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An Extended History of the Remains of Thomas Paine

Hazel Burgess

The following saga combines the most comprehensive account yet of the fate of Thomas Paine's remains, the intriguing story of the recent discovery of a vestige of those, and the recounting of a bizarre, scientific endeavour to validate that piece. It is a tale of fact, probability and possibility. It is a personal rendition, not a scholarly work. Space does not here allow the full story, but it is hoped, in time, to elaborate on its historic components in a more substantial form. With the exception of some minor details of some few participants, the research for the extended paper is complete.

The story began in 1988 with the small circumstance of a newsagent having run out of my husband's preferred newspaper which, prior to retirement, he always bought on his way to work. He took another paper, and glanced at the front page before settling down to work. Later in the day, he opened the paper and, on reaching the seventh page, a large photograph caught his attention. It was captioned "Thoughts, thoughts ... the skull of Thomas Paine ...," and showed a woman behind a table on which a skull had been placed. The story told of the relic being that of Thomas Paine, one of the items on display at a forthcoming antiques fair. The accompanying article read:

A lot came out of Thomas's skull, including those great monuments of late 18th century political and religious thought, *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*.

But while Mr Paine's skull is not for sale, a lot of other things are.

The photograph and short report intrigued us, because my husband, John, has always accepted family tradition that he was directly descended from Paine; he had not read a biography to know that all who wrote of Paine's life told of his never having fathered a living child.

We decided to visit the antiques fair the following weekend

to view the skull. There, seeking the exhibitor, we found our way through the large rooms of the early nineteenth-century mansion where the fair was held. The object of our excursion was not visible, but, on asking the owner if we might see the skull of Paine, he reached behind a long-case clock and brought out a splendid, hand-crafted leather box which looked rather like a hat box. He opened it, and unwrapped several intact sheets of newspaper which proved to be from the *Sunday Express*, 29th May 1966. Beneath that were some torn and crumpled sheets of newspaper which later, after careful ironing, indicated their origin as being from the *Diss Express and Norfolk and Suffolk Journal*, 14th April 1899. Under the Diss paper were several layers of yellowed and stained soft tissue paper which, when removed, revealed the skull. It seemed small, and had the name "Tho^s Paine" inscribed in copperplate, ink writing on the frontal bone. The custodian of the piece explained that the mandible was not the original. Our attention was distracted, and we neither asked for, nor were given, an explanation.

John asked if he might hold the skull, but the dealer hesitated. My husband told his story, and showed some few possessions of his famous, supposed ancestor which were passed on to him when he was young. At that time, his grandmother had said, "You had better have these. Nobody else will be interested." The nature and markings of those relics identify them indubitably as having belonged to Paine. The dealer in fine antiques was fascinated with the story and relics. To our astonishment he said "This belongs to you," and handed the skull to my husband whose response was to stutter "B-b-b-but, th-th-this b-b-belongs to you. I can't take it. You paid for it somewhere." Nevertheless, the serendipitous coincidence of part of the remains of a long-lost "ancestor" appearing in the city where an interested "descendant" lived was too much to resist, so John offered to pay what the dealer had paid. "Done," he said. A minor condition of the purchase of the box and contents was that it remain at the exhibition until the following Monday as it had had some publicity, and people were asking to view it over the holiday weekend.

A few days later, in awe, we collected the prize. Excited and emotionally affected by our acquisition of something we thought to have been irretrievably lost, we opened the box to examine its contents. We gently unpacked the cranium and mandible. We then lifted out two pristine copies of a bicentennial edition of *Common*

Sense. Beneath these was an old, brown envelope which contained a smaller, yellowed envelope within which was a copy of the rare pamphlet, *A Brief History of the Remains of the Late Thomas Paine from the Time of Their Disinterment in 1819 by the Late William Cobbett, M.P. Down to the Year 1846*; it was printed in London in 1847. There was also an early albumen photograph depicting the tabernacle in the guild oratory of Or San Michele, Florence, possibly a nineteenth century Paine admirer's idea of a fitting monument to the great writer, the original having been to the Virgin Mary. On the back of the brown envelope, in handwriting yet unknown to me, was written:

Thomas Paine, died at Greenwich, New York 1809. Buried at New Rochelle.

