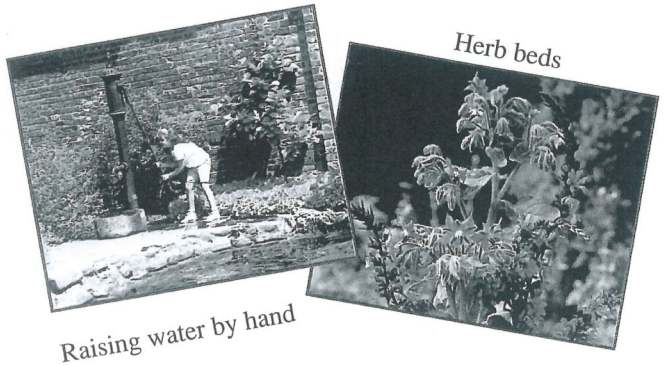
Pewtering in Bewdley

Andy Holding & David Moulson

THE MUSEUM GARDEN

An attractive area with water features, herb beds and an apiary with a range of hives on show.



Herb beds

Raising water by hand

Traditional straw hives called skeps were protected from the weather by bee shelters or hackles (straw hats).

Bee house with thatched heather roof

THE MUSEUM SHOP

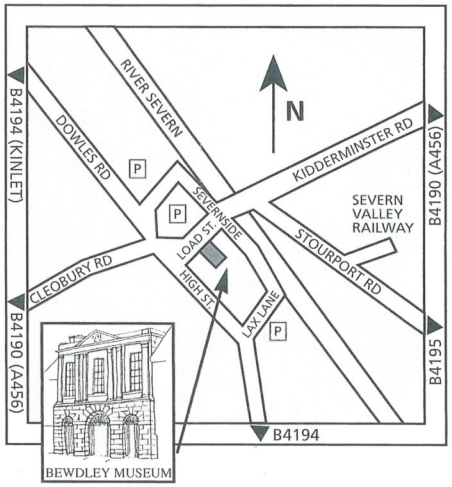
Contemporary and traditional craftsware produced by makers on site is available through the shop - a unique gift for a special occasion. The shop also stocks craftsware by other makers, souvenirs and a wide range of books.

- **Group and school bookings welcome. Education Service available.**
- **Regular temporary exhibitions, activities and events.**
- **Most parts of the museum are accessible by wheelchair.**

OPENING TIMES

1st March - 30th November.
Monday - Saturday 10.00am - 5.30 pm, Sunday 2.00pm - 5.30 pm.
Last admission 5.00pm every day.
Dates/times may be subject to change.

For further information please contact:
Bewdley Museum, Load Street, Bewdley, Worcestershire DY12 2AE.
Telephone: (0299) 403573.



Location: Bewdley is situated on the edge of the Wyre Forest, four miles to the west of Kidderminster off the A456 Leominster road, on the B4190.
By Rail: Severn Valley Railway. Kidderminster - Bridgnorth
By Bus: West Midlands Travel and Midland Red West operate services from many West Midland towns - contact your local travel office.

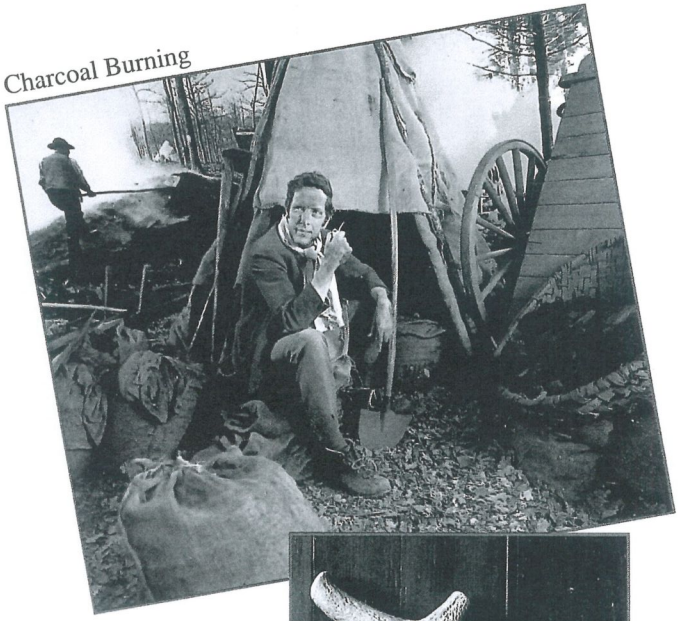
WYRE FOREST
L · F · I · S · U · R · F

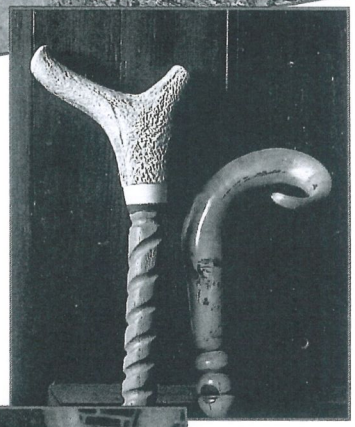
BEWDLEY MUSEUM

REVIVING CRAFT TRADITIONS

In One of Worcestershires Most Picturesque Georgian Towns

Charcoal Burning





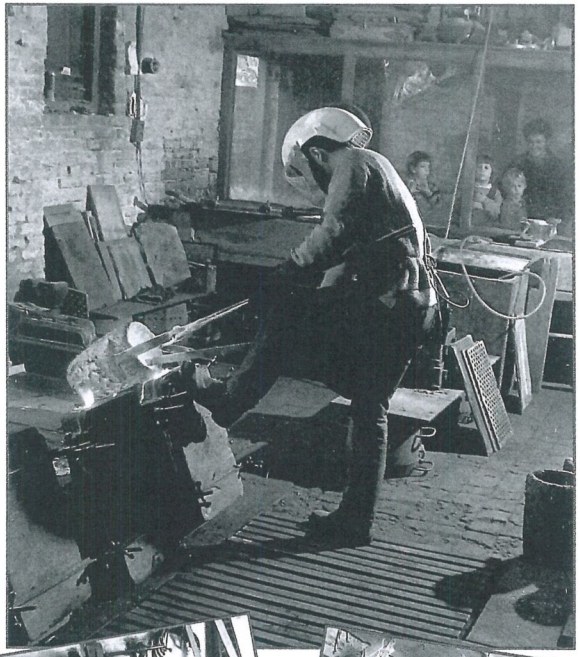
Stick Dressing Course

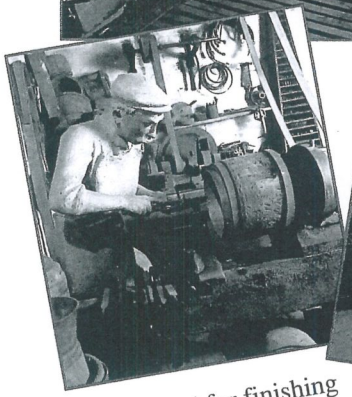
Front Cover: Rope Making

Driving bees from a straw skep

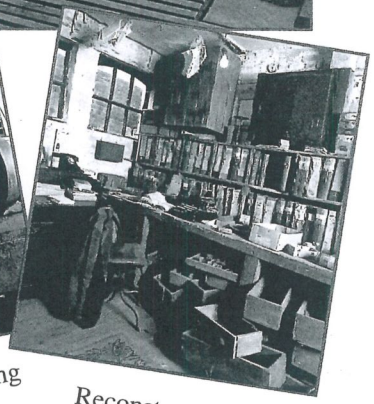
The riverside town of Bewdley once supported numerous local industries and a thriving community of craftsmen and women. The museum, housed in the town's old Butchers' Shambles, provides a fascinating insight into the trades of the area and the lives of its people. These are illustrated through displays, working exhibits and demonstrations.

