

Silver Spoons, Buckles & Bullets

THE STORY OF THE ELEY FAMILY



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THE STORY OF THE ELEY FAMILY

As a child I was fascinated by, and greatly coveted, a marble paper weight on my father's desk. It was a rectangular piece of dark maroon marble with chamfered edges topped with an embossed classical scene in silver, that looked like the cover of a visiting card case. I was told that it had been made, as an apprentice piece, by my ancestor William Eley, a London silversmith. Eventually, when I became the owner of the paperweight, I started my research into the Eley family.

Close examination of the paperweight revealed an initial 'W', possibly followed by another letter scratched on the surface. Was this an apprentice piece by William Eley to gain his Freedom of the Goldsmiths' Company?

The scene illustrated the legend of Scaevola – the Latin for left handed. The story was that when Rome was besieged by Lars Porsena in 508 BC, a Roman called Gaius Muchius infiltrated the Etruscan camp to assassinate him. Gaius slew Porsena's secretary by mistake and was captured. He was taken before Porsena and sentenced to death by flames. Gaius held his right hand over the sacrificial flames until it was destroyed to show he was not afraid of them. This action was considered so remarkable that Porsena at once ordered his release and made peace with the Romans.¹

There is one similar but smaller depiction of the scene in the British Museumⁱⁱ catalogued as a *'steel repoussé stamp for making a die with which watch cases could be embossed'*. The design is identical to the paper weight and so presumably could have originated in the Eley family. This 'stamp' was given to the Museum by Henry Willett, who lived in Brighton where William Eley's son, Charles, resided. The date of the donation coincides with that of Charles's death. Both Willett and Eley had an interest in collecting fossils so could well have known each other.

A lucky chance then took me to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In their collections is a heavily chased gold box, with the identical scene to the paperweight. To carry out his work, William Eley must not only have had sight of this box but must have been able to study it over a long period of time. The box is a masterpiece of the mid-18th century with the Scaevola scene on the lid and a scene of Apollo, with Romulus & Remus and the Wolf overlooking Rome, on the base. This arrangement on the top and the base of the box, is unusual as the design would undoubtedly have become worn if constantly placed on a flat surface. In fact, there is some wear on the bottom panel.

With the caveat about the dangers of trying to fit the evidence to prove a theory, I developed the following theory. The gold box is dated 1741, with an inscription that it was made by George Moyser (1706-1782). He

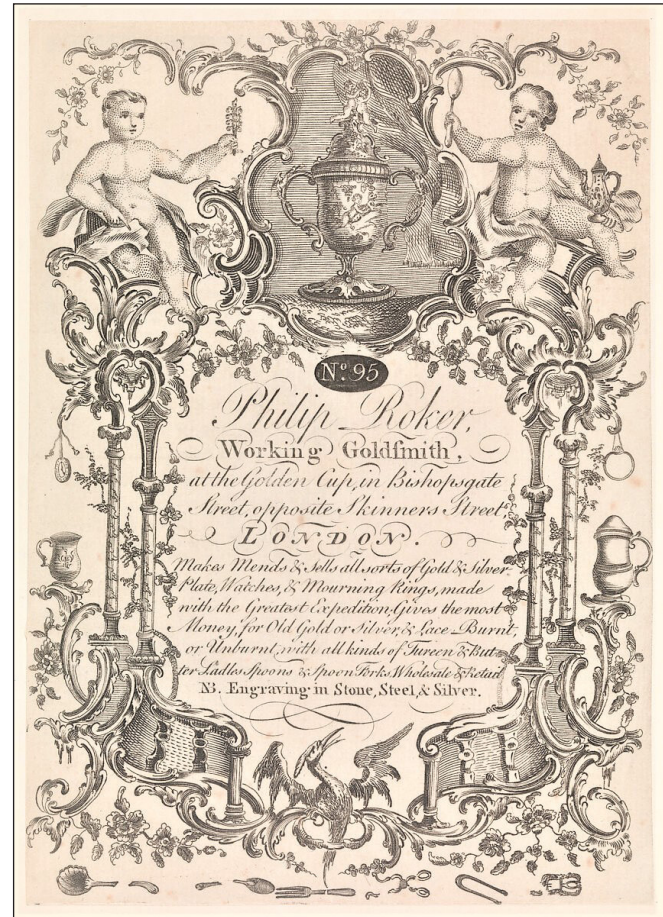
had come to England from Switzerland in 1726 and became the greatest chaser of silverwork in the country, introducing the rococo style. There are no other assay marks on the box itself except the mark: 'WR' surmounted by a fleur de lis. The Goldsmith's Company have ascribed the mark to Philip Roker, entered in 1739. It is possible that the fleur de lis may refer to French or Huguenot origins for the Roker family. Philip set up as a goldsmith &c at 95 Bishopsgate opposite Skinner Lane and produced an advertising card now also in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.ⁱⁱⁱ

The only other markings are scratch marks, in mirror writing, similar to those used by Pawnbrokers. The principal letter shown is 'F' which might refer to the shop of William Fearn who is recorded in 1808 as being a 'Pawnbroker'.^{iv} This suggests that William Eley could have had access to the box during his apprenticeship to William Fearn from 1770 to 1777.

The hunt for the Eley family had begun!

My research into the Eley family had started in the late 1960s when I collected references to pieces by Eley in books, antique shops and from friends and family. After a short burst of intense activity, the project was put to one side as I concentrated on my museum career. Now, nearly sixty years later, the advances in technology have enabled me to draw together not only further references to the Eley family, but also a wealth of images, from the comfort of my own home.

This work is in two sections – general information about the family where the entries are set out in chronological order and, where possible, an example of Eley silver for each year. The second section relates to the Buckle Patent and court case.



Philip Roker Trade Card
Courtesy the Metropolitan Museum, New York



4.06 x 3.81 cm, courtesy of the British Museum



9.0 x 6.5 cm, courtesy of the Louise Phillips

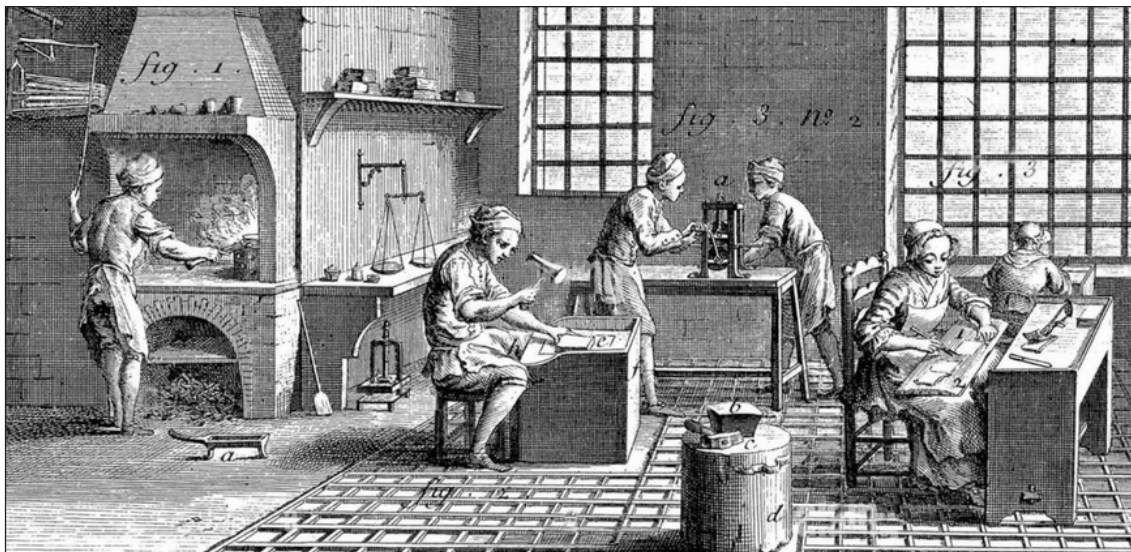


4.4 x 11.6 x 9.2 cm
courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum, New York

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18th Century Gold Beaters workshop

The Eley family originates from South Derbyshire, and it soon became apparent that several families in the immediate area, from Wirksworth southwards, sent their sons to London to train as silversmiths. In particular, three families intermarried, those of Eley, Fearn and Chawner. The reason behind this interest in silversmithing comes from the geology of the area. Most of the Peak District, for many centuries, has been mined for lead. The lead ore, galena, contains 0.05% silver and so became a source of the metal for coining and making utensils, industries which were all centred in London.

Thomas Eley, of Brailsford (c.1665 - c.1713).

His son, **Thomas**, born c.1684 and buried 15th May 1751, married at St. Michael's, Derby 28th July 1714, Mary Chawner born c.1693 who was buried at Scropton, 3rd December 1749.

Their son **George** was born in Heanor in 1725, and became a yeoman farmer in Scropton, Derbyshire and married Dorothy Jeram. Their children were:

John, baptised 31st November 1752;

Ann, baptised 7th November 1758;

Charles, baptised 10th May 1761 and;

William who was baptised 21st April 1756 at Scropton.^v William was apprenticed to his relative, William Fearn, silversmith, on 7th November 1770 for a fee of £25. He gained his Freedom of the Goldsmiths' Company on 7th November 1778. In 1773, William Fearn was listed as a spoon maker and resided at 75 Wood Street, London.

William Fearn, son of William Fearn of Sedbury, Derbyshire, farmer, had been apprenticed to Thomas Chawner on 6th October 1762 for a fee of £25. He gained his Freedom on 7th February 1770. He had entered his first mark, as a spoon maker in April 1769 at 5 Brownlow Street, Holborn and entered his second mark as spoon maker 13th May 1774 at 75 Wood Street. He was made bankrupt July 1777 at Wood Street.^{vi}

Members of the extended Eley family who worked in London included James Eley, watchmaker of 11 Fenchurch Street, who was also Churchwarden and Overseer of the Poor at St. Dionis, Black Church; Henry Eley, and later his son Edward, was a Goldbeater at 105 Shoe Lane. There was a concentration of gold beaters in Shoe Lane. Samuel Pierrepont also worked in Shoe Lane, and it is likely that George Pierrepont, William's first partner, was his son.^{vii}

1776

William Eley was in court 9th January 1776 where Lydia Halliway was indicted for stealing a handkerchief value at 10 pence.

William was 20, at the end of his apprenticeship with William Fearn. He had gone to hear a Christmas Eve sermon by John Towers (1747-1804) at the Presbyterian meeting house.

156. LYDIA HALLAWAY was indicted for stealing a linen handkerchief, value ten pence, the property of William Eley, December 28th.

WILLIAM ELEY *sworn*.

I am apprentice to a silversmith: I was at the meeting-house in Jewin-street on Sunday the 24th of December; a gentleman in the pew said, that is the old pickpocket; I missed my handkerchief, I had it minute before: I asked the prisoner, if she had got my handkerchief; I lifted up her cloak and found my handkerchief upon her.

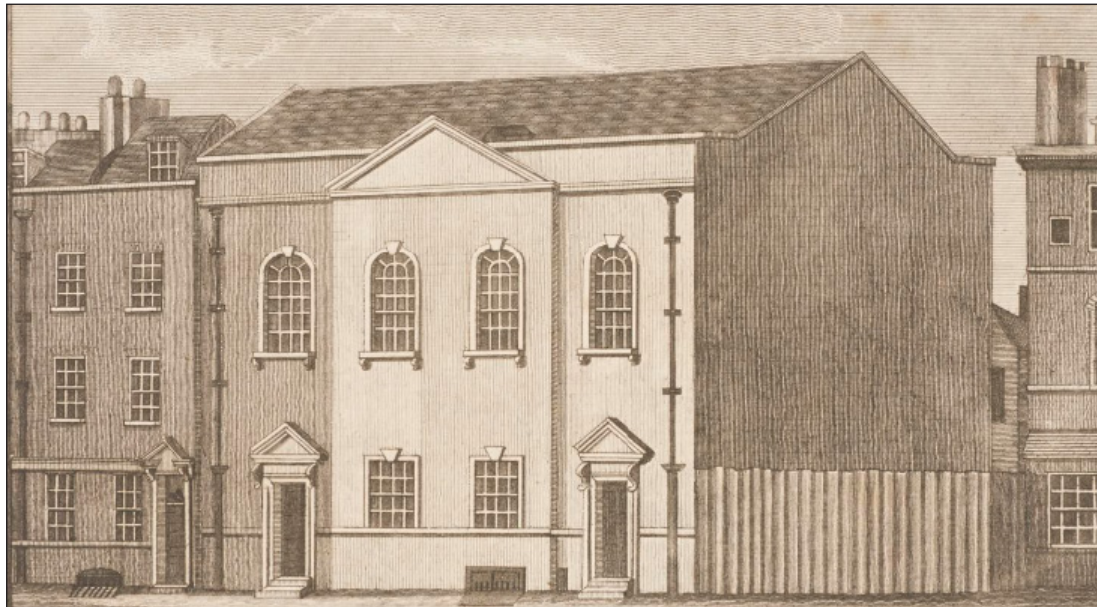
PRISONER's DEFENCE.

