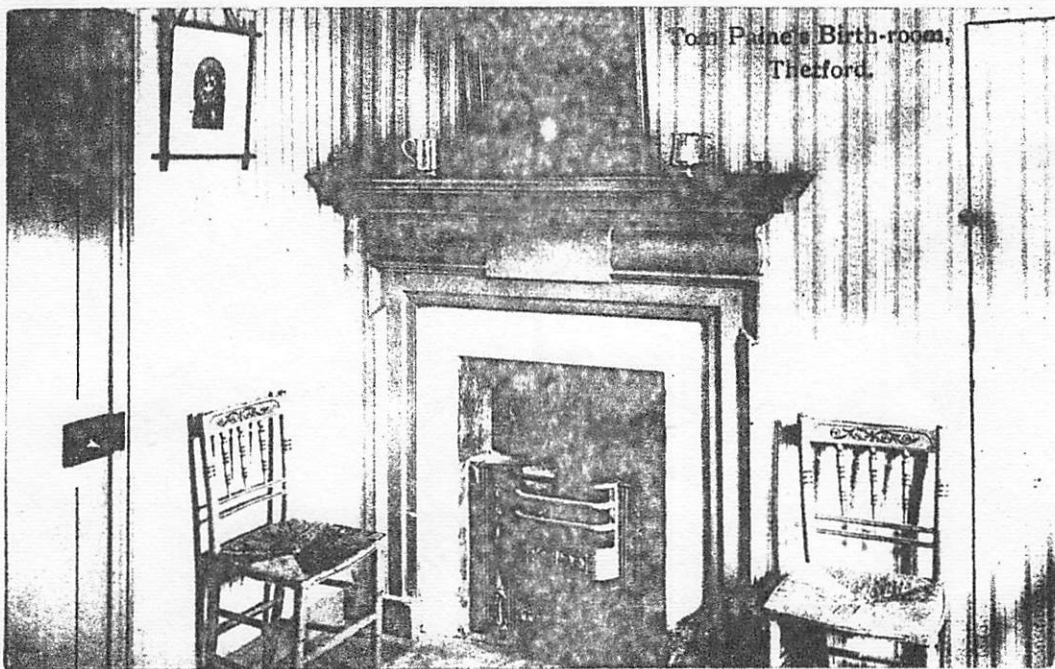


Bulletin



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'Never did any portly volume effect so much for the
human race. Rallying all hearts and minds to the Party
of Independence, it decided the issue of that great
conflict which ended for America, is still proceeding
all over the rest of the world.'

Paul Louis Courier speaking of
Paine's book, Common Sense in
1824.

THOMAS PAINE ON YELLOW FEVER

by

R.G.Daniels.

IN 1805 THOMAS PAINE addressed a tract to the Board of Health of the United States entitled Of the Cause of the Yellow Fever; And the Means of Preventing it in Places not yet effected with it.

In 1807, Clio Rickman printed and published this tract in London, at Upper Mary-le-bone Street, with a foreword to the reader:

"I publish the following little tract of Thomas Paine's in England, hoping that it may benefit society, by throwing some light on certain local diseases, even in countries, where it does not so particularly apply, as in America.

"I know also it will gratify many, to have anything from his pen; and to hear that the Author, though above Seventy, possesses health, fortune, and happiness; and that he is held in the highest estimation amongst the most exalted and best characters in America - That America, which is indebted for almost every blessing she knows to His labours and exertions."

Present-day knowledge.

AMARYL, or Yellow Fever, also called Yellow Jack because ships carrying crew or passengers with the disease flew a yellow flag, is a disease of Human Beings and some small animals, caused by a virus which is conveyed to man by the bite of a domestic mosquito, Aedes aegypti.

It was first identified in Barbados in 1647, and is thought to have been taken across the Atlantic in slave ships. It was first described in English by a physician, Hughes, in 1715. There were devastating epidemics in North America in the 18th. century, especially one in Philadelphia in 1793. There was even a small outbreak in the United Kingdom in 1865, in Swansea.

An attack of the disease, fatal in one in ten, confers long-lasting immunity, and in areas where the disease is endemic the native population has considerable immunity.

