Kimbell, of Aldersgate Street, London.

Alfred E Kimbell was, in simple terms, perhaps the most important figure in early pewter dealing throughout the period 1900 to 1938.

Important because he arranged, facilitated, the movement of desired and good pieces amongst collectors.

There has never, ever, been, to this writers knowledge, anything said that casts doubt on his reputation for probity.

He is not referred to, as far as is known, by Richard Neate, Charles Casimir, and others. Richard Mundey refers to him but once and briefly in any known writings as a "Silversmith" when he must have known well of his importance to early Pewter collectors from before Mundey was interested until just before Mundey was confident enough to open his first shop.

(This is really strange when you discover that they were bidding at the same Sotheys auction in 1929 and clearly in serious competition for lots. At this December 1929 auction the bidders recorded included - Neate, Fynde, Casimir, Mundey (or Munday) and Kimbell.) The following is the May 1929 Sotheys auction and shows Mundey and Kimbell bidding on following lots.

Mundey is known to have been performing for very little at the Gaiety Theatre until the middle of 1928. Yet in May 1929 (see above) he is bidding at Sotheys against "Kimbell" December 1929 he is bidding and buying old pewterware against such other established bidders as Richard Neate and A Fynde(Frank Bevan) - in business from at least 1920 - Charles Casimir and
Alfred Kimbell - 2nd generation antiques trade money and long established dealers. So where is Mundey selling it? - likely on the Caledonian market. - and remember he calls Kimbell - a "silversmith".) Although written as Mundey bidding against his known friends, we do not know that there was no friendly arrangement, as was the custom.)

Alfred E Kimbell is occasionally referred to with respect by significant members of the Society of Pewter Collectors in those years.

His business premises in Aldersgate Street were in a very key area, near to the Parish of St Bartholomew's, near to the Guildhall, close to Pewterers Hall, not far from the Smithfield Market, close to where the early SPC actually met. A very significant area in those years (long before and later). He started out as second generation of a successful family Jewellery, Pawnbrokers and Antiques dealership.

The Society of Pewter Collectors thought enough of him to mention his passing in their 1938 December bulletin. Something they significantly failed to do for any other dealers. This was then unprecedented - for a non-member dealer to be so mentioned.

This is in the SPC bulletin in December 1938 -

The Society heard with regret of the death of Mr. Alfred Kimbell and the President was requested to express the sympathy of the members to his family.

After the meeting Mr. and Mrs. Billing-Lewis kindly entertained the members and their wives to tea.

In the evening a dinner was held at the Star Hotel, Maidstone.

Faithfully yours,

G. J. GOLLIN, Hon. Secretary.

The importance might be gauged by asking today whom the Pewter Society would so mention with this respect - who was not a member, and never had been.

Alfred Kimbell, likely had personal confidence of the second generation professional respected dealer and he kept a low profile and hence did not feature much in the writings by those who would seek to build their own reputation as experts of the period.
He is, today totally unknown to most of either the UK Pewter Society or to the Worshipful Company of Pewterers.

Why then was he so important?

This website proposes that Alfred Kimbell was the one person in his business who had the trust of old pewter collectors and the means to buy whole collections and sell pieces to respected collectors, honestly, and to dispose of the pieces they did not want.

Likely he understood what he traded in rather better than most.

He was a dealer in an absolute prime position both personally and geographically.

No-one before has ever said that he was important. No-one before has ever looked at what he did. Mostly he is completely forgotten.

This article looks for clues amongst the unspoken, unwritten, practices of the first three decades of the 1900s.

What evidence is found for his role?

This article reproduces scans or photos of his - invoices, business cards, letters, mail shots, and what has been found of the comments of those who relied on his services.

Firstly then what was - (see the third small advert in the section below)

H & A Kimbell of 182, Aldersgate Street, London -

![Old Silver, Plate, and Pewter.
Wanted, pair of old Sheffield wine coolers, to purchase for cash. Reply, stating price and where to be seen, to (London.)—6415A. (hzt"

About 1904]
Alfred E Kimbell and his brother - a researcher writes -

Both Kimbells were trained as Jewellers by a Father who was originally a Silversmith..
and adds this research about the Kimbells-

H & A Kimbell were Henry and Alice Kimbell - likely established about 1868 - Henry died in 1909 and Alice in 1916.

