

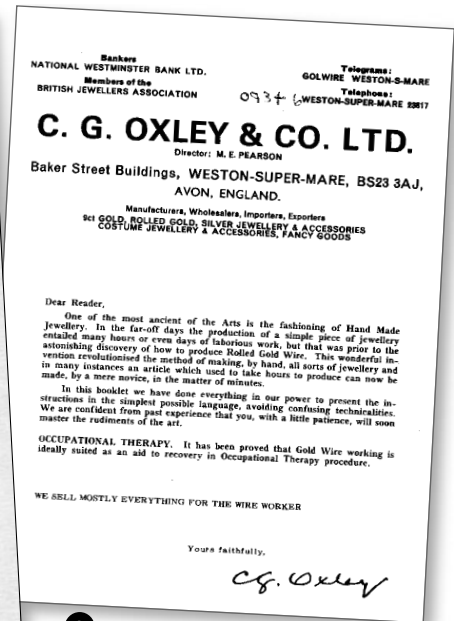
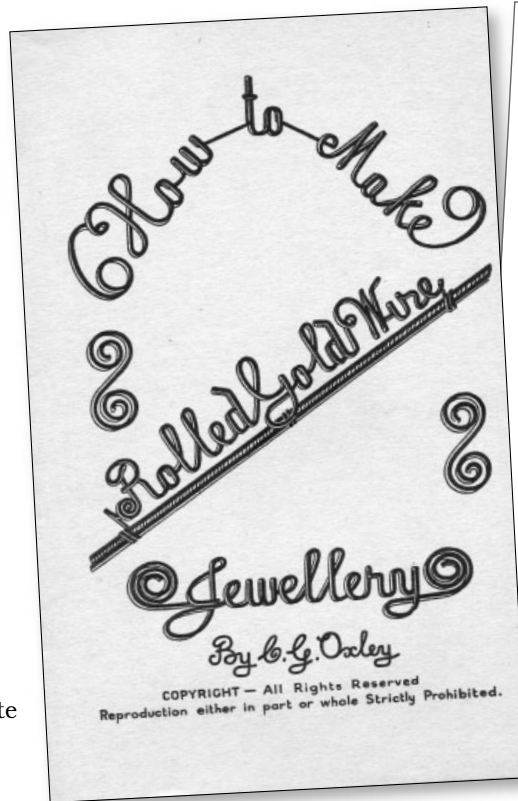
C. G. Oxley & Rolled Gold Wire Jewellery

by Stefany Tomalin

A recent enquiry came to me by e-mail from somebody in Canada who wanted to research the history of beads used with wire. She is following the trail and discovered C. G. Oxley who wrote the booklet *How to Make Jewellery with Wire and Beads* which I had reprinted a few years ago. His company was based in or near Weston-super-Mare and manufactured rolled gold wire, ('goldfill' in the USA) which was exported both as a raw material and as finished jewellery all over the world including to the USA and Canada up to the 1980's, but declined after his death and closed in the 1990's.

Illustrated here (fig 1) is the front cover of my original copy of the rolled gold wire jewellery book of C. G. Oxley, written in the 1930's. It is clearly illustrated with diagrams, and seems intended to demonstrate how to use the wire product to create jewellery, not just links, but brooches with your initials or name in scrolled wire lettering, bangles, small figures, insects, animals, etc. I have a couple of copies and I took apart the pages of one copy to facilitate the reprint.

When I had my shop in Portobello Road, in the 1980's one enquiring customer was a woman who used antique decorated Venetian glass beads on chain links of square-section rolled gold wire, to make typical 1950s-'60s necklaces.



She made contact with me again during the 1990's, because it turned out that she was the last surviving director of the company called C. G. Oxley, which had manufactured the

rolled gold wires, etc, and also had made finished rolled gold costume jewellery items. At this time I already had a copy of the booklet, and she had only a few more. I thought I'd be able to sell them in the shop, but as the company was winding up their business at the time, we discussed reprinting it, and in the end she sold me the copyright. I have slightly redesigned the cover, otherwise all the contents are the same.