Viruses as a group of disease carrying agents were not discovered until 1887, and it was not until 1929 that the Yellow Fever virus was identified, although the mosquito Aedes aegypti had been incultated in 1901.

Yellow Fever has killed more investigating scientists than any other disease.

It is said that the stories of the Flying Dutchman and of the Ancient Mariner are based on a ghost ship abandoned as the crew succumbed to Yellow

Fever.

The historical setting for Paine's tract is interesting. Philadelphia, as has already been mentioned, was the centre of a serious epidemic in 1793, just about the time that the negro slaves in Haiti began to revolt against their French owners. But it was not until 1801 that Toussaint L'Ouverture was finally victorious in gaining independence. By 1803 Napoleon Bonaparte had become jealous of this 'Black Napoleon' and formed a large armada in French, Spanish and Dutch ports under his brother-in-law, General Charles Leclerc, to sail to the West Indies and subdue the Haitians. However, the Haitians retired to the mountains and the Yellow Fever destroyed two thirds of the French army, and although the French treacherously managed to abduct Toussaint to France, where he died the following year, Haiti kept its independence. Partly because of this bother, Napoleon sold Louisiana to America for fifteen million dollars in 1803.

Yellow Fever was to play its part in defeating other European projects in the New World. In 1882, Ferdinand de Lesseps, hoping to repeat his Suez triumph, expended large amounts of shareholders' money in machinery, labour and bribes, in an attempt to link the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans at Panama. By 1889, however, the mosquito carrying Yellow Fever and Malaria had defeated him, and ruined his company.

It is apparent that Thomas Paine, who died in 1809, was not to know the scientific facts nor historical effects of Yellow Fever which are now commonly appreciated, and it is therefore interesting to read again his paper on its cause. It runs to more than 2,500 words, but about a quarter is taken up with an interesting discussion and description of experiments with marsh gas.

Marsh gas ("Fire-damp") - methane in its pure form, or, as we now know it, natural gas, and drawn upon it from the North Sea, has been known for some centuries. Decomposition of organic matter at the bottom of rivers and ponds produces large amounts of impure and often highly inflammable air, and this can be set free by accident or by stirring the mud or exposing it to dry out.

Paine recounts an extraordinary episode in the autumn of 1783 when, Washington having withdrawn from New York and made his Headquarters at Mrs. Berriens, Rocky Hill, Jersey, it came to their knowledge that the creek under Rocky Hill had a fiery reputation - it was said that it could be set alight. Washington knew of this and was interested enough to allow Paine to persuade him to try it. So, on the evening of November the fifth (a pleasant coincidence for the English fire-raiser), with General Lincoln, two aides-de-camp, some soldiers with poles, Washington at one end and Thomas Paine at the other, a scow sailed over the mill-pond on the creek. While the soldiers stirred the bottom of the pond, Washington and Paine held rolls of lighted cartridge paper over the surface of the water. Then, in a style that would please his amateur scientist friends, Priestley and Jefferson, Paine describes and proves that it was gas that was set alight by the illustrious and future President.

As regards Yellow Fever, Paine notes that it begins and continues in the

lowest parts of populous marine towns near the water, especially around wharves. He makes the digression to discuss marsh gas, not because he feels that it is the cause of Yellow Fever, but he puts forward the idea that the gas is injurious to life, especially if it combines with a 'miasm' from the low ground newly produced when wharves are built, and that this pernicious vapour from submerged material is responsible for the disease.

Because he believes that it is wharf-making that contributes, if it does not actually cause, to Yellow Fever, he ends the paper by suggesting new ways of making wharves - long ways along the river banks, and of iron rather than stone to make them cheaper, and that old wharves can be opened up so that the tide can wash in and around the banks of new earth disposing of any injurious vapours.

Finally: "In taking up and treating this subject, I have considered it as belonging to Natural Philosophy, rather than medicinal art; and therefore say nothing about treatment of the disease, after it takes place; I leave that part to those whose profession it is to study it."

Although there is now a very reliable vaccine to prevent Yellow Fever, there is still no treatment except good general nursing.

