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S.P.C.

A

Treatise

on

Pewter

by

Elsie Englefield

Price 1/6

A Treatise on Pewter



# A DISCOURSE

BY

ELSIE ENGLEFIELD

Author of

"A Short History of Pewter"

Delivered at a *Conversazione* given by the  
Worshipful Company of Pewterers  
on November 22nd, 1934  
at Cutlers Hall  
London

Master

H. Justus Eck, Esq., M.A., M.I.E.E.

Upper Warden

Frank N. Rush, Esq.

Renter Warden

Arthur J. Mullens, Esq.

Clerk

A. Stanley Grant, Esq.

*(Registered at Stationers Hall)*



WILLIAM JAMES ENGLEFIELD

*(Master Pewterer),*

*Master of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers of London, 1909-10*

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MASTER'S CENTRE PIECE



Illustration from "Pewter Down the Ages"

Made and given to the Worshipful Company of Pewterers,  
by the late William James Englefield in commemoration of  
his year of office as Master of the Company, 1909-1910.

MASTER, WARDENS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

In the first place I should like to say how very much I appreciate the honour of being asked to speak to you to-night. When the Master first mentioned this to me I was rather overwhelmed at the idea, but on reflection I realised that it was a request I ought not to refuse. Our position is a unique one as we are the last link connecting the Pewterers' Company with the past. Our firm founded by Thomas Scattergood in 1700, is the only one left of all the hundreds of general manufacturing Pewterers who were actively associated with the Company, and it would not be in existence to-day if it had not been for the genius, hard work, enterprise and enthusiasm of my father, the late William James Englefield. I am very happy to say that my brother is a worthy successor to his father.

My father was a true Londoner, born in Clerkenwell, and he loved all the old traditions of the City and was intensely proud of belonging to the Pewterers' Company. My love of Pewter was first fostered by him, and it is due to him and his influence on my life that I am now addressing you.

It is an excellent idea on the part of the Master and the Court to have arranged this evening ; thus giving the Liverymen, their friends and others interested, an opportunity of seeing some of the gun-metal moulds and productions of a Pewter factory, and of hearing a little about the industry to which the Worshipful Company owes its existence.

Doubtless many of the Livery can claim to be descendants of pewterers, but they themselves have no knowledge of the pewter-craft ; indeed, at one time, my father was the only Pewterer on the Company, for as the great pewter industry began to decline the Company gradually became an assembly of men without any real business interest in the trade.

For the benefit of those who are not acquainted



with the history of the Company I should like to give a few details of the past which bear upon my subject.

The earliest records of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers are to be found in their Ordinances for the year 1348. These regulations insisted upon a high standard of quality and workmanship in the trade, and included fines and penalties if these were disregarded. Searchers were appointed to visit the pewter makers and inspect their work, which, if found inferior, was destroyed and in some cases the makers fined. Evidence of this insistence of good work can be seen in specimens of pewter preserved to this day in museums and in the collections of expert pewter lovers.

Pewterers were very prosperous in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, for pewter ware was in general demand and owing to the vigilance exercised over the trade by the Company, its members enjoyed a period of great security and affluence.

These conditions prevailed until the year 1721, when the Bristol Pewterers challenged the authority of the Company by making "Guinea Basons," chiefly

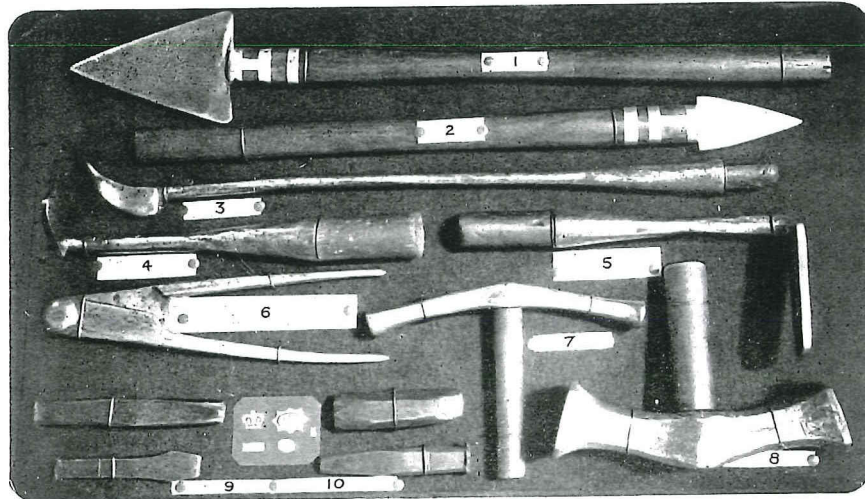
used for the slave trade, of low quality pewter and stamping them with the word "London."