Casting - a spectacular process





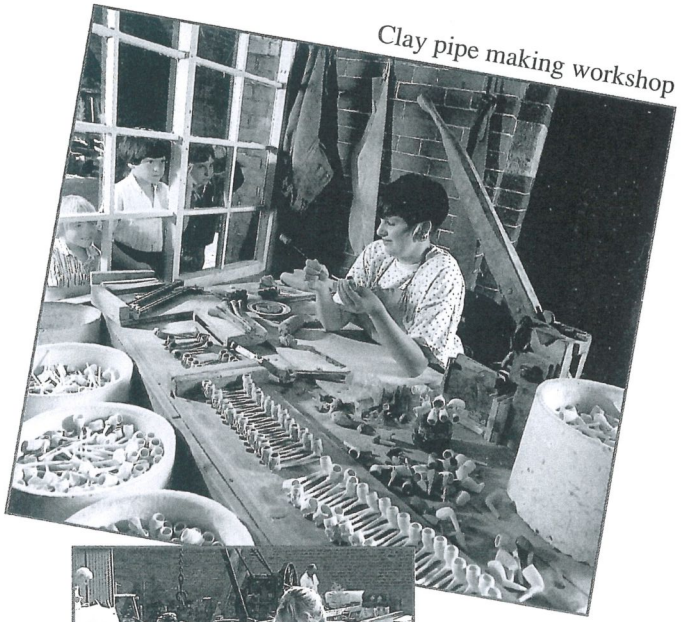
Lathes used for finishing brassware

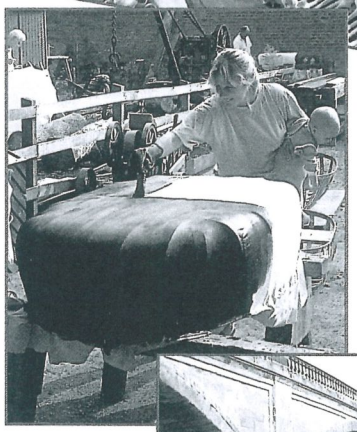


Reconstructed Foundry Office

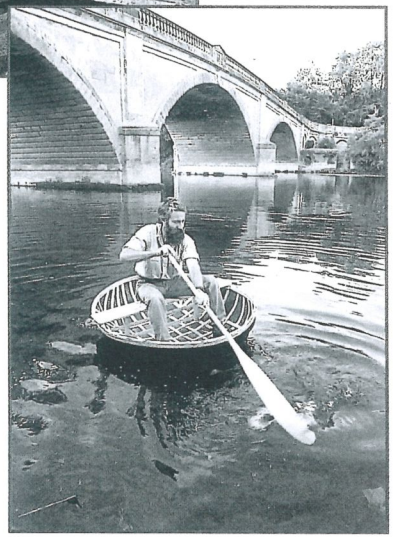
Maslin pans, saucepans, weights and bells were among the wares produced during the foundry's history.

Clay pipe making workshop





Coracle Making Course



Coracling on the River Severn

INTRODUCTION

Pewter is an alloy which has been used by man for thousands of years. The earliest known piece was discovered at Abydos in Egypt and dates from around 1500BC. It was the Romans who probably introduced pewter manufacture into Britain where they found plentiful supplies of the metals required. The major constituent of pewter is tin but on its own the metal is soft, difficult to cast and work and is not very durable. However, when alloyed with just a few per cent of a hardening agent such as copper, lead, bismuth or antimony, these difficulties can be largely overcome. The Romans found an abundant supply of tin in Cornwall and could obtain copper and lead from Wales and the Peak District of Derbyshire. Evidence of Romano-British pewter making has been found at a number of sites across England where hearths and pieces of stone moulds have been unearthed.

Pewter manufacture seems largely to have died out after the Roman withdrawal from Britain. A likely route for the re-introduction of pewtering technology was via the Cistercian monks during the 13th and 14th centuries. The Cistercian philosophy was to be largely self-sufficient for all their needs, including metal working. It is probable that the considerable number of Pilgrim Tokens which have survived from this period were made by the monks as a source of income. Later on they progressed to offer items with ceremonial uses such as chalices and spoons. It would seem a natural progression for surplus items to find their way into the local community and for a secular industry to develop.[1]

Pewter was a basic commodity of life for the next four hundred years. The list from Ingram and Hunt (see pages 10 and 11) illustrates that pewter was used in many areas of life and not just for eating and drinking and soon a guild was formed to control standards and quality. It was this control which lead to the consistently high standards in the finished product which enabled English pewterers to find a ready market in Europe. During the 15th century, pewter was second only to cloth as England's most important manufactured export.

In 1474, London pewterers were granted a royal charter from Edward IV for the legal control of pewter manufacture throughout the country. The organisation became known as the Worshipful Company of Pewterers and the charter gave them wide ranging powers including those of entry into a pewterers premises to check the quality of pewter being made and sold. Any substandard wares were either destroyed or confiscated and the pewterer was fined. Working practices were controlled so that apprentices were not

over-exploited or badly treated but also to ensure that they behaved according to the rules laid down for them. The Worshipful Company needed to be able to trace inferior pewter back to its maker if, for example, it was detected at a fair or for sale at another trader's shop. Therefore, an Act of Parliament was passed in 1503 requiring pewterers to strike their own maker's symbol or 'touch mark' on their wares. London pewterers had to record their marks on sheets of pewter kept at Pewterers' Hall. The earliest sheets were lost in the Great Fire of London but sheets from 1668 onwards still exist.

The craft reached its peak after the Civil War and it has been estimated that at that time around 3000 people were employed in pewter manufacture from a population of five million or so.[2] Another estimate indicates that about 90 million pieces were in use at any one time during the 17th century, when pewterers had a near monopoly on the provision of domestic utensils.

Pewter's low melting point (only 238°C) makes it easy to produce but also means that it readily melts in fires! Much pewter has been lost in this way while many pieces were melted down to make musket balls during the Civil War. Also pewter has always been recycled. When an item was broken, became tarnished or simply went out of fashion, it was often sold back to the pewterer for around a third of the price per pound of the replacement. All these factors have resulted in a scarcity of pewter dating from before the Civil War, with pewter from the late 17th and early 18th centuries being none too common either.

The industry declined from the late 18th century because of competition from Staffordshire pottery wares and the development in Sheffield of a method of cold rolling pewter into thin sheets which could then be pressed between metal forming dies or hand raised with a hammer. The parts so formed were then soldered together. Later these sheets were spun around a wooden former. These new techniques enabled the Sheffield pewterer to reproduce all the old styles and many more, only more cheaply than by casting. The new metal was known as Britannia metal but the new techniques were not recognised by the Worshipful Company whose influence over the trade declined drastically.

