

# Cutlery trade's next generation

## Apprentices set to learn ancient craft skills



**Young blood:** Mark James, left, and Dean Bramhall have been taken on as apprentices at the company

A CENTURIES-old Sheffield firm which claims the skills to be able to produce cutlery which matches that made in the 1800s is showing its faith in the future by taking on new apprentices.

Lambert Street-based Fletcher Robinson can trace its history back to 1520 and was known as C W Fletcher until last year, when it was acquired by US-based James Robinson Inc.

Robinson's long-established New York shop is a mecca for the very affluent and discerning purchasers of antique jewellery, porcelain and silverware and has links with C W Fletcher stretching back over half a century.

Almost 90 per cent of the 300 suites of sterling silver flatware made by hand to 23 different patterns at Fletcher Robinson's

**By Bob Rae**

Industrial Editor

Sheffield works has gone directly to James Robinson for the past 50 years and that continues to be the case today.

The rest is sold by small, exclusive stores within Europe, with many pieces being made to match and replace items missing from classic suites of antique cutlery.

"Nobody in the world produces cutlery like ours," claims Mike Rosewarne, an authority on flatware manufacture in Sheffield who is now director of Fletcher Robinson. He still rolls up his sleeves and displays his skills as a time-served hand forger on the shop floor, when necessary.

"We can match products made in the 1600s - and have an excel-

lent reputation for doing so. We were once asked to make a 20-inch basting spoon by a client and we didn't let him down," says Mr Rosewarne, whose career with the company stretches back 45 years.

Mike Rosewarne is keen to see Fletcher Robinson's skills continue into the future - hence the decision to take on two apprentices.

"We have to ensure the unrivalled skills we have at Fletcher Robinson do not disappear. They are a very important part of this city's heritage.

"Somebody once described us as Britain's best-kept secret. It's rather ironic that most people only learn about us when they walk through the doors of James Robinson in New York," Mr Rosewarne adds.