



Above: the Britannia standard mark of Charles Overing.

The life of the silversmith Charles Overing has been the subject of considerable confusion. This short essay is an attempt to resolve some of that confusion by summarising his life and his family relationships.

He was a younger son of Thomas Overing, circa 1629 to 1678, ironmonger of St. Martin's, Leicester. Thomas Overing was an alderman of Leicester and Mayor of the borough in 1668/9. Baptised in 1664, Charles was apprenticed to John Cruttall, a Freeman of the Goldsmiths' Company, (and a silversmith by trade), on 13th October 1680. As Dr. David Mitchell has pointed out¹, he must have received his freedom in October 1687, but it was not recorded, 'leading to a 'second' freedom in 1692. By that date, he was evidently married because the christening of a child, Thomas, son of Charles and Elizabeth Overing, on 25th September 1692 appears in the registers of St. Vedast, Foster Lane, and the Poll tax of that year assessed Charles Overing, silversmith, in the Precinct of Saddlers' Hall and Gutter Lane, with a wife and a child. Dr. Mitchell notes: a spoon of 1687/8, a tankard of 1688/9, a porringer of 1692/3 and a mug of 1695/6, with the sterling mark presumed to be that of Charles Overing, 'CO' with a pellet below in a shaped punch.

Elizabeth Overing, Charles's wife, must have died very shortly after the birth of Thomas and the subsequent marriage of Charles Overing to Rebecca Hanwell [daughter of Abraham Hanwell, yeoman of Dunstable, Bedfordshire], took place at St. James's Duke's Place, London on 16th January 1692/3. About the same time Charles moved from Gutter lane precinct to the nearby parish of St. John Zacchary². At least two children were born from the marriage to Rebecca – a daughter, Rebecca, on the 11th of February 1697/8, and another daughter, Ann, on 5th January 1699/1700. The burial of Rebecca Overing is registered in St.

John Zachary on the 14th of November 1700 and, although the marriage has not been traced, Charles Overing married again - three children are recorded as born to Charles and 'Avis' Overing in the parish of St. John Zachary: John, baptised 15/03/1701/2; Avis, baptised 26/03/1703/4 and buried 26/03/1703/4; Charles baptised 29/10/1704 and, *probably*, buried on May 27th, 1708.³

Overing took on several apprentices. The first, on 7th April 1693, James Middleton, son of Thomas Middleton, Gent. of Stafford. Then on the 28th of April 1699, Richard Bailey, son of Anthony Bailey, yeoman of Hampton near Highworth in Wiltshire. Bailey was 'turned over' to John Gibbons in 1704. Thereafter there were three more apprentices: on the 21st of October 1700 William Wills, son of Anthony Wills of the Inner Temple, Gent., deceased; on the 24th of June 1702 William Hodson, son of William Hodson, Gent., deceased of Ash in Kent; and on the 12th of September 1704 Phillip Lane, son of Phillip Lane, Taylor of 'Queen Hith', London.

In 1697, following the new act which introduced the Britannia standard⁴ of silver alloy to replace the previous sterling standard, Overing registered a new mark at the Goldsmiths' Company: 'OV' in gothic letters within a scrollwork cartouche. He remained in the same premises, probably Cary Lane, until 1710. However, at the end of 1706, Overing was declared bankrupt.⁵ He continued to work as a silversmith but was also given financial support by the Goldsmiths' Company: in a note in the Admiralty archives⁶, of October and November 1718, Joseph Marlow and John Barton, Wardens of the Goldsmith's Company declare Charles Overing was made bankrupt on 31 January 1706 and '*has since been given small sums to keep his family alive*'. Overing had been security for 'Mr. Essex' the purser of H.M.S. Worcester, but 'is now bankrupt, so asks *that the prosecution be stopped*'. The reason for the prosecution is, at present, unknown, but, clearly, Overing had had business interests outside silversmithing.

