

incorporated flora and fauna; Gothic Revival; and distinct German Baroque Revival traits such as the use of pronounced knopped stems and lobes to the foot and body of cups. At least some of his raw materials, prior to the Victorian goldrush of the 1850s, were sourced from the small gold, silver and lead mines established near Adelaide in the 1840s.

Although Adelaide's population was small, the fashion for presenting silver and gold objects had been enthusiastically embraced by a society eager to continue the social conventions of Europe. Firnhaber initially worked in some capacity with John Henry Pace, an English jeweller who had established a shop in Adelaide in late 1842. As a skilled silversmith, Firnhaber could make vessels and flatware, which Pace as a jeweller could not. Silver from this union survives, including a small presentation mug of 1847 [Fig 1], which has two marks ascribed to Firnhaber, a small 'lion passant' and an 'animal head', coupled with Pace's IHP mark, and a spoon, circa 1848 [Fig 3].<sup>10</sup> The spoon is interesting for its hallmarks: the lion passant mark for Pace over-striking the CEF mark of Firnhaber [Fig 4]. What tension this caused is not known but by December 1849 Pace, whose shop had been robbed on several occasions, had been declared insolvent and Firnhaber confidently stepped into the breach.<sup>11</sup>

Firnhaber was in a fortunate position in having no significant competition in South Australia until 1854 and was, therefore, able to produce a large number of major works, including a Masonic presentation cup of 1848 [Fig 5];<sup>12</sup> a snuff box of 1849;<sup>13</sup> the Royal Exchange cup of 1850;<sup>14</sup> the Loyal Adelaide Lodge cup of 1851 [Fig 12];<sup>15</sup>



Fig 3 Spoon, Adelaide, circa 1848, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber and retailer's mark of John Pace, engraved monogram JWC  
(Private collection, Adelaide)



Fig 4 Detail of marks on spoon [Fig 3]: John Pace's mark overstriking that of Carl Firnhaber

1 *South Australian Register* (SAR), 24 March 1847.

2 SAR, 20 March 1847.

3 Firnhaber was born on 19 May 1805 to Heinrich Firnhaber and Sophia von Magus.

4 Details of his German training are from Wolfgang Scheffler, *Goldschmiede Niedersachsens*, Berlin, 1965, vol 1, p 218; vol 2, p 843. No known maker's marks or extant work are listed.

5 Firnhaber is mentioned as a goldsmith, North Adelaide, in the *South Australian*, 15 September 1848, in relation to a 'lost' advertisement for a gold earring. In 1851 he was advertising as a "goldsmith, silversmith, and jeweller, Union-street, North Adelaide", SAR, 15 August 1851. Union Street was

renamed Lakeman Street in 1945.

6 SAR, 19 May 1854.

7 National Archives of Australia, South Australian State Office, Enrolled certificates of naturalisation 1848–1857, series A729, vol 1, no 142.

8 SAR, 12 June 1852, Firnhaber advertised that "he has just returned from Melbourne". SAR, 13 July 1852, Firnhaber advertised his recent return from the 'diggings'.

9 SAR, 1 February 1856, Firnhaber advertised his new premises at 142 (later renumbered 123) Hindley Street, Adelaide.

10 J B Hawkins, *Nineteenth century Australian silver*, Woodbridge, 1990, vol 2, pp 15, 19. Hawkins sug-

gests that Firnhaber may have also worked for George Griffin, a watchmaker and jeweller in Hindley Street, but no pieces have yet been identified to prove the union.

11 SAR, 8 December 1849. For an account of the robberies see John Hawkins, *ibid*, pp 12, 15.

12 Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA), loan 20146A35A(a&b).

13 *South Australian*, 5 October 1849, silver snuff box presented to E L Grundy by the grateful emigrants on-board the *Indian*.

14 Acquired in 2012 by the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, acc no 2012.1797.A-B.

15 SAR, 14 January 1851.



Fig 5 Masonic cup, silver, parcel-gilt, Adelaide, 1848, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, with engraved presentation inscription

(Gift of Philip Speakman through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2014. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide)





Fig 6 Presentation cup, silver, parcel-gilt, Adelaide, 1851, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved with a memorial inscription  
(Private collection, Adelaide)



Fig 7 Ottaway cup, silver, parcel-gilt and wood, Adelaide, circa 1853, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved by Justin Claude, engraved with a presentation inscription  
(Gift of Michael Bennett in memory of his wife Maria Bennett 2003. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide)



Fig 8 Ancient Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Apollo & Hercules Lodge medallion, gold and silver, Adelaide, 1848, engraved with a presentation inscription  
(Private collection, Adelaide)



Fig 9 Ancient Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Apollo & Hercules Lodge medallion, Adelaide, circa 1855, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved with a presentation inscription  
(Gift of Mrs K C Worthley 1968. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide)



the Hahndorf Grand Pigeon cup of 1851, valued at £30;<sup>16</sup> Schmidt's Royal Exchange cup of 1851;<sup>17</sup> the Lazar cup of 1851;<sup>18</sup> a presentation cup of 1851 [Fig 6];<sup>19</sup> the Grand Prize for pigeon shooters of 1853;<sup>20</sup> the Ottawa cup of 1853 [Fig 7];<sup>21</sup> the Dry Creek race cup of 1853, valued at £20;<sup>22</sup> and the Dr W P Hill cup of 1854.<sup>23</sup> The Masonic presentation cup, Royal Exchange cup, Loyal Adelaide Lodge cup, presentation cup and Ottawa cup are all extant and are South Australia's first examples of major silver presentation cups.

### Medallions and presentations to Friendly Societies and the Freemasons

The earliest set of objects unequivocally linked solely to Firnhaber are a star medal, cross-keys, and a silver medal in a gold mount for the Ancient Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Apollo & Hercules Lodge of Gilles Arcade, Adelaide, of 1848 [Fig 8].<sup>24</sup> The engraver was a little-known Mr Deane of Mount Barker in the Adelaide Hills and the recipient was William Pybus Jnr, an iron founder. Shortly afterwards the silver medal was stolen from Pybus's house, although it was later recovered. Useful information has been gleaned from the press, including the medal's value: £4 10s. Firnhaber also took to the witness stand in court, where he stated through an interpreter (since he spoke German) that he

knew the medal; he made it for Mr Pybus, the last witness; was positive of it, and had the die of it yet.<sup>25</sup>

This confirms that Firnhaber was capable of designing and making medals from 1848. The surviving star medal from the group is a handsome eight-pointed star with a circular chased wreath enclosing the finely engraved inscription. Another similar surviving Firnhaber medal, also for the Apollo & Hercules Lodge of 1855, was awarded to Henry Ayliffe, and consists of a five-pointed star with a wreath enclosing the inscription [Fig 9].

The 1850s saw Firnhaber create many medallions and several cups for the Foresters and Oddfellow Friendly Societies as well as for the Freemasons. Other examples of Firnhaber's medallionic work for the Oddfellows include an 1873 medal awarded to J Corner for fifteen years service to the Loyal Rose of Sharon Lodge [Fig 10] and an 1857 medal awarded to Henry Weman from the Duke of York Lodge at



Fig 10 Loyal Rose of Sharon Lodge medallion, Adelaide, 1873, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved with presentation inscription (Private collection, Adelaide)

16 SAR, 14 August 1851. It is interesting to note that the cover of this cup is described as being surmounted by an aged gum tree, in frosted silver, with a large bird on an upper branch. This makes the cup an extremely early example of the use of Australian flora and fauna in South Australian silver and pre-

dates Julius Schomburgk's use of these motifs.

17 John Hawkins, op cit, see note 10, vol 2, p 14, pl 291. illustrates the cup from *The Mercury*, *South Australian Sporting Chronicle* and *Commercial Advertiser*, 15 November 1851.

18 SAR, 31 December 1851.

19 AGSA, loan L81P1. The body of the cup is engraved "In Memory of an Esteemed Friend 1851".

20 SAR, 21 November 1853.

21 AGSA, acc no 20035A16A. Carl Firnhaber, engraved by Justin Claude, "Presented to Mr Thomas Ottawa by a few of his fel-

low colonists as a mark of respect and esteem previous to his departure for England/ Adelaide Dec'r 15th 1853."

22 SAR, 2 December 1853.

23 SAR, 30 March 1854. Presented in Burra Burra to Dr Hill. The cup was elaborately chased on one side

with a horse in recognition of his association with the Burra races.

24 *Bathurst Advocate*, 13 January 1849, cited in *Adelaide Observer*, 16 December 1848.

25 See SAR, 3 January 1849; *South Australian*, 14 May 1850, 17 May 1850.





Fig 11 Ancient Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Duke of York Lodge medallion, silver, parcel-gilt, Adelaide, 1857, engraved with presentation inscription  
(Private collection, Adelaide)



Fig 12 Loyal Adelaide Lodge cup, silver, parcel-gilt, Adelaide, 1851, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved with presentation inscription  
(Gift of Dr Helen Mayo 1931, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide)



Fig 13 Ancient Order of Foresters Court Perseverance medallion, silver and glass, Adelaide, 1853, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved with presentation inscription  
(J C Earl Bequest Fund 2006, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide)

Port Adelaide [Fig 11]. Applied to the top of his medal is a small cast 'Heart in Hand', a symbol of charity to its Oddfellow brethren. Weman was also a founding member of the Port Adelaide Institute and involved with St Paul's church.<sup>26</sup> He was a ship's chandler (cordage and canvas) by trade.

The most impressive Oddfellow presentation piece is undoubtedly the silver and gilt Loyal Adelaide Lodge cup (1851) which was made for Dr George Mayo the lodge's surgeon [Fig 12]. The local press recorded the presentation, from which we learn

We have not before seen so elegant a piece of South Australian workmanship. The artist is Mr Firnhaber of North Adelaide, whose skill we have frequently had occasion to notice ... On three compartments below [the inscription to Mayo] are the words 'Friendship', 'Love', and 'Truth'. The

cover is decorated with oak leaves and acorns, twined with ivy and laurel leaves and their berries. It is surmounted by a golden globe, on which is the badge of the order – the hand and heart.<sup>27</sup>

This marvellous early cup celebrated Dr Mayo's service as a founding member of the Adelaide Lodge, as its surgeon and as a Past Grand Master.<sup>28</sup> A prominent citizen, the doctor was about to embark upon a trip to England for a period of time.

The Ancient Order of Foresters established their first district in Adelaide in 1847. In Britain medals had been an integral feature of the Foresters from 1834. Unlike that of the Oddfellows, the Foresters' medal was regulated, and examples in Britain and Australia show many similarities. Two Foresters' presentation medals, one presented to Boddington in 1853 [Fig 13] and the other



in 1858 to Peter Green [Fig 14], both from the Court of Perseverance in South Australia, carry only the marks of Firnhaber and are assumed to be of his manufacture. It now seems, however, that the provenance is more complicated, as Hilliard and Thomason of Birmingham, were the sole supplier of medals to the Order until 1858. The annual accounts in England show that for 1851–52 Hilliard supplied twenty-seven silver medals at 14s, 109 Past Chief Rangers (P C R) medals at 6s 3d and twelve plated P C R medals at 10½ d. On 19 May 1852 the Executive Council, which made these medals available to its members, received payment of £10 from the Adelaide District, subsequently dispatching a group of goods to South Australia.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately the contents of the consignment are not known and one can only speculate that it included medals.

It does suggest that at least the insert of the 1858 medal was supplied by Hilliard and Thomason and possibly the whole ornate medal. Similarly, the 1853 medal, with its suspended horn and crossed arrows over a bow and the topmost forest stag on a crown with a handshake, are all specific emblems of the Order, arranged in the style of English-made medals. The Firnhaber medals to Boddington and Green are different from their English counterparts, however, leaving open the possibility that he reassembled, and added to, existing Forester medals. It should also be noted that the engraving found on the obverse of both medals is not characteristic of the style of Firnhaber's oeuvre. In 1854 a silver medal to P C R Snowball, known only through a newspaper report, was described in the following terms

the medal is of exquisite workmanship, and reflects great credit on the manufacturer, Mr. Firnhaber'.<sup>30</sup>

This may add strength to the argument that Firnhaber wanted people to assume that they were his manufacture completely; alternatively it reflects poor reporting or ignorance of the finer details. Being required to follow the English medal system, the Adelaide District had at least some kind of business arrangement with Firnhaber, including, but not limited to, inscribing the medals for South Australian recipients.

Freemasonry was similar in some respects to the Friendly Societies, and the masons also raised money to support various charities. Freemason's lodges were open to German settlers, and those arriving from 1848 had frequently belonged to lodges in their homeland.<sup>31</sup> Fortunately Freemasonry events, meetings and presentations were reported with some frequency in the newspapers and through them we learn of Firnhaber's involvement and that he himself had become a member of the Freemason's Lodge of Harmony by at least 1853.<sup>32</sup> This meant that Firnhaber was trusted to understand and interpret the complex Masonic symbolism for application on to appropriate medals and presentation silver over many years.

A founding South Australian member of the Freemasons, George S Kingston, had jewels made by Firnhaber in 1853 and 1854.<sup>33</sup> A slightly later Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master (P D P G M)



Fig 14 Ancient Order of Foresters Court Perseverance medallion, silver and glass, Adelaide, circa 1858, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved with presentation inscription  
(J C Earl Bequest Fund 2006, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide)

26 F E Meleng, *Fifty years of the Port Adelaide Institute*, incorporated, with supplementary catalogue, Adelaide, 1902, p 83. A black-and-white photograph of Weman appears on p 22.

27 *South Australian*, 14 January 1851; see also SAR, 14 January 1851.

28 State Library of South Australia (SLSA), SRG 765, series 16, vol 6 of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (MUIOOF), Minutes Book 1850–54, 5 December 1850, 2 and 13 January 1851, refers to the inscription to be used on the Mayo cup and arrangements for the testimonial presentation, which was carried out by P G Fiveash.

29 Information on the Executive Council annual

accounts 1851–52; the quarterly report, September 1852; and the Hilliard medals was kindly supplied by Dr Roger Logan, Honorary Secretary, the Foresters Heritage Trust, Southampton, England.

30 SAR, 12 January 1854.

31 Ian Schomburgk, 'Germans, Lutherans and Masonic lodges, 1836–1876', *Becoming South Australian: Germans in a British context*, proceedings published by the Friends of Lutheran Archives, Adelaide, 2011, pp 71–80.

32 SAR, 29 March 1853. Firnhaber's membership of the lodge is mentioned in relation to him providing a Past Master's jewel in gold and malachite to Edward William Andrews.

33 SAR, 16 November 1854.





*Fig 15 Collar jewel, Adelaide, circa 1861, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber*

*(Freemasons South Australia & Northern Territory)*

silver pendant of circa 1861 made by Firnhaber for the collar of John Lazar (1801-79) survives [Fig 15]. This silver Masonic square and compass pendant is simply engraved with Lazar's initials from his period of membership of the Provincial Grand Lodge, Adelaide. Lazar is a fascinating character: he made a name as an actor-comedian in Sydney and then in Adelaide from 1841-42, and again from 1848 when he was residing permanently in South Australia.<sup>34</sup> He first joined the new United Tradesman's Lodge in 1848, from which he received the aforementioned Lazar cup (1851). In 1853 he became a councillor of the city of Adelaide and was Mayor from 1855 until 1858. He owned a jewellery shop at 54 Hindley Street from circa 1853 to 1856 and would no doubt have had some professional dealings with Firnhaber.<sup>35</sup> He departed for New Zealand in 1863.

One of the finest surviving pieces of presentation silver, as distinct from jewels, associated with Firnhaber and the Freemasons is the superb Masonic cup presented to the Master, Aulay Macaulay, on 28 November 1865 by the Lodge of Truth (no 649, North Adelaide) [Fig 16]. For many years Macaulay was a senior surveyor for the Central Road Board, North District. The cup is the work of Firnhaber and consists of an emu's egg cup mounted in silver with elaborate pierced silver mounts containing Masonic symbols in laurel wreaths for the Master (the stonemason's right angle of a square), Senior Warden (the stonemason's level) and Junior Warden (stonemason's plumb), all levels of office that Macaulay had held. The base, bearing the inscription, consists of an elaborate 'landscape' with cast kangaroos and an emu, and three nodules of South Australian malachite, one containing azurite crystals. The emu's egg cover is surmounted by a silver celestial globe and the Masonic symbols of the square and compass.

Firnhaber's Masonic cup, has two known mounted emu's egg predecessors: the United Ancient Order of Druids covered cup<sup>36</sup> (1863) and a covered cup (1864) commissioned by Thomas Graves [Fig 17].<sup>37</sup> The vine leaves and prominent bunches of grapes seen on the 1865 cup repeat those of the Druids' covered cup while the pierced silver-work was also used by Firnhaber on Graves's cup.<sup>38</sup> Of particular interest in relation to these covered cups is a short news report from July 1864 which states:

We have been shown some neatly executed and tasteful designs drawn by Mr. C. Hill for Mr. Firnhaber of emu egg-cups. Our silversmiths appear to have an increasing demand for these peculiarly Australian ornaments.<sup>39</sup>

This was true: Firnhaber faced fierce competition in the 1860s from fellow émigré silversmiths Henry (Johann Heinrich) Steiner, Jochim M Wendt and Julius Schomburgk for the sale of mounted emu eggs and so, perhaps, to gain an edge over his competitors, he enlisted the assistance of the artist Charles Hill (1824-1916). Hill specialised in genre and narrative paintings but, from 1861, was also the inaugural master of the Adelaide School of Design. Unfortunately Hill's designs are no longer known, but it seems very likely that the Masonic cup reflects his new designs. Hill and Firnhaber knew each other from at least 1861 through their joint involvement with the South Australian Volunteer Military Force where, from June 1862, they held the positions of bombardiers in the Adelaide Artillery Company.<sup>40</sup>



*Fig 16 Lodge of Truth Masonic cup, silver, emu egg, malachite, azurite, Adelaide, 1865, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved with presentation inscription*

*(Freemasons South Australia & Northern Territory)*



Firnhaber and his business competitors were familiar with the use of ostrich eggs in Germany and naturally made the switch to emu eggs in Australia. The earliest surviving dated work in South Australia is Steiner's Mayo cup (1861) but Schomburgk can be credited with first considering their potential decorative use in Adelaide. He placed an advertisement in December 1858 in which he wrote

Wanted, a quantity of emu eggs. Apply to J. Schomburgk, Grenfell-street east.<sup>41</sup>

One may assume that Firnhaber became aware of this for in 1859 he made the first recorded pair of emu cups which were raffled to subscribers on Monday 28 November.<sup>42</sup> The idea of raffling the cups may also have been informed by Schomburgk, who raffled a candelabrum and several items of jewellery in July 1857.<sup>43</sup>

### Rifle shooting medals

Firnhaber's work was not always restricted to the manufacture of items for the British settlers living in South Australia; indeed he advertised with some frequency in South Australia's German newspapers, including *Süd Australische Zeitung*. The large German population in nineteenth-century South Australia also led to the establishment of German sporting associations and other recreational groups that drew upon the skills of their compatriot silversmiths. German rifle clubs were popular in Adelaide, the Barossa Valley and the Adelaide Hills, with the annual highlight being the Koenigschiessen, or King's shoot.<sup>44</sup> The Adelaide German Rifle Club (GRC), established in 1853, met annually at Easter for the Koenigschiessen in the grounds of Osmond Gilles's house in the foothills at Glen Osmond. In the 1850s the club attracted silversmiths to its membership including Eduard Lellmann<sup>45</sup> and Firnhaber. The annual meet was something of a festive occasion, with an attendance of three to five hundred people being not uncommon. *The Adelaide Observer* on 29 March 1856 described:

A large tent, erected on the ground, was decorated with English and German flags with a German brass band playing. The trials of skill with the rifles at a distance of 180 yards from the target, served to display the quick eye and sure aim of many competitors.



Fig 17 Cup and cover, silver, emu egg, malachite, azurite, Adelaide, 1864, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved with inscription (John & Wendy St Alban Collection, South Australia)

34 For further information on Lazar see <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lazar-john-2341>.

35 SAR, 2 September 1853, advertisement of imported jewellery; SAR, 30 July 1856, advertisement of closing sale.

36 For a report of the presentation see SAR, 18 July 1863.

37 John Hawkins, op cit, see note 10, vol 2, p 32,

pl 305; p 33, pl 306.

38 The newspaper reports of the Thomas Graves covered cup make it clear that originally this cup was similar to the Druids' covered cup; however, the base, stem and cup are now quite different. Perhaps Graves had Firnhaber refashion the cup in the 'new' style of the 1865 cup; see SAR, 11 June 1864, 25 June 1864.

39 SAR, 30 July 1864.

40 *The South Australian Advertiser (SAA)*, 13 June 1862.

41 SAR, 30 December 1858.

42 SAR, 26 November 1859; SAA, 28 November 1859. Unfortunately no description was given and their whereabouts is unknown.

43 John Hawkins, 'Hidden corners: rediscovering Firnhaber and Schomburgk

in the digital age', Robert Reason, *Bounty: nineteenth-century South Australian gold and silver*, Adelaide, 2012, p 75.

44 Vladimir Potezny, 'Süd Australische Deutsche Schuetzen Gesellschaft: South Australian German shooting companies (Kingship and ring target shooting)', unpublished paper supplied to the author by the Hahndorf Rifle Club. In 1853 Adelaide German Rifle

Club was established; Tanunda 1856; Lobethal 1860; Hope Valley 1861; Callington 1862; Hahndorf 1864; and Sevenhills a few years later. Clubs in Eudunda 1880s, Palmer 1896, Oakbank 1904 had varying years of existence.

45 For information on Lellmann see Reason, op cit, see note 43, pp 54-56, p 75.



On a number of occasions Firnhaber was selected by the club to design prizes for each shoot:

a beautiful silver medal, made by Mr. Firnhaber, a member of the club

was presented to the winner of the 1862 'kingship'<sup>46</sup> and then a few years later in 1865 a silver cup by Firnhaber was presented to the 'king' Mr H Linde, by Dr Bayer.<sup>47</sup>

As already noted, Firnhaber had enlisted with the Adelaide Rifles B Company in November 1860 and was listed as in the Adelaide Artillery in April 1861. In August 1862 he attained his highest rank of Sergeant which he maintained until his resignation in 1866.<sup>48</sup> This was his second period of voluntary military service; the first was brief, lasting from October 1854 to February 1855 in the 1st Battalion, No 1 Company, where he reached corporal.<sup>49</sup> It provided a social avenue and brought Firnhaber into contact with prospective customers; it also allowed him to be generous and in 1861 he provided a winner's shooting medal valued at £6. It was presented by Lieutenant-Colonel Torrens, retiring Captain of the Artillery Company, to Gunner Perry for the highest score at the annual shoot in November.<sup>50</sup> It was recorded that:

The centre of the medal is gold, and represents a mounted gun of very perfect formation, surmounted with a flag. The base of the medal is of polished silver. The whole is about the size of a watch, and has a very neat and pretty appearance.<sup>51</sup>

From another newspaper source we also learn:

He [Lieutenant-Colonel Torrens] highly commended the workmanship of Gunner Firnhaber, the maker of the medal, and paid a high eulogium to the great spirit of that gentleman in presenting it to the Company ... Gunner Perry briefly returned thanks, particularly alluding to the hearty good feeling displayed by the donor of that medal.<sup>52</sup>

Although fleeting, this record captures the high regard in which Firnhaber was held professionally and personally by members of the Artillery Company.

### Jewellery

Due to the absence of marked pieces, little jewellery has been connected to Firnhaber, although undoubtedly he was capable of making exquisite items. This is borne out by an anonymous columnist writing in 1892 on the occasion of "South Australia's fifty-fifth anniversary":



Fig 18 Brooch locket, gold, malachite and glass, Adelaide, 1859, attributed to Carl Firnhaber  
(Gift of Mrs Krogman 1944, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide)



Fig 19 Flagon, two chalices and paten, silver, parcel-gilt, Adelaide, 1850, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, with engraved inscription  
(Private collection, Adelaide)



Taking a nodule of malachite with its bubbly green surface, from which, by-the-way, brooches and ear-rings were afterwards made by our pioneer jeweller, Firnhaber, of Hindley-street, he [Johann Menge] said... 'You see this nodule or little boil of malachite. Well, this represents in miniature what the Burra Mine is – a big boil or bubble'.<sup>53</sup>

The recent reattribution of a brooch locket (circa 1859) [Fig 18] has been achieved through a newspaper description where the locket was described as:

a massive and beautiful brooch just manufactured by him [Firnhaber], in South Australian gold and malachite. The setting of the malachite consist[s] of a wreath of elaborately chased roses, sham-rocks, and thistles ... which is worth about £13.<sup>54</sup>

A year earlier another Firnhaber malachite brooch, its present whereabouts unknown, is described as being

emblematic of Australia, including representations of the emu and kangaroo, the grape, wheat ear, &c.<sup>55</sup>

Firnhaber's source of gold in 1858 was the Echunga district, while malachite was readily available from Kapunda and Burra Burra, South Australia.<sup>56</sup>

### Ecclesiastical silver

Why Firnhaber chose to leave Germany for Adelaide is not known, although he would have been familiar with the many earlier settlers in South Australia. There are second-hand references to his religious beliefs, that he was Anglican and later in life a Catholic.<sup>57</sup> The surviving objects show that Firnhaber created beautiful pieces of ecclesiastical silver for the Anglican Church in the

1850s and the Catholic Church in the 1860s. The first was the communion service (1850), for Christchurch, North Adelaide [Fig 19], and a communion service, (circa 1855) was supplied for St James's Church, Blakiston. The Christ Church communion service is in the Gothic Revival style with Firnhaber making replicas of the pieces now in St Peter's Cathedral, North Adelaide; these were designed by the leading British architect, William Butterfield (1814–1900). The original subscribers list for the plate shows that Firnhaber was paid £44 16s 3d and Joshua Payne (born circa 1810, Australia circa 1849–1889), the engraver, £9.<sup>58</sup>

The St James's communion service [Fig 20] (circa 1855) is quite different in style. With no conditions imposed on him, Firnhaber created an elegant and generous set that reflects his own design sensibility. The chalice in particular demonstrates his German origins and thorough training, with its lobed foot and lobed lower bowl drawing on sixteenth-century mannerist traditions. The paten is deeply scalloped and the fulsome flagon has a reverse S-curve handle and beaked spout. Together, they make a harmonious grouping, with the chalice and the small areas of exquisitely chased leaves and petals adding further ornament and unity to the service.



Fig 20 Flagon, chalice and paten, silver, parcel-gilt, Adelaide, circa 1855, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber

(On long term loan from St James's Anglican Church, Blakiston. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide)

46 SAA, 26 April 1862.

47 *South Australian Weekly Chronicle*, 22 April 1865.

48 *Government Gazette*, 14 August 1862. The old units were reformed in May 1866; Firnhaber enlisted as a private on 16 May 1866 in the Adelaide

Artillery but resigned on 10 October 1866.

Information supplied by the Coordinator of the Army Museum of South Australia (AMOSA) Archives, 18 July 2014.

49 SAR, 26 January 1855; *Government Gazette*, 25 January 1855,

23 February 1855; AMOSA Archives.

50 In 1862 Firnhaber won the medal and in 1863 it was won by Sergeant Darling.

51 SAR, 12 December 1861.

52 SAA, 12 December 1861.

53 SAR, 1 April 1892.

54 SAA, 28 February 1859. This Brooch locket was formerly attributed to Julius Schomburgk.

55 SAA, 30 September 1859.

56 SAA, 14 September 1858.

57 Jill Statton (ed), *Biographical index of South Australians 1836–1885*, Marden, South Australia, 1986, vol 2, p 501.

58 John Hawkins, *op cit*, see note 10, vol 2, p 21, pls 295 and 296.



Firnhaber's monstrance [Fig 21] and a chalice and paten commissioned for Salisbury's St Augustine's Church (now chapel, consecrated in 1857) in 1867 were described in the *South Australian Register*:

Colonial Manufactures – Mr. Firnhaber, jeweller, of Hindley street, has just completed an elegant *monstrance* for the Salisbury Catholic Church. The greater part of it is of silver. The workmanship is of a chaste and somewhat elaborate character. It stands nearly two feet high. The receptacle for the host is surrounded by a double wreath in frosted silver, representing the stems and ears of wheat and the leaves and fruit of the vine, and this emblematical of the bread and wine used in the Eucharist. It is surrounded by a halo, and surmounted by a globe and cross, in burnished and frosted silver.<sup>59</sup>

It is the only known South Australian manufactured monstrance of the period and stylistically it follows those from Europe. Whether Firnhaber made or imported the brass halo is unknown, although the latter seems probable. Based on the newspaper description, the globe and topmost cross have been replaced by a cross. The monstrance consequently stands 22 in (55.8 cm) tall. Of most interest is Firnhaber's double wreath which shows his tremendous skill, developed as a jeweller, for creating naturalistic flora in silver, finely finished with surface tooling that brings the texture of the ears of wheat and leaves to life.