I am not guilty of it indeed; I hope you will forgive me; I picked it up.

Are you sure you put it into your pocket?
—To the best of my knowledge I did; I will not be positive.

NOT GUILTY.

Tried by the London Jury before Mr. RECORDER.



Jewin Street Meeting House, where William lost his handkerchief (see above)

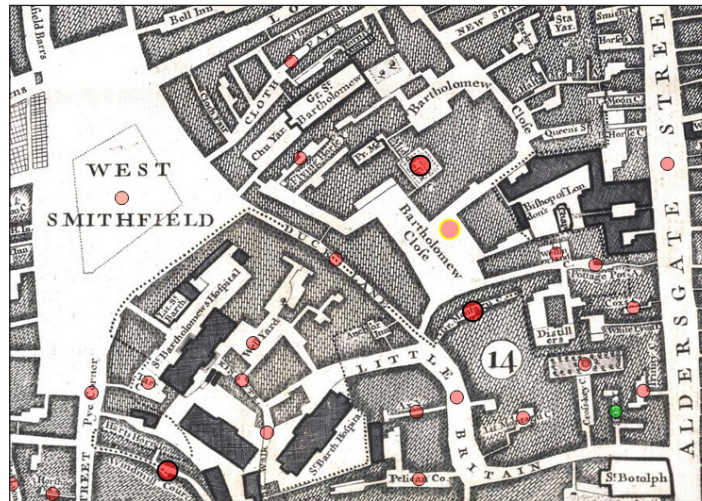


1777

On 11th November 1777, William Eley and George Pierrepont of 46 Little Bartholomew Close, London, entered a mark as spoon makers. During his lifetime William became known principally as a flatware maker, some 20% of silver spoons and forks in London coming from his workshop at that time.

Workmen's Names	Trades	Place of House	Mark when Entered	By Whome	Before Whome
William Eley George Pierrepont	Spoon Makers	c. 46 Little Bartholomew Close		Wm Eley Geo Pierrepont	James Husbands
c. 11 Nov 1777					

Courtesy of the Goldsmith's Company

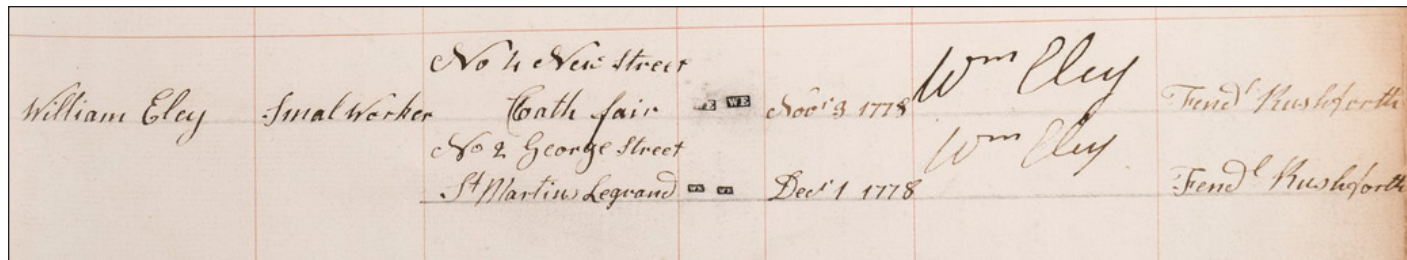


1777 Spoon



1778

In 1778 William Eley entered a second mark on 3rd November 1778, as a small worker, at New Street, Cloth Market before he gained his Freedom of the Goldsmiths' Company the next day. On 1st December, the same year, he entered a mark at 2 St. George Street, St. Martin le Grand, London, as a small worker.^{viii} Small workers were distinguished from flatware makers by the extreme dexterity and intricate techniques required for small-scale metalwork rather than cutlery.



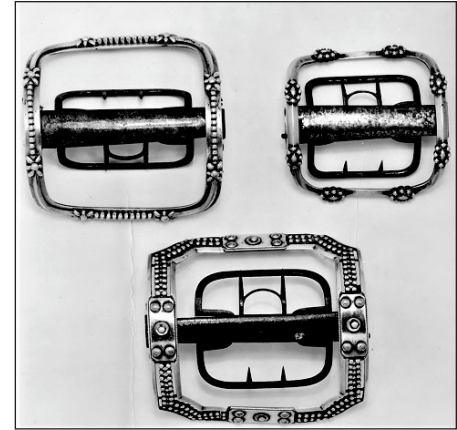
Courtesy of the Goldsmith's Company



1778 Tea Caddy Spoon

1780

His clientele expanded into the prosperous suburb of Putney, where on 15th November, Jonas Malden's account book records; 'Gave Eley's Man 1 shilling'. Jonas Malden already had some silver cutlery, given to him as a wedding present by Mrs Handyside, with her crest (an open hand) which he then took as his own, but on 7th September there is an entry for '2 tablespoons £1-10s'. Were these purchased from William Eley and delivered later?



1780-1790 Shoe Buckles

1781

William Eley, as a silver buckle maker at 29 Greenhill Rents, St. John Street took out Sun & Royal fire insurance on 14th July 1781 for £400.^{ix}

He sat on the jury at the inquest into the death of Simon Mezzerilia 1st May 1781.^x Mezzerilia was buried at St. James, Clerkenwell

1782

William Fearn was imprisoned in Newgate for six months for forgery.

William Eley, as a silver buckle maker at 36 Aylesbury Street, Clerkenwell, took out Sun & Royal fire insurance at on 1st January 1782 for £400.^{xi}

He married Sarah Gardiner at St. Runwald's Church in Colchester on 19th October 1782. She is recorded as being the daughter of Lieutenant Gardiner, and her sponsors are given as William Eley, Francis Smythies (1742-1798), solicitor and Town Clerk of Colchester, and John Dean of St. Osyth. No details are given about her father. In later years she is said to have destroyed many papers *'so that the children would not get too proud'*.

Was her father Richard Gardiner (1723-1781), author and soldier? He had died just before the date of her wedding. When he retired on half pay from the 11th Dragoon Guards, his rank would have gone from Captain to Lieutenant. This would explain his absence from the wedding record and the inclusion of two prominent citizens as sponsors. It should be said that there is no record of Richard Gardiner having a daughter Sarah in his family.^{xii} John Dean had a son Henry who, in due course, married William Eley's daughter Sarah.



1782 Berry Spoons

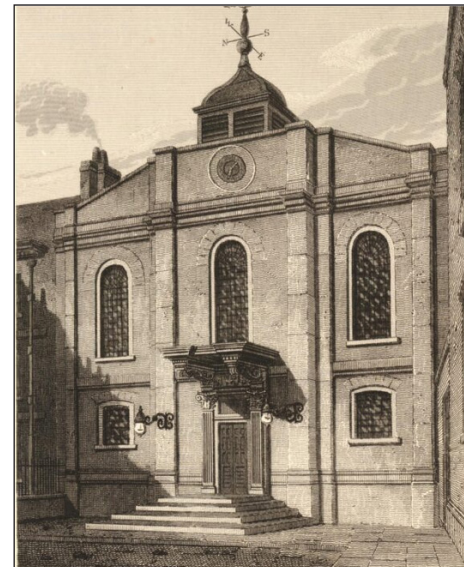
1783

William's daughter Mary was born 29th August and baptised 21st September 1783 at St. John's Church, Clerkenwell.^{xiii} She later married the son of William Fearn.

There is a family story that William Eley was so dexterous worker in metal that he produced a model grouse that walked.



St Runwald's Church, Colchester

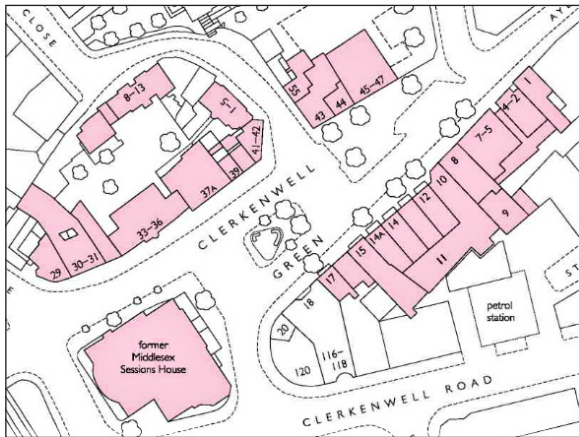


St. John's Church, Clerkenwell where the Eley children were baptised

1784

William was listed in 1784 as a buckle maker, residing at 14 Clerkenwell Green, when he patented a new form of shoe buckle; the patent was to run for a period of fourteen years, and he cornered the market.

He introduced an incredibly reliable and efficient spring-clip mechanism that revolutionized how shoe buckles attached to footwear. It was such a superior method that it became immensely popular almost overnight. Because Eley's design was widely copied, he took wealthy makers to court to protect his patent rights. He won an initial case against William Yardley, causing mass panic among traditional makers. In retaliation, the London and Birmingham silversmithing establishments banded together to have Eley's patent repealed later that same year. [See page]



Clerkenwell Green



1784 Sugar Tongs

1786

Daughter Ann was born 11th February and baptised 13th February,^{xiv} she later married Henry Aldwin Soames.

Eley's buckles had become so famous that in one case, when a theft of buckles was reported, it specifically mentioned two pairs of William Eley No. 422.^{xv} The sequential production number enabled exact identification of the stolen goods.

William Fearn and Mary had a son, also William, born 10th March 1786; he married Mary Eley in 1807.

1787

Daughter Sarah was born 14th October and baptised 22nd October.^{xvi} She later married Henry Dean.

1788

Took as apprentice James Meek, son of Thomas Meek silversmith of St. Andrew, Holborn as a buckle maker.^{xvii}

1789

William Eley, silver buckle maker, 14 Clerkenwell Green took out Sun & Royal fire insurance on 19th June 1789.^{xviii}

Daughter Elizabeth was born 23rd October and baptised 20th November.^{xix}

Took as an apprentice John Blackbeard, son of Francis Blackbeard, buckle maker, of Northampton Street, Clerkenwell, as a buckle maker.^{xx}

1790

On December 8th Rex v Eley Patent Case:

Eley had accused Mr William Yardley, buckle maker, of infringing his buckle patent. The jury decided that the charge could not be sustained after the expiry of the monopoly. (Patent dated 17th April 1784). Witnesses considered the Eley buckle as a great improvement and far superior to anything of the kind that had ever appeared. Afterwards, the Patent was revoked, to acclaim. However, since shoe buckles were then going out of fashion, it was a Pyrrhic victory.^{xxi} [See page 58]



1790 Salt Spoon

1791

Eley's first son, George, named after his grandfather, was born 23rd September and baptised 21st October but died an infant.^{xxii}



1791 Shoe Buckles

1792

William Eley, silver buckle maker at 16 Queen's Row, Pentonville and 14 Clerkenwell Green took out Sun & Royal fire insurance on 13th July 1792.^{xxiii}

William Fearn, of Clerkenwell Green, goldsmith, took as an apprentice William Chawner, son of Jonathan Chawner of Horncastle, Lincolnshire.^{xxiv}

1794

Son William, was born 15th January and baptised 31st March.^{xxv} He later married Susan Yeamens (1796-1855).

Took as an apprentice John Eley, son of Thomas Eley of Tyrley Castle, Staffordshire, yeoman, as a buckle maker.^{xxvi}



Eley patent No. 21821^{xxvii}

Each buckle is marked for left or right shoe. The sequential production number, 21,821, presumably runs from the introduction of the patent in 1784. Was the a production rate perhaps about 2,100 pairs of buckles each year?

1795

Daughter Eliza was born 30th December 1795 and baptised 11th January 1796.^{xxviii} She later married Richard Abud, jeweller.



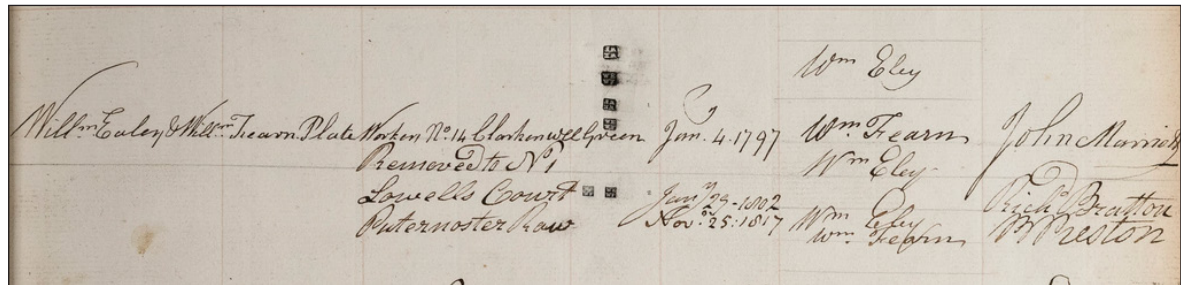
1795 Spoon

1796



1796 Fork

1797



Courtesy of the Goldsmith's Company^{xxx}

Son Charles, was born 20th April and baptised 23rd May.^{xxx} He later married Harriot Soames (1797-1867).

