

Two stages of engraving of the 2003 Liverpool Cup with the coat of arms and the race details. The sterling silver cup will then be 24 ct gold plated

The Liverpool Cup 2003

Design drawings for the City of Liverpool Gold Cup from 40 years ago are used to make the annual trophy

Restoring silver skills

W.J. Sanders now 100 years old

It is uncommon to find long-established Australian companies with a background of skills and traditions that would motivate an author to research and record its history comprehensively. Author, social and industrial historian and silver enthusiast Kenneth Cavill first wrote the history of W.J. Sanders in 1984; an updated version was published in *Australian* magazine in May 1998.

HISTORY of W.J. Sanders

The story that Professor Cavill uncovered starts:

'William James Sanders was an accomplished silversmith. He was born in 1885 in the jewellery district of Birmingham, England and as an apprentice he learnt his craft at the noted Victoria Street School of Jewellers and Silversmiths. Moreover the practical expertise he gained while in the

employ of Levi and Salaman and later as factory manager for C. Lyster and Son, manufacturing silversmiths of Birmingham, was to serve him well in Australia.

W.J. Sanders chose to emigrate and on arrival in Sydney in 1911, set about establishing his own business. Briefly he occupied premises in the old Victoria Arcade. By 1912, his small workshop was located in Sabiel's Building at 80 Hunter Street. During these early years he was engaged largely in restoration and repair work for the trade.

Following the outbreak of World War I in 1914, regular shipments of British and continental silverwares were interrupted. Long established jewellery houses and wholesalers soon turned to local manufacturers for supplies. W.J. Sanders took up the challenge and began manufacturing much of the small silver work then in demand. By 1915, he had moved to larger premises at 212 Clarence Street, where his output included trinket boxes, cigarette cases, vesta match boxes and match box holders, photo frames and napkin rings. Popular ladies' accessories followed, including compacts in several sizes, silver-mesh bags and purses. Individual sporting shields, cups and trophies were made to order.

Sanders' business continued to expand and in 1924, a further move was made to Bowen's Building at 1 Lee Street, Railway Square. This was to be the location of W.J. Sanders, manufacturing silversmiths, goldsmiths and art metal workers for close on half a century.

Sanders' production of tableware, in sterling silver, was extensive. The wares

included tea and coffee services, sauce boats, condiment sets, tankards and beakers, jugs and of course, numerous christening and presentation mugs. Salvagers were made in considerable numbers. By far the greater proportion of the smallwork and table silverware produced by W.J. Sanders was manufactured prior to World War II. Many of these items are now eagerly sought by collectors of Australian silver.

The wide range of sterling silver goods produced should bear the standard mark ... The four stamps: W.J.S., 925 and the characteristic STG together with an elephant's head have been used by W.J. Sanders, W.J. Sanders Pty Ltd and subsequently Amor-Sanders Pty Ltd from c. 1915 ... The elephant's head has its origin in the coat of arms of the Sanders family.

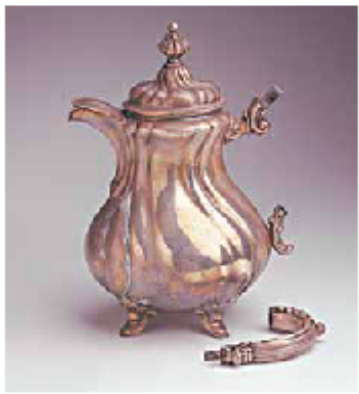
Much of the silverware, designed and manufactured by William Sanders was made for the better known jewellery houses and department stores including David Jones, J.M. Dempster, Drummonds, Fairfax & Roberts, S. Hoffnung & Company, Handy Bros, W. Kerr and Prouds. The marks of these companies were stamped on the silverware that Sanders made for them. The wares are documented in Sanders' pattern books.

With the outbreak of World War II this firm of skilled metal workers was soon involved in the production of aircraft component parts for the Ministry of Munitions. By mid 1946, W.J. Sanders was able to resume pre-war activities.

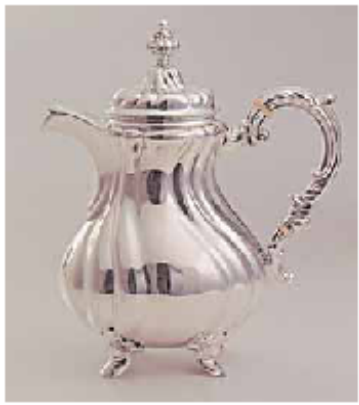
The untimely death of William James Sanders occurred later in 1946, at the age of 61. His obituary records: "With the



Ken Cavill's article on W.J. Sanders in *Australian* magazine, 1998 showed some examples of smallwork and table silverware now eagerly sought by collectors.



