

## OLD PEWTER DINNERS - THANKS FOR RESEARCH

This website especially wishes to thank the following for all their research and detail which they have allowed us to use, regarding -

Walter Churcher, Frank Jackson, The Staple Inn, The tablecloth, the menus, the drawings or sketches on the tablecloth, the list of those attending. Thanks given in order of information received.

The Pewter Society Library and Photograph Collection (Scrap books of Walter Churcher, menus, photos of Staple Inn and old pewter)

Ms Heidi Egginton, PhD Student, Faculty of History  
University of Cambridge (additional information regarding  
Walter Churcher)

Christine Ellis of Sydney Australia (Genealogy)

Albert Bartram of Chesham Bucks for permission to use various completed detailed articles written by him, also menus, and other research.

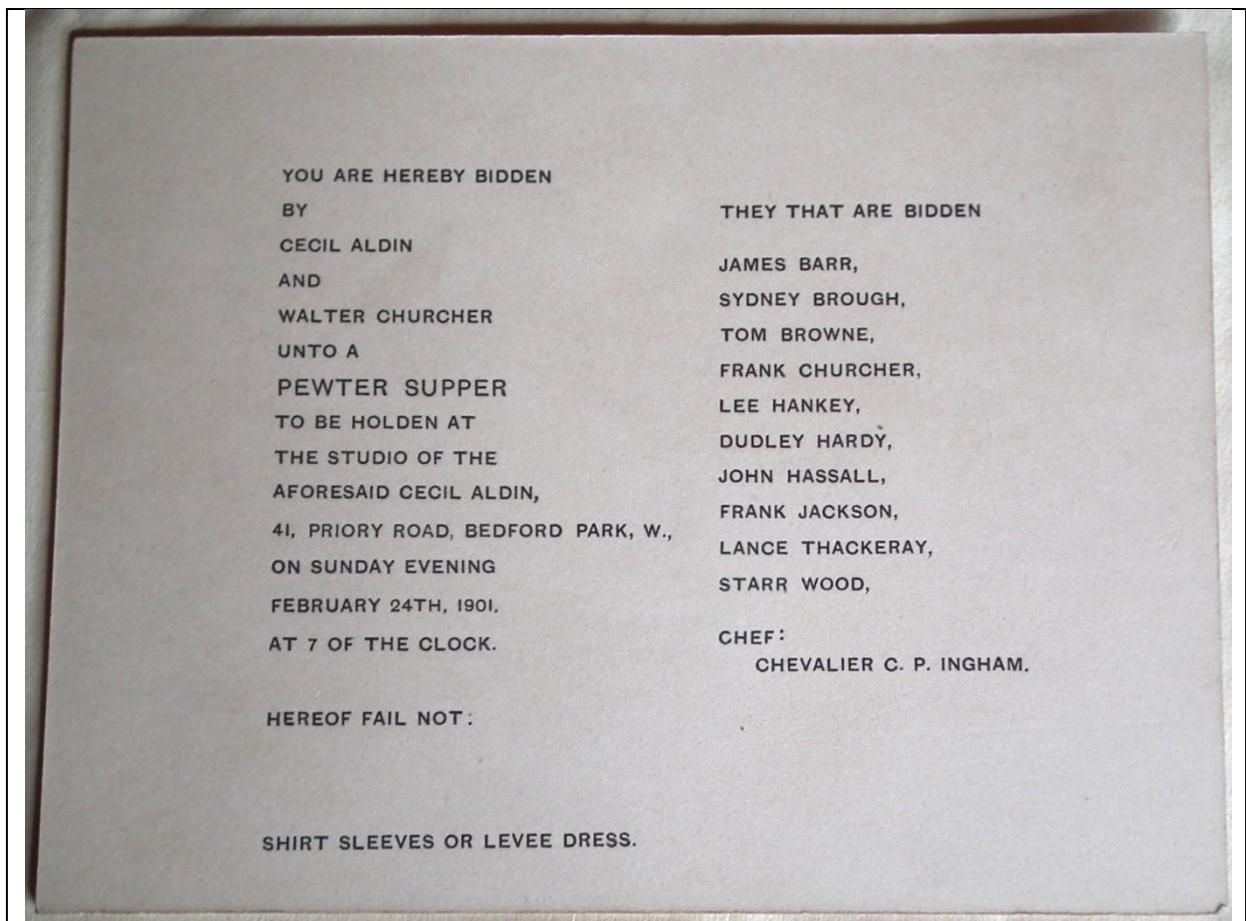
Peter Wildash of Thirsk, North Yorkshire, for photographs of the sketches on the tablecloth and listing of attendees etc.

Many thanks to all for permission to use and put on the *pewterbank.com* website the research included in these articles.

## The Pewter Dinners - Dinners eaten off Old Pewter Plate

This is the stuff of legend, where middling better end artists and artistes, and their friends, ate suppers off old pewter.

It is also true that Walter Churcher was especially known for this as the following cuttings show. But he was not the first and likely he continued when his good friend Frank Jackson stopped hosting them.



From the late 1800s Walter Churcher, a leading old pewter collector of his times, associated with an artistic group of friends and associates especially in the Bedford Park Area of West London and at the London Sketch Club.

Amongst those present were

(Cecil Charles Windsor Aldin (28 April 1870 – 6 January 1935) was a British artist and illustrator best known for his paintings and sketches of animals, sports, and rural life. Tom Browne was an extremely well known Cartoonist Painter and Illustrator. Dudley Hardy was another artist famous for his gaiety posters son of a famous marine artist, and also Vice President of the London Sketch Club. Sydney Brough was an actor, son of an actor, and a popular leading man of the time. Frank Churcher was Walter Churcher's brother.)

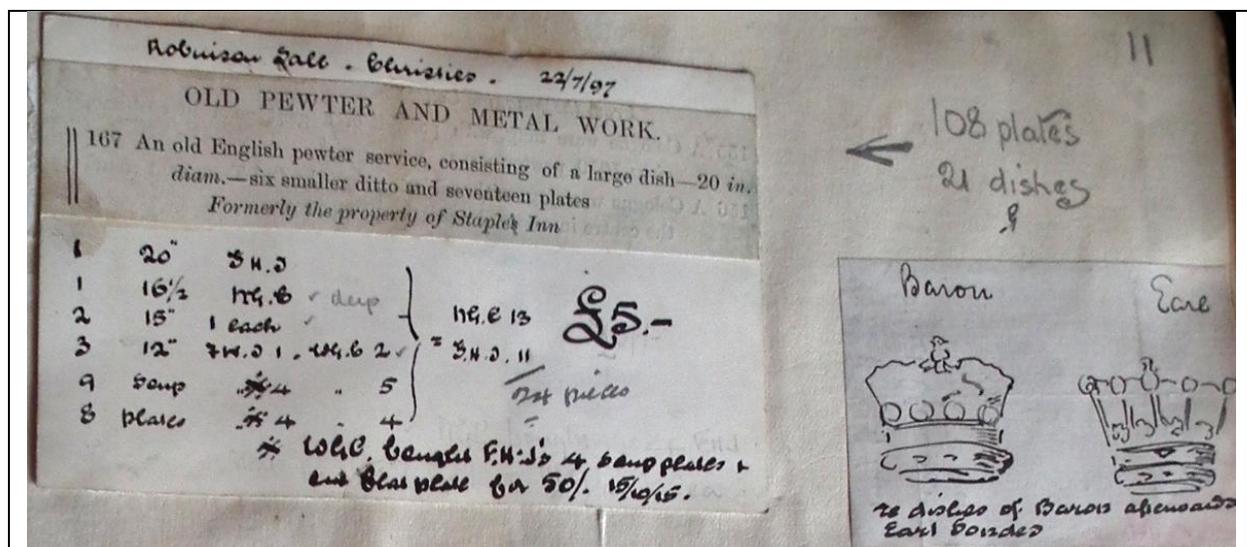
The guests were a mixture of artists and artistes - Churcher himself performed on stage and was especially known for his humorous recitations.

