

Late 19th century Pewter Collectors - Churcher and Jackson

For collectors of pewter, not only do the names of centuries of Pewterers become imprinted on the mind but also those from the turn of the twentieth century who wrote about their pewter wares, such as H.J.L.J. Masse, L. Ingleby-Wood and Malcolm Bell. Others may also be intrigued by the names of early collectors, many who became the founding members of the Society of Pewter Collectors founded in 1918, now known as The Pewter Society.

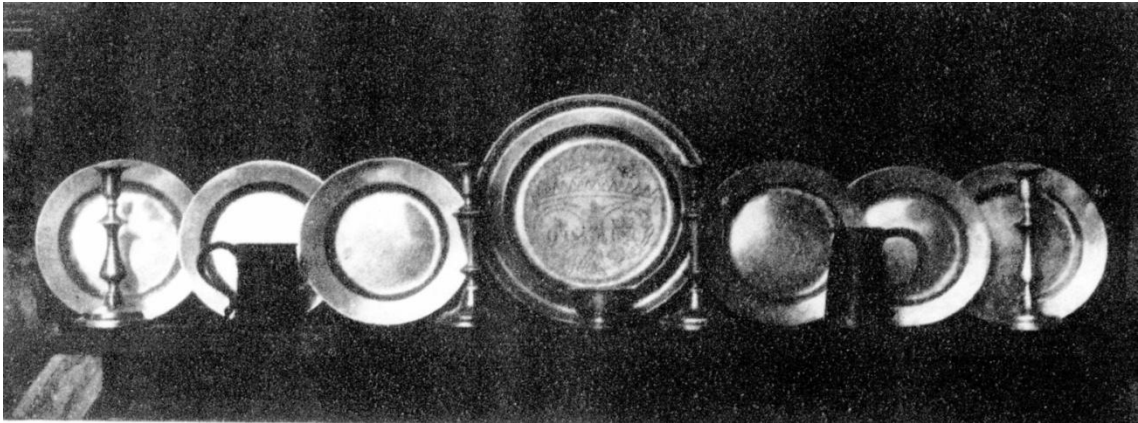
One of those names is Walter G. Churcher; but when and how did he become a collector of pewter? The answer to this lies in another name not normally mentioned in relation to early pewter collecting and not one of the early members of the SPC.

Frederick Hamilton Jackson, also known as Frank, was born in 1848 in Islington to Bookseller Nathaniel Jackson, and his wife Melina. After boarding at Morden School, South London, he became an Art Student, apparently studying at the Slade School, the Royal Academy School and under Sir Edward Poynter.



Church and Parsonage Bedford Park by F. H. Jackson

In 1876, having married the previous year, Frank won the Royal Academy Silver medal for one of his works. His first wife died after giving birth to their son and Frank remarried in 1879, moving to Bedford Park, Chiswick, an area with a high concentration of creative people and where he was involved in the foundation of the Chiswick School of Art. Frank's father died in 1885 leaving his wife and two sons beneficiaries of over £12,000, and it was about this time that Frank started collecting pewter.



1899 - Pewter on the Mantle-piece of Frank Jackson's studio



1899 - Pewter in one corner of Frank Jackson's studio

Walter Graham Churcher, was eleven years younger than Frank Jackson, being born in 1859, the eldest son of Hat manufacturer, James Graham Churcher and wife Elizabeth. Although born in Shoreditch his early life was spent in the Deptford/Lee area of what was then Kent, before the family returned to London, living in Hackney. Walter was educated at Highbury House School in St.Leonards-on-Sea in East Sussex, being awarded a prize for arithmetic in 1871.



**Highbury House School
St.Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex c.1905**

In 1881 Walter was granted the Freedom of the City of London by Patrimony, and was a clerk by occupation, but by the time he married in 1890 he had become an artist and entertainer. For many years he appeared at the Old Highburians annual Christmas functions in Sussex, at one time appearing in “Aladdin” as Widow Twankey. In 1897 he *“contributed a recitation, if it can so be termed, since most of it was dumb show, entitled “The silent orator”- a masterpiece of facial expression and gesture, which took the ‘house’ by storm. It was a really superb piece of work.”*

Another report of his popularity as an entertainer was in 1899 ; *“The hit of the evening, and a very great hit it was, was made by Mr. Walter Churcher with a screamingly humorous recitation “The Cricket Club of Red Nose Flat,” which threw a new aspect on our national game as “played” with pistols out in the*

Wild West. Mr. Churcher responded to a vociferous demand for his re-appearance with an equally humorous skit on the penny dreadful crusade "Why he called."

