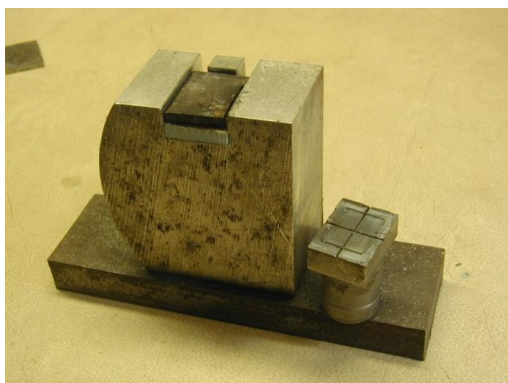


Brass Stamping - an Experiment – Martin Hebenstriet

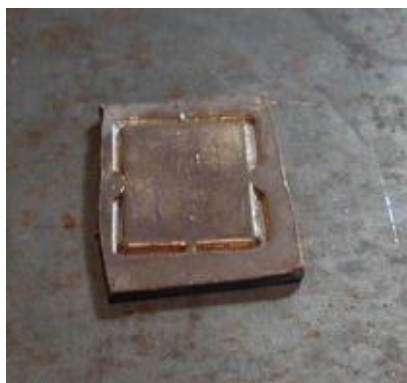
In 2002 when I was building an LMS Stanier tender chassis I was not too pleased with the exterior look of the axle box castings. These were as cast with just a cross on them and to me did not look the part and maybe could be improved. Some of the castings advertised by our suppliers are described as hot brass stampings and this got me thinking that maybe it could be done at home.

Being a mould tool maker I decided to have a go and made up a tool to give me the correct shape for the axle box cover. A top tool was machined up to fit my small flypress and when completed I made up a rough bottom tool to hold the brass blank.

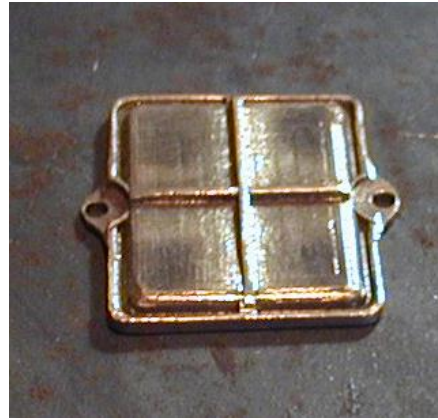
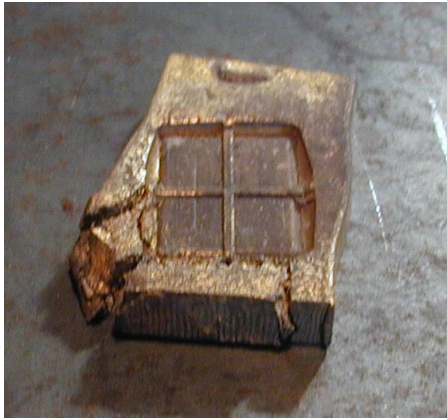


To check the look of it I took an impression in plasticine, after taking an impression I was pleased with the result. I now had the tools to make an improved more true to scale axle box cover; all I needed now was to find out how it was done.

I started by cutting out a piece of 16g brass sheet, set the tool up in my small fly press and heated up the blank to red heat, put it in the bottom tool swung the fly press and opened it up to get my prize. When I took it out it was a great disappointment as it hadn't fully shaped due to the brass being too hard.



I remembered when machining my Tich horn blocks that these machined with a free cutting swarf and maybe the material should be free cutting brass (or screw rod as it is sometimes known). A piece was cut off and heated up to a bright red almost yellow, put into the tool and stamped, this time the result was better but it seemed that I may have heated it up too much but the detail was very encouraging. It was so good that the milling marks had come out clearly



After playing with the heating process and settling on a cherry red I finally achieved the result that I was looking for and machined up the first stamping. This came out looking just like the cover should look like. I was pleased with this result and went on to make up all six. As can be seen from the last picture the covers stand up well to close-up photography.