The cause we know to be a virus carried in the saliva of a mosquito, and it is only by stringent international regulations that Yellow Fever is confined to a belt roughly 15° North and South of the Equator.

Thomas Paine's comments about the disease occurring only where the banks are broken out and flattened to form wharves are entirely in keeping with the facts as we know them, for it is just in these areas that the mosquito finds the type of stagnant water it needs to breed. It is interesting that he uses much the same phrase in describing the site of the occurrence of Yellow Fever as does Sir Patrick Manson in his famous textbook on tropical diseases (6th. edition, 1919) - "The ideal haunt of Yellow Fever is the low-lying, hot, squalid, insanitary district in the neighbourhood of the wharves and docks of large sea-port towns.....a 'place' disease."

Paine makes a point that the inhabitants of the West Indies and the Indians of America before the arrival of the white man, did not suffer from Yellow Fever, otherwise they would have forsaken the areas. This is quite true for the native population possessed 'herd' immunity, developed over the centuries.

In the Twentieth Century the disease would be prevented from arriving in the States by adequate vaccination and strict control of travellers. And the accumulation of pools of stagnant water close to dwellings and ships would likewise be prevented, or at least sprayed with mosquito killing chemicals.

The style in which this tract is written, Paine's accumulation of facts, and his derivation from these of reasonable hypotheses, are entirely in the manner of the good natural scientist of his age.

Dr. HINCKS AND THE AGE OF REASON IN CORK;

A Contribution to the Study of Paine's
Influence Upon Irish History.

by

Nigel H. Sinnott

BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 1790's all Ireland was in a political ferment which had been sparked off as a result of the success of the French Revolution abroad, and at home, the formation by Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763-1798) and others, at the end of 1791, of the Society of United Irishmen, which "at its foundation stood broadly on the principles of Paine's Rights of Man (part 1 of which was published in 1791) which work, Tone notes with glee, at once became the 'Koran' of Belfast." The Society flourished particularly in Dublin and Belfast until it was suppressed (at least officially) in 1794. The following year, 1795, marked the reaction to Irish Jacobinism with the formation of the Orange Order, and was also the occasion of Tone's leaving Ireland in the hope of obtaining help from the French for an armed uprising against the Dublin Castle authorities.

In the same year, in the city of Cork, an interesting tract was published. It was entitled Letters addressed to the inhabitants of Cork, occasioned by the circulation of a work, entitled, The Age of Reason, &c., in that city. (Cork: printed and sold by J. Haly, King's Arms, Exchange, 1795). The pamphlet, or small book, was a defence of orthodox (Protestant) Christianity, and we now know the author to have been Thomas Dix Hincks, LL.D., an eminent Presbyterian divine of the day. I do not intend here to discuss the details of Dr. Hincks' theological arguments, save to say that, to an inexperienced eye, they appear to be typical of scholarly defences of religion in that period. What is interesting is that Dr. Hincks should have felt it necessary to go to print at all, and it is clear on reading the preamble to the letters that The Age of Reason was not merely "circulated" in Cork, but published there. I quote:

"A work has lately been circulated amongst you with much industry, and, if I have been rightly informed, with considerable success.... Had this work been permitted to take the usual course, and only one or two copies of it reached this part of the Kingdom, I should not have thought of troubling you with any remarks, but have trusted to the answers which have been or will be published in other places, and to the many excellent works which have been written in support of the evidences of Revelation. But when some persons, with a zeal which I cannot think laudable, and which perhaps deserves reprehension, have rendered it by their exertions a local publication, and have caused its dispersion amongst those, who from their situation in life, are unable of themselves to see the false reasoning

it contains, it is incumbent on those, whose education and course of study have led them to investigate the subject, to endeavour to assist their brethren, and prevent them if possible from forsaking the clear and pleasant streams of Religion, for the muddy and bitterswaters of infidelity." (p.5)

I have been unable to trace any surviving copies of this Cork edition of The Age of Reason, but its circulation must have been quite wide enough to worry the devout Dr. Hincks, and, indeed, his Letters ran to a second edition in the following year, retitled, Letters originally addressed to the inhabitants of Cork, in defense of Revealed Religion, occasioned by the circulation of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason in that city. (By T.D.H.) Second edition . . . with additions, &c. (Cork, 1796)

