

A History of Wentworth Pewter

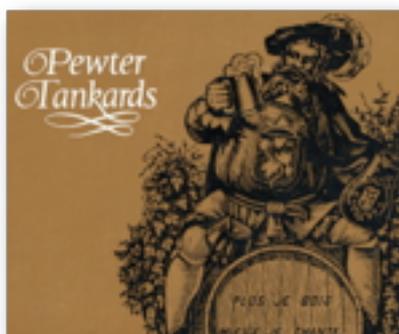
Arthur Richard Wentworth was born on 5th September 1909 to Arthur and Susannah Wentworth, at their home in central Sheffield, 125 Duke Street.

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

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



An early Wentworth display of Wentworth products



One of the first Wentworth catalogues, from the 1970s

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



Early Wentworth Novelty tankards

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Richard Abdy, Liveryman

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



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

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