

# Paul Wildash – for the love of Pewter

*Paul Wildash took up his Freedom (by patrimony) of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers when he was 21 and became Master of the Company in 2005, the third in a line of Wildash Masters. He comes from a retailing background and hoped that this would give him a good understanding of the complexities of running a design competition. He retired as Chairman of Pewter Live this year after three years, handing over the baton to Liveryman Richard Parsons, a current Steward of the Company.*

*A. What is your interest in pewter?*

A. My interest borders on the obsessive having been so involved with Pewter Live over the last 15 years. I started (at Buckingham College) as assistant judge to Ken Targett – now there's a man who really knows about pewter. I am still a judge at Bucks. We have a very good relationship and usually collect at least one prize at Pewter Live every year.

*Q. When and why did you become Chairman of Pewter Live?*

A. The committee were looking for a Chairman in 2004 and I persuaded Richard Wildash to accept the role which he did with the proviso that I would take over after my year as Master. At the time I was unsure whether I actually wanted to become Chairman. However, it has given me great pleasure albeit with plenty of sleepless nights.

*Q. What changes have taken place during your tenure?*

A. One huge change was the departure of Diane Smith who did so much for the competition as our PR adviser and organiser. Eleanor Mason Brown then joined the Company as Events and Marketing Co-ordinator and there followed a period of adjustment as it was necessary to cut our budget dramatically without affecting the competition. I am sure Eleanor will agree that it was a difficult start with us both learning on the job.

*A. What was the biggest change you made?*

A. This has to be the shop. Initially the shop worked well but as the years went by it was becoming more and more labour intensive and a lot of this work fell to the Hall staff and volunteers. This had to change and it was my aim that stalls should reflect the most contemporary pewter designers in

## PEWTER LIVE 2010



MIKE JOHNSON, CHAIRMAN, PEWTER PROMOTION COMMITTEE; RICHARD BOGGIS ROLFE, RENTER WARDEN; AND PAUL WILDASH, CHAIRMAN PEWTER LIVE 2008-2010



PAUL WILDASH AND DAVID SHILLING



WITH THE COMPETITION WINNERS

## Paul Wildash - For the love of pewter (cont.)



2010: Paul Wildash, David Shilling, Sebastian Conran, Lord Linley, Eleanor Mason Brown and the Master, Nicholas Bonham

- A. the UK. My goal was not to have any flasks or tankards on show here.

This is not to say that these items don't have a place because indeed they do but not, as I saw it, as part of a contemporary design competition. I felt we had to show visitors what can be done nowadays with pewter and new ways of display. For example the A E Williams stand shows off the most beautiful traditional pewter but in a thoroughly modern way.

This is balanced against the likes of fine designers Glover & Smith and Fleur Grenier who have both achieved great results working solely in pewter and I am sure the Committee will continue to support the craft area of pewter design wherever it is able.

- Q. *And your biggest disappointment?*

- A. Well, it would be unfair to single out one item although I have been

disappointed by the lack of progress of the Open Competition. Started in 2005, although it has moved forward, it is fair to say that it is not attracting as many new designers as we had hoped. This year with the Olympic theme we had high hopes of receiving a good number of entries and although there were some excellent designs, we should have attracted more. We will need to work harder in this area.

- Q. *Anything else?*

- A. I could go on but Past Chairmen can get rather boring so I would just like to say that it has been a privilege and honour to Chair such a flagship event. We have many challenges to face but I am delighted to hand over to Richard Parsons, an excellent pair of hands with a great knowledge of design and retailing.

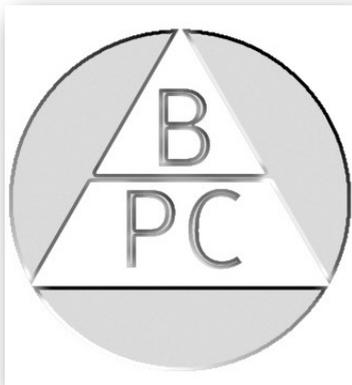
# Around the Trade Associations

## European Pewter Union

The 2010 Annual Meeting was held in London in May. There were representatives from the Netherlands, Italy and the UK, with apologies from Portugal and Belgium. The Meeting focused on the new and proposed regulations for the composition of, and leeching from, articles made of Tin (and Tin based alloys) within the European Union.