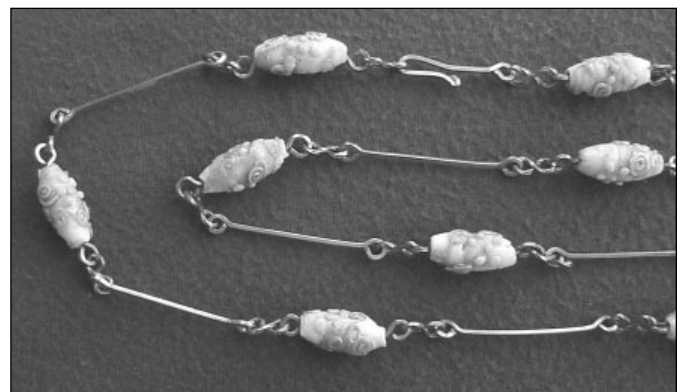


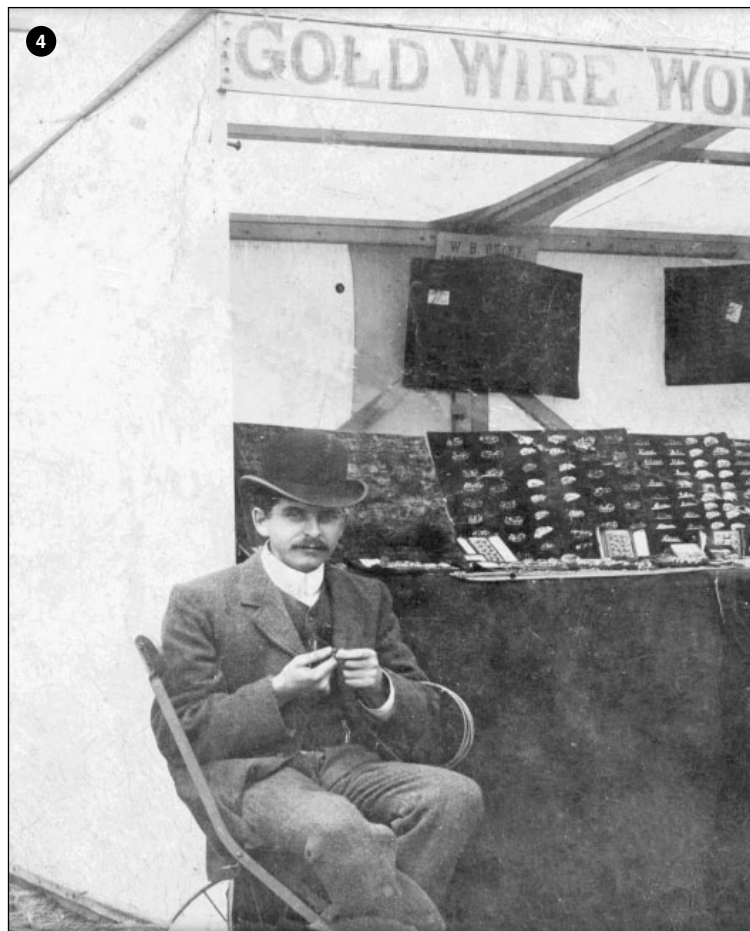
Fig 3: Venetian beads and rolled gold wire

The lady I corresponded with when I purchased the copyright to the book was Diana Herriot, who became the sole proprietor, her business or personal address in the early 1990's was at Uphill, Weston-Super-Mare,

One of the original copies I obtained has the address of the C G Oxley firm with updated postcode in it (when these came in at a later date). They used to be located at: C. G. Oxley and Co. Ltd, (Director M. E. Pearson), Baker Street Buildings, Weston Super Mare, BS23 3AJ, Avon England. Telegrams: Golwire Weston-s-Mare Telephone: Weston-Super-Mare (09346) 23817. This telephone number would now have been (0)1934 623817 (fig 2).

