

PAST MASTER, PAUL JAMES TEAR
MASTER CUTLER 1997-1998

Paul Tear was born in Liverpool before the Second World War. During the Blitz, his family moved away from the city to Cheshire. After the war, they moved again to Sutton Coldfield in the West Midlands, where he went to Bishop Vesey's Grammar School for 18 months, before returning to Liverpool to attend Merchant Taylors' School as a boarder.

On leaving school, he worked for a short time as a Trainee Manager with the Kenning Group, but then in 1958 he took his first steps into the precious metals business with The Sheffield Smelting Company Limited, where his father was a Director.

He served a 3-year apprenticeship before marrying beauty consultant Pauline Schonhut from Rotherham. They moved to Hertfordshire where he worked as a Technical Sales Representative for the Company.

However, 6 years later, in 1967, spurred on by the desire to run his own business, he returned to Sheffield and founded Solpro Manufacturing Limited. Since then, the Solpro Group has grown, acquiring The Sheffield Smelting Company, his original employer, now known as Thessco, in 1984. The Group has developed into one of the largest specialist precious metals groups in the world, carrying out its own refining and production of specialist alloys for many diverse industries, and exporting to thirty nine countries worldwide.

The Group now owns two of the last high-quality cutlery and silverware companies in the Sheffield area, specialising in flatware and tableware, to add to the cutlery products made by Thessco Limited for over 200 years. Mr. Tear was the first "manufacturing cutler" to hold the Master Cutler's office for over 40 years. More than 40 years of "hands-on" management of a group of companies for which he has had to travel the world has not left him with a great deal of time for hobbies, but he has always been interested in sport and, as an ex-player of Sheffield Amateur Rugby Union Club, he has devoted what time he could spare to supporting the club. He was secretary of the Club for many years and was elected President twice, each time for a 2-year spell. He is currently Deputy Chairman of the Club.

Mr. & Mrs. Tear have two children, Jackie and James, both of whom are Directors of companies within the Solpro Group. James is a Member of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire, and Jackie is a Freeman.