A typical restoration project, a sterling silver coffee pot before and after restoration by W.J. Sanders



W.J. Sanders staff at the premises at Railway Square, crafting the Gothic Revival solid silver baptismal font for St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, c. 1928. This was fully restored by W.J. Sanders in 2009

passing on Saturday, November 30, of Mr W. (Bill) Sanders, one of Australia's foremost goldsmiths and silversmiths, the trade has lost one of its most respected and popular craftsmen ... Control of the family business passed to his widow, Mrs Ellen Sanders who was actively involved in its operations until 1958. Their son, John William Sanders, joined the business in 1947 and was responsible for its management from 1948. ... The 1950s and 1960s was a period of considerable church building and refurbishment; John Sanders greatly expanded the company's production of church plate and ecclesiastical metalware at that time.'

W.J. Sanders' production of church plate in silver and gold has been noteworthy. Many fine examples of their ecclesiastical work - chalices, ciboria, tabernacles and monstrances - are found in places of worship throughout Australia and New Zealand.

'A major proportion of W.J. Sanders ecclesiastical silverware has been manufactured for the several church supply houses of Sydney. These establishments, past and present, include Church Stores, CMS Church Supplies, E.J. Dwyer, Louis Gille, R.C. Lacey, Pellegrini and Company and S.M. Wallace. Individual items of church plate should bear the mark of the supplier plus the sterling silver stamp of W.J. Sanders.'

Sanders produced a vast range of church furnishings - art metalwares in brass and bronze such as lecterns, candle stands, processional and altar crosses - for well over half a century.

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SPORTING trophies

Horse racing has been viewed as one of Australia's national sports for nearly 200 years. Since the gold rush era of the 1850s, a suitably inscribed gold cup has been presented to the winners of the most prestigious racing events. By the early 1920s, W.J. Sanders had established itself as the premier trophy maker and was at that time commissioned by Hardy Bros to make the Sydney Cup, the original being a traditional two-handled cup manufactured in 18 ct gold. Another example is The King's Cup, an 18 ct gold trophy given by King George VI for the spring carnival race meeting, Sydney, 1939. Inevitably the elaborate, hand-crafted gold racing trophies of the Victorian age have given way in more recent times to simpler forms – traditional and modern.

Following this golden age, W.J. Sanders continued designing and manufacturing many different racing trophies for carnivals Australia-wide, mainly in sterling silver and electroplated nickel silver (EPNS). These include such trophies as The Liverpool Cup (pictured), The Grafton Cup, The Kalgoolie Cup (pictured) and many more that are still made annually.

In making such trophies there are no short cuts. The traditional skills and various crafts are still used today, as shown here. The Liverpool Cup and the smaller replicas were originally designed and made by W.J. Sanders some 35 years ago.

The Liverpool Cup is made in 925 sterling silver. Sheets of the highest quality Australian silver available are hand-cut down to a blank size.

The body of the cup is spun up in .8 gauge sterling silver on a tapered mandril, then seamed and the top lip rolled. The lid is spun up on to a wooden chuck then reversed and necked in. The body is then soldered to a spun base, the handles are cut from 1.6 gauge sterling silver.

A hand-turned finial of solid silver is soldered onto the lid. All sections are then hand soldered together, as the cup begins to take shape. Each solder is then skillfully hand-filed down smooth so that the cup appears as one piece. It is now ready to have the handles soldered on.

To prepare the trophy for plating requires many hours of machine hand polishing using different grade brushes and mops, and eventually achieving a mirror-like surface.



Church plate made by W J Sanders for World Youth Day 2008



The Lakes Cup originally made in 1934, replicated by W J Sanders in 2010



The 2002 Kalgoolie Cup and replicas



From left to right: The Cross of Cong, as found showing the brown oxidation and after restoration. A stylised cat's head bites the base of the cross and links it to the conical knob ornamented with silver animal lace



From left to right: The Gaelic writing and the cat's eyes, 56 of which were missing. The gilt bronze animal interlace patterns and decorative silver work on the front. Twenty large stones and 30 enamelled decals were missing. Decorative silver work around a centre glass, which in the original cross was a crystal designed to enshrine a relic said to be a fragment of the True Cross

The cup once polished to perfection is then skillfully hand-engraved with the very ornamental coat of arms along with the race details. After a final buff, it is 24 ct hard gold plated and set on a varnished rosewood plinth.

Outside of horse racing, W.J. Sanders became widely known for their manufacture of many different sporting trophies, large and small. A fine example is the Colin Rodgers Cup made for Hardy Bros in 1921. From this time on many Sanders' trophies were commissioned by the better-known jewellery houses and by the clubs themselves, covering a wide range of sports – air races, yachting, rifle shooting, boxing, athletics, and many more.

William Sanders is remembered as a keen golfer and thanks to his efforts, and then later those of his son John, a large selection of handsome trophies can still be found in the golf clubs that surround Sydney. Many of the perpetual trophies of the Australian Golf Club were lost in a disastrous fire that destroyed the clubhouse in 1983. The company was given the task of reproducing the club's important trophies, originally made half a century before.

