

# John Ingleby's Top Five useful Engraving Tips

John Ingleby from Ballcraft (Engravers) Ltd in the UK has worked in the industry for over 25 years. Here he shares some of his knowledge and experience.

### Number 1 - I call this tip '**Pins not Nails**'.

When I come to engrave a shield, I occasionally find it practically impossible to get the record shield off of the shield itself. The reason is that when the shields are assembled grab nails are usually used (see photograph 1). Sometimes aluminium record shields are used which can be very easily damaged. There are times when you find nails still in the wood shield, leaving a torn hole through the aluminium record shield itself. Steel and stronger record shields can also break when you remove them.



Photograph 1

When my company makes shields we use pins which we cut to approximately 10mm in length. When fitting, we pre-drill approximately 5mm down and using a hammer we fix the record shield onto the wood. This means that they can then be removed easily and therefore the record shield doesn't have to be replaced.

These days people want to use their shields for as long as possible, so when all the record shields are full, rather than buying a new one we encourage them to take the oldest record shield off and replace it with a new one. We then place this onto the rear of the shield, therefore retaining the history of the event.

**Number 2 – Cleaning.** When our customers return the shields for their annual presentations we clean every one. Well people notice this! We tell them we have cleaned the shield at no extra charge, but what we don't tell them is that it only takes approximately 1 minute to clean and make them look like new. How do we do this? Well we use a combination of two products: one

called Mr S and the other is a Micro cloth - you would not believe how this combination acts like magic! On the new nickel cups and salvers this same process removes all the old silver polish making the items look like new.

**Number 3 – Black aluminium plates.** I don't know how many of you engravers out there use black plates which engrave silver instead of just gold or silver plates? But we use quite a large percentage of these as they look smart with glass trophies. We use them on black base products and with silver products too. One of the main reasons for this is because you can read the engraving at quite a distance (see photograph 2).



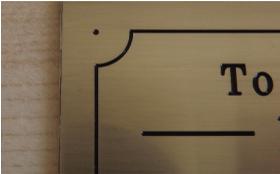
Photograph 2

**Number 4 -** We still use quite a lot of brass plates for benches and for our clients who require them for crematoriums. When I set the text out on the plate sometimes it's very difficult to find where to split the client wording. This tip I call '**Softening the Space**', what do I mean? Well if you look at photograph number 4 you will see that after the word '**To**' I have put the remaining text on a separate line. This then leaves a large space to the right and also to the left and thus by adding a line either side of the word softens the space. On the second plate (photograph 3), I have used the two lines again which I think personally makes the plate look more balanced.

## Tips & Tricks



*Photograph 3*



*Photograph 4*

Note that when I set the plate out on the computer I have added four very small circles which

show on photographs 3 and 4 as black dots. These will be used later for marking the fixings. When we fill the engraved plate with black paint we also fill these circles to make it easier to see when we drill them.

**Number 5 – Polishing.** When we polish the above brass we use wet and dry emery paper. First we use 1,200 grit and then we use 1,500 grit and finally a rubber polishing block. All of this takes place using water and a small amount of washing up liquid. On the final polishing of the plate we use a mixture of brass polish and car polish (the one in a red bottle). The mixture is in a ratio of a third brass to 2/3 car polish. After polishing for approximately 2 minutes we wash the plate and all the black gunk washes off easily (because of the emulsions in the car polish), leaving a beautifully polished brass finish.

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