

Arts & Crafts spoons by Katie Harris and Kate Allen of Hutton's and Connell's

By Simon Moore

The period of the early 1900s was especially busy for the Sheffield and London-based firm of William Hutton and Company. They had allied themselves with Connell's of Cheapside, who were a secondary showroom and sales outlet for Hutton's and were also acting as an outlet for Liberty's of Regent Street. Identical pieces of small silverware and designs were being sold with sponsor marks for any of these retail outlets. Added to that, Hutton's employed two women designers, both called Kate.



Fig. 1: Advertisement for Hutton, c. 1885 and likely published from one of the Pawson & Brailsford advertising directories of Sheffield businesses



William (and Edward) Hutton and Sons Ltd.

The firm was first established in Birmingham by William Hutton in 1800 but moved its location to Sheffield in 1832 so that it could be at the hub of the plating industry, itself vital to many new or struggling silversmithing firms at the time. Despite the loss of its principal in 1865 the business continued to be run by the family by which time the firm had succeeded enough to open a showroom in Holborn, London.

Its success continued, taking over Creswick & Company in 1902 and acquiring their crossed arrows mark (Fig. 4). Like so many others, the firm eventually failed and was taken over by James Dixon & Sons in 1930.

The Company was a family business that was established over the three major silversmithing cities in Britain - West Street, Sheffield; Hanley Street, Birmingham and at 7 Farringdon Road, London EC (in 1894).

William Hutton's was one of the first mainstream silver firms to venture into the commercial production of Arts & Crafts silverware, early in 1899 just ahead of Liberty whose Cymric wares were launched slightly later in the same year. Hutton's also partnered with the Goldsmiths' & Silversmiths' Company Ltd., and Lawrence Connell of Cheapside in London and the two offered identical wares but from their own workshops. The A&C style of Hutton's likely owes some influence to Christopher Dresser and the designers Katie Harris and Kate Allen who, latterly, produced some very eye-catching items often heightened with opaque enamelling.



Fig. 2: Canova pattern teaspoon by Hutton and showing Katie Harris's typical Art Nouveau style, 1899. Below, a jam spoon, 1907, with more typical 1880s engraving in the bowl.



Kate Allen was a freelance jeweler and buckle maker often sub-contracted by Hutton's. She studied at Goldsmiths' College, New Cross, London where she was mentioned in the Studio Magazine as one of the women metalworkers who distinguished themselves in the year 1899.

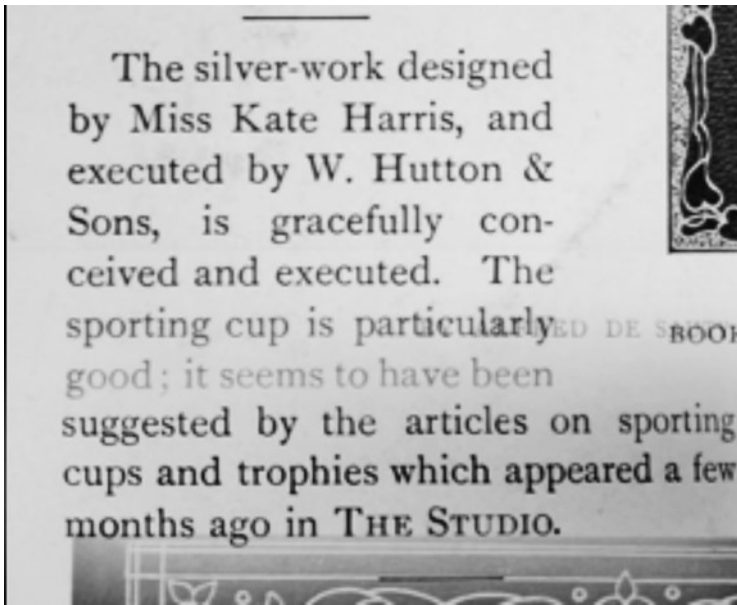


Fig. 3: From a brief article about the work of Kate Harris in *The Studio Magazine*, January 1902.

Kate or Katie Harris (main work dates 1898-1920) was another freelance designer who did much work for the Goldsmiths and Silversmiths Company of London, Hutton's and for George Lawrence Connell & Company and there are differing schools of thought as to who designed Hutton's enamelled flatware. Katie Harris produced designs that were more in line with Art Nouveau (Pudney, 2105) whereas Kate Allen's work often reflected her jewelry and more abstract belt buckle styles. Extrapolating from this one may argue that the more abstract designs are more attributable to Allen than Harris. One of Allen's spoons (Fig. 14) incorporates a complex handle to bowl junction that could have been derived from some of Oliver Baker's spoons for Liberty, c. 1900 (Moore, 2017) and illustrated in the *Studio Magazine* (volume 19) for 1900.