Son George was buried, aged 5 weeks, 4th October 1797.^{xxxi}

William Fearn took as an apprentice, George Smith, son of George Smith of Paternoster Row, goldsmith.^{xxxii}



1797 Ladle

1798



1798 Shoe Buckles

1799



1799 Slice

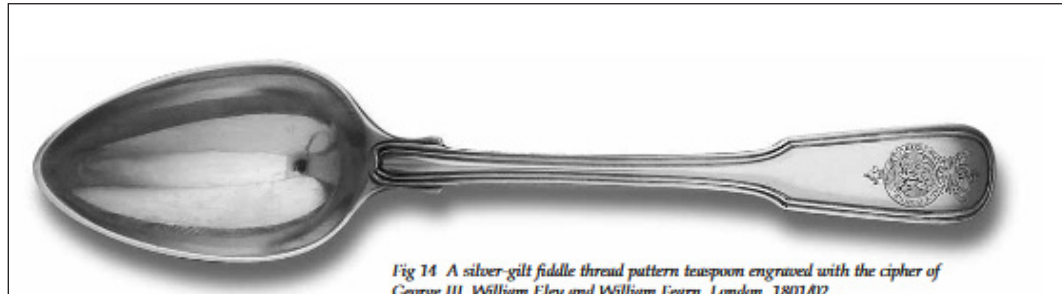
1800

Son Henry was born 9th January and baptised 7th February 1800.^{xxxiii} He later married his double first cousin Caroline Soames.



1800 Fish Slice

1801



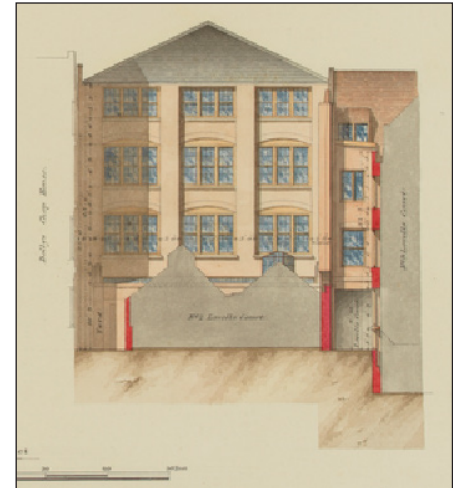
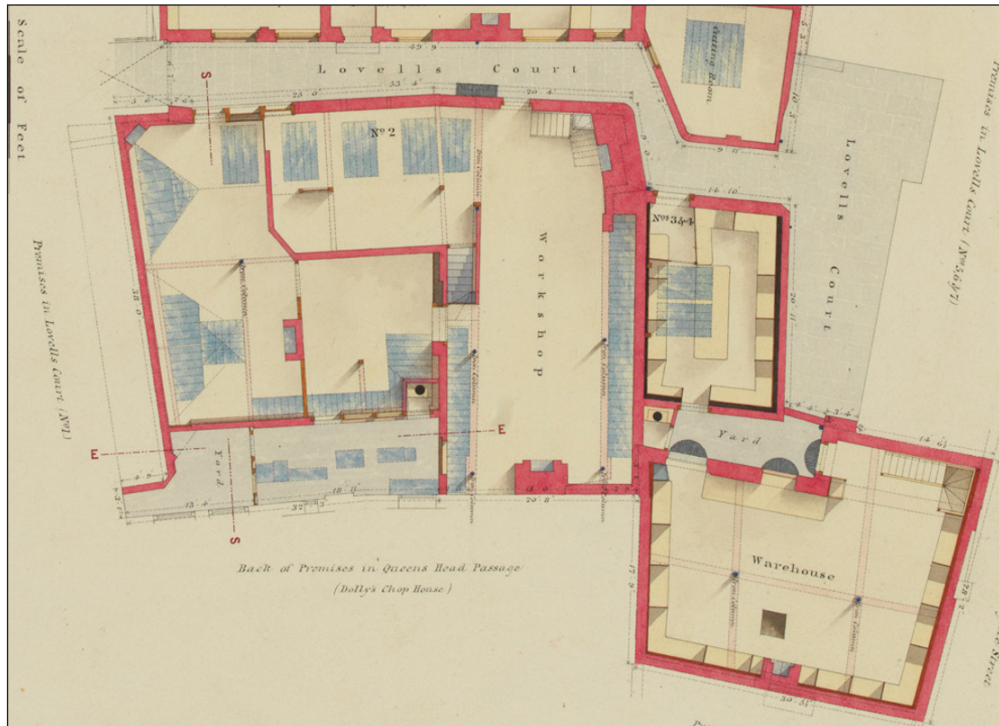
1801 Spoon

1802



Courtesy of the Goldsmith's Company

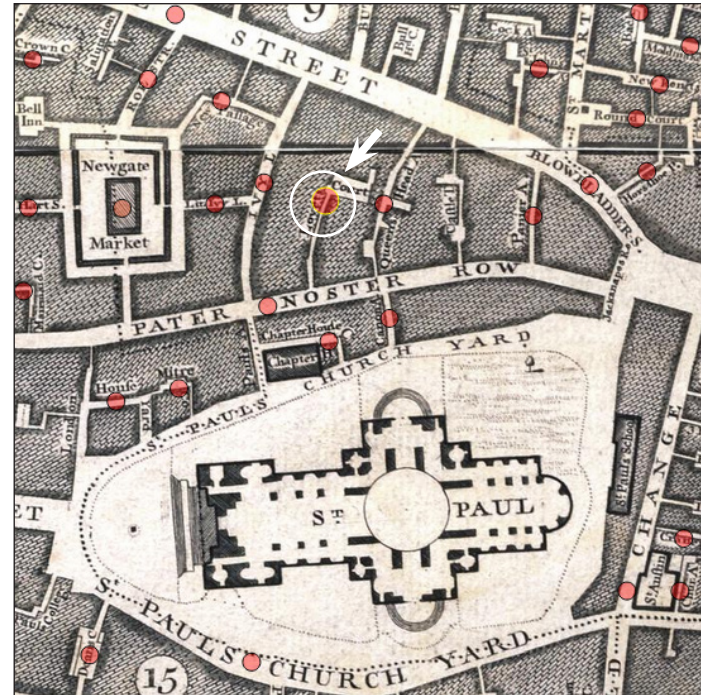
William went into partnership in 1802 with William Fearn and William Chawner and moved to 1 Lovell's Court, Paternoster Row. London



1-3 Lovell's Court
Courtesy of the Clothworkers' Company

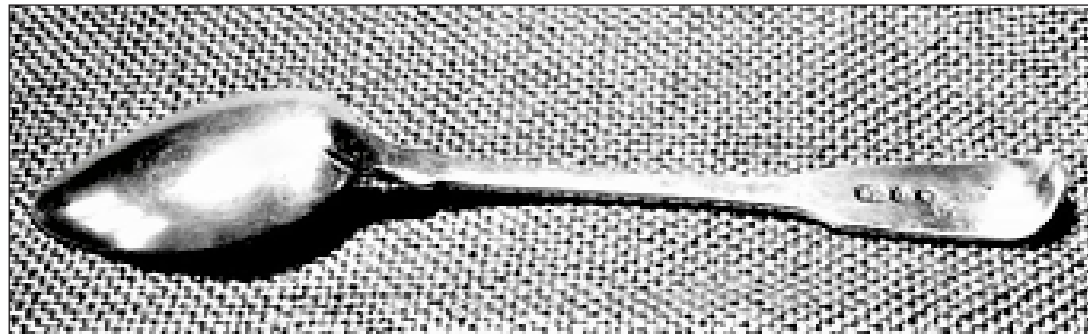
William Fearn took as an apprentice James Jaggers, son of Richard Jaggers, of Clerkenwell Close, deceased, sweep washer.^{xxxiv} In the 1700s, a sweep washer was a tradesman who purchased, refined, and recycled waste “sweeps” – the residue, dust, and offcuts of precious metals generated by craftspeople like silversmiths and goldsmiths.

Eley & Fearn, working silversmiths of 14 Clerkenwell Green, at 1-2 Lovell’s Court, took out Sun & Royal fire insurance 1st March 1802.^{xxxv}



Lovell's Court, Paternoster Row

1803



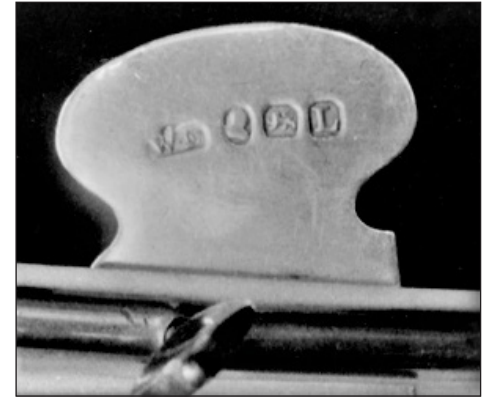
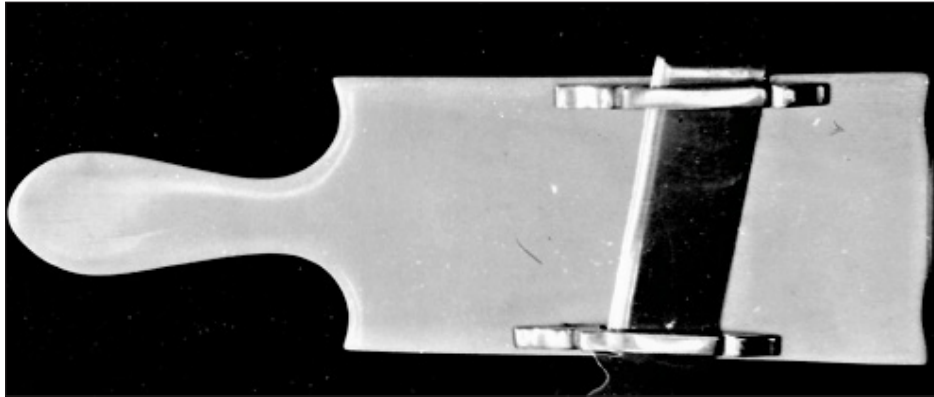
1803 Spoon

1804

John Blackbeard, pickle maker, son of Francis Blackbeard, pickle maker, became free of the Goldsmith's Company having been apprenticed to William Eley, of Clerkenwell Green, pickle maker, in March 1804.^{xxxvi} In the 1790 Directory, Francis Blackbeard is listed as a broker at 3 Bull Wharf, Queenhithe. At that time, metalwork was cleaned by dipping into 'pickle', an acidic solution.

William Fearn took as an apprentice Joseph Brockwell, son of Henry Brockwell of Bagnize Wells, Middlesex, silversmith.^{xxxvii}

1806



1806 Cucumber Slicer

1807



1807 Mark



1807 Fork

1808

William Eley supplied 48 tablespoons and 42 forks to the Goldsmiths' Company.

Took as an apprentice his son William.^{xxxviii}

William Chawner took as an apprentice Robert Barnard, son of James Barnard, of Charles Street, Bridgewater Square, silversmith.^{xxxix}

1809

Eley's second daughter, Ann, was married on 25th April 1809 to Henry Aldwin Soames.