Frank Jackson is referred to on this website under the Pewter Collectors heading - in the article Churcher & Jackson. he perhaps started collecting in about 1885 thus being the earliest recorded Old pewter Collector that this writer is aware of (in England).

Perhaps we can see from the names that we have placed that the people at the gathering probably gave them real social interest at the time. Celebrity dinners (almost) in the sense that these names or some of them, would have meaning to the other well to do folk in London.

## 1897

This is the year the Old pewter dinners likely started. As this was when Frank Jackson was able to buy at the Robinson Sale at Christies the old pewter that had belonged to The Staple Inn in Holborn.



of the Cedar House, Hingham, Rook, and Mr. Walter Withall. Perhaps the largest collection of all is that of Mr. Churcher, since it contains no less than two hundred and fifty pieces, of every variety, a fact which may be partly ascertained from our illustrations. The picture shows a fine series of old English, Scotch and Irish plates and dishes, many of them bearing scarce and early marks, and several pieces which were formerly in use at Staple Inn, Holborn, have the crest of the Society. The collection also contains several church plates and some excellent specimens of the scarce "tappit hen," in addition to a series of old covered tavern measures, dating from the time of Charles II. to that of George IV. Another interesting thing about the Churcher collection is that there is in it sufficient table pewter to accommodate sixteen persons at a five course dinner. The surviving Staple Inn pewter in Mr. Churcher's collection consists of a dish sixteen inches in depth, another which is fifteen inches, nine plates, and two flat dishes which are twelve inches in diameter, all being eighteenth century work. The most interesting of these is one which was

IN the issue of *Madame* for December 26th, Mr. George Cecil commenced a series of articles on Pewter, dealing with his subject in the manner most suited to the budding collector. Mr. Cecil names several well-known collectors, (we wondered at the omission of Mr. de Navarro), and is indebted for some of his illustrations to the splendid collection of Mr. Walter Churcher, the celebrated reciter. Mr. Churcher is the envied possessor of two hundred and fifty pieces, of every variety, which include several old English, Scotch and Irish plates and dishes, many of them bearing scarce and early marks, and several of the pieces which were formerly in use at Staple Inn, Holborn; so complete, indeed, is Mr. Churcher's collection, that he gives "pewter suppers" to his friends and lovers of the ware, whereat every edible and drinkable is served in the polished plate.

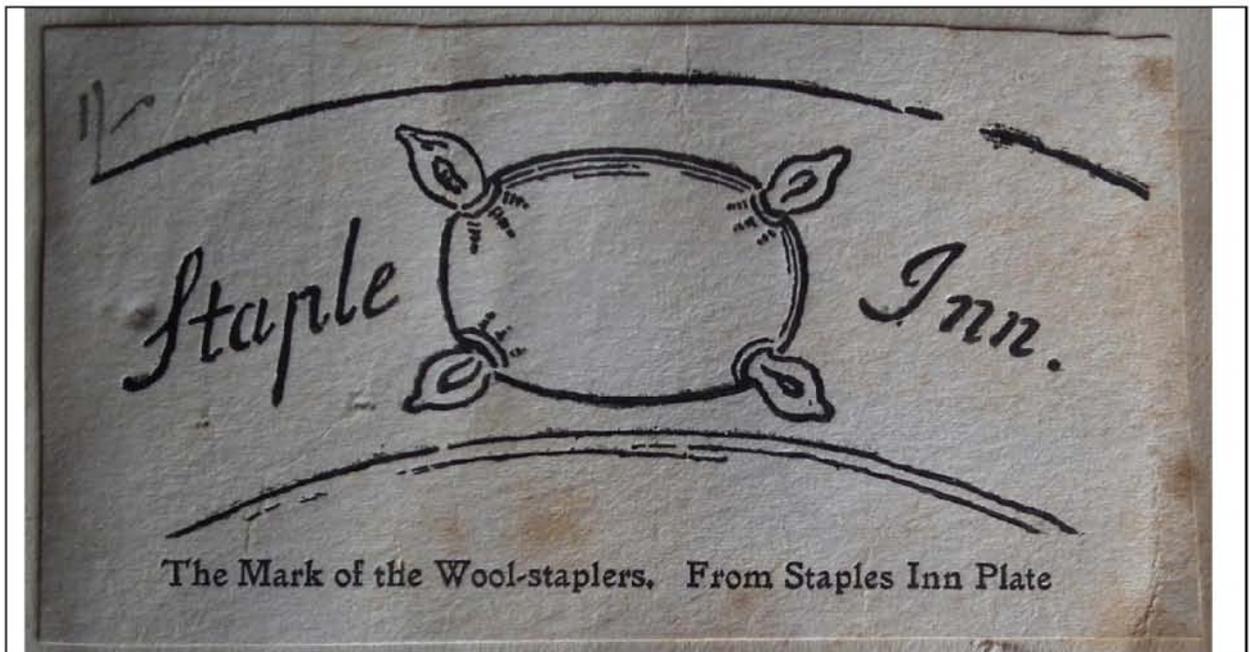
**December 26th 1903**

A few details and photos follow of **The Staple Inn (and Hall)**



Difficult to see how this relates to the next in terms of roof line but these come from Walter Churcher's own scrap books.





A **Wool Staple** is a naturally formed cluster or lock of wool fibres and not a single fibre. Very many staples together form a fleece. The cluster of wool fibres is made by a cluster of follicles.

The natural cluster of wool is held together because individual fibres have the ability to attach to each other so that they stay together. When removed from the sheep the underside of the fleece shows all its distinct individual staples.

For other textiles, the staple, having evolved from its usage with wool, is a measure of the quality of the fibre with regard to its length or fineness.

Staple length generally determines the end use of wool, that is, whether it will be used in weaving or knitting.