Sometime between 1891 and 1896 Walter, like Frank Jackson, became a resident of Bedford Park.



An 1899 caricature of Walter Churcher and Mr. Dudley Harvey, (in hat - Vice President of the London Sketch Club), by J. H. Thorpe.

[Hamlet: I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another.]

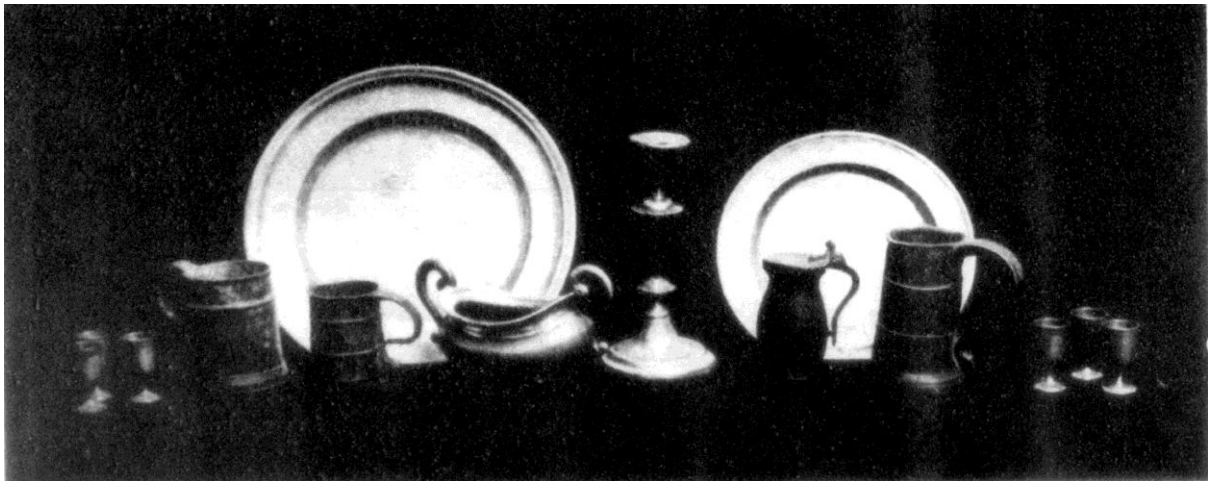
This caricature apparently represents an incident which took place when some members of the sketch club were visiting the studio of Dudley Harvey in Etaples.

An article written in 1899, states that after years of being almost alone in the field of collecting Frank had introduced his close friend Walter Churcher to this hobby and that *'the two commenced to "hunt in couples," as they have done ever since'*. One example of this was in 1897 when they made the joint purchase of what was known as the Staples Inn Pewter service, which included twenty four various sized plates and dishes. The Staples Inn pewter became part of a large dinner service containing everything required for "Pewter dinners", which as well as plates and dishes, included tureens, sauce boats, salts, pepper boxes, tankards, and even, although unlike the rest of the service which was all English pewter, liqueur 'glasses' obtained from Algiers, apparently once the property of a General Hanson.

These 'Pewter' dinners were held by Frank Jackson for artistic friends such as other members of The London Sketch Club, *"a Bohemian art body"* (as described by The Pall Mall Gazette), of which both Jackson and Churcher were founding members and which still exists today. The preliminary meeting regarding forming a club for young likeminded men to be able to meet once a week, without formality, was held at Frank Jackson's studio in early 1898. Frank was one of the parties to meet with a view to renting The Modern Art Gallery in Bond Street for the meetings; its future home in Marylebone would later host meetings of The Society of Pewter Collectors.

The club *"for artists and congenial spirits"* was inaugurated in April 1898 with thirteen members including Walter Churcher, with Frank Jackson becoming the Honorary Secretary and healthy competition for membership. The weekly two hour meeting where the members would be given a theme and produce a work to express that theme in their own particular artistic style, would close with a display of the artworks followed by supper. There would also be two, week long exhibitions each year plus other functions including an annual full reproduction of all completed works.