In the same year, St Augustine's was gifted a Firnhaber chalice and paten in silver, and silver-gilt by a parishioner Patrick Ryan Walsh [Fig 22].<sup>60</sup> With its wide foot and small bowl, Firnhaber draws attention to the decorative knopped stem and bands of decoration worked to the foot. Again, wheat and vines feature most prominently in wonderful chased detail. Firnhaber developed this form of chalice in 1866 when he was regularly supplying the Catholic Church of South Australia. Similar chalices exist at St Peter and St Paul Catholic Church in Gawler and St Mary's Cathedral in Hobart, Tasmania.<sup>61</sup> The latter was donated by Patrick Kelly and is inscribed on the foot

Ecclesiae Cathedrali Hobartoniensi Patritius  
Kelly Calicem istum donavit 1866.

The choice of Firnhaber as maker of the chalice is explained when it is understood that Kelly himself had been a recipient of Firnhaber's work; the congregation of Gawler gave him, earlier in 1866, the parting gift an elaborate silver cross which had at its base a praying angel, malachite and blue carbonite (azurite), and cost a substantial £100.<sup>62</sup>

The silversmithing skills of Firnhaber were required regularly for the manufacture of presentation objects for retiring or departing clerics as well as for significant benefactors of the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of most of these pieces is now unknown, with newspaper reports of their existence being all that remain; for example,



Fig 21 Monstrance, silver, parcel-gilt, brass and glass, Adelaide, 1867, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber  
(St Augustine's Catholic parish, Salisbury, South Australia)



Fig 22 Chalice and paten, silver, parcel-gilt, Adelaide, 1867, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber; the chalice with engraved inscription  
(St Augustine's Catholic parish, Salisbury, South Australia)



a travelling communion service by Firnhaber for presentation to Rev William Wood on his ordination in 1856;<sup>63</sup> a trowel by Firnhaber used to lay the foundation stone of the Catholic church of St Lawrence the Martyr, North Adelaide, in 1867;<sup>64</sup> a chalice by Firnhaber for presentation to the departing Rev T Bongaerts, from the Catholics of Port Adelaide in 1866 which cost £20;<sup>65</sup> a chalice for the departing Rev Father O'Connor in 1867, also of Gawler; and another chalice as a presentation to the departing Rev J N Hinteroecker in 1868.<sup>66</sup> The last reported piece of ecclesiastical work by Firnhaber was a "magnificent lamp" for St Ignatius Catholic Church at Norwood in 1870, where in 1869 Hinteroecker had taken charge.<sup>67</sup>

### Significant presentation silver

The early wealth of South Australia had been secured by copper (malachite) finds in the 1840s. A most unusual vessel, with a copper mining connection, is Firnhaber's Bagot cup, presented to Captain Charles Bagot in 1859 on his imminent departure for England [Fig 23]. The local miners, smelters and inhabitants decided to present Bagot, an original owner of the Kapunda mine, with a farewell gift as a mark of their appreciation. The *South Australian Register* ran an extensive article on 16 November 1859 describing the previous gala day, its ceremonies and speeches. The newspaper first described the body of the silver cup, after which followed details of its cover:

It consists of an exact miniature of the busiest parts of the mine, and shows the Buhl engine and engine-houses, shear-legs, whim, capstan, and two shafts, &c. All is complete – the capstan turns, and the mine bell rings. It was made at short notice from a sketch of Mr Austin's. The cup bears the owner's crest on one side and the miners' arms on the other ...<sup>68</sup>

Two days later the *South Australian Advertiser* ran a more accurate article:

It is not, however, entirely of South Australian elaboration, the time being allotted to the artist (Mr. Firnhaber) being altogether insufficient to allow him to complete an entirely original work. He therefore adapted an imported cup to the purpose intended; and as it had no lid, executed with his own hands what many persons will regard as the most remarkable portion of the whole piece. The cover is large and massive – the whole of its summit being occupied by an elaborately-carved model of the above-ground machinery of the Kapunda Mine. As this was copied from a photograph, it is, of course, a correct representation.<sup>69</sup>



Fig 23 The Bagot cup, silver, parcel-gilt, the body made in England circa 1845 and the cover in Adelaide, circa 1859, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber after a sketch by Mr Austin, with engraved inscription

(Kapunda Historical Society Inc., South Australia)

59 SAR, 28 September 1867.

60 The chalice is engraved around the foot in Latin 'Ecclesiae Sancti Agustini [sic] Patritius Ryan Walsh Calicem istum donavit 1867' (Patrick Ryan Walsh has given this cup to the

church of St Augustine 1867). Walsh is buried in the church cemetery.

61 Brian Andrews, Heritage Office, Archdiocese of Hobart, Tasmania, kindly brought the Hobart chalice to the author's attention.

62 SAR, 24 August 1866. See Hawkins, op cit, see note 10, vol 2, p 287, pl 505 for an illustration of this piece, which was exhibited at the Australian Intercolonial Exhibition, Melbourne, 1866–67.

63 SAR, 22 October 1856.

64 SAR, 28 March 1867.

65 *South Australian Weekly Chronicle*, 8 December 1866.

66 SAA, 12 September 1868.

67 SAA, 23 November 1870.

68 SAR, 16 November 1859, quoted in John Hawkins, op cit, see note 10, vol 2, p 29.

69 SAA, 18 November 1859.



It was not an uncommon practice to reuse or rework existing English silver, and Firnhaber certainly created a striking cover that is unique in his oeuvre and takes inspiration from Victorian goldfield brooches of the mid-1850s. Most fortunately, the Bagot cup made its way back to South Australia and resides at the Kapunda Museum, amongst other relics of the Kapunda copper mine.

Shortly after his completion of the Bagot cup we learn more of Firnhaber in relation to an incident concerning Julius Schomburgk and the Freeling testimonial (1860). Mr F S Dutton, the secretary of the committee appointed to purchase the testimonial, stated publicly that Schomburgk was the only person in the colony capable of manufacturing a piece of plate.<sup>70</sup> This raised the ire of the Bagot family, who sent a letter to the *South Australian Advertiser*:<sup>71</sup>

To the Editor of the Advertiser, Sir – I perceive in your report this day of the 'Freeling Testimonial' that Mr. Dutton stated that 'Mr. Schomburgk was the only person in the colony; capable of manufacturing a piece of plate'. I am not aware whether Mr. Firnhaber is in the colony, but believing him to be, I think it only just to a very respectable and old colonist, to state that I have seen some of his designs and workmanship, which have never been surpassed by any in Adelaide. I may mention two which came under my own personal notice, viz., a large masonic cup, made for presentation for Mr. McClure<sup>72</sup>, and a piece of plate presented to Captain Bagot before he left for England. Those, with many others which I have had a look at, made by Mr. Firnhaber's own hands, may, for chastity of design and elegance of finish, defy competition.

I am Sir etc.

U.N. Bagot,

Kapunda November 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Firnhaber himself sent a letter to the editor, published the same day:<sup>73</sup>

### The Freeling Testimonial.

To the Editor of the ADVERTISER

... Mr. Dutton, said that 'There was no person in the colony that could make a piece of plate except Mr. Schomburgk'. Now, what nonsense that is. Mr. Dutton's experience of the skill of the jewellers and silversmiths of Adelaide, I am afraid, is very limited. Had Mr. Dutton taken the trouble to enquire

70 See John Hawkins, *op cit*, see note 43, pp 76-8. SAA, 23 November 1860. This was not the sole occasion on which selection committees felt the ire of Firnhaber. He was runner-up to being awarded the rights to make the Royal bridal present in 1863 and believed the selection process was corrupt. See SAR, 29 September 1863.

71 As described in SAA, 27 November 1860.

72 No further mention of a Masonic cup to McClure is made in newspapers; Firnhaber did however provide the Lodge of Truth with a gold jewel enclosing a specimen of malachite for presentation to McClure in 1856. Lazar presented the jewel and U N Bagot was in attendance. See SAR, 8 May 1856. Also of interest

is an advertisement by E Solomon & Co, auctioneers, who were to sell "A handsome silver presentation cup, Masonically designed. Manufactured in the colony, by Mr. Firnhaber". SAR, 8 January 1857.

73 SAA, 27 November 1860.



Fig 24 Hanson cup and salver, silver, parcel-gilt, Adelaide, circa 1862, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber. Designed by Julius Schomburgk and engraved by Joshua Payne; the salver engraved with a presentation inscription (J C Earl Bequest Fund 2007. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide)





in what manner Mr. Schomburgk contrived to execute his last piece of work, viz., the Ridley Testimonial, he would have discovered that it was through the assistance of the modeller, draughtsman, caster, chaser, &c., Mr. S. of course assisting.

Mr. Schomburgk is a most excellent workman, as is well known; so are likewise many others in Adelaide whom Mr. Dutton, in his blissful ignorance, knows nothing of.

I could turn out a piece of plate of any design or massiveness out of my hands, if, perhaps, I were lucky enough to be able to pay the expenses of working and materials by entering into some lucky mining transaction as some have done. I am too poor to lose my money in such speculations and I have a family to support.

I am sir &c.

C.E. Firnhaber

Gold and silversmith of 42 years' standing  
Hindley-street, November 24.

Firnhaber's displeasure was not aimed at Schomburgk and in 1862 the two worked together to create the Hanson cup and salver to be presented to the newly appointed Chief Justice, Richard Davies Hanson [Fig 24]:

It [the cup] was designed by Mr. Julius Schomburgk who also took part in the construction, but the principal workmanship was done by Mr. C.E. Firnhaber.<sup>74</sup>

Again this quote shows the workshop nature of the manufacture of complex items. Widely regarded as Australia's most iconic piece of Gothic Revival silver, it is rare in that it is not of an ecclesiastical nature, as naturalistic and rococo styles were more fashionable for secular work in the 1860s.

With typical Victorian pomp and ceremony the presentation to Hanson took place on Saturday 12 July 1862 at the Masonic Hall, Adelaide, in front of approximately sixty people. The speeches and review of the testimonial were printed in Monday's *South Australian Advertiser*, from which the following extract is taken:

The cup is pure Gothic in its design; on the pedestal are four shields displaying the arms of the Hanson family, beautifully chased and surmounted by the crest, a merlin on a cap of maintenance ... The cup is of polished silver ... all the ornaments are of Gothic openwork in frosted silver, most elaborately worked. The cover of the cup is surmounted by a classical figure of Justice (blindfold) with sword and scales ...

The cup stands on a salver, having a raised edge, and dependent border of Gothic design in frosted silver ... It reflects the highest credit on these talented artists ... The engraving of the inscription was the work of Mr. Payne, King William-street.<sup>75</sup>

The companion salver is raised on four Gothic Revival pierced tracery feet and the salver's decorative border repeats the theme used on the lid of the cup. Originally each foot also featured a shield with the Hanson arms to match those on the stem of the cup.<sup>76</sup> The salver proper remains something of an enigma, the flat section being soldered to the concave rim of the salver, which in turn is screwed to the feet. These are features that strongly suggest Firnhaber was reusing existing silver plate, especially as the reverse shows signs of damage from the possible erasure of earlier marks.<sup>77</sup> In this instance it would seem that the Hanson family supplied this earlier piece of silver with the very beautifully engraved central element, the Hanson coat of arms surrounded by rocaille scrolls. It was from this that Firnhaber extrapolated his cast shields of the Hanson arms for the feet.

Encircling the engraved arms on the salver is a lengthy 1862 testimonial inscription dedicated to Richard Davies Hanson. Of marvellous quality, this engraved inscription is the work of Joshua Payne who had collaborated with Firnhaber since at least 1850.<sup>78</sup>

The resultant cup and salver is an elegant combination of nineteenth-century Gothic Revival style and elements more reminiscent of sixteenth-century German silver. The overall design of the cup is quite unlike anything else made by either Firnhaber or Schomburgk. A few years later, in November 1867, on the occasion of the Grand General Show organised by the Agricultural and Horticultural Society in honour of the H R H the Duke of Edinburgh's visit, the gold- and silversmiths of Adelaide exhibited a range of work. Firnhaber chose to exhibit the Hanson cup and an elaborate trowel presented to Bishop Shiel in March 1867, at the foundation ceremony of the Catholic church of St Lawrence Martyr, North Adelaide.<sup>79</sup> Adelaide's dignitaries and prominent citizens, including Firnhaber, attended a civic banquet held in honour of the duke.<sup>80</sup>

74 SAA, 14 July 1862.

75 SAA, 14 July 1862.

76 At least one of these was made into a brooch. See AGSA acc no 20133A69A.

77 The salver has the impressed stamps of Firnhaber and Schomburgk. An assay test would

confirm whether the salver is of a different origin.

78 For further information on Payne see John Hawkins, *op cit.* see note 10, vol 2, Appendix A, pp 250-1.

79 SAR, 11 March 1867, 28 November 1867

80 SAR, 28 November 1867.





Fig 25 Trowel, silver and casurina wood, Adelaide, 1863, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber, engraved by Robert Tapley with Adelaide Town Hall and a presentation inscription.

(Adelaide City Council Civic Collection)

Some smaller presentation items made by Firnhaber also survive, including an early trowel (1850), which set the pattern for the later Bishop Shiel trowel and the Adelaide Town Hall trowel (1863) [Fig 25].<sup>81</sup> The 1850 trowel commemorates the laying of the foundation stone of the Wesleyan chapel in Pirie Street, Adelaide, by Sir Henry Edward Fox Young, Lieutenant-Governor of South Australia from 1848-54.<sup>82</sup> Elegantly engraved, again by Payne, the governor's arms and inscription are to one side, while the reverse reveals an elevation of the proposed church and those associated with it. Of particular interest is the handle, which Firnhaber had turned from the Australian timber known as she-oak or Casuarina, capped by an imperial crown in silver. Casuarina handles were used by Firnhaber in his Adelaide Town Hall trowel and a punch ladle (circa 1860) [Fig 26], both in the collection of the Adelaide City Council.<sup>83</sup>



Fig 26 Punch ladle, silver, parcel-gilt and casuarina wood, Adelaide, circa 1860, maker's mark of Carl Firnhaber

(Adelaide City Council Civic Collection)

### Personal circumstances and later years

The late 1840s and 1850s had been relatively kind to Firnhaber: he had established a business in Adelaide and supplied work to a broad cross-section of the community. The Lutheran Archives of South Australia hold little information about him and there is no evidence of his being a practising Lutheran but we do, however, learn of an emergency baptism on 21 January 1850.<sup>84</sup> Pastor Andreas Kappler, who worked among the German tradesmen of the city undertook the baptism of Firnhaber's infant, Elisabeth Sophia, who died aged four months.<sup>85</sup> Kappler is notable for his record keeping and states that the child was their fifth, not third, suggesting further deaths in infancy.<sup>86</sup> Elisabeth's godmother was recorded as Mrs Elisabeth Christine Heinemann, who may be assumed to be the wife of J H Heinemann, a watchmaker, who lived with the Firnhabers and probably assisted in the business.<sup>87</sup> The Firnhabers had a further son, Louis Hermann Edward, in 1853<sup>88</sup> and another, Henry (Heinrich Johann Georg) in 1854.<sup>89</sup>

The Births, Deaths and Marriages notices in the newspapers of the 1860s indicate that things changed dramatically and rapidly in Firnhaber's personal life. He lost his wife Elizabeth in May 1860 and, in November 1863, lost his daughter Caroline Eliza (1843-1863) to scarlet fever; her death was followed shortly after by that of his sons Bernhard Moritz (1847-1863) and Henry (1854-1863).<sup>90</sup> This tragedy made the newspapers and the Venerable Archdeacon William Woodcock (1808-1868) officiated at their burials.<sup>91</sup> Woodcock was incumbent at the Anglican Christchurch, near Firnhaber's home in North Adelaide. One happier event took place in June 1862 when



Firnhaber married a fifty two year-old widow Dorothea Elisabeth Nettelbeck (née Glockmann 1810–1880) at the residence of Mr Ernst Köpke, an innkeeper in Gawler. The marriage ceremony was conducted by the independent Lutheran pastor, the Rev Carl Muecke.<sup>92</sup>

At the time of Firnhaber's death on 25 July 1880 he was still residing at Kermode Street, North Adelaide and was aged seventy five.<sup>93</sup> The death notice does provide one piece of additional information, namely, that for the last six years (since 1875) of his life Firnhaber had been confined to his house, which accounts for no known late work.<sup>94</sup> This also accords with the trade directories of South Australia, where his Hindley Street business was listed in 1874 for the last time. His Kermode Street address is then given as "jeweller" for 1875, after which he was listed as a private resident only. The last item by him, mentioned in the newspapers, was a silver cup for Mr W Green's prize-winning wine at the Nuriootpa Show in 1874.<sup>95</sup>

## Conclusion

Firnhaber has left a unique legacy to South Australia, with a significant body of work dating from the late 1840s to the 1870s. Since John Hawkins's formidable publication *Nineteenth century Australian silver* (1990) and the Art Gallery of South Australia's exhibition and catalogue *Bounty* in 2012, much has been learnt. Further research has enabled this first biography of Firnhaber to be compiled, allowing him to take his place amongst his better known peers, Henry Steiner and Jochim Wendt. Reading between the lines of Firnhaber's few remaining words we can sense that he was a man of strong professional honour and moral rectitude and, in his later years, he took great pride in being an early colonist.

He achieved considerable professional success and prominence in Adelaide society, although he also suffered terrible personal losses that reflect the hardship of colonial life. Too long forgotten, Firnhaber's substantial artistic contribution to the history of Australian gold- and silversmithing can now be proclaimed and celebrated.

## Robert Reason

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81 Illustrated in Robert Reason, *op cit*, see note 43, cat no 22, p 117. Adelaide City Council Civic Collection, item 970.

82 *South Australian*, 16 July 1850; SAR, 16 July 1850.

83 Illustrated in Robert Reason, *op cit*, see note 43, cat no 20, p 117. Adelaide City Council Civic Collection, item 980.

84 Information kindly supplied by L Zweck of the Lutheran Archives.

85 Buried in the West Terrace cemetery, Adelaide.

86 A 'Miss Firnhaber' does continue to be mentioned in newspapers up to the death of a Sarah Firnhaber, spinster, in 1933; however no link has been established to C E Firnhaber; see *The*

*Advertiser*, 14 September 1933, 17 October 1912; SAR, 13 September 1878.

87 *South Australian*, 17 May 1850.

88 It must be assumed that Louis died young, for in 1867 Firnhaber commented in a letter to the editor that he had "unfortunately, no sons living"; see SAA, 10 April 1867.

89 SAR, 6 November 1854.

90 SAR, 17, 23 November 1863.

91 SAR, 24 November 1863.

92 Information kindly supplied by L Zweck of the Lutheran Archives.

93 SAR, 26 July 1880. Firnhaber was buried at the North Road Cemetery.

Nailsworth, the same location as his first wife.

94 *South Australian Chronicle and Weekly Mail*, 31 July 1880.

95 SAR, 12 June 1874.



# George Barton Cutten and American coin silver

JOSCELYN GODWIN

The silver of the American colonies and early republic has always been prized for its rarity and its historical associations, while a special cachet attaches to anything made in the southern states before the Civil War. As to its quality, the best silversmiths of Boston, Philadelphia, and New York were equal in taste and skill to those of London, Edinburgh or Dublin. But after the revolution of 1776, lacking a hereditary aristocracy, they supplied a clientele that seldom aspired beyond owning a handsome tea and coffee service. Outside those east coast centres, most silversmiths simply made flatware and the occasional christening mug: simple items that attract little interest on the other side of the Atlantic. This article introduces the first scholar and collector to have taken them seriously.



Fig 1 George Barton Cutten: photograph by Stone's Studio, Syracuse, New York, circa 1940

(Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Colgate University Library)

George Barton Cutten (1874-1962) [Fig 1] is a familiar name in American silver studies thanks to his books on the silversmiths of Utica, New York (1936), North Carolina (1948), Virginia (1952) and Georgia (1958).<sup>1</sup> Like Arthur Grimwade's study of the London goldsmiths, Cutten's books and articles chronicle, as best they can, the lives and relationships of an elusive class of characters: all the more elusive since Cutten's chosen regions were virtually terra incognita. He worked from crumbling newspapers, city directories, church, court, tax and census records, while the main collection at his disposal comprised his own twelve hundred spoons.

Here Cutten describes the genesis of these humble heirlooms as it might have happened in the inland regions.

Procuring spoons when these were made was no small task, and was accompanied by no mean ceremony. It meant far more than simply dropping into a jeweler's, selecting the spoons, and carrying them home. The first and most difficult question was where to procure the silver, for this had to be furnished to the smith by the customer. The only source of this precious metal was coin, and coin was far from plentiful. Of course, on the coast, visited by sea captains and pirates, coin was not uncommon, but little of it trickled through the ten days' journey [to Utica] from the ports of New York and Boston. It might mean gathering and hoarding for months before the requisite amount could be procured. And what a motley lot! Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, Swedish, and even American; pieces of eight, dollars, crowns, double florins, guldens, and, perhaps, even a Pine tree shilling, now almost priceless. When it was handed on to the silversmith he weighed it, then proceeded to melt it and to hammer out the spoons. In due time they were completed according to order, they were carefully weighed, and the customer was credited or charged with the difference between the weight of the coin furnished and the spoons; then the smith was paid for his work. Before the days of banks, it was considered advisable to have one's silver made into some kind of useful utensils, plainly



marked, for then, if they were stolen, they could be more easily identified.<sup>2</sup>

This excerpt explains why most American silver before the Civil War is known as 'coin silver', with a nominal purity of 900/1000 (approximating that of the Spanish coinage), rather than the sterling standard of 925/1000.<sup>3</sup> It also explains why earlier articles were stamped with nothing but the maker's name, if that: the original buyer knew where the silver had come from. Post-Cutten research has, however, modified this appealing picture. By the 1830s larger silversmiths were manufacturing flatware in quantity and sending it to retailers who stamped it with their own names. Such pieces may also bear marks of lions, busts, eagles, stars, etc, sometimes called 'pseudo hallmarks' as though trying to pass as English sterling, but now recognised as an innocent code of manufacturers' marks.<sup>4</sup> One often sees the mark 'COIN' or 'PURE COIN', guaranteeing the origin of the material. Although there was no legal control or inspection, the quality of American coin silver from coast to coast remained surprisingly high, as proven by recent assays using x-ray fluorescent testing.<sup>5</sup>

Coin silver appealed to collectors like Cutten for various reasons: a love of regional history, of country antique shops and minor historical societies, the hunt for the rare item and the pleasure of getting it for next to nothing; and perhaps most of all, a William Morris-like nostalgia for the pre-industrial era and for the union of beauty and utility under the craftsman's hand. In the post-revolutionary period, as Cutten's lists show, every small American town and many villages had one or more silversmiths who might double as watchmaker, jeweller and dentist (America's most famous silversmith, Paul Revere, tended George Washington's teeth). The spoons that became heirlooms for their modest clients seem flimsy and two-dimensional compared to British ones: a typical teaspoon weighs somewhat under 10 dwt (15.55g). After 1800 the overwhelming majority are fiddle pattern, which takes on every proportion and variation imaginable. Stephen Ensko, another pioneer in the study of



Fig 2 Basket of flowers table-spoon handle, circa 1830, retailed by Benedict & Scudder, New York City (Author's photograph)



Fig 3 Sheaf of wheat teaspoon handle, 1824-25, retailed by Colton & Collins, New York (Author's photograph)

American silversmiths, wrote scathingly in 1937

The fiddle-back type of spoon is offered rather for record than for interest. With exception of the graceful designs of the "Basket of Flowers" and the "Sheaf of Wheat", these 19th century spoons have little to recommend to any collection.<sup>6</sup>

To George Cutten, on the contrary, every spoon presented the challenge to track down its maker and tell his tale. As for the "graceful designs", Ensko was referring to a fashion that began around 1810 for decorating the end of the handle with a basket of flowers or a sheaf of wheat with a sickle stuck through the binding [Figs 2 and 3]. These designs were made by compressing the handle into a steel swage or mould and were often complemented by a scallop shell on the back of the bowl. Beside teaspoons and tablespoons the village silversmith made

1 George Barton Cutten (from henceforward Cutten) and Minnie Warren Cutten (from henceforward Cutten), *The Silversmiths of Ullica. With Illustrations of Their Silver and Their Marks*, Hamilton, NY, 1936; George Barton Cutten, *The Silversmiths of North Carolina*, Raleigh, NC, 1948; George Barton Cutten,

*The Silversmiths of Virginia, Together with Watchmakers & Jewelers, from 1694 to 1850*, Richmond, VA, 1952; George Barton Cutten, *The Silversmiths of Georgia; Together with Watchmakers & Jewelers - 1733 to 1850*, Savannah, GA, 1958.

2 Cutten, *ibid*, 1936, pp 10-11.

3 More informative than any treatment in print is the online discussion of coin silver by members of the Silver Salon Forum from 2002 onwards. See <http://www.smpub.com/ubb/Forum19/HTML/000234.html>

4 This discovery is largely due to John R McGrew's

detective work in comparing thousands of such marks. See John R McGrew, *Manufacturers' Marks on American Coin Silver*, Hanover, PA, 2004.

5 See the post of 4 November 2002, in the discussion mentioned above, note 3.

6 Stephen G C Ensko, *American Silversmiths and Their Marks*, New York, 1937, vol 2, p 13.





Fig 4 Forks and sugar shells: illustration from *The Silversmiths of Utica*, p 36

some salt spoons, sugar tongs and shells [Fig 4], cream and mustard ladles. Dessert spoons are rarer; coin silver forks even more so. Cutten sums up the situation in the inland settlements that were rising out of former Indian territory and primeval forest:

Clasp knives, butcher knives, carving knives, or hunting knives could also be used at the table, fingers antedated forks and served in place of forks for millenniums, [sic] but spoons were spoons, and some kind of spoon was necessary to take liquids into the mouth.<sup>7</sup>

By the middle of the nineteenth century, several things were changing<sup>8</sup> and Cutten wrote in his booklet on the New York State silversmiths

The year 1850 is an arbitrary date [for ending this study], but machinery was being introduced so rapidly at that time that hand-made silver was becoming scarcer.<sup>9</sup>

He would observe this terminal date in all his subsequent studies. Hollow-ware in the Federal period (corresponding to the Regency period in Britain) had already compromised its hand-raised quality with the application of ready-made rolled bands, stamped with repeating decorative motifs and cut to size. Prosperity and fashion called for a heftier kind of flatware which made it possible to market silver forks to match the spoons. Mid-century taste favoured eclectic styles and the adornment of every surface; social aspirations were exploited to create implements for the 'correct' serving of every food. With steam presses and industrial production complex designs could be easily replicated and thereupon began the array of patterns churned out by the big manufacturers from that day to this. Electroplating, invented

in the 1840s and perfected after the Civil War, created a new public for whom the look was more important than the intrinsic value. Companies such as Gorham in Providence (Rhode Island) and Kirk in Baltimore (Maryland) also set their sights on those upscale customers who had all along preferred to buy English or French silver for its better weight, fineness, and design. For a while the two standards, coin and sterling, coexisted, until in 1868 Gorham led the way by abandoning the lower standard.<sup>10</sup> The firm's competitors were forced to do the same, and in a very few years coin silver had gone the way of the village silversmith.