The longer wools, generally around 51 mm and longer and called combing types, are processed to worsted yarn. Short stapled wools are more profitably used in the woollen section where high grade material may be produced from superfine wool.

Although traditionally staple length only referred to animal fibres, it is now also used when referring to manufactured fibres.

**A Wool Stapler is -**

1. A dealer in wool.
2. One who sorts wool by the quality of the staple or fibre

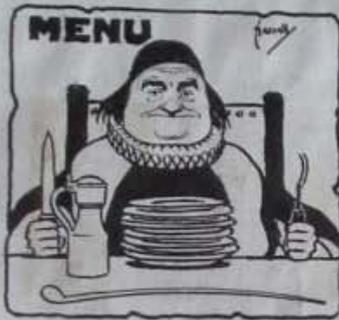




PLATES FROM STAPLE INN

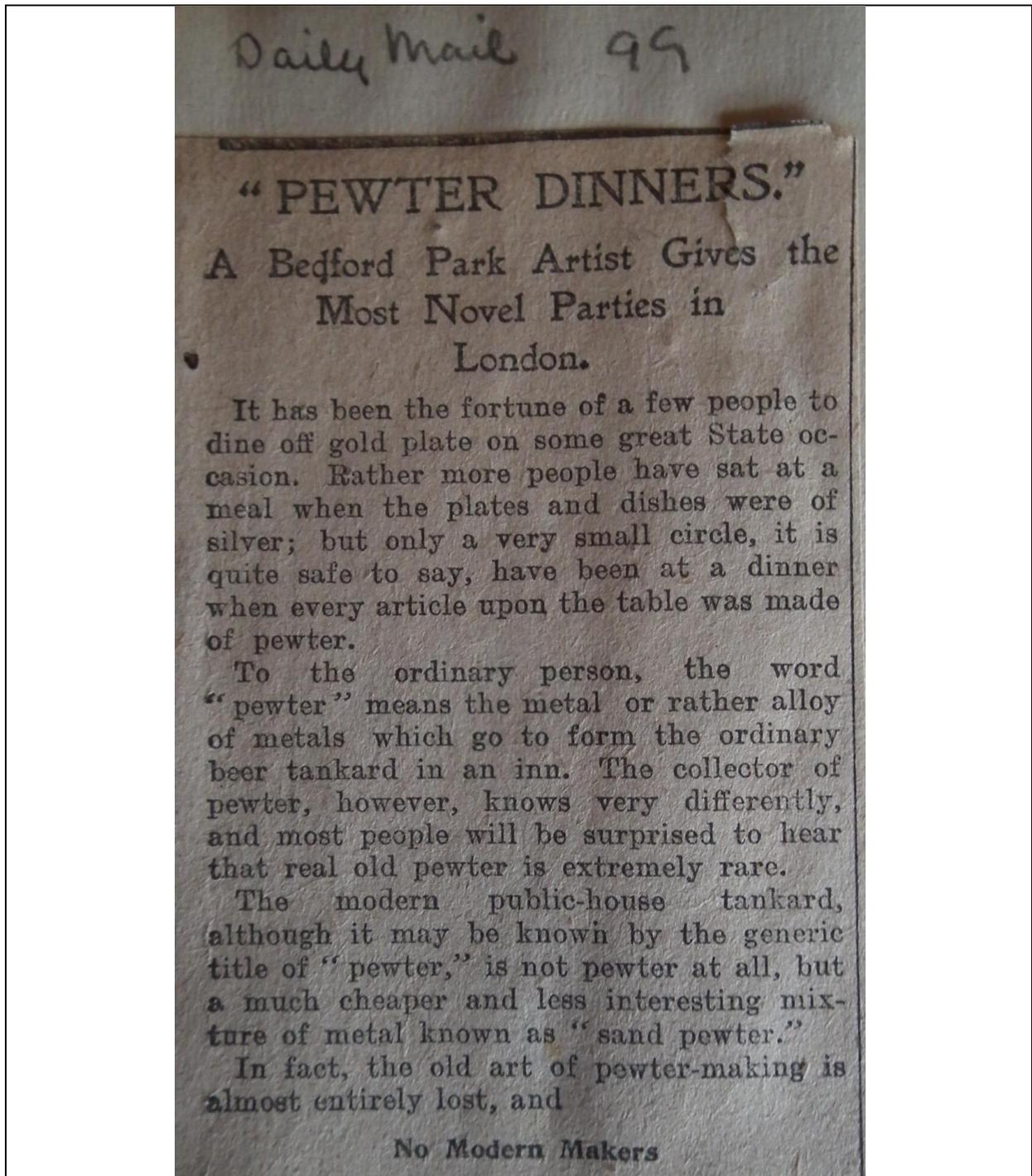


Proofs of blocks for  
Scupper messes -



For a little more detail of the old pewter and the idea of these dinners and the attention they drew we move back a year or two to 1899

Here follows for clarity sections of a long single column that appeared in the Daily Mail in 1899



### No Modern Makers

have been able to produce a combination of lead and tin equal to that which was current a hundred or more years ago.

Experts in the subject say that in all probability the famous pewter makers, Hobhouse Jarmyn, and the like, possessed the secret of a third ingredient which is not now known. When the improved processes of glass making made glass vessels extraordinarily cheap, pewter making fell into disuse, and with its fall its secret perished also.

For the collector of pewter this is a most happy circumstance, for it makes his objects rare and valuable. Probably the best-known pewter collector in England is Mr. Frank Jackson, the well-known artist and the secretary of the London Sketch Club.

It was owing to him that the first dinner was eaten entirely from pewter, and it is through him that the "pewter dinners" have become an artistic function, to which many amateurs of the curious in life would give a good deal to be invited.

The originator of the idea began to collect pewter some time ago, in fragments. He would come across a dish here, a plate there, or a fine tankard in some country tavern. As the collection grew, it became his ambition to have

a Complete Dinner Service

### a Complete Dinner Service

for at least six people, a thing which, as every collector knows, is extremely difficult of achievement.

Gradually the set grew. The fine collection of tankards belonging to one of the smaller inns of court came into the market, and was at once bought up. Some wonderful tureens and basins of pewter were found in Rome, the remains of the table service of a cardinal in the Middle Ages.

The greatest difficulty of all was experienced in the search for liqueur "glasses" of pewter. The artist was determined that nothing should be wanting in his dinner service, and that it should be complete down to the smallest detail.

Eventually, strange as it may seem, the liqueur "glasses" were picked up in Algiers. They are of very rare and curious workmanship. Pewter seems so thoroughly an English product that one finds it difficult to imagine it of Moorish workmanship.

The knives were discovered at the sale of an old country mansion with its effects. The handles are of thick pewter. It is curious, also, to find how difficult it is to eat with pewter spoons after the light silver ones in use in

the Present Day.