Most of the two Kates' work seems to have been manufactured between 1902 and 1908. The former was a bumper year for spoons judging by the amount of material sent for assay.

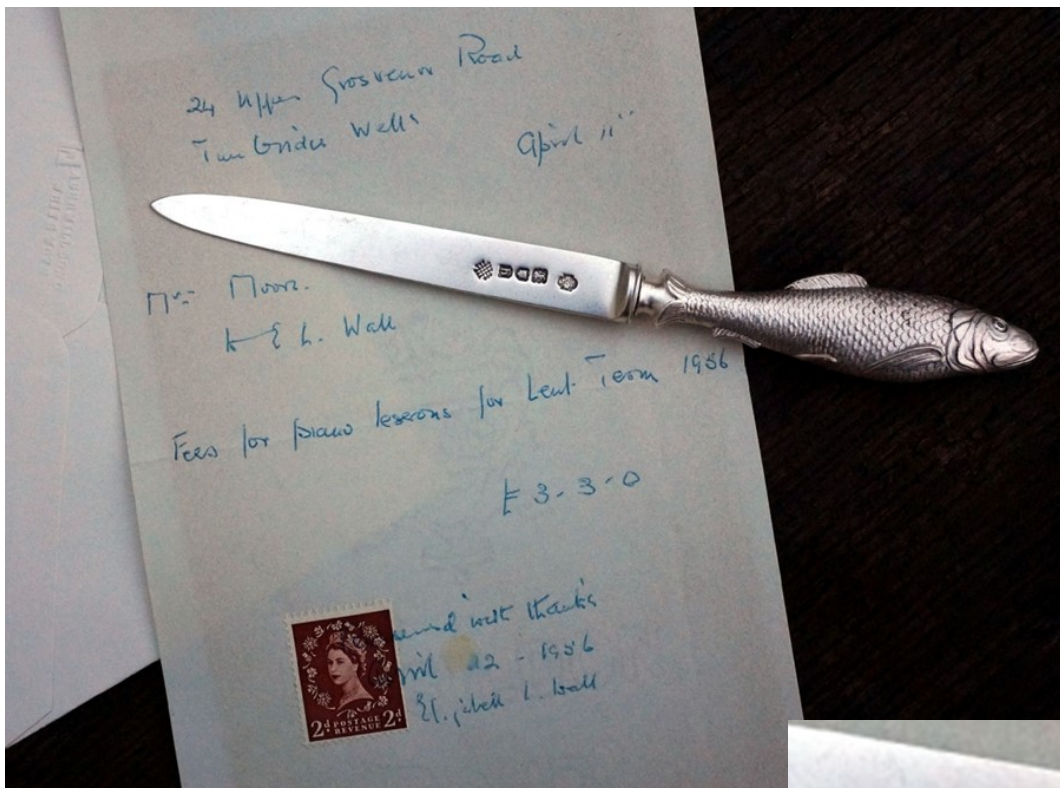


Fig. 4: Novelty fish-hafted paper knife by Hutton, 1903, note the sheaf of crossed arrows mark (formerly from the taken-over firm of Creswick's) to the left (and below) which was sometimes used as a mark of excellence by the firm but more frequently on electroplated items.





Fig. 5: Left, teaspoon of Secessionist / Art Nouveau style, 1898 and right a more abstract stirrer spoon, both manufactured by Hutton 1898 and 1901 and both attributed to Katie Harris.



Fig. 6 : Set of six teaspoons and sugar tongs attributed to Kate Allen for William Hutton and Co. 1903. The interlace junction may be coincidental or a slight nod to Archibald Knox's work. For many of her spoon designs, Allen added buttresses from handle to bowl (figures 8 and 9).



Fig. 7 : Spoon by Kate Allen, 1903 of more Arts & Crafts style with a split wire bowl attachment. The stylised foliate finial has been enamelled green.



The serving spoons (below) are so well-balanced that they could almost double as soup spoons.



Fig. 8: Pair of serving spoons in an anonymous (but original) box by Kate Allen for William Hutton and Co. 1902. These have been listed as fruit or ice-cream serving spoons/shovels. Occasionally they were made in pairs with differing finishes, one spoon with a hammered look and the other (like these) planished.