The Company were in doubt if their jurisdiction extended so far from London. When, seven years later, a further complaint came to their knowledge, the Company were reluctant to take action as they were still doubtful of their position with regard to the country pewterers. Such being the case, the country searches were discontinued. This attitude of the Company had the effect of weakening their authority over the London pewterers, and towards the latter part of the 18th century they no longer controlled the trade.

The last public event in which the Company took part was in the year 1885, when they had a Pewterers Car in the Lord Mayor's Show. It was also an interesting event to Brown & Englefield, for in that year they took over the old-established business and had an active part in the procession, my father being in charge of the car.

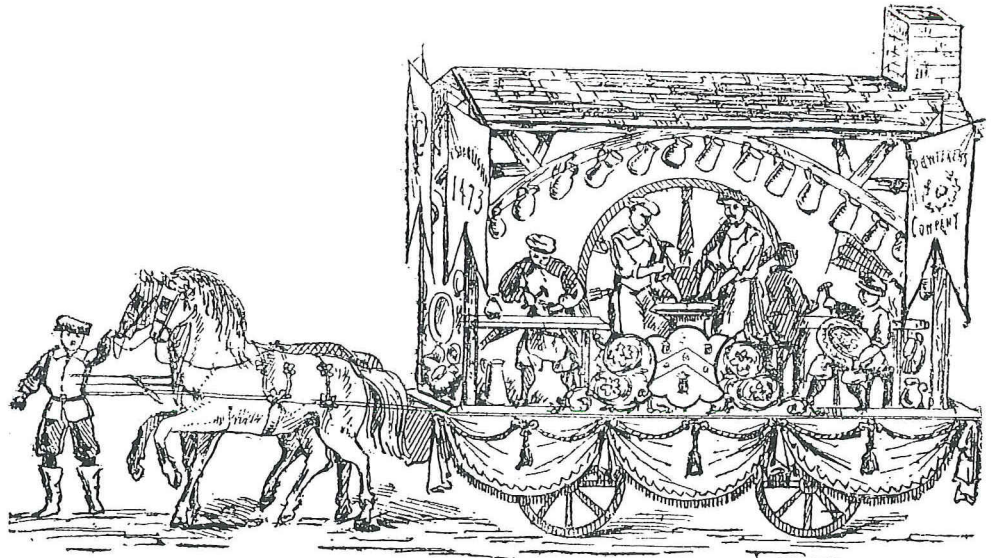
The Lord Mayor elect was Mr. Alderman Staples,

CASE OF OLD TOOLS USED BY THE TURNERS  
AND HAMMERERS OF THE FIRM DATING  
BACK TO 1700.



1. Spear Grater.
2. Spear Burnisher.
3. Hawksbill Burnisher.
4. Small Hook for general turning.
5. Large Hook used on Sadware Lathe for turning dishes and large plates.
6. Compass used for making circle in dishes and plates to guide the hammerman in hammering courses round the booge.
7. Small booge hammer.
8. Large planishing hammer.
- 9 and 10. Steel Punches of the Compton period, and impressions.

PEWTERERS' COMPANY—CAR



PEWTERERS' COMPANY.—CAR.

As illustrated in the *City Press*, November 11th, 1885.



Facsimile of the Medal (showing both sides) cast in the car and thrown to the populace.

pewterer. He was then a past-master of the Pewterers' Company, having been Master in 1876. In passing, it is remarkable to note that there was not another Master of the Company, who was a pewterer, until 1909 when my father filled that office.

The car represented a pewterer's workshop in which the processes of casting, turning and hammering were shown in operation. Medals, commemorative of the occasion, were cast during the course of the procession and thrown to the people along the route, silver coins being thrown back by the recipients.