### the Present Day.

When the whole dinner service was completed the plan of regular pewter dinners was inaugurated by Mr. Jackson. These take place in a great studio at that home of the artist, Bedford Park. More than one old English tradition is kept up with due solemnity, and old English fare is eaten.

The great joint of beef is specially chosen in Smithfield Market on each occasion, while the beer is a fine and mellow brew from an old and famous brewery. It is only at the end of the meal, when "Pewter" has been drunk in brimming tankards, that a modern note comes in.

Your artist is generally fonder of a cigarette than a pipe, and there is nothing that goes so well with a cigarette as coffee and kummel. Accordingly coffee and kummel are served, the latter in the beautiful Moorish pewter, and the former in curious little vessels standing upon three legs.

There are few more joyous festivals round London than these pewter dinners. To pewter collectors—and they are many—they are of special interest.

Staple Inn

John Kock

Principal 1716  
Edward Hazlsey 1719/18  
Robert Kilham 1786/21

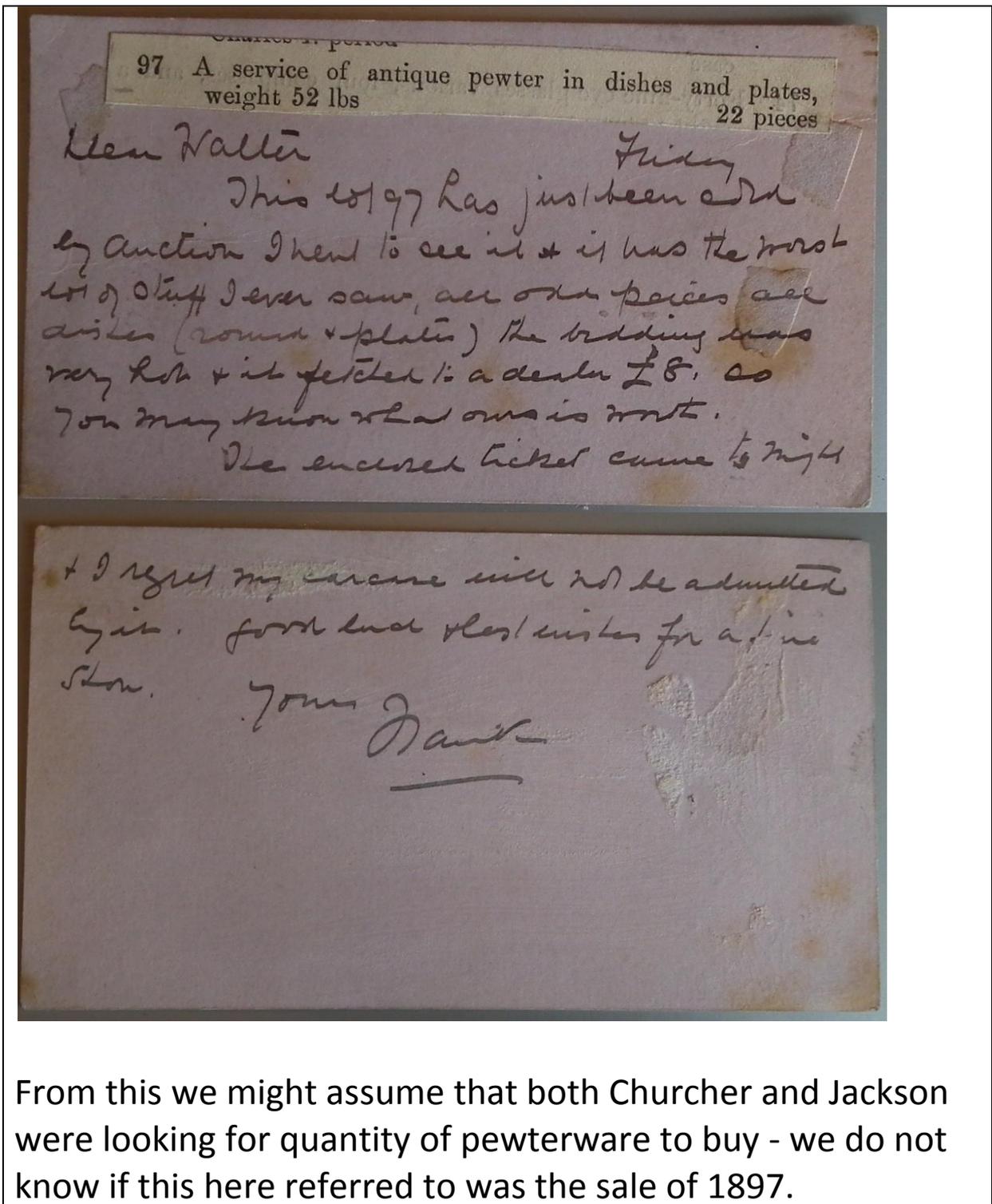
Wm Kirkby 1817

last Donville Smythe

1884

The principal appears  
to have held office  
for 3 years

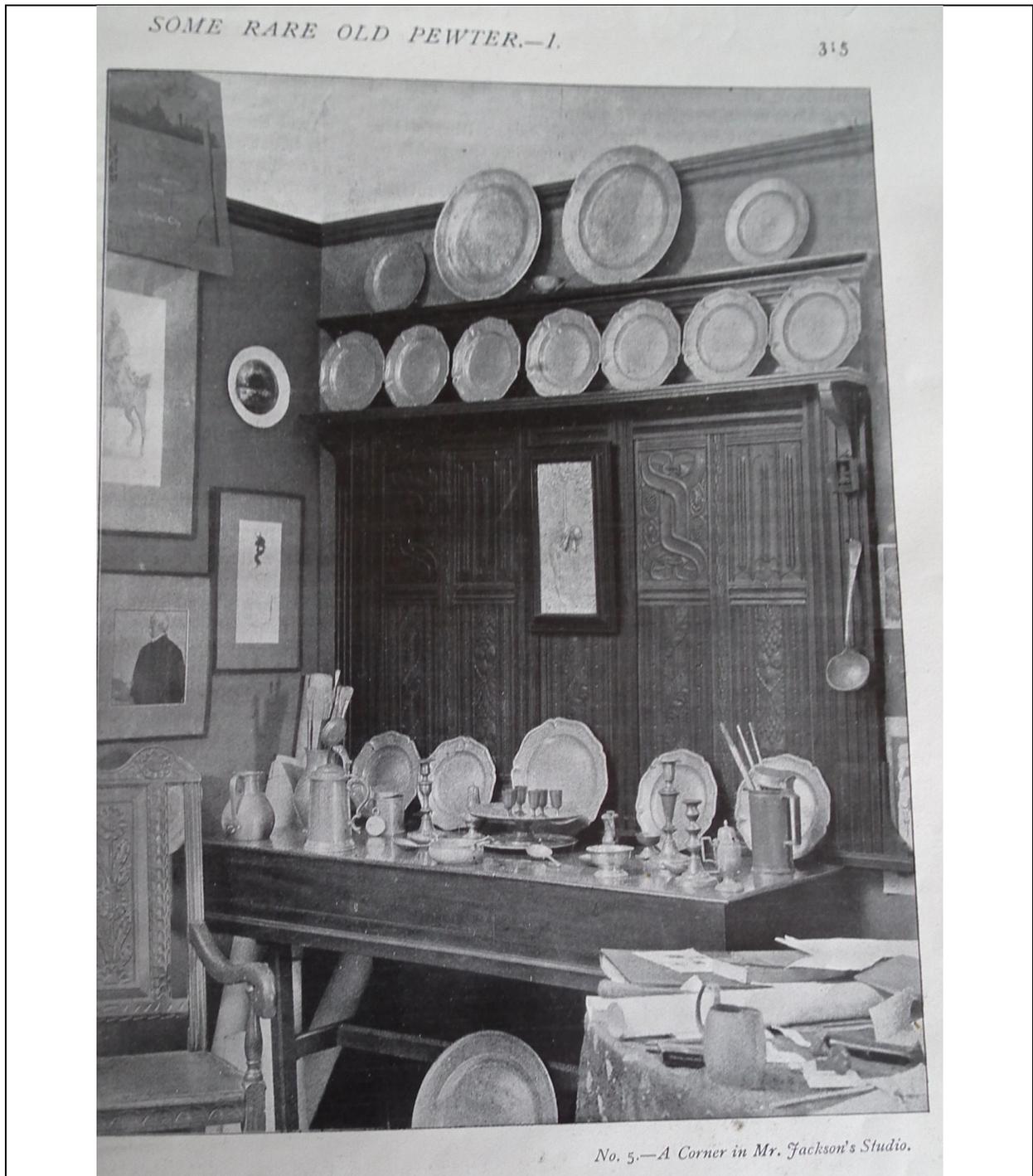
Some Society or group met at the Staple Inn or Hall which Walter Churcher notes here without relating what they did. The Group had a "Principal". Perhaps they held a dinner - on the old pewter!?