Despite Dr. Hincks and the Government spy network, however, the illegal United Irishmen continued to spread and flourish. In 1797 we read how a number of Cork militiamen were sentenced to death and executed for taking the United Irishmen's oath, but only after a local Scottish regiment had refused to carry out the sentence, and a more "loyal" regiment procured for the purpose.³ In this same year General Lake "dragooned" Ulster to disarm the people and terrorize the Northern Jacobins into obedience, though this failed to prevent the great risings in Ulster and Leinster in 1798, and the unsuccessful French landing in Bantry Bay later in the same year. In that year, too, Dr. Hincks had another tract published in Cork, which was entitled, aptly enough, On dwelling together in unity, a sermon (on Ps. 133) preached . . . on . . . the first of July 1798.

Thomas Dix Hincks was born in Dublin in 1767, the son of a customs officer, Edward Hincks, who died in 1772. He was educated both in England and in Dublin, intended to read medicine, but decided instead to take Orders. He went to Trinity College, Dublin (? 1784); and Hackney New College (1788). His ministry in Cork lasted from 1790 to 1815, during which time he was ordained (1792), became a salaried officer of the Royal Cork Institute, lectured on chemistry and natural philosophy, ran his own school (1791-1803) and taught at Fermoy Academy, Co. Cork (1815-1821). In 1821 he left the province of Munster for Ulster, where he taught classics in Belfast Academical Institution. He died in Belfast in 1857, and was buried in Killyleagh, Co. Down. A memorial window was subsequently erected to him in Belfast's First Presbyterian Church.

Hincks was a varied and adaptable writer; in addition to the works already mentioned he published A Greek-English Lexicon (1831, 1843), edited the Munster Agricultural Journal and several school textbooks. Of his theology, Alexander Gordon says this was "Arian, but he avoided polemics, and was on intimate terms with men of all religious parties."⁵ Hincks was awarded his LL.D. by Glasgow University in 1834. In 1791, the year after he came to Cork, he married Anne Boulton (d. 1835), who bore him seven children, of whom five survived him. Of these, two sons achieved particular distinction: Edward Hincks (1792-1866) was a distinguished orientalist, and made major contributions to the decipherment of cuneiform script. Another son, Sir Francis Hincks (1807-

1885) was at various times of his life Premier of Canada (1851), Governor of Barbadoes and the Windward Islands (1855), and Governor of British Guiana (1862). In 1844 he launched a liberal newspaper in Canada, the Montreal Pilot, to promote, amongst other causes, "the secularisation of clergy reserves." When Premier, however, his tardiness in carrying this measure through resulted in the religious Gavuzzi Riot of 1853. Sir Francis eventually published a book entitled Religious Endowments in Canada in London, in 1869.

To return, finally, to Thomas Paine. There can be no doubt that his ideas in the 1790's (and later) had profound effects upon political thinking among Irish radicals, just as they did among the revolutionaries of France, the United States, and Britain. Both he and Wolfe Tone met in Paris in March 1797 and during the period of the "dragooning" of Ulster and the '98 Rising, a copy of Paine's Rights of Man was virtually a death-warrant if found in an Irishman's pockets. It is interesting to see the spread of Jacobin ideas in the 1790's from Dublin and Belfast to Cork, where they were ruthlessly suppressed in 1798, and remained more or less dormant until the Tithe War in the 1830's. During the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) the County was a major theatre in the fighting, and has ever since earned itself the nickname of "Rebel Cork."

References

1. Jackson, T.A. & Greaves, C.D. (1971) Ireland Her Own. London. p.119.
2. Brit. Mus. Cat. Printed Books to 1955. I have not examined this version.
3. Jackson & Greaves. loc. cit. p.160.
4. Brit. Mus. Cat. Printed Books to 1955.
5. Gordon, A. (1882). Hincks, Thomas Dix. Dict. Natl. Biography 9: p.892.
6. Moriarty, G.P. (1882). Hincks, Francis. Dict. Natl. Biography 9: p.890.
7. Equally interesting are unconfirmed, but reliable, accounts of a Gaelic edition of the Rights of Man which circulated in the Scottish Highlands in the 1790's. If any collector of Paineana can run down a copy of either of the Gaelic Rights of Man, or the Cork edition of The Age of Reason, I would be very pleased to hear of it.