The production of cast pewter continued into the 19th century, largely represented by the production of tankards and measures, and is still flourishing in the hands of A E Williams Ltd of Birmingham and others. The Worshipful Company of Pewterers still exists to actively encourage research into the industry's past and to promote the modern pewter industry.

METHODS OF MANUFACTURE

The low melting point of tin (232°C) and its readiness to alloy with other metals means that simple wares can be produced in pewter relatively easily. However, the manufacture of higher grade wares involves a considerable level of craftsmanship and skill.

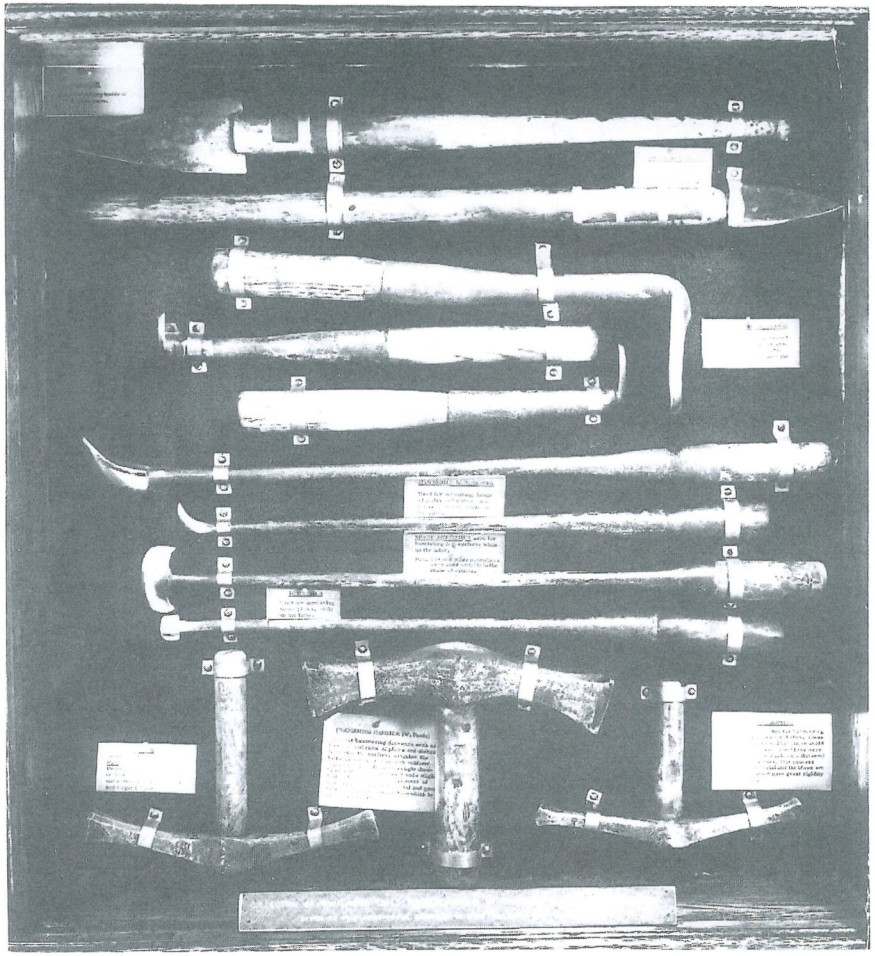
The pewter that was produced in Bewdley was cast – not made from rolled sheets as in Sheffield and, later, Birmingham. After casting, pieces had to be soldered, hammered or turned. A basic set of tools consisted of a range of moulds, ladles, soldering irons, hammers, mallets and a lathe with a variety of turning tools.

Items of flatware such as plates, dishes, basins and spoons were cast in two-part moulds which had been lined with a coating such as egg white and jewellers' rouge to ensure the free flowing of the molten alloy. When cool, they were then hammered in the 'booge', the curved section between the rim and the well, to strengthen the metal before being skimmed and polished on a lathe.

Hollowares – tankards, mugs etc. were made in a number of parts which were then soldered together before being finished off on a lathe. A tankard, for example, would consist of three parts; the top of the body, the body base and the handle.

The late Tom Williams, of A.E. Williams Ltd, soldering a flagon.

Lathe work involved turning to smooth and decorate the surface, burnishing, then polishing the piece while spinning with a choice of abrasives such as 'shave grass' as recorded by Theophilus Presbyter in the early twelfth century. A handful of tin scrapings, Mare's Tail stems and fine sand from the River Trent were among the materials used for this purpose. Another was 'Tripoli' or 'Rotten Stone', a form of decayed limestone which was imported in large quantities from North Africa.



Collection of pewterers tools from the London pewterers Townsend & Compton. By kind permission of The Worshipful Company of Pewterers.

THE MARKS TO BE FOUND ON PEWTERWARES

Touchmarks

When a pewterer had completed his seven year apprenticeship, he could submit a piece of his work to the Guild for approval. If his work was satisfactory, he could register and 'strike' his own touchmark which was unique to himself.

Touchmark of John Duncumb.

Hallmarks

Probably as a marketing ploy in the 17th century, pewterers started to mark their pieces with a set of, usually, four marks emulating those found on silver. They are mostly unique to an individual pewterer and so can be used to identify him but they differ from silver hallmarks in that they do not include a date letter or town mark. Up until the second quarter of the 18th century these hallmarks were struck on the front of plate rims. After this date they are to be found on the back of the rim or the well.

Hallmarks of John Duncumb.

Rose and Crown

This mark, taken from the English Tudor Rose, was in use by the middle of the 16th century. It was used to denote quality and marking was controlled by the Worshipful Company. Most pewterers had their own variations of the design.

Crowned Rose device of John Duncumb.

Crowned 'X'

Like the Rose and Crown, the Crowned 'X' was originally a quality mark which indicated that the metal was of a certain standard. However, by the 18th century control over its use had been lost and there was widespread abuse of the mark.

A typical crowned X mark.

Labels or Cartouches

Traditionally, London pewter was considered to be superior and as a result, provincial pewterers began to mark 'London' on their pieces. Naturally, the London craftsmen objected and began to include their London address. Other advertising slogans were incorporated in these labels such as 'Superfine Hard Metal' to promote the idea that the goods were of a superior quality.

Labels of Stynt Duncumb.

Customs and Excise Marks

The Imperial Standard of measurement was adopted in the 1820's. Pewter vessels were used as measures in ale houses and were periodically checked by Customs and Excise officers to ensure that correct measures were being given. The vessel was then stamped with the initials of the reigning monarch and the number of the district in which it was checked.

A customs mark from the reign of Victoria.

THE PEWTERERS OF BEWDLEY

Situated at the hub of a busy communications network, Bewdley provided its pewterers with the ideal location in which their trade could flourish.

The River Severn linked the town with Bristol and the sea and large quantities of bulky raw material could be cheaply imported up river. Beyond Bewdley, the river was shallower and less easily navigable and many of the larger vessels would transfer their cargoes here to smaller shallower draught boats for continued passage up river to Shrewsbury.