From this we might assume that both Churcher and Jackson were looking for quantity of pewterware to buy - we do not know if this here referred to was the sale of 1897.

The following shows some of the pewter that Jackson and separately Churcher had at different times. It might be that after 1904 Churcher purchased some of Jacksons pewter or it

might be that Alfred Kimbell bought a lot of it and sold it on to those collectors he knew including Churcher. Although Jackson and Churcher appeared to have an agreement concerning the original Staple Inn Old Pewter.



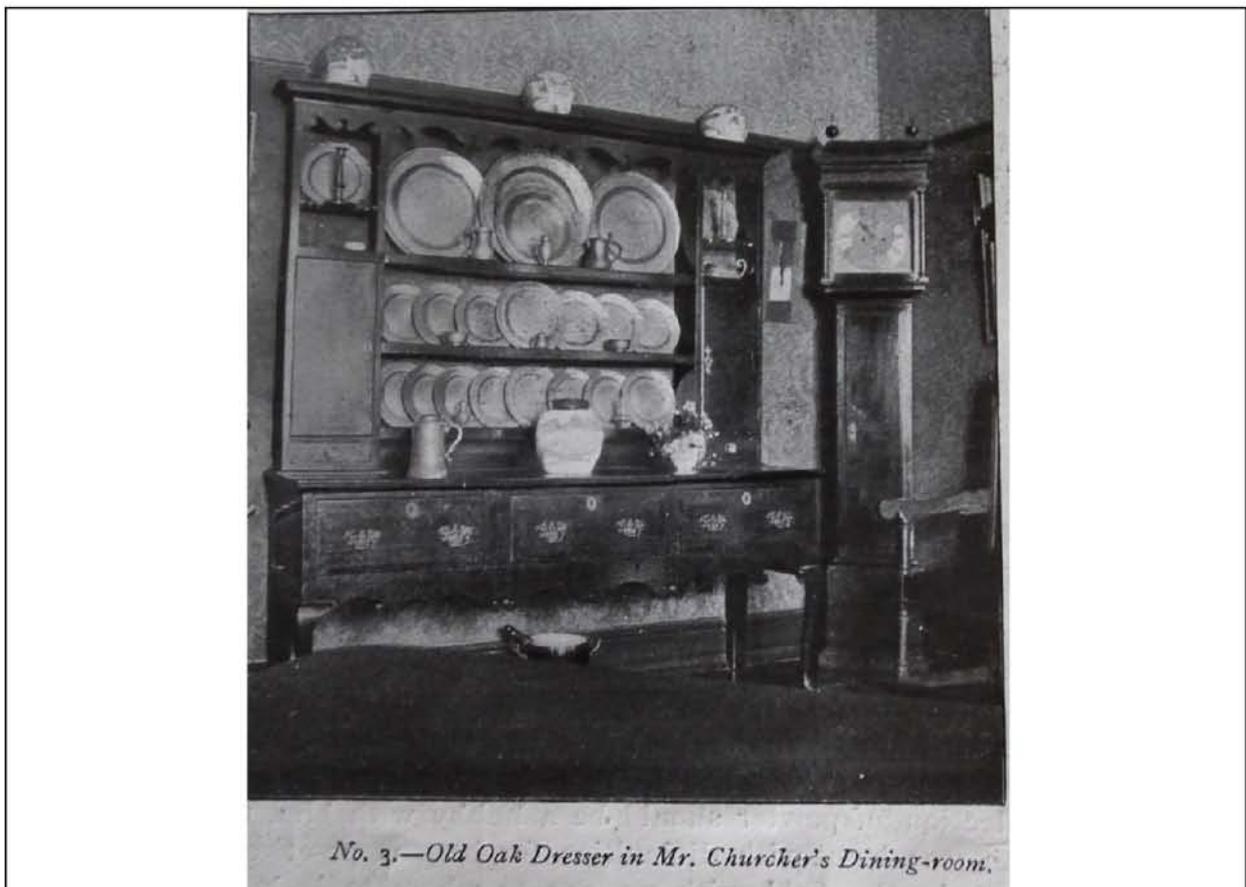


No. 6.—A Group of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Pewter.

My notes for the present must be brought to a conclusion by just one or two brief comments upon a few of the members of the group selected to form a "tail-piece" to this article. At each end will be seen three liqueur cups—at least, they are used for that purpose now—which may be classified among the greatest rarities the collector is likely to come across. Both Messrs. Churcher and Jackson have endeavoured, in all their purchases, to confine their attention to English work, but as it was their ambition to secure, in pewter, for studio feasts, every article essential to the enjoyment of the kindly fruits of the earth, and as "home-made" liqueur pewters were not to be had for love or money, these dainty little cups from a foreign land were permitted to take their place among their insular relatives. They were acquired by Mr. Jackson in Algiers, having formerly been in the possession of General Hanson, who discovered them in Morocco. Possibly they once held the fragrant mocha of some Oriental potentate, but that can only be con-



*No. 2.—A Corner in Mr. Jackson's Studio.*





The photos shown above are mostly from 1899 and 1903.