There were two sons, Henry who died in 1941 and Alfred in 1938. It is unsure whether Henry was involved in the business.

Alfred is the one listed in Aldersgate Street from 1901 until his death (although his home was elsewhere).

What could be of interest is that Henry Snr was a Silversmith and both sons trained (actually apprenticed) as Pawnbrokers and Jewellers.

Henry Jnr - although Henry does list himself separately as a pawnbroker elsewhere, H and A Kimbell might not actually relate to parents Henry and Alice but might stand for Henry and Alfred Kimbell.
The company name actually continues until 1967; Henry had retired to Dorset about 1934 (but appears to keep an address in London) while Alfred is still involved in the business at his death in 1938; so who was running it after that?

The following letter in mid 1928 suggests that Alfred was very discerning and that his opinion was respected by those who were thought important - he has his own letterhead (from the family business address) but is still apparently in business with his brother until 1934 (??)

worries concerning an enamelled boss dish at Sotheby's in 1928

Here follows an article from the Connoisseur who are aware of the respect in which they (or Alfred) are held -
Commemorative Chargers - there is no evidence anywhere that Alfred E Kimbell ever dealt in these chargers. Despite being the leading dealer of his day and a buyer of the more valuable pieces sold at Sothebys (for example), there is about his offerings something that collectors could apparently trust completely. There is also no record of his dealing in wriggleworked William and Mary Tankards.
Other research tells us - the writer appreciates that some sections are becoming duplicated/or expressing contrasting views as taken from differing sources - but this should add to the developing picture of a serious early pewter dealer - who was respected in the early years - and, most importantly, in the later years, and tell the reader to make their own mind up on certain matters of fact.

The company was actually known as H & A Kimbell (of 182 Aldersgate Street) from certainly from 1901 and possibly earlier, until at least 1968. Unusual for those days in that H & A might have actually stood for Henry and Alice Kimbell.

Henry John was born about 1833 and Alice Edith about 1838. They must have had a very successful business as in 1901 they employed at least five Pawnbrokers Assistants as well as one of their sons.

Interestingly Henry always appears to list himself as a Pawnbroker and they do not 'live over the premises', and his daughters do not appear to have to work. Henry dies in 1909 leaving about eleven thousand pounds and Alice in 1916. The business is then carried on by their son Alfred Edward born about 1880 (so about the same age as Richard Neate) and is presumably the Mr Kimbell referred to by Richard Mundey (see extract from RM's own writings).
In 1901 and 1911 Alfred is actually living on the premises and may of course continue to do so although by the time he dies in 1938 and 182 Aldersgate Street is listed in his probate (of just over £7000) by then he also has a property in Amersham Berkshire.

The listing on every telephone directory entry (other than the occasional change in Telephone number/exchange 0 from 1911 is exactly the same; , H & A Kimbell 182 Aldersgate Street are Pawnbrokers, Jewellery and Antiques until Alfred dies when the Antiques disappears and only Pawnbrokers and Jewellery remain with an unknown proprietor.

Alfred dies in 1938 but the business name in Aldersgate Street continues up to at least 1968 - next directory 1970 and no listing from thereon.

Alfred didn't marry but we are now trying to trace descendents of his siblings to try and see if they can find out if one or any of them carried on the business even if behind the scenes.

His only brother married late and had no children - but his two of his sisters married Jewellers, one who had actually worked for Alfred certainly before and it appears immediately after his marriage.

The telephone listings which started in 1910 of 'Pawnbrokers, Jewellers and Antiques' - changed - so that in 1940 Antiques has been dropped and doesn't reappear again.

Kimbell advertisements. a telephone with ' National 6429' rather than 'Central 6429' - the Central 6429 phone numbers are all prior to 1929.

