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WILLIAM COBBETT AND HENRY HUNT - THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF THEIR THIRTY YEAR RADICAL RELATIONSHIP

Penny Young

(A summary of the 2010 Eric Paine Memorial Lecture)

Two giants dominated English popular radical politics a couple of centuries ago. The two men were William Cobbett (1763-1835) and Henry Hunt (1773-1835). They fought for justice, human rights and a reformed, democratic House of Commons and went to prison because of their beliefs. Both men came from southern England, shared interests in politics and farming and both became fiercely independent MPs for northern constituencies. Hunt was a member of parliament for Preston during the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832, while Cobbett sat in the first reformed House of Commons as a member for Oldham.

The life of William Cobbett is well documented. Raised at the plough in Farnham in Surrey, he became the greatest radical political writer of the early nineteenth century, the man the essayist William Hazlitt called 'a kind of *fourth estate* in the politics of the country.' Cobbett's *Political Register* was published weekly from 1802 until his death in 1835 and was read by everybody from presidents, kings and emperors to poets, soldiers and farm labourers. The establishment press or the 'reptiles', as he called them, loathed him. Governments plotted to suppress him and all his works that challenged them at every twist and turn. When Cobbett spoke out against the flogging of soldiers in Ely under the guard of German mercenaries, he was charged with seditious libel, found guilty and jailed in Newgate Prison for two years from 1810 to 1812. Many biographies have been written about William Cobbett and he is celebrated today.

By contrast, the name of Henry Hunt remains relatively unknown, although he was the greatest political speaker of his times. Derisively dubbed 'Orator' Hunt by his enemies and, like Cobbett, vilified and demonised by the establishment, Hunt was the darling of the people. When he spoke at mass public meetings, he attracted huge crowds. He was the first member of parliament to win a seat (for Preston in 1830) on a ticket of one

man one vote. Hunt was the star speaker at the great reform meetings of Spa Fields in London in 1816/1817 and what went down in history as the Peterloo Massacre on St Peter's Field in Manchester on 16 August 1819. The meeting had been called to support a reform of parliament and the abolition of the Corn Laws. Five minutes after it began, it was brought to an abrupt stop when the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry slashed their way into the crowds to arrest Hunt and the men standing with him on the platform. In his book, *The Casualties of Peterloo*, Michael Bush estimated that the action by the yeomanry, which was backed up by the 15th Hussars, resulted in the deaths of at least eighteen people, while the number of those injured exceeded seven hundred. The perpetrators were never brought to justice and it was Hunt and his co-defendants who were jailed. Hunt was given the longest sentence in the worst jail. He spent two and a half years incarcerated in a dank cell in Ilchester Prison in Somerset where he wrote his *Memoirs*.

There have been only two biographies of Henry Hunt. Robert Huish published one the year after Hunt's death. The second was written by John Belchem. He launched his academic career with his outstanding, political biography of Hunt, which was published in 1985. Belchem's book dispelled the myth of the violent, argumentative, vain demagogue, the man who wilfully opposed the so-called Great Reform Act of 1832. This was the image of Hunt that has been copied and repeated by historians and essayists through the ages. Belchem portrayed a very different Henry Hunt, the Wiltshire farmer who became a democratic radical, established a mass platform for parliamentary reform and who, alone in the House of Commons argued, quite correctly, that the planned reform bill was a cheat and a sham. Sadly, John Belchem's biography is out of print.

What nobody has written about in any depths before is the unlikely but very real political partnership and close friendship between William Cobbett and Henry Hunt. Their relationship lasted in one way or another for thirty years until the deaths of both men in 1835 just four months apart. Nobody has charted its course from close friendship to deadly enmity with the various peaks and troughs in between. Quite simply, nobody was looking out for the story.

It was Hunt who began it. He became a fan of Cobbett as soon

as the latter returned in 1800 from his first period of exile in the newly independent America. There, Cobbett had become the most well-known and controversial of writers and he set out to repeat the act in England. When he launched his weekly *Political Register* in 1802, Hunt became a loyal reader. He described in his *Memoirs* how he longed to become acquainted with this most celebrated writer of the day. In typical Hunt style, he took the bull by the horns and went up to London to call on Cobbett. His visit took place in 1805. It was not a particularly productive meeting. Both men took a dislike to each other. Hunt described it in detail in his *Memoirs*:

As I walked up Parliament Street, I mused upon the sort of being I had just left, and I own that my calculations did not in the slightest degree lead me to suppose that we should ever be upon such friendly terms, and indeed upon such an intimate footing, as we actually were for a number of years afterwards. It appeared to me, that at our first meeting we were mutually disgusted with each other; and I left his house with a determination in my own mind never to see a second interview with him

Hunt was indeed quite right in his assessment of Cobbett's reaction. Cobbett was suspicious of Hunt and thought he was a bad character. He especially took exception to the fact that Hunt had left his own wife and was living with the wife of another man. In 1808, Cobbett wrote a private letter to his publisher, John Wright, warning him not to associate with Hunt:

There is one Hunt, the Bristol man. Beware of him! He rides about the country with a whore, the wife of another man, having deserted his own. A sad fellow! Nothing to do with him.

Much to Cobbett's fury, this letter was used against Hunt in the Westminster election of 1818 when Cobbett was in self-imposed exile in America.

Despite the initial mutual mistrust, however, Hunt persevered at forging a relationship and, despite his letter to Wright of 1808, Cobbett responded. The two men joined forces at political county meetings, taking great delight in bashing the system and baiting both the Whigs and the Tories, the Ins and the Outs, as they called them. Against all the odds, Cobbett the conservative radical, wily, experienced and fiercely independent, became the closest of friends with Hunt the democratic radical, ten years younger and

totally new to the game. He addressed Hunt in his private letters as 'my dear Hunt'. It was the highest compliment Cobbett could pay.

It is difficult to understand how it all happened. Cobbett was a busy and famous man. Hunt was a minor dabbler in county politics. What was the attraction? Cobbett possibly answered that question himself in his writings from exile in America the second time round between 1817-1819 when he explained why he liked Englishmen best.

The *loud voice*, the *hard squeeze* by the hand, the *instant assent or dissent*, the *clamorous joy*, the *bitter wailing*, the *ardent friendship*, the *deadly enmity*.....All these belong to the characters of Englishmen, in whose minds and hearts every feeling exists in the *extreme*.

Cobbett could have been describing himself. He was also consciously or unconsciously describing Henry Hunt. In many ways, despite the difference in age and temperament, the men were very similar, passionate and extreme in everything they did and the way they lived their lives. They also enjoyed a similar sense of humour.

It is a puzzle why the depths of their collaboration and friendship have never been explored before. The clues for it are all there. They can be found in Hunt's *Memoirs* and *Addresses* and scattered through the numerous volumes of Cobbett's *Political Registers*. The material is available, although it tends to be tucked away in dusty boxes, on scratched microfilm or hidden on obscure shelves in places like the British Library, the Library of Nuffield College, Oxford, universities in the USA and county record offices. The relationship can also be traced in contemporary comments, caricatures, lampoons, squibs and poetry as well as in diaries and letters, including those mainly from Cobbett to Hunt. Only two letters from Hunt to Cobbett survived. I believe they are the last two letters Hunt wrote to his old friend and political partner. They are doubly important because they reveal why Hunt severed relations with Cobbett. As far as I know, the two letters have never been made public before. When the two men finally fell out just before the Reform Act of 1832, the radical press sighed in oblique references and subtle hints that if only the pair could make it up, radical politics would be stronger for it. United we stand, divided

we fall. Like all good stories, the story of Cobbett and Hunt is of contemporary significance.

When the pair did terminally fall out, it was like a nuclear explosion. After all the wonderful things Cobbett did with and wrote about Hunt, it is hard to read the tearing biting insults he repeatedly hurled against him. Hunt was the GREAT LIAR, the great impudent and ignorant oaf, a shuffling hulk and a carcase which only deserved to be whipped and beaten. After Cobbett wrote about Hunt's 'hackerings, the stammerings, the boggings, the blunderings and the coverings down' of the 'Preston cock' in the *Political Register* of 12 February 1831, Hunt hit back in a public Address to Cobbett on 'the Kensington Dunghill'. It was written in extreme bitterness:

This *backbiter* of every man that ever was acquainted with him, the *calumniator* of every one who ever rendered him a service has thought proper to put forth his impotent venom and to level his cowardly and malevolent attack upon me in an address to you, the People of Preston, in his last lying Register, I feel it a duty ... to state the reasons that have caused the wretched creature thus to assail me.

Hunt went on to do so in ghastly detail.