William Chawner took as an apprentice Francis Blackbeard, son of Francis Blackbeard of Taylor's Row, Islington Road, silversmith.^{xi}

16th June 1809^{xli}

'Melancholy accident – Thursday afternoon, as the second daughter of Mr. Eley, who resides in Northumberland Street, Strand, was passing through Spring Gardens, with an infant child in her arms, two bricks fell from the scaffolding before Mr. Thompson's house, at the corner of New Street, and fractured both their skulls. They dropped instantly senseless to the ground and were taken to a neighbouring surgeon. The wounds, however, being of so fatal a nature, they were immediately conveyed to Mr Eley's house in a wheelbarrow, where they remain, without the least hopes of recovery.'^{xlii}

It is not certain that this refers to the family of William Eley, silversmith, as the infant would have been born only two months after Ann Soames, his second daughter's marriage. If the baby survived, this could have been Emily Birkett Soames^{xliii} and her mother, who lived to a great age. The building in question was No. 29 New Street, Covent Garden, inhabited



1809 Crumb Scoop

by T. Thompson, Linen Draper. However, researching family history on-line has brought to light a fresh theory. William Fearn and Mary Eley had a child, Drusilla, baptised in August 1807. Could this be the infant ? She died at the early age of 19. Elizabeth Eley was, at the time, the second unmarried daughter of William Eley and she was buried at St. Andrew's Church, Cone Engaine in Essex on 7th September 1808 near her mother's relatives. Perhaps Elizabeth had taken her infant niece for a walk, She could have succumbed to her injuries, Drusilla might have required constant attention which might explain why William and Mary Fearn only started a family, twins Henry and Sarah, many years later in 1820.^{xliv}

1810

In December 1810, Emes & Barnard's debts included a total payment to Eley, Fearn & Co. of 685oz 16dwt of bullion and £106.10s in cash.^{xlv}



1810 Fish Slice

1811

Took as apprentice his son Charles.^{xlvi}

William Chawner took as an apprentice William Bagnald, son of James Bagnald of Hay Street, Clerkenwell, silversmith.^{xlvii}



1811 Condiment Spoon

1812

William Chawner took as an apprentice Thomas Matthew Brockwell, son of Henry Brockwell of Badnigg Wells, King's Cross Road, Middlesex, silversmith. ^{xlviii}



1812 Fork

1813

Sales By Auction By Mr Hoggart, at the Mart on Friday February 9th at twelve. Particulars of Mr Mickley, Buntingford. A valuable Freehold Estate; comprising an excellent well-built detached Family House, the late residence of Dr. Wood, deceased, situate at the entrance of the town of Buntingford, about 30 miles from London, in the county of Herts. The House is approached by a carriage drive, and contains seven bed chambers, two dressing rooms, closets and water closet, drawing and dining rooms of good proportions, breakfast room, library and bath room, principal and secondary staircases, and convenient domestic offices well supplied with water, detached brewhouse, laundry, coach house and three stall stable and out buildings, lawn and shrubbery walks, and two enclosures of rich meadow land, containing altogether about seven acres, part tithe free and exonerated from land tax. ^{xlix}

It would appear that William was investing his profits. He was recorded as living there, though the premises were under the management of George Mickley.



1813 Snuff Spoon

1814

Partnerships dissolved: W. Eley, W. Fearn and W. Chawner of Lovell's Court, Paternoster Row, silversmiths (so far as respects the said W. Chawner)' ⁱ



'Mr Fearn's stock of superb Jewels, Gold Chromometers and other Watches, Musical and Gold chased snuff boxes, near two thousand ounces of plate and valuable assortment of well manufactures plated goods – by Mr Farebrother, at the auction mart, Batholomew Lane, near the Bank of England, this following day, at 11 positively without any reservation.

The genuine stock in trade of Mr Fearn, late of Cornhill, goldsmith, retiring from business, comprising a very choice assortment of elegant jewellery in diamonds, pearl, emerald, ruby and topaz necklaces, ear rings, bracelets, head ornaments, rings and pins, bunches of pearls, thirty golf chronometers, gentlemen's and ladies' watches, gold watch chains, two hundred fashionable seals, many of them of standard gold, musical and richly chased and gold and silver snuff boxes, gold mounted tortoiseshell ditto, and a well selected assortment of modern plain jewellery; upwards of fifteen hundred ounces of richly chased plate, and plated goods in costly epergnes, soup and sauce tureens, venison dishes and covers, triangular and other candlesticks and branches, cruet frames, tea kettles and lamps, egg frames, bread and cake baskets, also a quantity of metal gilt goods, and black goods – To be viewed the day preceding and morning of sale. Catalogues 1s each, had at the Mart; at Garroway's; and of Mr Farebrother, Beaufort House, Beaufort buildings, Strand.' ⁱⁱ

From the will of Richard Crossley, 19th August 1814: '.... And I give and bequeath unto my said trustees the sum of two thousand pounds upon trust to invest the same in or upon such stocks, funds or securities ... to receive the dividends interest or annual produce ... to apply the same by even and weekly payments unto and for the support and maintenance of John Doughty, Journeyman Silversmith and at present employed by Messrs Eley, Fearn and Chawner, silversmiths, for and during the term of his natural life for his own personal use and benefit ...'



1814 Ice Cream Spades



1814 Tea Pot
Courtesy of Boston Museum of Art

1815

Took as an apprentice his son Henry.^{lii}

'Hatton Garden – Yesterday the driver of a hackney coach appeared to a summons to answer a complaint made against him by Mr William Eley, on behalf of his wife and daughter. The complainant stated, that at eleven o'clock on Monday forenoon Mrs and Miss Eley engaged the defendant's coach to take them from the Angel at Islington to Moorgate; that on the way the defendant fell in with another hackney coach the driver of which and the defendant ran their coaches against each other at so furious rate as to endanger the lives of Mrs and Miss Eley; there was no check-string to the coach so that Mrs Eley had to stretch out at the coach window and lay hold of the skirts of the defendants coat, which she kept pulling and entreating him to stop; their cries, screams, and entreaties however availed them nothing; the defendant was drunk and paid no attention to them, but drove on at the imminent risk of their lives; the wheels of the coach passing over several heaps of gravel that lay on one side of the road, so as to endanger its being overturned. By which they were in jolted and tossed about that they received severe bruises. 'The sitting magistrate lamented that the law did not leave it in his power to punish the offender as he merited, but as far as it did he would. The defendant was convicted in the penalty of ten shillings and costs, which he paid down and was discharged.'^{liii}

Took as an apprentice Joseph Horton, son of Thomas Horton of Horseshoe Alley, Moorfields, silver buckle maker deceased originally apprenticed to John Hynde Cotton of Wood Street, silver spoon maker in 1810 and then turned over to William Chawner in 1811.^{liv}

1816

Son William II married Susan Yeamans. (1795-1855)

1817

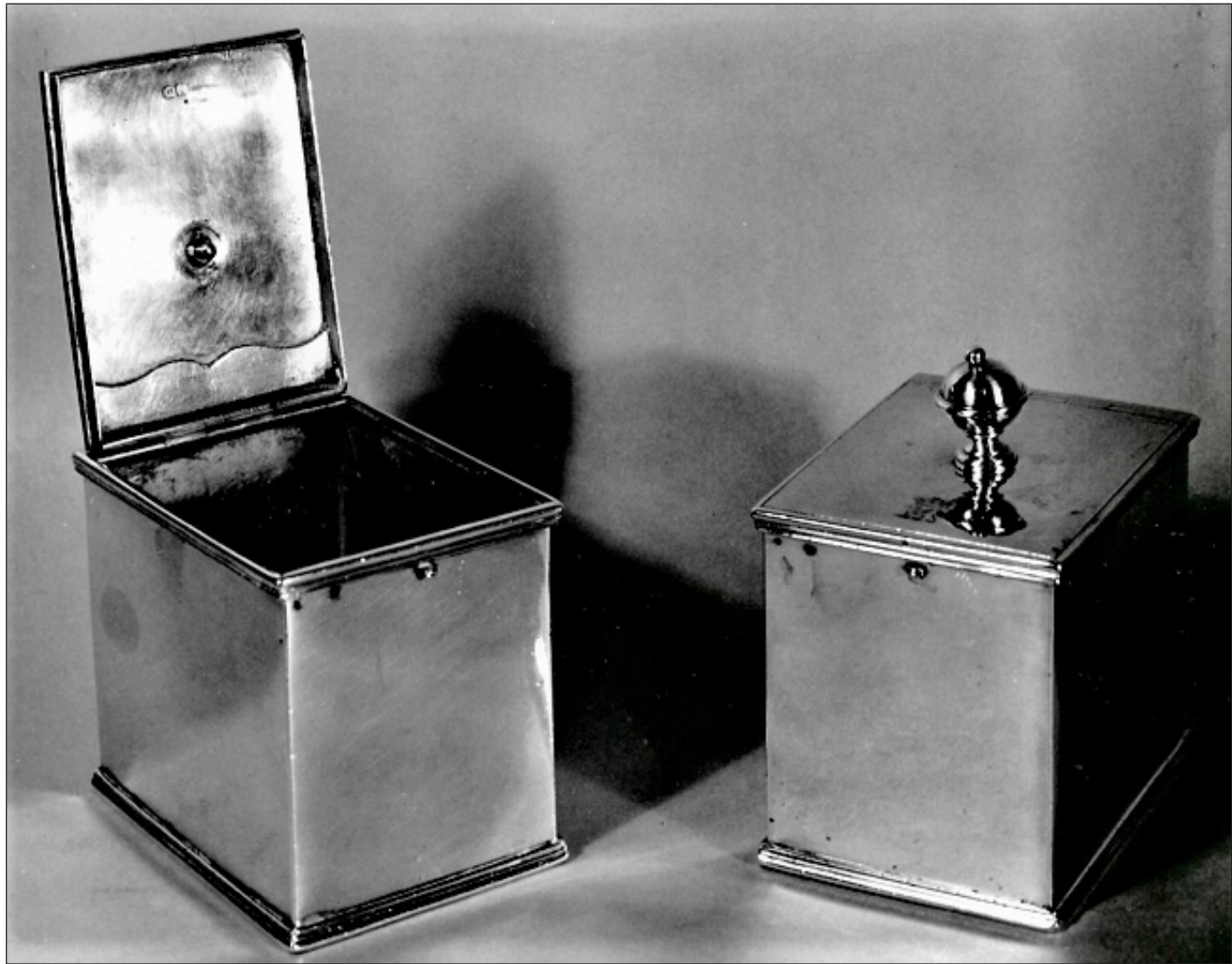
'Joseph Brown was indicted for obtaining goods, under false pretences, value £15.10s from William Eley, under false pretences. The prisoner pleaded Guilty. Aged 22. Transported for Seven Years. London Jury before Mr Common Sergeant.'

^{lv}



1817 Spoon

1818



1818 Tea Caddies
Courtesy of Brighton Pavilion



1818 Tea Kettle
Courtesy of Brighton Pavilion



1818 Tea Pot
Courtesy of Brighton Pavilion



1818 Toasting Dish
Courtesy of Brighton
Pavilion

1819



1819 Salt

1820

'Fire early Saturday morning at the house of Mr. Fearn the great silversmith and jeweller in the Strand, corner of Adam Street. House burned down, loss of some jewellery and adjoining houses (also silversmiths) badly damaged. Only a servant in house, due to gas leak, Fearn and family at house in Brixton' ^{lvi}



1818 Vinaigrette

1821

William II's son William Thomas was born 14th September; he later married Louisa Hicks

THE ROYAL CONNECTION

There are ten items in the Royal Collection made by William Eley, either as gifts, acquisitions or replicas.



Courtesy of The Royal Collection Trust

For his coronation in 1821, George IV had the 12th century anointing spoon re-gilded. Eley made two replica silver gilt spoons enhanced with rubies, turquoises and pearls. They measure 26.6 x 5.1 x 2.5cm [RCIN 50556]. Presumably Eley had to have sight of the original spoon to make the replicas and so may have been responsible for the regilding of the original Coronation spoon. At the same time Charles Eley made three further replicas which he left in his will to each of his three daughters. I saw Jane Eley's copy in 1966 at the home of my cousins, Phylis and Greta Malden, who nicknamed it the 'Runcible spoon'. The sisters went into a care home before their deaths in 1986, and it has not been seen since then.

At the same time, George IV also commissioned a canteen of cutlery from Eley & Fearn which he presented to his younger brother Adolphus. The spoons had twisted stems and with crowned lion passant finials. The reverse of the bowl is engraved with the cartouche for Prince Adolphus, 1st Duke of Cambridge, 7th son of King George III and Queen Charlotte.



Courtesy of Mary Cooke Antiques

In 1891, Alfred de Rothschild presented to the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) on his fiftieth birthday, an ornate silver gilt casket which had been made by Eley in 1821. It measured 10.5 x 25.2 x 19 cm [RCIN 50230], with the interior lined with blue velvet and a hinged domed lid mounted with Prince of Wales's feathers and coronet in close-set diamonds.