Disinterred by William Cobbett in Sept. 1819, his remains were taken back to England by Cobbett in Nov. 1819, & kept by him at his house Normandy Farm near Farnham until his death in 1835. Cobbett's son then inscribed Paine's name on the skull & various limbs & put them in a tin trunk. Shortly afterwards he was arrested for debt, & the trunk & other Cobbett property was seized by the receiver, who held it until 1844 when the debts were discharged. Payment of these reduced Cobbett junior to become a farm labourer, and Paine's remains then passed to Mr. Tilly of Bedford Square London, who still had them in 1846.

The fact that the writer told of Tilly holding the remains in 1846 suggests that he knew of their whereabouts and had probably seen them that year. It is probable that the envelope and contents have been together with the skull since about 1853-54.

Examination of the skull and information contained in the pamphlet in the box suggested authenticity; Cobbett's eldest son, William, had "inscribed his name in several places on the skull and on most of the larger bones of the limbs." As he penned an article entitled "Where are Paine's Bones?," Moncure Daniel Conway was under the impression that this meant that Cobbett's son had inscribed his own name on the bones, but it is more likely that he wrote the name "Paine." An obvious inscription on the skull we had obtained is that already mentioned. With the aid of digitally enhanced high resolution photography, other markings became visible and worn scratchings, possibly of the name Paine, were discernible. My husband and I were of the opinion that it would be in nobody's interest to inscribe the name of Paine on a skull if it

was not that of the man himself.

Aware of the fact that Paine's remains had been exhumed by William Cobbett in 1819, and that they had subsequently become lost, it became obvious to us that there was an interesting story for the telling, or rather the writing. I began to research the life, times and posthumous career of Thomas Paine as I had never researched anything before. My findings astonished me, but those are the subject of a larger work than this. Fieldwork led me to many important documents in England and the United States of America, some of which corroborated parts of Conway's story of the remains. He had managed to purchase documents and relics, some now owned by the Thomas Paine National Historical Association of New Rochelle, New York. There I was shown a note written by Benjamin Tilly, William Cobbett's secretary, which Conway had acquired:

Tuesday January 7th 1833 at 1 o'clock at noon I went to 11 Bolt Court. Fleet Street, and there, with Mr Gutsell and Mr. Dean, I saw, at the house of Mr. Cobbett, the remains of Mr. Thomas Paine, (that were brought from America by Mr. C.) when I procured some of his hair, and from his skull I took a portion of his brain which had become hard, and which is almost perfectly black.

On either side of the skull's frontal bone, above the orbit, or eye socket, is evidence of scalping; The first cuts were deep, and left marked lacerations which deepened as the knife proceeded to the posterior of the skull. These markings verify the fact that hair was taken from the biological owner of the Sydney skull. The "portion of brain," which Conway described as being "about two inches by one, leaden in color, and quite hard," could only have been removed through the foramen magnum, the hole through which the spinal cord passes.

Again, on 2nd December 1839, Tilly removed more hair from the skeleton while it was held by the receiver, George West, who had a farm adjacent to that of William Cobbett which, after his death, was leased to a Mr R.D. Thomson. It seems that Tilly intended to fulfil Cobbett's purpose of Paine himself raising funds to erect his own monument. Fragments of his hair were to be enclosed in gold rings and sold as a means of paying for the memorial and his funeral "in a season, when twenty wagon-loads of flowers can be brought, to strew the road before the hearse."

Apart from the obvious inscription, the most noticeable feature of the skull is a deep depression on the forehead. The obvious result of an injury, one scientist who examined the piece suggested that it was the result of "a strike from a heavy pointed (but not a sharp) object." Healing processes have obscured signs of probable "cracking" which would have been evident at the time of the injury. It was thought that the injury occurred at least ten years prior to death, and that it would have shown during life as a "dimple on the skin." Thomas Paine might have suffered such an injury in 1779 at the height of the Silas Deane Affair, when the former's loyalty to the American cause was being questioned.