"Thomas Paine's Age of Reason, with the thesis that "the most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, that have afflicted the human race, have had their origin in this thing called revelation, or revealed religion"; encouraged Anglican theologians in their higher criticism. But in reaction to such views, we see the revival of ritual magic by Francis Barrett in Marylebone and revelations of Christian doctrine even more fantastic than those Paine denounced, such as the apocalyptic preaching of Edward Irving, or the interpretation by Robert Taylor of Christianity as a solar myth, with Christ a Centaur 'perfect man and perfect horse' ".

THE THETFORD INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSAL
TO DEMOLISH THE BIRTHPLACE OF THOMAS
PAINE.

12th. May, 1971 at the
Council Offices, Thetford,
Norfolk.

AT THE INQUIRY AT THETFORD, into the proposed demolition of Paine's birthplace, the house now known as Grey Gables, the Thomas Paine Society was represented by the Chairman of the Society, Christopher Brunel, and a member of the Society's Council, Mr.A.A.Rudling. Also opposing the destruction of the house were the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, F.A.Ridley & Mr. and Mrs. L.Ebury, representing the London Secular Group, Mr. and Mrs.Cartwright representing the Leicester Secular Society, and a number of local residents including the Mayor of Thetford, Mr.T.J.Lamb.

The Inquiry was opened on the 12th. May by Mr.J.P.Jackson; who will advise the Secretary of State for the Environment, Mr.Peter Walker,M.P. The case for demolition was put by Mr.D.W.Cunningham of T.E.Rudling & Co., solicitors. Messrs.Rudling want the site for their own offices. In outlining their case, Mr.Cunningham's main points were the condition of the house and the position of the owner, Mr.A.G.Bagshaw, who said as witness that he had at one time thought that the older part of the house had really been the birthplace of Thomas Paine, but that he no longer thought so. During the time of his occupation of the house since 1941 only a handful of people had visited it.

Mr.A.J.Witton (principal of Thetford estate agents, Hawker & Witton), said that the condition of the house was bad and that from the statement made by Moncure Conway and others, he considered that it did not incorporate the birthplace of Thomas Paine.

Robert Barbour (of Lambert Scott & Innes, architects for Messrs.Rudling), gave an exhaustive report of the structural condition of the house. It was certainly in an appalling state. To bring it up to a state fit for occupation would require £25,000 - £30,000.

W.G.Crisp (senior partner of Messrs.Rudling), produced the most significant documents of the whole inquiry - title deeds to the present Grey Gables and surrounding properties "going back to the seventeenth century." From these documents Mr.Crisp claimed that the actual house in which Paine was born had been demolished. Members of the Society who were present had no knowledge of these documents and there was, of course, no opportunity to examine them thoroughly.

B.E.Partridge (of the Norfolk County Council's legal staff), stated that the Council was unwilling to spend money on the preservation of the building. The Architect of the Norfolk County Council, Mr.Noel Brandon-Jones, confirmed this, but did make some favourable remarks on the architectural qualities of parts of the building.

ADVERTISEMENT

PUBLICATIONS

THOMAS PAINE - PIONEER OF TWO WORLDS
by Chapman Cohen

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outstanding writer.

13p. postage included.

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by Robert W. Morrell

A reprint of a lecture given in London early this year.

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T.P.S. BULLETIN

Various back numbers available.

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Thomas Paine Society, 443, Meadow Lane, Nottingham, NG2 3GB, England.

Mr. William Ellis Clarke (Town Clerk of Thetford), made an interesting point that the Thetford Borough Council was by no means niggardly in its provisions for preserving buildings and was committed to spend £28,118 on this work. The decision of the Borough Council to approve the demolition of Grey Gables was taken by a majority of only one vote. The Mayor of Thetford, Mr. T. J. Lamb, vehemently opposed the demolition of the house and expressed his support for the minority on the Council who wished to retain the house. This element of conflict within the town of Thetford is of considerable interest.