The town was equally well served by land routes. As an important centre of the packhorse trade it had links with Wales, the Midlands and the North and allowed Bewdley pewterers ready access to markets in these areas and beyond.

We know from the Bewdley Bridge and Chapel Warden's accounts that pewterers were at least selling their pewter in Bewdley as early as 1568:

> 'Item R's of margaret grene wydowe for the hole rent of the uppermost standing of the pewteres upon the south syde of the court howsesse at upon Saynt Androwes daye in the Xth yere of our Sovaryne lady quene Elizabeth.
>
> It R's of Richard worthyngton the pewterer for the yeres rent of the secunde standing eastwards.
>
> It R's of William a Cradeley the pewterer for the yeres Rent of the thrydde standing east.
>
> It R's of Grene bank the pewterer rec of the ffowthe standing east..'[3]

Others mentioned in the accounts are Harry Wydsam and George Towstance. The earliest pewterer for whom we have reasonable documentation is Thomas Smith. He lived and worked at 25 Load Street which still exists as a shop. Thomas Smith married in 1672 and died in 1719. An inventory of his goods entitled 'Inventory of Thomas Smith the Older, Pewterer' was taken on the 14th January of that year by Nicholas Ward, Christopher Bancks (presumably the Bewdley pewterer of whom more later) and Ralph Smith. The document shows that Thomas Smith was a successful businessman and was rather wealthy for the times as the value of his goods totalled £313-18-05d.

However, these early pewterers are thought to have worked on a relatively small scale, perhaps employing an apprentice and a journeyman. It was with the arrival from Wigan of Christopher Bancks that the industry began to be of major importance to the town's economy. The Bancks family business,

together with that of the Duncumbs who were succeeded by Ingram and Hunt and then Crane and Stinton ensured that pewtering thrived in Bewdley for 140 years.

THE BANCKS FAMILY

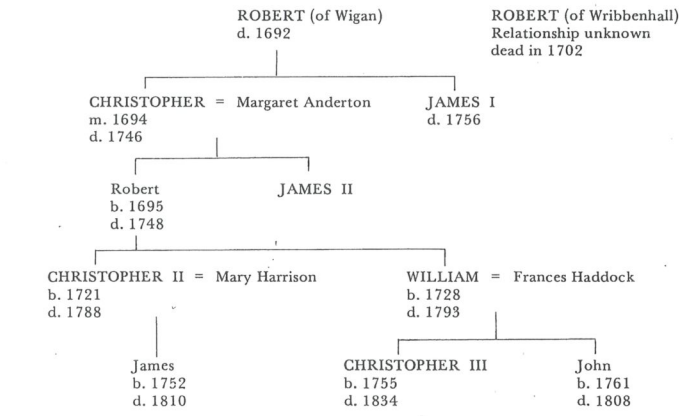
Christopher Bancks arrived in Bewdley from Wigan in 1697. He came from a family of pewterers who can be traced back as far as Adam Bancks who died in 1559 and who continued as pewterers in Wigan until the 18th century.

Christopher arrived with a letter from the mayor of Wigan stating that 'Mr. Christopher Bancks is a real worker and maker of all sorts of pewter, and that he has served a lawful apprenticeship in the art, mystery and calling of the pewterer, and that he is well disposed towards the Government and towards the Church of England as by law established.'

It was thought that Christopher was the first member of his family to have settled in Bewdley. However, a search by the Pewterers' Company to check the quality of pewter being produced in the town in 1702 shows that a 'Robert Bancks of Wribbenhall in Kidderminster parish' was now dead and mentions some of his pewter. Perhaps Christopher moved to Bewdley to help with the pewtering business of an ageing relative?

The spire flagon illustrated on the front cover was made by Christopher Bancks II and is inscribed 'C. Bancks C. Warden 1780'

Banks of Bewdley



Note: Pewterers in capital letters.

The Bancks Family.

Marks of Christopher and James Bancks.

The Duncumb Family

John Duncumb was a younger son of a landed Surrey family who was apprenticed to a Birmingham pewterer, William Wood, in the mid 1690's. In 1702, he married Wood's daughter, Elizabeth, and around the same time established his own business in Birmingham. This enterprise flourished and by 1718 had a turnover of about £2000 per annum, - hundreds of thousands of pounds in modern terms. John and Elizabeth had thirteen children all of whom were baptised at St. Martin's Church, Birmingham, between 1703 and 1720.

On the 20th March 1707, he applied to the Court of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers to become a Freeman, but for reasons that were not recorded, he was turned down. However, in spite of this, on one of his touchmarks he proclaimed himself 'Freeman of' and usually put this touchmark next to a 'London' cartouche. He continued to work in Birmingham until 1720, but in 1719 he inherited some of his father's fortune and decided to invest it in setting up a new pewtering business in the thriving river port of Wribbenhall.

This became the largest pewtering concern of its time. Some 20 tons of pewterware was produced annually, the equivalent of 50,000 common plates of 9½" diameter! Most of this production was of sadware, that is plates and dishes but with a proportion of basins, bedpans, chamberpots and a small amount of holloware - tankards and measures. Very large numbers of spoons were also produced. The factory also supplied unfinished or 'rough' pewterwares to other pewterers for finishing. Between twenty and thirty men were employed and John Duncumb pioneered the change from workshop to mass production techniques.

From the surviving day book of John Duncumb, which covers the period from July 1718 to December 1724, it is possible to get a very good picture of his business at that time. This remained steady at around £2000 turnover per annum, serving some 65 customers at any one time, though a total of 124 are named over the five year period. Most were situated in towns within a thirty to forty mile radius of Bewdley, with Shrewsbury predominating.

Some consignments were sent to places as far away as Chester, Grantham and Burton on Trent[1].

John Duncumb died in 1745 in his early sixties and was buried on the 8th November at Kidderminster. His will, made on 7th June 1739, bequeathed his estate as follows:

To his eldest son George, his estates in Surrey
To his daughters Ann and Sarah, £1000 each
To his son Stynt, all his household goods, stock in trade and personal effects together with the buildings at Wribbenall
To his son Joseph £500
To his Grand-daughter Mary Ingram, £500 on attaining 21 years
To his Grandson John Ingram junior, £200 on attaining 21 years

Witnesses were Christopher Bancks, Edward Burlton and John Ingram Senior, his son in law.

Marks of John Duncumb.