This was a relationship that was conducted in the full glare of the public. The late Georgian and Regency public feasted on what the one wrote about the other. It was all there in black and white for everybody to read. There was Cobbett's wife, Nancy, with her violent hatred of Hunt and her fury at her Billy's friendship with that bad man. There was also Hunt's long-time mistress, his beloved, beautiful Mrs Vince, illegitimate granddaughter of a baronet and part of the reason for Nancy Cobbett's hatred. The press used Mrs Vince as a stick with which to beat Hunt. Legitimate tactics or press intrusion into private life? Cobbett stoutly defended Hunt, adding to his wife's fury. Yet, everybody was able to read what Cobbett thought of men who dumped their wives and women who slept outside the marriage bed when he later published his *Advice to Young Men*. He was particularly severe about the women: 'Here is a total want of *delicacy*; here is, in fact, *prostitution*," he wrote.

Nancy's attempted suicide – provoked by the renewal of her husband's collaboration with Hunt – and the separation of Cobbett

from his family were also common knowledge, as was the unfounded accusation made by Nancy that her husband had a homosexual relationship with his secretary. Cobbett's biographers have largely avoided these matters, maybe out of a desire to protect his reputation or because they found them of no significance or because they believed the incidents were part of Cobbett's private life and off limits. (Both George Spater and Richard Ingrams touched on the subjects.) Yet all these events sprang out of the relationship between William Cobbett and Henry Hunt and are of relevance in understanding what happened. None of it diminishes either of the men. We stand on the sidelines and admire them even more, for the men they were, for their integrity and determination to do what they believed in, and for their achievements.

These two men inspired generations. Two weeks after Cobbett's funeral on Saturday, 27 June 1835 in Farnham, the town of his birth, the deaths of both men were mourned and commemorated in a letter published in the *Poor Man's Guardian*, one of the radical penny press newspapers. The letter positively remembered the two men in the heyday of their political struggle. It was a tribute from those who would help to carry the torch of reform into the future. The letter was written by the Bradford radical, Peter Bussey, one of the future leaders of the Chartist movement. It was very singular, he wrote, that within the space of a few months, they should lose 'two of the most staunch Reformers this country ever produced – Henry Hunt, the consistent and uncompromising advocate of equal rights, and the Member for Oldham.' The pair had stood the test for years, braving 'the storm of Whig and Tory vengeance.' They fought and conquered the 'demon-like power' of Castlereagh, which had oppressed the country. 'The base minions in power trembled beneath their castigations', and the people were awoken from their slumbers. Cobbett and Hunt raised their 'gigantic powers,' and governments turned pale.

Two Cocks on the Dunghill is an account of the personal and political relationship between two great men at a crucial time in history. It is set against the backdrop of the aftermath of the French revolution, the wars with France and the fear of a Jacobin-style revolution in England and the demands for a reformed House of Commons. The issues, arguments and emotions resonate today. The questions raised are ever relevant. How should a government fight against a perceived foreign and home threat of

'Terror'? When, if ever, should human rights be suspended? What role does the press play? How much integrity can there be in politics and at what cost? *Two Cocks on the Dunghill* is a story about corruption and greed, compassion and morality, of love, hate, jealousy and scandal and how human beings deal with them. It is also about the courage of individuals against an oppressive state and the triumph of will power and determination in adversity. 'On one thing I am resolved, namely that, unless snatched away very suddenly, I will not *die* the MUZZLED SLAVE OF THIS THING!' wrote William Cobbett in the *Political Register*. He did not, and nor did Henry Hunt.

Two Cocks on the Dunghill - William Cobbett and Henry Hunt: their friendship, feuds and fights is written by Penny Young and published by Twopenny Press. Copies may be purchased either from a bookseller for £20.00, or direct from the author at: 2, The Old School, South Lopham, Norfolk, IP22 2HT for £15.00, postage and packing included. Please make cheques payable to the Two Penny Press.



Caricature of Paine being attacked by tiny devils and rat-like creatures, Cobbett carrying a coffin containing Paine's bones and being attacked by rats and Hunt holding a reform flag.

RADICAL PECKHAM: THE STORY OF TIMOTHY BROWN.

Derek Kinrade.

We owe a dept of gratitude to Bill Ure, who revealed through his newsletter (No.101, Autumn, 2005) that William Cobbett, the famous polemicist, resided in the winter of 1815-16 at Peckham Lodge, near Rye Lane, as a guest of banker Timothy Brown. As far as I can tell, this episode had previously been noticed only by Iain McCalman in 1988,¹ and was not mentioned in the monumental biography of Cobbett by George Spater in 1984.²

Peckham Lodge, Rye Lane.

Peckham Lodge does not appear on any of the early maps of Peckham, but Heaton's Folly, which lay within it's grounds, is marked by a dot on an 1810 map of Camberwell parish on the right hand side of a pathway leading from Peckham to Nunhead, approximately where the grounds of St Mary's College were later situated, now occupied by Morrison's car park. The original Lodge was leased from the de Crespignys who had inherited this and other properties from Isaac Heaton, it's builder, in 1808. It was let in turn to Brown.

Bill Ure, who is a relative of Cobbett, has told part of the story, but there is more:

William Cobbett, a close friend.

Cobbett, of course, is famous, particularly for his weekly *Political Register*, which so got under the skin of the establishment of the Establishment. One of his biographers, Daniel Green, has described him as "one who was hostile to the government and who had dedicated himself to the exposure of corruption and the destruction of the system".³ Certainly he was perceived as

dangerous, particularly in the context of a bitter war against France. Those in authority dearly wished to silence him and saw their opportunity when Cobbett used the Register to comment on what came to be known as the Ely Mutiny. A number of soldiers

stationed at Ely unwisely refused to obey orders in response to some fairly minor grievances. Cavalry from the German Legion was called in, a summary court martial held and the reputed ringleaders sentenced to 500 lashes each. It should be understood that the lash, and the fear it was thought to induce, was then seen as the primary means of maintaining discipline in the miserable ranks of the armed forces. But to Cobbett it was abhorrent, and he railed against both it and the Hanoverian involvement at Ely. It led him to express the hope that those who criticised Napoleon's harsh discipline might in future be more cautious when they saw our own "gallant defenders not only required physical restraint, in certain cases, but even a little blood drawn from their backs, and that, too, with the aid of *German troops*".

Nowadays, any such level of comment in the media would hardly raise an eyebrow. But in 1809 it was enough for a charge to be filed against Cobbett for sedition, followed by a trial in 1810 when every possible infringement against the interests of the nation were successfully held against him. He was sentenced to two years imprisonment and a fine of £1,000. In addition, he was required to find two sureties to assure his keeping the peace for seven years after his release. He was committed to Newgate Prison, though this was not quite the calamity it may appear since, as Green puts it, "in those day influence and money could procure almost anything except freedom". Not only was Cobbett able to live in some style, visited by Timothy Brown and other admirers from all over Britain,⁴ but continued to keep the Register going, every article carrying, beneath his signature, the address, 'State Prison Newgate' to rub in his sense of injustice.

When he was released on 9 July 1812, Cobbett was entertained to dinner by Sir Francis Burdett, joined it is said by 600 guests, and hailed as a public hero. As Bill Ure has noticed, Timothy Brown became and remained one of Cobbett's closest friends. He was one of the sureties for his 'good behaviour' and stood to forfeit £5,000 should the released prisoner overstep the mark, a very real risk given Cobbett's predilection for plain-speaking. One possible reason for Cobbett's stay at Peckham may simply have been Brown's generosity. Newgate left Cobbett firmly in the camp of the radicals with a thirst for reform but, as Green shows, his imprisonment had also drained his resources, sales of the *Register* had declined and he had been for some time reliant on gifts and loans from well-wishers. By 1815 his financial position

was precarious. He needed a rich, like-minded friend and a London base, and it appears likely that Timothy Brown came to his rescue.

'Equality Brown', his partnership with Samuel Whitbread II.