Fig. 9: Another typical Allen spoon for William Hutton and Co. 1902 engraved in the bowl with a winged swan's head and neck on a crest coronet which belonged to about 10 different families and cannot be assigned. See also advertisement by Connell's (Fig. 13).



Fig. 10: A set of small spoons with stunningly-stylised botanical terminals that typify the design and enamelling of Kate Allen, by William Hutton & Co. 1902.



Fig. 11: Six small spoons attributed to Kate Allen 1903. [Courtesy of van den Bosch]

George Lawrence Connell (& Co.)



Connell's mark over stamping (possibly that of A.E. Jones)

George Lawrence Connell was another 'polyglot' goldsmith with hallmarks registered both at Birmingham as well as London. His firm also acted as a retail outlet for A.E. Jones (who had worked there as principal designer) and particularly for (nearby) William Hutton & Co. as well as for Liberty's; some of the latter's Tudric range also bear his firm's name and address in Cheapside, London. Much of Hutton's earlier wares also bear Connell's sponsor mark but usually post 1910 when Connell's presumably acted as a secondary outlet for slightly older stock.

His father, William George Connell was largely a watchmaker and (later) jeweller but made some pieces of silver during the 1890s, about 10 years before his son George Lawrence came into the firm, and which reflect a marked A&C taste.



Fig.12

Fig. 12: Rather quirky spoon by George Lawrence Connell & Co., 1916. The bowl is typical for the style of the times but the design of the handle with its cabled ellipse and terminal may have been adapted from eastern European late mediaeval spoons. Although somewhat atypical, the design is more attributable to Allen than Harris once again.

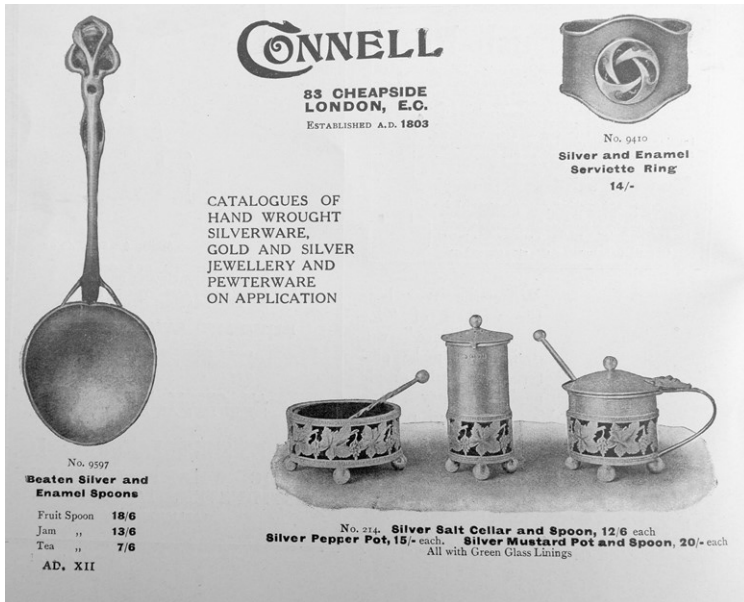


Fig. 13: Advertisement (below) from *The Studio Magazine* from 1914 showing the 1902 version of the Kate Allen spoon by Hutton's (Fig. 9).

Fig. 14: Another Kate Allen spoon and with a complex interlace buttress (which is slightly derivative of spoons by Oliver Baker for Liberty's) by Lawrence Connell & Co, 1914. Earlier versions (c. 1901-1905) bear the sponsor mark for William Hutton.



Fig. 14

References

Moore, Simon (2017). *Artists' Spoons & Related Table Cutlery*. FastPrint Publishing, Peterborough, England.

Pudney, Stephen (2015). Katie Harris – the mystery woman of English Art Nouveau. *The Decorative Arts Society Journal*, 9-25.

Simon Moore has written extensively about flatware and cutlery. His most famous book is *Cutlery for the Table, A History of British Table and Pocket Cutlery*, The Hallamshire Press, 1999

A remarkable private collection formed over the last thirty years is the focus of this richly illustrated book and provides the reader with a general introduction to English silver spanning a century and a half from a little before the Tudor age (1485–1603) to the threshold of the Civil War (1642–51).

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Tessa Murdoch, *Art Newspaper*

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