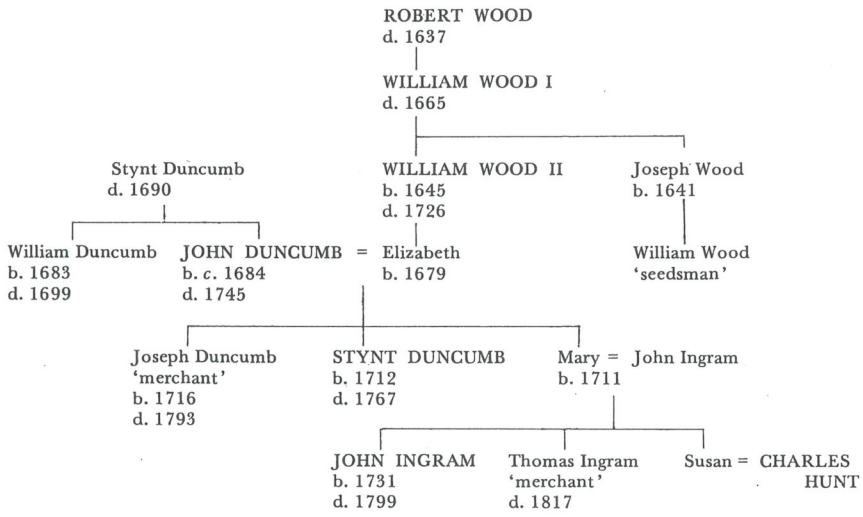
John's son Stynt (Stent, Staint) was baptised at St. Martin's Church on 22nd May 1712. By 1730 he had joined his father in the business close to where they lived at Wribbenhall House. This stood adjacent to Pewterers' Alley but was demolished in the 1930's. Nearby stood the Pewterers' Guildhall which was removed in 1841 by Lord Sandys and re-erected at Ombersley. The large amount of surviving pewter which bears Stynt's mark indicates that his business continued to flourish but no records remain to confirm this.

Stynt Duncumb died in 1767 aged only 55 apparently unmarried and he was buried at Kidderminster on 3rd May. In his will he left the business to his

nephew, John Ingram junior, son of his sister and her husband John Ingram senior. The will bears a seal with the well known Duncumb crest of a horse's jamb (leg) rising from a coronet. This crest had been confirmed to the Surrey Duncumbs by the Herald's Visitation of Surrey in 1623.

Marks of Stynt Duncumb.

Wood, Duncumb and Ingram



The Duncumb Family.

John Ingram and Charles Hunt

John Ingram was descended from John Ingram of Upper House, Clifton on Teme, who was granted the arms 'Ermine on a fesse gules three escallops or' in 1694 which appears in one of John Ingram's hallmarks. John's father was a successful Bewdley attorney who had acquired the lease to the ancient royal manor of Tickenhill and lived with his first wife Anne at Tickenhill House. He re-married after the death of Anne and his second wife was Mary Duncumb, Stynt Duncumb's sister. They had a son, John junior, who was probably apprenticed to his uncle, Stynt.

After Stynt's death in 1767, John inherited the business. He may have been in business on his own account for some time before this as he was 37years old at the time. By 1778, he had formed a partnership with his brother in law Charles Hunt, husband of his sister Susan. This became a very large pewtering business as can be seen from the accounts, which survive from 1769 to the early 1800's. They record the names of over seven hundred customers between 1769 and 1790 covering most of England, Wales, and from the amount of Ingram and Hunt pewter found in the USA, they also had a flourishing export business across the Atlantic. The partnership produced and bought for re-sale a wide variety of items as can be seen from this list taken from the order book between 1803 and 1805.

Shallow dishes
Common PB Dishes
Common dishes 15in.
Oval water venison dishes
Small x soup plates 9in.
Plates 24in. oval
Common plates
New fashioned water plates
Extra large basin with lid
Large wash hand basins with feet
Mid oval tureens
Soup linings with covers
Mid tureens
Small common porringers
Common chamber pots
Bed pans
Child's chair pans
Quart funnels
Half pint funnels
1 pint round tea pots
Oval tea pots
Quarts, pints, half pints:-
bellied full
bellied short
full with rings round
straight full

Common shallow dishes
Deep dishes
27in. oval dishes
Small x plates 9in.
Plates 12in. 13in. 14in. 16in.
18in. 20in. 22in. 23 in.
Large water plates
Common piece basins
Small wash hand basins with feet
Piece basin 12 and half in.
Soup linings-no covers
Large soup linings
Pint porringers
Middle common porringers
Large x chamber pots
Stool pans
Urinals
Pint funnels
Phial funnels
Tea pots, largest of the old shape
Bellied tea pots
Pints, half pints straight short, wide bottom
Quarts, pints, straight short, wine
Common quarts, pints
Common straight full half pints

straight short
Quarts, pints, straight with lip
Glass make quarts, pints
Glass bottom tankards
Quarts at 2lbs
Wine measures, full with lid
Full quart liquor measures
Apothecary measures
Short candle moulds
Bracket candlesticks
Round inks, no caps
Medium chest inks
French syringe pipes
Female syringes
Pint syringe with pipes
Tablespoons
Tutane plain teaspoons
Soup ladles
Three sizes of ladles
Butter boats
Pepper casters
Salts, round, three legs with glass linings
Tooth powder boxes
Limbecks
Dram bottles
Four and a half in. crumb combs
Dish cover knobs
Ice pots or churns, assorted

Small tavern pots
Glass bottom quarts, pints
Quarts, pints, half pints, straight short with foot cut lower
Wine measures, short with lid
Common straight quart wine measures
Pint liquor measures, wine with lid
Candle moulds
Hand candlesticks
Ink stands
Round inks, with caps
Medium loggerhead inks
Ear syringes
Half pint syringes with pipes
Teaspoons
Teaspoons flowered
Gravy spoons
Five sizes of soup spoons
Common cullenders
Pepper boxes
Mustard pots with glass linings
Round foot salts
Shaving cans
Diddy bottles
Childs boats
Wine strainers
Scolloped ice moulds
Grained tin

The quantities of individual items which they made were huge; one hundred thousand spoons a year were made in fifty different patterns; two and a half thousand pint tavern pots were produced with a thousand each of quarts and half pints.

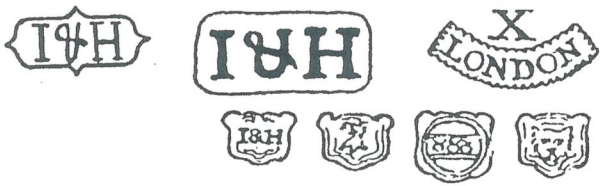
Much of their output was sold through major wholesalers in the cities and these orders were probably collected by a man called Stinton whose name appears frequently in the later order books. He would travel to towns in a particular area to win orders which were then recorded and which would show clear geographical patterns. The turnover of the firm around 1800 was £6000 per annum, representing about 55 tons of pewter wares at an average value of one shilling per pound. Few orders appear to have been supplied from stock and most took between two and six weeks to fill.

Naturally, having such a wide range of goods created employment elsewhere, as they needed to buy in many accessories such as teapot handles, green baize for candlestick bottoms, glass bottoms for tankards and large quantities of grease. This was probably used to lubricate the 'wheels' used for finishing pewter and perhaps for flux used when soldering pieces together. Suppliers

of the average 53lbs of grease bought per month between September 1805 and October 1806 were families such as the Cotterells, Doveys and Greaves who lived in the vicinity of Pewterers' Alley.

Not infrequent purchases were of 'hatts' which were probably felt hats which were very convenient for handling hot moulds. Hat making was a Bewdley trade so perhaps further local employment arose from their use in this way.

John Ingram died in 1799 and some time before 1811 and probably in 1807 the business passed to Crane and Stinton who owned a lease on workshops adjoining Wribbenhall House from 1807 onwards.



Marks of Ingram and Hunt.

Crane and Stinton

Little is known about Mr. Stinton apart from the fact that his initial as recorded in Ingram and Hunt's order book was 'J' and that he was a traveller for them. He also subscribed five shillings a week in 1815 towards establishing a Sunday School in Wribbenhall. The Crane family however, was an old established Bewdley family and several members appear in town records during the 18th century. Four were Bailiff for example between 1747 and 1804.