Brown's hospitality was entirely in keeping with his reputation. Blanche tells us that he was known as 'Equality Brown' and described himself as the "well-known local democrat".⁵ It is interesting that by 1875 he should be so described, when in his day he might have been thought dangerously radical rather than democratic. Apart from his banking interests, from 1799 to 1810 he was a partner with Samuel Whitbread in the famous brewing company. This was the Samuel Whitbread, the son of the founder,⁶ and the partnership agreement between Brown and others contained a most unusual clause which freed Whitbread from attending personally to any business. This allowed him to follow his political aspirations. He had been elected MP for Bedford in 1791, a position he held for the rest of his life, in which he gained recognition as a champion of religious and civil rights and was notably prominent in seeking to improve provision for poor people, the abolition of slavery and attempts to introduce a national education system.⁷ Controversially, he also urged negotiations with France, admiring Napoleon Bonaparte and hoping that his reforms might be introduced in Britain. It would be tempting to suppose that beyond his financial interests, Brown found a synergy with Whitbread's reformist views. In reality the reverse appears to have been the case reforms might be introduced in Britain. It would be tempting to suppose that beyond his financial interests, Brown found a synergy with Whitbread's reformist views. In reality the reverse appears to have been the case. Roger Fulford, Whitbread's biographer, says that Brown was "noisy, opinionated and reforms might be introduced in Britain. It would be tempting to suppose that beyond his financial interests, Brown found a synergy with Whitbread's reformist views. In reality the reverse appears to have been the case. Roger Fulford, Whitbread's biographer, says that Brown was "noisy, opinionated and quarrelsome: he was rich and radical, and revealed to the world a combination which is happily rare - a banker with dangerous views".⁸ In particular, Brown was "a fervent supporter of Burdett (Sir Francis Burdett), a stance not without embarrassment to Whitbread. In 1810 a dispute arose between the two partners, settled only by Brown being paid off. Whitbread wrote that he had

“never been a very pleasant partner to me” and that the difference without him was “incalculable”.⁹

Brown’s Association with Horne Tooke.

A happier relationship was that between Brown and another campaigner for radical change, John Horne Tooke. Originally a priest, Horne Tooke remained a champion of the Church of England throughout his life and had many esteemed, respectable friends. We owe to him the first steps to secure for the public the right of making available an account of parliamentary debates. As such he may be seen as an unlikely revolutionary. Yet he was imprisoned in 1777 for having solicited subscriptions for the relief of relatives of Americans “murdered by the King’s troops at Lexington and Concord”, and in 1769 was prominent in setting up a society to support a Bill of Rights, which he saw as a vehicle to campaign for a radical programme of parliamentary reform. But it was his involvement in The Society for Constitutional Information that most profoundly brought him into conflict with the government. The society, without doubt, enthusiastically supported much of the thinking that had promoted the French Revolution. On 14 July 1790, on the occasion of a first anniversary dinner, a resolution was passed rejoicing in the establishment and confirmation of liberty in France. But even here Horne Tooke may be seen as a moderating influence, for he introduced a separate resolution to the effect that to achieve this English people had only “to maintain and improve the Constitution which their forefathers had transmitted to them”.¹⁰ Nevertheless, he was one of three radical freethinkers arrested and tried for high treason in 1794. Pitt’s government, dreading an uprising similar to that in France, brought a huge weight of evidence against the defendants, determined to eradicate the radical movement. It was alleged that Horne Tooke and his co-defendants had organised meetings seeking to encourage people to disobey the king and parliament. Prominent in the persecution’s massive case was Horne Tooke’s support for Thomas Paine’s hugely successful *Rights of Man*. This had already been pretext for a successful prosecution for seditious libel, obtained in Paine’s absence, the defendant having hurriedly and wisely fled to France. But in treason trials the public mood was against the establishment. To general rejoicing, after a trial that lasted for six anxious days, all three defendant were acquitted in eight minutes.

However, Horne Tooke had indeed been sympathetic to Paine’s

ideas. During his time in London, Paine¹¹ was a frequent guest at Wimbledon Common, where Home Tooke's famous Sunday dinners attracted many like-minded friends and associates.¹² They included some of the most distinguished men (and I do mean men) of letters, scientists and intellectuals of the day, some of them of a decidedly radical and reformist disposition, including Lord Erskine, Sir Francis Burdett, Gilbert Wakefield and Sir James MacKintosh.¹³ One of the most regular visitors was Timothy Brown, who "frequently rode over on a Sunday from his house at East Peckham, near Camberwell, on purpose to dine at Wimbledon...Tooke must have entertained a high opinion of the character and integrity of Mr. Brown as the latter was his banker for many years".¹⁴

Home died on 18 March 1812 and the following few years it fell to Timothy Brown to continue the tradition of meetings, housing and encouraging radical discussion at his Peckham home. I noticed how Cobbett came to join him there and have suggested a possible explanation for his stay at Peckham. Iain McCalman offers an alternative or perhaps additional scenario. He points out that Brown was fascinated with religion and philosophy as well as political radicalism. And that in addition to stimulating debate he had an important role in financing the publication of freethinking publications. One of these was particularly controversial. Early in 1813 Brown learned that a near-destitute Scottish journalist, George Houston, was seeking to secure the publication of a new English edition of Baron d'Holbach's *Ecce Homo!*, to be published as *A Critical Inquiry into the History of Jesus of Nazareth, being a rational analysis of the Gospels*. The title is perhaps misleading. The baron was perhaps the first modern theorist of atheism and one of the most radical philosophers of the Enlightenment. *Ecce Homo* first appeared, in French and anonymously, in 1770.¹⁵ In a modern edition, Andrew Hunwick explains that d'Holbach regarded all religion as an illusion, based on fear and ignorance. In place of religious morality, which he rejected as socially harmful, he appealed for the establishment of a natural system of ethics, based on the needs of individuals as social beings, arguing that nature urges humanity to seek out its own happiness. The author's close friend Denis Diderot observed that the text, which sought to demythologise the scriptures, was "raining bombs within the House of the Lord", Jesus being presented as a normal human being, born normally. Hunwick sums up the contents as "a vehement attack on the Bible, Christian dogma and morality, and

all aspects of Christian institutions”.

When he heard of Houston's initiative, Brown was, writes McCalman, “rapturous”. He tells us that “Brown threw the full weight of his wealth and influence behind it's publication” and “encouraged and entertained Houston ceaselessly - even at 'his parties for pleasure”, He subsidised the printing and publishing of the work, read and commented on the proofs and worked hard to promote it's circulation. Then, in September 1813, a sceptical article in the *Political Register*, written by another freethinking published, George Cannon, inspired Brown to approach William Cobbett to give similar publicity to *Ecco Homo*. Despite some reservations, Cobbett, who was in favour of free expression, agreed, and he, Brown and other members of the Peckham circle, under various pseudonyms, co-operated in writing letters to the *Register* and the short-lived *Theological Inquirer* exploring and defending the arguments in *Ecce Homo*. It was hazardous territory. The radical publisher Daniel Isaac Eaton had been charged as publisher of d'Holbach's book in November 1813, the prosecution only being dropped when Eaton revealed Houston as the translator.¹⁶ In November Houston was prosecuted and found guilty of blasphemous libel and sentenced to two years imprisonment and a fine of £200.¹⁷ Although Cobbett went on to include further articles by Cannon in the *Register*,¹⁸ both he and Brown knew the game was up. To make matters worse, Houston having served sixteen months in Newgate, provided the authorities with information about Cobbett's and Brown's involvement in the publication of *Ecce Homo*.¹⁹

Last years.

Brown remained supportive of Cobbett, but by 1820 his friend's debts were clearly out of control. Spater tells us that Brown, himself “a friendly creditor”, urged Cobbett to seek refuge in bankruptcy, and undertook the necessary procedures at his own expense. Typically, from a small house at 15 Lambeth Road where he was permitted to live, Cobbett used the period of his bankruptcy to brilliant effect, campaigning on behalf of the reviled Caroline of Brunswick to claim her place as queen to George IV. He was released from bankruptcy in November 1820, the burden of his debts lifted and his energy unimpaired. Timothy Brown was less fortunate, he died of a stroke on 4 September 1820.

Two Hundred years ago, dissent, including religious dissent, was a dangerous business. Darwin had yet to make his epic voyage on HMS Beagle, and his Origin of Species, with its cool scientific approach, had yet to make its revolutionary mark. Even today there will be many readers who find radical views, or some of them, unacceptable. But I ask them to reflect that these advocates of change began the struggle for human rights, the freedom of speech, for the Enlightenment, for the inclusive franchise, for universal education and for our parliamentary democracy (such as it is). Much that was once considered radical is now orthodox. In my view, nothing more important came out of Peckham.