A continued programme of testing and political communication was discussed and developed. The meeting also looked at the current state of the pewter trade throughout Europe.

The Worshipful Company of Pewterers hosted a dinner at Pewterers' Hall on the Friday.



ABPC Chairman, Liveryman Richard Abdy, commented "*Whilst it was disappointing not to meet with more delegates, the meeting did prove to be a worthwhile one by focussing minds on the pending challenge of new regulations from Brussels.*"

The 2011 Annual EPU meeting is scheduled to take place in Sirmione, Lake Garda, Italy, over the weekend of May 13/14 2011. Anybody wishing to attend (or wanting to learn more about it) please contact [Cathy Steele](#) at the ABPC.

## Association of British Pewter Craftsmen

The Council meeting in July was held in Birmingham, at the Giftware Association HQ, courtesy of Liveryman, Isabel Martinson. One of the principal items on the agenda was the proposed new regulations affecting metals, including tin and therefore pewter.

Also at the meeting Sam Williams of A E Williams was appointed as the ABPC's representative for any matters concerning the Worshipful Company's Pewter Live event and competition. Sam commented: "*I am delighted to be given this task. If anybody has any thoughts or*



*comments on Pewter Live with regard to the pewter trade and its involvement please let [me](#) know."*

The next ABPC Council Meeting will be Wednesday October 27<sup>th</sup> in Sheffield; anybody wishing to attend please contact [Cathy Steele](#).

For the rest of 2010 and 2011 the meetings and the activity of the Association will continue to concentrate on how the industry should react to these new regulations. This will continue to be in partnership with the ITRI and with the support of testing at Imperial College. Please see the update on the current position, to be published in the ABPC Newsletter.

[Association of British Pewter Craftsmen](#)

[European Pewter Union](#)

---

## Product Innovation Page

We intend to feature, in future numbers of this Magazine, a series of articles looking at manufacturers' pewter product launches and innovations. The idea is to examine what is happening in the real world of pewter, see what is working well for industry, and publicise it.

We would like news of what is happening, whether in retail or in manufacturing, perhaps even of what was a good idea but somehow has not worked. If you would like to submit details of an innovative product or a recent launch, or any other successful or unsuccessful pewter venture ...

If you have any ideas for articles we could publish, or want to write a piece, reflective or otherwise ...

If you have any stories ...

... [please let us know](#).

[Home](#)

# Kirstie Allsop - and our Serenity Vase

9am: the fleet of three land Cruisers, all full to the brim with Lights, Microphones, TV screens and very large Cameras, pull up and with no more space left on the car park that's when we finally knew Channel 4 had arrived. It was Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> of April and Channel 4 had arranged to come to A E Williams to film an episode for a second series of Kirstie Allsop's Television Series "*Kirstie's Homemade Home*".

Within minutes the Factory had been converted into a "Camera Friendly" environment. Tables cleared, floors mopped, machines dusted, a task that I must say is much more daunting than it sounds; those who work in a factory will understand exactly what I mean. Lights had been set up in various places, noise had to be at a minimum and, most importantly, Kirstie herself was yet to arrive.

10..30am: Kirstie arrived. Our task was to teach her how to make one of our Serenity Vases using a variety of manufacturing techniques that a skilled Pewtersmith would have taken years of working in the trade to learn. Some people would say it sounds simple, others, including ourselves would strongly disagree. We were only allowed to offer Kirstie verbal advice; we could not intervene during production as she had to be able to complete the *Serenity Vase* by herself.



Kirstie's Serenity Vase

Like all manufacturing companies we had to brief Kirstie on Health and Safety, and the usual do's and don'ts. Then she had to change from her trademark flowing dress into one of our blue work overalls. Add safety goggles, safety gloves and safety boots, and we were finally ready to get Kirstie into action.