About 1711, Overing married for a fourth time. This marriage is recorded in '*The Register Book of Marriages performed in the Rules of the Fleet*'⁷ but the date is smudged. '*Charles Overing St. Ollives silver street working silversmith widower and Elinn. [or perhaps Ellinr.] Grant ditto widow*'. Three children were christened in the parish of St. Olave's: Hester, baptised 16th December 1711 and buried 18th January 1711/12; Mary, baptised August 17th, 1715 [daughter of '*Charles Ovaring and Ellinor his wife*']; Charles baptised 30th June 1717 and buried '*in the Church ground July 20th 1718.*' Charles himself died the following year, buried '*in the Church ground August 21st 1719.*' A mug of 1718 with Overing's mark must have been amongst the last pieces made in his workshop.⁸

David Mitchell states that by 1718 Overing had been employed as '*Assistant in Firing*' at the Assay Office and his eldest son, Thomas, as '*Drawer*'. Thomas had been made free of the Goldsmiths' Company by patrimony in 1716⁹. Charles's other surviving son, John, was apprenticed to John East of the Goldsmiths' Company in September 1715 and turned over to his father in February 1717, before being made free of the company by patrimony in 1721 after his father's death. He registered a mark with the Goldsmiths' Company as a largeworker, giving his address as Noble Street, in 1725.

Of the children of Thomas Overing, ironmonger and alderman of Leicester, Charles was not the only son apprenticed to a London livery company and this is part explanation for the confusion surrounding Charles Overing's life. An elder son, Thomas, was apprenticed to the Wax Chandlers' Company in 1679 and was made free of that company in March 1686/7. This

Thomas may have been the father of Thomas Overing, a very successful scalemaker, who died in 1732. Thomas, Overing, scalemaker, was free of the Blacksmiths' Company and a Thomas Overing, son of Thomas, chandler of Whitechapel, deceased, was apprenticed to John Quart of the Blacksmiths' Company in 1709. '*On the 20th [February 1731/2], died suddenly of an Apoplectic Fit Mr. Thomas Overing, the most famous Scale-maker in the World, at his house in St. Bartholomew-lane behind the Royal-Exchange*'.¹⁰ Several children from the marriage of Thomas and Mary Overing were baptised between 1719 and 1731 in the parishes of St. Olave Silver Street and, later, St. Bartholomew by the Exchange.

Another son of Thomas, James, baptised in 1668 in Leicester, was apprenticed on the 2nd of January 1684, to Thomas Paynott of the Turners' Company. Although free of the Turners' Company, it is probable that his trade was that of a silversmith or silver case maker and that it was he who registered an incuse maker's mark with the Goldsmiths' Company in 1717, giving his address as Cary Lane. He married Hester Edmunds on the 8th of February 1690/1 at St. James's Duke's Place, when his brother, Charles, was sponsor. At least eight children were born from the marriage: Charles, baptised on the 27th January 1694/5 in St. Bride Fleet street; John ['*Jno.*'] baptised 28th April 1698 in St. Ann and St. Agnes with St. John Zachary, who was buried on the 5th May the same year; '*Samll.*' baptised 19th January 1699/1700, St. Ann and St. Agnes, and buried 21st January the same year; Hester, baptised 2nd January 1700/01 St. John Zachary; James, baptised 12th February 1701/2 St. John Zachary; William, baptised 27th August 1704, St. John Zachary; Ann baptised 7th July 1706, St. Ann and St. Agnes; another William, baptised 21st August St. John Zachary 1708 and buried 22nd December the same year.

James Overing paid Land tax for premises close to those of Charles in St. John Zachary from at least 1701. He died in 1727, his burial entered in the parish register of St. John Zachary on the 24th of September. '*Widow Overing*' is listed in the Land tax assessments for the following year. Neither of his sons outlived their father by many years but both followed him into the trade of a goldsmith. Charles was apprenticed to his father on the 1st of March 1709/10 and became free of the Turners' Company. He married Mrs. Elizabeth Ludlam of St. Dunstan Stepney at St. Michael Bassishaw on the 4th of August 1719. This marriage has been incorrectly supposed to be a marriage of Charles Overing, the silversmith, his uncle¹¹. The marriage licence¹² reads as follows:

'3rd of August 1719. Which day appeared personally Charles Overing of the p'ish of St. John Zachary London Goldsmith aged above Twenty four yeares, and a Batchelor and alledged that he intendeth to marry with Mrs. Elizabeth Ludlam of the p'ish of St. Dunstan Stepney in the County of Middx. aged Twenty four yeares, a spinster.....'