Endnotes

1. Iain McCalman. *Radical Underworld*. Cambridge University Press, 1988.
2. George Spater. *William Cobbett: The Poor Man's Friend*. Oxford University Press, 1984.
3. Daniel Green. *Great Cobbett, The Noblest Agitator*. London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1983.
4. More than 1,000 according to Cobbett.
5. William Harnett Blanche. *Ye Parish of Camberwell (1875)*.
6. I recall that as an Excise Officer I made several visits to the Chiswell Street premises and was eventually sent to check the last brew and finalise the firm's involvement with the Revenue. The Shire horses and the brewery oozed prosperity. The fermenting room boasted an enormous unsupported roof, second only to that of Westminster Hall.
7. A contemporary, Sir Samuel Romilly, described him as the "promoter of every liberal scheme for improving the condition of mankind, the zealous advocate of the oppressed, and undaunted opposer of every species of corruption and ill-administration". He is said to have spoken in the House more often than any other member.
8. Roger Fulford. *Samuel Whitbread, 1764-1815, A Study in Opposition*. London, Macmillan, 1967.
9. *Ibid*.
10. Alexander Stephens. *Memoirs of John Home Tooke*. London, J. Johnson & Co., 1813.
11. A former Excise Officer.
12. William Hamilton Reid. *Memoirs of the Public Life of John Home Took*. London, 1812.
13. See Alexander Stephens. *Memoirs of John Home Tooke (1813)*.
14. *Ibid*.
15. It is now available in a critical edition and revision of George Houston's translation, edited by Andrew Hun wick (Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1995).
16. Daniel McCue Jr. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. It has also been said that his age was a factor. He died in 1814, impoverished and exhausted.
17. The radical publisher, Daniel Isaac Eaton, had also been previously

charged - not for the first time.

18. As Rev. Erasmus Perkins.

19. Spater says the files of the Privy Council indicate that Houston sought employment as a government informer.



**This issue of the
Journal of Radical History
is dedicated
to the memory
of
MICHAEL FOOT
(1913 - 2010)
President
of the
Thomas Paine Society
1963-2010**

Handel the Philanthropist. A Review of the Exhibition at the Foundling Museum.

Ellen L. Ramsay.
(York University)

The eighteenth century Enlightenment reverberated throughout the arts as it did throughout the sciences, as demonstrated by the recent Handel exhibition at the Foundling Museum in London, England. Most successful composers of the eighteenth century including Handel, secured their living and reputation with secular music played in a broad range of settings to a full spectrum of social classes. Depending upon the musician's predilections and circumstances, he or she might only depend on church patronage when church-inclined laws shut down the more popular settings of the day. George Friderick Handel (1685-1759), [born Georg Friederich Handel], "The Old Pagan," as he was sometimes referred to, was best known for his operas, oratorios, cantatas and grand concerts rather than for the small collection of church music he composed. Indeed, during his work in Italy (1706-1710) Handel experienced the musical censorship of Pope Clement XI who, like his predecessor, considered opera a profane musical form and thus banned it. The debate about the relative benefits of secular and religious music would follow Handel on his travels throughout Europe as the winds of the Enlightenment spread the wings of culture with an upsurge of interest in beautiful music and sometimes the less *rational* forms of entertainment to its critics.

Handel became known as an exquisite melodist, instrumentalist and lyricist in all chambers, from the palace rooms of the aristocracy, the larger room of the upper classes, the smaller rooms of the emerging middle classes, to the grand new concert halls and theatres of the popular masses. In London from 1710 Handel's compositions were played at the Covent Garden Theatre, Drury Lane Theatre, King's Theatre in the Haymarket, Lincoln's Inn Fields and Westminster Abbey. Following a long period of intense work, Handel experienced considerable success from 1739 and established himself in some prosperity. This relative prosperity

freed his hand to raise money for two of his favourite charities.

The year 2009 commemorates the 250th anniversary of Handel's lifetime of musical achievement. To celebrate the occasion, the Foundling Museum (est. 1739) organized an exhibition dedicated to the composer consisting of 61 paintings, drawings, autograph scores, manuscripts, letters, newspaper articles, will and codicils assembled from the Gerald Coke Handel Collection, the British Library, the Royal College of Music, the Royal Collection, the Royal Academy of Music, King's College Cambridge, Leeds Library, The Thomas Coram Foundation for Children and Colin Coleman Music. The exhibition enhances the Foundling Museum's permanent social history displays as well as the rooms dedicated to Handel and William Hogarth, two patrons of the Foundling Hospital.

At the end of his life Handel wrote a codicil to his will leaving the rights to his oratorio *Messiah* to the Foundling Hospital and £1,000 to the Society of Decay'd Musicians (now known as the Royal Society of Musicians). The early eighteenth century witnessed a proliferation of friendly societies to assist the poor and working classes in England. The Decay'd Musicians Fund (est. 1839), one of Handel's two charities, began life in the Orange Coffee House in the Haymarket where a group of musicians, possibly including Handel, saw the orphaned children of a deceased musician known to them playing on the streets of London. The life of a musician could be precarious in the era before retirement pensions, unemployment and disability benefits, and an injured hand, arm or leg as well as any of the infirmities of old age could render the musician and his family destitute. The Musicians at the Orange Coffee House therefore met together to found a subscription insurance fund to provide for musicians and their families in times of need. For this reason their organization was named the "Decay'd Musicians' Fund."

Handel attended the founding meeting of the Decay'd Musicians in the Crown and Anchor Tavern on the Strand in 1739. In 1737 he had suffered a debilitating stroke that left him partially paralyzed. This was later to be followed by another stroke in 1752 that left him partially blind. Handel's early experience with infirmity may have spurred his altruistic interest in the musician's friendly society although he was not in any personal financial difficulty at the time. A membership in the society was both a subscription and an

insurance policy for members and Handel was one of 228 musicians who signed the Declaration of Trust on 28 August 1739. Meetings were held on Sundays and small payments were dispersed immediately for the funeral expenses of deceased members and for the support of widows and children.

Handel's involvement with his charities went well beyond membership. His first benefit performance for the Society of Decay'd Musicians was held on 20 March 1739 at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. Handel selected to perform *Alexander's Feast* set to the lyrics of an ode by John Dryden. Quite appropriately, and not without a note of satire, Alexander of Aphrodisias of the 3rd century AD, on which the dramatic oratorio was based, was a peripatetic Aristotle an philosopher in Greece known to be free of the religious mysticism of Platonism. The concert was repeated successfully for years. In the 1740s and 1750s criticism of secular music was raised again by churchmen in London and one of Handel's tenors, John Beard, became a petitioner for permission to perform music during Passion Week as concerts had been banned during this week. Handel's great gift as an impresario was his knowledge that grand inspiring music would draw a large crowd, bring out the best in audiences, and therefore also raise a large sum of money for charity more successfully than any sermon from a churchman. Handel honed his benefit skills in this regard over the last two decades of his life and left a legacy for music lovers and charity enduring centuries.

Handel's second charity was the Foundling Hospital, also established in 1739. He associated himself with the Hospital from 1749 until his death and became a governor of the hospital in 1750, the year of his first benefit concert for the Hospital. Thomas Coram (1668-1751), a retired shipwright, founded the hospital and opened its doors to the first orphans in 1741. The Hospital for "the maintenance and education of exposed and deserted young children" was intended to replace the church-run workhouses where orphans were placed and often died in from disease. Coram's great hope was that the Foundling Hospital would provide the children with lots of fresh air and exercise on the 35 acres of land he purchased in Lamb's Conduit fields, and that they would survive disease through consultations with the many doctors who featured as governors on the Hospital board. In the nineteenth century the hospital petitioned and received a government grant to assist its operations. Desperately poor mothers held the Hospital

in high esteem for the care of their children and priority was given to the children of women who had been betrayed by false promises of marriage from men. In the spirit of the Enlightenment, no child was to face the stigma of illegitimacy in the hospital and the hospital was envisioned to be a place where children would receive the best start in life.

In 1750 Handel staged a grand benefit concert for the Hospital led by his *Royal Fireworks Musick* formerly performed in the open air for George II, followed by *The Anthem on the Peace* to celebrate the 1748 Aix-la-Chapelle Treaty, and selections from the oratorio of *Solomon* relating to the dedication of the temple. These were then followed by Handel's specially written Hospital anthem entitled, *Blessed are they that considereth the poor*, and concluded with the Hallelujah chorus from the *Messiah* of 1742. Approximately 1,200 tickets were sold in Arthur's Chocolate House on St. James Street, at Batson's Coffee House near the Royal Exchange, and at the Hospital itself raising approximately £728 for the Hospital. Handel continued his fund raising efforts for the Hospital despite the development of blindness between 1751 and 1754 resulting from his second stroke.