Among the exhibits here is the gun-metal mould for producing the medals which were cast in the car, a spoke and portion of the 6-ft. wheel used to turn the lathe, and also a page of the "City Press" of November 11th, 1885, with a picture of the pewterers car in the procession.

There has been a very great pewter revival during the last fifty years, while much has been written on the subject during this century. In 1903 John Redman of Bradford, published his book "Old

Pewter and Sheffield Plate," and in his preface he remarked on the dearth of information upon the subject, saying that for months he was unable to find a printed article, of any kind, relating to pewter. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that the practical knowledge in the early publications was rather vague. "The History of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers," by Charles Welch, and many other publications since, including my own little book,\* have now made it an easy matter to get acquainted with the subject.

Most of the writers and lecturers have made a study of the marks and periods of pewter. I am dealing with the subject, and of necessity, briefly, from the standpoint of the manufacturer, and the demands for pewter at the present time.

The constant references to pewter in the Press have been an important means of restoring this beautiful metal to public favour. It is most gratifying to record that, at the present time, the old style of CAST pewter ware is once more coming into its own.

\* (See page 37)

English pewter dates back to the 10th century, and was in common use until the middle of the 18th century. The pewter manufacturers had no competition and were generally very wealthy. About 1840 the introduction of china and earthenware, cheap pottery, glass, zinc, and enamelled iron-ware began to displace pewter. Later, the discovery of German-silver and nickel-silver, harder alloys, which, when plated, had the appearance of silver, still further led to its disuse.

This decline need not have been so overwhelming if the pewter manufacturers had more fully realised the trend of the age, and made a determined effort to adapt the trade to the coming changes. They, however, rich and independent, did not make the necessary exertions to keep pace with the times, and this indifferent attitude thus gave competitors their opportunity, and the pewter industry languished.

To many, pewter is only associated with public houses, and a pewter beer mug is as far as they get. It is astonishing how nearly everyone I meet, both in

business and other circles, can claim to have in his possession a pewter tankard which either belonged to his grandfather or father.

It is a revelation to many to hear that ironmongers, confectioners, stationers, silversmiths, druggists, tobacconists and the church, all have a use for the pewterer's craft. Various articles for the businesses enumerated are exhibited here.

### What is Pewter?

Pewter is mainly composed of tin, the highest priced metal in the trade being known as "Tin and Temper" (best quality) is an alloy with antimony and copper, and free from lead. The natural grey colour of this alloy resembles in appearance soft subdued old silver, is pleasing to the eye, and soothing to the touch.

Our present day artistic ware is of the same quality and alloy as the best work of past ages. This point has been raised many times among collectors, and it has been said that the modern ware is not equal to the standard set up by the old pewterers. In our case,



PEWTER LOVING CUP



Made and given to the Worshipful Company of Pewterers  
by Ralph H. Englefield upon being presented with the  
Freedom and Livery of the Company, October 20th, 1921.

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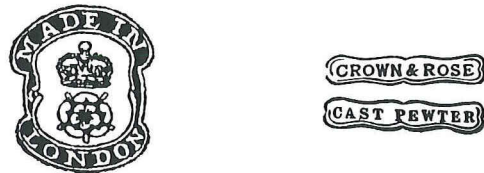
TOUCH MARKS, 1785-1935



Touch Marks of the firm during the Compton period,  
still in our possession.



Touch Marks of the firm from 1885.



Touch Marks used at the present time.

we can assure you the composition has not changed from that of the past, for we are using the same formula which has been handed down to us, and our workmanship is quite up to the old standard, as will be seen by the flagons on view which we made for the Company some nine years ago. Our Crown and Rose ware will become the antiques of the future.

Ordinary good pewter is an alloy of tin, antimony and lead ; a lower quality known in the trade as "black" metal is composed of 60 per cent. tin and 40 per cent. lead. A still lower grade is made up of 50 per cent. tin and 50 per cent. lead : the more lead added the lower the quality and darker the appearance.

The processes of manufacture consist of casting, turning and soldering, and the tools used to-day are practically the same as those used by the early pewterers.