At that time, as he returned to his Philadelphia lodgings one night, Paine was spotted by some army officers and members of the legislature strolling in the opposite direction on their way home. They had enjoyed a fine dinner with the clothier, Mr Mease. One of the group, Colonel Attlee, on noticing Paine as he approached them in Market Street, announced to the party, "There comes 'Common Sense'." Matthias Slough of the legislature remarked, "Damn him, I shall common sense him," at which the party leaned against the wall. Slough is said to have tripped Paine, throwing him into a filthy gutter where he fell heavily on his back. As it was the antagonists who passed on the story, it is quite possible that the tripping of Paine was in fact a striking.

The only other known injury to Paine which might have caused such damage to his head was that recorded by James Cheetham; he wrote of Paine, in 1806, returning to stay with the Dean family of New Rochelle where he had spent some weeks in 1804. He was not welcome. He is said to have arrived with a gallon of rum, "and in the evening got so drunk that he fell from his chair, broke his nose, and sprinkled the room with his blood." It is most unlikely that the striking of Paine by an English army officer in Paris in 1793 or 1794 was vigorous enough to sustain such an injury.

The nose of the skull is broken, and deflects to the right as it would have done in life. On first sight of a photograph of Paine's death mask taken by John Wesley Jarvis, of which there are several in the literature, the most noticeable feature is the deviation of the nose to the right. The mask also shows the sunken upper lip of a man who may have lost his front teeth. All

four incisors are missing from the skull as are one canine tooth and one premolar. Another canine is chipped. Two premolars on the left side are sheared off at the gum line. This loss of teeth would account for the sunken appearance of the upper lip in the mask. It has been said that the cast of the nose to the right was a mistake or sloppiness on the part of Jarvis, but, if he was modelling from the head of the skull now in Sydney, his mask was from a true cast. In fact, Jarvis thought the mask his finest work, as did Dr John Francis who had "many opportunities of seeing Paine." It is worth adding that the face of the mask is pock-marked and the cheeks sunken.

The death mask exhibited at the Ancient House Museum at Thetford, Norfolk, was taken from the original cast. A fine illustration of it appeared with an article I wrote for the *Thetford and Breckland Magazine*, in 1996. That illustration clearly shows the indentation in the forehead that is obvious on the skull. From physical evidence and the comments of writers over the years, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the cranium; it is that of Thomas Paine. The same cannot be said for the mandible. Several scientists have examined it, and are unanimous that it is a splendid match in colour and age, but not a practical fit I have dismissed it as being that of Paine for the simple reason of its having no markings such as those to be found on the cranium.

The *Brighton Herald* of 6th February 1909 published an article telling of "a curious letter" that had been received by a well-known local antiquarian, a Mr Bartlett. The letter had been written by William van der Weyde, best known for his *Life and Works of Thomas Paine*. He was preparing that work and, apparently, following up information supplied to him by Moncure Conway shortly before the latter's death. According to the item in the paper, Conway had written that the antiquarian was "believed to know the whereabouts of Paine's skeleton." Unable to assist Van der Weyde, Bartlett passed on the request for information to the editor of the newspaper. A fascinating response came within days. Mr George Homewood, of Brighton, wrote of his grandfather, a widower, having married a Mrs Wilkinson, the widow of a Liverpool exciseman. During the exciseman's tenure, Cobbett landed with the bones of Paine. Mr Homewood wrote of the government not allowing the precious cargo into the country, and of the captain of the ship on which it had travelled having to take it back on board. Extraordinarily, the letter continued, the captain gave Mr Wilkinson

the jawbone which came into the possession of Homewood's grandfather when he married Wilkinson's widow. It is not true that the government refused entry of the bones into the country, but it is highly likely that, in order to overcome reluctance on Mr Wilkinson's part to allow them past his examination, the mandible was given to him by Cobbett as a bribe, or Wilkinson himself demanded the relic.