Inside lid the inscription:

*A HUMBLE OFFERING/ TO/ H.R.H. The Prince of
Wales,/ on His 50th Birthday, / FROM/ His devoted
and faithful Servant/ ALFRED DE ROTHSCHILD./ 9
November 1891.*



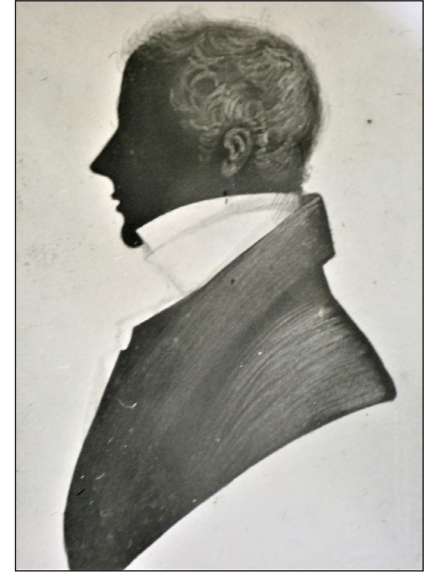
Courtesy of The Royal Collection Trust

1822

William Eley I's son Charles, of Islington, married Harriot Soames (1797-1857) on 27th April 1822 at Yardeley, near her family home at Broadfield Hall, some three miles west of Buntingford.^{lvii}



Harriot Soames (1797-1867)



Charles Eley (1797-1875)



*1822 Plate
Courtesy of Brighton Pavilion*

1823

'26th February. Henry Kinder was indicted for that he, on 18th January, being servant to Paul Storr and John Mortimer, did steal a silver spoon value 10s and a knife value 10s their property; and Sarah Cherry was indicted for that she, well knowing him to have committed the said felony, did feloniously receive, harbour and maintain him. Thomas Connelly. 'I am shopman to Messrs Paul Storr and John Mortimer, who are silversmiths and jewellers and live in New Bond Street. We do business with Messrs Eley and Co working silversmiths in Paternoster Row. On Wednesday the 15th January we sent the prisoner there with some plate, which he delivered safe, he was to have brought a table spoon and knife back from them among other things. ' Goods were found in a cupboard in Cherry's House which she tried to conceal. Mr William Eley 'I am a working jeweller, and do business for the prosecutors. On 15th January Kinder brought some plate and took some back. I believe I myself delivered him the knife, but I am not certain. I looked it out for him to take; I know it to be the same mark on it. We sent it to the prosecutors on sale or return.' The bag containing other plate delivered to him. Thomas Connelly re-examined 'I know the spoon to be the prosecutor's; it was sent to Messrs Eley and Co to be repaired' Kinder Guilty aged 38 Cherry Guilty aged 35. Transported for Fourteen years. Kinder had also stolen a watch value £10 from Storr & Mortimer – also Guilty, transported for 24 years. 'There is no record in the Register of those Transported to Australia, but many years later a Henry Kinder was killed by his wife's lover in Melbourne.^{lviii}

William Ball was indicted for stealing, on 21st April, a handkerchief, value 2s the goods of Charles Eley, from his person. Mr. Charles Eley: 'I am a silversmith and live in Paternoster Row. On the 21st of April, about eleven o'clock in the morning, I was passing through Panyer Alley into Paternoster Row. I felt my pocket move; the prisoner rushed by me into Paternoster Row; I missed my silk handkerchief, and pursued him into Cheapside, and never lost sight of him; he ran down Foster Lane; I saw him drop it in the middle of the lane, and picked it up, and he was secured.

Cross examined by Mr Adolphus: Q. Are you sure you did not drop it – A. Yes; I felt my pocket move immediately; before he rushed by me. Richard Skillern. I am an officer. I was in Cheapside, and heard the cry Stop thief! I saw the prisoner running and secured him. (Property produced and sworn to) Guilty Aged 25 Transport for Life^{lix}

William II's son Charles was born 17th April 1823; he later married Elizabeth Quilter.



1823 Mustard Pot



1823 Wine Label

1824

William Eley I died, leaving £35,000. Each of his sons, William, Charles and Henry, received £4,000 and £4,000 was invested for his daughters. When William had retired to his property in Buntingford, Hertfordshire, he had received a pension of £150 annually which was transferred to his widow. He had also invested in the new property development at Canonbury.



A pair of sideboard urns were made for the Duke of Buckingham.^{lx}

The three sons set up in business but after only a year the partnership was dissolved. William Eley, Gentleman, at 33 Spencer Street, Goswell Street took out Sun & Royal fire insurance Road on 24th March 1824.^{lxi}



1824 Ladle



1824 Jug, Courtesy of Louise Phillips

1825

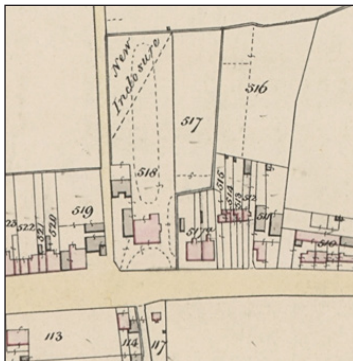
William II and Charles maintained a loose partnership while Henry decided to go to Cambridge University and join the Church.

Partnerships dissolved. William Eley, Charles Eley and Henry Eley of Lovell's Court, Paternoster Row, silversmiths.^{lxii}

William Eley, silversmith, took out fire insurance for 3 Lovell's Court 24th March.



Charles's eldest daughter Harriot (1825-1854) was born, and he moved to Cheshunt where he acquired Lot 518 XX from Job Wright. He built a house on Crossbrook Street just across the road from the Roman Urn Inn. Coincidentally, just up the road opposite Blindman's Lane a Miss Soames also has property at Lot 218.^{lxiii} Harriott later married Alfred, the son of Revd Kempson, Vicar of Cheshunt.



Cheshunt property, from 1842 tithe map



1825 Fork and Spoon by Charles Eley

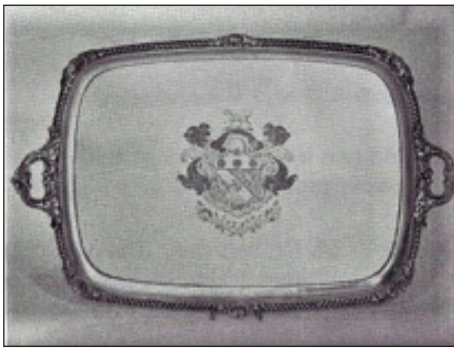


1825 Urn by William Eley II

1826

William Eley, silversmith at 22 Greville Street, Hatton Garden, took out Sun & Royal fire insurance 25th October 1826. ^{xiv}

During 1826-1827, William Eley II supplied 100 knives to the Goldsmiths' Company.



1826 Tray



1826 Wine Label by William Eley II



1826 Wine Funnel

1827

In 1827, George IV bought from Eley a silver gilt dish and ewer for £134 3s [RCIN 51290] as well as a communion service of paten, flagon, chalice and alms dish. They were possibly to be used in the proposed sepulchral chapel in St. James's Park to commemorate the death of the Duke of York, the king's youngest brother. Plans were drawn up by Josph Michael Gandy (1771-1843) for the building but it was never built.



Dish

Courtesy of The Royal Collection Trust



Ewer

Courtesy of The Royal Collection Trust

Son Charles's second daughter, Mary Ann, was born in Cheshunt and died the next year.



1827 Ladle by Charles Eley



1827 Thread Puller

1828

In July Charles Eley, patent shot cartridge manufacturer, of 11 Kirby Street, Hatton Garden, took out a Sun & Royal fire insurance policy. On 17th December, he and his brother William, Patent shot cartridge manufacturers, took out another policy with the Sun Fire Office for their premises at 14 Charlotte Street, Rathbone Place.^{lxv}

1829

William Fearn died at 5 Alford Place and is buried at St. Matthew's Church, Brixton.

Sale of Workshops: *To working Silversmiths &c. – Messrs W & C Eley's valuable Patterns, Tools, Implements, &c – By Mr. Pullen at 98 John Street, Tottenham Court Road, on Monday, June 15, at 11 precisely, on account of the number of lots.*

The valuable modern patterns, powerful presses, spinning lathe, machinery, &c. , the property of Messrs William and Charles Eley, who have relinquished business, and removed from their late extensive manufactory in Paternoster Row; comprising anvils and blocks, hammers, tenants, drawing plates, a flatting mill, &c, together with every requisite modern pattern and tool for manufacturing silver goods in all its branches, and the whole in excellent preservation, affording to working silversmiths and the trade an opportunity rarely to be met with of adding to their stock valuable patterns and dies of modern character and devices. May be viewed on Friday and Saturday preceding the sale: catalogues had on premises, and of Mr Pullen, 80 Fore Street, Cripplegate.^{lxvi}

John Cutmore, Superintendent of Works, remained until 1829 when he went into partnership with Thomas Cutmore and took over William Eley's premises at 3 Lovells Court. Thomas Cutmore was made free as a Spectacle maker 29th June 1829 was bound to John Cutmore as a hardware man.

3rd June 1829, John Francis Green was apprenticed to William Eley, 1st February 1826 and 'turned over' to Thomas Cutmore, silversmith and spectacle maker.

It would appear that William Eley II's mark continued in use into the 1830s, presumably by the Cutmores.



Detail of the Wedding Wager Cup Mark
Courtesy of Wax Antiques

1829 Wedding/Wager Cup
28 x 6 cm
Courtesy of Wax Antiques

Advertisement of 1829 addressed: To Sportsmen

'At a meeting of the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Red-house club, on Friday, the 15th May, it was resolved that no cartridges of any description should be used in the Enclosure of Battersea, excepting Eley's Patent Wire Cartridges, and of those only such as shall be sold in the ground by a person appointed by Mr Eley for that purpose – all others being deemed unsafe'

Son Charles's third daughter Ellen (1829-1886) was born in Cheshunt; she later married Revd Alfred Kempson.



1829 Salts William Eley

1830

William Eley, gentleman, at 7 Shacklewell Lane took out Sun & Royal fire insurance 10th August 1830 ^{lxvii}

Peter Hawker: *“I have taken much trouble about these cartridges as if I had been a partner in the concern, because I found the invention to be one of great merit. But, for want of these cartridges being brought to perfection before they were served to the public, there arose many prejudices which it may now be a work of time to overcome. It would be an absolute waste of paper to publish the experiments I have made, and the correspondence I have had, with Mr Jenour the inventor, and Mr Eley the purchaser of the patent; because all of that the public can wish for is to hear from some disinterested person, who had thoroughly investigated the subject, the merits, or demerits of the invention. In 1827, Mr Jenour waited on me, as an entire stranger, relative to publishing a pamphlet entitled “An Essay” &c. , &c. , on the “Special” Cartridge !; an invention for which he received a premium from the Society of Arts, but which he had made too public to admit with safety of his taking out a patent. He however felt anxious to bring the invention into notice; and Mr Davison, most kindly, on my introducing him, undertook the printing of his pamphlet. Th be brief, - this led to his inventing a better; because more simple, kind of cartridge; and this he wisely kept secret, till he could meet with someone who had the wherewithal to speculate in a patent. Messrs Eley became the purchasers; but latterly the concern remained with Mr Charles Eley alone. To describe the many blunders that were made, first by putting sand, and then tallow grease, with the shot, (against which I wrote letter after letter of remonstrance), would be needless; but suffice it to say that,, by the time the cartridges were brought so far to perfection as to be worth their weight in gold. For certain purposes, the circulation of the imperfect ones had given them an almost irretrievable blow; and here ended the grand establishment in Charlotte Street. Mr Eley then retired to Waltham Cross, and employed a Mr Fairman as agent, at a little shop in Fitzroy Market; till, at last, Mr Purdey, the gunmaker, took the concern, and purchased for £100 what had the year before been refused £10,000 for ! This Purdey told me himself; and I would take his word as soon as that of any man in London. The rock on which Mr Eley’s patent at first became wrecked was this:- he made his wire a great deal too stiff; and his meshes too small. ”* ^{lxviii}

Joshua Jenour (1755-1853) patented the ‘wire cartridge’ (Patent No. 5570) on 28th November 1827, designed to improve shotgun patterns by containing shot within a wire mesh, which allowed it to break apart upon firing. Often called ‘wire shot concentrators’, these early cartridges were intended to keep pellets together for improved range and the Eley Brothers later famously producing them for over 80 years. The invention of the wire cartridge

pre-dates modern plastic shot cups but serves the same purpose. While Jenour's invention was groundbreaking, it was often associated with subsequent, more refined production by Eley.

Son Charles's fourth daughter Jane (1830-1914) was born in Cheshunt; she later married Revd Clifford Malden (1833-1886)

1831

William & Charles Eley, gold & silversmiths at 3 Lovell's Court, Paternoster Row, took out Sun & Royal fire insurance 14th September 1831^{lxix}.

1834

Son Charles's fifth daughter Caroline (1834-1905) was born; she later married Eley Soames (1820-1905)

1835

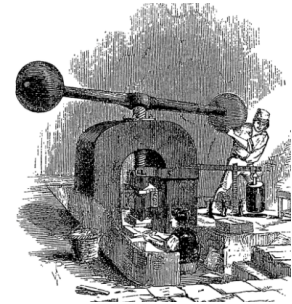
At Shacklewell, Sarah, relict of W. Eley, Esq late of Buntingford, Herts aged 78. Her will:

'Sarah Eley of Clapton, Middlesex, appoints H. A. Soames of Upper Clapton; Mr R. Abud of Regents Place, West London; and William Eley of Shacklewell, Middlesex my executors. Remainder of my property may be equally divided between my seven children. Mary Eley, daughter of my brother-in-law Charles Eley, shall have ten pounds for each year from the date of this will until my decease and no longer. I also desire that no part of the annuity on the house in Lovel's Court owing by either of my sons may be paid as I entirely forgive them the amount 30th May 1832. Witness Henry Genery servant to Mrs Eley.' Mary Eley was born in 1827 and died in 1828, I wonder whether this was a mistake and the intended was Harriott Eley, Charles's eldest daughter, born in 1825.^{lxx}

Bookbinding phase.

