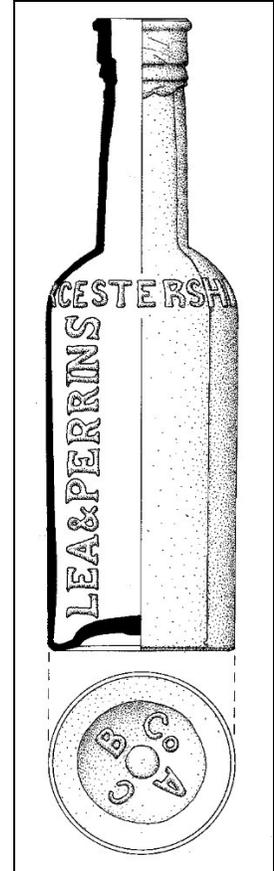


Figure 1 – Lea & Perrins bottle (Schulz 2006:63)

B&Co



Figure 3 – B&Co basemark

Toulouse (1971:77, 79) claimed that the B&Co mark could have been used by Breffit & Co.; however, it was more likely a Bagley & Co. logo. We have found few examples of this mark – only one for “B&C^o” (with two lines under the “o”) (Figure 3). More common is “B&CO.LD.” on bases

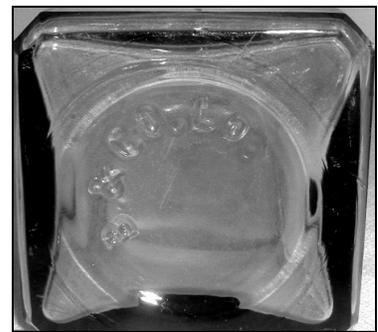


Figure 4 – B&CoLD basemark (eBay)

of square gin bottles with applied finishes (Figure 4), jars and other bottles. Assuming that B&CO is the logo of Bagley & Co., the mark *without* “LD” was used between 1890 and 1898,

while the “LD” version was made from 1898 to 1962. See the section on Bagley & Co. for more information.

BREFFITS or BREFFITS & Co (poss. 1860s-ca. 1890)

According to Toulouse (1971:79), this mark was used by Breffits & Co. The company was in business under the Breffit name from ca. 1844 to 1921. We have seen “BREFFETS & C^o” on the bases of English beer bottles with applied finishes on eBay auctions (Figure 5). Our only examples were very crudely made, probably prior to 1890. Tod von Mechow (2011) described four beer bottles used by Canadian brewers that were embossed “BREFFIT’S (arch) / MAKERS (horizontal) / LONDON (inverted arch)” on their bases.²



Figure 5 – Breffits & Co. basemark (eBay)

Each was mouth blown into a two-leaf mold, but von Mechow failed to note the finish manufacturing characteristics. This mark may only have been used by the firm on beer bottles during the ca. 1860-1890 period.

EB

At this point, we only have recorded the initials “EB” on a single light blue bottle base (Figure 6). The color is reminiscent of other British bottles, so the mark may have been used by Edgar Breffit & Co. during the 1880s. Toulouse (1971:175) reported the “EB&Co” mark as being used by Breffit during that time period, but this is the only report linking the firm with the logo.



Figure 6 – EB basemark

E (after 1900) **B**

We have observed this mark on a Horlick’s Malted Milk jar base (Figure 7). This may be another Edward Breffit mark; Horlick’s was definitely marketed in London, England. William and James Horlick emigrated to the U.S. and created Horlick’s Malted Milk in 1883. James

² London refers to the location of the main sales office.

returned to London in 1890 to set up an import house for the product. Sales were so good that James built a factory at Slough in 1908. In 1921, the company split into the American business and the rest of the world, served by the British factory. The British company acquired the American holdings in 1945 (*Wikipedia* 2007). The base we recorded had a valve scar, suggesting a manufacture after ca. 1900. It is also possible that the E-over-B mark was some sort of factory code.



Figure 7 – Unusual EB mark (Fort Bliss collection)

EB&Co (ca. 1880s)

According to Toulouse (1971:175) this mark was used by Edgar Breffit & Co. during the 1880s. Cooper (2001:A 2-4) identified a liquor bottle embossed “E.B.&Co.” on the base – found at Skagway, Alaska. Boow (1991:175) noted that the mark was used at the Aire & Calder Glass Bottle Co., Castleford, Yorkshire, England, by Breffit & Co. From 1836 to 1913. Although Toulouse is our only source to independently identify these initials with Breffit, they fit the name, and we have not found any other glass house with the same initials. However, the logo was likely used prior to the “Limited” period that began ca. 1884.

EB&CoL^D (1884-ca. 1920)



Figure 8 – EB&CoL^D basemark (eBay)

Breffit used at least one mark after the firm became “limited.” We have a single bottle embossed “EB&CoL^D” (arch)” with an illegible five-digit number in an inverted arch below it, although others have been featured on eBay. The bottle is amber in color and was apparently a beer bottle. The finish was a one-part “blob” that was applied. Similar round bottles on eBay also had five digits, e.g., 13150 (Figures 8 & 9).