Having sketched the boundaries of George Cutten's silver researches, I turn to the man himself.<sup>11</sup>

We proceed with some bare facts. Cutten descended from a family originally called Cutting which had left New England for Canada in 1759. He was born on 11 April 1874 in Amherst, Nova Scotia, to William Freeman Cutten, a merchant and municipal judge, and his wife Abbie Ann Trefry Cutten. His father died when George was fourteen and he did not go to school until he went to college at eighteen. He attended Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, and graduated as a BA in Philosophy in 1896. Proceeding to Yale University, he earned another BA (or AB) in Philosophy in 1897 and the added kudos of playing on the Yale football team. In the same year he was ordained and began a thirteen-year career in the Baptist Church, ministering to congregations in Montowese, Connecticut (1897-99), New Haven (1899-1904), Corning, New York (1904-1907) and Columbus, Ohio (1907-1910), where he was a voluntary football coach for Ohio State University.<sup>12</sup> In 1898 he married Minnie Warren Brown, with whom he had four children.<sup>13</sup> Alongside his ministry he laid the basis for a second career by earning a PhD in Psychology from Yale in 1902, and a BD in Theology from the same university in 1903. In that year he travelled through Europe, North Africa, the Near East, and the Holy Land. He later wrote about his education:

Looking over the 12 years spent as a pupil in college or in the university, I am sure I had only one superior teacher and three or four capable ones ... The poorest were the ones who had written the most books and articles<sup>14</sup>.

Cutten's dissertation was on *The Psychology of Alcoholism*. As one would expect of a Yale doctorate it was a thorough study of the medical, psychological and social symptoms of alcoholism as understood by the more progressive schools of thought. When Cutten expanded it into a book of the same title, published in 1907, he added some more speculative chapters.<sup>15</sup> One of these adapted his BD thesis, arguing that the only sure cure for alco-



holism is a religious conversion, although this was not expressed in a dogmatic or even a specifically Christian way. Like the Harvard psychologist William James, whom he often quoted, he trod a narrow path between science and faith, writing

However much we may believe in the divine element in conversion and in the religious life generally, it must remain an unknown quantity, and can only be judged by the apparent effects upon the person experiencing it.<sup>16</sup>

Cutten also knew his Freud; he was certain that God's mysterious ways, especially sudden conversions, must involve the subconscious mind. He studied the new field of psychical research, reading the works of F W H Myers and Edmund Gurney, and was up to date in the theory and practice of hypnotism. It was the latter that furnished the vital link between faith and therapy. He wrote

The cure of the drunkard in conversion is one peculiar to itself but which contains elements found in hypnotic and allied practices, and it necessarily must if it embraces the whole man in its scope.<sup>17</sup>

By 1900 and 1901, when alcoholics came to him for treatment, Cutten would hypnotise them, and once they were entranced, he would plant thoughts of disgust and shame at their sinful state, suggestions of aversion ('alcohol will taste like castor oil'), and, most importantly, glowing pictures of the new life that awaited the ex-alcoholic and all around him.

Unlike some of his denomination, the Rev Cutten was no hell-fire preacher nor did he imagine all Roman Catholics as having horns and a tail. In a pamphlet *The Christian Life in a Baptist Church*, aimed at his fellow pastors, he urged them to educate their flocks.

Two quotations sum up his attitude:<sup>18</sup>

God has provided a way of salvation for everyone. (Lesson II, 2)

Besides the individual church we recognize the Universal or Catholic church, composed of all true Christians, regardless of denomination or creed, of which Jesus Christ alone is the head. (Lesson X, 10)

Cutten's pastorships allowed him time to write two more books. *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*<sup>19</sup> has all the authority and certitude of a successful thirty four year old. The answers to humanity's problems have arrived, he seemed to say; we just need the sense to apply them, by passing our faith through the corrective lens of modern psychology. The many chapters on religious fanaticism and paranormal phenomena show his fascination with things that most scientists preferred to ignore, as does the third volume of this early trilogy. *Three Thousand Years of Mental Healing*<sup>20</sup> is a factual account of ancient, medieval, and modern instances of the power of mind over body: something of which his hypnotic practice had convinced him.

Cutten's next career started out at the top. Although he had never held an academic position, in 1910 Acadia University, his alma mater, invited him to be its President. Acadia was an old institution by Canadian standards, founded in 1838 to train Baptist ministers and, like many sectarian foundations in the New World, it was transforming itself into a liberal arts college to prepare young men for any profession, while maintaining a high moral tone. Cutten was the ideal muscular Christian: a broad-minded pastor and well-published scholar, ex-captain of Acadia's football team with the additional halo of Yale's, and married to a woman with her own college degree.<sup>21</sup> During his presidency he

7 Cutten, *Silversmiths of Central New York* (Paper read to the New York State Historical Society), Hamilton, NY, 1937, unpaginated.

8 For a conspectus of the process with illustrations, see Graham Hood, *American Silver: A History of Style, 1650-1900*, New York, 1971, pp 191-212.

9 Cutten, *The Silversmiths Watchmakers and Jewelers of the State of New York Outside of New York City*,

Hamilton, NY, 1939, p 2.

10 Dorothy Rainwater, *Encyclopedia of American Silver Manufacturers*, 4th ed, Atglen, PA, 1998, p 127.

11 Biographical data is taken from the George B Cutten Papers in Colgate University Library's Special Collections and Archives (call no A 1058), especially the faculty records form filled out in 1940 by Cutten himself, a selection of obituaries, and the notes prepared in 1953-55 by his sec-

retary, Alice J Smith, for a history of the Cutten administration. For a list of the Cutten Papers, see <http://exlibris.colgate.edu/speccoll/findaids/html/A1058.html>.

12 The dedication page of Cutten's *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity* (New York, 1908) mentions three churches in Nova Scotia which he served as pastor before his ordination.

13 Muriel Grace, born in Corning, later Mrs Ralph Hoitsma; Claire Manwell, MD, born in Corning; William Francis, born in Columbus; Margarita Joy, born in New Hampshire, who died in 1926.

14 Cutten, 'The College Professor as Teacher', p 374.

15 Cutten, *The Psychology of Alcoholism*, London and New York, 1907.

16 Cutten, *ibid*, p 282.

17 Cutten, *ibid*, p 316.

18 Cutten, *The Christian Life in a Baptist Church*, Corning, NY, 1906, unpaginated.

19 Cutten, *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, New York, 1908.

20 Cutten, *Three Thousand Years of Mental Healing*, New York, 1911.

21 See dedication page of Cutten, *Psychology of Alcoholism*, note 15.



secured the university's finances, raised the faculty from fifteen to twenty-five, and left it with seven new buildings.<sup>23</sup> When Canada entered the First World War he enlisted, but was refused for overseas service because of football injuries; he served instead as a recruiting officer and, after a munitions explosion had devastated the city and harbour of Halifax, as Director of Rehabilitation for the Halifax Relief Committee.<sup>23</sup>

By 1922, Major/President/Reverend/Doctor Cutten was ready for pastures new. He would spend the rest of his life in the United States and his working years as President of Colgate University in central New York State: another old Baptist foundation (1819) that had expanded into a liberal arts college, rechristened in 1890 to honour the soap and toothpaste magnates who were its major benefactors. Like Acadia, Colgate retained the name of 'university' even though the great majority of its students graduated as Bachelors of Arts. Cutten captained it through the rough seas of the Great Depression, built half a dozen halls of learning in the local grey stone,<sup>24</sup> and of course "put Colgate on the football map."<sup>25</sup>

Towards the end of his first year as President, Cutten addressed the Canadian Society of New York with words that were reported in the local press. Such opinions as these would return to cloud his memory in the eyes of a later generation:

What this thought of "democracy," "equality" and the "melting pot" has accomplished is to permit persons of different races and intellectuality to marry and deteriorate our stock at an alarming rate. Not only philanthropy, but modern medicine is deteriorating the stock, for by this means is inferior stock kept alive.<sup>26</sup>

Preaching eugenics was a respectable if not a majority position in 1923. After the Nazi experience it was not, and to emphasise the fact, the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, in New York City, exhibited another quotation from Cutten.<sup>27</sup> It included these words

The danger that the "melting pot" brings to the nation is the breeding out of the higher divisions of the white race and the breeding in of the lower divisions.

When this was noticed in 2001, with its embarrassing credit to Colgate University's eighth President, there was agitation to rename the university's Cutten Complex of student housing after someone more in tune with contemporary ethics. However, the historically-minded faculty argued that the mores of the past should be learned from, rather than erased and hence forgotten, and so the name remains.

Cutten was a man of his time, who gloried in the name of 'rugged individualist': a class broad enough to include both John B Rockefeller and, in Cutten's opinion, Jesus Christ.<sup>28</sup> In one of his addresses to students he quoted a popular definition of religion

Betting your life that there is a God.

No! He said:

Religion is betting your life that you are a god and acting accordingly.<sup>29</sup>

Such action has its hazards. On 8 May 1924 Cutten was arrested for speeding through the streets of Utica at forty miles an hour.<sup>30</sup> Local law required a mandatory one-day prison sentence for such infractions, but the charge was somehow wangled into another jurisdiction, and 'Colgate's Prexy' was spared an ignominy that would have taken some living down. When the *Utica Observer* mentions that his passenger was Raymond B Fosdick, this opens a window into Cutten's network: Fosdick was already a trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation and would become its President. His brother Harry Emerson Fosdick, a Colgate graduate of 1900 and leader of the modernist movement against Christian fundamentalism, would become pastor of the Rockefellers' Riverside church in New York City.<sup>31</sup> With such allies, and the powerful support of James Colby Colgate (1863-1944), Cutten left Colgate University twice the size and much more securely endowed than when he arrived.

Starting in 1925, Yale University Press published Cutten's second trilogy of books: *Mind, Its Origin and Goal*, *The Threat of Leisure* and *Speaking with Tongues*<sup>32</sup>. So far had Cutten come from biblical literalism, indeed from the whole concept of revelation, that he could now write:

The basis of both science and religion is the same: namely, intellectual curiosity: and if we are living in a *universe*, curiosity must be satisfied in a way which will be antagonistic to neither<sup>33</sup>.

The thesis of *Mind, Its Origin and Goal* is that the human mind is a natural outcome of animal evolution, and in due course has enabled the creation to know its creator. But it must now learn God's will from nature, whose method is not to coddle the unfit, the weak, and the stupid, but to promote the survival of the fittest. There follows a eugenic treatise, with tables and statistics showing the inevitable degeneration of America if the lowest elements continued to out-breed the highest.

The message of the second book, *The Threat of Leisure*, can easily be imagined: it arises from Cutten's disgust at the



ways most Americans behaved when not working. *Speaking with Tongues* is the first book in English on glosolalia, already discussed in *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*. Here Cutten took advantage of later French and German treatises and expanded the field to include trance speaking, automatic writing, speaking a language one has never learned, and in a famous recent case, revealing the "Martian alphabet".<sup>34</sup> He neither mocked nor admired the gift of tongues and attributed most of it to the phenomenon of multiple personality, but did admit that in some cases it defies scientific explanation.

As President of Colgate University, Cutten ensured that this kind of research would continue by bringing in George Hoben Estabrooks (1895-1973), a protégé from Cutten's Acadia days. During his long career as a Professor of Psychology Estabrooks became a national authority on hypnotism, extra-sensory perception and spiritualist phenomena.<sup>35</sup> Like his mentor, he treated them from a scientific point of view, but was not afraid to admit his private belief in telepathy and the immortality of the soul. During the Second World War Estabrooks worked with military and secret services to create a special kind of spy, using a method similar to Cutten's own experiments with alcoholics.<sup>36</sup> The principle was that through hypnotism one could create an alternative personality and instill it with sympathy for the enemy. (He recommended using Americans of German or Italian descent, taken from hospitals.) Upon awakening with no memory of his brainwashing, the subject would gravitate to spy networks and get involved in their plots; then he would be retrieved, hypnotised back into his original personality, and patriotically spill the beans on his comrades.

Of George Barton Cutten's four careers: Baptist minister, writer on psychology and religion, college President and silver expert, the first three seem to hang together in log-

ical progression, as part of a mission to improve humanity, or the small proportion of it he deemed worth improving. But nothing about him had so far signified the antiquarian or the aesthete. It was as though he discovered a long buried talent and made up for its neglect by something close to obsession. Thus in his second decade at Colgate he turned his formidable energies to the study and collecting of silver. Later, in 1947, he would say that he had begun collecting fifteen years previously, ie. around 1932.<sup>37</sup> As for the catalyst, an unsourced clipping in the Cutten Papers states that

Mr Trefry of Trefry & Partridge, the Beacon Hill [Boston] jewelers, started Dr Cutten on his quest for old spoons.<sup>38</sup>

Seeing that his mother's maiden name was Abbie Ann Trefry, a family connection seems likely.

A more certain influence was that of Francis Patrick Garvan and his wife Mabel Brady Garvan to whom *The Silversmiths of Utica* is dedicated

In recognition of their patriotism and generosity in preserving for posterity the work of the early craftsmen of America.

Francis P Garvan (1875-1937) had graduated AB from Yale in the same year as Cutten (1897) and gone on to become President of the American Chemical Society, Director of the Bureau of Investigations (predecessor of the FBI), and one of Yale's great benefactors. In 1930 he commemorated his twentieth wedding anniversary with a stupendous gift of early American furniture, pewter, glass, prints, ceramics, numismatics and especially silver to the Yale Art Gallery;<sup>39</sup> with his later donations it comprised over 10,000 objects.<sup>40</sup>

22 Obituary in *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 November 1962.

23 Ibid.

24 Andrews Hall, 1923, Huntingdon Gymnasium and Lawrence Hall, 1926, Stillman Hall, 1927, McGregory Hall, 1930, Student Union, 1937, plus a golf course.

25 Article on Cutten's induction into the Corning and Painted Post Sports Hall of Fame, *Sunday Telegram*, Elmira, NY, 10 June 1979.

26 'Melting Pot National Suicide Says Colgate University Head', *Rome [NY] Daily Sentinel*, 15 May 1923.

27 The exhibition opened in 1991. Cutten's statement was taken from a publication of the American Defense Society: Henry Wise Wood, *Who Shall Inherit the Land of Our Fathers?* New York, 1923. Information from the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 5.

28 Cutten, 'Rugged Individualism', convocation address delivered at Colgate University on 20 September 1934, unpaginated.

29 Cutten, 'Natural Checks or Higher Controls: Which?', convocation address delivered at Colgate University on 25 September 1935, unpaginated.

30 'Colgate's Prexy Has Case Moved from City Court', *Utica Observer*, 23 June 1924.

31 Information on the Fosdicks from standard biographical sources.

32 Cutten, *Mind, Its Origin and Goal*, New Haven, 1925; *The Threat of Leisure*, New Haven, 1926; *Speaking with Tongues, Historically and*

*Psychologically Considered*, New Haven, 1927.

33 Cutten, *ibid.*, 1925, p 129.

34 The case in question was studied in Théodore Flournoy's *From India to the Planet Mars*, New York and London, 1900.

35 Obituary in *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis* 16/3 (1974), accessed online.

36 Jim Bronskill, 'Manchurian Candidates of Our Own - When RCMP Flirted with Brainwashing', *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 December 1997. Accessed online.

37 'Amateur Silversmith Makes a Hobby of Spoons', *The Hobby Reporter*, 1/3 (1947), pp 3-4.

38 Clipping in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 10.

39 'The Mabel Brady Garvan Collection', *Bulletin of the Associates in Fine Arts at Yale*, 8/2 (1930), pp 6-7.

40 Now called the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection of American Decorative Arts.



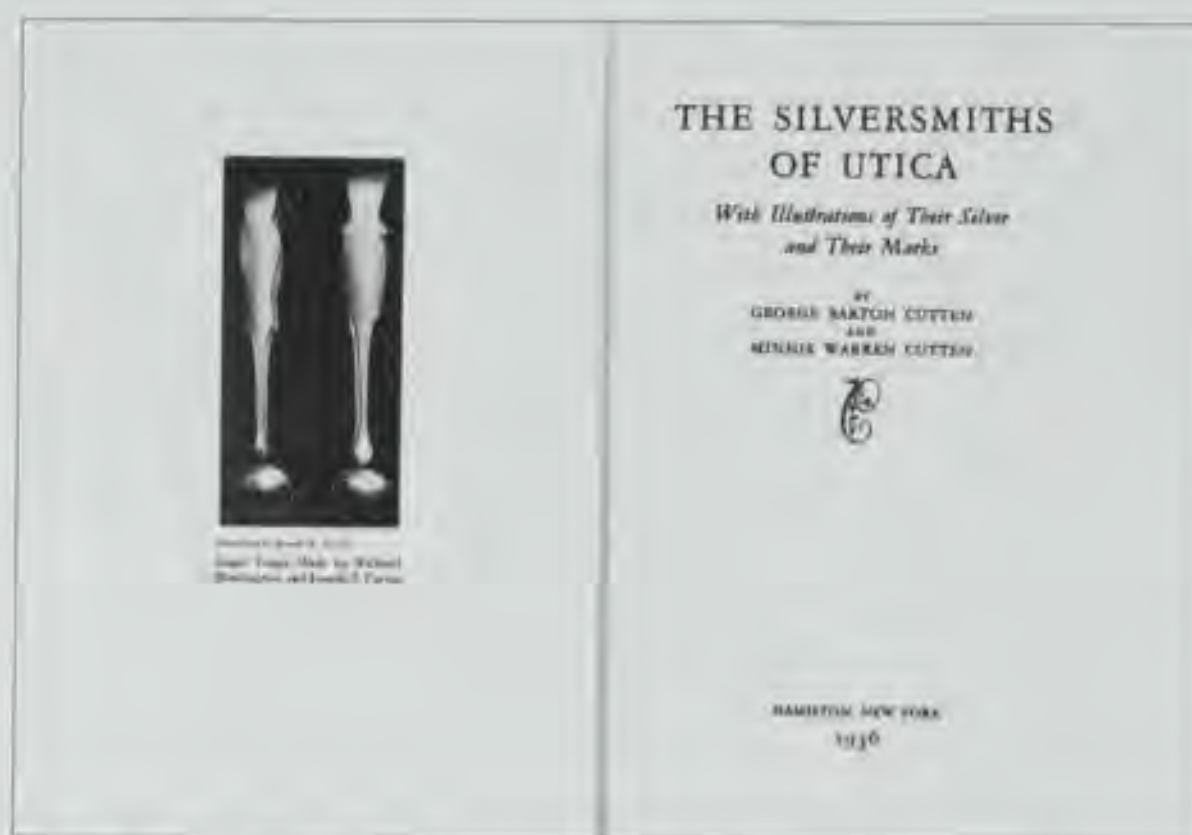


Fig 5 *The Silversmiths of Utica*, frontispiece, showing sugar tongs, and title page

The Garvans had hired a young scholar, John Marshall Phillips (1905-1953), to research their collection and when the gift was made to Yale he accompanied it, joining the Art Department and later became Director of the Yale Art Gallery and curator of the Garvan Collection. In 1935, to celebrate the tercentenary of the state of Connecticut, the gallery published Phillips's study of early state silver as a thirty seven-page booklet.<sup>41</sup> This may have spurred the Cuttens on to emulate Garvan. George Munson Curtis's pioneering work on the same subject provided another model, with its address to "lovers of old plate", its good paper and typography, and its biographies.<sup>42</sup> The Cuttens published *The Silversmiths of Utica* themselves from Hamilton, New York, in 257 copies, bound in grey crinkled boards with a silver cloth spine, a silver paper label with the initial C in the style of coin-silver engravings, and a text of sixty-seven pages on thick untrimmed paper [Fig 5]. Four photographs of flatware were tipped-in, the marks were probably drawn by Minnie in India ink,<sup>43</sup> and the verso pages left ample space for additional marks and notes. Of Cutten's four silver books it is the most attractive, and the only one not yet reprinted.

Minnie Cutten shared in her husband's quest, or was it originally hers? She also co-authored this first fruit and I suspect her of the arch humor of the opening lines:

During the past year we have had a very interesting experience and have become acquainted with a number of attractive people. So far they have not objected to our calling them our friends. We have never talked with them, to be sure, for we met them in the Public Library, and everyone knows that there is no conversation permitted in a Public Library – the placards on the wall say so. We have greeted them, though, week after week, and as we read items about them in the newspapers, we have passed these back and forth as tasty tid-bits<sup>44</sup>.

The friends in question are of course the long-dead silversmiths whom the Cuttens were researching in the Utica Public Library. The whole preface has a jaunty tone quite foreign to George Cutten's usual prose, for his humour, when it comes out, is more biting.

Utica, thirty miles from the Cuttens' home in Hamilton, had been one of the richest cities in New York state. Incorporated as a village in 1798, it reaped the profits of trade between the interior and the coast, first by ox cart and stage coach, then by barge on the Mohawk river and the Erie canal, and eventually by train. Until Syracuse overtook it late in the century, Utica was central New York's industrial hub, with textile mills, foundries and breweries. The Works Projects Administration's invaluable guide to New York state offers a telling statistic: during the First World War, Utica's Savage Arms Company turned out Lewis machine-guns for the British government in a quantity equal to two-thirds of Great Britain's entire output.<sup>45</sup> But Prohibition (1920-33) closed the city's breweries, and the Depression was hard felt.

*The Silversmiths of Utica* lists 191 names of silversmiths, jewellers, watchmakers and repairers (but not silver platers or clockmakers) who worked in Utica between 1799 and 1860; before the industrial era these crafts frequently overlapped. A typical entry reads:

Butler & Osborn ( - 1807)

Nathaniel Butler and John Osborn. In March, 1805, this firm advertised new watches, prices six to twelve dollars, and in May, 1805, advertised military goods. In 1806 they advertised silver tea and table spoons, gold beads, hoop and knob earrings of the newest fashion. "All kinds of masonic medals will be made and engraved in the neatest manner." The partnership was dissolved in 1807.<sup>46</sup>

Almost from the outset Utica flatware acquired some distinctive features. Whereas early American silver is seldom marked with the place of origin, the city's makers habitually added a 'UTICA' stamp to their own mark. The Cuttens' taxonomic study revealed that like some isolated animal species, the region's designs had evolved independently of the American mainstream.

One type of early spoon seems to have been made almost exclusively in Utica.

Dr Cutten has described it as a late coffin type handle with semi-circular cut corners.<sup>47</sup> [Fig 6]

He also mentioned the elongated coffin tip [Fig 10, no 3], the small pointed fins found on early fiddle pattern





Fig 6 Cut corners on late coffin-type handles: teaspoon, 1802-1810, maker's mark of Joseph Barton [Museum Purchase 56.174.1-4]; dessert spoon, maker's mark of Shubael Storrs [Museum Purchase 76.20]; teaspoon, 1810-19, maker's mark of Charles J J DeBerard [Museum Purchase 73.159.1-3]

(Courtesy of Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Museum of Art, Utica, NY)



Fig 7 Small pointed fins on early fiddle pattern teaspoon Lansingburgh, New York, circa 1790, maker's mark of David Smith

(Courtesy of Replacement Sterling 925)

spoons [Fig 7], and the 'sugar-loaf' shoulders (or fins) peculiar to Utica and nearby towns [Fig 8]. Perhaps the latter imitated a common French pattern of the time which could have come into northern New York from Canada.

There is a stark contrast between the almost two hundred Utica silversmiths recorded, and the thirty-six whose marks could be reproduced from actual specimens. Cutten knew as well as anyone what happens when silver articles become unfashionable, but he disapproved of melting pots of any kind:

Might it not be classed as a sin, if not a crime, to melt down grandmother's tea spoons to make a flapper's compact?<sup>41</sup>

More devastating was the effect of the Depression in which, as he described, literally tons of nineteenth-century silver was bought door-to-door and melted. Consequently the majority of silversmiths live on in name only until the occasional rare piece is found.

Studying the Utica silversmiths soon expanded to those of the surrounding region. The next year, 1937, Cutten read a paper to the New York State Historical Society on 'The Silversmiths of Central New York', from which I have already quoted. It introduced characters such as Sanford Boon of Hamilton who not only made silver but advertised a perpetual motion machine, exhibited at Temperance Hall, "admittance 25 cents, ladies free". The tangible remains were, however, scanty. Cutten admitted that he knew of only three large pieces in the whole region, all Utica made: a porringer by John Osborn in the New York Historical Society, a teaset by James and Lynott Bloodgood now in Missouri, and a large soup ladle by Nathaniel Butler in his own collection. Years later, in 1972, the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in Utica held an exhibition in Cutten's memory. Even then they could only find half a dozen specimens of Utica-made hollow ware (along with 159 pieces of



Fig 8 Sugar-loaf fins on sauce ladle, circa 1850, retailed by Lane, Bailey & Co, Madison, New York, and marked 'PURE COIN'

(Author's photograph)

41 John M Phillips, *Early Connecticut Silver, 1700-1830*, New Haven, 1935.

42 George Munson Curtis, *Early Silver of Connecticut and Its Makers*, Meriden, CT, 1913. This sets a terminal date of 1830.

43 An unsourced clipping of November 1950 in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 10, mentions her expertise in this.

44 Cutten and Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1938, p 5.

45 *New York: A Guide to the Empire State*, Compiled by workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of New York, New York, 1940, p 355.

46 Cutten and Cutten, op cit, see note 1, p 29.

47 *Utica Silver*, exhibition at Fountain Elms, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, 5 November 1972 - 4 February 1973, catalogue, Utica, 1973, p 5.

48 Cutten, 'Silversmiths of Central New York', unpaginated.





Fig 9 Letterhead of the St Dunstan Society  
(Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Colgate University Library)

flatware), of which the prize exhibit was Osborn's tea service in Federal period style, with ball feet, domed lids and finials.<sup>49</sup> These showed that the city's silversmiths could rise to the occasion when required, while their scarcity explains why Cutten's collecting necessarily focused on flatware.

By 1939 his researches had covered the entire state of New York, excluding the metropolis. He published his findings in a booklet that remains a first port of call for collectors with access to one of the three hundred copies.<sup>50</sup> Minnie was no longer co-author; the torrent of data left no room for biographies or anecdotes and the work is simply a checklist of makers listed by place, and indicates the nature and date of the source: usually a



Fig 10 Evolution of spoon patterns: photograph made for Cutten's study of the coffin-head design  
(Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

directory or a newspaper advertisement. A few names carry birth and death dates; a very few are taken from Currier's or Ensko's compilations.<sup>51</sup>

Cutten's papers from this period reveal the existence of a short-lived silver society in New York: the St Dunstan Society, named after the tenth-century Archbishop of Canterbury and patron saint of goldsmiths. The society's letterhead [Fig 9] pictures the saint with his crozier and the tongs with which he pulled the Devil's nose. Its only known publication is a compilation of biblical references to the goldsmith's craft by Maud Stoutenburgh Eliot (died 1944), a New York socialite with an interest in genealogy and New York history.<sup>52</sup> She was probably the moving force behind the society, founding it on St Dunstan's day, 19 May 1940. This was also the day on which Winston Churchill ordered the evacuation from Dunkirk, after which Americans could no longer pretend that Europe's war was not their concern.

Upon retiring from the presidency of Colgate University in 1942, Cutten served for two years as interim acting President of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School in Rochester, New York. His cause now was not immigration or eugenics, but temperance. Ever since the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, he had wished it back, and told his Colgate students so with self-deprecating humour:

I have never found myself under any disadvantage because I did not drink, but some of my friends have found themselves under considerable disadvantage because they did. The truth of the matter is that I have no intellectual ability to spare; in fact, hardly enough to get along on comfortably, at times; of course, those who have intelligence plus can, perhaps, afford to dissipate it.<sup>53</sup>

Now in wartime he was more serious, even provocative:

One wonders whether 77 days of prohibition at Pearl Harbor before December 7 [1941] instead of 77 days afterward might have saved us from the worst naval defeat in our history.<sup>54</sup>

But the war did not keep Cutten from pursuing his avocation. His studies of New York State silversmiths became more and more specialised. Some of them, published in periodicals and reissued in pamphlet form, are remarkable pieces of archival research and detective work.<sup>55</sup> His shorter, journalistic articles are no less scholarly in content but are aimed at the more casual reader.<sup>56</sup> For instance, he wrote about the coffin-head pattern that was in vogue from 1800 to a little after 1810. Always the evolutionist, he demonstrated how it fitted into the transition from Old English to fiddle pattern [Fig 10]. As for the name, some said that it was subsequent to the design;



others, that the shape was deliberate because such spoons were given at funerals to the pall-bearers and chief mourners. Moreover, it was thought lucky for babies to teethe on them, and they were tied to cribs for that purpose: hence the expression 'born with a silver spoon in his/her mouth'. Another article treated an essential of the elegant tea-party, sugar tongs. Francis M Rosenfeld, an inventor of electrical devices, had collected over eighty specimens, of which the article illustrated about a third.<sup>55</sup> Cutten again took a taxonomic approach, sorting them into categories and comparing the invention of the one-piece tong, as opposed to the scissor type, to the evolution of the thumb. He writes about shanks and bows, and of how the shanks were sometimes cast, but the bows must always have been wrought, because cast silver is too brittle to withstand frequent bending.