'Chance led Mr Remnant's foreman Mr Edmonds to inquire of an artist who cut dies for a helmet manufacturer in Westminster, and he undertook to resolve the problem by sinking a die. The next thing was to produce covers from the die; it so happened that in Lovell's Court, opposite Remnant's shop there lived a working silversmith named Eley. . . he had

screw presses to stamp spoons and dish covers, and Edmonds, by watching the process of stamping the silver, learned how to stamp leather. In his investigations he heard that a clever young man named Barritt was employed by Eley as a die-sinker; his services were Accordingly engaged to cut a book die, and thus Mr Remnant was able to bind books in a new style, which became immensely popular. After a breach with Remnant Barritt took up on his own account and the report continued: About the year 1831, Mr William Eley, the silversmith gave up that business to work out a patent for a new cartridge invented by himself, but he was before his day, and met with but poor success, he accordingly left that and joined Mr Barritt, who was established in 1 St. James's Walk, Clerkenwell, and only wanted capital to develop his new business. William Eley left the partnership with Barritt in 1835' lxxi



1837

1837 advertisement: *Game shooting – Eley's improved patent wire cartridges, for shooting Game &c at long distances, will be found an invaluable acquisition now the Game is wild. They kill twenty-five yards further than a loose charge and are recommended and sold by all the leading Gun makers in town and country. Warehouse, 36 St. James's Street, Piccadilly. N. B. The satisfactory accounts received from all parts of the performance of the Cartridges warrant the strongest recommendation of them.*

1837 Grand Pigeon match for a silver cup, the Patent Eley cartridge was not allowed, because it was too accurate.

Eley Wire Cartridge Effective Ranges

UNIVERSAL SHOT CARTRIDGE 5-40 Yards	BATTUE CARTRIDGE 10-15 Yards	BLUE CARTRIDGE 20-60 Yards	RED CARTRIDGE 25-65 Yards	ROYAL CARTRIDGE 15-70 Yards	GREEN CARTRIDGE 70+ YARDS
Convenience - Bone dust - Loosely packed small	Close Range - Rapid Dispersion	Mid Range - Controlled release - Moderate shot - Pheasants	Intermediate - Snipe and ducks	Long Range - Delayed release - Ducks in flight and small waterfowl	Extreme Range - Large buckshot and balls

By the late 1840s, the market had consolidated around the Universal, Royal, and Green cartridges. The Battue, Blue, and Red were discontinued, as experience proved that three distinct loads were sufficient for all ranges.

1838

William Eley, patent wire cartridge maker at 36 St James's Street, took out Sun & Royal fire insurance (& Thomas, Taylor) and mentions Emmetts Yard, Old Bond Street 31st January 1838.^{lxxii}

Charles Eley, gentleman, at Wright's Lane, Kensington took out Sun & Royal fire insurance 21st February 1838.^{lxxiii}

1839

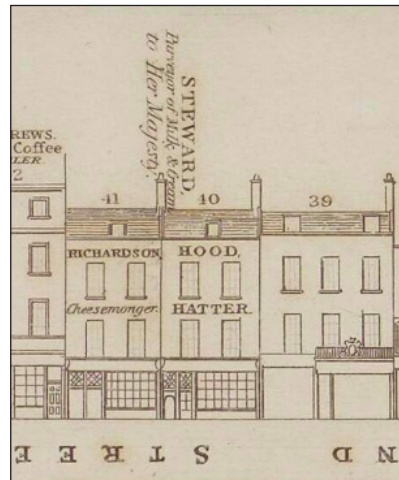
Charles Eley, gentleman, at 36 St. James's Street took out Sun & Royal fire insurance 4th September 1839 (also with Charles Lord Southampton at properties 1–36 Fitzroy Market 4th September 1839).^{lxxiv}

Charles Eley had been the primary owner of the business and the original wire cartridges only had his name on them. The initial attempts to sell the Eley Wire Cartridge went poorly and Charles Eley withdrew from the business. During the mid-1830s, William Eley reinvigorated the company and began selling the 'Improved Patent Wire Cartridges'.

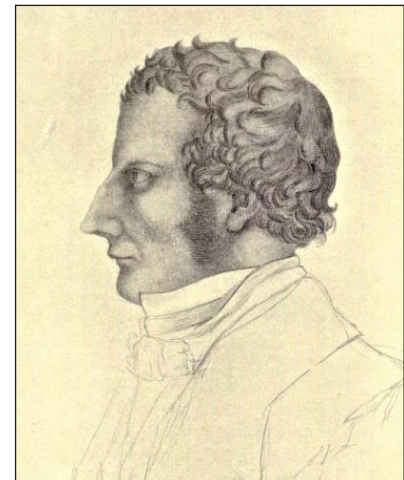
In 1837, the company added percussion caps to their range.

1841

William Eley, gentleman, at 11 Paradise Row, Chelsea took out Sun & Royal fire insurance 19th April 1841.^{lxxv} Charles Eley at Emmett's Yard (Emmett, stable keeper) took out Sun & Royal fire insurance 18th August 1841. Note that this is after the explosion.^{lxxvi}



40 Old Bond Street
backing onto Emmatt's Mews



William Eley II (1795-1841)

8th March 1841 *“London With Eley, ‘Uncle’ bishop and all the crack gun fellows on logic and new experiments.”* lxxvii

William Bishop (1797-1871) became a goldsmith and then an agent for Westley Richards and somehow gained the nickname ‘uncle’ because he was known for wearing a top hat at all times and dressed in a black shirt with a huge white frill. He was a very successful gun seller, responsible for popularising guns as a very successful gun seller and promoter of sport shooting. His Estate was valued at death at £10,000.

Peter Hawker: *5th July “Keyhaven. Up early and prepared for a sail to the cliffs but became out of humour for sport by hearing of the horrible death of my factotum poor Eley, the cartridge man, with whom I was in perpetual communication, and who was the most punctual, respectable, and intelligent of all the sporting tradesmen under my patronage. He was blown to atoms by fulminating powder at his factory in Bond Street, where I was in the habit of repeatedly going to give him hints and advice; and often have I advised him not to extend his practice to the dangerous trade of making percussion caps. His loss will be irreparable to the sporting world; and no one will feel it more than myself”*



William Bishop with bust of Peter Hawker

8th July 1841 *“London. Directly I set foot in town I went, with ‘Uncle’ Bishop [the famous manager of ‘Westley Richards’] to the factory of poor Eley where I was astonished to see that scarcely any damage had been done beyond the appalling accident that blew him to atoms. His own son was within two yards of him, and people were working in the factory, at the time the explosion took place; but so little was the expansion that, although he blew up 2lb of fulminating mercury, not even a paper was burnt; and the walls were no more disfigured than if cold water had been thrown over them. In short, a few panes of glass being broken was all that could be seen in the way of damage, the usual quantity of fulminating mercury that people venture to mix at a time is from ¼ to ½ an ounce; and how so clever a man as Eley could have run the risk of mixing such a quantity was the surprise of everyone.”* lxxviii

His reference to 'scarcely any damage' does not quite equate with the coroner's report, as reported in the *Morning Post*:

'Dreadful explosion in Old Bond Street – On Friday evening, between the hours of six and seven o'clock, a tremendous explosion similar to a discharge of cannon, was heard to proceed from the expensive manufactory of Messrs Eley & Company, cartridge and percussion cap manufacturers, of Emmatt's Mews, Old Bond Street. A vast number of persons immediately proceeded from the to the premises, accompanied by a number of police on duty near the spot, when they found that great destruction had taken place. It was very shortly discovered that Mr. Eley, the proprietor of the manufactory, and who carries on his business in St. James's, at the corner of Jermyn Street, had perished. On search being made through the dilapidated premises he was discovered stretched on the floor of the counting house, a frightful spectacle. His left arm and hand were blown off, his right thigh was nearly severed, both his feet were blown to pieces, his person in other respects was mutilated and blackened, and scarcely a remnant of his apparel was left about him. Information of the awful catastrophe was immediately forwards to Mr. Gell, coroner for Westminster, who appointed Saturday afternoon for the holding of the inquest. After the jury had viewed the body of the deceased, the following evidence was produced.

Mr Charles Eley of Cheshunt, said that the deceased was in the habit of using detonating or fulminating mercury, a composition of most combustible and dangerous nature. He had no doubt that deceased was stirring the composition when it exploded. A solicitor stated, on behalf of Mr. Emmatt, the proprietor of the premises, that he had not been aware of any combustible matter being used by the deceased; that had the fact been known to the neighbours deceased would have been indicted. Ann Stubbins, servant to the deceased, stated that whole of the partition and roof of the room in which the composition was made had been more or less carried away and injured, and all the windows destroyed. Joseph Long and James Price, both in deceased employ, stated that the detonating mercury was obtained at Mr. Diamond's, on Holborn Hill. After other evidence had been heard, the jury returned a verdict of accidental death' lxxix

In evidence Charles Eley said that the mercury was bought in wet state, that the deceased was in the habit of drying for the purpose of weighing, that it was dried on a plate of metal placed on a fish kettle of hot water. Usually up to 2lbs was used, but on occasion 5lbs. It would detonate if a heavy body had fallen upon it. I have noticed it between an anvil and hammer, and it was not exploded. When wet it cannot explode by any blow. After drying it was weighed and directly afterwards wetted and kept so until it was put into the percussion cap and then being a small quantity.

Ann Stubbins aged 20 of Edmund Street, King's Cross had only been in employment with Eley for four months. She had been in the wadding shop at about 4 o'clock and saw the deceased alone and quite sober as he went into the counting house.

James Price had been a servant to the Eleys most of his life, employed, first by William I, then William II for 34 years, from 1807, and then servant to William Thomas Eley, William II's son and he was in his house at 38 Broad Street in 1851, aged 74.

INQUEST JURY

Inquest held in the house of Edward Hogg, junior, The Red Horse 10 Old Bond Street by Mr. Gell, coroner.

Almond, Albion Club, House, 85 St. James's Street;

Lever, Ben, Tailor, 4 Stafford Street, Bond Street;

Bowman, Frederick, 2 Old Bond Street;

Poulton, G or C, Fishmonger, 4 Old Bond Street;

Brocksupp, Thomas, Hosier, 6 Old Bond Street;

Powell, H or W. H. , Coach Builder, 38 or 43 Old Bond Street;

Cape, George, Tailor, 11 Old Bond Street;

Richardson, John, Cheesemonger, 41 Old Bond Street;

Duval, C. , Water gilder;

Gainsford, Tallow Chandler, 59 Piccadilly;

Sprague, Daniel;

Faulkener, Music seller, 3 Old Bond Street;

Stewkey, Joseph;

Howard, J, Insurance Broker, 37 Old Bond Street;

Wallace, Thomas, Butcher, 39 Old Bond Street;

Jones, John, Cabinetmaker, 58 Old Bond Street;

Waud, Thomas

At least two thirds of the jurors came from Old Bond Street. ^{lxxx}

1844

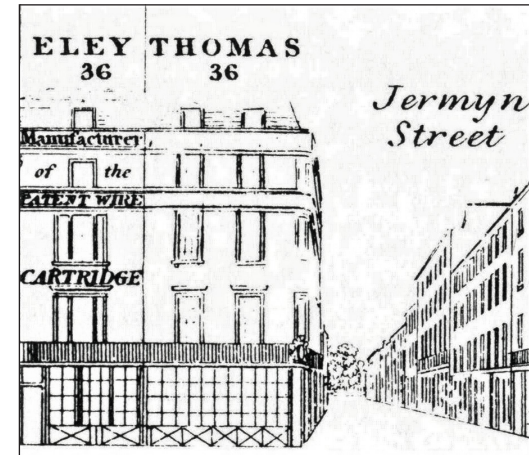
1st January Jane Eley began her diary, which she continued until her death in 1914, recording the life of a clergyman at Datchet, Buckinghamshire then Raughton Head in Cumberland and finally at St Lawrence on the Isle of Wight. During her widowhood in Tunbridge Wells she insisted that her eight children and their families should gather each year on her birthday in October, when a family photograph would be taken. On her marriage, she invested in a property opposite what was to become Moorgate Station in London. She eventually sold it a good sum, which enabled her to leave an estate of £25,000 in 1914.

