

Introduction to "Old Collectors" files

These files have been assembled from documents in the library of the UK Pewter Society and from a private collector's files.

There are good reasons to look at old collections -

If we can choose a date (say 1912) and look at collections then, perhaps it gives us a good idea of what was found up to then.

If we look later, say around 1930, we can see what was added to collections in the interim. We can then consider where that came from. We might think that there were two main new sources of pewter that became widely available to collectors after the Great War - genuine pieces released from the Churches, and reproductions produced for growing demand.

If we think that perhaps collecting just got better - then we have to ask why those collectors say around 1912 failed to find the new discoveries. Sometimes it is thought that there were very few of them. This is untrue.

By 1912 - there had been several Old Pewter Specialist Exhibitions -

Cliffords Inn Hall 1904 and 1908

Taunton Castle Museum 1908 and 1912

Provands Lordship Glasgow 1909

The five exhibitions showed perhaps some 2000 different pieces.

There were listed some 136 individual exhibitors at these exhibitions - of whom 28 were named female collectors.

Other collectors written of, or mentioned elsewhere might be as many as 60. This does not include Pewter known of in the Churches - (Norfolk alone could show over 400 pieces in 1934 and part of Yorkshire listed over 600).

Many collectors are shown to have 200+ pieces each (around 1912).

Collectors who did not exhibit include - H H Cotterell whose notes show he had over 200 pieces in 1911. William Redman author of Old Pewter and Sheffield Plate who had at least 200 pieces in 1903. Charles Rowed author in 1920 of Collecting For Pleasure and illustrates around 300 pieces of his in 1908. Colonel H N B Good who had several hundred pieces in 1906, and many others. These four names are interesting because they had in common that they were very serious and determined collectors with very differing social backgrounds and resources. Simply put if these collectors and exhibitors could not find certain pieces then we need to ask - why?

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There could have been some 20,000 pieces of Old Pewter in collections in around 1912.

It has been said that a lot was Continental European and of the exhibitions checked close on 20% was.

That still leaves a very large number of Old British Pieces in private collections known of in 1912.

This was some 6 years before the Society of Pewter Collectors was formed (with 12 members).

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Thus readers are invited to look at these photos of early collections and consider the above thoughts. One person's reaction was that these collections were "dull" - and by today's standards they were. We should ask though what made collections more exciting and when? Might we not also ask why perhaps some 200, perhaps well to do but certainly many determined collectors around 1912 failed to find the old pieces that so enhance today's collections.

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The Old Collections are divided into two groups.

The first group are those known of around 1900 - 1912. Many photos are undated and without clue and thus some will be later.

The second group are those likely later than 1912 up to the middle 1930s, though mostly middle to late 1920s where dated. There might easily be earlier photos in this group and some later ones.

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Any comments or additional photos and information are welcomed.