Early in 1944, the Rochester Divinity School chose a new permanent President, and Cutten was freed from his temporary post.<sup>56</sup> It may have been with retirement in mind that he cashed in some (or all?) of his non-American silver.<sup>57</sup> In a sale of 14-15 April 1944, at the Parke Bernet galleries in New York City, he consigned anonymously an impressive little collection: a Danish repoussé peg tankard with lion supports, circa 1680; a cylindrical caster by George Jones, 1731-32; a sugar caster by James Goodwin, 1729-30; a repoussé-decorated tripod cream jug by William Kersill, 1761-62, once bought by Charles Dickens and engraved to this effect; a pair of octagonal candlesticks by William Gould, 1735-36; a caddy by John Newton, 1728-29, with the arms of Lord Byron, later owned by Thackeray, then by Dickens; and a William III tankard by Alice Sheen,

engraved with all its owners' names from 1699 to 1876. These items together realised \$1,020.

At the war's end the Cuttens migrated to the warmer climate of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, living first in an apartment, then at 416 Pittsboro Street, a newly-built three-bedroom house near the University of North Carolina campus. They lost no time in resuming their favourite activity. Within two years they had compiled an inventory of the state's silversmiths up to 1850. The State Department of Archives and History in Raleigh was so impressed that it agreed to publish the work, and printed 5,000 copies which it gave away free.<sup>60</sup> The preface is dated 15 January 1948. One effect of the book was to dispel the myth that North Carolina was too poor and backward to have supported silversmiths. The Cuttens' researches turned up documentation on 187 of them, working in twenty-three centres between 1739 and 1850. Unlike the studies of the Utica and New York State silversmiths, this one gives sources for all the data, showing a diligence in working through newspapers, deeds and wills that had surely never been applied to the subject before. As always, Cutten added perceptive remarks about the problems facing silversmiths in their particular location. For example, while the northern colonies got most of their raw material from British coins, North Carolina traded with the West Indies, whose coinage was

often of Spanish and Mexican origin, containing impurities which made it brittle and unfavorable for raising large and important pieces of silver plate.<sup>61</sup>

49 Photograph in *Utica Silver*, op cit, see note 47, p 11.

50 Cutten, *The Silversmiths Watchmakers and Jewelers of the State of New York Outside of New York City*, Hamilton, NY, 1939.

51 Ernest M Currier, *Marks of Early American Silversmiths, with Notes on Silver, Spoon Types & List of New York City Silversmiths 1815-1841*, Portland, ME, 1938; Stephen G C Ensko, *American Silversmiths and Their Marks*, 2 vols, New York, 1927 and 1937.

52 *Biblical References to the Work of Ancient Goldsmiths and Silversmiths and the Precious Metals in which They Worked*, "compiled and arranged by Maud

Stoutenburgh Eliot (Mrs Walter Graeme Eliot), keeper of the rolls", [New York], St Dunstan Society, 1942.

A private edition was issued in 1940 to a few of the author's friends among the society's members. Information from a letter in the Cutten Papers from Harrold E Gillingham, 8 May 1944, informing Cutten of Mrs Eliot's death.

53 Cutten, 'Meet a Prohibitionist!' convocation address delivered at Colgate University, September 20, 1939, unpaginated.

54 Speech to the Genesee Conference in Rochester, reported in *Geneva Daily Times*, 5 June 1943.

55 In this category are 'The Ten Eyck Silversmiths', *The Magazine Antiques*, December 1942; 'More Ten Eyck Silversmiths', *The Magazine Antiques*, April 1944; with Amy Pearce Ver Nooy, 'The Silversmiths of Poughkeepsie, New York', *Dutchess County Historical Society Year Book*, 30 (1945); 'Ten Silversmith Families of New York State', *New York History*, January 1946; foreword and list of silversmiths in Joan Lynn Schild, *The Silversmiths of Rochester*, Rochester, NY, 1944; 'Additional Notes Concerning Andrew Billings', *New York History*, April 1945. From Cutten's typed list, circa 1951, of his sixteen publications on old American silver and silversmiths, in Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 28.

56 From the same list: 'Coffin-Head Design American', *New York Sun*, 20 March 1942; 'Seven Silversmiths Wrought in Northampton', *New York Sun*, 21 May 1943; 'American Silver Sugar Tongs from the Collection of Francis M Rosenfeld', *The Magazine Antiques*, February 1946; 'Reverend Mr Silversmith', *The Biblical Recorder*, 19 June 1946; 'Richmond's Eighteenth-Century Silversmiths', *Times-Dispatch*, 1 June 1947; 'Petersburg Silversmiths', *The Progress-Index*, 1 June 1947.

57 There are photographs of almost the whole Rosenfeld collection in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 21. It is now part of the extensive silver holdings of

the Newark Museum, New Jersey.

58 Reported in *The Western Herald*, Webster, NY, 16 February 1945.

59 Sale catalogue and auction house statement in Cutten Papers, box 2.

60 History of the work as reported by Charles Messer Stow, 'Tarheel Silversmiths Listed', *Time*, 24 April 1948; number of copies listed in Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 1.

61 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1948, p 2.



Again the paper evidence dwarfs the material evidence. The book illustrates only thirty-five makers' marks and seventeen and a half items (the half is a bowl-less spoon) from various collections, none of them identified as Cutten's own. The grandest of them is an urn-shaped cream jug on a square foot and a matching sugar bowl with a flamboyant pineapple finial by Freeman Woods, who had worked in New York in the 1790s. The biographies are more expansive than those of the Utica book, and give a more vivid sense of the times and the versatility of the southern silversmiths. John Vogler (1783-1881), from whom the most silver survives, was a member of the Moravian community, which still preserves his tools in its museum. He had started as a gunsmith, and also made a 'silhouette machine'. The house he built in 1819 introduced Federalist architecture into the mainly Germanic environment of Old Salem.<sup>62</sup> John Gill (born 1798) invented the first percussion revolver in 1829 which preceded the more famous Colt revolver. In his advertisements he offered to "alter common guns into percussion guns" and also to mend tortoiseshell combs with silver.<sup>63</sup> Three silversmiths were also Baptist ministers and another ran a daguerrotype gallery which probably put the silhouette-makers out of business. Until 1865 North Carolina was a slave-owning state and, while slaves were not trained as silversmiths, free blacks and orphans were occasionally taken on as apprentices.<sup>64</sup>



Fig 11 Cutten as silversmith, from the *Hobby Reporter*, 1947  
(Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

The following advertisement placed by Priscilla Caps in the Raleigh Star seems straight out of *Huckleberry Finn*:

John Killingsworth ran away and carried with him a son of mine, a free mulatto boy. I apprehend he will try to sell him. Said Killingsworth is a plausible hypocrite about 45 years of age, he is a mill wright, a silversmith, a counterfeiter, a great Liar and occasionally tries to preach.<sup>65</sup>

By 1947 our ex-preacher was occasionally trying to be a silversmith himself. In the *Hobby Reporter*, alongside an article that only mentions Cutten as collecting silver, is a photograph of him in apron, shirtsleeves and his signature bow tie, holding up a new-forged spoon with a pair of pincers.<sup>66</sup> [Fig 11]

For eight consecutive years George and Minnie Cutten left the sultry summers of North Carolina to vacation in Maine, the northernmost state of the east coast.<sup>67</sup> There they headed for the antique shops, county archives and libraries, gradually compiling a list of Maine silversmiths which remains unpublished. Meanwhile, with their work on North Carolina in print, they turned to the adjacent state of Virginia. They had been there before, over the Easter recess of 1940, and investigated Richmond's antique shops and museums.<sup>68</sup> Now the investigation was in earnest and yielded a book three times the length of the one on North Carolina; it included what is now the separate state of West Virginia. On 1 September 1951 Cutten signed the preface to *The Silversmiths of Virginia*, published by the Dietz Press of Richmond. The silver cloth bound volume lists 450 silversmiths and reproduces 150 marks, with thirty photographic plates. The *Richmond News Leader* called it

that seldom seen phenomenon: a first and authoritative final work in its field<sup>69</sup>

and so it would prove for the rest of the century.

The state named for the Virgin Queen probably had the earliest silversmiths and refiners of any colony in America (except, Cutten patriotically adds, Annapolis Royal in Nova Scotia), but their remit was to prospect for gold and silver mines.<sup>70</sup> From the start, Virginia was a treasury of British plate. Lord Delaware, who arrived in 1609 and lived in grand style, surely brought a service with him.<sup>71</sup> St John's Episcopal church in Hampton boasts the oldest continuously used church plate in America: a communion service with London marks for 1618-19.<sup>72</sup> In New England the great majority of early church plate is American rather than British whereas in Virginia the ratio is reversed.<sup>73</sup> Among the reasons for this were that settlers in the northern states had encouraged their own craftsmen from the start, and went on to



develop a substantial middle class that was not connected with Great Britain or its church.<sup>74</sup> The southern colony had closer relations with the mother country through the tobacco trade and its shared Episcopalian allegiance. As for where all the English domestic silver had gone, Cutten reminded the reader that priceless pieces were returned to London or Baltimore to be re-made in the latest fashion.<sup>75</sup> The Maryland historian J Hall Pleasants (1873-1957) confirmed this, writing to Cutten in 1950 with an important, if anecdotal memory:

The older members of the firm of Samuel Kirk & Sons told me many years ago how much old silver was brought to them from the South and even from Maryland to be melted down and fabricated into newer fashions.<sup>76</sup>

The fashions in question were probably those of the all-over decoration with repoussé work for which the Baltimore firm of Kirk was famous,<sup>77</sup> and which the American historian Graham Hood excoriates as “monument[s] of repulsiveness”.<sup>78</sup>

After the colonists’ resistance to the Stamp Act in 1765, followed by the revolution of 1776 and the war of 1812, the pipeline to British products was stopped. Yet Virginia-made silver continued to be as scarce as its old newspapers, some of which the Cuttens could only find in Massachusetts, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and even Wisconsin. When they asked Virginians about this the standard reply was that the Northerners had stolen it all during the Civil War.<sup>79</sup> Then what became of it there? Cutten had seen no trace of it:

I have examined tons of silver spoons, and I have recognized only two spoons made by Southern smiths who had not also worked in the North, and I am not positive about one of them.<sup>80</sup>

He would return to this question in his last book. *The Silversmiths of Virginia* documents the Virginia craftsmen with portraits, marks, photographs and biographies of up to a page in length. There are many interesting details. One maker, John Adam (born 1780), was a cousin of the Scottish Adam brothers and was represented by a cream jug in appropriate style (p 4). At the other end of the scale some skilled blacksmiths worked in silver (p xxi), but no women or black silversmiths are known (pp xxi-xxii). Any silversmith could set up as a dentist without a diploma or training, while many of them gave up the craft to profit from the real estate boom of the early nineteenth century (p xxiii). Among the rarer articles illustrated are a skippet (container for a wax seal) and a gorget, a military adornment hung around the neck, often made for trading with the Indians (pp 6 and 8).

Cutten had always been an avid collector. To the *Hobby Reporter* he confessed to owning 1,200 spoons, and the Winterthur Library has his list of 1,100 of them, dating from 1699 to 1810.<sup>81</sup> He did not mention his many pieces of hollow-ware, including five splendid tankards by eighteenth-century American makers.<sup>82</sup> The extent of his collection was revealed after the Cuttens moved to North Carolina and began their generous patronage of the state’s Museum of History. In 1945 Cutten donated two pieces to the museum; in 1947

62 See [http://www.city-ofws.org/Portals/0/pdf/Planning/HRC/Local\\_Landmarks/LHL\\_Sheets/52\\_JohnVoglerHouse.pdf](http://www.city-ofws.org/Portals/0/pdf/Planning/HRC/Local_Landmarks/LHL_Sheets/52_JohnVoglerHouse.pdf)

63 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1948, pp 41-3.

64 Ibid, p 10.

65 Ibid, p 54

66 ‘Amateur Silversmith Makes a Hobby of Spoons’, *The Hobby Reporter*, October 1947.

67 Preface to unpublished manuscript, *The Silversmiths of Maine*, Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 29. To judge from relevant correspondence (folder 26), the years in question were 1947-55.

68 Statement in ‘The Yankee Soldier and Southern Silver’, unpublished manuscript in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 24.

69 Review in *Richmond News Leader*, 9 February 1953. Cutten’s work on Virginia was not superseded until Catherine B Hollan published *Virginia Silversmiths, Jewelers, Clock & Watchmakers 1607-1861. Their Lives and Marks*. McLean, VA, 2010.

70 The point had already been made in Francis Hill Bigelow, *Historic Silver of the Colonies and Its Makers*, New York, 1941, p 17 (first ed, 1917).

71 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1952, p xiv.

72 From the church’s Altar Guild handbook, via

Wikipedia article ‘St. John’s Episcopal Church (Hampton, Virginia)’.

73 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1952, p xv.

74 Ibid, p xviii.

75 Ibid, xvi.

76 Letter from J Hall Pleasants, 2 October 1950, Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 7.

77 See also J Hall Pleasants, review of *The Silversmiths of Virginia in Virginia Historical Magazine*, 61/1 (1953), pp 101-4.

78 Graham Hood, *American Silver*, New York, 1973, p 239.

79 ‘The Yankee Soldier and Southern Silver’, unpublished manuscript in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 24.

80 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1952, p xix.

81 E Richard McKinstry, ed, *Guide to the Winterthur Library, the Joseph Downs Collection and the Winterthur Archives*, Winterthur, DE, 2003, p 29, entry 102: ‘American silver teaspoons in the George Cutten Collection’, 15-page document with notes.

82 Anthony Simons, Philadelphia, 1797; William Cowell (1687-1736), Boston; Andrew Tyler (1692-1741), Boston; John Ball, Boston, 1765; Nicholas Roosevelt (1715-1769), New York. Data from photographs in Cutten papers, box 1, folders 11 and 12.





Fig 12 Representative pieces from Cutten's sale and gift to the Museum of History, Raleigh, North Carolina: (1) tankard, Boston, 1765, maker's mark of John Ball; (2) cream jug, Providence, circa 1790, maker's mark of William Burr (3) cream jug, Baltimore, early nineteenth-century, maker's mark of both Chaudrons & Rasch, Philadelphia, and Simon Wedge; (4) sugar bowl, New York, circa 1830, maker's mark of B Gardiner

(Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

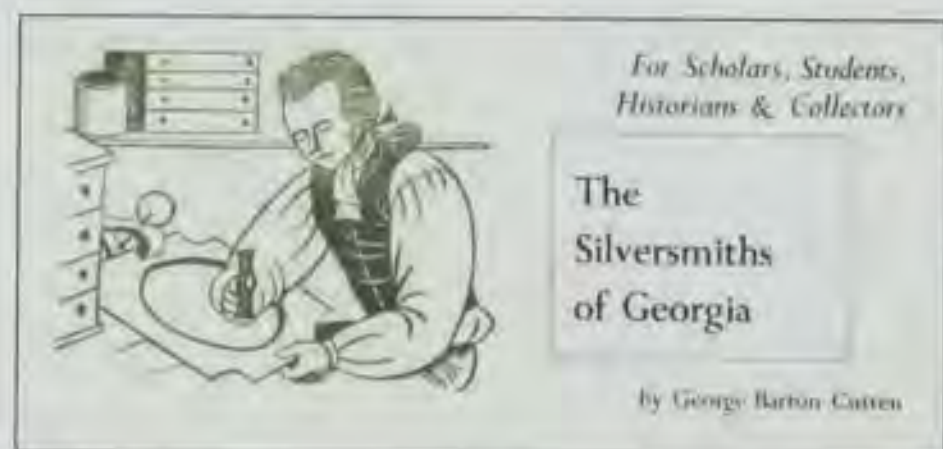


Fig 13 Flyer advertising *The Silversmiths of Georgia*, 1958

(Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

George B. Cutten  
Minnie W. Cutten

Fig 14 Signatures of George and Minnie Cutten in a copy of the Dutchess County Historical Society Yearbook, 1945

(Author's photograph)

he sold five more and in September 1957, 154 pieces "at a very low selling price".<sup>83</sup> About eighty of these had been loaned to the museum in 1947 and displayed in a special case as "Early American Silver from the collection assembled by George Barton Cutten and Minnie Warren Cutten".<sup>84</sup> The loan included the five tankards, three teapots of the period around 1800, a large New York jug of 1815, and other "representative pieces of silver for the period 1655 to 1868" [Fig 12].<sup>85</sup> Almost all were by silversmiths of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other northern centres. Cutten has been credited with a "vast collection of North Carolina silver"<sup>86</sup> but that appears to be a misunderstanding. There is no evidence that he had much success in collecting the work of southern silversmiths: the paucity of illustrations in his books proves it.

Utica was also a beneficiary of the Cuttens' de-accessioning. In 1956 the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute acquired from them 328 items of flatware, of which one third are by Utica silversmiths.<sup>87</sup> The rest came from twenty four other places in New York State, ranging from Watertown to the north, Binghamton to the south, Rochester to the west and Troy to the east. This collection included all the items illustrated in the Cuttens' 1936 book, and formed the basis for the memorial exhibition of 1972-73, already mentioned.

With their upstate New York collection in Utica, the representative American collection in Raleigh, and the English pieces sold, the rest of the Cuttens' collection probably went to their children. Muriel Hoitsma, the eldest, made her own contribution to the field with a pamphlet on *Early Cleveland Silversmiths*, prepared for the Ohio sesquicentennial in 1953.<sup>88</sup> Their younger daughter, Dr Claire Manwell, gave Amherst College a John Forbes tea and coffee set of 1805 that may have come from her parents.<sup>89</sup>

In seeking his next field of research, Cutten skipped South Carolina, which had already been covered by the Charleston historian E Milby Burton.<sup>90</sup> Beyond that lay Georgia, the subject of his final book, published in July 1958. *The Silversmiths of Georgia* contained entries, some of them pages long, for 238 individual smiths or partnerships and thirty-eight watchmakers or jewellers as well as fifteen densely printed pages of source notes. The book was entrusted to the Pigeonhole Press, a Savannah press with fine printing aspirations and the printer and designer, Roy Dilley, included his own lino cut prints representing silversmiths at work [Fig 13]. Cutten was annoyed by the long delay in publication and disappointed that, after all his trouble, the book only had card covers.<sup>91</sup>

Georgia was the scene of prolific silver production, especially in the old capital of Savannah. Yet Cutten could find few specimens to photograph, and all were in private collections. In accounting for this he reviewed the old rumour of the abduction of southern silver by northern soldiers. Not until 1954, after handling tens of thousands of pieces, did he find a southern silver item with probable Civil War involvement. One, an embossed mug, was in a farmhouse in Maine, the other in a lot of miscellaneous spoons. His research found that, despite their engraved legends to the effect, neither could have come from a returning northern soldier.<sup>92</sup> He explained the scarcity of Georgia silver by (1) preference for British silver of sterling standard,



(2) burial, for safety, (3) remelting and refashioning, (4) destruction in war and the Savannah fires of 1796 and 1820. Among the losses in 1796 was the communion service given to Christ Church in 1733 by the Rev Samuel Wesley, brother of John Wesley the founder of Methodism (who visited Savannah two years later).

After his usual list of acknowledgments Cutten added these words:

My wife, Minnie W Cutten, can hardly be included in this listing, for she has contributed in every way.

I have noticed in several examples of George Cutten's books and pamphlets that she has added her signature underneath his, [Fig 14] and wondered about her contribution, always acknowledged but never recognised on a title page since their first book. Her careful hand is evident from the earliest list of American silversmiths in the Cutten Papers [Fig 15] to the maker's marks in his later books [Fig 16], and there is no doubt that George could not have accomplished his silver studies without her.

After the Georgia book came out, Cutten made a surprise return to the educational forum with an article in *School and Society*. He did not mince words:

A large number of persons on the faculties of our colleges and universities lack teaching ability and have no interest in the teaching function. Indeed, with the possible exception of Sunday schools, probably the poorest contemporary teaching is that to be found in our colleges<sup>83</sup>.

The article was an attack on what would later be called the 'publish or perish' climate in academia, the over-estimation of the PhD and the irrelevance of most research to teaching; it must have ruffled some feathers. But as we know Cutten had a low regard for teachers as well; in 1934 he had told his Colgate students:

After all, no one can teach you anything. Nine-tenths of what a professor knows you can find in books, if you know what books to find it in, and the other tenth consists of deductions which he has made from his knowledge... The great teacher is not the one who unloads on you, but the one who inspires you with an insatiable passion to know, one in whose presence you determine to live a greater and higher life.<sup>84</sup>



Fig 15 Manuscript catalogue of American silversmiths, probably written by Minnie Warren Cutten (Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

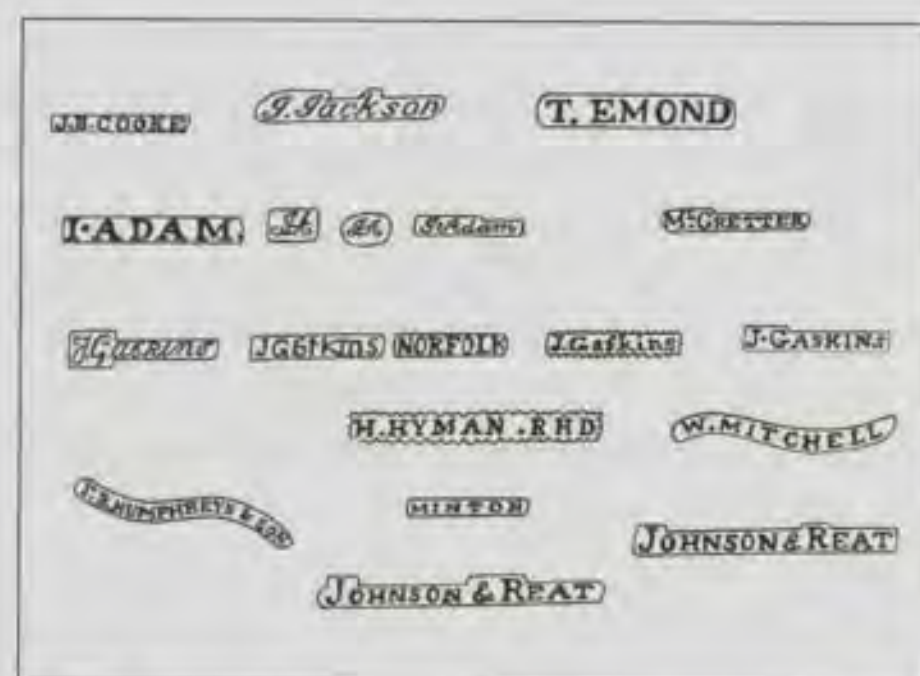


Fig 16 Marks of Virginia silversmiths, probably drawn by Minnie Warren Cutten (Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

83 Information kindly supplied by John Campbell, Collections Manager, North Carolina Museum of History, 6 November 2013.

84 For a photograph of the case, from which many of the larger pieces are identifiable, see <http://collections.ncdcr.gov/dcr/NCD/CRSearch.aspx>, Accession no H.1947.38.4.

85 George Barton Cutten and Mary Reynolds

Peacock, *Silversmiths of North Carolina, 1696-1860*, 2nd ed, Raleigh, NC, 1973, p xi.

86 C Sylvester Green, 'Cutten, George Barton', in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, William S. Powell, ed, Chapel Hill, 1979. Accessed online.

87 'Date on Cutten Collection of Silver', type-script kindly supplied by Anna D'Ambrosio, Director

and Chief Curator, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum of Arts. See also *Bulletin of the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute*, January 1957.

88 Muriel Cutten Hoitsma, 'Early Cleveland Silversmiths', Cleveland, OH, 1953. Copy in Cutten Papers, box 2.

89 Gift to Five Colleges and Historic Deerfield Consortium of a teaset by

John Wolfe Forbes, circa 1805: see <http://museums.fivecolleges.edu/>.

90 E Milby Burton, *South Carolina Silversmiths, 1690-1860*, Charleston, SC, 1942.

91 Correspondence in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 25. The edition was limited to 500 copies.

92 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1958, pp 4-6.

93 Cutten, 'The College Professor as Teacher', *School and Society*, 86 (1958), pp 372-75.

94 Cutten, 'Rugged Individualism'.



Cutten was now eighty four, and beginning to feel his age. He and Minnie left Chapel Hill for Northampton, Massachusetts, where their daughter Claire was practising as a physician. In 1962 he was invited to return to Colgate University for the alumni reunion; he replied that he hoped to do so, on condition that it was kept strictly secret.<sup>95</sup> One can imagine the fuss to which he would otherwise have been subjected and, as it happened, he did go, and spoke at the luncheon. That was his last appearance. He died in a Northampton hospital on 2 November 1962, leaving an estate of \$60,000 to provide a trust fund for Minnie; the residue was to be divided among his three children.<sup>96</sup>

Cutten's opinions on religion, psychology, parapsychology, temperance, and education are forgotten today, while his statements on eugenics are not. It is, however, his silver studies that continue to be sought, consulted, and cited and many remain definitive for their area<sup>97</sup> and, even when they have been superseded, they have been responsible for launching a new wave of silver research and collecting. *The Silversmiths of North Carolina* was revised twice by Mary Reynolds Peacock, the last version (1984) being more than twice the length of Cutten's original. It is much more lavishly illustrated because a host of collectors had meanwhile appeared, some of them with North Carolina hollow-ware of unsuspected quality, and others who had just realised that their old spoons, even worn and dented, had historical significance. The whole idea of the disappearance of southern silver needed to be modified. As mentioned above the systematic study of the 'pseudo hallmarks', frequently found on flatware of the earlier nineteenth century, has revealed a network of suppliers and retailers rather different from Cutten's image of the village silversmith hammering "pieces of eight" into spoons. Both developments, however, only

serve to broaden and deepen the study of coin silver. Cutten had set an example of how much interest and pleasure could be had from these unpretentious links with the American past.

### Acknowledgments

I thank the present and past directors and staff of Special Collections and Archives, Colgate University Library for their many kindnesses during my study of the George Barton Cutten Papers. I also thank Anna D'Ambrosio, Michael Soble, and Laura Laubenthal of the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute in Utica, New York, and John Campbell, Collections Manager, North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, North Carolina, who were most helpful in replying to my questions about their collections.

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<sup>95</sup> Correspondence in Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 4.

<sup>96</sup> Obituary in *Schenectady Gazette*, 8 December 1962. Minnie Warren Cutten died on 9 March 1965 (Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 4).

<sup>97</sup> The Georgia book has been reprinted (Savannah, 1998) with the addition of an article by Katharine G Farnham and Callie H Efird, 'Early Silversmiths and the Silver Trade in Georgia', *The Magazine Antiques*, March 1971. Catherine Hollan's book on Virginia silversmiths has been mentioned above.



# Silver ceremonial trowels

ANTHONY BERNBAUM

## Introduction

This article serves as an introduction to the history and design of presentation and ceremonial silver trowels and their use in the various ceremonies involved with the laying of foundation stones and other similar occasions.<sup>1</sup> It examines the emergence of the use of trowels in Great Britain in the eighteenth century and their widespread use during the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when rapid urbanisation and the construction of numerous churches and civic buildings lead to a boom in their use. The article will also look at the design of these ceremonial trowels and will highlight in particular some wonderful examples by Arts and Crafts silver-smiths and designers. In conclusion it will look at developments in their use after the Second World War and the demise in their popularity.

Silver trowels remain an obscure and esoteric area of the silversmith's and silver collector's repertoire: a very poor cousin compared, say, to the caddy spoon and it is the author's intention that this article should demonstrate that this obscurity is not deserved. Ceremonial trowels represent an old tradition, a window into some great architecture, buildings and social history. The duller of silver trowels may still carry an often untold and revealing story of civic pride, charitable endeavour, religious zeal, social conscience or economic ambition. On occasion these elements are augmented by innovative silver designs conjuring some wonderful examples of trowels which compare favourably to distinguished pieces of any genre.

Overall this article focuses on British trowels but it strays abroad on occasion to illustrate some exceptional

examples of design. Whilst not explored in any detail in this article foundation stone ceremonies, in which silver trowels were used, have also been part of an international culture both in continental Europe and the Commonwealth.<sup>2</sup>

## The history of foundation stone ceremonies and silver trowels

The idea of celebrating the construction of a new building with ceremonial dates back hundreds of years and crosses many cultures. The foundation stone (or cornerstone) represents the first stone set in a masonry foundation; it is of crucial importance as all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thereby determining the position of the entire structure. Over time a cornerstone would come to be a ceremonial stone, or replica, set in a prominent location on the outside of a building which often bore an inscription indicating the construction dates of the building and the names of the architect, builder and other significant individuals.