The lease on the workshops ran for 14 years from 1807 so that it is quite likely that the business passed to John Carruthers Crane in 1821. His name appears without Stinton in a trade directory for 1827. A bill which still exists, issued by the auctioneer Richard Booth, advertises the sale on 5th July 1831 of the premises in the occupation of Mr. John C. Crane situated in the centre of Market Place (see number 25 of the 'Pewter Trail') 'where the business of an ironmonger and general furnisher has been carried out for about a century past'.[6] This was clearly Crane's retail outlet in the town centre as manufacture took place across the river in Wribbenhall. The statement that it had been used for similar business for a century suggests that it was perhaps Ingram and Hunt's and before that Duncumb's shop.

Crane retired in 1838 and his moulds are thought to have passed to James

Yates of Birmingham. So, in effect, the business returned to the city where it had been founded nearly one and a half centuries earlier by John Duncumb.

By a roundabout route the moulds, including the one owned by Duncumb now in the exhibition, are now in the possession of A. E. Williams Ltd. of Well Lane, Digbeth, which is only a few hundred yards from where Duncumb first set up in business and from St. Martin's Church where the Duncumb children were all baptised!

Marks of Crane and Stinton.

Joseph Morgan

The pewterware made by Joseph Morgan bears a number of similarities to that made in Bewdley, such as the rounded attention handle terminal favoured by Ingram and Hunt and Crane, and the flared base on tankards and measures. Furthermore, the hallmarks of Morgan are very similar to the hallmarks of J. C. Crane.

A possible explanation of this is that he was apprenticed to Crane and Stinton from1816 to 1823. This would fit well with the confirmed events in his life such as his marriage to Susanna in 1824 and the birth of his daughter Ann Maggs in 1827.[7]

Marks of Joseph Morgan. [8]

THE BEWDLEY PEWTER TRAIL

For the visitor who wishes to step beyond the glass cases of the permanent exhibition and out into the physical setting for the story of Bewdley pewtering echoes of the trade are everywhere. What a fine setting it is too! By following this trail the visitor can not only see what remains of the trade's former importance but can also enjoy something of the architectural elegance and atmosphere of this delightful riverside town.

This gentle stroll takes approximately 45 minutes to complete and there are benches on which to relax along the route.

The trail begins outside the Museum. . .

1: Across Load Street stands the George Hotel, one of the most important inns in Bewdley. Behind the hotel, in what is now the car park was stabling for many of the pack horses on which Bewdley pewter was carried in long trains to its many markets in Wales, the Midlands and beyond.

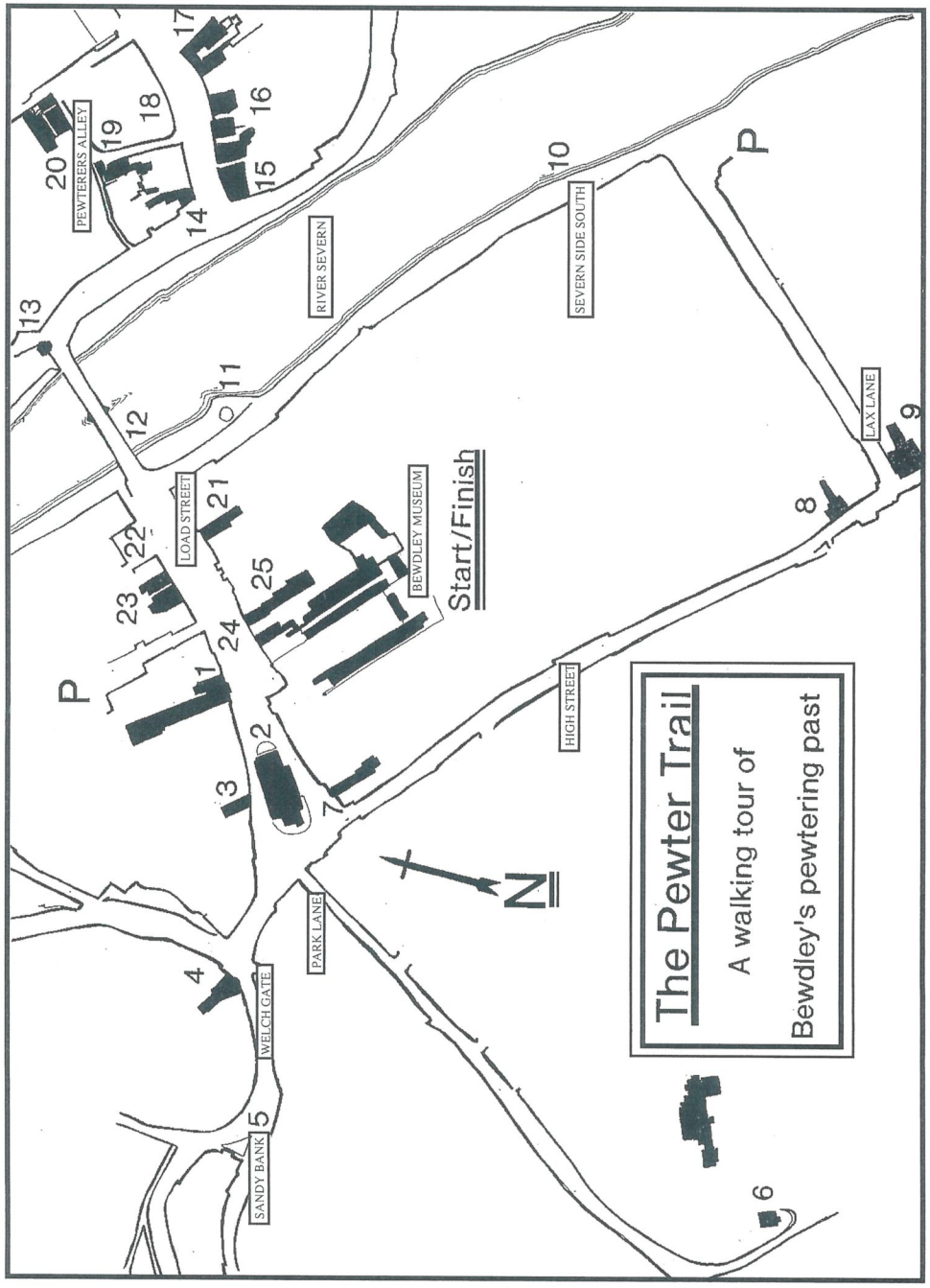
2: Dominating Load Street to your left is St. Anne's church, dating from the 1740's.

3: Walking up Load Street to the right of St. Anne's, we come to number 55 - now HR's wine bar - which was for many years owned by the Bancks family - one of many such properties as we shall see. In the 1820's it was worth £400. Like many of the houses in Load Street, the 18th century facade may hide an older timber-framed building.

4: At the top of Load Street the road divides. On the corner, the large white building, now a fish and chip shop was for many years the 'Pack House Inn' - a further reflection of the importance of this form of transport to the town's economy. At its height, there was stabling in the town for 400 horses at any one time.