## **Walter G Churcher**

**1859 - 1934**

**Hon. Sec. : London Sketch Club  
( 1901-1911)**

**President : The Society of  
Pewter Collectors ( 1921-1922)**

### **THE TABLECLOTH**

**Walter G Churcher was born in Islington in 1859. In 1891 he was living at 60 Linthorpe Road, Stamford Hill, Borough of Hackney. Where he is described in the 1891 Census Return as an Artist. He apparently married circa 1892 Madeleine, and by 1901 had moved to 4 Queen Anne;s Gardens, with a Son ( Brian) aged 8years. Walter was then aged 42 years .**

**Although described as an Artist ,there is no mention of his name in any of the standard artists reference works but he gets a mention in Jeremy Wood's' Dictionary of Neglected Artists ' where he is described as a landscape painter in oil and watercolour and an illustrator who was founder member of the London Sketch Club in 1901. A watercolour landscape by Churcher was illustrated in 'The Studio' in 1913.**

**Churcher was also a collector of antique pewter ,and began to organize ,at his home , the well known 'Pewter Suppers' where his artist and pewter collector friends could partake of lengthy meals consumed from antique pewter plates ,chargers ,and vessels.**

**See APP. 1 and 2. for a sample of his menus. His wife Madeleine together with servant Alice Smith would have prepared the meals. Churcher became President of the Society of Pewter Collectors from 1921 to 1922. He did not appear to have a particularly important collection, but made the most of it with what must have been very enjoyable occasions. It was during these sumptuous suppers that the tablecloth was draped over the table and guests were**

invited to make a quick sketch or sign their names and some of these sketches are small works of art in themselves by artists such as Cecil Aldin ,Walter Fowler ,Dudley Hardy etc.We must also remember that Howard Cotterell was a very good artist.

Walter Churcher died in 1934. His wife Madeleine presented the Pewter Society with a pewter snuffbox in memory of her husband.( Where is it now?)

That would seem to be the end of the 'Churcher ' story, until 1986 when Ken Gordon,(Past President) by some means or other ,got in touch with a man named Brian Churcher who happened to be the son of Walter Churcher.On various occasions Ken and Brian met at a hotel for 'leisurely' luncheons and after an 'outstandingly good meal' ( Ken's words) they returned to Brian's home where Brian produced and gave to Ken a number of menus including the tablecloth with various sketches on it. Brian also mentioned to Ken that he remembered some of these 'Pewter Suppers' ( Brian was 92 when he met Ken)

Ken Gordon died in 2007 and his wife Peggy, very kindly donated the tablecloth to the Worshipful Company of Pewterers.

Albert Bartram,  
Chesham 2008.



Lance Thackeray. Fl 1901-1916.  
Painted genre and sporting subjects.

*Walter Chandler*  
*J. P. [unclear]*



**PEWTER SUPPER,**  
ON  
**January 16th, 1922.**

"When every blessed thing you hold  
is made of silver or of gold,  
You long for simple pewter."  
W. S. GILBERT ("Gondollers.")

To the Members of the  
Society of Pewter Collectors.

**THE SIMPLE FARE.**

- 
- COLD ROAST FOWLS
- BOILED BACON
- COLD ROAST BEEF
- GAME PIE
- SALAD

BAKED POTATOES IN JACKETS

- 
- CHRISTMAS PUDDING
- MINOE PIES
- CHEESE CAKES

CHEESE OF SORTS

—  
TO DRINK

- 
- RED CLARET
- CHABLIS
- BASS OF BURTON
- WHISKY OF SCOTLAND
- 

*Chas. [unclear]*  
*Ed. [unclear]*  
*Madeline Churches*  
*MacLooke*  
*H. J. [unclear]*  
*Howard M. [unclear]*

*Agnes Parvill [unclear]*  
*James Webster*  
*[unclear]*  
*[unclear]*

To  
GREETING.



**YOU** are hereby bidden  
by **WALTER CHURCHER**  
unto a  
**BEWATER SUPPER**

to be holden at  
6, South Parade,  
Bedford Park, W.

(3 minutes from Turnham Green Station, District Railway),

on *Monday, January 16<sup>th</sup> 1922,*  
at 7<sup>*30*</sup> of the clock, and no later,

to meet a few congenial spirits, *after the meeting of the  
Society of Penker Collectors (at 6.30)*  
Morning Dress and Pipes.

Hereof fail not!  
R.S.V.P.



*Edgar Barralet*

*Sydney H. Nicholson*



*James Mathews*

*Brian Churcher  
Harry Nicholls  
William H. Marler*

**AFTER-WAR  
PEWTER SUPPER,**

March 7th, 1920

*Jan Hassall*

To greet JAMES W. MATHEWS  
on his temporary return  
to his native country.

**THE GUESTS.**

- EDGAR BARRALET
- BRIAN CHURCHER
- WALTER CHURCHER
- SIR GEORGE FRAMPTON, R.A.
- DUDLEY HARDY, R.I.
- JOHN HASSALL, R.I.
- IAN HASSALL
- RENE SULL
- WILLIAM H. MARLER
- JAMES W. MATHEWS
- ALEC. A. MILLAR
- HARRY NICHOLLS
- SYDNEY H. NICHOLSON, M.A., Mus. Sec.
- W. PETT RIDGE
- MAJOR J. MACKENZIE ROGAN, Mus. Sec.
- ALBERT TOFT

*Alec. A. Millar*

*Major J. Mackenzie Rogan*

*W. Pett Ridge*

*Geo. Frampton*

*"When every blessed thing you hold  
Is made of silver or of gold,  
You long for simple pewter."*

*W. S. GILBERT ("Soldiers")*

**THE SIMPLE FARE.**

- COLD ROAST FOWLE.
- SAUSAGES.
- COLD ROAST BEEF.
- TONGUE.
- SALAD.
- POTATOES-IN-JACKETS.
- CHRISTMAS PUDDING.
- MINCE PIES.
- APPLE PIE.

*Dudley Hardy Walter Churcher*

6 SOUTH PARADE,  
BEDFORD PARK, W.

*AP  
Albert Toft*

*Harry Nicholls*

CHEESE OF SORTS  
AND THINGS TO DRINK.

APPENDIX 2



PEWTER SUPPER. <sup>W</sup>

MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup>, 1903.

TO GREET CECIL ALDIN.

"When every blessed thing you hold  
is made of silver or of gold,  
You long for simple pewter."

W. S. GILBERT ("Bandsmen.")

THE GUESTS. *Dudley Hardy*

- CECIL ALDIN.
- KEBLE BELL.
- CHARLES BERTRAM.
- CHARLES CAPPER. *Hassall*
- WALTER FOWLER. *Hassall*
- DUDLEY HARDY. *Hassall*
- JOHN HASSALL. *Hassall*
- HARRY LYTTON. *Hassall*
- HARRY NICHOLLS.
- W. PETT RIDGE.
- HERBERT SCHARTAU.
- LANCE THACKERAY. *Hassall*
- HENRY THOMSON. *Hassall*
- HUGH THOMSON.
- FRED UPTON. *Fredrick Upton*

THE FARE.