As early as the sixteenth century foundation stone ceremonies were recorded in Britain and Ireland as major civic events. In 1592 Trinity College, Dublin held a foundation stone ceremony lead by the mayor of Dublin.<sup>3</sup> In England, the foundation stone of St Paul's Cathedral was laid at a ceremony believed to be held in 1675 (although further foundation or coping stone ceremonies were held in the 1690s). In 1739 Westminster Bridge and in 1760 William Pitt Bridge (now Blackfriars Bridge) both had major foundation stone ceremonies attracting thousands of visitors.<sup>4</sup>

1 Throughout this article the nomenclature of ceremonial trowels refers to trowels used at foundation stone, corner stone, coping stone or topping out ceremonies. The former two are the same ceremony which celebrates the commencement of building works, the latter two celebrate the completion of the roof

structure or finishing of the works. The article does not cover mallets although these do link very closely with the use and history of silver trowels.

2 Two of the earliest references to the use of a ceremonial silver trowel which the author has found are in continental Europe.

The *English Daily* journal of 13 August 1730 reported: "Paris August 19th.

The 13th King [of France] ... went to the new Bridge at Compiègne, which is to be called Pont Royal.

His Majesty put on an Apron fringed with gold and taking up a Silver Trowel out of a Bason of Silver full of mortar, laid

the first stone ...". Pre-dating this is evidence that the Pope used a silver trowel as part of the Jubilee ceremony, possibly as early as the fourteenth century.

3 John Pentland Mahaffy, *An epoch in Irish history: Trinity College Dublin, its foundation and early fortunes 1591-1660*, Dublin, 1903.

4 As reported in contemporary newspapers the Lodge of Antiquities holds a silver mallet, said to have been used by Charles II at the ceremony at St Paul's Cathedral, which Sir Christopher Wren, a freemason, owned until his death when he bequeathed it to his lodge.



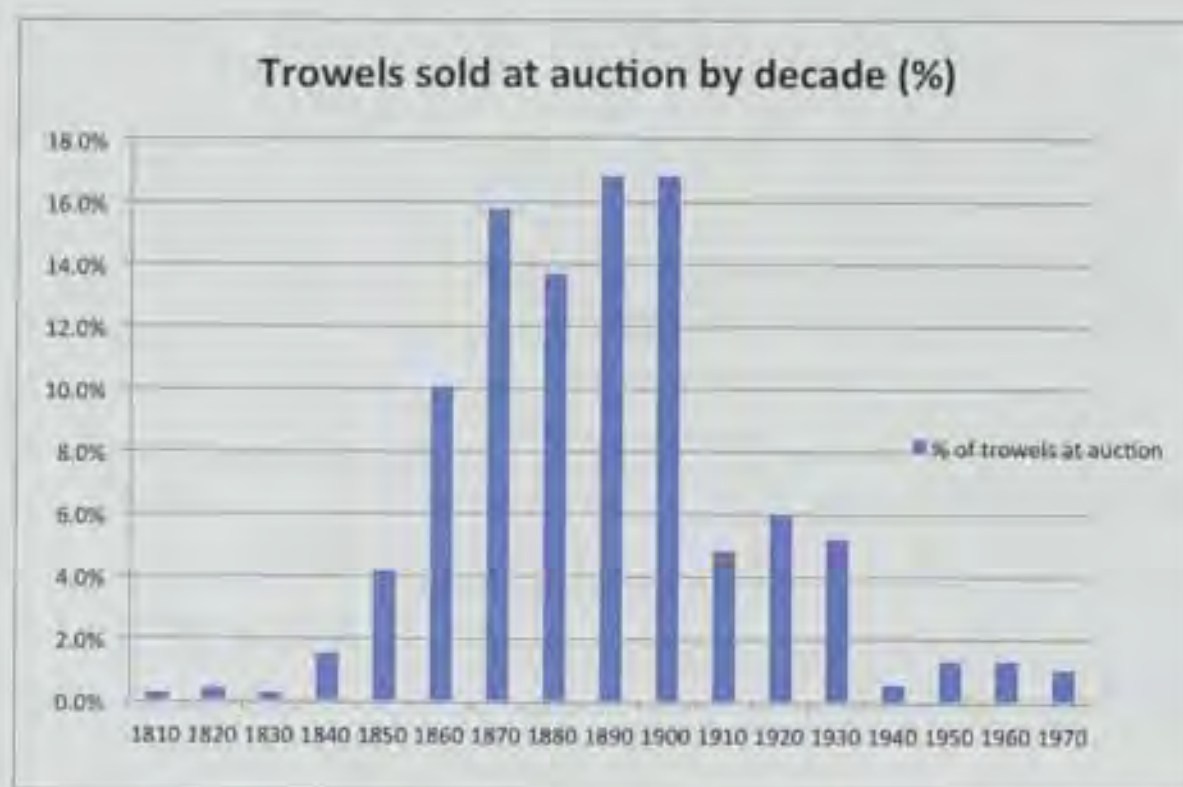


Fig 1 Distribution of trowels by date: data taken from auction records

There is, however, no evidence that any of the ceremonies mentioned above involved a silver trowel. In England references to the use of silver trowels do not appear until the beginning of the eighteenth century and, even then, references to them are infrequent. There seems to be no surviving image of an early or mid eighteenth-century British ceremonial trowel although they were certainly used in this period. On 17 May 1755 *The Evening Post* reported on the foundation stone ceremony for the new Middlesex Hospital which took place on 1 April:

After Divine Service the Right Hon, the Earl of Northumberland, walked from the Church to the Ground appointed for erecting the new Building for the Middlesex Hospital in Marylebone fields, in the following manner, namely, The Beadle of the Hospital with a silver staff; and next to him Two Masons supporting the first stone of the building, followed by Mr Gray, the Builder, bearing a Silver Trowel in his hand ...

At the Place above mentioned a spacious Ring being made, his Lordship, supported by Sir William Beauchamp Proctor and Col Cornwallis, laid the first stone of the Middlesex Hospital, amidst the Acclamations of Thousands of people.

The reference to the "Acclamations of Thousands" is worth noting as it is clear from contemporary sketches and paintings that foundation stone ceremonies were major events, to which formal invitations were issued and were attended by many. Such an image is shown in Fig 6.

The earliest surviving British silver trowels to have been located to date, and for which images are available, date from the 1820s<sup>5</sup> and one of the very earliest of these is the trowel used to lay the foundation stone of the new premises of Rundell, Bridge and Rundell [Figs 2 and 3].<sup>6</sup>

An analysis of auctions over the period 1986 to 2011, using an aggregator auction website, is shown in the graph in Fig 1. It clearly shows how, based on trowels that appeared at auction, the use of silver trowels in Britain grew rapidly from 1850 to around 1914.<sup>7</sup>

There seem to be two main explanations for the adoption and rapid increase in the popularity of the silver trowel. One is the growth of Freemasonry over the period and the other is the development and growth of the professional architect. Both are considered below.

### The role of Freemasonry

The role of the Freemasons is certainly significant in the development and history of the silver trowel.<sup>8</sup>

The ceremonial laying of foundation stones in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the remaining link between Operative and Speculative Masonry.<sup>9</sup> It was probably because of this connection that Freemasons began to be asked, in the eighteenth century, to assist at the laying of foundation stones and continued to be asked to do so even after the connection with the Operative masons' craft had ceased. It is clear from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century local newspaper reports that local Freemason's lodges played a significant role in many, although not all, foundation stone ceremonies.

It seems that the significant role of the Freemasons in foundation stone ceremonies did not extend to guidance within their own doctrine for the use of silver trowels. The trowel is not mentioned as a specific tool in early accounts of Masonic foundation stone laying ceremonies, including that of the ceremony observed at the laying of the foundation stone of the first Freemasons' hall in May 1775. It is also not mentioned at any time in the instructions for the "Ceremony of Laying a Foundation Stone by the M W Grand Master" which appeared in the *Book of Constitutions of the United Grand Lodge of England* which governed such ceremonies until 1922. The book simply referred to the fact that:

...the cement is laid on the lower stone [no mention of a tool] and the upper one is laid down slowly, solemn music playing.

The first official recorded use of a silver trowel as an essential implement used in a Masonic ceremony laying a foundation stone was in fact at a much later date when the foundation stone of the Masonic Million Memorial (the present Freemasons' Hall on Great Queen Street, London) was laid on 14 June 1927.





Fig 2 Trowel, silver-gilt, Dublin, 1814-15, maker's mark of James Le Bas, for Rundell, Bridge & Rundell's new premises  
(© V&A Images, Victoria Albert Museum)



Fig 3 Trowel, silver-gilt, Dublin, 1814-15, maker's mark of James Le Bas, reverse of blade  
(© V&A Images, Victoria Albert Museum)

## The role of architects

The development of professional architecture during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is an important factor in the growth of the popularity of silver trowels.<sup>10</sup> The expansion of the architectural profession dates to the latter part of the eighteenth century when the industrialisation of Britain led to a rapid growth in building construction as well as the development of new materials and processes for construction and the demand for architects grew commensurately.

On 20 September 1791 the Architects Club was established thereby bringing together the leading architects of the day; the club enabled architects to share knowledge and ideas. The Society of Civil Engineers was established twenty years earlier in 1771; it became the Institute of Civil Engineers in 1818. The work of the leading architects of this period, such as John Soane, ultimately led to the establishment in 1834 of the Institute of British Architects, now known as the RIBA. Two highly influential periodicals, *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* and *The Builder* were launched in 1837 and 1840 respectively.

As the practice of architecture was professionalised so it was also commercialised. It would seem from contemporary newspaper sources that architects encouraged foundation ceremonies and acquired trowels inscribed with their names for such ceremonies as a form of self promotion. The naming of the architect on the engraving of a foundation stone trowel, whilst a logical step for posterity, quite probably arose because of the architect's role in originating the ceremony. Seven of the trowels illustrated in this article bear an architect's name. In the records of Omar Ramsden (see note 23), albeit early in the twentieth century, it is recorded that architects ordered trowels from the silversmith directly rather than from a retailer.

In the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal*, under the pseudonym 'Candidus's Note Book' the following commentary appears:

Among those whimsical absurdities to which custom reconciles is that of inscribing the name of the architect and the date

5 The earliest surviving silver trowel I have identified is Dutch and was made in 1743 by Arnodus Van Essen of Groningen; this is in the collection of the Groningen Museum.

6 A British trowel of 1810 has been identified which was sold at auction but no images of it exist. It was described as having the engraved inscription: "Bristol March 19th 1810 With this trowel the foundation stone of the Commercial Coffee Rooms was laid by G. Dyer Esq., Chairman and Treasurer" within a wreath and with an ivory handle. An Irish trowel, similarly identified, of Dublin, 1791 by Joseph Jackson, is described as being an Irish George III presentation trowel of elongated form, the blade inscribed "The first stone of/The House of Industry/Laid by the/Rt. Hon. Tho. Connolly/at the request of the Governors/as the first mover of a Bill for /establishing such institutions/in this kingdom/19th September 1791", with a turned wood handle. Just prior to publication of this article one of the earliest English trowels known appeared as lot 265 at Bonham's sale of 27 January 2015. This trowel was used by Lord Thomas Dundas, on behalf of the Prince Regent, to lay the foundation stone of

Regents (now Vauxhall) Bridge on 9 May 1811. The trowel, dated London 1810 has the maker's mark of William Eley I, William Fern and William Chawner II.

7 All British trowels which appeared at auction over the period on the auction site's database, up until June 2011, were assessed; they totalled 781 and both silver and silver plated examples were counted. The date of inscription was used if it differed from that of the hallmark. As far as was possible trowels that appeared more than once at auction were counted once only.

8 This section draws from information kindly provided by the librarians at Freemasons' Hall.

9 The Operative masons were those practising masonry as a craft from whom the Freemasons originated. By the eighteenth century the Masonic movement drew its members from a wide range of professions and hence became known as 'Speculative Masonry'.

10 This section draws heavily from Spiro Kostof, *The Architect, Chapters in the History of the Profession*, Oxford, 1977, ch 7, John Wilton-Ely, *The Rise of the Professional Architect in England*.





Fig 4 John Mead, the Golden Salmon, 32 Ludgate Hill, the new facade of Rundell Bridge & Rundell's premises, watercolour (Guildhall Library, Corporation of London)



Fig 5 Trowel, silver-gilt, London, 1827-28, maker's mark of James William Garland, for the new London Bridge



Fig 6 Laying the foundation stone of new London Bridge on 15 June 1825, watercolour (Guildhall Library © City of London)

11 *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal*, 1839, vol 2, p 85.

12 Timothy Schroder, *The Gilbert Collection of Gold and Silver*, Los Angeles, 1988, no 109, pp 412-3.

13 John Culme, *The Directory of Gold & Silversmiths Jewellers & Allied Traders 1838-1914*, Woodbridge, 1987, vol 1, p 398.

of a building, not where they can be seen and convey such information at a single glance, but where they must remain unseen forever, namely on the foundation stone....It is all very well to bury underground the names of lord mayors or other official worthies and dignitaries who assist at the ceremony of laying of the first stone because it matters not how soon they and everything relating to the childish silver trowel part of the business are forgotten; but that there should ever by any mystery or room for doubt as to who was really the architect of the building ...<sup>11</sup>

Whilst not direct evidence of the role of architects in promoting foundation stone ceremonies this passage does show how the use of silver trowels must have been reasonably widespread by 1840.

### Georgian and Victorian presentation trowels

This section illustrates examples of several of the more notable trowels used for significant buildings of the period; these are set out in chronological order. A distinctive aspect of the genre of silver trowels is their link to so many great buildings and the leading figures who presided over foundation stone ceremonies.

Figs 2 and 3 illustrate the trowel used for the opening of Rundell, Bridge and Rundell's new shop at 32 Ludgate Hill in 1825/6 whilst Fig 4, a watercolour by the architect John Mead, shows the completed building. The inscription on the trowel reads:

The first stone of the New house for Messrs Rundell Bridge & Rundell was laid with this trowel by John Gawler Bridge, 4th August 1825. John Clement Mead Architect.

The trowel is a good size and weight being 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in (38.4 cm) long and weighing over 16 oz (500g). The maker's mark on the trowel is not that of Rundell's but rather that of James Le Bas, the Irish silver-smith; the trowel was assayed in Dublin in 1814-15. Timothy Schroder in his catalogue of the Gilbert Collection (which included the trowel) proposed that the reason for this was that there was insufficient time for Rundell Bridge and Rundell to make the trowel for the ceremony.<sup>12</sup> An alternative possibility is that the foundation stone ceremony was organised by the architect John Mead who, therefore, provided the trowel himself, which he purchased and had inscribed elsewhere. The trowel and a copper plate engraved with the facade of the shop were sold by a descendant of the architect so he must have retained it after the ceremony.<sup>13</sup> The fish engraved on the back must be a reference to the 'Golden Salmon', the name of the shop.

Fig 5 shows the silver-gilt trowel used for laying the foundation stone of the new London Bridge. The hallmarks are for James William Garland, London, 1827-28 and the reverse is engraved with the arms of the City of London and the inscription reads:

With This Trowel the first Stone on The City Side of the New London Bridge was laid in the foundation of the abutment by The Right Honourable MATHHIAS PRIME LUCAS Lord Mayor on the 12th day of March 1828.





Fig 7 Trowel, London, 1837-38, maker's mark of Robert Garrard II, for the Fitzwilliam Museum  
(© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

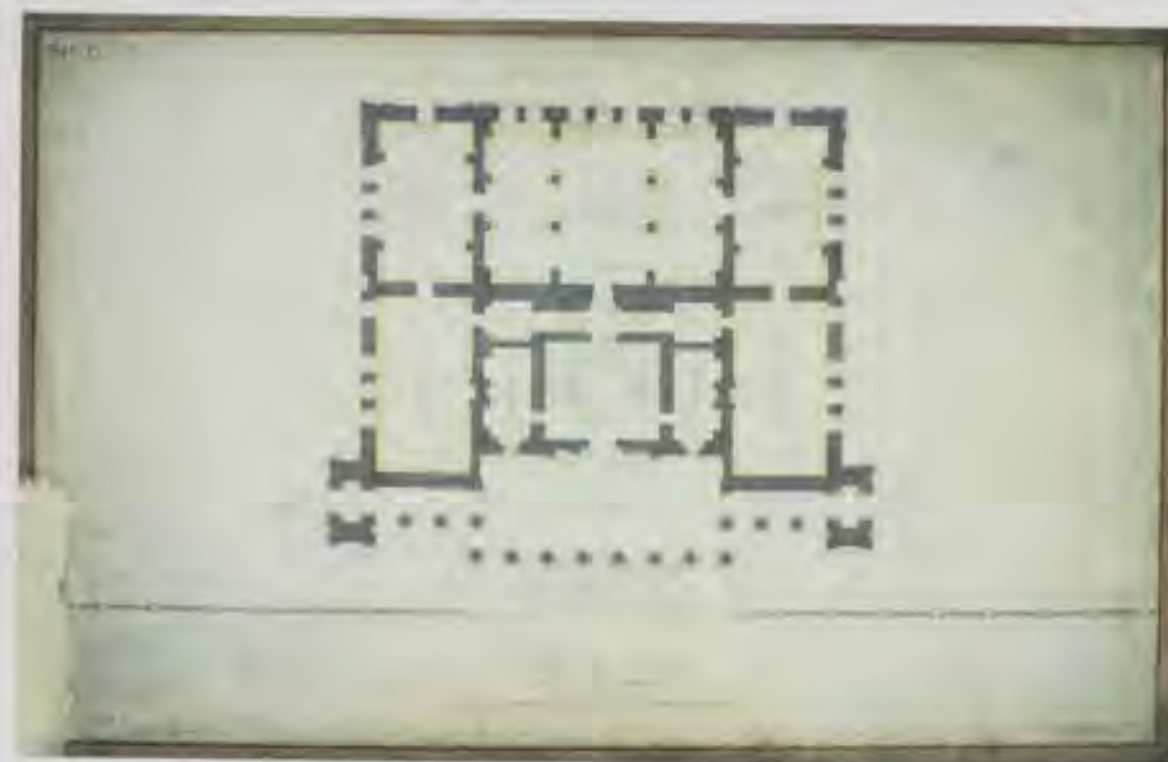


Fig 8 Architect's plans of the Fitzwilliam Museum as engraved on the blade of the trowel in Fig 7  
(© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

The ceremony was reported in the *Morning Chronicle* of 13 March 1828:

Mr Jones, The Chairman of the Bridge committee, then handed to his Lordship [the Lord Mayor] a silver trowel, used in the ceremony of laying the first stones of the other piers.....The stone having been lowered, his Lordship used the trowel in a workmanlike manner.

The reference to the trowel being used to lay the first stones of the other piers may refer to a ceremony that took place on the south side of the bridge in 1825 for which a different silver-gilt trowel was used which was made by Green, Ward and Green. A contemporary engraving exists of the 1825 southside ceremony [Fig 6].

The silver trowel used for the laying the foundation stone of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge [Fig 7] on 2 November 1837 was made by Robert Garrard II and is marked for London 1837-38. Unlike so many trowels of the Victorian period, its quality shines through. The engraving on the blade depicts the ground floor plan of the museum; the actual architect's plan is shown as Fig 8. The trowel is now held by the Fitzwilliam Museum. The *Bury and Norwich Post* of 8 November 1837 commented:

A considerable portion of the site had been enclosed and fitted up with stages, one of which was appropriated to the ladies, another to members of the Senate, a third to the undergraduates and a fourth to Gentlemen not members of the University. When all had taken their respective stations the spectacle was very imposing- the splendour of the scene not being a little enhanced by the numerous attendance of the young noblemen in their rich costume. ... The architect, Mr Basevi, now placed a silver trowel in the hands of the Vice Chanecllor who took some mor-

tar and spread it on the under stone ... The Vice Chancellor addressed the meeting in nearly the following words "Gentlemen of the University at a time when our university is so actively exerting itself to keep pace the spirit of improvement which pervades the whole country we cannot but hail with satisfaction and delight the auspicious commencement of this noble work"

The Writer's Museum in Edinburgh now holds the trowel used for the foundation stone of the monument to Sir Walter Scott [Fig 9]. The inscription on the trowel reads:

To Commemorate the Laying of the Foundation Stone of the Monument at Edinburgh in honour of the Immortal Scott. This trowel to be used at the ceremonial was presented to the Right Honourable Sir James Forrest of Comiston Bart., Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Most Worshipful Grand Mason over all Scotland. The Right Worshipful Master, Office Bearers and Brethren of the Grand Masters Mother Lodge, The Ancient Lodge of Edinburgh No. 92. Aug 15th 1840.



Fig 9 Trowel, silver and wood, for the Scott Monument, Edinburgh  
(© Edinburgh Museums & Galleries, Writer's Museum)





Fig 11 Silver trowel used for the Victoria Bridge, Montreal, Canada, wood engraving



Fig 12 Trowel, silver and granite, London, 1879, maker's mark of Robert Garrard & Sons, for Eddystone Lighthouse  
(© Trinity House, London)



Fig 10 Trowel, silver, London, 1843-44, maker's mark of William Eaton, for the clock tower, Houses of Parliament, London  
(© Parliamentary archives)

The *Morning Chronicle* of 14 August 1840 reported:

... and in the name of the ancient lodge over which they presided, presented his Lordship with an elegant silver trowel.....The ceremony of laying the foundation stone then commenced with usual masonic rite, the Grand Master using the silver trowel above mentioned.

The trowel used to lay the foundation stone of the clock tower of the new Houses of Parliament, now called the Elizabeth Tower, but better known as Big Ben, was made by William Eaton, London, 1843-44 [Fig 10]. The inscription reads:

The first stone of the clock tower of the Houses of Parliament was laid by Emily second daughter of Henry Kelsall Esqr of Rochdale, 28th September, 1845. Charles Barry architect. Thomas Grissell, Samuel Morton Peto builders.

There are no references in the parliamentary archives or local newspapers to a foundation stone ceremony for Big Ben so it seems quite possible that it was a private affair between the architect and builders and the lack of ceremony may reflect the lengthy delays to the overall project. Emily Kelsall, who laid the foundation stone, was the wife of the builder Samuel Morton Peto.

Ironically the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal*, in a commentary written under the pseudonym 'Candidus's notebook', as referred to above, made the following, and as it turned out wholly inaccurate, comment:

The only symptom I have yet discovered of the so much talked of "March of Intellect" is that there has been no "laying the first stone" of the New Houses of Parliament-none of the fussy tom foolery, with the "silver trowel" and all the rest of it, which generally takes place upon such important occasions. The sensible example thus set, will I trust, be adhered to in future; for I suspect the silly ceremony hitherto la vogue, has frequently dipped rather deeply into the building funds...<sup>14</sup>

14 1841, vol 3, p 272.

15 *Home to Canada Royal Tours, 1786-2010*, Dundurn, 2010.





Fig 15 Trowel, silver and wood, London 1902  
maker's mark of Mappin and Webb, for Kew Bridge  
(© Museum of London)



Fig 16 Detail of Kew Bridge trowel  
(© Museum of London)



Fig 17 Detail of finial of Kew Bridge trowel  
(© Museum of London)

16 This is a summary of information provided by Liverpool Museums web-site.

and the circumstances of the ceremony, and the names of the Master, Deputy Master, and engineer was deposited in the cavity under the stone. In the mean time the engineer in charge, Mr. Thomas Edmond, had prepared the cement setting for the block. This the two Princes further tempered, each having a silver trowel for that purpose, and Mr. Douglass assisting in the operation. The block was slowly lowered by hand-power, and the Duke of Edinburgh, after trying it with his trowel, said, "I declare this stone well and truly laid." The words were a signal for a round of cheers from those on the rock and those on board the steam-boats within sight, some of the more distant ships joining.

Finally, selecting a trowel from the very beginning of the twentieth century Fig 15 shows the trowel used for the coping stone of Kew Bridge in 1902. The wooden handles of the trowel and mallet are made from timbers from the first Kew Bridge which dated from 1759. Both pieces are marked for Mappin and Webb, London 1902-3 and Fig 16 is a detail of the trowel blade, including an engraving of the new bridge whilst Fig 17 shows the Tudor rose of the finial of the handle, a motif popularised by Arts and Crafts silversmiths such as Ramsden and Carr. The inscription on the blade pronounces that the coping stone was laid by Edward VII on 20 May 1903.

### *The Illustrated London News*

The trowels described above represent some of the very best silver trowels of the period that still survive. Such was the enthusiasm and significance of foundation stone ceremonies and their associated trowels that *The Illustrated London News* published a number of images of trowels, including that for the Eddystone Lighthouse as described above. Two that were illustrated are shown as Figs 18 and 19 although the whereabouts of the actual trowels is unknown but both are sufficiently innovative in their design to provide an appropriate link to the following section on the design of trowels.

Fig 18 shows the trowel used for the opening of Birkenhead Docks in 1844 and is taken from *The Illustrated London News* of 26 October 1844. The handle and engraving were beautifully executed by the local firm of Joseph Mayer. It is less surprising, than it may initially seem, that a little known provincial silversmith should produce such an innovative trowel. Joseph Mayer (1803-86) was a passionate collector, well travelled and with a wide interest in antiquities, medieval art and porcelain. He established his own jewellery and silver firm in 1844 so this trowel was quite probably a significant and early commission for him. He went so far as to establish his own museum in Liverpool in 1852; his collection now forms part of the Walker Art Gallery.<sup>16</sup>

The second trowel [Fig 19] dates from 1849 and was used by Prince Albert to lay the foundation stone of the Middlesex Paupers Lunatic Asylum. It appeared together with a detailed description in *The Illustrated London News* of 12 May 1849, as set out below. It was made by Garrard's and designed, according to the article, by Benjamin Rotch, a senior Middlesex magistrate who chaired the committee overseeing the new asylum's construction. The highly naturalistic





Fig 18 Silver trowel by Joseph Mayer of Liverpool, for Birkenhead Docks, engraving from *The Illustrated London News*



Fig 19 Silver trowel by Garrard & Sons, London, for Middlesex Paupers Asylum, engraving from *The Illustrated London News*



Fig 20 Trowel, silver-gilt and ebony, Birmingham, 1861-62, maker's mark of Edward Godwin, for Northampton Town Hall (© British Museum)

design of the trowel, which does not look particularly practical, predates the comparable pieces made by William Smith of Liverpool in the late 1870s.

### Design in silver trowels

Most trowels made and used in the Victorian period were not of the calibre of those shown above and the relatively standard design and manufacture of trowels of this period is perhaps one reason why so little has been written about them. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and during the Edwardian period, up until the Second World War, much greater innovation in the design of trowels can be seen which was led by the most distinguished designers and silversmiths of the day. There are wonderful examples of trowels by Omar Ramsden and Alywn Carr, Alexander Fisher, Nelson and Edith Dawson, Henry Wilson, and Edward Spencer which this section illustrates; setting out the designs in chronological order.

The first trowel illustrated dates from 1861-62 [Fig 20] and is by Edward William Godwin, an architect who is best known for his modernist aesthetic furniture design. It was used for the foundation stone ceremony of his first major commission, Northampton Town Hall [Fig 21].