11am: we started by showing Kirstie our impressive mould store and I then took her into the casting shop where Michael showed her how to cast a vase using a centrifuge. As one would expect the first vase was not of sufficient quality to use. However after several attempts, and several reminders from the producer that "We haven't got all day", Kirstie managed to produce a vase good enough to use in the next process.



Kirstie Allsop pours her metal

12:30pm : our *Serenity Vase* is made up of two halves, a base and two handles, which have to be soldered together, using a micro flame and a strip of solder. It fell to John to show Kirstie how to solder her vase. As those who have soldered may know, starting off on an intricate vase such as this one is not ideal. However after an hour, Kirstie impressed us by successfully joining the two halves together and even adding the handles. After the base had been stamped with our touch marks and of course Kirstie's initials, Kirstie then also added the base to the vase.

1:15pm: Kirsty took a very lumpy-soldered vase through to Andy in the Linishing room. Here Kirstie was to remove the imperfections using a linishing wheel, a small wheel with a sandpaper-like surface. This was a very nervous moment for us. The power of our 5hp lathe was enough to wrap Kirstie around it if she was not careful. With a bit of help from Andy, though, Kirstie managed to finish her piece including polishing it to provide it with its beautiful lustre. Do we have a pewtersmith in the making?

It was an interesting day for us all at A E Williams, it is not often you have the chance to show someone like Channel 4 around the building. To me it is one step further to promoting British Pewter Manufacturing, something that should be more widely done in this country. For those that would like to watch, the episode will be aired on Channel 4 in October. The vase – but not Kirstie's - can be purchased directly from us at [www.pewtergiftware.com](http://www.pewtergiftware.com)

## Sam Williams

[Home](#)

[Unable to reproduce the photo]

From left to right Front Row:

Mary Farrell, Kirstie Allsop, Kevin Watkins, Sam Williams

Second Row: Michael Wiles, Zena Jones, Richard Daly, Paul Fallon

Back Row: Pearl Morris, Andrew Gardner



**A E Williams are the oldest family run Pewtersmiths in the world, established in 1779. Passing down the craft from generation to generation. Over the 230 years of trading the company currently own the largest and oldest range of antique bronze moulds in the world. With the addition of a modern Pewter Gift range, collectors now have an unrivalled choice of Pewter – each piece made with care by craftsmen. Prestigious clients include Historic Royal Palaces, The PGA and various film studios.**

# The Company Creed

We hope you like this Journal. It is published under the authority of The Worshipful Company of Pewterers in support of pewter and the pewter trade.

But whether you do or not, please let us have your comments, and ideas for more articles. There is a bottle of passable claret for the person submitting the most interesting entry. [Editor's](#) decision is final!

The Company's modern aims include: *the promotion of pewter.*

The Company fully supports the trade and the metal, not least through the Association of British Pewter Craftsmen and the European Pewter Union; and through its highly-rated annual design competition, *Pewter Live*. Below you will find a photograph of this year's winners; and elsewhere in this edition, we look at *Pewter Live* through the perspective of its immediate past Chairman, Past Master, Paul Wildash.

Do, also, log into the Company's website on [www.pewterers.org.uk](http://www.pewterers.org.uk) and look, particularly, at the sections on: pewter, with its links to the trade and trade information, and *Pewter Live*.



Home



**Pewter Live  
2010 winners;  
accompanied  
by:**

**Sebastian  
Conran (front  
left);**

**the Master  
(centre); and**

**Isabel  
Martinson  
(front right)**

# TIN - 92-6-2!!

Home

At the time of writing (September 2010), the price of tin ingots on the London Metal Exchange had reached \$23,800 per metric tonne. Since tin started the year at a little over \$15,000 per metric tonne, the increase in the cost of pewter's main raw material has been 40%.

Today, pewter contains around 92% tin, 6% antimony, and 2% copper. In a later article I will explain why pewter contains these other metals, but today will concentrate on tin, and on our trade.

It was forty years ago that the Association of British Pewter Craftsmen was formed by Barry Johnson, (the managing director of George Johnson & Co (Birmingham) Ltd), and the Worshipful Company of Pewterers. There were at that time some 28 pewter manufacturers in Sheffield, seven in Birmingham and two in London.