1855

An outbreak of cholera was caused by the pump in Gold Square.

The Firm was then at 38 Broad Street, employing 200 staff; 12 men and 4 women from the staff died.

'At West End on 2nd September the widow of a percussion cap maker aged 59 years' I was informed by this lady's son that she had not been in the neighbourhood of Broad Street for many months. A cart went from Broad Street to West End every day. It was the custom to take out a large bottle of the water from the pump in Broad Street as she preferred it. The water was taken on Thursday 31 August and she drank it in the evening and also on Friday. She was seized with cholera on the evening of the latter day and died on Saturday. A niece, who was on a visit to this lady, also drank of the water. She returned to her residence in a high and healthy part of Islington and died. ^{lxxxix}



After William II was killed in the explosion in 1841, his three sons decided to carry on the business. Because of their young age, business dealings were carried out by a senior 'front man' who, when necessary, would go into a back room to confirm matters with the 'boys'. William II's eldest son William Thomas forged an alliance with Samuel Colt, the two patenting a skin cartridge for use in the latter's revolvers.

The firm became major suppliers to the Army of the Confederacy during the American Civil War.

By 1860, they were making pinfire shotshells and first listed them for sale in *The Ironmonger & Metal Trades Advertiser*. On 13 April 1861, William Thomas Eley, William II's son, took out a patent for an improvement to the pinfire shotshell. The key aspect to this patent was to better fix the cap into the case and prevent the pin from flying out of the case on detonation.

The growth of business was accompanied by moves to the Gray's Inn Road in 1864, and by the development of the Boxer cartridge designed by Colonel Boxer, Chief Superintendent of the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, and adopted by the government in 1866.



In 1874, the Company went public to finance expansion, but lost momentum after 1881 when William Thomas died. His brothers lost interest in the business but remained in control until 1901. The shareholders accused them of running it as though it was a private company. Innovations included smokeless powder, and in the 1890s, 400 types of cartridges were being produced. A factory had been established at Tile Kiln Lane, Edmonton, London by 1865. In 1894, the company transferred production to Angel Road where enlarged premises included a tramway to its wharf on the nearby River Lee. The War Office twice removed the company from their Approved List of suppliers due to poor quality, particularly ·303 British ammunition. Much of the ammunition was returned from abroad as unusable. Moreover, poor facilities meant the company had to buy in components, unlike their competitors.

Members of the Eley family continued to be involved with the business until it merged in 1919. The last member of the family to be involved with the business was Gerard Eley, great grandson of William II, and who joined Nobel Industries in 1920 and worked until his retirement from ICI in 1952.

In 1895 an explosion killed three female workers.

Another explosion occurred in 1900, killing two workmen and the works manager. The directors squabbled amongst themselves, and in 1906 the mostly female workforce went on strike when their wages were cut. The Board of Trade appointed an arbitrator. A leading ballistics expert, F. W. Jones, was brought in to improve matters and recommended the building of a 107 ft (32.6m) shot tower in 1907. The factory was ill-adapted to mass production - it produced only 209 million ·303 cartridges in World War I compared with 2,373 million at Kynoch's Birmingham factory - but its specialised skills made it ideal for innovation, in particular, the munitions needed as aeroplanes were beginning to engage in aerial combat.

After the war, Eley, along with other firms, became part of Explosive Trades Ltd, soon to be part of Nobel Industries. Many Belgians had been billeted in Edmonton as refugees and many, as elsewhere, worked in the armaments industry. This led to natural links between the two countries, and in the 1920s Eley went into partnership with Fabrique Nationale (FN), buying out the Belgian firm of Cartoucherie Russo – Belge. However, the need for ammunition had slumped. The Angel Road factory closed in 1921, and all production was transferred to Nobel's factory in Waltham Abbey.

In 1926 the Eley business was bought from Nobel by IMI Industries.

In 1951 Eley released the 'Tenex'. 22 cartridge for Olympic target competition.

Eley is noted for its 1979 development of the Eleyprime process. Rimfire ammunition was historically primed by measuring activated liquid primer into the cases where it would dry. Spilt or surplus primer could dry into an explosive residue on factory machinery. Various manufacturers have experienced fatal accidents over the years, often related to primer handling. The Eleyprime process measures dry, unactivated primer into the case where it is activated by adding water, meaning activated primer was only present inside cases and the factory did not handle activated compound in bulk. As an additional benefit, dry materials could be metered more accurately than liquids, meaning the process had the potential to be more consistent than liquid metering. The process has been licensed to other manufacturers as it was safer for workers. Eley received the 1988 Queen's Award for Technology for this innovation. The shot tower at the former Edmonton site was demolished in the late 20th century. The area today is known as the Eley Industrial Estate.

The business later moved to a new purpose-built factory in Sutton Coldfield. The shotgun cartridge business was separated out as 'Eley Hawk' and sold to Spanish firm Maxam Explosives. Although a separate company, Eley Hawk continues to operate from the same site as a tenant in Eley Limited's factory.

In 2014, Eley became independent as a result of a management buyout backed by private equity firm LDC (part of Lloyds TSB).

In 2017, via their US subsidiary Eley Inc, the company acquired their US importer and batch-testing partner Killough Shooting Sports. This gave the company more direct control over distribution in the US and brings the batch-testing facility provided by Killough 'in house'. KSS also owned the American Rimfire Association, which Eley also took control of as part of the acquisition.

In December 2022, LDC divested Eley to Lunele Limited.



The Kynoch connection

 420-400 KYNOCHE 375 MAGNUM FLANGED SMILES SAFETY KYNOCHE & CO. LTD. LONDON & NEWCASTLE	 375 MAGNUM FLANGED SMILES SAFETY KYNOCHE & CO. LTD. LONDON & NEWCASTLE	 300 SUPER EXPRESS SAFETY KYNOCHE & CO. LTD. LONDON & NEWCASTLE	 310 CARTRIDGES Vickers 242 Rifle KYNOCHE & CO. LTD. LONDON & NEWCASTLE
 420-400 KYNOCHE 375 MAGNUM FLANGED SMILES SAFETY KYNOCHE & CO. LTD. LONDON & NEWCASTLE	 375 MAGNUM FLANGED SMILES SAFETY KYNOCHE & CO. LTD. LONDON & NEWCASTLE	 300 SUPER EXPRESS SAFETY KYNOCHE & CO. LTD. LONDON & NEWCASTLE	 310 CARTRIDGES Vickers 242 Rifle KYNOCHE & CO. LTD. LONDON & NEWCASTLE
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A black and white portrait of a man with a full, dark beard and mustache. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt and a dark bow tie. A small, light-colored flower is pinned to the left side of his bow tie. The background is a plain, light color.

1901-1902 the Company acquired various new businesses and premises: the Eyre Street factory of Hadley & Shorthouse, producing nails and brass and copper tubes and wire; a large factory at Stirchley to produce armour-piercing and shrapnel shells; Forward Engineering Company which added gas engines to the existing engineering portfolio of machine guns and roller bearings; a paper mill in Ireland, and perhaps most significant of all, Accles Limited of Holford Works, a run-down ammunition company on an adjoining 33 acre site.

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with other munitions related products. These included acetone, shell cases and detonators. Staffing levels at the site rose to 6,000, most of whom were women. At the end of the war, demand for the work's products collapsed almost overnight. Much of the site's machinery, wooden buildings and other facilities were publicly sold off in a 4-day sale held in November 1919.



In November 1918, a new Company was born, initially named Explosive Trades Ltd. but quickly changed to Nobel Industries. This was a merger of Britain's explosives interests centred on the biggest manufacturer, Nobel Explosives. Kynoch Ltd was a part of this and found itself sharing an uncomfortable bed with its former competitors in the field of explosives (Nobel and Curtis & Harvey), ammunition (Eley) and metal processing (locally, Kings Norton Metal Co. which possesses facilities for brass and copper strip rolling and rod extrusion as well as interests in coin minting and ammunition; and Birmingham Metals and Munitions Co. manufacturing rolled copper and brass and solid-drawn brass cartridge cases). These two companies and Kynoch Ltd. represent 'the Birmingham end' of Nobel's interests and were managed by 'The Birmingham Committee', chaired by Arthur Chamberlain and his deputy Sir Harry McGowan.

In 1929, the name of 'Kynoch Ltd' disappeared, replaced by ICI Metals Ltd. The Lion Works became the Kynoch Works. Allen Everitt & Sons of Smethwick (non-ferrous tubes, especially copper-nickel condenser tubes produced in a state-of-the-art factory) joined the Metals Group, which became involved in the ultra hush hush 'Tube Alloys Project', Britain's atomic energy programme, especially in connection with development of methods of separating the isotope U235 from uranium and of new uranium fabrication techniques.

When World War II broke out, thousands of extra personnel were required, managing Government agency factories with their 15,000 people. The range of different ammunition types produced at Witton was vast, from small arms ammunition to large Q.F. cases, from detonators to anti-tank devices. Throughout the group 67 different types of cartridges were being produced. The Company had eleven factories in 1939. By 1943 it had twenty-seven factories on twenty separate sites and was employing 20,000 people at Witton and 30,000 at its other sites.

The Eley section was bought out by Eley .22 LR Ammunition Sporting Services Ltd

ELEY is now a global leader in the manufacture of the most consistently accurate .22 LR Rimfire ammunition and competition air pellets in the world.





17th Century Silversmith's Workshop



Silversmith's Workshop 2026

THE PATENT



A.D. 1784 N° 1427.

Buckles.

ELEY'S SPECIFICATION:

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, I, WILLIAM ELEY, of Clerkenwell Green, in the Parish of Saint John, Clerkenwell, in the County of Middlesex, Buckle Maker, send greeting.

WHEREAS I, the said William Eley, did, by my Petition, humbly represent
5 to His present most Excellent Majesty King George the Third, that I had, by much study and application, invented "A NEW CONSTRUCTED BUCKLE OR BUCKLES WITH NEW INVENTED JOINT AND SPRING CHAFE FASTENINGS;" which said Invention was entirely new and of my own contrivance, and was not known to any person or persons, except those to whom I did communicate the same
10 for their approbation as to its utility, and was not made by any other person or persons; that in regard I apprehended the said Invention would be of great use and benefit to His said Majesty's subjects, and as I was the first and true Inventor thereof, I therefore most humbly prayed His said Majesty that he would be pleased to grant unto me, my executors, administrators, and
15 assigns, His Royal Letters Patent for the sole use and benefit of my said Invention within that part of His said Majesty's Kingdom of Great Britain called England, the Dominion of Wales, and Town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, for the term of fourteen years, pursuant to the Statute in that case made and provided; His said Majesty, being willing and desirous to give encourage-
20 ment to all arts and inventions which might be for the publick good, was graciously pleased to condescend to my request; and, therefore, by His Royal Letters Patent under His Great Seal of Great Britain, bearing date at Westminster, the Seventeenth day of April, in the twenty-fourth year of His reign,

Eley's New Constructed Buckles.

of His especial grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, for Himself, His heirs and successors, did give and grant unto me, the said William Eley, my executors, admors, and assigns, His especial licence, full power, sole privilege and authority, that I, the said William, my executors, administrators, and assigns, and every of them, by myself and themselves, and by 5 mine or their deputy or deputys, servants or agents, or such other as I, the said William Eley, my executors, administrators, or assigns, should at any time agree with, and no others, from time to time and at all times thereafter during the term of years therein expressed, should and lawfully might make, use, exercise, and vend, my said Invention within that part of His said Majesty's 10 Kingdom of Great Britain called England, His Dominion of Wales, and Town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, in such manner as to me, the said William Eley, my executors, admors, and assigns, or any of us, should in our discretions seem meet, and that I, the said William Eley, my executors, administrators, and assigns, should and lawfully might have and enjoy the 15 whole profit, benefit, and advantage from time to time coming, growing, accreving, and arising by reason of the said Invention, for and during the term of years therein mentioned, to have, hold, exercise, and enjoy the said licence, power, privileges, and advantages therein-before granted unto me, the said William Eley, my executors, administrators, and assigns, for and 20 during and unto the full end and term of fourteen years from the date of the said Letters, according to the Statute in such case made and provided; in which said Letters Patent is contained a proviso, that if I, the said William Eley, did not particularly describe and ascertain the nature of my said Invention, and in what manner the same is to be performed, by an instrument 25 in writing under my hand and seal, and cause the same to be inrolled in His Majesty's High Court of Chancery within four calendar months next after the date of the said Letters Patent, then the said Letters Patent, and all libertys and advantages whatsoever thereby granted, shall utterly cease, determine, and become void, anything therein-before contained to the contrary 30 thereof in anywise notwithstanding, as in and by the said Letters Patent, relation being thereunto had, may more fully and at large appear.