Both Frank and Walter exhibited in the early years of The London Sketch Club exhibitions held at The Modern Art Gallery. Reports from the inaugural show comments *"that Mr. Walter Churcher delights in gloom, his 'Twilight' and 'Marshland' being both very sombre, yet effective, though the trees in the latter seemed to have been painted in hot haste,"* while *"Mr. Frank H. Jackson has some good examples ; 'the Bye-way,' with its locks and barges pursuing their silent way: 'A sketch of Denham, Bucks.' ; 'The End of the Broad,' another view of Walderswick ; an East Anglian subject 'Sketch, Wymondham.'."*



1899 - A group of Seventeenth and Eighteenth century pewter

At each end can be seen the six liqueur “glasses” mentioned above; described as 2½” high with a top diameter of 1½” and engraved with repeated wavy lines.

Also described are ‘*four old tavern pots*’, each bearing inscriptions:

The first reads ‘*Henry Case at ye duke marlbora head at hatton*’ [garden]

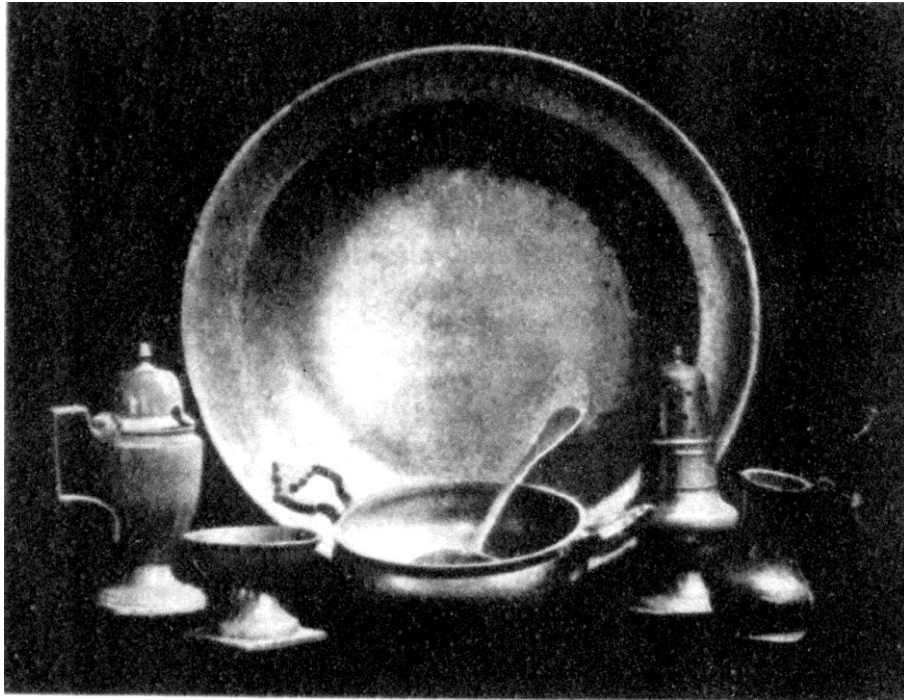
The second has G.H.M. on the handle and the inscription reads ‘*Richd Yeo at ye blew lettice in ship yard without temple barr*’

The third has Y.R.A. on the handle and inscribed ‘*Jane Fischer living in ould bedlam next dore to ye 5 bels and mortar*’, plus three shields on the lid containing the letters R.E.E.

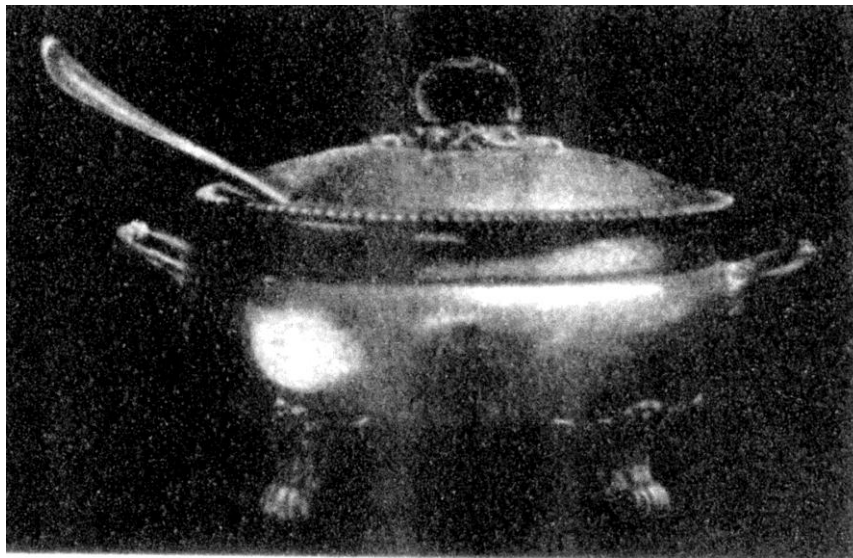
While the fourth contains the inscription ‘*Tim Buck at ye fountain in portugall st against ye playhouse.*’

These ‘*old tavern pots*’ were apparently previously in the collection of Rev. S.M. Mayhew, F.S.A.