5: A short stroll up Welch Gate leads to another junction. The road in front of you - Sandy Bank - was once the main approach before the alternative easier route to your right was cut. The gradient you see here goes on for several hundred yards and the difficulties of leading a train of pack horses heavily laden with pewter up or down the unsurfaced road can only be guessed at. Retrace your steps and cut across the top of Load Street to the foot of Park Lane.

6: For the energetic, Tickenhill, a large originally 16th century building lies up Park Lane. The site has a long and illustrious history and was at one time



a royal palace. The connection with the pewter industry is that the Georgian facade that we see today was added by John Ingram's father in 1738. He had married Mary Duncumb, sister of Stynt, and John Ingram was born, perhaps here at Tickenhill,in 1731. If the view uphill looks too daunting, carry straight on towards High Street.

7: Opposite you will see Bewdley Butchers, number 25 Load Street, owned by the pewterer Thomas Smith. An inventory of his goods compiled on his death in 1719 includes 'lead, old brass, the casting frame, tools and old wire' to the value of fifteen pounds and five shillings. Continue along High Street.

8: As you go downhill, another 'Pack Horse Inn' stands on your left.

9: At the junction of Lax Lane stands Lower Park House, marked by a blue plaque noting it as the birth place of Stanley Baldwin, Prime Minister in the 1920's and 1930's. Turn into Lax Lane whose name derives from the Old Norse word for salmon and continue down to the river bank. Just downstream when the river is low, slight rapids mark the location of the ford where those salmon were once landed and which was the earliest crossing of the river at Bewdley. Turn left along Severn Side South.

10: During Bewdley's heyday as a trading and maufacturing port, the quays along the river would have been a centre of industrious activity. Across the river you can see the quays at Wribbenhall, now sadly overgrown, where much of the tin and other raw materials of the pewter trade would have arrived by trow, the characteristic flat bottomed cargo vessel of the Severn. From here too doubtless would have flowed a constant stream of Bewdley pewter heading for towns up and downstream.

11: As you continue along Severnside, the bandstand marks the position of old Bewdley bridge - you can see where its abutment projects into the river. Damaged by floods in 1795, it was patched up and lasted for another three years. Continue along the river and cross over the bridge.

12: The bridge was built to a design by Thomas Telford in 1798 and was, remarkably, completed in one season thanks to unusually dry weather and low water.

13: At the far end of the bridge to your left, the pattern of the pavement marks the site of the octagonal toll house demolished in 1960. Tolls were levied on all traffic until 1834. Follow the road along the river where several benches allow you to sit and admire the view of Bewdley across the river.

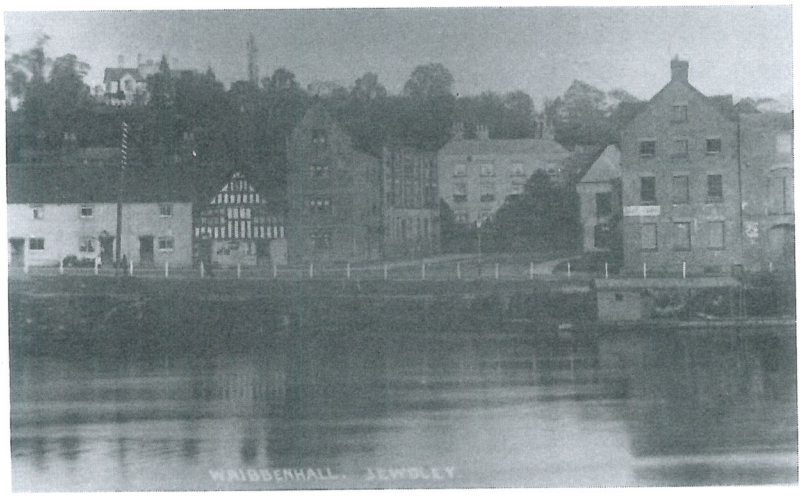
14: The road junction is known locally as 'Beales Corner' after the Beales, an important merchant family of the 18th century. The building on the left corner belonged to the Beales, whose interests may well have included shipping raw materials and finished goods to and from the pewterers who were their immediate neighbours in Wribbenhall.

15: The building on the opposite corner was the warehouse of another Bewdley pewterer, Benjamin Cotterell. It originally stood a storey higher.

16: Turn left along Kidderminster Road, an ancient pack horse route and the main thoroughfare for the transport of Bewdley pewter to the important Midlands markets. On your right, several of the houses below the hotel are believed to have been part of the extensive property owned by the Bancks family.

17: The Black Boy, another important inn bearing a name common in trading ports and a reminder of Bewdley's link with Bristol and overseas.

18: Opposite the Black Boy, on the site now occupied by the police station, stood Wribbenhall House, John Duncumb's house, a fine large 18th century town house standing in its own walled garden. It projected so far into Kidderminster Road that it stood a mere twelve feet across the road from the Black Boy. The house was demolished in the 1930's. Turn left into Pewterers' Alley.



View of Wribbenhall showing Wribbenhall House, projecting into the road, before its demolition in the 1930's.

19/20: As its name reveals, this area was at the heart of the Bewdley pewter industry. At the entrance to the alley stood the pewterers' guildhall, a seventeenth century timber-framed house removed in 1841 and re-erected in Ombersley, a village on the Worcester road, around ten miles from Bewdley where it still stands opposite the 'Crown' public house.

The Pewterers' Guild Hall, removed from its site in Wribbenhall and rebuilt here in Ombersley in 1841.

Here were the workshops, stores and warehouses which helped to make Bewdley the most important pewtering centre of its time. On your right is the original garden wall of Wribbenhall House. Around the corner stands Vine Cottage (20), reputed to have been the counting house of John Ingram - perhaps where journeymen pewterers would bring their work for delivery and payment. As you go left down the narrow alley that leads back to the river frontage, the backs of the buildings in Pewterers' Alley are revealed. It is not difficult to imagine the maze of small workshops adding to the many tons of Bewdley's annual output. As you emerge from the alley, turn right and retrace your steps over the bridge.

21: As you enter Load Street on your left is number four, which passed in 1788 to Thomas Bancks.

22: Immediately to the right of the bridge stands the Angel Inn. Though obviously a modern building, it does occupy the site of the original Angel,

which passed to James Bancks in 1762. Thereafter it remained in the family until sold at the George Hotel in 1871 for £600.

23: Further along from the Angel stands an impressive double fronted house painted blue, numbers 70 and 71 Load Street, occupied and later owned by the Bancks family and sold at the same sale at the George in 1871 for £810. These and other properties (see 3 and 16) are substantial buildings in prime sites and they help to illustrate just how much wealth and social importance the pewter trade had helped the Bancks to achieve.

24: As you stand in Load Street you will see just how broad the street is. It was here in the middle of the present roadway that the 'standings' of the regular fairs and markets were located. Records of pewterers occupying these timber market stalls go back to 1568 and are among the earliest references to Bewdley pewterers which we have.

25: Adjacent to the Museum is number 10 Load Street, now the wool shop and in 1830 the house and shop of John Carruthers Crane. He paid poor rates on the house of 18/- per annum.

You have now returned to your starting point and have completed the Bewdley Pewter trail.