NOW KNOW YE, that I, the said William Eley, in compliance with the said proviso, do hereby describe and ascertain the nature of my said Invention, and declare that the said new buckle so invented and made by me is 35 made in the manner as by me herein-after specified, expressed, or described, that is to say:—

A jointed double chape and tongue, or under buckle, for men's or women's shoes, after mentioned, with a bar or bars made of iron or any other kind of

Eley's New Constructed Buckles.

metal, which extends, or nearly extends, from side to side between the bridges of the upper rim belonging to the buckle, which upper rim of the buckle for men's or women's shoes may be made of any kind of mettal, shape, or fashion. At the end of the bar next the instep is one or more nib or nibs, 5 catch or catches, hook or hooks, for the purpose of locking or fastening the said upper rim and under buckle, and holding or confining the same together; and a joint at the other end of the said bar is fixed or fastened to the bridge of the upper rim of the buckle next the toe, for the purpose of turning over or throwing back the upper rim of the buckle to buckle or unbuckle the 10 shoe, and to assist in holding the upper rim and under buckle together. To the sides of the said bar are fixed a jointed double chape and tongue, for buckling or fastening the shoe with the straps, which is called a double chape, under, or false buckle. In the bridge of the said upper rim, next the instep, are made two or more cavities for the purpose after mentioned. To which 15 bridge or bridges are fixed two small springs; one end of each spring is fix'd or fastened to the inside of the same bridge or bridges, the other end of one of the said springs projects over one of the said cavities, and the other across the other cavity of the said bridge or bridges. To each of the said bridge springs is fixed a small nob, which passes through or underneath the bridge 20 next the instep. The use of one of the said cavities is to admit therein the said nib or nibs, catch or catches, hook or hooks, of the bar of the under buckle, which is received by one of the said springs that locks or fastens the rim and under buckle together, and the other cavity is to admit therein the nib or nibs, catch or catches, hook or hooks, of the strap spring after mentioned. The use of one of the said nobs by pressing will unlock or unfasten 25 the upper rim and under buckle, the other nob by pressing will unlock or unfasten the strap spring after mentioned. The said strap spring is a piece of iron, steel, or metal, which extends, or nearly extends, the width of the buckle between the bridges; on which strap spring is fixed a small spring, for the purpose of throwing up the under buckle, which relieved by the bridge 30 spring. A small nob is fixed about the middle at one end of the said strap spring, and at or near one corner of the other end thereof is fixed one or more nib or nibs, catch or catches, hook or hooks, which shuts into one of the said cavities of the bridge or bridges, and is received by one of the said 35 bridge springs which locks or fastens the same. The said strap spring is for the purpose of confining or keeping fast between the upper rim and under buckle, a false strap of leather, or anything the shoe is made of. One end of this strap spring goes under a flat piece of iron, steel, or metal, belonging to the joint next the toe, which projects out for that purpose, with a notch

Eley's New Constructed Buckles.

therein to receive the said nob on the said strap spring; the said nob also serves as a direction to fix or fasten the said strap spring.

In witness whereof, I, the said William Eley, have hereunto set my hand and seal, this Sixteenth day of August, in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord Georg the Third, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth, and in the year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

W^m ELEY. (L.S.)

EDWD MONTAGUE.

AND BE IT REMEMBRED, that on the Sixteenth day of August, in the 10 year above mentioned, the said William Ely, before our said Lord the King in His Chancery, and acknowledged the Specification aforesaid, and all and every thing therein contained and specified, in form above written. And also the Specification aforesaid stampd according to the tenor of the Statute made in the sixth year of the reign of their late Majesties King William and Queen 15 Mary of England, and so forth.

Inrolled the Sixteenth of August, in the year above written.

LONDON:

Printed by GEORGE EDWARD EYRE and WILLIAM SPOTTISWOODE,
Printers to the Queen's most Excellent Majesty. 1856.



Lord Mansfield



Lord Kenyon

8th December 1790 before Lord Kenyon and a special Jury – The King against Eley

The following is how the case was reported (the opposing counsel were mortal enemies):

This was a scire facias to repeal a patent. Some time ago Mr Eley brought an action against Mr Yardley, for the invasion of his patent. This action was tried before Lord Kenyon and a special jury of Merchants at Guildhall, and the jury contrary to the directions of the judge, found a verdict for the plaintiff – see it reported in the times. The court of King's Bench was afterwards moved to grant a new trial, which they did, but it was agreed by the parties that it should stand and abide the event of this Scire Facias, which was sued out by Mr Yardley, in order to try the validity of this patent, and which was the subject to this day's discussion.

Mr Mingay said, to Gentlemen of the description of the jury, it would be unnecessary for him to state at any length the nature of the contract entered into between an inventor and the public, when he acquired a right to exclude from the profits of his invention all the rest of his Majesty's subjects. On the part of the inventor, every proper and reasonable encouragement ought to be given, provided the bounds of law were not transgressed. This defendant Mr Eley might have a great deal of art and merit, but whatever his merits might be, on the part of the public had a right to say, that this patent could not be sustained. Patents had now become so frequent that one could not stir without trading upon some of them. While the jury gave all due encouragement to ingenuity, they would not

abandon the interests of the public. He should state in the words of the patent what the defendant claimed as his invention. He said, after much study and labour, “he had invented a new constructed buckle or buckles, with a new joint and spring chape fastening”. He said the specification must shew plainly to the public how they were to make this buckle after the expiration of the monopoly. It must tell them what it was, and how many mechanics might make it, because at the end of the patent all the world were to be benefited by it.

It was stated in the words of the specification to be “*a jointed double chape and tongues, or under buckle for men and women’s shoes &c,*”

The Patent dated, April 17, 1784, and the specification, August 16, 1784.

He contended, that this Patent was for more than the defendant was entitled to, and therefore it could not stand. He contended, 1st The thing invented was not the subject of a patent – 2ndly if it was, he had not taken a patent for it, and 3rdly if he had taken a patent for it, he had not specified it.

He called a number of witnesses, many of whom had been a long time in the trade, who said, that there was nothing new in the defendant’s buckle, that double chapes on a single axis, had long been in use before this patent, and that they had exactly the same effect and operation with double chapes on a double axis. The defendant had no more right to this patent, than a man who should make a door to go upon three hinges instead of two.

Mr Erskine made a most able defence for Mr Eley.

He afterwards called a number of very respectable witnesses who considered the defendant’s buckle as a great improvement, and far superior to anything of the kind that had ever appeared.

Mr Mingay in reply said, that no ingenuity of his learned friend, no abilities, no arguments, no eloquence, no fine quotations from Shakespear, no coaxing of the jury could defend this patent.

Lord Kenyon addressed the jury and observed that this was a question of great importance to the defendant, and

also to the public. Near two hundred years ago, the frequency of monopolies became one of the greatest grievances of this commercial country. This power was afterwards abolished by Act of Parliament and a new power conferred upon the crown, of granting monopolies sub modo. But greater care ought to be taken in granting them than he was afraid had been used. When they looked into the newspapers they must see patents had become a serious grievance, because they held out to the indigent and ingenious part of making, that persons who were armed with these monopolies, had a right to crush them when perhaps they could not distinguish what was an invasion and what not.

If this monopoly belonged to the defendant, it would endure for eight years from this time. And, said his Lordship, it is found to be an invention or improvement, it may secure him, for anything I know to the contrary, the whole trade of buckle making, to the destruction of thousands of people. They could then only find one master and would be bound to work for him. The whole manufacture of buckle making would belong to this man. The question, therefore, is extremely important to the whole body of buckle makers and to the public. But these observations must not divest this man of his property, if he has the property in tum. This will depend on the patent and specifications. Now it is as clear as the sun that where a patent affects to give an inventor more than his invention, it has been held at all times, on all occasions, and by all judges, that the patent is void. And all mankind has acquiesced under the rectitude of that opinion.

Before I read many lines of this patent. Considerable doubts arose in my mind.

He (the patentee) claims a “new constructed buckle or buckles”. He affects therefore to claim a new invented buckle, not a certain improvement on the buckle, but a new invented buckle. ...

... His lordship said the jury would consider whether the patent had not given the defendant too much, and whether he ought not to have confined his claim to those little articles which he invented.

Lord Mansfield also held in cases of this sort, that if the patent affected to give to the patentee any thing that was in common use before, the patent was void.

The jury immediately found a verdict for the King and thereby repealed the patent.

The numerous buckle-makers in and about the court were rather noisy in expressing their approbation of this verdict by repeated huzzas!

The cause occupied the whole day.



James Mingay



Thomas Erskine

The article 'So Manly and Ornamental' shoe buckles and Britain's 18th century by Matthew McCormack in *English Historical Review*, CXXXVIII (2023) makes no mention of this case.

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FOOTNOTES

- i The design of the scene is unusual with Mucius twisted to face to his right with his hand placed across his body towards the flames, burning on a tripod held on goats' legs. All other depictions of the legend have Mucius facing left towards the judge with the flames between them. The only other example of this is shown in a sculpture arrangement of 1791 by Louis Pierre Deseine in the Louvre Museum in Paris.
- ii BM 1875. 0206. 1
- iii 27. 100. 2. 335.
- iv Trade directory
- v Scropton Parish Registers
- vi *Gentleman's Magazine*
- vii 1790 & 1808 Trade Directories
- viii Goldsmiths Company Mark Book 1: GC/AO/3/5/5
- ix London Archives CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/293/445761
- x London Lives
- xi London Archives CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/298/453497
- xii Essex Marriage Allegations
- xiii Greater London Record Office P76/JNB/1 Baptismal Register for St. John the Baptist, Clerkenwell 1723-1812
- xiv *ibid*
- xv Newspaper report
- xvi Greater London Record Office P76/JNB/1 op sit
- xvii GC/TR/1/9
- xviii London Archives CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/361/558169
- xix Greater London Record Office P76/JNB/1 op sit
- xx GC/TR/1/9
- xxi Newspaper report
- xxii Greater London Record Office P76/JNB/1 Baptismal Register for St. John the Baptist, Clerkenwell 1723-1812
- xxiii London Archives CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/387/60292
- xxiv GC/TR/1/8
- xxv Greater London Record Office P76/JNB/1 op sit
- xxvi GC/TR/1/9
- xxvii Lot 80, December 2024, Sworders. Two pairs of Eley type silver shoe buckles comprising: a pair by William Eley, London 1794, stamped 'Eleys Patent 21821', with bright cut beaded decoration, 5. 5cm wide
- xxviii GC/TR/1/9
- xxix Goldsmiths Company Mark Book 2 GC/AO/3/5/5
- xxx Greater London Record Office P76/JNB/1 op sit
- xxxi *ibid*
- xxxii GC/TR/1/8
- xxxiii P76/JNB/1 op sit
- xxxiv GC/TR/1/9
- xxxv London Archives CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/423/727885
- xxxvi COL/CHD/FR/02/1282/095
- xxxvii GC/TR/1/9
- xxxviii GC/TR/1/10
- xxxix *ibid*
- xl *ibid*
- xli *London Chronicle*
- xlii 1808 Directory
- xliii Newspaper report
- xliv 1841 Census
- xlvi *Silver Studies*, 2009, No. 25 p. 48
- xlvi GC/TR/1/10
- xlvi *ibid*
- xlvi *ibid*
- xlvi Newspaper advertisement
- li *ibid*
- li *ibid*
- lii GC/TR/1/10
- liii Newspaper report
- liv GC/TR/1/10
- lv *ibid*
- lvi *ibid*
- lvii Cotteder marriage register
- lviii Trove
- lix London Lives
- lx *Silver Society Journal*, Volume 7, 1995 p367 – sold 27th October 1992, Lot 220
- lxi London Archives CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/503/1029141
- lxii *ibid* 1037927 & 1028140
- lxiii DSA4/30/1 1841 Cheshunt Tithe Award
- lxiv London Archives CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/506/1851648
- lxv *ibid* 518/1084503
- lxvi Newspaper report
- lxvii *ibid* 526/1111349
- lxviii *Hawker on Sporting*, 6th edition p. 102 Eley's Patent Shot-Cartridges
- lix London Archives CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/532/1128631
- lxx Prerogative court 10th September 1835
- lxxi *The Bookseller*, 31 August 1863, pp. 494-495 Obituary for James Littler Barritt
- lxxii London Archives CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/564/1267025
- lxxiii *ibid* 566/1267951
- lxxiv *ibid* 581/1308089
- lxxv *ibid* 574/1352852
- lxxvi *ibid* 582/1360395
- lxxvii Peter Hawker (1820-1853) Diary: p. 205
- lxxviii *ibid* p. 207
- lxxix *Morning Post* 28th June 1841
- lxxx Westminster Abbey archives
- lxxx Dr. John Snow, *Medical Times & Gazette*, 1854 pp321-322

