

Charles Welch, FSA

Many of those of you who are connected to the Worshipful Company of Pewterers (and other Livery Companies in the City) may have already heard of Charles Welch, and indeed may have read, or just dipped into, his History of the Pewterers' Company, first published in 1902, modernised by Major GS Johnson and republished in 1972, and then recently further modernised by Past Master of the Company, William Grant, his edition published in 2003.



Mr Charles Welch, FSA

I found in my records the other day a photocopy, of which what follows is a transcription, of this Obituary of Welch. I did not know where it came from, but William Grant, the Company's Historian, said he believed it came from *The Times*.

I do know, from the website of the Cutlers' Company, that Charles Welch died on the 14th January 1924. The biographical note on the Cutlers' site suggests that he was a much more prolific author than this Obituary suggests. But for the record, the Obituary goes as follows:

Mr Charles Welch

The City of London heard with much regret of the death on Monday of Mr Charles Welch, FSA, who for many years was the Librarian at the Guildhall. He was in his 76th year, and had been in retirement since 1906.

The son of a physician at Hackney, Mr Welch was born on the 21st July, 1848, and was sent to the City of London School under Dr Mortimer. On leaving he joined at once the then small staff in the Guildhall Library, which consisted of a librarian and two assistants. During his service of more than forty years he helped the Library to develop into the largest in London, next to the British Museum. In the last year of the old library the attendances numbered just over 14,000, but in the first year of the new library, which was built in 1872, they were over 170,000. Mr Welch compiled the original book catalogue, and later laid down the plan of the present excellent card index. This indexes one result of the International Conference of Librarians held at the London Institution in 1877, and it has since been adopted as a model by many public libraries in the kingdom.

On the history and antiquities of the City Mr Welch became an authority second only to the late Dr RR Sharpe. He wrote lives of civic worthies in the "Dictionary of National Biography," and contributed to the Victoria County Histories. With the late Canon Benham he wrote "Medieval London"; he edited the register of freemen in the time of Henry VIII., the old churchwardens' accounts of Allhallows', London-wall, and a facsimile Ogilby and Morgan's map of London, 1677. In the City Guilds he took a keen interest, and published a book on their coat armour.

He wrote the history of the Cutlers' Company, of which he was a past Master, and with which his family had been connected since 1617, of the Paviers' Company, of which he was a member of the court, and of the Pewterers' Company; he was also a liveryman of the Clockmakers' and

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Gardeners' Companies. His "Modern History of the City of London," which justifies its title, is of great value to the student. He also wrote books on London Bridge and on London coins. He was actively associated with the London and Middlesex Archeological Society, the Society of Antiquaries, the Hakluyt Society, the Bibliographical Society, and the Library Association.

Mr Welch was fond of vocal music, especially choir and part singing, and he was at one time a licensed lay reader of the diocese of London. He leaves a widow, four sons, one of whom is assistant librarian at the Guildhall, and six daughters.

Alan Williams

Photo: from the Cutlers' website.

The Worshipful Company of Cutlers: <http://www.cutlerslondon.co.uk/>

With the photocopy of the Obituary was a schedule of the Welch family's long-standing connection with the Worshipful Company of Cutlers. A copy is available should any reader wish to have one. Perhaps the Obituary and the schedule were sent to me by a previous Clerk to that Company?

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