The creation and support of Handel's two charities may be seen as a grand Enlightenment act in an era of industrialization, war, movement to the cities and great hardship for the poor and working class. Much of the visual imagery accompanying the charitable organizing was presented in the neoclassical style becoming associated with the revolutionary movement building in France. Richard Wilson's (1714-1782), *Foundling Hospital* painted in 1746 is set in a circular frame of laurel wreaths to celebrate the heroic accomplishment of the Hospital. The portraits of Handel by Georg Andreas Wolfgang (the Younger), Richard Wilson, and other painters in the exhibition, portray Handel surrounded by his books, quills and musical instruments in the same manner as scientists of the day were shown with their books, instruments and apparatus. The 1775 colour engraving of the Foundling Hospital chapel from the Gerald Coke Collection is very probably a precursor to the grand romantic revolutionary themes in France including Jacques Louis David's *Oath of the Tennis Court*, (depicting the oath of the Third Estate) commissioned in 1790 by subscriptions from the Jacobin Society. The size and structure of David's room, the angles, the windows, the flow of light into the room and even the placement of people in David's drawing

strongly echo the earlier work of the Foundling Hospital by the anonymous engraver. These art works were all part of a grand heroic tradition developing during the international enlightenment movement.

The Handel exhibition at the Foundling Museum brings together a fine collection of objects and sound recordings accompanied by descriptive panels. The artworks include drawings, engravings, lithographs and paintings on a smaller organizations and settings that suit the gallery space and would have been associated with the smaller settings of the eighteenth century middle class. Some of the autograph scores reveal Handel's failing eyesight with their roughly angled bars and scrambled handwriting. The careful observer notes that Handel changed the lyrics of the Foundling Hospital Anthem from "The *Righteous* shall be held in everlasting remembrances" to "The *Charitable* shall be held in everlasting remembrances." The document bearing the *Declaration of the Society of Decay'd Musicians* has been carefully unrolled and supported on a wooden bolster and is probably a unique viewing of the document.

The Handel exhibition includes a fine portrait of tenor John Beard, and Gustav Waltz, bass singer; an original copy of the first substantial Handel biography by John Mainwaring (1760); and newspaper articles including the announcement from the Feather's Tavern that the Handel festival of 1786 had raised £3,300. The gallery is arranged in such a way that the portraits address the viewer from key points in the room. As the viewer wanders around the exhibition space listening to the music of Handel, looking at the visual displays, reading the descriptive panels and noting details in the articles, the viewer could not help but be drawn to the sheer beauty of the autograph scores and copies presented in the glass cabinets in the centre of the room. Whether one's interests lie in the history of philanthropy in the period, Handel's biography and work, the Foundling Hospital, the paintings, or the scores, this exhibition makes the gallery visit an adventure of social history in the broadest cultural sense.

An excellent, concise colour catalogue at the very modest price of £5 accompanies the Handel exhibition. This small catalogue makes a lovely contrast to the very large exhibition catalogues currently accompanying the large touring exhibitions at the major museums and art galleries. The larger catalogues are impractical

for the visitor as they are too voluminous to either carry or post. By contrast, the 63 page catalogue accompanying the Handel exhibition measures just 15 x 21 x 1/2 cm, bound in a strong soft cover and graced with a beautiful colour portrait of Handel by Thomas Hudson on the front cover and a 1784 gold commemorative medal on the back cover. The catalogue is easy to transport and inexpensive to post.

The first essay in the Handel catalogue is written by Katharine Hogg, the exhibition's curator, and discusses Handel's connection to the two charities. The second essay is a longer one by Professor Donald Burrows entitled *Handel and the Foundling Hospital*, a researched article with details of Handel's benefit concerts, and scores that originally appeared in *Music and Letters* in 1977. Both essays are fully illustrated in colour. The volume concludes with a thirty-four-page colour catalogue of objects from the exhibition. The quality of reproduction in the catalogue is superior to most contemporary catalogues and is unhindered by the visible pixels or questionable focus of some newer catalogues. Even the typeface on the newspaper articles, the script in the minute books and on the musical scores, can be read with the unaided eye, something of a rarity in catalogues today. The catalogue remains on sale at the museum after the exhibition ends.

The Foundling Museum houses an excellent permanent display of the Gerald Coke Handel Collection open to the public all year round. For scholars interested in eighteenth and nineteenth century philanthropy and the Enlightenment, the Foundling Museum is well worth a visit as it contains a permanent collection of art, music and social history items from 1739 to the early twentieth century. Contemporary art exhibitions in keeping with the spirit of the institution are added on a rotating basis throughout the year. The Museum also offers lunchtime concerts, evening recitals, and educational lectures. The Museum permanently displays the art of William Hogarth and his contemporaries and celebrates Hogarth's role as a Hospital philanthropist and founder of London's first public art gallery housed at the Hospital in the 1840s.

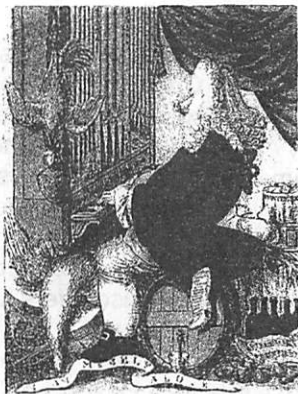
In the last decade and a half, London has seen a renaissance in the small museum sector. When the Labour Party was elected to office in 1997, it kept its promise to make the national museums free to the public. The result has been a resurgence of interest in

museums generally. Smaller social history museums such as the Foundling Museum opened in 2004 with very modest entry fees (£5 for adults and free for children under 16) and others such as the Charles Darwin Museum advanced major renovations during the period. The Handel house at 25 Brook Street, London, Handel's residence from 1723 until 1759, was renovated in the period and opened as the Handel House Trust Museum in 2001. This museum also hosts a full schedule of events for the public including exhibitions of oil paintings, sculpture, prints, letters, autograph leafs and early editions of operas and oratorios related to Handel. The smaller museums offer the viewer an interesting view of the community in which they were and are situated on a scale perfectly suited to a morning or afternoon visit. The Foundling Museum's café has become a popular meeting place for local residents and their children throughout the day, an occurrence that would have cheered its founders. London now hosts at least 300 museums large and small, and the Foundling Museum, as one of the newer ones certainly ranks as a valuable addition for the social historian of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Reprinted from *Labour/Le Travail*.



Handel age 58



A caricature of Handel by Joseph Goupy, dated 1754, parodying his large appetite.

Book Reviews

Two Cocks On The Dunghill, William Cobbett and Henry Hunt: Their Friendship, feuds and fights. Penny Young. Twopenny Press, South Lopham, Norfolk, 2009. 384pp Paperback, ISBN 978-0-9561703-0-9. £17.95

There have been numerous biographies of William Cobbett, but only one of Henry Hunt although Hunt was no less an important and prominent figure in early 19th century Radicalism. And this is out of print. This is not an attempt to write another biography of Cobbett or Hunt. Rather it is an explanation of their often troubled relationship.

Cobbett was in essence a self-educated ploughboy. Hunt came from the landed gentry, his family owned or rented 3,000 acres. A spell of six weeks imprisonment in 1800 following a dispute over the killing of pheasants brought Hunt into contact with the radical lawyer Henry Clifford. He came out of prison a convinced radical.

There was continual trouble between Cobbett and Hunt, the cause of much being Cobbett's wife Nancy. Hunt having married Ann Halcomb, the daughter of a publican in Devizes, had become enamoured of Catherine Vince and eloped with her, while Cobbett was usually highly conventional in such matters. Out of character he made excuses for Hunt. Nancy on the other hand greatly disliked this female aristocrat and referred to her as "the whore on horseback". The differing personalities of the two women reflected their class origins. When Cobbett first met his wife she was scrubbing out a wash tub, whereas Mrs Vince would have had servants to do her laundry. Nancy was a good cook and could make delicious home-brewed beer. Cobbett urged the English people to abandon drinking stewed tea and return to making home made ale. Mrs Vince would have drunk wine.

When Hunt and Cobbett first met they didn't hit it off, but as Hunt contributed to Cobbett's *Political Register* they grew closer. Hunt developed into a formidable political speaker being dubbed Orator Hunt, a phrase originating with the radical poet turned Tory Robert Southey.

In 1816 Hunt was invited by the Spenceans (followers of Thomas

Spence who advocated public ownership of land) to speak at a meeting at Spa Bath Fields (today's Mount Pleasant sorting office) What Hunt wasn't told was that the aim of the meeting was to spark off a revolution. Hunt spoke from the window of the *Merlin's Cave* pub, but Despite his efforts to convince the crowd that violence was futile, that evening rioting broke out. A second meeting led to the looting of gun shops which the Tory press blamed Hunt and Cobbett. A third meeting passed off without incident.

However, the government continued with its programme of repression. Hunt spoke in Bristol. " We want no tumults, no riots, we want only our rights", he proclaimed. Fearing imprisonment, he had already served two years in Newgate, Cobbett decided his best course of action was to leave for America. In March 1817 he set sail for New York. Hunt was furious Cobbett had not told him he was going. Other radicals moved to fill the space vacated by him. In his *Black Dwarf*, Thomas Wooler mercilessly criticised Cobbett, whereas Hunt still chose to defend him.