Outside these three cities there were only a few other manufacturers. Now, throughout the country, only a handful remain. The ubiquitous tankard still holds sway as the most popular item made in pewter; but, in addition, a huge range of high quality items is also available. It has to be asked - what happened?

First, pewter is very much a "gift" material and as such, subject to the whims of fashion. Secondly, it competes against ceramic goods, glass, copper, stainless steel and, to a lesser extent, silver. However these items, with the exception of silver, are considerably cheaper. Forty years ago, when tin was priced at around £3,000 per imperial ton, pewter could compete quite happily with other materials mainly because of its exclusivity - pewter was then very much "poor man's silver" in that it had a warm, quality feel.

In the present climate, our manufacturers are fighting for survival and it is only by producing items of the highest quality that they can aspire to think that they might still be around in forty years' time.

**Ian Wilkie, Court Assistant**

---

*The following commentary on the price of pewter has been taken from A History of British Pewter by John Hatcher and TC Barker, published by Longman in 1974 (ISBN 0582 50122-9) page 275. The work was commissioned by the Worshipful Company to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the first Royal Charter - Ed.*

“The retail price of pewterware before 1700. There was no single price for pewterware. Different prices were charged according to the composition of the alloy and the amount of workmanship involved. Thus we find that in 1615 the London Company specified that sadware (fine) should be sold retail at 10 1/2d per lb and lay (holloware) at 9d per lb.

But these were only general guidelines, and in 1674 a further ordinance specified in detail prices ranging from 12d to 14d per lb for various types of dishes and plates, each made of the same alloy but each requiring a different amount of workmanship; and in 1560 the workmanship allowed for tavern pots ranged from 9s to 11s per 100 according to style.”

Photo of tin ingots reproduced by kind permission of Yash Metal Impex Private Ltd of Maharashtra, India  
[www.yashmetal.in](http://www.yashmetal.in)



# A History of Wentworth Pewter

Arthur Richard Wentworth was born on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1909 to Arthur and Susannah Wentworth, at their home in central Sheffield, 125 Duke Street.

Sheffield was at that time home to dozens of different pewter companies. They had followed the lead of James Vickers, on Hollis Street, who, in 1769, started making cast spoons from a material that was very close to modern pewter .

By 1909 the trade had grown to such an extent that one company alone, James Dixon's, was employing over 900 people in various metal trades but with pewter as their single biggest department.



An early Wentworth display of Wentworth products



One of the first Wentworth catalogues, from the 1970s

Around this time Adolphe Veiner started his own Sheffield metal- wares business with his sons, and by 1925 the business was known by its anglicised name of Viner's Ltd. It began to produce Pewter wares under the trade name of *Craftsman*.

It was with this company that Arthur Wentworth Jr learnt his craft, as an apprentice. *Craftsman* pewter was made from 1926 to 1939 and is most often found with the characteristic hammered pattern of that period. The majority of pieces appear to be for tea and coffee services or similar gift type pieces rather than the tankards and flasks that came to dominate the pewter trade in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

During World War II, production in all Sheffield metal factories was switched over to the war effort and the majority of the craftsmen served in the armed forces. At the end of the war, however, Arthur was amongst the first people to restart domestic production, but now it was with his own company.

The earliest trading records date from April 1946 when Arthur started to record purchases, sales and wages. However, it is likely that he was working on his own, developing a product range and marketing those products for some time before that. The company's first official home was Central Works at 104 West Street and the early letterheads advertise the company as 'Electro Plate & Pewterware Manufacturers, Silver & Electro Plate Repairs & Restorations'.

The company grew quite rapidly, particularly on sales of tankards to the UK and US wholesale markets and on sales to companies that remain as customers to this day.

For example the H. Samuel Jewellery chain has stocked Wentworth Pewter continuously since at least the 1950s.



Alan Hollingsworth, Chairman of Wentworths 1982 to 2000 and a Liveryman, is on the left



Early Wentworth Novelty tankards

Growth was such that the company moved to larger factories, first to Talbot Works, Reed Street and then to Tankard House, Leadmill Road.