Moulds are the essential part of a pewterer's equipment, and as pewter ware is cast ware this will be readily understood. The moulds are usually of gun-metal, very heavy and most carefully made. They

are costly but fortunately last indefinitely. We are still using some of the original moulds of the firm dating back to 1700. Moulds being so expensive often do duty for more than one article, for instance, the cover of a tankard might be identical with the base of a candlestick.

When the pewter trade was flourishing there were several pewter mould makers in existence. In those days moulds were more or less in constant demand. The pewter industry had declined to such an extent by the time my father came into the business, that so far as he knew there was only one pewter mould maker left, and he was an elderly man. My father, foreseeing the future difficulty, set himself to learn the art of mould making and later taught my brother.

This knowledge has been one of the chief reasons why we are still in existence. Being our own mould makers we can make correct moulds at the lowest possible cost. We are thus enabled to produce new designs to customers' requirements without unduly burdening the article with initial expenses.

There is a great knack in casting. It is not just a question of pouring the metal into the mould, a perfect casting being the natural result. The mould must be carefully prepared and thoroughly warmed ; the quality of metal must be suitable and the heat of the fire just right, but even then things may go wrong. However, a resourceful caster will overcome all difficulties. The art of casting cannot be learned from a book, it must be gained from practical experience.

Turning is not so intricate, though it is surprising to find how one man's turning will differ from that of another. It is possible to tell, by merely looking at the work, which man was the turner, for the "feel" is different. A good turner's work is a joy to look at and to feel. Once the working of the lathe is understood, and the correct handling of the tools mastered turning becomes second nature to the worker.

In the olden days the work was always turned bright and burnished. Time and usage would cause this brightness to tone down, and the article resumed the natural grey colour of pewter. We still burnish our

commercial ware, but as the burnishing gives, for the time being, a "tinny" look to the pewter, and is not artistic, we do not burnish our art ware but subject it to a process which preserves its natural colour. Commercial and the art-finished ware are shown here and the contrast clearly denotes the difference.

Hammering was a skilled branch of the trade exclusively done by professional hammermen. Only plates and dishes were hammered. They were first turned on the lathe, then hardened by hammering round the "booge"—the shaped part between the rim and the bottom—and then turned again on the inside so that the course of hammering is only seen on the outside. This process of hammering was unique and only done by pewterers, and principally by London pewterers.

This art of hammering must not be confused with the modern style of "hammered Britannia-metal ware." My father was the last of the professional hammermen, and so far as we know my brother is the only person practising this art.

AT THE "SADWARE" LATHE



Mr. Ralph H. Englefield turning a large dish on the Sadware lathe, preparatory to hammering. This lathe was made by my grandfather for his son, and it is now being used by his grandson. "Sadware" is a term that was used by the old pewterers for low relief work—such as plates and dishes.

## AT THE HAMMER BENCH



Hammering the booge of dish using the historical stake, hammers, stool and foot rests, in the possession of the firm since 1700. The art of hammering was imparted by his father, Mr. W. J. Englefield, to his son, and his knowledge is now unique. As mentioned on page 13 these tools were used by Mr. W. J. Englefield in the Lord Mayor's Procession of 1885.



I have mentioned casting and turning, now I come to the hardest branch of the trade—soldering. This is the last branch to be taught and by far the hardest to acquire—truly an art in itself.

In the very early days, probably before early 16th century, and before the blow-pipe was introduced, pewterers used to place a sandbag inside any article which required joining, and the two castings were melted together with a copper bit. This method would not show a seam outside, but very often the pattern of the sandbag could be seen inside. Handles were fixed on in this fashion. The gun-metal handle mould was placed on the article, and the sandbag put inside. The pewter was then poured into the mould, and the heat of the liquid metal where it touched the article melted them together. This was called “burning-on.” Pewter articles of this kind are very scarce.

The blow-pipe is now used. Dexterity in the manipulation of the blow-pipe and the ability to ensure a regular flow of the solder are the two necessary qualifications of a good solderer. Unless a workman

can solder properly he cannot claim to be a first-class pewterer. The principal reason for the difficulty in soldering is that pewter melts at a low temperature.