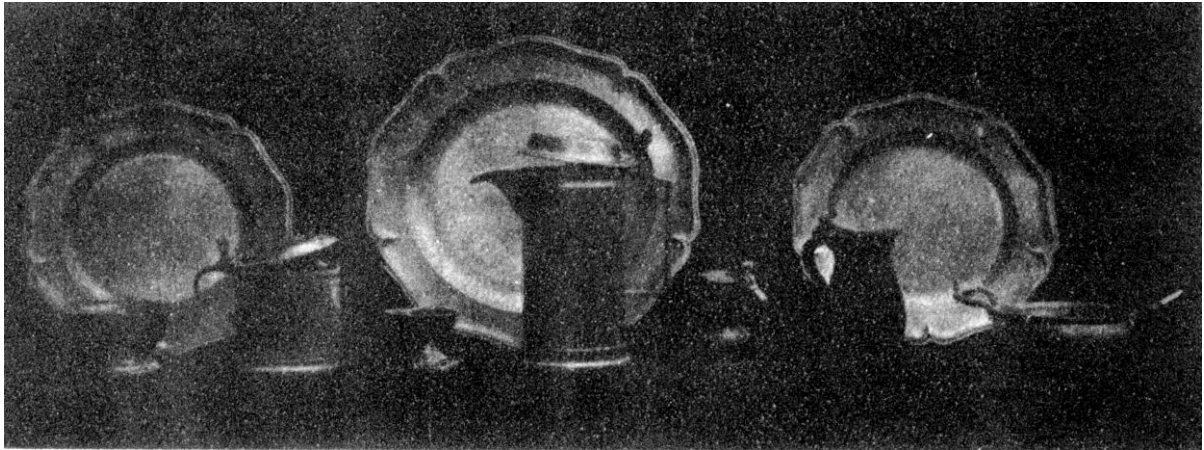
Reverend Samuel Mayhew was the Vicar of St Paul’s Bermondsey and he died aged 80 in 1898 the year before this photograph was taken, so these would be would appear to be new additions to the collection of Frank Jackson.



1899 – 15” dish dated 1720, Queen Anne mustard pot 5” high 2½” diameter, Georgian salt 2” high 2½” diameter, Sauce boat, George III Pepper box 5½” high 2½” diameter, Elizabethan measure 3¼” high 1¼” diameter

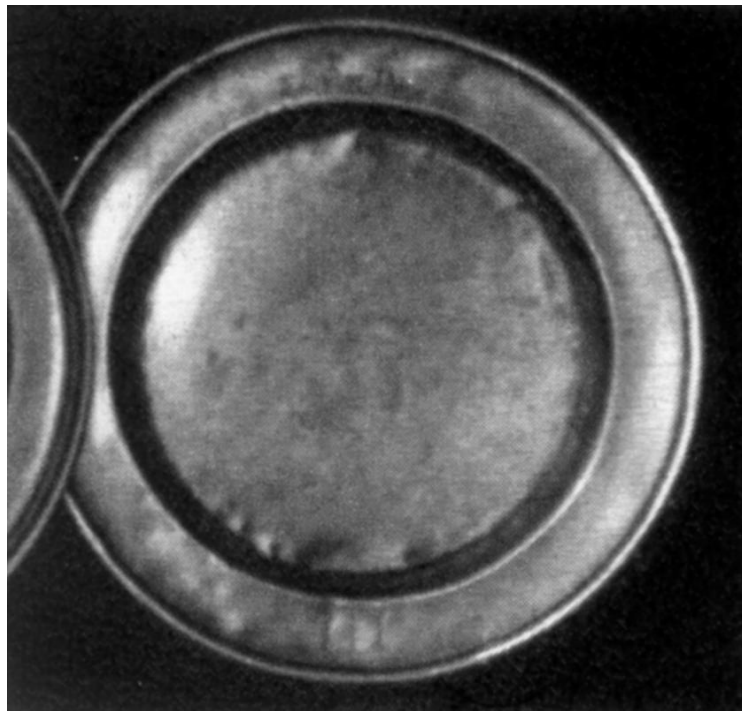


1899 - Oval Tureen, part of same service as Sauce boat above, circa 1830
Height 6” Length 12” Width 7”