From the 1960s onwards, the company began to face increased competition from other Sheffield producers. On one occasion around a third of the workforce left to start Tether

Manufacturing Ltd. During this period Wentworth continued to trade on its values of quality and service; and it survived where others didn't.



Taken in the Talbot Works factory in the 1960s. Individuals unknown.

Arthur died in 1982 and the company was bought by Alan Hollingsworth and Stephen Abdy as part of a management buyout. Since then the company has

continued to make the same quality product and has carried out a number of acquisitions designed to maintain its presence in a market that was declining as a result of Far East imports of pewter gifts and gifts in general. Amongst the acquisitions were Sheffield Rose Pewter in 1989, Abbey Pewter in 2005 and the Quaich Company of Scotland in 2008.

In 2004 the company acquired Anglo Pewter Ltd which incorporated several pewter brands such as George Herott, PMC Ltd and Tether Manufacturing (hence bringing that company back into its original fold).

At the same time the company moved into its fourth and present factory; Monarch Works, Catley Road, Darnell, Sheffield, the old home of the PMC company.

### Richard Abdy, Liveryman

The photographs in this article: courtesy of Richard Abdy. If anyone is able to identify the unidentified individuals, please let Richard know.



In the 1960s: Alan Hollingsworth, again, on the right, pouring metal with David Slowe who is still at Wentworths.

[Home](#)







manufacturers of quality pewterware

**Wentworth are pleased to announce a special 20% discount for readers of The Pewterer when ordering on-line**



PROUD TO BE  
BRITISH  
MANUFACTURERS



**www.wentworth-pewter.com**

Enter code: PEWTERER

offer valid until November 30th 2010








# The Decline of the Powers of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers in the 18th Century

Home

## Introduction by David Hall

The late Ron Homer was for many years the Worshipful Company of Pewterers' Archivist/Historian. Here, we have a much-reduced article on the waning, during the eighteenth century, of the Company's powers of search. David Hall, Liveryman and Company Archivist, writes an introduction:

“The practice of searching goes back at least to the first half of the 15 century, before the Worshipful Company had its first Royal Charter in 1474. Small groups of officers and senior members would go round, visiting Company members' premises on an unscheduled basis. While on the premises they would carry out tests on the work in progress and the items in stock. The standard the Company sought to maintain was primarily that of the quality of the alloy being used, not of the workmanship.



The tongs, or steel assaying tool, used in the early 1700s for casting samples of metal (the process by which the quality of the alloy was tested). This photo comes from page 100 of the first Company Catalogue, published in 1968 (there is a copy in the Library). The process of searching was based on taking samples of the alloy being used and casting uniform size balls. These were then weighed and the weight compared with that of the true alloy. If the sample was too heavy then too much lead was present.

The 1474 Royal Charter provided, for the first time, rights of search outside London, that is it permitted the Company to go to other towns and cities and carry out similar searches and condemn faulty alloys. When metal was condemned the pieces concerned were defaced and confiscated, and fines levied. Working pewterers in the provinces at this time usually belonged not to the Company but to locally-based guilds.

The Company, when lobbying to get these England-wide search rights, was aiming to match the rights already held by the Goldsmiths. In 1536 the right to search was extended by general legislation to Wales, but it never applied to Ireland or Scotland.

In 1998, Ron Homer published a list of the names of some 750 individuals from outside London whom the Company records show had their workshops and wares searched (mostly of 17<sup>th</sup> century date). The records show that the great majority of those who were searched were visited only once or at the very most twice. Only in a few places, like Bristol, were searches carried out more often.

This begs the question, was the Company for much of the time more interested in the prestige that the right of search gave, the money it brought in and the opportunity to see what their provincial rivals were doing, than in maintaining standards? For example there is only one record of the searchers going to Wigan, in 1676; at the time Wigan was the second most important town in England for the manufacture of pewter.