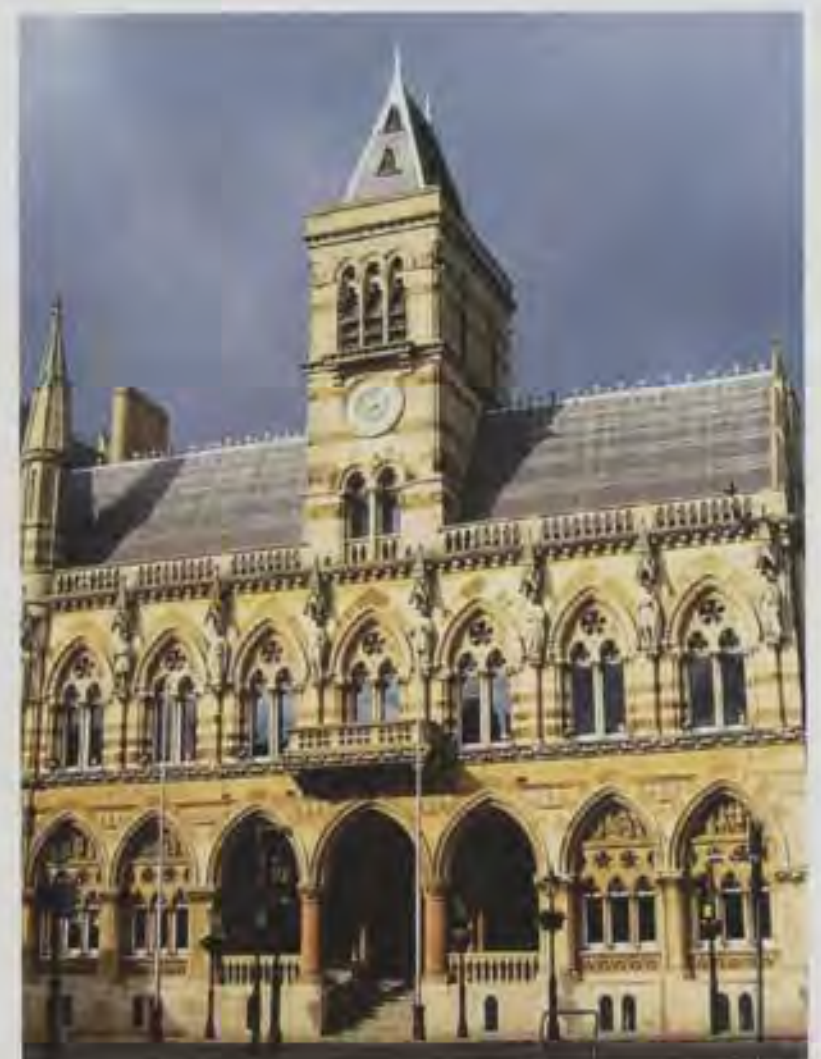


Fig 21 Northampton Town Hall, designed by Edward Godwin



As might be expected there are many silver trowels of this period with royal connections: far too many to illustrate in this article but Fig 11 shows an engraving of a Canadian silver trowel with a beaver handle and decorated with maple leaves which was used by Edward, Prince of Wales, for laying the last stone of the Victoria Bridge in Montreal in 1860.

Arthur Bousfield and Garry Toffoli, drawing on contemporary accounts, wrote:

Montreal Canada's largest city of the time with 90,000 people had been in a frenzy of preparation....Houses were white-washed, trees planted, fountains created .... Torrential rain delayed Edward's entry until 1.30pm August 25th...Under a crimson canopy fringed with gold lace and furnished with handsome carpets, the prince saw the six ton last stone of Victoria Bridge lowered in to place. He tapped it few times with a silver trowel....<sup>15</sup>

Whilst the *New York Herald*, as reported in *The London Illustrated News* of 15 September 1860, described the same ceremony in the following terms:

The Prince and suite having ascended the platform, the builder of the bridge handed him a silver trowel the handle of which represented a Canadian beaver and which was connected with the blade by the Princes feather.

Even the remote Eddystone Lighthouse was deemed worthy of a foundation stone ceremony after a new lighthouse had been commissioned to be built in 1877; the ceremony took place on the foundations of the lighthouse, surrounded by the sea. The original silver trowel by Robert Garrard and Sons of 1879-80 [Fig 12] is beautifully engraved with the four Eddystone lighthouses [Fig 13]; Winstanley's (1698 to 1703), Rudyard's (1708 to 1755), Smeaton's (1759 to 1882) and the current Douglass Tower (1882 to the present day); the handle is made from rock taken from Eddystone itself. The event was shown on the front cover of *The Illustrated London News* of 30 August 1879 [Fig 14]. The accompanying article commented:

This tool is a unique memento of the event, its handle being a Turk's head knot and rope's-end of polished gneiss taken from the core of the Eddystone south rock and the silver blade is appropriately inscribed and engraved. On one side is the coat of arms of the Trinity House; underneath are the delineation of the four towers which have been built on the rock; and toward the point is a scene representing the site of the new building. Round the edge is inscribed the motto "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it". On the other side of the trowel is the Royal coat of arms surmounting a commemorative inscription. The trowel is inclosed in a box composed of polished oak taken from the present lighthouse, the lid bearing a plate with the following inscription: - "This box is made from a portion of the original internal fittings of Smeaton's lighthouse on the Eddystone, 1757. 1879." A white glass bottle containing a parchment inscribed with the date



Fig 13 William Heysham, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh laying the foundation stone of the new Eddystone lighthouse, engraving, 1879 from *The Illustrated London News*



Fig 14 Trowel, used for the Eddystone Lighthouse, engraving from *The Illustrated London News*





Fig 22 Trowel, silver and gold, maker's mark of William Kerr, for the Great Hall of Sydney Town Hall  
(© Powerhouse Museum, Sydney)



Fig 23 Trowel, copper, by the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft for Kyrle's Hall, Birmingham



Fig 24 Kyrle's Hall, Sheep Street, Birmingham designed by Henry Bidlake

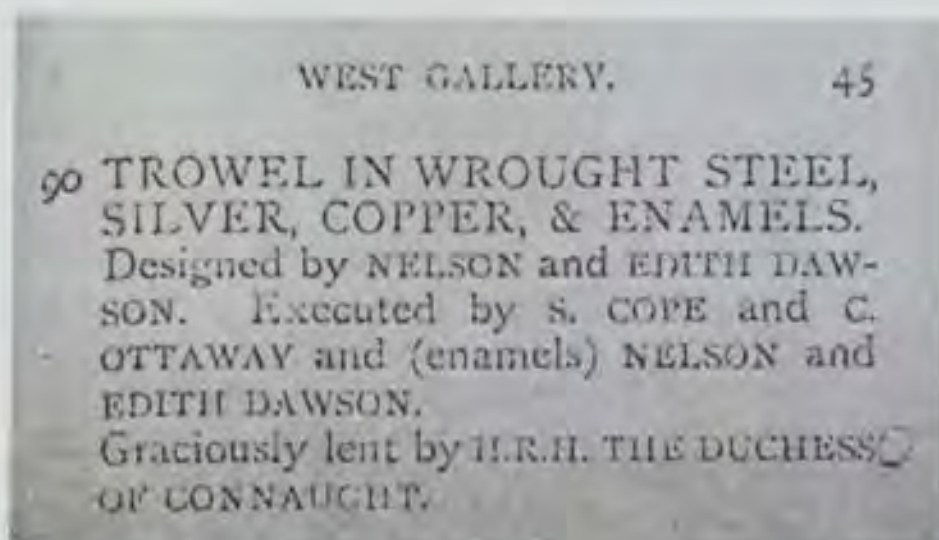


Fig 25 Entry from the Arts and Crafts Society exhibition catalogue of 1896, referring to the trowel by Nelson and Edith Dawson

17 Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, E.598-1963; gift of Edward Godwin, son of the artist.

18 T Ducrow is recorded as one of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft's earliest members and his metalwork was shown at the 1895 Arts and Crafts Society Exhibition.

Godwin won a competition for the design in April 1861 and the building was officially opened on 17 May 1864. The drawing for this trowel is preserved among his designs for the town hall at the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>17</sup>

The British Museum describes the trowel, which was made in Birmingham by an unknown maker, as follows:

Silver gilt with ebony handle, the blade engraved with St Michael and the dragon within a monodora, set within a triangle, the spandrels of which are decorated with Gothic leaves; the handle mounts are pierced with quatrefoils and stylised leaf-forms; the shaft joining handle to blade is encrusted with rosettes and twisted wirework; on the end of the handle an engraved monogram within a shield; the reverse of the blade is engraved with a sexfoil containing an inscription (rubbed).

The *Northampton Mercury* of Saturday 26 October 1861 described the foundation stone ceremony in profuse detail over two pages, including the trowel and its inscription:

The Town Clerk then presented to the Mayor, on behalf of the Corporation, a handsome silver trowel, with which the stone was laid, having on the lower face the following inscription, and the upper being engraved with a very artistically designed figure of St Michael and the Dragon, within a Vesica Piscis:- "This trowel was presented by the Corporation to Pickering Phipps Esq, Mayor of Northampton, on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of the New town Hall, October 22nd 1861."

The next trowel [Fig 22] is not English but rather an Australian design from 1883, albeit by a silversmith born in Northern Ireland. It is remarkable for its design and seems to have been influenced by the aesthetic fashion that was gripping much of Europe (although comparatively few silversmiths) at this time. It was used in laying the foundation stone of the Great Hall of Sydney Town Hall on 13 November 1883 and was made in the workshop of William Kerr (1838-96), a leading watchmaker, jeweller and silversmith in Sydney in the late nineteenth century. Kerr was born in Northern Ireland and came to Australia on board the 'New York Packet' with his family



in 1841. He obtained many important commissions for presentation pieces, such as this trowel, often from Sydney City Council. He used Australian motifs, mostly plants and animals, in his distinctive, finely worked pieces.

The Powerhouse Museum Sydney notes that:

The striking design and execution as well as the original condition of the trowel, which is applied with Australian flowers crafted in gold, make it an outstanding item of Australian metalwork of the period. It is the only example of its kind known to have been made and survived.

Turning back to British trowels, the first Arts and Crafts trowel identified is by the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft for its own new premises in 1892 [Fig 23]. The trowel is not made in silver but copper and brass, in keeping with the Guild spirit of using affordable every-day materials. Its inscription reads in two parts:

Birmingham Kyrle Society and Guild of Handicraft. Foundation Stone laid by George Dixon MP 22nd October 1892.

George Dixon was a Birmingham MP and father of Arthur Stansfield Dixon, chief designer for the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, one of the earliest Arts and Crafts guilds to focus on metal working. Like other guilds of this period its ethos was directly linked to the work of William Morris. Founded in 1875, and named after the seventeenth-century philanthropist John Kyrle, the Kyrle Society was a society "for the diffusion of beauty", one of its principal activities being to plant trees and flowers in urban areas but also to provide a forum for the poor and lower classes to learn artistic skills and better themselves more generally.

The trowel was used for the Guild's first purpose-built premises, Kyrle's Hall, Sheep Street, Birmingham. This classic Arts and Crafts building was designed by the architect William Henry Bidlake and completed in 1893 [Fig 24]. The *Birmingham Daily Post* of 24 October 1892 commented extensively on the ceremony:

Mr Dixon having laid the stone (using for the purpose a trowel made in bronze by a member of the Guild of Handicraft, Mr Ducrow)<sup>16</sup> addressed the gathering...

They [the Kyrle Society] also tried to develop the beauty of character. Those who endeavoured to take advantage of opportunities of this kind not only increased their enjoyment but did something to raise themselves to a higher position in the



Fig 26 Trowel, silver, steel, enamel and copper, by Nelson and Edith Dawson, used for Aldershot Hospital, illustration from the Arts and Crafts Society exhibition catalogue of 1896

scale of humanity. Those who used the building would recognise that the ladies and gentlemen who worked for the Kyrle society did so at considerable personal sacrifice but the sacrifice after all merely nominal for the effort to contribute towards the elevation and enjoyment of others was one of the greatest pleasures of life.

Nelson and Edith Dawson were pioneers of Arts and Crafts jewellery and silver. They were amongst the first designers to exhibit their metalwork at the Arts and Crafts Society exhibition, commencing in 1896, and were famous for the quality of their distinctive enamelling. Amongst the items included in the 1896 exhibition was a steel, copper and silver trowel as described in an extract from the exhibition catalogue [Fig 25] while Fig 26 shows a photograph of the actual trowel with a heart-shaped blade, enamelled handle and central enamel plaque surrounded by the royal coat of arms. The inscription reads:

With me, her Royal Highness The Duchess Connaught of Strathearn laid the foundation stone of the Aldershot Hospital July 28th, 1896





Fig 27 Trowel, silver and enamel by Nelson Dawson  
trowel, for the South Kensington Museum  
(© V&A Images, Victoria Albert Museum)

The Arts and Crafts Society exhibition was highly significant at this time and it is probable that this trowel influenced many of the trowels subsequently illustrated in this section. The heart-shaped blade of the trowel can be seen repeated in the trowels shown below by Henry Wilson, Alexander Fisher and Edward Spencer. The example by Edward Spencer [Fig 39], dated 1911, was for a foundation stone ceremony of an extension to the very same Aldershot Hospital.

In 1899 Nelson Dawson made a trowel for the South Kensington (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) Museum's foundation stone ceremony of 1900 which was to be Queen Victoria's last public appearance; Fig 27 shows this trowel in its original box. It is Victorian and ornate in its design, no doubt reflecting the purpose it served, although an Arts and Crafts influence can be seen in the use of enamel and in the silver design around the bottom of the blade. The *Builder* of 20 May 1899 commented that the trowel "was not the usual "shop" production".<sup>19</sup>

The actual foundation stone is shown as Fig 28 and a contemporary sketch of the ceremony in Fig 29.

The next design for a silver trowel may not actually be placed in correct chronological order since we do not know its date, just its designer. Charles Ashbee illustrated it in his book *Modern English Design* published in 1909 [Fig 30] which includes designs by him dating from 1889 to 1909. The trowel is described as a:

Presentation Trowel, set with three chrysoprases or three amethysts and fitted with a turned ivory handle. The socket of the handle is beaten into nine leaves where it is applied to the blade.

Ashbee was perhaps the greatest and earliest innovator in Arts and Crafts silver, starting his metalwork in 1889 from premises in east London.

Figs 31 and 32 show two similar trowels by Henry Wilson, both of which are dated 1902; Fig 33 is the reverse of the first trowel. Wilson was another of the pioneering architects of the Arts and Crafts movement and highly influential. The inscription of the first trowel [Fig 31] reads:

Presented to the Countess Beauchamps to commemorate the laying of the foundation stone of the Wyche Church Malvern October 2nd 1902.

19 Further information is available on the Victoria and Albert Museum's website, see Nicholas Smith, *What lies beneath: Foundation stones and time capsules and Queen Victoria's*

*Trowel*, under the section "Tales from the Archive".

20 This trowel can be viewed at the Royal Free Hospital Archives Centre, Hampstead on request.

It has been 'rediscovered' during the research for this article.

21 April 1904, vol 31, issue 133, p 228.

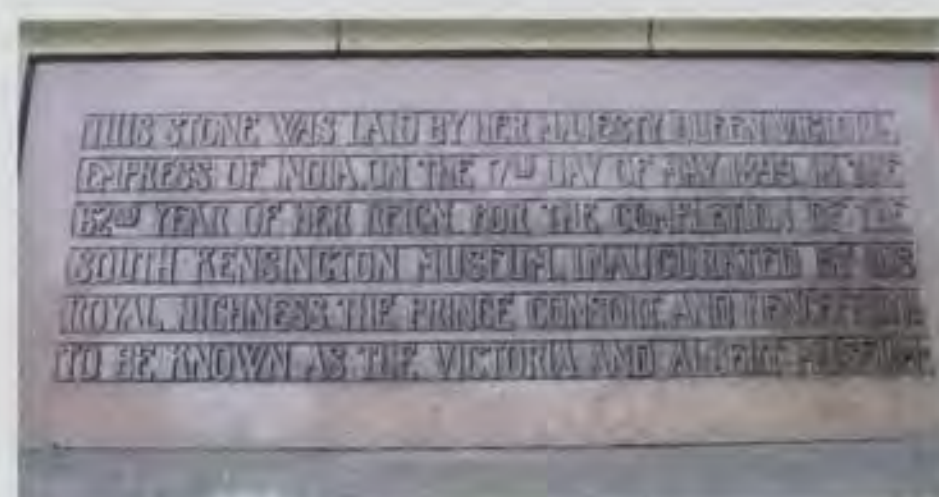


Fig 28 Foundation stone of the South Kensington Museum



Fig 29 The Queen's visit to South Kensington: Her Majesty laying the foundation stone of the Victoria and Albert Museum, newspaper image



That of the second trowel [Fig 32] reads:

Presented to Hon James Hozier. M. P. by the Architect and the Contractors on the occasion on his laying the memorial stone of Lesmahagow Church Hall Oct. 4th 1902.

Alexander Fisher is considered the leading enamellist of the period who re-established the tradition of designing silver which incorporated enamel. In 1902 he designed a trowel [Figs 34 and 35] for the foundation stone ceremony of the New Hampstead Hospital, now the Royal Free Hospital.<sup>20</sup> This stunning trowel was illustrated in *The Studio*<sup>21</sup>, the leading art and design journal of its day, which described it as follows:

The little silver trowel given for the laying of the foundation stone of a hospital and reproduced here by kind permission of HRH Princess Christian, is replete with thought. On the enamel on one side is Hygeia, holding a smoking cap, symbolic of the healing power of drugs. Upon the handle a snake in champlévé enamel is imprisoned within the silver bars.

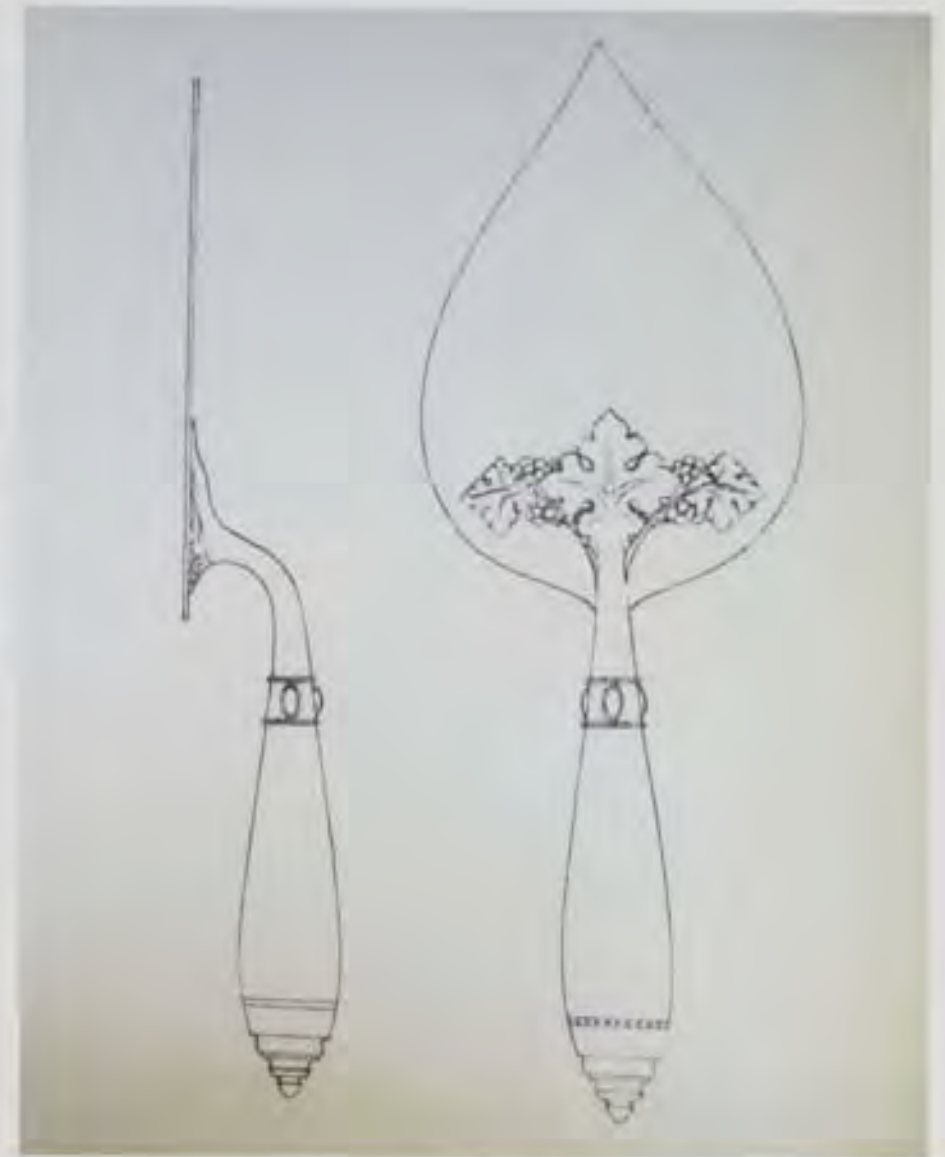


Fig 30 Sketch of a trowel, Charles Ashbee, from *Modern English Design*, 1909



Fig 31 Trowel, silver and copper, by Henry Wilson, for Wyche Church, Malvern  
(© Van den Bosch)



Fig 32 Trowel, silver and copper [Fig 31] reverse showing inscription  
(© Van den Bosch)



Fig 33 Trowel, silver, by Henry Wilson, for Lesmahagow Town Hall  
(© Van den Bosch)



Fig 34 Trowel, silver and enamel, by Alexander Fisher, for New Hampstead Hospital  
(© Royal Free Hampstead Archives Centre)



Fig 35 Detail of Fig 34  
(© Royal Free Hampstead Archives Centre)





Fig 36 Trowel, silver and steel, by Omar Ramsden and Alwyn Carr, for their premises in Fulham  
(© Daniel Bexfield, London)



Fig 37 Trowel, silver, Birmingham, 1905-6, maker's mark of Liberty & Co, for Mersey Park School, Liverpool



Fig 38 Trowel, silver, for the Niagra Power Station, Canada  
(© Casa Lomo, Toronto)

A silver handled trowel with a steel blade which is not marked but is by Omar Ramsden and Alwyn Carr [Fig 36] was almost certainly used by Ramsden and Carr themselves at the opening of their new workshop at 3a Seymour Place, Fulham Road, London which they named St Dunstan's Studio. The architect for the project was C H B Quinell and it was built by William Willett.

In 1905 Liberty & Co put their sponsor's mark on a trowel [Fig 37] which was almost certainly made by their partner firm William Hair Haseler Ltd; the trowel is marked for Birmingham 1905. The handle is cast with a stylised honesty pods with a band set with four turquoise stones. The designer is not known but it is very typical of David Veasey who, after Archibald Knox, was one of Liberty's leading designers of the period. It is thought to be the only presentation trowel made in the Cymric range. The inscription reads:

Presented to Edward Williams Esq Vice-Chairman of the Birkenhead School Board from 1893-1903 and of the Birkenhead Education Committee from 1903 to 1905 , on the occasion of the laying of the [xxx] stone of the Mersey Park School, by his colleagues as a token of the regard and their appreciation of his services to education July 3rd 1906.

An outstanding and highly innovative silver trowel, dating from circa 1906, was used in the foundation stone ceremony for Niagara Power Station [Fig 38]. The Art Nouveau influence is self evident, with the handle representing Niagara Falls and, within that, a stylised figure representing the spirit of the falls. It was presented to Sir Henry Pellatt by E J Lennox to commemorate the laying of the corner stone of the Power House Company in Niagara Falls, Ontario on 8 May 1906. Unfortunately the hallmarks are rubbed and the maker of the trowel cannot be identified.<sup>22</sup> The blade is engraved with an image of the power house above the text:

Presented to Lt. Col. Sir Henry M. Pellatt, President of the Electrical Development Company of Ontario Limited/by E.J. Lennox, architect for the/Power House Company of Niagara Falls/on the occasion of the /laying of the corner stone/May 8th, 1906.

Fig 39 shows a trowel by Edward Spencer made for the Artificers' Guild, together with a watercolour of a nearly identical trowel from their archive held at Goldsmiths Hall [Fig 40]. The Artificers' Guild had been set up by Nelson and Edith Dawson in 1902 and although their association with the guild soon came to an end, the guild itself continued from 1909 to 1938 under its lead designer Edward Spencer. The trowel is unmarked; the blade and finial are silver and it has a steel shaft. The handle is made from ebony and abalone with touches of gilding to parts of the handle and gold pins hold the finial in place which is itself topped by an amethyst. The monogram E R within the green enamel circle is for Edward VII. Its inscription reads:

The Aldershot Hospital, July 1911, King Edward VII ward

It was illustrated in the local *Aldershot News*. It was used at the foundation stone ceremony for a new wing of the local cottage





Fig 39 Trowel, silver, steel, enamel, gold, abalone and ebony, by Edward Spencer, for Aldershot Hospital



Fig 40 Edward Spencer, design for a trowel, watercolour  
(© The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths)



Fig 41 Edward Spencer, design for a trowel, watercolour  
(© The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths)

hospital which involved a large ceremony attended by local dignitaries. The newspaper noted that:

On behalf of the architect, Mr T Davison who was unable to be present, Mr Underwood then presented Mrs Newcombe with a silver trowel of exquisite design with which to lay the stone.

A review of the archives at Goldsmiths' Hall suggests that Edward Spencer and the Artificers' Guild made at least twenty-five trowels during the period 1902 to 1939. Two of his more elaborate designs are shown as Figs 41 and 42.<sup>23</sup> Fig 43 illustrates a charming note written on the back of one of the trowel designs that no doubt reflects the need to make the trowels to a specific deadline dictated by the date of the foundation stone ceremony:

Notice. Trowels are urgent to date of finish

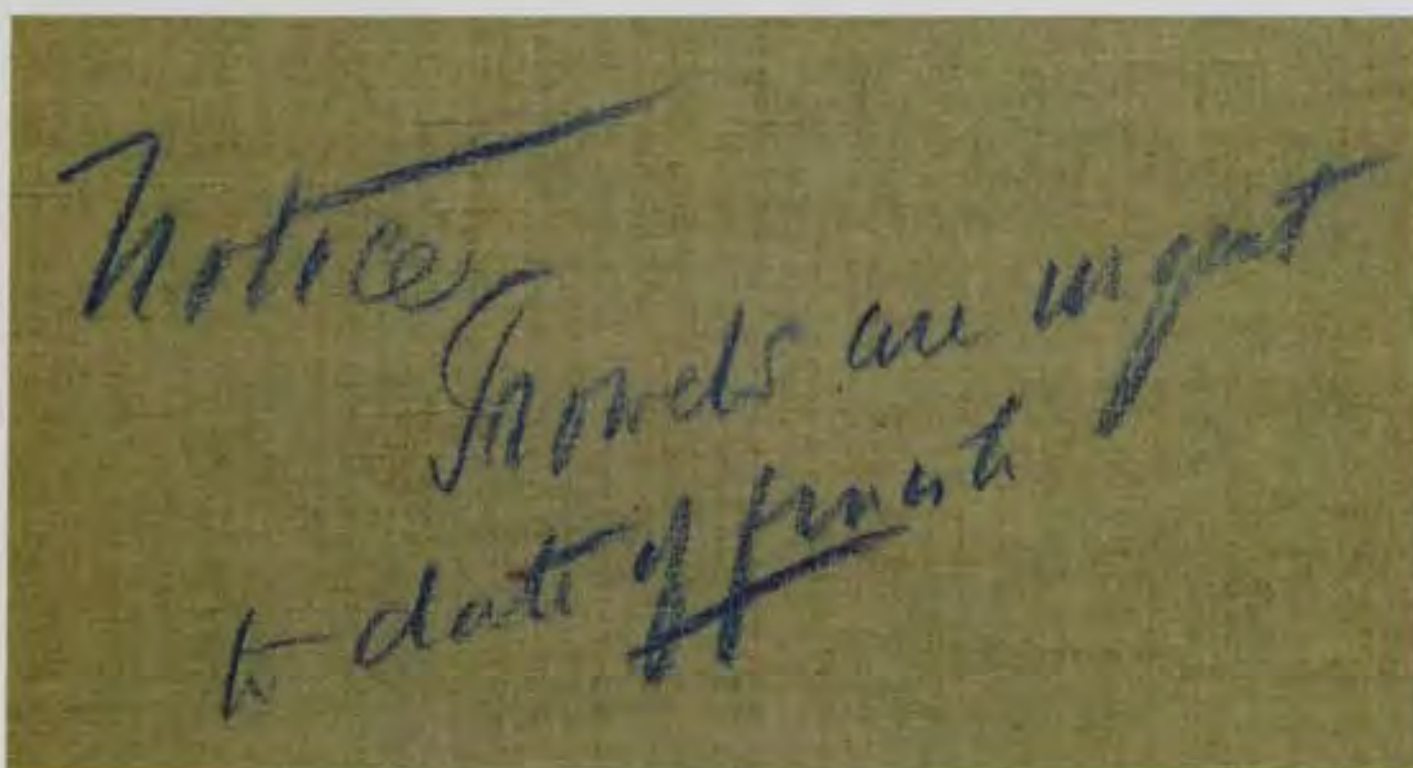


Fig 43 Text from reverse of Fig 42  
(© The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths)



Fig 42 Edward Spencer, design for a trowel, watercolour  
(© The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths)

22 This trowel is held at Casa Loma, Toronto, Canada.

23 Figs 44, 45 and 46, are from the Edward Spencer archive at Goldsmiths' Hall.





Fig 44 Trowel, silver, London 1922-3, maker's mark of Omar Ramsden  
(© The Antique Silver Company)

Omar Ramsden also produced a number of high quality trowels one of which is illustrated as Fig 44 and trowels to this design appear from time to time on the market. Ramsden's note book [Fig 45] makes reference to the architect Montford Piggot ordering two batches of trowels, one of three and one of five, in 1922 and 1925 respectively.<sup>24</sup> Ramsden's code reveals that the total cost of each trowel in 1922 was £2 1s, with a price to the client of £4. By 1925 the cost had risen to £2 5s and the price to the client was £5 5s 2d.