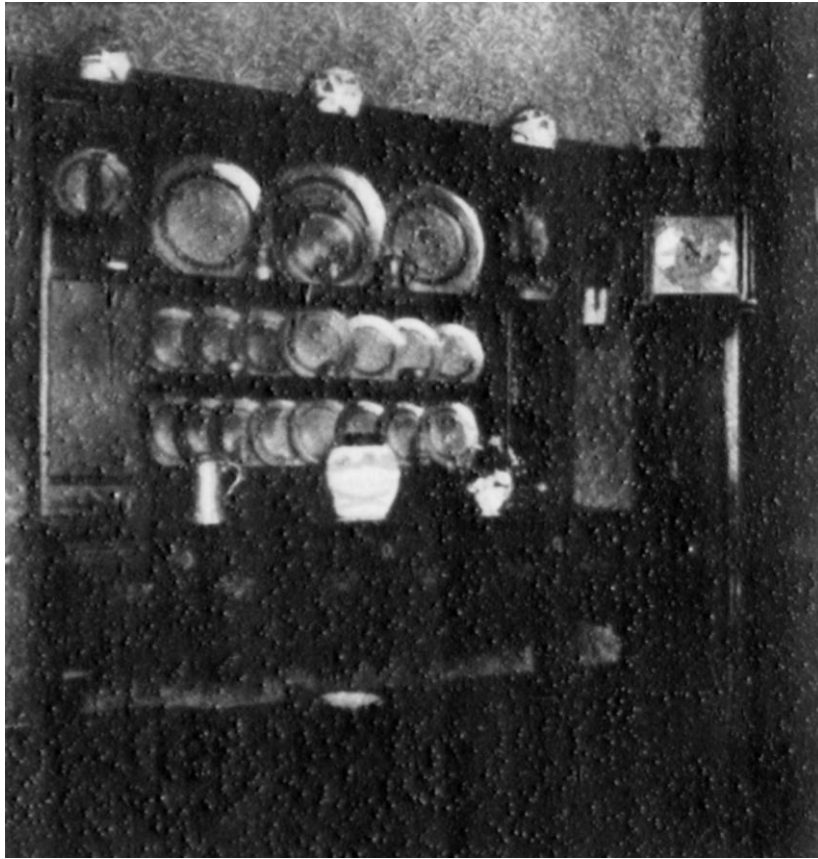


1899 - A group of Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth century pewter
The three plates are described as being part of a complete set and it is stated that they were made in 1830 by an English manufacturer for a French firm. The plates are 9½” in diameter and each one is stamped with two entwined G’s in a wreath of tiny leaves.

Only one of the other pieces in the group is described and that is the bowl shaped piece on the left. Frank Jackson felt that it had been made as a ‘salt’ despite its rather unusual dimensions (2½” high 4” diameter) but he actually used it as a sugar bowl.



**Old Staple Inn Single-reeved plate
Dated 1717, bearing the “The Woolsack” badge**



1899 - Pewter on display in the dining room of Walter Churcher



1911 – Beer jug belonging to Walter Churcher
(from *Chats on Old Pewter* by H.J.L.J. Masse)

In 1899, Frank, who by then was a member and at one stage Vice President of the Royal Society of British Artists, (R.B.A.), was appointed to the council of the Society of Miniature Painters and in 1902 he was an official with the Board of Education. Walter, sometime prior to 1902 had become a Freemason, and in 1905 he held the position of President of The Pickwick Bicycle club. It is unknown which of Walters' two occupations of entertainer or artist was his main source of income but this appears to have been supplemented in 1901 by teaching elocution while in 1911 he lists himself as an Artist to Chubb & Sons, Lock and Safe manufacturers. He did publish two books, one in 1918 with Sir George Hayter entitled "The House of Chubb" and the second "The Horn Coffee House, Doctors Commons", *a short history of the Coffee house mentioned in Charles Dickens' book "Pickwick Papers."*

How long Frank and Walter continued to "*hunt in couples,*" for pewter is unknown, but it would appear that although his pewter collection was still being written about, life for Frank Jackson took a different direction around 1904. He moved to Wandsworth from Bedford Park, his home for over twenty years, and started writing, publishing "*Intarsia and Marquetry, a Handbook for the Designer and Craftsman.*"

A member of the Art Workers Guild, (Frank joined in 1887, the year before H.J.L. J. Masse), he was a committee member from 1907-1909. He was also the founder and later Vice President of the Society of Designers with particular interest in churches and examples of his work can be found, in London and also in St. Bartholomew's Brighton, Sussex, St. Basil's Deritend, Warwickshire and St Mary-le-Tower Ipswich, Suffolk. So as well as being a Painter and Designer Frank continued writing, publishing a further six books up to 1912 including "*The shores of the Adriatic, the Italian side: an architectural and archæological pilgrimage*". A series of three lectures delivered at the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce entitled "*Cantor Lectures on Romanesque Ornament*" were also published in 1907.