The Company would apply to the Magistrates at the Quarter Sessions in Middlesex and Surrey, to be appointed as local County inspector under an Act of 1503. This Act provided for the appointment of such County inspectors by the Magistrates and, where records exist elsewhere of such inspectors being appointed, they were usually selected from among the local pewterers and braziers.”

# The Decline of the Powers of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers in the 18th Century

Adapted from a fuller paper researched and written by the late Ronald F. Homer.

For over 250 years the Pewterers' Company exercised, country-wide, the right of search and seizure granted to them by charter and by early 16th century Acts of Parliament. However, by the 18th century, and in a changing social climate, the legality of this right was being called into question by pewterers who were not members of the Company.

The last extensive country search was carried out in 1702 but subsequent complaints about the poor quality pewter led the Company to agree to carry out a search in Bristol in 1723. Before they went, they sought counsel's opinion on their powers. Far from helpful, its main points were that whilst the Company could search, and seize and carry away wares, they were not entitled to deface them or extract fines without a licence from the Court of Exchequer; and any wares seized had to be exhibited and condemned in that Court within one year.

However, if the pewterer agreed, they could make a 'composition' and accept a voluntary fine instead of seizing his wares. But if entry was refused they could not force an entry 'without the mayor, constable or chief officer of the place being present.'

In the face of these constraints, the Company abandoned any further searches outside London.

The Company retained its unrestricted power of search over its own members and continued to exercise this power in London. But, even in London, the Company had to get an annual dispensation from the Lord Mayor to enable them to search non-members' premises in the City, and similar documents from Middlesex Quarter Sessions and from Surrey Quarter Sessions to cover their activities outside the walls. In 1786 the Company sought counsel's opinion on the case of an individual identified only as 'AB' who was not a freeman of the City. Recently AB had purchased a set of moulds from a former manufacturer and had employed that manufacturer's son, who was not a freeman and who had not served an apprenticeship.

The question was, could AB be punished for making pewter (even though the quality of the metal was not at issue in this case)? To the Company's disappointment Counsel, Mr Edward Bearcroft of Lincoln's Inn, opined that 'although AB is strictly liable to a penalty of 40s per month under 5 Eliz c. 4 proceedings under that Statute are so disfavoured by judges and juries, be the facts what they will, they hardly ever succeed. I cannot therefore recommend suit against AB'.

From 1778 the Company had become much concerned with the low quality of the metal used for beer mugs and sought to make it obligatory to make these from 'Trifling Metal', an alloy between fine and lay in quality for which the Company had laid down a standard for internal use. However, they could not impose this outside their membership as there was no statutory definition of Trifling.

In 1791 the Company, following the recommendation of a committee which had spent five years considering the subject, proposed to petition for an Act of Parliament to define the alloy. But first they sought counsel's opinion, this time from a Mr J. A. Park of Lincoln's Inn. He was far from enthusiastic and his opinion reads in part:

*It is well known that in the present day all corporate rights are looked upon with jealousy, and even many wise and temperate men have doubts of the present utility of corporate bodies however beneficial they were in the infancy of commerce, and therefore it is not likely very extensive powers either of search or control will be granted more than they at present enjoy and it is not in the interests of private corporations to provoke too much discussion of their authority.*

One can almost hear him muttering about his ivory tower client's lack of appreciation of the current socio-political climate!

There is evidence that searches went on until at least 1818, but faced with a series of unfavourable opinions, and increasing opposition among tradesmen, the Company finally realised that it must face reality and accept that times had changed and its powers had withered to a state of near impotence.

In 1835 the Municipal Corporations Act finally removed what little remained by by-passing the Companies and providing that freedom of the City by redemption could be obtained directly from the Corporation of London. Outside London this Act also finally removed any bar on trading by those who were not freemen. However, in the City of London alone, this bar to trading was not formally removed until 1856, though by then it had become a dead letter.

Article adapted by Alan Williams from the (longer) Ron Homer original. The Editor would like to thank the Executors of the late Ron Homer for their kind permission for him to do this.

A commentary by William Grant on the Company's powers of search, based on his research into the Company's O&Es from the 18th century will follow in a future number of this magazine.

---

[Home](#)