In 1971, when W.J. Sanders Pty Ltd merged with badge maker W.J. Amor Pty Ltd, the manufacturing facilities were combined with those of the latter company at Marshall Street, Surry Hills. From 1971, the manufacture of silverware and art metal wares was undertaken in parallel with the production of medals, medallions and badges under the name of Amor-Sanders Pty Ltd.

John Sanders retired in 1984. In 1996 the Amor-Sanders company was dissolved, and W.J. Sanders commenced trading independently once again, its premises now located at Marrickville in Sydney's inner west.

The production of table silverware such as tea and coffee sets once crafted by W.J. Sanders and other Australian silversmiths has long passed. Today, most of the new work crafted by Sanders consists of commission work such as trophies, church plate, presentation silverware, as well as a range of hallmarked giftware and christening gifts made in sterling silver. There is also increasing demand to craft missing individual items of silverware sets or lost components from silverware pieces made in another era.

ABOUT Restoration

During the early days the company was largely engaged in 'restoration and repair work for the trade.' It seems the company has turned full circle. Today, restoration and repair is once again a very important part of the company business.

The knowledge and craftsmanship skills of a manufacturing silversmith are essential for authentic and professional restoration. Restoration should replicate the original work. Nothing is done to devalue the heritage or where possible the aging effects on an antique. Everything is done to repair and halt any deterioration of the metals and where possible the patina will not be changed.

Importantly, no short cuts are taken and pieces are researched to ensure that the correct and original procedures are adhered to. For example, valuable silverware was very seldom nickel plated, but unfortunately it is quite common to find previously restored silverware with a coating of nickel which, although it made that previous restoration easier and less expensive, quite often it has completely ruined a valuable piece.

On the other hand, there are antiques that W.J. Sanders restores such as old telephones or gramophones that contain components that were originally nickel plated. In such cases they are prepared in-house and sent out for new nickel plating.

The range of articles restored by the company today is extremely wide and although specialising in antique silver such as tableware, cutlery, candlesticks etc., the

company prides itself on the professional restoration of a wide range of antiques – including marine antiques, old medical instruments, bronze and spelter sculptures, swords, antique oil and electric lamps, a wide range of church plate and furnishings and musical instruments. Add to that brass articles such as beds, firemen's helmets, extinguishers, fire guards, fire dogs, brass and bronze plaques, copper coal scuttles and of course many different sporting shields and trophies.

Before embarking on any important restoration, research is done to determine the origins and history of the item. Such was the case in 1999 when Father Lex Johnson had his curiosity aroused by the distinctive dark shape of a cross leaning against the far wall of the Earlwood parish garden shed. Fashioned in the ancient Celtic style, the cross was in an extremely sorry state, dilapidated and tarnished almost beyond recognition. On close examination after a rough clean he discovered Gaelic text around the patterned edges.

It was soon recognised as a copy of the Cross of Cong, the exquisite gold processional cross made in the early 12th century. It had been hidden away in 1641 and was re-discovered by a priest, the Abbot of Cong, in an old chest. After he revealed the existence of the cross to Dr George Petrie in 1822, it eventually found its way into the National Museum of Ireland. Dublin jeweller Edmund Johnson re-created it for the Chicago World's Exposition in 1893 and Tiffany & Co, New York then stocked copies.

A spokesperson from the National Museum of Ireland described the replicas as beautiful examples of traditional metalsmiths' craft and the replicas themselves should be considered as prize possessions. The other four replicas known to the Museum are housed in museums or in the possession of churches around the world. A missing cross had been found.

The restoration process required an exceptional level of craftsmanship, skill, patience and care. W.J. Sanders' silversmiths spent 60 hours engaged in the laborious task of taking apart and numbering the parts, and then using the methods of a century before to restore the cross completely.

The job sheet read as follows:

- Take completely apart, remove all stones and decals
- Remove all pins, rivets and metal work (over 900 parts in total)
- Fix split in wooden base structure, clamp, clean and reset
- Find and replace over 20 of the larger missing stones
- Find, replace, reset 56 missing small stones (cat's eyes)
- Make and replace 30 missing enamelled decals
- Make and replace over 40 pins and rivets
- Remake various parts of the sterling silver decoration
- Remake various parts of the bronze decorative lacework
- Re-structure and reshape damaged collar on handle
- Chemically clean and machine hand-polish all metal parts
- Silver plate parts where needed and reassemble all.

Such restoration work undertaken over the last 90 years has always given the craftsmen of W.J. Sanders immense pride and satisfaction and will surely be some of the motivation to keep these essential crafts alive for the next 100 years.

WJ SANDERS

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Reference

Kenneth Cavill, 'W.J. Sanders, Manufacturing Silversmiths, Goldsmiths & Art Metal Workers' *Australiana*, May 1998, pp 33-40