Walter, as well as still occasionally performing until about 1922, continued to add to his pewter collection, including the purchase in 1915 of, for the sum of fifty shillings, eight of the ten plates held by Frank Jackson from the 1897 joint purchase of the Staple Inn pewter.

In 1918 Walter become, along with Howard Herschell Cotterell, one of the twelve founding members of Society of Pewter Collectors, being its president in 1921 as well as being one of the Honorary Secretaries in the early 1930's.

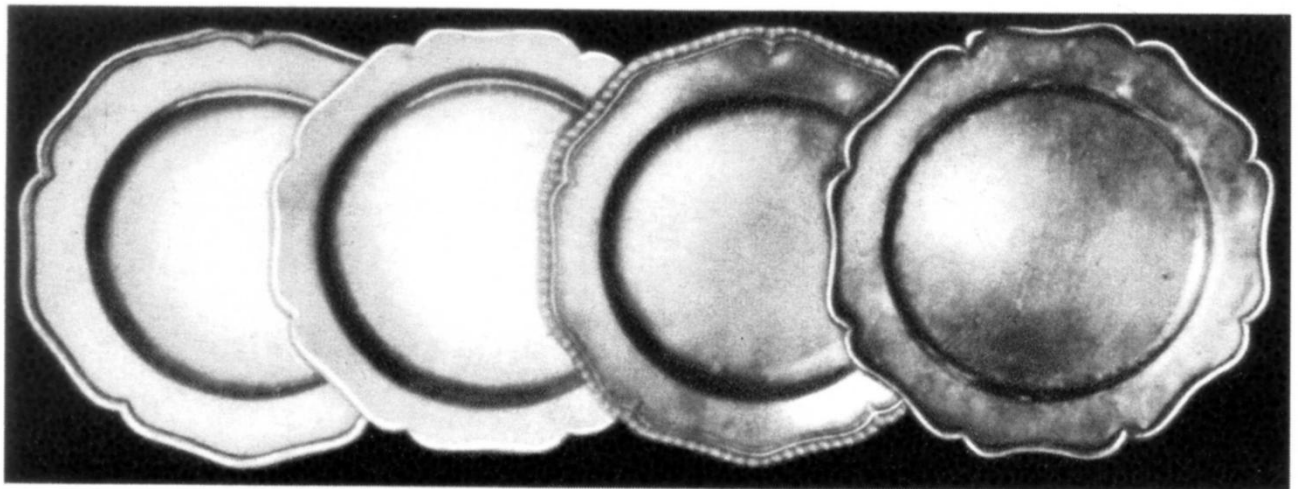
Not only was Walter one of the listed subscribers to Howard H. Cotterells' book '*Old Pewter Its Maker and Marks*' published in 1929, he also contributed nearly a dozen photographs of his collection for that publication. A notation on one photograph reveals that he had taken on the custom of his friend, Frank Jackson, and used some of his collection for Pewter suppers.



English footed cups circa 1800-1825



Pear-shaped lidded English tankards, c.1755-1790



Wavy-edged plates from the last half of the 18th century.

Frank Jackson died at his home in Wandsworth in 1923, and Walter Churcher in the City of London Mental Hospital in 1934, both aged 75.

While the collections of Frank Jackson and Walter Churcher do not appear in any known auction catalogues, if not handed down within the family, private sales to other collectors may have taken place, but it does appear that some items from Frank Jackson's collection were purchased by the dealer H & A Kimbell of Aldersgate Street; a perhaps not uncommon practice of the day.

Many current collectors would have pieces in their collections which once graced the homes of both Frederick Hamilton Jackson and Walter Graham Churcher, some which would have been used at Frank Jacksons' Pewter dinners by well known English artists of the day such as, Dudley Hardy, George C. Haite, Tom Browne, Robert Sauber and Phil May.

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