My article about the wire, the jewellery, the company

(continued over)



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and the booklet was originally going to end here – Graeme Morris took some close-up digital pictures of typical rolled gold wire jewellery (from my collection), made most likely in the 1930's–1960's with C.G. Oxley's wire. These were to accompany my notes above (see figs 5–10).

Then the story took an exciting turn, so the tale continues. Carole Morris e-mailed me in February this year to say that a Mr. P. A. Oxley who was based in Weston-super-Mare had just ordered a copy of my reprinted booklet *How to Make Jewellery with Wire and Beads* (which she stocks), and she wondered whether he was related to C. G. Oxley, the author. So I wrote to him asking if he was part of the family of C. G. Oxley who originally wrote it?

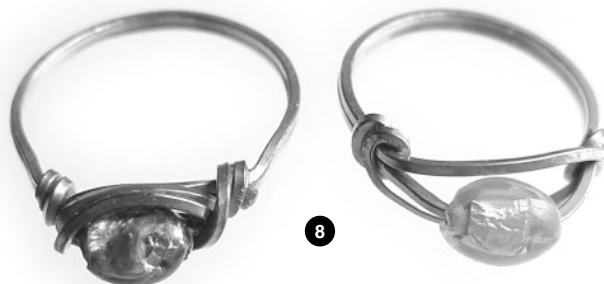
I told him that in the 1980's I had opened a bead shop in Portobello Road, London, and had some business with the company, as the lady who was in charge after C. G. Oxley died wanted antique beads to continue making necklaces to fulfill orders using the wire techniques in the book. I told him that when the Oxley business closed down, I bought the copyright of the booklet from her, as it seemed to me a valuable instruction book as well as a piece of costume jewellery craft history. My own shop closed in 2001. I said to him that if he was related, it would be a great opportunity to be able to fill in some of the gaps in the story.



Photos: 4 – Paul Oxley Collection; 5–10 Graeme Morris

simple name brooches (see also fig 9), to names on mother of pearl shapes (see also figs 7 & 10) and rings (see also fig 8).

There are other items on the table, but it is not easy to see what they are; possibly there are some necklaces? The necklaces in fig 5 are likely to be 1930's in date, much later than the photograph.



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Here, verbatim is his reply to me:
'Dear Stefany

I am so pleased to have received your mail regarding my great uncle Cecil George Oxley. I am at present researching my family history hence my surprise to find a book on the internet written by Great Uncle George all those years ago. The founder of the business was my grandfather William Henry Oxley who you can see in the photo with the bowler & a coil of wire on his arm [fig 4]. He is pictured with my grandmother & my father's eldest sister who was about 3 years of age at the time, which dates the photo to about 1905. I do not know the identity of the other young man in the photo. It could be an employee or it could be my grandfather's brother Cecil George Oxley.

Unfortunately my grandfather died suddenly in 1915, leaving my grandmother with seven young children to bring up & try to run the business. This is when C.G. took over the business giving no financial help & having no more contact. C.G Oxley died in 1959 a very wealthy man. As far as the buisness is concerned he left some money in his will to his M.D. at the time. His name was Martin Edmund Pearson. Do you recognise this name? The business was then taken over by a boy who worked there since leaving school – his name is Gordon Groves. I know he goes to the Far East buying something in the jewellery line.

Thanks for your interest. It's so nice to share my research with somebody.

Kind Regards, Paul Oxley'

Paul's photograph (fig 4) a perfect piece of social history and he has given us permission to reproduce it here. Notice that William Oxley (and possibly Cecil Oxley) sat down on the left of the picture have large coils of the rolled gold wire over their arms and they are using hand tools (probably pliers) to make pieces of jewellery as they sit and wait for customers.

On the table behind the group are black velvet(?) display boards with various kinds of jewellery from the