Walter Churcher's Scrapbook concerning his good friend the artist Frank Jackson c1900 (and a bit before?) - it appears that when Frank left to go to the USA Walter got what he wanted from his collection of pewter and we should note -

*Hence - Frank fades out of the scrap book and is not further mentioned - other than notes about Kimbell having his pewter (?)*

This is about 1900 or a little before!

Later memories of Richard Mundey (likely from the 1930s or a little before -)
A suggestion that he bought a collection from Frank Jackson who moved to the USA prior to 1900 - and then sold it to various other collectors -

(Naturally the K could be another dealer)

The part likely refers to the Staple Inn Pewter being shared between Frank Jackson and Walter Churcher (Churcher a founder of the 1918 Society of Pewter Collectors)

This collection of Major John Richardson DSO is here listed in 1925 and the handwriting perhaps that of Sutherland-Graeme.

_The writer wishes to thank Christine Ellis of Sydney Australia for the biographical detail supplied for this article._

Here follows mail from Alfred Kimbell to a Scottish collector -
The telephone number changed in about 1929 - so for how many years do you go on using the same printed business cards with the telephone number crossed out?

Whatever the answer and surely it is before 1934 because here is clearly Alfred E Kimbell telling us this is his business.

1) These tell us that in 1934 - he was trading alone under his own name - Alfred E Kimbell FRSA.

perhaps confirming his brother Henry Jnr had retired by - July.

2) It tells us that in 1936 pewter was important enough to have a bill head of its own - or at the least a bill head for the firm with a piece of pewter illustrated in the top left corner in colour printing - not the least expensive way to produce an image of pewter (a Glasgow Tappit hen and a (semi) broad rim crown crested charger?) This must
have indicated at least - a priority - that of old pewter - amongst his trade of - pewter, jewellery, silver, and pawn broking.

3) The third from 1934 tells us that one way of trading (as we have seen elsewhere) was to send out pieces on - "Sale or Return" - and this was sufficient a part of the business to have stationery printed for it.

They (H & A Kimbell) were significant Sothebys auction buyers in 1929 as this excerpt from a Society of Pewter Collectors bulletin tells us -

![Image](image-url)

We have seen that Alfred was a serious buyer of old pewter and we see that he was well connected and the shop in London well positioned for dealing.

How else then did he maintain a large trade in old pewter.

It might be though that he sold out into the provinces to collectors by mail order offering as we have seen above - a sale or return option.

Some evidence of this is found in a small collection of numbered photographs found not in his effects (as none have been seen). Each photo has a number to the back
which has age, these came from various collectors, the writing in biro is recent and reflects the writer.

The photos are shown here because they are very interesting to collectors of Old Pewter and show something of the range that this specialist, valued, and respected dealer had for sale in the period 1920 - 1938. These dates are chosen to reflect the likely very active period of the Society of Pewter Collectors from whose records these have been gathered and put back together (despite the biro writer) - (though the individual collectors who received them are now unknown) - until the death of the principal - Alfred E Kimbell in 1938.

in recent years descendants of named collectors or pewterers have come forward with information about the person written about. This website has been unable to find any photograph, and any background Kimbell family details prior to the parents Henry and Alice - and nothing much at all about them. So if anyone reading this would like to add anything of background interest then this website would be pleased to add anything proven to this article.
H. & A. Kimbell,  (Dealers)
182, Aldersgate Street, London.
Telephone - 6429 Central.
SUTHERLAND CROWE

Telephone 6429 Central

H. & A. Kimbell

127 Aldersgate Street

London

Queen Anne Tankard

No marks

S. Croome Colchester
The idea that Alfred E Kimbell traded by sending out photographs and details, and not just one photograph, has been found to be correct by the following adverts placed -

1) Firstly in the catalogue for The Clifford’s Hall Inn exhibition of 1908

![Image of 1908 catalogue]

2) and also in 1912 advertising in the catalogue for the PROVAND’s LORDSHIP CLUB - Loan Exhibition of Old Pewter (Ecclesiastical and Domestic)

![Image of 1912 catalogue]