The onset of the Second World War marked a clear end to this period of innovation in design. Edward Spencer's Artificers' Guild closed in 1942, four years after his death, as did the workshop of Omar Ramsden, in 1939 following his death (though it was later continued by Leslie Durbin).

### Post war developments in silver trowels

The practice of using silver trowels at foundation stone ceremonies continues to this day and was widespread throughout the 1950s and well into the 1960s although it has dwindled since then.<sup>25</sup>

Most designs for silver trowels during this period were, however, stylistically quite limited and a traditional style prevailed.<sup>26</sup> Of the great post war silversmiths Leslie Durbin made several trowels and Robert Welch just one. There is no evidence that Brian Asquith, Christopher Lawrence, Gerald Benney or Stuart Devlin made any ceremonial trowels. Leslie Durbin continued Omar Ramsden's practice and made several beautiful silver trowels including Fig 46, a small parcel-gilt trowel dated 1947. The inscription on which reads

PRESENTED TO H.R.H. THE DUCHESS OF KENT C.I.,  
G.C.V.O., G.B.E., 19TH MAY 1948.



Fig 45 Omar Ramsden, sketch for a trowel  
(© The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths)



Fig 46 Trowel, silver, London, 1947-48, maker's mark of Leslie Durbin, for Ramsgate Hospital



The blade is applied with the arms of Ramsgate and was used at the foundation stone ceremony of the new wing of Ramsgate Hospital which also served as the Ramsgate Peace Memorial. A sketch of the trowel also appears in the Omar Ramsden note book [Fig 47] in which Leslie Durbin remarked:

This [trowel] gave me quite a lot of trouble owing to the winding of the silver plate on the handle and the gilding of the Arms of Ramsgate on the blade. It worked quite well but actually cost in time much more than our price which was given by the Corporations.

This article concludes with Robert Welch's trowel [Fig 48] designed for the foundation stone ceremony of Churchill College, Cambridge in 1961. It is clearly innovative and modern in its design; not just a rarity for its time, but a rarity today as well. On the day of the ceremony Sir Winston Churchill was unwell which ironically resulted in Lord Tedder, Chancellor of Cambridge University, undertaking the ceremony, towards whom Churchill had a well recorded animosity. An exchange of letters held in the college archive between Churchill and Lord Tedder follows:

Lord Tedder to Churchill<sup>27</sup>:

I have taken the liberty of arranging to send the silver trowel, which was used for the laying ceremony, on to you as soon as it has been suitably inscribed.

Churchill replied<sup>28</sup>:

I should be very glad to have the trowel but, as you laid the Stone, I think that it would be appropriate for you to retain it yourself.

Robert Welch, in his biography<sup>29</sup>, relays the following anecdote which sheds further light on the fate of the trowel:

I also recall the episode of a silver trowel that Richard Sheppard [first Master of Churchill College, Cambridge] was to present to Sir Winston Churchill at the topping off ceremony<sup>30</sup>. I wondered whether to design a traditional trowel, a beautiful form if ever there was one, or to take artistic license. Unfortunately I chose the latter course of development.

Later I was invited to a Fellows dinner where Richard Sheppard sought me out. He was a heavily built man who supported himself on a walking stick. He came close to me and placed his stick firmly on the centre of my shoe, pinning me to the spot; before I could utter a gasp of pain, he gave me a lecture on the beauty of a real trowel and how designers should not take liberties with such splendid objects. The point was fully taken. The trowel cannot have been held against me as I received several commissions from the College afterwards.

This anecdote provides the perfect epitaph for this article for, from this period onwards, there seems to be virtually no further develop-



Fig 47 Leslie Durbin, sketch for a trowel  
(© The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths)



Fig 48 Robert Welch, trowel for Churchill College, Cambridge

24 Figs 48 and 49 are from Omar Ramsden's workshop notebooks in the archive at Goldsmiths' Hall, book R, p 191 and book S p 53 respectively.

25 The foundation stone of the National Theatre on the South Bank was laid with great fanfare in 1951 by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and captured in detail by Pathé news; the ceremony and trowel can be seen at: [www.british-pathe.com/video/queen-lays-foundation-stone-at-national-theatre/query/national+theatre](http://www.british-pathe.com/video/queen-lays-foundation-stone-at-national-theatre/query/national+theatre). The actual trowel has not been located but it was designed by Leslie Durbin. The Post Office Tower in 1964 had a well attended topping out ceremony involving a silver trowel.

26 Modern innovations can still be seen in part from the designs for fish, cake

and pastry slices collected by Professor B Seymour Rabinovitch, see Benton Seymour Rabinovitch and Helen Clifford *Contemporary Silver, Commissioning, Designing, Collecting*, London, 2000 and Benton Seymour Rabinovitch, *Contemporary Silver Part II, Recent Commissions*, Seattle, 2005.

27 16 October 1961, Churchill archive reference CHUR 2/571A/30.

28 20 October 1961, Churchill archive reference CHUR 2/571A/31.

29 Robert Welch, *Hand and Machine*, Chipping Camden, 1985.

30 Churchill College had no topping out ceremony and this is certainly a reference to the 1961 foundation stone ceremony.



ments in silver trowel design and their use has dwindled significantly. Today very few major British buildings have foundation stone laying ceremonies or, if they do, use silver trowels, although the practice does continue internationally.<sup>31</sup> Speaking with modern day architects it would seem that commercial pressures favour limited publicity and ceremony for the commencement of works at major buildings. Topping out or opening ceremonies remain prevalent but usually without the symbolism of a silver trowel.

### Acknowledgments

My thanks to Jan and Carole Van den Bosch for their knowledge and enthusiasm on Arts and Crafts silver and also for permission to reproduce certain images in this article; to David Beasley and Eleni Bide at the library at Goldsmiths' Hall and to the Freemasons' Hall library. I am also grateful to a number of other librarians and archivists including those at the National Art Library, the Churchill College archive, the Royal Collection,

Royal Free Hospital archive and the Museum of London. Thanks finally go to George Styles who was very helpful, most notably in finding the reference on Robert Welch's trowel for Churchill College

*Anthony Bernbaum works in finance and has a longstanding interest in British Arts and Crafts design, principally focussing on the silver and social history of that period. He is particularly fascinated by the origins of modern design and modern silver design in particular. He has found that silver trowels provide a perfect combination of all his interests but has so far resisted becoming a trowel collector. He has a BA in Economics from Cambridge University and an MBA from INSEAD.*

31 The Heron Tower in the City of London did hold a topping out ceremony involving the gift of silver trowels to the

participants. By contrast the Shard has held both a topping out and opening ceremony without using a silver trowel.



# Adi Toch, *Wide Open*:

## a new silver commission for the P & O Makower Trust Collection at Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales)

In November 2013 Adi Toch was selected to produce the latest commission for the P & O Makower Trust's collection of contemporary silver that has been on loan at Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales) since 2006. The spectacular result is a large, double-skinned bowl form called *Wide Open*, made entirely in Britannia silver and covered all over with a gloriously multi-coloured patination.

The Trust initiated its first commissioning scheme with the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1979, with further collections begun in 1993 in partnership with the Crafts Council (now transferred to the National Museum Wales in Cardiff) and in 2007 with the Ashmolean Museum. Its aim has always been to stimulate early-career silversmiths to produce their most ambitious and innovative work.

There has, therefore, never been a specific brief, simply a given budget and an invitation to submit ideas for an object of museum quality of a kind that the artist aspires to make but might otherwise be unable to achieve.

The collection now in Cardiff includes important early work by star silversmiths like Chris Knight and Ndidi Ekubia and, since 2007, the Trust has commissioned exciting new work from Sarah Denny, Theresa Nguyen and Kevin Grey. Adi Toch's *Wide Open* is the latest in this distinguished series and, like its predecessors, combines great skill and a fearless imagination to bring to the collection a new perspective on the creative potential of silver.

Adi Toch was born in Jerusalem in 1979 and followed a BA from Jerusalem's Bezalel Art Academy (2000-4) with



*Wide Open*, patinated Britannia silver, London, 2014, maker's mark of Adi Toch  
(All images © Adi Toch)





*Wide Open, patinated Britannia silver, London, 2014, maker's mark of Adi Toch*  
(All images © Adi Toch)

an MA at the Cass, London (2007-9), where she was taught by Simone ten Hompel. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is included in the permanent collections of the Goldsmiths' Company, the Crafts Council, the Fitzwilliam Museum and National Museums Scotland.

*Wide Open* is the largest enclosed bowl Toch has made to date and, as we have come to expect from her, is not only precisely crafted but at the same time invitingly curvaceous and sensuous in appearance. In Toch's own words

*Wide Open* explores the shape of the bowl and a different visual language for silver with variegated patina. Made from two parts soldered together, the top is funneled inside and through the bowl shape leaving an aperture while creating a foot on which the piece leans. There was an interesting contrast between the meticulous process of calculating and executing the work in silver and the serendipitous procedure of the chemical colouring.

The technique of patination is a testing one requiring bold, swift action and producing an unpredictable, spontaneous result, although with practice, Toch learned to have more control. The finished object is first painted all over with an ammonia compound using rapid strokes of the brush. It is then heated briefly and left to 'develop' for a short while before stopping the process. In the case of *Wide Open* it took three attempts to achieve the right

effect, the patinated surface having to be removed with pumice each time before it could be redone.

The result is a vibrant, lustrous finish which ranges in colour from purple and blue to shades of coppery orange. Toch has been experimenting with patination on silver-plated gilding metal (brass) for several years and such a piece, *Large Reflection Bowl* (2012), has recently been acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum. *Wide Open*, however, is her first patinated vessel using solid silver. The patination creates

a dynamic counterpoint to the restrained form and makes it hard to believe that what we are looking at is truly silver. It does not quite extend over the entire vessel, however: the very edge of the rim has been polished to reveal a subtle but telling glimpse of the underlying silver.

Toch concludes that

the piece was both challenging and enjoyable to make – working on such a large scale in silver was really exciting and I am grateful to the P&O Makower Trust and Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales) for this fantastic opportunity.

#### **Andrew Renton**

Head of Applied Art, Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales)



*Wide Open, patinated Britannia silver, London, 2014, maker's mark of Adi Toch; detail of the marks*  
(All images © Adi Toch)



## Book Review

### *Silver Gifts from Swedish Monarchs to Russian Tsars during the Seventeenth Century.*

Managing editor Susann Silfverstolpe. Authors and editors Susann Silfverstolpe, Angella Kudriavtseva and Irina Zagorodniaja. Published by Atlantis, Stockholm, 2014, pp 423

This handsome volume, published in Swedish, Russian and English editions, joins a growing number of titles devoted to, or largely focusing on, the unique holdings of the Armoury Museum in Moscow's Kremlin. Others recent titles include *Gifts to the Tsars* (Indianapolis, 2001), *Britannia and Muscovy* (Yale, 2006) and *Tudors, Stuarts and the Russian Tsars* (London, 2013).

The book comprises a series of scholarly essays and a well-illustrated catalogue of Swedish ambassadorial gifts. The latter, amounting to nearly 200 large and impressive objects, were presented to the tsars in a series of embassies dispatched between 1647 and 1699. By no means were all the objects made in Sweden; the lion's share came originally from Augsburg, Nuremberg and Hamburg, with the first of these cities providing by far the largest number. As a result the book presents a much more representative view of seventeenth-century central European display silver than its title suggests.

Collectively the catalogue entries build up a fascinating picture. Objects are grouped according to the missions which presented them and show the subtle differences of emphasis from one embassy to another. Queen Christina's embassy of 1647, for example, featured huge cups and covers measuring over a metre in height. It was also more heavily weighted in Nuremberg silver than later missions, reflecting the gradual eclipse of that city by Augsburg during the seventeenth century. Swedish plate rarely figures on the lists until 1699, when suddenly, in a remarkable change of policy, two thirds of the gifts were made in Stockholm.





One of the most striking features of this plate, especially the cups and pictorially embossed dishes, is their huge size and readers who have not seen them in the flesh should take care to note their measurements, for it is easy to underestimate their extraordinary scale. Quantity is another and sets of tazzas (or 'confectionery dishes') sometimes run to twelve, eighteen or even twenty four, a phenomenon very rarely seen elsewhere. These were often intended to be stacked together, the foot of one fitting inside a ring within the bowl of another.

Another point to emerge is that many of these gifts were not new at the time they were presented. A massive cup by Hans Pezold of Nuremberg, for example, was at least eighty years old when it was plucked from the royal treasury in 1684. The problems of assembling a hundred kilos or more of grand display plate at short notice must have been enormous and the records show the Swedish authorities scrabbling around to buy in plate of the right sort. A pair of Hamburg globe cups were procured for the 1655 embassy by a very round-about route: they were bought the year before by Charles X Gustav as a New Year's gift for the Landgrave of Hesse. No sooner had the Landgrave received them than he passed them on to his brother-in-law, Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie, who promptly pawned them. Going full circle, they were then redeemed by the Swedish crown and added to the latest consignment of gifts to the tsar. Other pieces bear internal evidence of an earlier provenance: a set of confectionery dishes among the 1684 gifts were made in Augsburg in 1637-9 and the original coat of arms worked over to erase them at the time of the embassy. The catalogue informs us that this fact was 'discovered' in 2005, though I cannot resist pointing out that I made the same observation when I reviewed the catalogue of the *Gifts to the Tsars* exhibition in the *Burlington Magazine* in 2001.

For many the most interesting part of the book will be the series of sixteen introductory essays by Susann

Silfverstolpe and others that collectively make up about half the book. The first eight chapters give a detailed account of the five separate diplomatic missions and describe not only the character of the gifts but the protocol of their presentation, the way in which they were subsequently used and the politics that made such costly largesse necessary. Most of the embassies were sent to encourage a Russian alliance and in a period when Sweden was one of the most expansive powers in Europe, engulfing Finland and large parts of Poland, it was important to be on good terms with her powerful neighbour. But these missions were not always successful and it must have been particularly galling for Charles XII that no sooner had Peter the Great accepted the plethora of gifts taken to Moscow in 1699 than he declared war on Sweden, driving her out of her stronghold of Narva and transforming it into a new capital city called St Petersburg. Other chapters give more detailed accounts of some of the embassies and a particularly useful section focuses on presentation silver from the three main German centres of Augsburg, Nuremberg and Hamburg.

A few very minor criticisms might be mentioned: the catalogue section would have benefitted here and there from more detailed photographs and there are a few irritating editorial shortcomings. In particular, there is a lack of cross referencing between the catalogue entries and the essays (which often contain further information or comparative illustrations) and it would have been very helpful to include measurements of pieces in comparative illustrations (especially as these objects are often very large). These do not, however, seriously detract from the merits of the book as a whole, which provides a fascinating account of the gifts in such a way as to give valuable insights into the international market for goldsmiths' work, and seventeenth-century diplomacy and court protocol.

**Timothy Schroder**



# The Silver Society prize for silversmithing

In April 2014, at the Festival of Silver held at the Goldsmiths' Centre, London, the Silver Society Prize for Silversmithing was awarded to Malcolm Appleby. The award-winning piece was his *Star Struck* tumbler bowl, described by Timothy Schroder as "an intense piece of work by an extremely accomplished artist craftsman".

Malcolm was born in Kent in 1946 and studied at Beckenham School of Art, followed by Ravensbourne School of Art, the Central School of Arts and Crafts and the Sir John Cass College. He then went on to learn the art of gun engraving from John Wilkes in London; in 1970 he moved to Scotland where he has lived and worked ever since. Malcolm is known as a consummate engraver who constantly experiments with the cutting and texturing of silver. Throughout his career he has worked to promote the art of engraving, both through his own work and in providing opportunities for young craftsmen. At the Festival of Silver he also presented his own prize, the Malcolm Appleby Award, for a piece of work which combined skilful engraving with artistic flair, this was won by Katie Earlam.

Malcolm describes below the origins of these remarkable tumbler bowls, how he executed them and how he continues to develop the concept:

About five years ago I gave the prize of a week's training to a new silversmith exhibiting at British Silver Week at Goldsmiths' Hall, organised by Gordon Hamme. I chose James Dougall largely because of his name: James Dougall was a famous Victorian gunmaker. The week went well and I asked James to use some of my existing dies, that I have cut over many years, to strike up a silver disc to make a tumbler bowl. We used a tiny flower die, which we struck over and over again on to the flat disc. I think James, or maybe Peter Musgrove, raised it on a wooden stake with a nylon mallet, to retain the images while it was being worked. I made more bowls in this way using old dies.

I subsequently engraved some geometrical dies in a rhomboidal form for general use and made some tumblers with those as well. More recently I have designed dies specifically for these struck tumblers using a rhomboid with another negative rhomboid



*Star Struck tumbler bowls by Malcolm Appleby*





*Flat disc of silver struck with dies, prior to raising*

chiselled out of the centre. I had help with the basic machining from Thomas Fatorini who also supplied the metal and hardened the finished dies. I engraved the surfaces with what I call a crystal structure within the rhomboid.

To achieve a stronger impression in the silver I used fine silver, 3mm thick. One of my assistants, Callum Strong, forged the blank out with rusty hammers on a very rusty stake, retaining the 3mm in the centre and graduating the thickness until it became 7mm at the edge. The edge by this time is very much distorted and quite undulating. After much annealing the blank is struck with the new dies. For the inside I have used 'star' dies. I am continuing to make new dies to develop my repertoire.

After striking, the edges are very carefully rounded and polished. The discs are then posted to Peter Musgrove to raise into tumbler form. The striking almost programmes the silver to wrinkle up in a certain way and no one bowl will behave in the same way as another. After raising and hallmarking (in Edinburgh), the tumblers are gilded by Steven Wood. I like the gilding splashed over the edges that I then carefully rub down with superfine wire wool, which almost fine burnishes the surface and tones down the gilding. My final job is to burnish the surface with a steel burnishers.

I make a very small number of bowls in each development as I expect the series to continue evolving.

**Lucy Morton**



*Star Struck tumbler bowls by Malcolm Appleby*



# Sir Hugo Huntington-Whiteley, Bart (1924-2014):

## an appreciation

Hugo Huntington-Whiteley's intellectual abilities were manifested in his boyhood, when elected to an Oppidan scholarship at Eton. He did not, however, complete the course which would have led to Oxford or Cambridge but, at the age of seventeen, took up a naval cadetship and thereby followed his father into the Royal Navy. Over five and a half years he served in various theatres and was mentioned in despatches. After leaving the navy at the end of the war he did some teaching but decided that he needed a professional qualification and in 1948 commenced the five year accountancy articles, qualifying in 1954. In due course he became a partner in the eminent firm of Price Waterhouse, serving in various locations including London, Birmingham and Bristol until he retired in 1983 after twenty years as a partner.

Hugo married Jennie in 1959 and this may be considered the greatest achievement of his life, she gave him outstanding love and support: not long ago they celebrated their Golden Wedding. Retirement from Price Waterhouse did not lead to inactivity but to fresh fields in the realm of consulting as well as involvement with various companies and organisations. Music had always been a great interest and he was for many years organist and choir-master of his parish church, situated in close proximity to his home at Ripple in Worcestershire. He served as a governor of the Royal School of Church Music, and has had a close association with the Elgar School of Music in Worcester and other local bodies concerned with music. He was also a life governor of Birmingham University and undertook hospital governorships and membership of his local Area Health Authority. In 1971 Hugo served as High Sheriff of Worcestershire.

In due course Hugo was admitted to freedom of the Goldsmiths' Company, joining the livery in 1968 and the Court in 1982, culminating in his election as Prime Warden for 1989-90. He was extremely well suited for this office: his accountancy background enabled him to deal effectively with financial aspects of the company's affairs, and his love of silver was expressed in a zeal for the craft and its products: both historical and modern. Hugo's participation in the House Committee meant that the company benefited greatly from his love of good food and wine; helping in the selection of appropriate menus for func-

tions and the choice of wines to be laid down in its cellars for future consumption. I was myself elected to the livery at about this time, and invoked Hugo's help with the problem of a communion cup and paten belonging to the remote Devon parish of Bondleigh. These appeared for auction at Sotheby's after having been missing from the parish since 1932, although no faculty for their disposal was recorded. We were amazed to find they had been sent for sale by the Irish Georgian Society but, after negotiation through various channels, Hugo arranged a charitable donation of £500 to be made by the Goldsmiths' Company to the society which, thereupon, gave full release of the pieces. They were returned to Bondleigh where a special service, at which the Bishop of Plymouth preached, welcomed them home. An example







Sir Hugo Huntington-Whiteley's Court wine cup, silver and nephrite, London, 1983, maker's mark of Anthony Elson

(Courtesy of the Goldsmiths' Company)

typical of Hugo and his willingness to help a good cause.

Hugo enjoyed collecting: not large and showy pieces but smaller attractive items. He said that he first started collecting because his father had sold most of the family silver to avoid having to clean it! His taste lay with objects having a day-to-day use, or which were unusual, but at the same time, practical. He had already held office during 1981-82 as Chairman of the Silver Society which, as with everything else, he led with great enthusiasm. At the society's 1982 AGM Hugo reported a busy and successful year, with five ordinary meetings and two outings, one to Munich and the other in London. The latter comprised a major visit to the British Museum, arranged by Hugh Tait and described in the journal as "the most privileged of all privileged occasions".

Over the years, Hugo and Jennie participated keenly in many Silver Society outings and were notable for enjoying themselves as much as we enjoyed their stimulating company. One of my most vivid memories is of a society visit to Glasgow, where we visited museums, houses and, in particular, the Burrell Collection on the edge of the city. In addition to giving full attention to the objects on view, Hugo was most concerned to find a restaurant where roast grouse would be on the menu!

So there we have it, ninety years is a good innings, particularly when packed with such a

breadth of interests, all of which he tackled so capably, at the same time remaining friendly and approachable to everyone. Life gave Hugo much but he paid back in full measure and with enjoyment. One can agree with Dr Johnson "*Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit*", which may be translated as "He touched nothing without distinction."

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote

A man is a success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much, who has gained the respect of intelligent men, who has filled his niche and accomplished his task, who leaves the world better than he found it ... who looked for the best in others and gave the best he had: his memory is a benediction.

Our sympathy remains with Jennie and their daughters, and we hope they can take comfort from all their memories.

Hugo's family motto is "Live to live" and he certainly fulfilled it.

Timothy Kent



# Index

Illustrations are not separately identified except under certain headings such as invoices and marks. Usually only the first entry of an article is indexed so the reader is advised to check the whole article. A complete index of previous issues may be found on the Society's website.

- Acadia, University of 87
- Accounts, privy purse  
Crown Prince Friedrich Christian of Saxony 48  
Queen Maria Josepha of Saxony 48
- Adelaide  
Artillery Company 74  
German Rifle Club 75  
Town Hall, 82
- Adkins, Henry, silversmith 43
- Allport, James, silver plater 43
- Alston, James, button and buckle maker 32  
marks of 34  
partnership with Thomas Willmore 34
- Altar, positioning of, in 16th century England 6
- Ambassadorial gifts, from Sweden to Russia 119  
re-presentation of gifts, by Sweden 120
- Appleby, Malcolm, silversmith and engraver 121  
Award 121  
Star struck tumbler bowl 121  
description of production of 121
- American silver  
coin 84  
colonial 84  
early republican 84  
hollow-ware 86  
industrial production 86  
pseudo hallmarks on 85  
spoons 85  
patterns of 85  
sugar tongs 93  
sterling standard 86
- Ancient Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Adelaide, medallions 71
- Andrewes, Lancelot, vicar of St Giles's Cripplegate 6
- Anglican church, ritual in 17th century 8
- Architects,  
Bidlake, William Henry 109  
Mead, John 102  
Piggott, Montford 114  
role of in foundation stone ceremonies 101  
Wilson, Henry 110
- Architects Club 101
- Archives, Dresden 48
- Artists  
Archer Shee, Sir Martin 46  
Barry, James 65  
Cotes, Francis 46  
Garrard, George 46  
Hill, Charles 74  
Hogarth, William 73  
Mozart, Anton 18  
Quinnell, C H B 112  
Rubens, Peter Paul 26  
Simpson, John 46  
Smith, John Thomas 63  
Torelli, Stefano 50
- Arts and Crafts  
movement 109  
Society exhibition 110
- Artificers' Guild 112
- Ashbee, Charles, designer 110
- Astronomy, representations of 29
- Audienzen, files, in Dresden 48
- Augsburg,  
cabinets 18  
shrines 18
- Australian  
gold rush 69  
Gothic revival silver 81  
Jewellery 76  
South Australian silver 68  
trowel 108  
silversmiths  
Firnhaber, Carl Eduard 68  
Kerr, William 108  
Schomburghk, Julius 74  
Wendt, Jochim M 74
- Bernbaum, Anthony, **Silver ceremonial trowels** 99
- Birmingham  
Assay Office, Guardians of 34  
Commerce Committee, members of 35  
Guild of Handicraft 109  
silversmithing in 32
- Bloodgood, James and Lynott, silversmiths, Utica 91
- Books  
*Augsburger Goldschmiede*, Helmut Selig 24  
*Book of Common Prayer* 5  
*Book of Constitutions of the United Grand Lodge of England* 100  
*Communion Plate in the Churches of the City of London*, Edwin Freshfield 5  
*Early Cleveland Silversmiths*, Muriel Hoitsma 96  
*Magnificent Guide or Grand Copper Plate Directory for the Town of Birmingham*, Bisset 36  
*Mind, Its Origin and Goal*, George Barton Cutten 88  
*Modern English Design*, Charles Ashbee 110  
*Neues über J. Kepler*, Franz Dvoršk 30  
*Nineteenth century Australian Silver*, John Hawkins 83  
*Nollekens and his Times*, John Thomas Smith 63  
*Speaking with Tongues*, George Barton Cutten 88  
*Silver Gifts from Swedish Monarchs to Russian Tsars during the Seventeenth Century*, Silfverstolpe, Susann, review of 119  
*The History of the Grocers' Company through its Collection of Silver and Glass*, Helen Clifford 46  
*The Psychology of Alcoholism*, George Barton Cutten 86  
*The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, George Barton Cutten 87  
*The Silversmiths of Georgia*, George Barton Cutten 96  
*The Silversmiths of North Carolina*, George Barton Cutten 98  
*The Silversmiths of Utica*, George Barton Cutten 89  
*The Silversmiths of Virginia*, George Barton Cutten 94  
*The Threat of Leisure*, George Barton Cutten 88  
*The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce, and Manufacture* 36  
*Three Thousand Years of Mental Healing*, George Barton Cutten 87
- Book review, Silfverstolpe, Susann (managing editor), *Silver Gifts from Swedish Monarchs to Russian Tsars during the Seventeenth Century* 119
- Boon, Sanford, silversmith, Hamilton, NY State 91
- Booth, George, 2nd Earl of Warrington 65
- Bower  
Anne 67  
Dorothea 67
- Boxes, snuff  
Birmingham 36  
cost of, Dresden, 1730s 49  
Diplomatic gifts 48  
Gold 48  
hardstone, Saxon 49  
Meissen porcelain 50  
Paris made 52  
platinum, Birmingham, 1850, Percival Norton Johnson 42  
tournament prizes 48
- Bridge  
Blackfriars 99  
Kew 106  
London 102  
Victoria, Montreal 105  
Westminster 99  
William Pitt 99
- Britannia silver 117
- Brown, Minnie Warren, wife of George Barton Cutten 86
- Bucklemakers, Birmingham 32
- Buckles,  
Knee 34  
shoe 34
- Butler, Nathaniel, silversmith, Utica 91
- Button makers, Birmingham 32
- Cabinets  
Augsburg 18  
of curiosity 18  
Pomeranian *kunstschränk* 18
- Cameron, Peter, author 32
- Canadian silver 105
- Capenhurst Hall, Cheshire 67
- Card cases, Birmingham 42
- Cassidy-Geiger, Maureen, **Gold boxes as diplomatic gifts: archival resources in Dresden** 48
- Casuarina wood 82
- Cathedral  
Freising, high altar of 26  
St Mary's, Tasmania 78  
St Paul's 99  
St Peter's, North Adelaide 77
- Chester  
Goldsmiths' Company 66  
Plate Duty Book 67
- Chalice  
by C E Firnhaber 7  
use of in Catholic ritual in England 6
- Chalice and paten,  
Adelaide, 1865, C E Firnhaber 78  
Adelaide, 1867, C E Firnhaber 78
- Chapel, Wesleyan, Pirie Street, Adelaide 82
- Chinn, John Richard 41
- Church  
All Hallows Barking (All Hallows by the Tower) 7  
All Hallows the Great, communion service 13  
Christchurch, North Adelaide 77  
Loreto, Prague 19