Figure 9 – Amber bottle (eBay)

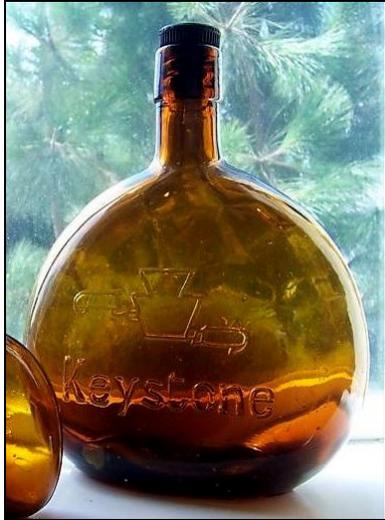


Figure 10 – Amber flask (eBay)

A second example was offered on eBay. This was an amber flask embossed with a keystone symbol, the words “TRADE” and “MARK,” and “KEYSTONE” below (Figure 10). The base was embossed “EB&CoL^D (arch) / Q / 10393 (inverted arch)” (Figure 11). The flask was machine made and had an internal threaded finish (Figure 12).

This mark would have been used by Breffit during the “limited” period, between 1884 and 1921. Machine-made bottles would have been 1907 or later. The flask was *not* made by an Owens machine. The lack of a typical machine scar probably indicated a manufacture by an Ashley machine.

E. BREFFIT & C^o

Sellers on eBay have also offered bottles embossed “E. BREFFIT & C^o MAKERS LONDON” around the heels of internal-stoppered soda bottles (Figures 13 & 14). These were probably made between ca. 1870s and ca. 1900.



Figure 13 – E. Breffit & Co. heelmark (eBay)



Figure 11 – EB&CoL^D basemark on flask (eBay)



Figure 12 – Internal thread finish (eBay)



Figure 14 – Soda bottle (eBay)

EFB (ca. 1880s *or* ca. 1904-1919)

According to Toulouse (1971:175), EFB mark was used by Edgar F. Breffit & Co.. However, the Elk Flint Bottle Co. was a possible maker – based only on initials. We have not seen an actual example of the mark, nor found any historical reference that Breffit used his middle initial as part of the company name, so the El Flint Bottle Co. may be a better choice. However, this could be a misreading of the ESB monogram, used by E.S. Burnham (see the Other E section for a discussion of Burnham and his monogram). Toulouse relied on many collectors for information, virtually all of whom corresponded by handwritten letters. Either of those variables could have led to a mark that does not exist.

EFB&Co (ca. 1880s)

According to Toulouse (1971:175), this was one of the marks used by Edgar Breffit & Co. during the 1880s. As noted above, the inclusion of the “F” initial makes Edgar Breffit and unlikely choice, but the ampersand (&) does not fit with the Elk Flint Bottle Co. This may well have been a misunderstanding or mis-recording of the mark.

Discussion and Conclusions

A serious look at the marks that may have been used by Breffit breeds as much confusion as conclusions. The ACBCo logo on the bases of Lea & Perrin bottles is well researched and can almost certainly be ascribed to Aire & Calder. All marks with the actual “Breffit” name may also be clearly ascribed to the firm.

The two variations of “EB” described above may very well have been used by Breffit. Both seem to be on British bottles and fit the time period. It is also highly likely EB&Co initials found on bottles with British characteristics were used by Breffit. However, we noted bottles with an EFB monogram in a diamond embossed on the bases for several years before we discovered that the logo was used by E.S. Burnham, a packing house that bottle beef products. The “S” in the monogram is highly stylized and resembles an “F.”

We have not discovered any examples of the “EFB” initials. It is entirely possible that Toulouse either mis-read the “ESB” monogram or accepted a report from someone else. Both EFB and EFB&Co logos may be fictitious.

The second issue is dating. Toulouse suggested ca. 1880s for all the “E” marks, probably based on manufacturing characteristics. It may be significant that none of these marks includes “L^D” Since Breffit was a Limited firm by 1884, all the marks that do not include “L^D” probably predate that year.

Finally, bottles embossed “B&Co” were more likely manufactured by Bagley & Co. See the Bagley & Co. section for more information on our choice.

Future research should concentrate on finding a source for a larger sample of possible Breffit marks. In addition, future researchers need to develop a better history to deal with numerous unanswered questions. For example, if Breffit had been in his 20s when he purchased the Ryebread plant in 1844, he would have been at least 100 when the firm joined the United Glass Bottle combine. We have found no record of his death or a successor.

Although we have discovered the important transitions for dating bottles, our sources include few details. More precise dating for Breffit changes will help tighten up date ranges for marks. We also need *much* more information on Breffit’s machine use. Finally, we need to discover whether Breffit continued to operate the old factory, when he acquired the Aire & Calder plant. If two factories existed simultaneously, it could explain some of the variance in the marks.

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Last updated 4/26/2015