Cobbett urged Hunt to come to America. One attraction, he wrote, was the land had no Wilberforces. Both regarded Wilberforce as leader of the "canting saints", while Wilberforce saw Hunt as "the tool of worse and deeper villains" and Cobbett as "the most pernicious of all."

In 1818 there was to be a General Election. Hunt decided to contest the Westminster Seat. At a meeting in Covent Garden his political opponent Thomas Cleary read a letter from Cobbett written ten years earlier which described Hunt as riding round the country with a whore and urged people to have nothing to do with him. Hunt wrote to Cobbett urging him to come home and to deny having written the letter. In the event Hunt came bottom of the poll with just 48 votes.

In August 1819 at least 60,000 people gathered in St Peter's Square, Manchester to be addressed by Hunt. Hardly had he started to speak when the Salford and Manchester yeomanry charged the crowd with sabres drawn. At least eighteen people died and over six hundred were injured. Hunt escaped with a cut hand. He was arrested and charged with treason, later changed to seditious conspiracy. In the *Political Register*, Cobbett began to distance himself from Hunt.

Relations between the two men (Cobbett was now back in England having brought with him the remains of Thomas Paine, these were lost after his death) continued to cool as Hunt was brought to trial. On May 15 he was sentenced to two and half years in Ilchester Prison, which was one of the worst in England and it was clear the government's aim was to kill him or so ruin him in body and spirit he would no longer be a threat. Beyond recording Hunt's name in the list of the imprisoned Cobbett said nothing about this. In his *Memoirs*, Hunt expressed bitterness and resentment about Cobbett's flight to America, about how he had neglected and deserted him since his return, about the role played by Mrs Cobbett, blaming her for the collapse of their friendship.

From inside the grim walls of Ilchester, Hunt conducted a campaign against the terrible conditions and the mistreatment of prisoners including the sexual abuse of female prisoners. Beyond advertising Hunt's *A Peep Into Ilchester Goal*, Cobbett did nothing to help. Instead he set out on the series of journeys which became known as his *Rural Rides*. Hunt was released on October 30, 1822, to widespread demonstrations, but Cobbett said not a word about this in the *Political Register*. Hunt resumed his life with Mrs Vince and set up a business making substitute coffee from roasted rye.

Towards the end of January, 1823, Hunt appeared again briefly in the *Political Register*, however, as Ms Young puts it, Cobbett wanted to be "top cock on the dunghill". This soured his relationships with other radicals referring to them mostly to criticise and undermine them, an exception being Richard Carlile from whose imprisonment Cobbett made political capital. In the *Political Register* for November 15, 1823 he referred Peterloo but did not mention Hunt.

Hunt had taken up the issue of Catholic emancipation knowing that the English government would bribe the Catholic clergy to stop them objecting to the loss of people's voting rights (the government proposed to raise the property qualification) In the *Political Register* for April, 1825 Cobbett devoted pages to supporting Hunt's actions.

In 1826 Cobbett decided to stand for parliament and organised a meeting to raise funds at *The Freemason's Tavern* in Great

Queen Street. Crowded to overcapacity, the meeting ended up being held in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Hunt was there and the crowd demanded he speak. Cobbett was livid and got his own back in court two weeks later. The jury found Cobbett not guilty of libel and Hunt was ordered to pay £25 costs.

However, following Cobbett's defeat at an election in Preston the two men again edged towards reconciliation. Both were to meet at a meeting in Covent Garden. Nancy threatened to commit suicide if Cobbett went, but he ignored her threat and when she learned he had attended she cut her throat with a knife. Although serious the wound was not fatal.

A political dinner at the *Crown and Anchor* tavern in the Strand ended in a fist fight but brought Cobbett and Hunt closer together. For the next eighteen months the men were good friends. They set up an organization, the Radical Reform Society to agitate for annual parliaments, universal suffrage and vote by ballot. While Cobbett was willing to compromise and if needs be dilute, Hunt stuck firmly to his principles. Cobbett also objected to Republican speakers like Hunt's friend John Gale Jones being invited to address meetings. Once more relations between the two men soured. The situation turned bizarre when Nancy Cobbett thought that Cobbett's secretary had rid himself of his drunken and adulterous wife so he could have a gay affair with Cobbett, an extreme homophobe. The accusation indicates Nancy's state of mind.

Both men would achieve their ambition of being elected to parliament, although Cobbett lost his seat for opposing the Reform Bill of 1832 which he thought didn't go far enough. Having suffered two strokes, Hunt still toured the north including Manchester early in 1834. He died on February 13, 1835. Cobbett some weeks later in June. Had the two been able to overcome their differences, had Hunt led a more regular life and Cobbett been able to address what were undoubtedly his wife's mental health problems, the course of radical history in the first part of the nineteenth century may have been somewhat different.

Two Cocks On The Dunghill is illustrated with some very interesting contemporary cartoons and two colour plates. But it suffers from a multitude of typographical errors, proof, if it was needed, that manuscripts should be thoroughly proof read before

going to the printers. Never the less, it remains a valuable contribution to early nineteenth century political history.

Terry Liddle



A FREE BORN ENGLISHMAN !
THE ADMIRATION of the WORLD !!!
AND THE ENVY OF SURROUNDING NATIONS !!!!!

The caricaturist George Cruikshank's telling image drawn in 1819 at the height of the government campaign to suppress human rights, free speech and assembly and a free press.

Thomas Paine -- A Collection of Unknown Writings. Edited by Hazel Burgess. Xix & 241pp. Paperback. ISBN 13: 978-0-230-23971-5. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. £16.99.

"This is no more than a say so of Jonathan Steadfast, who says it because it suits him to say it." An Enemy to Monopolies and Inconsistencies [Thomas Paine], "Jonathan Steadfast and his Book" in the *Mercury* [Elisha Babcock], 27 September 1804.

"As censure is but awkwardly softened by apology, I shall offer you no apology for this letter." Thomas Paine, *Letter to George Washington*, 30 July 1796.

The appearance of a recently published collection of unknown writings by Thomas Paine could not be but of some interest and excitement – certainly on my part and presumably that of other Paine scholars and enthusiasts. When asked by the journal, your reviewer envisioned a brief, and piquant review, perhaps a few paragraphs. No big deal. As it turned out, however, that was not to be. Hazel Burgess' collection took a great deal of effort to sort out and, to my regret, requires some censure and reproach. This collection fails to live up to its claims and will be, I predict, largely dismissed by careful and knowledgeable Paine historians. Fairness to my fellow Paine readers and colleagues and, indeed, to Hazel Burgess, necessitates at least a reasonable explanation. And that, dear reader is the manner in which this review grew from three paragraphs into the form presented to you here.¹

Before any words of censure, however, it is important to write something positive. By way of disclosure, the author of this review has known and maintained a cordial acquaintanceship of some years with the editor of this collection, Hazel Burgess. While we have not always agreed, to date we've maintained a friendly and collegial relationship. Certainly her DNA research on the purported Paine skull discussed later in this review was and continues to be of great interest to all Paine historians. Second, she gets some things right in this collection. In her editorial notes, Burgess

understands that George Chalmers aka Francis Oldys was a paid slanderer and that James Cheetham's biography of Thomas Paine was a hatchet job. Her work also corrects a minor dating error in Philip Foner's 1945 *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*. And the collection actually contains some newly published Paine material of genuine scholarly and historical interest. There are, however, two problems. First, a great part of the collection is either already in print, easily obtained. And more problematically, the very small quantity of new Paine material is sandwiched in between a much greater quantity of work that is not of Paine's authorship.²

Certainly where absolute proof is not available, questions of historical accuracy necessarily reduce to matters of opinion. Readers of this review will not be left in doubt as to mine. The work reviewed here, however, generally presents itself as unqualified *fact* and lacks, in my view, the kind of scholarly circumspection found in more valuable and lasting historical studies. The cover, for example, claims that the works in this compendium have "not been seen, either publicly or privately, in over 200 years." Burgess' editorial notes go on about her "path to significant discoveries," the "sweet satisfaction" of seeing "what nobody else has seen in over 200 years," and her "discovery" that the extant Paine canon is incomplete. All very moving if the claims hold up. But what if they don't?³

The first three items in Burgess' collection, for example, were all in print at the time she compiled her collection. She writes that the New York Historical Society had already published them at the turn of the last century and claims to be doing a service by reprinting them in this collection for the first time in over a hundred years. She does not write, however, that the 1898 collection is available – by my count – in at least 154 libraries in America and the UK. It is also available in a good quality hardcopy edition that has been in print since 2007. The same work is available, moreover, in a free digitized and fully searchable edition on Google Books. Burgess makes no mention of the contemporary editions – hardcopy or digital – so she was either unaware or omitted to mention them. From the outset, then, Burgess' bibliographical claims relative to these works appear thin at best and, as we shall see, there are other problems with this "revelatory collection."⁴

Throughout her editorial comments, Burgess evinces a

certain vindictive or condemnatory prejudice against Paine's character that may cause puzzlement on the part of discerning readers. She acknowledges some of his accomplishments, but misses no chance to belittle his character. Why, for example, does Burgess indulge in the sniping comment at p. 30 that there was "little in the treasury but sufficient for Paine to draw immediately on his salary," as if Paine's payment were not authorized by vote of the Pennsylvania Assembly?⁵

In a later chapter, she calls Paine a "turncoat who was definite in his opinion this way or that."⁶ Or there is her stunning allegation, as we will see later, that Paine was no abolitionist or enemy of slavery, but himself a slave-holder. Reader's unfamiliar with Burgess' background will be at a loss to understand her rancour, but a brief look at the editor's own history may help to clarify her agenda.