A circular article to be soldered is usually placed on a rotating table of iron, known in the trade as a "gentleman"—why, no one knows. My grandfather, who was chief engineer to the pewterers Elmslie and Simpson, used to say that that was the only gentleman in the pewterer's shop. At that time a pewterer's attire was often a frock coat and a tall hat. I never knew my grandfather, but I presume he had a keen sense of humour, and was "getting at" them and their appearance. In those days pewterers thought very highly of themselves, and from all accounts did not suffer from inferiority complex.

It is well to mention a few facts about Britannia-metal. Britannia-metal ware is spun from the sheet, and this invention of spinning the metal instead of casting it saves the great expense of moulds. This discovery made an important 18th century addition to the Sheffield industries, and the alloy used being of

similar composition to good pewter it was a very serious menace to the pewter trade.

A study of the two productions by the connoisseur soon enables him to make the distinction. Britannia-metal ware is lighter in weight, and has not the solidity of pewter. Pewter, being cast, is stronger, will keep its shape and improve with age. The great and all-important difference is that Pewter is CAST ware and Britannia-metal is SPUN ware.

Britannia ware is often referred to and mistaken for pewter, but no one should confuse the modern hammered ware for CAST pewter. I am referring to the early days when Britannia-metal ware was of plain design. Many of the pewter patterns were copied as closely as possible, so that at the present time a real difficulty is often experienced by the expert collector in deciding whether he has purchased a pewter treasure or only a good early specimen of Britannia-metal ware. This ware has not, of course, the traditional value of pewter, and is not considered by pewter lovers comparable with the work of our ancient craft.

## Just a Few Words about the Exhibits

Here is the Pewterers' Golf Flagon, made by us and presented to the Company in 1926 by Mr. Hodge to commemorate his year of office as Master. It is in yearly competition and the winner has the Flagon in his possession for that year ; he also receives a pint size replica from the Company.

The gun-metal mould for producing the Gallon Measure is one of Compton's moulds of 1785. On account of the great expense in making such a mould, and the limited number of gallon measures required, it was the custom in the trade either to borrow the mould or to purchase castings produced from it. Pewterers had their own sets of moulds, but in instances such as this, where the general demand did not justify the expense of a mould, the above practice would take place. This explains the scarcity of the gallon measure in collections of to-day.

Pewter is the most suitable of all metals for the

CAST PEWTER CHURCH WARE



One of many Cross and Candlestick designs made for Churches which have been built during the last 25 years.

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CAST PEWTER WARE



Crown and Rose Cast Pewter Ware. Handsome tea service in Cast Pewter Ware and a pair of flower vases of an old design.

vinegar trade, as the acid in the vinegar has no action on the measures and funnels made of it.

It is the correct metal for the ice-cream making industry. Tinned iron rusts, copper wants constant re-tinning, the ice and salt eat into zinc, but pewter is exempt from all these failings.

Pewter is admirable for tobacco jars as it keeps the tobacco moist and in good condition ; especially is this an asset in hot countries.

The inhaler is still used in hospitals at the present time. It is often found in an old collection, minus the cover and tube. The reason for the holes at top of handle and inside the pot of what, in other respects, looks like an ordinary tankard have frequently puzzled collectors.

This basin is known as a blood or bleeding bowl. It is graduated in ounces and is still used in hospitals. Some of you know this little story. One day a client was in our office when a 'phone call came through, and I turned to my father and said—"So-and-So want to know when they can have their bleeding

basins." I was quite unconscious of having said anything dreadful, being so used to the term, until I heard a voice saying, quizzically, "Do you allow your daughter to swear, Mr. Englefield."

The glass-bottom tankard was first made about one hundred years ago. In the olden days, it is said, in order to get a man to accept the King's Shilling a recruiting sergeant would place a shilling, unbeknown, in a tankard of ale, and when the "victim" had finished his drink he found he had joined the army. The glass-bottom tankard is supposed to have been designed to prevent such happenings. This is one of many legends handed down by tradition.

The three-handled Loving Cup also has its legend. One of our kings was out hunting and pulled up at an inn and ordered a tankard of ale. A serving-maid holding the handle offered the tankard to the King. He was obliged to take it by the body, and in doing so spilled some of the ale on his coat. He was annoyed and gave orders that the next time he should be served with a two-handled tankard. On his second visit the



same maid in offering the tankard, held both handles with the same result as before. The King, still further annoyed, ordered that a three-handled tankard should be proffered on his next call.

