

# The Sandy Law pewter collection

"It's old and grey but some people still love it"; thus John Windsor headed his article on pewter in *The Independent* on Saturday 6th September 1997. Writing on the eve of a major pewter sale at the then Phillips Auction House (now Bonham's) in Chester, Windsor went on to say: "Some collectors are afraid of old pewter. Not because the tin alloy contains a little lead and antimony, a close relation to arsenic, but because the unsorted heaps of grey metal tankards, tea pots and candlesticks on traders' stalls are so perplexing."

The sale was of "the biggest ever and probably the finest collection of British and European pewter comes under the hammer.

"What little old pewter is left has attracted only a small band of dedicated collectors. It has been a cheap collectible for the past century.

"But tin, pewter's main ingredient, is still the fourth most valuable metal (after platinum, gold and silver), and in the old days it was sufficiently valuable for the price of re-casting a battered pewter vessel to be fixed at just a third of its original price."

The collection Windsor was writing about was Dr Sandy Law's; Dr Law had been a stamp collector but, clearly, fell in love with pewter. Windsor went on to say: "Charles Hull, author of the Shire Album publication, *Pewter*, described to me how the country's stock of antique pewter got lost as China became fashionable at the end of the 18th century. ... Britain's 17th century population of six million owned 30,000 tons of pewter wares. Now there was a tenth of that quantity in a population ten times the size."

In the Sandy Law collection was a pewter plate, now owned by the Royal Palaces, known as the Arthur Plate, and displayed in the Great Kitchens complex at Hampton Court. Dr Law had bought the plate from a private collector.

We intend to publish an article on the Arthur Plate in a future issue of this e-zine.

Further reading material: *The Sandy Law Pewter Collection* (paperback), compiled by Phillips International Auctioneers and Valuers.

*Pewter*, by Charles Hull, published by Shire Album 280. ISBN: 0 7478 0152 5

John Windsor's article (Money: It's old and grey but some people still love it) in *The Independent*, of Saturday, 6th September, 1997

Albert Bartram became a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers in 2009.

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Editor: Alan Williams

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