Mr Homewood's grandfather became schoolmaster in a village where he and his sister, Margaret Homewood, as children, visited their grandparents. One day, Margaret noticed a grave being dug in the churchyard. She ran home to tell her mother who immediately asked permission of her father to bury the mandible in the open grave. That she did and, within minutes, a body was interred and the grave filled.

The story was taken from the *Brighton Herald* of 13th February 1909 by the *London Star* which, in turn, was read by the Reverend George Reynolds who, it will be shown, played a major role not only in the distribution of Paine's remains, but also of many Cobbett manuscripts regarding not only the bones, but also the life of Paine. He immediately wrote to the *Star* refuting Homewood's story as impossible because he had in his possession a wax mask that Cobbett had taken in 1822. The mask, one of many, was made to prove to his detractors that he had not returned to England, as rumour had it, with the remains of an African or an old woman. The *Alexandria Gazette & Daily Advertiser* of 11th February 1802 had noted: "It is gravely asserted in the *London Courier*, that the bones that Cobbet [*sic*] took to England as the bones of Tom Paine, were the bones of a 'negro.'"

The Homewoods' story has persisted, and resurfaced at least twice. In 1924, the famous composer Algernon Ashton made enquiries of *The Standard* regarding the burial of Paine. Margaret Homewood read his letter, and contacted him telling her story of the open grave. He expressed great interest. In April, May, and June of 1951, Miss Homewood wrote several letters to interested people when, once again, Paine was the subject of a news item. In two of those letters, she described the location of the grave where her mother had laid the mandible. From her description, I have managed to locate the churchyard. I have no reason to doubt the Homewoods' stories, and am convinced that the mandible of Thomas Paine was buried as Miss Homewood recounted. The

biological owner of the jawbone that was visible in the corpse mask owned by the Reverend George Reynolds, the same as is now held in Sydney, will never be known.

On 5th July 1900, a small part of Paine's brain was sold to Moncure Daniel Conway by Charles Higham, a second-hand bookseller of Farringdon Street, London, who specialised in the trade of theological books. Conway did not personally purchase the prize; a letter held by the Thomas Paine National Historical Association at New Rochelle, addressed to him at the Hotel Strasbourg, Paris, reveals that the piece was bought on his behalf by a representative of the publishers G.P. Putnam's Sons. Dated 5th July, 1900, it reads:

I now enclose herewith a receipt for payment made on your behalf of £5. for the fragment of the Brain of Thomas Paine. I hold this to your order. I do not know at present of anyone crossing the Channel, but in the event of any friend of mine going across, I shall be only too pleased to be the means of conveying this fragment to you.

The signature is illegible. The enclosed receipt, on the letterhead of Charles Higham, is also dated 5th July 1900:

Received from Dr Moncure D Conway the sum of Five Pounds in payment for a fragment of Thomas Paine's Brain this being the whole of the fragment that I received from Mr George Reynolds and all that exists of Paine's brain to the best of my knowledge and belief.

The receipt was signed by Higham over a one penny Postage and Inland Revenue stamp.

Conway returned to America with his precious cargo and, in 1902, wrote of it being under a glass cover. In 1905 when he learned that the monument to Paine at New Rochelle, which had occupied several positions in the vicinity, was to be moved to the spot where it now stands, he decided that the brain should be interred as close as possible to the original grave site. On 14th October 1905, it was paraded before "thousands of persons who attended the public transfer of the key of the Paine monument to the city of New Rochelle." A report of the occasion concluded by noting that "the discovery of the brain of Paine leaves little doubt that the story told concerning the theft of his body, that it fell finally

into the hands of vandals, who cut it up and sold it for relics, is true".