WHITE SOUP.

FROM WILLIAM IV. TUREENS & GEORGE II. PLATES.

BOILED OXFORD GRISKIN,  
ROAST FOWLS,  
STEAK & KIDNEY PIE,  
ON GEORGE I. PLATES & GEORGE II. DISHES.

APPLE TART & CREAM,  
BRISTOCK PUDDING,  
ON QUEEN ANNE PLATES.

CHEESE OF SORTS.  
ON GEORGE III. PLATES.

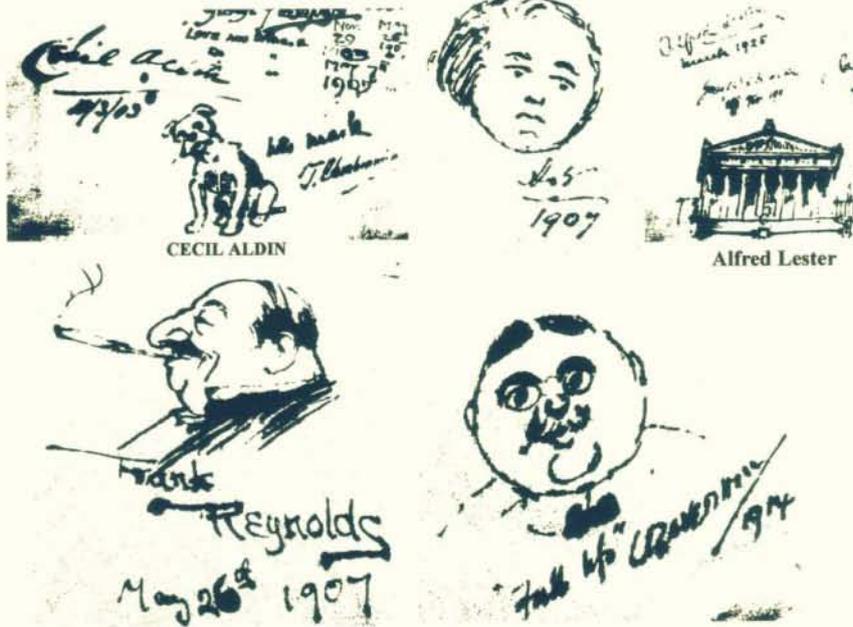
AND THINGS TO DRINK IN PEWTERS  
OF DIVERS DATES.

4, QUEEN ANNE'S GARDENS,  
BEDFORD PARK, W.

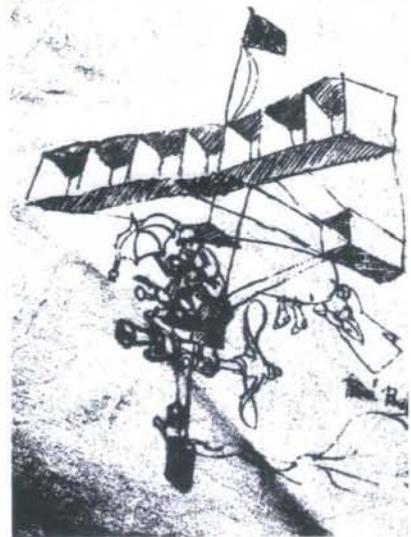
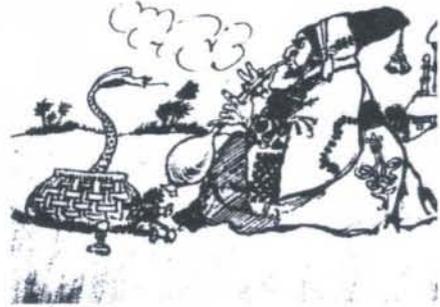
Griskin is the lean part of  
pigs loin. An Oxford Griskin  
ould relate to a pig from Oxford.



The Tablecloth



Some of the sketches on the tablecloth



More sketches on the tablecloth

THE LONDON SKETCH CLUB,  
246a, Marylebone Road, N.W.1.

HON. SECRETARY -  
F. T. C. WEEKS,  
SECRETARY -  
C. V. SHARMAN.

TELE. : AMBASSADORS 1973.

All correspondence should be addressed to

THE HON. SECRETARY,

246A, MARYLEBONE ROAD,  
N.W.1

11<sup>th</sup> November 1932

Capt. A. V. Sutherland-Graeme.

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter and with you  
much regret the unfortunate illness of Mr. Weldon Churcher.  
It is very tragic.

Certainly you may have the use of the Clubroom  
for your meeting as usual and I have warned our  
steward accordingly.

Wishing you and the members of your Society all  
success

Yours faithfully

C. Sharman

November 1934  
I received a similar letter  
from Mr. S.T.C. Weeks.

ansd

15 NOV 1932



Walter Churcher?

“Churcer Smileth” by Frederick Evans (photograph taken c. 1900-1905), 22.2cm x 11.4cm  
*Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, Accession Number 1994.215*

The photograph is inscribed: “Walter Churcher”, “Churcer Smileth”, “Frederick H. Evans”  
<http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/190018838>

'The Abolition of the Designer', *The Artist: An Illustrated Monthly Record of Arts, Crafts, and Industries* (July 1898), pp. 185