Cleaning

Pewter was kept clean and scoured while in use. Ben Johnson, in 'Every Man in His Humour' of 1601, has Lorenzo senior referring to Stephano's character 'Which reflects as bright to the world as an old alewife's pewter'.

We also have Mrs. Margaret Elmes method for keeping pewter clean which dates from 1645:

'For your plaites if they are well washed every mealle with water and brann, soe hot as theare hands can endewar it then rinsed in faire woater and set one by one befoare the fire, as they may dry quick, I am confident that they will dry without spots.'

She claimed this would remove everything except the stain of pickled rabbits!

Vegetable matter other than bran was used such as hay or coarse grasses. Another useful plant was the Mare's Tail referred to above. Also known as Horsetail, it has the ability to take up silicates from the soil water and deposit them in nodules on its stem and leaves. When dried, the plant becomes an

excellent scourer - hence its alternative names of 'scouring rush' or 'pewterwort'.

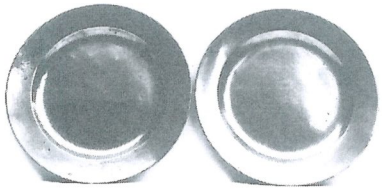
If left uncleaned, pewter slowly develops a thick, dark surface corrosion as a result of damp and air pollution. Under this corrosion,which is porous, the pewter can become badly corroded and pitted and if left it will eventually deteriorate.

Part cleaned pewter plate showing the surface corrosion which develops on pewter if neglected.

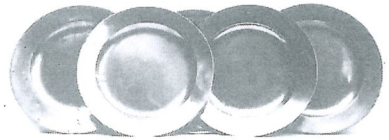
The Bewdley Collection

The Bewdley collection of pewter now stands at around thirty pieces and it is hoped that this figure will continue to grow.

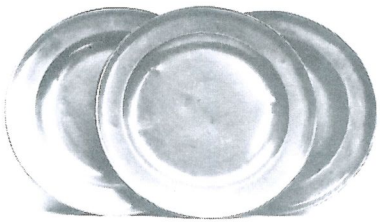
Bewdley pewterers concentrated their production on functional pewterwares for everyday use. Their products, though made in large numbers, were however of a very high quality as can be seen from the pieces on display and the illustrations on the following pages.



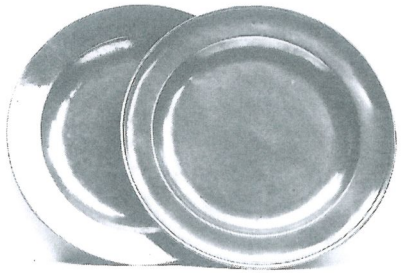
John Duncumb
Two 9¾" plain rimmed plates.



John Duncumb
Five 9/9¼" plain rimmed plates.

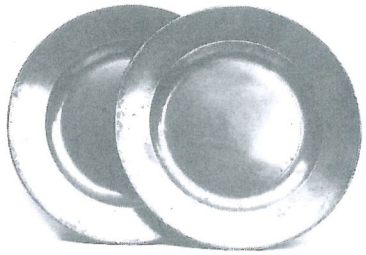


John Duncumb
Three 16½" single reeded dishes.

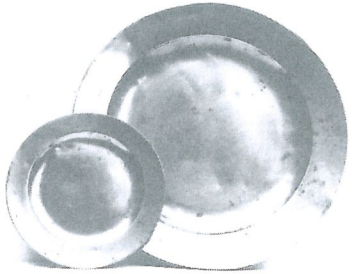


John Duncumb
15½" plain rimmed dish (left) & 15½" single reeded dish (right).

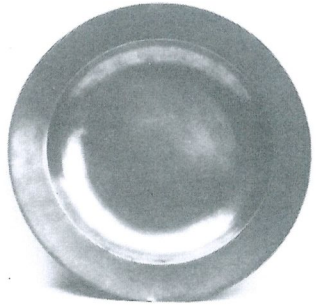
John Duncumb
20½" single reeded charger.



Stynt Duncumb
Pair of 9" plain rimmed plates.



Stynt Duncumb
9¼" plain rimmed plate & 16½" plain rimmed dish.

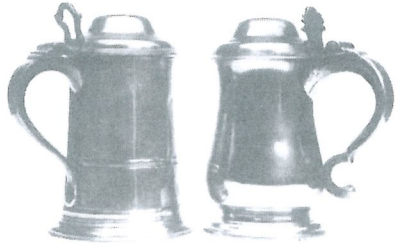


John Ingram
9¼" plain rimmed bowl.

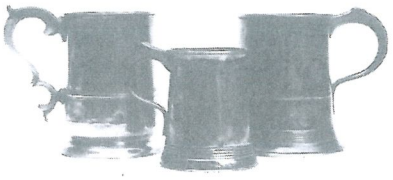
John Ingram
9¼" plain rimmed bowl.

John Ingram
Tobacco box.

Ingram & Hunt
(left to right)
Glass bottomed quart tankard, half pint beaker, pint tankard.



Ingram & Hunt
Dome lidded quart (left) & dome lidded bellied quart (right).



Crane & Stinton/John Carruthers
Crane (left to right)
Pint tankard, half pint tankard, pint tankard.

Joseph Morgan (left to right)
Quart tankard, concave pint tankard, spouted pint measure, quart tankard.

Notes on the text

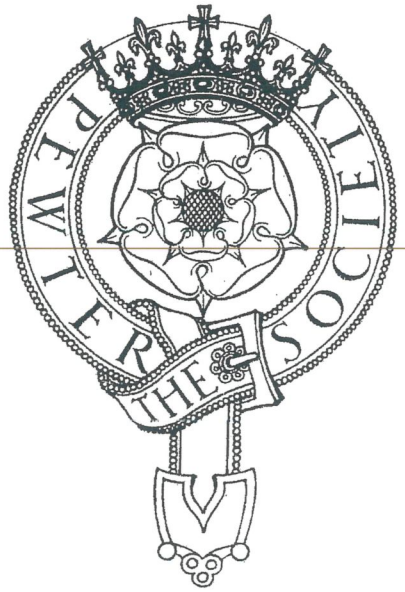
[1] Peter Hooper, Pewter Society Journal, Autumn 1992
[2] C. Hull, 'Pewter', Shire Album No. 28
[3] Bewdley Historical Research Group
[4] Hereford and Worcester County Record Office 4600 b 705: 550/316
[5] Hereford and Worcester County Record Office 7600 705: 550/96
[6] Pewter Society Journal, Vol. 7, P. 45 1989
[7] Dr. A. S. Law. Pewter Society Journal,Vol. 3, No. 4, Autumn 1982
[8] All pewter marks are from 'Provincial Pewterers', Homer & Hall

Where else to see pewter in the Midlands

The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, near Broadway, Worcs.
Coughton Court, near Alcester, Warks.
Warwick Castle, Warwick.
The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust properties, Stratford upon Avon, Warks.

Further reading

'Provincial Pewterers'. Homer & Hall, Phillimore 1985
'Pewter'. Charles Hull, Shire Album No. 280
'Pewter of Great Britain'. C. A. Peal, John Gifford 1983
'Phaidon Guide to Pewter'. V. Brett,Phaidon 1981



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