I am told beer tastes best out of a pewter tankard. It is a well-known fact that tea is best out of a pewter tea-pot. To demonstrate this I must tell you a story from my own experience. A Scotsman purchased a tea-pot from us for which he paid 50s. A year later he brought back the ebony handle and a lump of pewter. His wife had left the tea-pot on the hot stove, and, as I have already mentioned, pewter melting at a low temperature, the result was inevitable. This is the point—he said his tea hadn't tasted the same since. They had tried china and silver tea-pots, but he had to come back and buy another pewter one in order to taste some good tea. There must be some mysterious virtue in pewter which draws the best out of things.

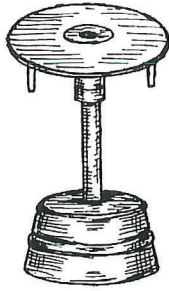
Pewter is a delightful metal for church furniture, such as crosses, candlesticks, and vases. We have been

making church work now for many years. The reflections are so beautiful in the soft light of the church that many, indeed, most people I suppose, imagine that it is old silver ware.

Pewter is becoming increasingly popular for presentations and gifts for all occasions. The graceful designs, based on the old lines, require no decoration, their shape being their chief attraction. The soft subdued colour, at once restful and charming, is in direct contrast to the glitter of highly polished metals and lacquered hammered ware now so often offered to the unwary or inartistic buyer.

In conclusion, in an age of such restless activity, noise and confusion, it is encouraging to know that there is a growing tendency to appreciate beauty in shape and design that have been handed down to us by skilled, industrious and honest craftsmen who not only served their day and generation, but are still influencing the life and thought of to-day.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF ARTICLES MENTIONED  
ON PAGES 26-32



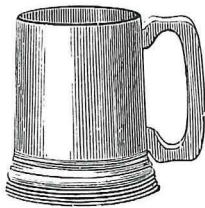
A rotating table of iron used when soldering together circular articles and known in the trade as a "Gentleman."



Three-handed Loving Cup



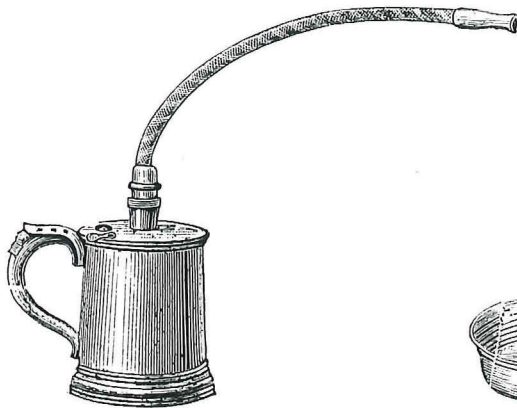
Tobacco Jar



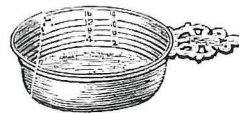
Glass-base Tankard



Vinegar Measure



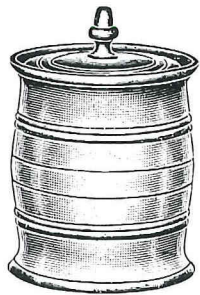
Muges Pewter Inhaler



Blood Porringer

ILLUSTRATIONS OF ARTISTIC CAST PEWTER WARE

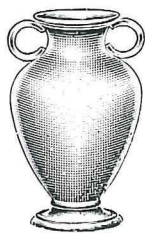
Some cast from the original moulds of the firm, others based on the old designs.



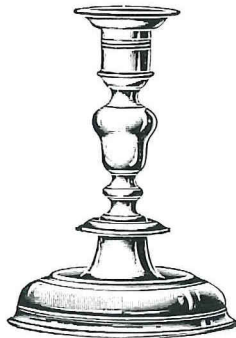
Barrel Biscuit Box



Sugar Basin



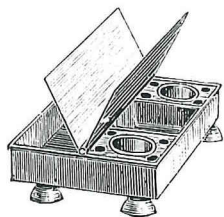
Lily Vase



18th Century  
Candlestick



Goblet



Old-fashioned Standish  
Inkstand



Barrel Jug