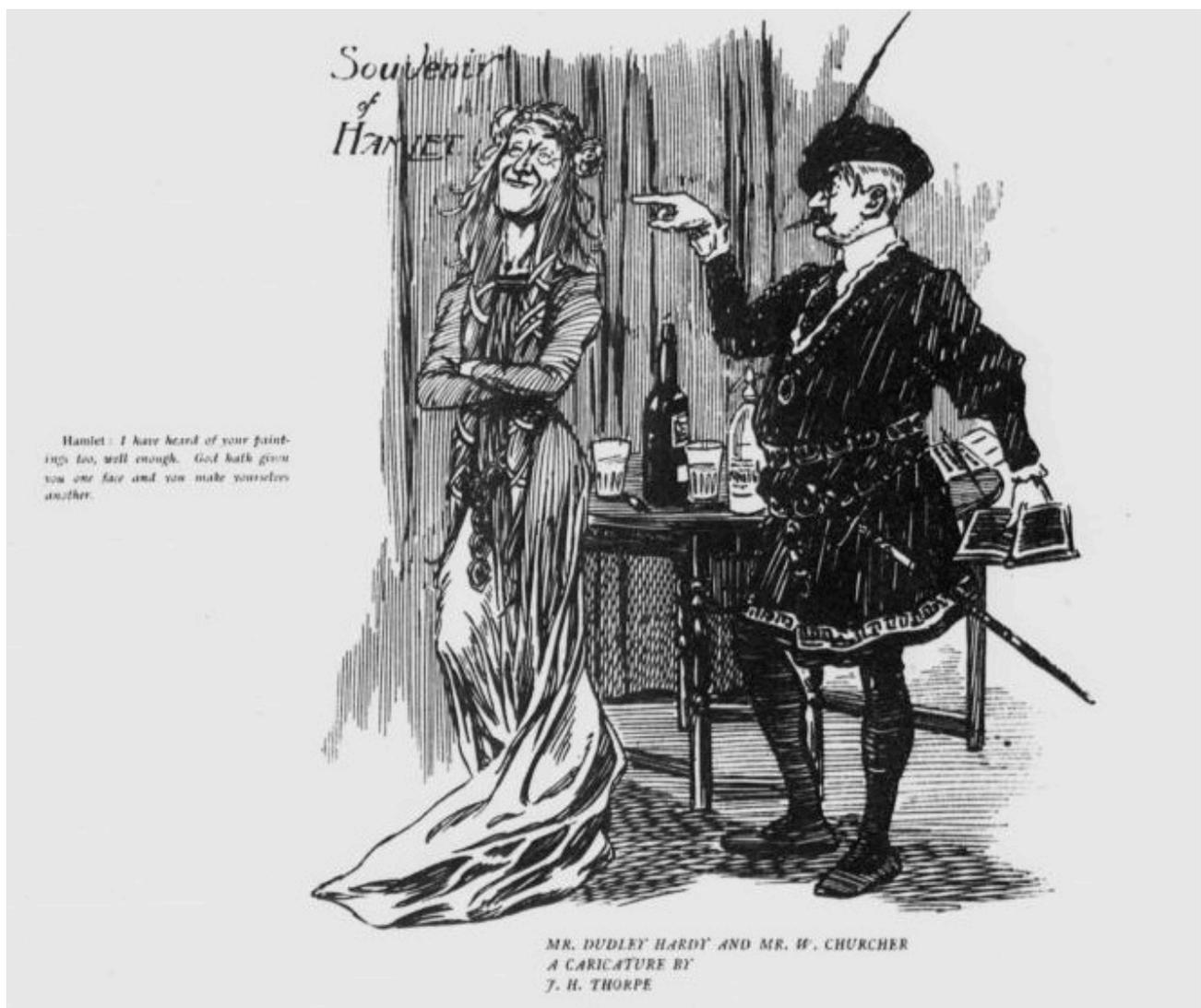
"The third annual dinner of the [Society of Designers] was held at the Hotel Florence, Haymarket, on Tuesday, 17th May, and was attended by a numerous company. The dinner was followed by a musical entertainment, in which Messrs. Walter Churcher, H. Baker, and J. Williams Benn, in addition to various members of the society, took part."

•••

'Art Centres', *The Artist*, (September 1899), p. 213

(Article about the third exhibition of the London Sketch Club, held at the Modern Gallery in Bond Street - a collection of sketches from nature, including works by G. C. Haité and Dudley Hardy)

"By the courtesy of Mr. Walter Churcher we are enabled to reproduce an amusing sketch by J. H. Thorpe, representing an incident which is supposed to have taken place on the occasion of a few members' visit to the studio of their Vice-President, Mr. Dudley Hardy, at Étapes."



'Mr Dudley Hardy and Mr. W. Churcher: A Caricature by J. H. Thorpe'

*Caption reads* - Hamlet: "I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another"

'The Modern Gallery', *The Bury and Norwich Post*, (1 November 1898)  
(Article about the inaugural exhibition of the London Sketch Club, where a number of 'two hour' sketches were shown alongside finished pictures)

"Mr. Walter Churcher delights in gloom, his "Twilight" and "Marshland" being both very sombre, yet effective, though the trees in the latter seem to have been painted in hot haste".



'The Eccentric Club', *The Era* (3 December 1898)  
(Report on the annual dinner of the Eccentric Club)

"The entertainment was under the able direction of Mr. John Le Hay, and the arrangements could not have been in better hands. Mr. Frank Boor opened with "I'll sing thee the song of Araby", followed by Mr. John Peachey with "For ever and for ever", Mr. Leo Stormont sang a favourite ballad; Mr. Walter Churcher caused much merriment by a very funny parody on "Kissing Cup's Race", his pantomime description at the close being exceedingly clever..."

See also: report of the next two annual dinners in the same journal (2 December 1899) - Mr. Walter Churcher listed as one of the "gentlemen who gave their services to the entertainment"; (1 December 1900) - Walter Churcher also among those responsible for the "evening's entertainment". The Eccentric Club dinner was "the most frivolous dinner of the year...to which every member goes with the intention of having a jolly evening".



'The Professions and the War', *The Era* (10 February 1900)

"At the Café Concert, under the direction of Miss Pattie Butcher and Mr. Albert van der Velde, to be held at the galleries of the Royal Society of British Artists to-day, [Mr. Walter Churcher, among many other men and women] have promised to appear."



'The Press Club Dinner', *The Morning Post*, (23 April 1900)

Mr. Walter Churcher, among a few other gentlemen "kindly contributed to the entertainment of the company" at Gray's Inn.



'The London Sketch Club', *The Morning Post* (16 October 1900)  
(Article on the fifth exhibition of the London Sketch Club, at the Modern Gallery in Bond Street)

"[T]he sketches in old and watercolour and the black-and-white drawings are frequently clever in workmanship, many possessing the vitality that is born of speedy execution and concentrated effort. "The Common" and "A Lonely Road" by Mr. Walter Churcher are landscapes that lose nothing in veracity by their simplicity of treatment... Different effects of evening, at sunset time, or when the dusk has dimmed the radiance of the after-glow, have furnished Mr. G. H. Lenfestey, Mr. G. C. Haité, Mr. Walter Churcher, and Mr. Hans Hansen with opportunities of exercising their nicety of observation and executive power."

‘Designers’ Jottings’, *The Artist* (January 1901), pp. 104-6  
(Article on events held by the Society of Designers - at Clifford’s Inn)

“The Smoking Evening, which was given on December 22, by the Council, in honour and congratulation of the safe return of their fellow-member, Spencer Stromqvist, C.I.V.\*, was a great success. Messrs Walter Churcher [et al] contributed to the evening’s enjoyment by various kinds of vocal and musical entertainment, which were heartily received and fully appreciated.”

\* C.I.V. - City Imperial Volunteers, a British Army regiment formed out of London for service in the Second Boer War

‘The Bookman Literary Circle’, *Bookman* (April 1927), p. 25  
(Article on the third annual dinner of the London Bookman Literary Circle, held at Anderson’s Hotel, Fleet Street, March 1927)

“During the evening Mr. Walter Churcher, Miss Winifred Stocken and Miss Winifred Baxter contributed enjoyable items of humour stories and solos, and Miss Amy Kemp was at the piano.”