Charles junior had at least two children from the marriage with Elizabeth Ludlam: Elizabeth, baptised at St. Mary Abchurch on 4th August 1726, and Charles, mentioned in his will [who in turn also became a freeman of the Turners' Company]. A Charles Overing was buried in the parish of St. Mary Islington on August 31st, 1731, and the will of Charles ['*Caroli*'] was proved on 9th September the same year¹³. In the will he mentions four houses in Woods Close, Clerkenwell, which formed part of his late father's estate and to which he had title. He wished to transfer any right to those properties to his wife, Elizabeth, whilst she lived, and thereafter to his son, Charles. Richard Evans, Will. Sutton and Sarah Morse witnessed the will.

James Overing, the other nephew of Charles Overing, was buried in St. Ann and St. Agnes 'in ye Vault' on 30th October 1730. His will was proved in the Archdeaconry Court of London, by his mother, Hester. It was written on 21st October 1730 and witnessed by Gawen Nash, John Kemp and Jos. Umfrivile. In the will he describes himself as 'Goldsmith' and leaves £20 to his beloved brother, Charles. All the rest of his estate he left to his mother, Hester Overing, 'Widow'.

Between 1723 and 1725 Charles Overing, junior, the nephew of Charles, silversmith, had been paying Land tax on premises in Fish Street Hill [third precinct]. The City of London Sessions papers of 1723 record that Charles and James Overing took the Oath of Allegiance in accordance with the Act of 09 George I c.24¹⁴ Charles is described as a 'Goldsmith of Fish Street Hill'.

Soon after the death of James and Charles, their sister, Hester, married John Kemp, citizen and goldsmith: 'Marryed in St. Ann Blackfryers and St. Andrew by ye Wardrobe', 28th December 1732, 'John Kemp of St. Vedast alias Foster lane, Bachlr. and Hester Overing of ye same parish Spinster'. John Kemp was made a Liveryman of the Goldsmiths in 1736 and appointed to the Court in 1745. He died in 1753. Three children were born between 1735 and 1739 but all died in infancy. Hester Kemp, his widow, died in 1785.

¹ 'Silversmiths in Elizabethan and Stuart London: Their Marks and Their Lives', published 2017.

² Dr. Mitchell points out that the entry in the land tax register is for a 'Charles Overton' which is assumed to be an error for *Overing*.

³ William McMurray, 1925, 'The Records of Two City Parishes....', p.451 made an error in assuming that the Charles Overing buried in 1708 was Charles Overing, the silversmith, not his son.

⁴ 95.84% silver.

⁵ See the 'London Gazette', December 1706, issue 4285.

⁶ National Archives, ADM 106/721/121-122.

⁷ Nat. Archives PRO RG7/24

⁸ Advertised by Bassetlaw Antiques.com.

⁹ See: David Mitchell

¹⁰ See: 'The London Gazette'.

¹¹ This error appears in Arthur Grimwade, 'London Goldsmiths, 1697-1837. Their Marks and Lives. From the original registers at Goldsmiths' Hall & other sources' and is repeated by Dr. Mitchell.

¹² Vicar General's Marriage Allegations.

¹³ Nat. Archives Prob11/646/321

¹⁴ 'Being an Act requiring all persons being Papists in Scotland and all persons in Great Britain refusing or neglecting to take the oaths to register their names and real estates'. London Metropolitan Archives 17th September 1723. CLA/047/LR/02/04/028/001/0613 and 009/0791.