George Reynolds, who had sold the portion of Paine's brain to Higham, acquired it in 1878 from a man named Timothy Ginn, a cabbie of Bethnal Green. At that time, Reynolds was a Baptist minister at Stepney, and Mr Ginn's daughters attended his chapel. Ginn was head of an extended family consisting of his wife, his mother, his sister, and his six children. It was with them that Benjamin Tilly, Cobbett's former secretary, boarded, and in their house at 3 Chester Place that he died of stomach cancer, in the presence of Ginn's wife Caroline, on 31st August 1869. He was possibly nursed by Ginn's sister, Adelaide, who was a monthly nurse. It is very likely that he left his few possessions to the Ginns, as suggested by Jabez Hunns, in recognition of their kindness in his illness. It is presumable that, apart from the skull and right hand of Paine, which became separated from the rest of his remains about 1853 or 1854 when Tilly became bankrupt, all relics of Paine, of which Tilly had been a diligent custodian for twenty five years, remained in possession of the family until purchased by Reynolds for £25. It will be shown that he bought more than the portion of brain, and withheld information of his ownership of other items when questioned on the matter by Conway and Hunns a few years later. He probably prevaricated in leading Conway to believe that he had been told by Mrs Ginn that she had sold the bones to a rag-and-bone collector. Conway wrote of that story being untrue, but did not elaborate. It is clear from my own research that stories of Paine's bones being made into buttons are not true; neither is the report of a rib being in France.

In either 1853 or 1854, the skull and right hand of Paine were purchased at auction by a Reverend Robert Ainslie. He was a Congregational Minister and writer, whose best known work was the first translation into English of Lobegott Friedricyh Konstantin Tischendorf's Greek text of the New Testament which followed his discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus, a notable manuscript of the Bible. Having been Minute Secretary to the London City Mission, with which he was associated from 1835 to 1844, Ainslie left as a result of having offended fifty four missionaries during one of his Saturday devotional meetings. With the skull and right hand of Paine among his belongings, he became Minister of the Unitarian Church at Brighton in 1860. He referred to both his church and himself as "unsectarian." He resigned in 1874.

It was by chance that Conway learned that Ainslie had been in possession of the Paine items. Soon after Conway had given a lecture on Paine in London in 1876, Edward Truelove, a well-known rationalist bookseller at 256 High Holborn contacted him, and recalled a gentleman who had visited his shop about 1853 or 1854. On noticing Paine's works on the shelves, the visitor offered the startling information that he was in possession of the great writer's skull and right hand. Truelove had once attended a lecture given by Ainslie, and recognised him as the former Secretary to the City Mission. The reverend gentleman refused to offer further information on either himself or his curios. Truelove expressed astonishment that such an orthodox person should take an interest in Paine, but it is now obvious that he did not realise that Ainslie had long left the Mission and set off on a rationalist journey of his own. It is possible that, on the day he told Truelove of his treasures, Ainslie purchased the very rare pamphlet that still rests in the leather box holding the skull. It is also possible that the box was crafted by or for him.

When Conway wrote to Robert Ainslie in 1877 to make enquiries about Paine's remains, his letter was answered by Ainslie's daughter, Margaretta, who informed him that her father had died. She wrote of having vague, childhood memories of the bones being in her father's possession, but knew nothing of their then whereabouts. Conway placed some reliance upon her information, and speculated that her father must have acquired the pieces prior to 1844 when the remains were brought to London from Surrey where they had been kept since Cobbett's death. It was impossible for Robert Ainslie to have had the bones prior to 1844, when they were forwarded to Tilly, because, as noted by William James Linton who wrote the *Brief History of the Remains in 1847*, Tilly was able to verify that they were the same that had been in Cobbett's possession. It seems obvious that the writer of the holograph on the reverse of the envelope containing a copy of Linton's pamphlet, which my husband obtained with the skull, had seen the remains, and confirmed the fact that they were entire in Tilly's possession at his abode in Bedford Square. I have compared the handwriting with that of Linton; it does not match. Surely the writer would have written with some anguish if the skull and right hand had been missing; he did not. Margaretta Ainslie's account of childhood memories must be dismissed.