Mr. Martin Whitworth (Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings), considered Grey Gables of significance, both historically and architecturally. It was a building of considerable character, and the environment would greatly lose by its demolition. It could be restored within reasonable economic costs, and he confirmed the figure of some £25,000 for this.

Mr. Christopher Brunel demonstrated that the Thetfordian view that Paine's birth-place still stood was not mere local legend. He listed material from 1809 by responsible local historians and others that referred to the house as being the birthplace. In fact, Thetford says to the world, "This is the house Thomas Paine was born in - this is the very room where he was born." The difficulty was in reconciling that with Conway's view of demolition to give way to a pretty garden and fountain.

The key was that it was only part of the original building that was pulled down - and not the part containing Paine's birth room. Mr. Brunel cited three pieces of evidence:

1. A Short Historical Guide to the Ancient Borough of Thetford by W. G. Clarke (Thetford, 1909). Clarke stated that Paine was born "in a room (still standing) in the older portion of the house now occupied by Mrs. Tyrrell...."
2. Eastern Daily Press (June 8, 1909), quoted in Paine Centenary Book (Thetford, 1909), where an account is given of Conway's visit to Thetford in 1900, and the contact made at that period with F. H. Millington. The house, said the author of the article, had been altered by Mr. G. Tyrrell - "the front part of the house was pulled down, but the back part, including this room, was preserved and incorporated with the new house. Mr. Millington thought the chain of evidence complete."
3. The Freethinker (London, February 5, 1939). George Bedborough tells in an article of a visit to the house in 1938. He recounts some of the alterations, and the rural side-street that led to it, known then as Paine's Drift. Mr. Bedborough says that the Town Clerk, George R. Blaydon* "has no doubt as to the genuineness of the still-standing house as the birthplace of Thomas Paine."

Mr. Brunel considered it significant that Millington's information was given to Conway in 1900, whereas Conway's book was first published in 1892; Conway died in November 1907, and later revisions were not made by him - e.g. the popular edition by Watts (London, 1909). It is this edition that is most frequently met with.

*Former Mayor of Thetford and Vice-President of the TPS until his death.

Mr. A. A. Rudlin (no relation to the solicitors T. E. Rudling), developed the Society's case for preservation. His local associations went back many generations. He mentioned letters of support for our case from the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. His opinion was that the main cause of dispute was money and that the responsibility for the preservation of the house rested with the local public bodies and the Department of the Environment itself, since the sum of £40,000 would be required to purchase the building, including the cost of renovation. This was a good example of flint and clunch work, and anyway eighteenth century buildings were not rubbish.

Mr. Rudling's statement that this was a public responsibility, locally and at ministry level, was greeted with applause. The only other person applauded at the Inquiry was Mr. F. A. Ridley, a Vice-President of the TPS, who was representing the London Secular Group. After giving a crisp biography of Paine, highlighting his contributions to the Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution, he concluded that Thetford would remain a place for admirers of Paine to celebrate in. This remark united those local interests, who wanted to preserve the character of the town, with those who praised Paine and his works.

Near neighbours of Grey Gables had their reasons for opposing the demolition proposal or the proposed offices to be built on the site. They included Mr. S. F. Burlingham, who lived in Thomas Paine Avenue, and who claimed to be the first to raise his voice against the demolition. He pointedly asked, "are our children going to say we had destroyed Old Thetford?" Since Mr. Burlingham's protest many others had been sent to the Council and the Inquiry. As Mr. Noel Brandon-Jones had said in his evidence, "Numerous letters of protest have continued to pour in."

The TPS has evidence of representations by the Ancient Monuments Society, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, and numerous Americans, including Professor Philip S. Foner, of Lincoln University, the editor of the Complete Writings of Thomas Paine (1945).

A. A. Rudling.

C. Brunel.

EXHIBITION

The Thomas Paine Society will mark the 180th. anniversary of the publication of the complete Rights of Man with an exhibition at the Marx Memorial Library, Highgate, London, of items drawn from private collections. Particulars soon.

Members of the Society having material they feel might be of interest for exhibition are invited to send particulars to the Secretary.

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