John Burgess, the husband of the collection's editor, is one of a great number of persons who have laboured under the illusion -- occasionally the delusion, no doubt -- that they are direct descendants of Thomas Paine. The difficulty with that proposition is, of course, that Paine had no offspring. While many base their claim on a common historical confusion between our revolutionary pamphleteer Thomas Paine and another man of the same name, John Burgess' claim is of another sort.⁷ He claims to descend through a bastard offspring of Paine by the wife of one of Paine's closest friends, the French publisher and editor Nicolas de Bonneville. The rumour began historically with the slanderous attack-biography written by James Cheetham, published the year after Paine's 1809 death. Cheetham waited until Paine's decease because he knew very well that Paine would sue him -- Paine had threatened it. As events transpired, Cheetham was sued anyway. Madame Bonneville successfully sued Cheetham in a Federalist court so hostile to Paine that the judge defamed him from the bench. The allegation of bastardy was so utterly unfounded and baseless that Madame Bonneville was nevertheless awarded damages. The salient point here is that in order to fit the model of her husband as a "descendant" of Paine, Paine needs to be something of a scoundrel or at least a rascal.

This whole story took a macabre and startling turn when a skull appeared in a 1988 Sydney, Australia antiques auction; a skull reputed to be the noggin of Thomas Paine.⁸ The Burgessses

hastened to Sidney and managed to purchase the relic from the sympathetic dealer, impressed with Mr. Burgess' claims of consanguinity. This moment might be said to mark the beginning of Mrs. Burgess' career as a Paine enthusiast, albeit a somewhat hostile one. She set out to prove her husband's relationship by comparison of his mitochondrial DNA to that of the skull. Surprise - there proved to be no demonstrable relationship, but Burgess' career as a Paine-sceptic was launched, of which the collection here is the latest and most visible so far.⁸

Perhaps it is that same enthusiasm to believe the worst that led her to the greatest blunders in this very flawed work of bibliography. The single longest work in the collection – 75 pages of about 200 pages total – is an unsigned 1791 pamphlet entitled *Reflections on the Present State of the British Nation by British Common Sense*.¹⁰ Burgess' claim that this work should be accepted into what she calls the "Paine canon" will be rejected by historians and thoughtful readers for at three obvious reasons. First, the author of this work favoured titled distinctions and wrote that when the present financial crisis ended, then "may we, with safety, return to ceremony, and the etiquette of distinction, rank, and title."¹¹ The writings of Thomas Paine both before and after this work flatly condemned titles and inherited distinctions and there exists no writing of Paine's that condones aristocracy. Second, the writer claimed to be a British citizen and spoke of "our own market, or home consumption," whereas Paine spoke as an American or "citizen of the world," neither as a British subject in the works before and after the date of the work in question nor in any work subsequent to the American Revolution.¹² This Paine candidate also made prominent and repetitious use of the phrase "Godlike Reason," a combination of words that appears nowhere else in Paine's printed works. Nor does the adjective "godlike" itself appear in any other Paine work. And yet the faux-Paine used it four times on a single page, the repetition itself uncharacteristic of Paine's simple, declarative style. In fact, Paine rarely if ever used any adjective with the word "reason."¹³ Burgess' candidate is, moreover, prolix in the extreme -- single sentences run over a hundred words!¹⁴ Paine was a master of the simple declarative sentence and a short, sparkling, aphoristic style of Plain English. And again, can anyone but Mrs. Burgess believe that the Thomas Paine who wrote this:

Let them call me rebel and welcome, I feel no concern from it; but I should suffer the misery of devils, were I to make a

whore of my soul by swearing allegiance to one whose character is that of a sottish, stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man?"¹⁵

and who himself bore arms against the King of England later regretted his action and opined that "reason abhors dissention?"¹⁶ Reason is the fountainhead of dissent. Was Paine, as Burgess' writer further claimed, "but little known?"¹⁷ Not at all: Paine was already heralded in his own name on two continents, received, corresponded or boarded with the likes of Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, Thomas Walker, the painter John Trumbull (with whom he lived for a good part of the time) and William Cavendish-Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland (Prime Minister in 1783, Home Secretary in 1794, Lord President of the Council later again in 1801 to 1805, and Prime Minister again in 1807 to 1809). Historian David Freeman Hawke noted that Paine's friend and United States Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson thought him known and respected enough to serve as *de facto* American representative to the British government for two years after the recall of John Adams.¹⁸ Paine "but little known?" This might perhaps describe him in another dimension of time or on another planet, but not the one in which Paine lived and worked. Burgess claims all this and more with the single longest "discovery" in her rewrite of the Paine canon.

For all of the above she offers – as near as can be discerned – the slim justification that Paine "proved to be a turncoat, definite in his opinions this way or that,"¹⁹ was proud of his pseudonym "Common Sense"²⁰ and that it was "the name no other would dare assume."²¹ The first claim is indefensible unless we accept her claim that the work is authentic. Isn't this *post hoc ergo propter hoc*? The second claim, on the other hand, is as indisputable as it is trivial. And the latter claim – central to her argument – is nonsense. Burgess again offers no proof but her mere "say so." The fact is that other individuals, both in America and England, used the pen name "Common Sense" during Paine's lifetime. Though scarce in America, the determined researcher will find a few and there are a great many non-Paine appearances of the pseudonym in the periodicals of late eighteenth-century England.²²

Before closing this unfortunate review, a final word is necessary with respect to Burgess' claims regarding Thomas

Paine and slavery. She believes that Paine owned slaves. Burgess made the claim to this writer back in 2005 *sotto voce*, in high dudgeon as it were, and when asked for proof, declined and cited a forthcoming book that would "reveal all" to a horrifically shocked scholarly community. Behold the book! Wherein Paine is unmasked as an owner of man-flesh. Well ... not exactly. With regard a black man named Joe, a hired man of Paine's, Burgess claims that "it is highly likely that Joe had been, in earlier years, Paine's slave."²³ Her claim would be a matter of some consequence if she bothered to substantiate it, but consistent with the great part of this work, she omitted to do so. Burgess merely cites the letter of Paine to Kitty Nicholson Few where he inquired after "my favourite Sally Morse, my boy Joe, and my horse Button"²⁴ and a reasonably well-known text on the Quakers and slavery in early Pennsylvania and observes that "it would have been unusual for a Philadelphian in his situation, and of his standing, not to have owned some."²⁴ Burgess then goes through a long speculative ramble based on another letter to an unknown addressee that amounts to zero corroboration for her stunning claim. This is not history. This claim amounts to unsubstantiated calumny on an individual for whom there is adequate evidence to show his detestation of slavery.²⁶ Scholars and simply careful readers will again find nothing here to support her accusation.²⁷

In the main body of this collection, there are approximately 139-140 pages of purported Paine text and just over sixty of editorial commentary for a total of 203 pages. By my count, 55% are either highly doubtful or demonstrably spurious and at least another 12% are already in print in more or less contemporary printings such as Foner, Gimbel, the Morris Papers and Kessinger reprints.²⁸ Burgess claims variously the utility of combining the texts in one place or their benefit for context, but what can be the utility of combining them with an even greater load of spurious texts and inflated, indefensible claims? Ironically, one of the most memorable quotes found in one of the few authentic and authentically new works presented in this collection is one wherein Paine ridicules "Jonathan Steadfast" for relying just on his own "say so."²⁹ Admittedly, a great deal of historical controversy -- as noted earlier -- comes down to a "say so." And like Johathan Steadfast, Burgess frequently says so with little more substantiation than that it *suits her to say so*.