- patrons of 24  
shrine in 19  
east walls of, in City of London churches 9  
St Alban's Wood Street, consumption of wine at 7  
St Andrew's by the Wardrobe, communion spoon 11  
St Anne's Blackfriars, communion plate 12  
St Augustin's, Adelaide 78  
St Benet Finck, communion spoon 9  
St Christopher's Stocks 14  
St Giles's Cripplegate 6  
St Ignatius, Norwood, South Australia 79  
St James's, Blakiston, South Australia 77  
St James's Garlickhythe 14  
St John's Episcopal, Hampton 94  
St Katherine's Cree 7  
St Lawrence the Martyr, North Adelaide 79  
St Lawrence Poultny, unification with St Mary Abchurch 9  
St Martin's Ludgate Hill, communion spoon 9  
St Martin's, Birmingham 40  
St Mary Abchurch, communion spoon 8  
St Mary Magdalene, Milk Street, spoon 7  
St Michael's Queenhythe, communion spoon 9  
St Nicholas's, King's Norton 44  
St Peter and St Paul, Gawler, South Australia 78  
St Philip's, Birmingham 32  
Wyche, Malvern 110  
Church of England,  
liturgy 5  
ritual in 17th century 8  
Churchill,  
College, Cambridge 115  
Winston, Sir, Prime Minister and politician 115  
City of London, communion spoons in 5  
Civil Engineers,  
Institute of 101  
Society of 101  
Clare Market Actors' Club 64  
Clifford, Helen, **A portrait of Robert Garrard II (1793-1881)** 46  
Clock, Gilbert Collection 18  
appearance of 22  
Astronomy, figure of 28  
casing of 22  
structural changes to 21  
transformation from a shrine to a clock 28  
Coin silver,  
American 84  
purity of 85  
spoons 85  
Colgate,  
James Colby 88  
University 88  
Communion,  
cup 6  
plate, sets of 6  
service of 6  
table, placement of in 17th century 13  
wine, quantities consumed 7  
Communion service  
Adelaide, circa 1855, C E Firnhaber 77  
Travelling, C E Firnhaber 79  
*Comptes de la Chatouille*, Saxony 48  
Corkscrews, Birmingham 36  
Cross, Adelaide, 1866, C E Firnhaber 78  
Cup  
Bagot, England, 1845 and Adelaide, c 1859, C E Firnhaber 79  
Communion, London, 1575, John North and William Nicholls 5  
Dr W P Hill, 1854, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 71  
Dry Creek race, 1853, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 71  
emus' egg 74  
Grand Prize for Pigeon Shooting, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 71  
Hahendorf Grand Pigeon, 1851, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 71  
Hanson, and salver, Adelaide, c 1862, C E Firnhaber 81  
Lazar, 1851, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 71  
Lodge of Truth Masonic, 1865, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 74  
Loyal Adelaide Lodge, 1851, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 72  
Masonic, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 69  
Mayo, 1861, Adelaide, Jochim Steiner 75  
Ottway, 1853, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 71  
Royal Exchange, 1851, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 69  
Schmidt's Royal Exchange, Adelaide, C E Firnhaber 71  
presentation cups, South Australian 69  
United Ancient Order of Druids, 1863, Adelaide 74  
Curtis, George Munson, author on Connecticut silver 90  
Cutten,  
Abbie Ann Trefry, mother of George Barton Cutten 86  
George Barton 84  
academic career 86  
donations of silver by 95  
eugenics, interest in 88  
hypnotism, interest in 87  
sale of silver 93  
temperance, attitude to 92  
William Freeman 86  
Cymric silver 112  
Daguerreotype, of Robert Garrard II 47  
Dallaway, John, wire worker and drawer, Birmingham 36  
Dalton, Thomas, factor, Birmingham 37  
Dataday 47  
Davidson, Cathlyn, **A portrait of a Chester goldsmith Richard Richardson IV (1755-1822)** 66  
Dawson, Nelson and Edith, silversmiths and enamellers 109  
Delieb, Eric, author 32  
Designers  
Ashbee, Charles 110  
Dawson, Nelson and Edith 109  
Dixon, Arthur Stansfield 109  
Godwin, Edward William, Artificers' Guild 107  
Rotch, Benjamin 106  
Spencer, Edward 112  
Veasey, David 107  
Diplomatic gifts, eighteenth century Saxony 48  
Dirr, Philipp 26  
Dish, altar, for Dunham Massey, Cheshire 65  
Dixon  
Arthur Stansfield, designer 109  
George, MP 109  
Docks, Birkenhead 106  
Dordrecht, Reformed Assembly of 7  
Drawings,  
*Drawings to illustrate the life of Hogarth*, John Thomas Smith 63  
Dresden,  
archives of 48  
court calendar 48  
tournament prizes 48  
Duffy, Eamon, author 5  
Eaton, William, silversmith 104  
Ecclesiastical silver, South Australian 77  
Edward VIII 106  
Edinburgh, Duke of, visit to Adelaide in 1867 81  
Eliot, Maud Stoutenburgh, NY socialite 92  
Enamel 111  
Enamellists  
Dawson, Nelson and Edith, silversmiths and enamellers 109  
Fisher, Alexander 111  
Engravers  
Gamble, Ellis 63  
Hogarth, William 63  
Payne, Joshua, South Australia 77  
Simpson, Joseph 65  
Engraving 63  
Enquiries, Commission of, 1552 5  
Ensko, Stephen, author 85  
Estabrooks, George Hoben, Professor of Psychology 89  
Exhibition, *Wunderwelt. Der Pommersehe Kunstschrack*, Berlin 18  
Fair, Leipzig 52  
Fire of, London, 1666 8  
Firnhaber, Carl Eduard, South Australian silversmith 68  
ecclesiastical silver by 77  
jewellery by 76  
medallions by 71  
personal life 82  
Fisher, Alexander, enamellist 111  
Flags, ecclesiastical 7  
Foresters, Ancient Order of, medals for, in South Australia 72  
Fosdick,  
Harry Emerson, pastor of Riverside church, New York 88  
Raymond B, trustee of Rockefeller Foundation 88  
Foundation stone ceremonies 99  
Fox Young, Sir Henry Edward, Lieutenant Governor of Australia 82  
Fränkel, Nathan Ruben, Collection of clocks, Frankfurt am Main 20  
Frauenberger, Heinrich, museum director 20  
Freemasons,  
Hall 100  
Jewels, South Australia 74  
Masonic Million Memorial, London 100  
Medallions, South Australian 71  
role in foundation stone ceremonies 100  
Freshfield, Edwin, author 5  
Friedrich Christian, Crown Prince of Saxony 48  
birthday shooting competition prizes 50  
diary 50  
gambling 52  
journey to Italy, 1738 49  
Friendly Societies, South Australian 71  
Galanteries 49  
Galilei, Galileo, astronomer 29  
Garbett, Samuel, industrialist 34  
Garland, James, silversmith 102  
Garrard  
Harriet 46  
James, silversmith 46  
R. J & S, silversmiths 46  
Robert & Sons, silversmiths 105  
Robert I, silversmith 46  
Robert II, silversmith 46, 103  
Sebastian, silversmith 46  
Garvan  
Collection, Yale 90  
Francis Patrick, President of American Chemical Society 89  
Benefactions to Yale 89  
Mabel Brady, wife of Francis Garvan 89  
Georgia, silversmiths of 84  
Gift giving at court of Dresden 48  
Gilbert Collection, Rosalinde and Arthur 18, 102  
Gill, John, silversmith and inventor of revolver 94  
Godwin, Edward William, architect 107  
Godwin, Joscelyn, **George Barton Cutten and American coin silver** 84  
Goldrush, Victoria, Australia 69



- Goldsmiths' Hall 112
- Gordon, Thomas, silversmith 43
- Gotzkowsky, Johann, Ernst, Prussian merchant 49
- Graham, Jane, wife of Joseph Willmore 37
- Gribelin, Simon, scrapbooks of 64
- Grocers' Company 46
- Groom, George, jeweller 43
- Guild
- Artificers' 112
  - of Handicraft, Birmingham 109
- Hallmarks, pseudo, on American silver 85
- Hanson, Chief Justice, Richard Davies 81
- Haseler, William Hair, Ltd, silversmiths 112
- Hilliard and Thomason, export of medals to South Australia 73
- Hogarth, William, artist and engraver 63
- Holmes, Paul, **Communion spoons in the City of London** 5
- Hoitsma, Muriel, daughter of George Barton Cutten 96
- Hood, Graham, historian 95
- Hospital
- Aldershot 110
  - Middlesex 100
  - New Hampstead (Royal Free) 111
  - Ramsgate 115
- Hunt, Harry, silversmith, partner of Thomas Willmore 33
- Huntington-Whiteley, Sir Hugo, an appreciation 123
- Johnson, Jeremy, spoonmaker 7
- Kager, Johann, Matthias, designer 29
- Kapunda, mine, Australia 79
- Kepler, Johannes, astrologer and astronomer 29
- Kent, Tim, author 11
- Kerr, William, silversmith, Australia 108
- King, John, spoonmaker 11
- Kingston, George S, Freemason, Adelaide 73
- Kreitmayr
- Elias I 20
  - family, clockmakers, Freidberg 19
- Kyrle Society 109
- Latour, dealer 49
- Lautier, dealer 52
- Lazar, John, Freemason, Adelaide 74
- Le Bas, James, silversmith, Dublin 102
- Le Clere, dealer 52
- Leipzig, fair 52
- Liberty & Co 112
- Liger, Isaac, silversmith 65
- Lighthouse, Eddystone 105
- Lodge
- Apollo & Hercules, Adelaide 71
  - Duke of York 71
  - Loyal Rose of Sharon 71
- Lotter, Abraham II, silversmith, Augsburg 19
- Luxury goods, Saxony, 1737 49
- Makower, P & O, Trust Collection 117
- Malachite, South Australian 74
- Manwell, Claire, daughter of George Barton Cutten 96
- Mappin and Webb, silversmiths 106
- Marfels, Carl, author on clocks 20
- Maria Josepha, Queen of Saxony 48
- Mainardi, publisher, Rome 50
- Male, Jane, wife of Thomas Willmore 33
- Marks
- American coin silver 85
  - Richard Crosse, 1639 6
  - Thomas Issod 12
  - John King 11
  - Abraham II Lotter, Augsburg 20
  - John Pace, Adelaide 68
  - Adi Toch 118
  - Joseph Willmore 38
  - London 43
  - Thomas Willmore 42
  - Thomas Willmore and James Alston 34
- Thomas Willmore and Sons 37
- May, Brian, **Thomas and Joseph Willmore and James Alston, John Yap and John Woodward: Silversmiths of Birmingham** 32
- Mayer, Joseph, silversmiths, Liverpool 106
- Medallions, South Australian 71
- Medals
- Ancient Order of Foresters, Adelaide 72
  - rifle shooting, South Australia 75
- Monstrance
- Adelaide, 1867, C E Firnhaber 78
  - Loreto church, Prague 24
- Moule, John, button maker, Birmingham 37
- Mug, Adelaide, 1847, John Pace 68
- Müller, Theodor, author 24
- Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute 91
- Murdoch, Tessa, **A glimpse of the apprentice William Hogarth engraving his master's shop-bill: the sign of the Angel** 63
- Museums
- Alter Pinakothek, Munich 26
  - Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales), Cardiff 117
  - Armoury Museum, Moscow 119
  - Art Gallery of South Australia 83
  - Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich 27
  - British Museum 108
  - Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge 103
  - Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg 26
  - Kapunda, South Australia 80
  - Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin 18
  - Kunstwerbemuseum, Düsseldorf 20
  - La Specola, Florence 30
  - Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica 96
  - North Carolina Museum of History 95
  - Powerhouse Museum, Sydney 109
  - South Kensington Museum, London 110
  - Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool 106
  - Writer's Museum, Edinburgh 103
- Nativity scenes
- significance of to Catholics 26
  - design of, on shrines 24
- Netherton
- John, silversmith 46
  - Mary 46
- Nettlebeck, Dorothea Elisabeth, wife of C E Firnhaber 83
- Newspapers and Periodicals
- Adelaide Observer* 75
  - Aldershot News* 112
  - Birmingham Daily Post* 109
  - Builder* 101
  - Bury and Norwich Post* 103
  - Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* 101
  - Evening Post* 100
  - Hobby Reporter* 94
  - Illustrated London News* 105
  - London Gazette* 36
  - Morning Chronicle* 103
  - New York Herald* 105
  - Northampton Mercury* 108
  - Richmond News Leader* 94
  - South Australian Advertiser* 79
  - South Australian Register* 68
  - Studio* 111
  - Süd Australische Zeitung* 75
  - Utica Observer* 88
- New York State
- Historical Society 91
  - silversmiths 86
- Niagara Power Station 112
- Noja, Giovanni Carafa, Duca di 50
- North Carolina
- silver 93
  - silversmiths 84
- Nutmeg graters, Birmingham 36
- Oberhofmarschallamt*, archive of, Dresden 48
- O'Donnell, Craig, **Thomas and Joseph Willmore and James Alston, John Yap and John Woodward: Silversmiths of Birmingham** 32
- Oman, Charles, author 5
- Osborn, John, silversmith, Utica 91
- Pace, John Henry, jeweller, Adelaide 69
- Parke Bernet, sale of Cutten silver 93
- Parker
- John, silversmith 46
  - Mary 46
- Parliament, Houses of 104
- Big Ben 104
  - Elizabeth Tower 104
- Patination, of Britannia silver 117
- Paupers Lunatic Asylum, Middlesex 106
- Pemberton
- Samuel, bucklemaker, Birmingham 34
  - Thomas, silversmith, Birmingham 43
- Peto, Samuel Morton, builder 104
- Phillips
- John Marshall, scholar 90
  - Richard, **Thomas and Joseph Willmore and James Alston, John Yap and John Woodward: Silversmiths of Birmingham** 32
- Pieta
- design of on Augsburg shrine 27
  - print sources for 27
- Plague, London, 1665 8
- Plate Assay Act, 1784 39
- Platinum, first ingot of 42
- Pleasants, J Hall, historian 95
- Pomerania, Duke Philip II of 18
- Porpora, Nicola, *Kapellmeister*, Dresden 50
- Portrait
- Garrard family 46
  - Garrard, Robert II 46
  - Photographic 47
  - Richardson, Richard IV 66
- Présents du Roi 48
- Prince Albert 106
- Pritchard, William, hatter, Birmingham 37
- Privy purse, accounts of
- Crown Prince Friedrich Christian of Saxony 48
  - Queen Maria Josepha of Saxony 48
- Prizes
- shooting, Adelaide 75
  - tournament, at Dresden 48
- Providence, La*, French Hospital 14
- Pybus, William, iron founder 71
- Raleigh, State Department of Archives and History 93
- Ramsden, Omar, silversmith and designer 101
- Ransome Wallis, Rosemary, author 32
- Reason, Robert, **Carl Eduard Firnhaber: South Australia's first gold and silversmith** 68
- Renton, Andrew, **Adi Toch, Wide Open: a new silver commission for the P & O Makower Trust Collection at Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales)** 117
- Richardson
- Anne 66
  - Charles, civil engineer 67
  - Hellena 67
  - John, silversmith 66
  - Ralph, doctor 67
  - Richard II, silversmith, Chester 66
  - Richard, silversmith, Chester 67
  - Richard IV, silversmith, Chester 66
  - Samuel, silversmith 66
  - Thomas, lawyer 67
  - William, broker and silversmith 67
- Rock, Daniel, author 5
- Roebuck, Dr John, chemist 34
- Rosenfeld, Francis M, collector and electronic inventor 93
- Rundell, Bridge & Rundell, premises 100
- Russia, ambassadorial gifts to 119



- St Dunstan Society, New York 92  
 St Dunstan's studio 112  
 Salver, seal, for Sir Robert Walpole 64  
 Samford Courtenay, rebellion 6  
 Sayderländer, Willibald, author 26  
 Saxon, State Archive of 48  
 Saxony, court of 48  
 Schomburghk, Julius, silversmith, South Australia 74  
 Schroder, Timothy, author 20, 102  
   review by 119  
 Scott, Sir Walter, Memorial to 103  
 Sculpture, silver 18  
 Seckel Collection, Berlin 20  
 She oak timber 82  
 Shoreham Deanery 7  
 Shrines,  
   Augsburg 18  
   Loreto church, Prague, Augsburg, 1612,  
     Abraham II Lotter 19  
     iconography of 24  
     Nativity scenes on 24  
     Pietà on 27  
 Silfverstolpe, Susann (managing editor), **Silver Gifts from Swedish Monarchs to Russian Tsars during the Seventeenth Century** 119  
 Silver Society, Prize for silversmithing 121  
   2014 winner 121  
 Smith,  
   John, spoonmaker 11  
   T J & J 47  
 Snuffers, Birmingham-made 39  
 Spencer, Edward, designs for trowels 112  
 Spoon  
   Adelaide, Carl Firnhaber 69  
   baluster top 7  
   caddy, Birmingham 36  
   chalice, medieval 5  
   communion, 5  
     City of London 5  
     design of 11  
     development of 14  
     Hanoverian pattern, 1736, Benjamin West 13  
     inscriptions on 7  
     lace back, St Benet Finck 11  
     piercing patterns of 11  
     seal top, London, 1671, Jeremy Johnson 9  
     slip top, Jeremy Johnson 7  
     trefid, John Smith 11  
   coin silver, in America 84  
   coffin-head, in America 92  
   patterns of, in America 85  
 Smith,  
   Daniel, bucklemaker, Birmingham 33  
   T J & J, stationery manufacturers 47  
 Snuffer makers, Birmingham 39  
 Snuffers, candle, manufacture in Birmingham 39  
 South Australia  
   German migration to 68  
   German population of 75  
   rifle shooting clubs in 75  
   silversmiths of 68  
   Volunteer Military Force 74  
 Steiner, Henry, silversmith, South Australia 74  
 Stückenschmidt, Elisabeth Sophie, wife of C E Firnhaber 68  
 Sugar tongs, American 93  
 Sweden, ambassadorial gifts from, to Russia 119  
 Tankard, Clare Market Actors' Club 64  
 Tedder, Lord, Chancellor of Cambridge University 115  
 Telescope, earliest representations of 29  
 Tesi, Vittoria, singer 50  
 Testimonial, Freeling 80  
 Thavies Inn, London 40  
   Birmingham warehouse at 43  
   wholesale businesses at 43  
 Toch, Adi, silversmith 117  
   *Large Reflection Bowl*, 2012 117  
   *Wide Open*, 2014 117  
 Tonkin, John, plater, Birmingham 36  
 Town Hall  
   Northampton 107  
   Sydney 108  
 Trade cards 63  
   of Thomas Willmore Junior 36  
 Trinity College, Dublin 99  
 Trowels  
   ceremonial 99  
   C E Firnhaber, Adelaide 79  
   watercolour designs for 113  
 Unite, George, silversmith, Birmingham 43  
 Utica  
   city of 90  
   marks 90  
   Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute 91  
   silversmiths 84  
   spoon design 90  
 Vallant, Mary Ann, wife of John Woodward 41  
 Vinaigrettes, Birmingham 36  
 Virginia,  
   silver 94  
   silversmiths 84  
 Vogler, John, silversmith, North Carolina 94  
 von Breuner, Seyfried Christoph, benefactor of Loreto church, Prague 24  
 von Lobkowitz, Benigna Catharina, Baroness 24  
 von Mollart, Margarete, wife of Seyfried von Breuner 24  
 von Bülow, Major 50  
 Wackerbarth-Salmour, Count, chamberlain to Prince Friedrich Christian 48  
 Wakelin, Edward, silvermith 46  
 Wales, Edward, Prince of 105  
 Walker, George I, silversmith, Chester 67  
 Walwin, Abraham, donor to St Mary Abchurch 9  
 Warrington, George Booth, 2nd Earl of 65  
 Welch, Robert, silversmith 14  
 Wendt, Jochim M, silversmith, South Australia 74  
 Whitgift, Archbishop 7  
 Wilczynski, Sebastian, valet to Crown Prince Freidrich 48  
 Wilhelmine Amalie, Empress 52  
 Wilkes, John,  
   gun engraver 121  
   gunsmith, Sheffield 39  
 Willmore,  
   and Alston, buckle and buttonmakers 34  
   Charles 38  
   family tree 32  
   George, jeweller, Birmingham 33  
   Graham, barrister 44  
   and Hunt 35  
   James, son of Thomas 33  
   John, builder, Birmingham 33  
   Joseph,  
     Bead manufacturer 38  
     planemaker, Birmingham 33  
     silversmith, Birmingham 32  
       death of 44  
       marks of 38  
       partnership with Yapp and Woodward 39  
       products of 42  
       snuffer maker 39  
   Thomas, silversmith, Birmingham 32  
     addresses of 34  
     children 33  
     junior 36  
     London mark of 42  
     marks of 34  
     partnerships 33  
     products 36  
     and Sons 35  
   and Wilkes, candle snuffers 39  
   William, japanner and toymaker 37  
 Wilson, Henry, silversmith 110  
 Wine, communion 7  
 Winterthur Library 9  
 Woods, Freeman, silversmith, New York 94  
 Woodward,  
   family tree 41  
   John, silversmith 32  
 Yale,  
   Art Gallery 89  
   Center for British Art 63  
 Yapp,  
   and Chinn, jeweller and silversmiths 41  
   family tree 41  
   John, silversmith 32  
 Zech, Heike,  
   **When Christ became an astronomer: the contrasting histories of two seventeenth-Century Augsburg shrines** 18  
   *An Imperial Gift and other Treasures, South German Gold and Silver in the Gilbert Collection (1600-1800)*, lecture given to the Silver Society, January 2014 31



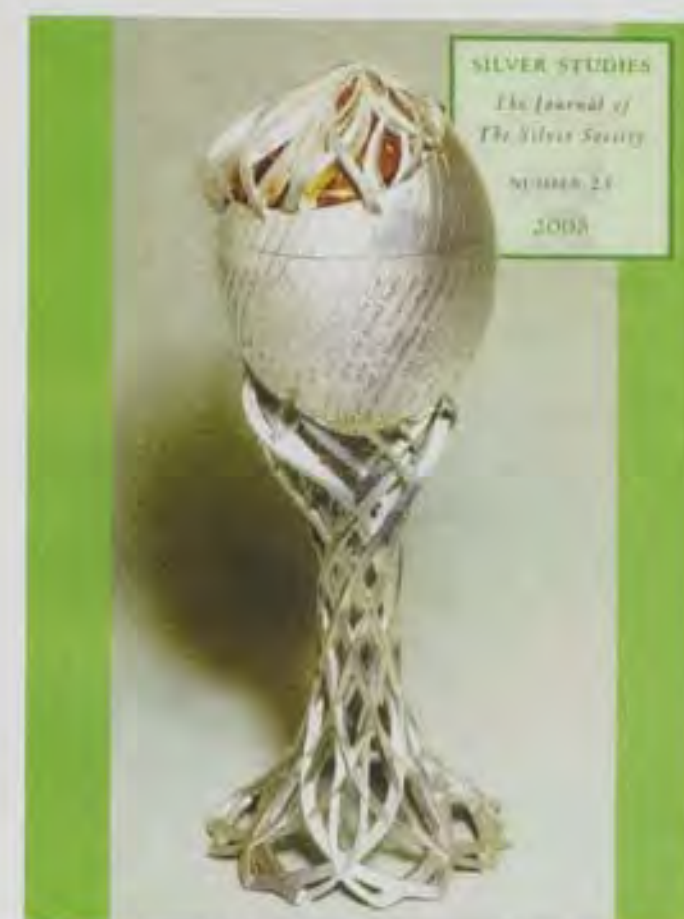
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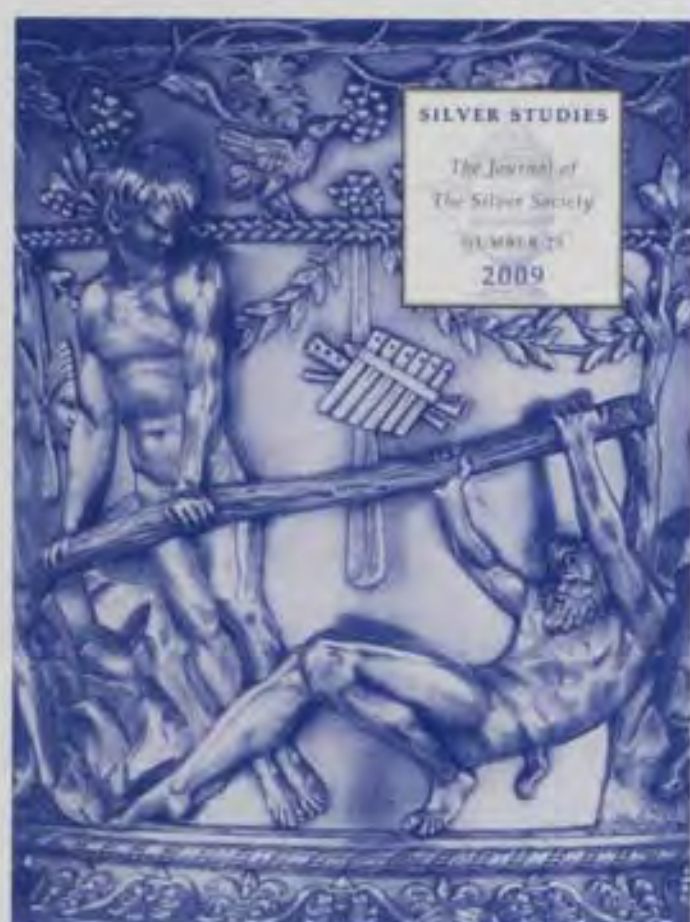
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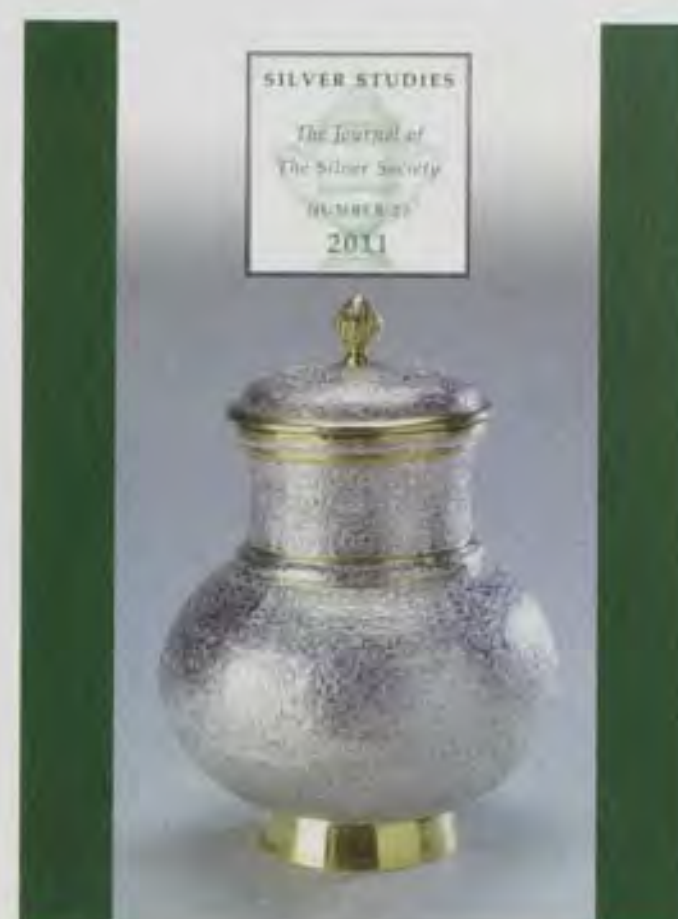
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