Endnotes

1. From the short bio of the editor provided in the collection: "Hazel Burgess is an Australian researcher with undergraduate and doctoral degrees from the University of Sydney. She has spent many years searching for the truth behind the public face of Thomas Paine." The first sentence is interesting for an omission and the second for its claim. Burgess' degree is in Religious Studies, not history. And her "years searching for the truth behind the public face of Thomas Paine" is precisely the preconceived mindset that colours her work and rather spoils her scholarship, as evidenced by examples presented in this review.

2. For significant new printings of Paine's work, see especially Burgess 191 and 199-202. The single page Connecticut piece on p. 191, while interesting and newly printed, is sandwiched between four letters already reprinted in Gimbel and a work at Burgess 192-8 that was simply not written by Paine. The ratio of meat to bun here is about characteristic of the entire collection.

3. An academic advisor strictly enjoined me in the springtime of my scholarly career that the more elevated the claim, the easier the target and farther the fall.

4. See Silas Deane, *The Deane Papers, 1774-1799*, Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2007, ISBN054830744X, 9780548307441. See also <http://books.google.com/books?id=fpQ6AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:STANFORD36105026546619#v=onepage&q=&f=false> accessed 11 March 2010 or simply search "Silas Deane Papers" on Google Book.

5. See Burgess, 31-2. As it happens, the purported Paine letter that accompanies her comment is signed "C.S.," and, while it is written well enough to be Paine, there is nothing either in the text itself or, for that matter, Burgess' body of scholarship that should have led her publishers or the reader to accept her "say so" that it was written by Paine. It's interesting to note that the author who signed himself "C.S." used the word "forsooth." Time constraints prevented a search of every extant Paine letter, but the term appears in none of Paine's major works; not once. Even if we ever find that Paine used the word "forsooth, it seems to me that careful scholarship requires that the letter remain in the category of a "possible" Paine work. See Burgess, 35.

6. Burgess, 146.

7. Back in the 1990's, when the author of this review fielded internet inquiries for the Thomas Paine National Historical Association -- an organization since disgraced and fallen upon hard times -- it seemed like we received an inquiry a week from people honestly convinced they were all "direct descendants" of Thomas Paine.

8. See Hazel Burgess, "An Extended History of the Remains of Thomas Paine," *Journal of Radical History*, 8:4 (2007), pp. 1-29.

9. Burgess' dissertation for a doctorate in Religious Studies is interesting in this regard, but it is unfortunately sequestered or withheld from public view by the University of Sidney at the request of the student. A letter from Burgess' dissertation supervisor noted, "Students ... may request that they not be made public. Few do ..." Few, indeed. I don't know of another such instance. The practice flies -- insofar as I understand it -- in the face of

both academic tradition and open scholarly inquiry. See Hazel Burgess, "The disownment and reclamation of Thomas Paine: a reappraisal of the "philosophy" of "common sense" (Ph.D thesis, University of Sidney, 2003). The library listing is available at <http://opac.library.usyd.edu.au/record=b2654935~S4>.

10. See Burgess, 71-146. See also, (anonymous), *Reflections on the Present State of the British Nation by British Common Sense* (London: James Ridgway, 1791). A second edition was entitled *British Common Sense; or, Reflections on the Present State of the British Nation, Recommending a Free, Uninfluenced Representation of the People, on the Grounds of National Utility and National Necessity* (London: W. Miller, 1791).

11. See Burgess, 119.

12. *Ibid.*, 77 and 82.

13. *Ibid.*, 79-80. The anonymous author of this work similarly repeats the phrase "wantonly wicked" at pp. 92-3. Another phrase that appears nowhere in any of Paine's other best-known works.

14. Burgess, 77-8.

15. See Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis I* in Philip Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* (New York: Citadel Press, 1945), 1:56.

16. Burgess, 75.

17. *Ibid.*

18. David Freeman Hawke, *Paine* (New York: Harper & Rowe), 188.

19. Burgess, 146.

20. Burgess, 72.

21. Burgess, 149.

22. See *The Port - Folio* (1801-1827) 1:15 (April 11, 1801), 113. Burgess offers this item as part of her collection, but it is not Paine simply because it's attitude towards Britain is antithetical to Paine's, its negative attitude toward the Declaration of Independence, and perhaps even transatlantic transit problems. It would not be surprising if Burgess were the only person in the world to believe that Paine authored it, but then ... she appears to have an agenda. See Burgess, 174. For other examples of non-Paine uses of the pseudonym, see also *Philadelphia Repository and Weekly Register* (1800-1805) 3:8 (February 19, 1803), 63; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, December 3, 1776, Issue 1282; *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Friday, December 22, 1775, Issue 14422; *Sun* (London, England), Saturday, April 20, 1793, Issue 174; *Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Tuesday, September 10, 1793, Issue 7572; *True Briton* (1793) (London, England), Thursday, May 2, 1793, Issue 105. There are many more especially in English periodicals of the period.

23. See Burgess, 81.

24. See Foner, 2:1275.

25. Note that this is the same Thomas Paine of whom she wants the reader to believe earlier – and at a time of even greater fame for Paine – that he wrote as one "but little known." See above note 17. See also Burgess, 218, n.195 where she cites the "brief, general account of slaveholding in Pennsylvania at the time," Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

26. See my forthcoming "The Infernal Traffic in Negroes' -- Thomas Paine and Antislavery," part of a collection in review for 2011.

Forthcoming Exhibition

Industrial Revolutionaries **People who shaped the Modern World**

26 June – 6 November 2010

Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston

"The eyes of the working classes are now fully opened, they begin to cry: Our St. Petersburg is at Preston!"

Karl Marx, 1854.

Employee worker relations, child labour, alcohol and the need for temperance, impending elections with surprise results, penal reform, and economic success for our manufacturing industries; the very issues that concern us in 2010 were preoccupying the people of Preston 150 years ago. People in Preston created a new industrial world and then fought to redress the problems of inequality caused by industrialisation through radical social reform and political activism. Preston is a microcosm for understanding the North West of England's industrial pioneers and their ideas; ideas that shaped the modern world.

Industrial Revolutionaries is a major new temporary exhibition at the Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston. It spans 150 years with the key personalities and the movements they created— its influence, its history and its global impact - revealed through over 70 objects including portraits, major loans and key collection items, some newly conserved and on display for the first time

Multi-sensory and hands-on, the exhibition puts people's stories at the forefront. Visitors will discover the connection between familiar historical figures and lesser-known individuals. They will see how the actions of these people in Preston contributed to the Industrial Revolution:

Sir Richard Arkwright: Preston-born inventor of the water-frame, entrepreneur and developer of the factory system, Arkwright rose to become the richest commoner in the country.

Charles Dickens: author and social commentator, who visited Preston during the lock-out and strile of 1853, no doubt influencing his novel *Hard Times*.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were also writing about these events and asking will Preston be a test case for proletarian

revolution?

Elizabeth Gaskell, author with a social agenda, influenced by events during the lock-out and strike of 1853-54. She fictionalised Preston weaver and orator George Cowell in her novel *North and South*.

Joseph Livesey: Champion of the poor and temperance campaigner.

Henry Hunt: Preston's first radical MP and people's hero.

Father Joseph 'Daddy' Dunn: Well respected and affectionately nicknamed,

he pioneered Preston's achievement of being the first gas-lit town in Britain.

Rev. John Clay: Prison chaplain and reformer in the fields of crime and public health.

Annie Hill: Half-time child mill worker and unusual in the fact that her portrait was painted by artist Patti Mayor.

John and Samuel Horrocks: industrial innovators who developed the Yard Works and created Britain's largest cotton-manufacturing company and factory with world-wide connections and influences.

This brilliant and thought-provoking exhibition also animates one of the museum's social history collection's most iconic objects – the Horrockses Yard Works model, a large scale model of a cotton mill. Forerunner of the multinationals, Horrockses was by 1913 Britain's largest cotton manufacturer with a huge global network. Visitors will experience the world behind the scenes at the enormous mill complex through digital interpretation.

Other exhibits include Joseph Wright of Derby's portrait of Richard Arkwright, a portrait of Henry Hunt MP, a Tee-Total teapot, the newly conserved tram wagon, Preston Prison whipping horse, specially recorded versions of street ballads plus unseen footage of Preston in North West Film Archive by local filmmakers Will Onda and Mitchell & Kenyon.

Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Market Square, Preston, Lancashire PR1 2PP. 01772 258248. www.harrismuseum.org.uk Open Monday & Wednesday - Saturday 10.00am – 5.00pm, Tuesday 11.00am – 5.00pm, Closed Bank Holidays

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