The story told by her brother, Oliver, is more acceptable. According to Conway who himself interviewed him, Oliver told of their father, Robert Ainslie, having learned from his brother, a veterinary surgeon with connections to the estate of Lord King not far from where Cobbett had lived in Surrey, that the remains of Paine were at Richards' auction rooms, 43 Rathbone Place, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London. It was there that Reverend Ainslie acquired the two pieces, unknown to either Tilly or James Watson, the radical publisher, who kindly bought what he thought to be all of the former's goods and returned them to him. It seems that Watson might have arrived late at the auction rooms, and did not know that the skull and right hand had been removed from the box in which Tilly kept the remains and some manuscripts by William Cobbett. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Watson was concerned about the near loss of Paine's remains because in 1853 he spoke with Mr Joseph Cowen, an advocate of reform who became the Member of Parliament for Newcastle in the 1860s, regarding a public funeral and burial for Paine at Kensal Green Cemetery. They decided to call upon Tilly at his workplace where he was employed as a tailor for a Mr Swaine, described as a merchant clothier, who lived near St. Bride's church, Fleet Street. They found that Tilly had left without leaving an address where he might be contacted.

It is not surprising that Tilly had disappeared; his wife had died, he was poor, aging, and I suspect, probably did not wish to be found. He had moved from his lodgings in the house of the widow, Anna Prentice, at 13 Bedford Square, to stay with his niece at Norton Folgate, and, from there, to stay with the widow of an old friend, Mrs Ball, and her family. From there he moved to board with Mr and Mrs Ginn at Bethnal Green. His circumstances were reduced, and he would have had to pare down his belongings. In doing so, I think he might have opened Cobbett's box and discovered that the remains of Paine, of which he had taken great care, were not entire. He certainly knew before he died that the skull, if not the hand, was missing because he left a note telling how to recognise the skull of Thomas Paine. He became lost forever to those interested in carrying out Cobbett's plan for a monument, or even a humble burial at Kensal Green. Mrs Ball later described Tilly as "a kind, affectionate, and gentle old man; in fact, a perfect English gentleman." If my suspicion is right, such a man would not easily forgive himself; it is possible that he never did. James Watson died on 29th November, 1874, having sold his

publishing business to George Jacob Holyoake, probably believing that Tilly had disposed of the precious relics in his care.

Conway wrote of some of Paine's bones having been sighted by the Reverend Alexander Gordon, "a Unitarian tutor at Manchester," in 1873, who again heard of the bones in 1876. Gordon was a great scholar and fluent in several languages; he contributed to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and provided 778 biographies to the original volumes and two following supplements. In the early twentieth century, he became the first lecturer in Ecclesiastical History at Manchester University. Conway was under the impression that Gordon would have wished for a burial of the remains, possibly at Thetford. The bones seen by Gordon in 1873 were probably the skull and the right hand, both of those being in the possession of Reverend Ainslie, still a Unitarian minister at Brighton with whom Gordon would have been acquainted. Gordon's hearing again of the bones in 1876 was probably in discussion as to their whereabouts after Ainslie died in August that year. Soon after his death, according to Oliver Ainslie, the bones were taken by a Mr Penny. Ainslie's son claimed to have known no more of Penny than his name, not even his given name. In all probability, Penny was one Edward Penny of Brighton, who might have known Ainslie as the Unitarian minister. Working forward in time, the whereabouts of the right hand, at this stage, can be traced no further.

In reading Hunns's 1908 account of the handling of Paine's remains, it is obvious that he spoke at length with George Reynolds. He wrote of Reynolds being the "chief authority" for his article. Interestingly, Conway also had interviewed Reynolds, but neither he nor Hunns spoke with Timothy Ginn or his wife who, by the time they wrote on the remains, were dead. It is on the word of Reynolds alone that both writers accepted the fact that the bones were either handed over to a rag-and-bone man by Mrs Ginn after Tilly's death, or disposed of by some other means as intimated by Conway. As he noted, Mrs Ginn's story had "an accent of sophistication about it."

A note from James M. Dow of Liverpool appeared in *Notes and Queries* of 17th July 1909, in which he briefly told of Hunns's account of Paine's remains. He also told of his lately having been informed that part of the skull of Paine was in possession of Dr Stanton Coit, the well known American leader in the Ethical Culture

movement and opener of the first settlement house in New York in 1866. Dow's note brought a response, in the issue of 4th September, from H. Percy Ward, who also gave his address as Liverpool. He was a secularist who had once studied for the Ministry. He quoted Dow's statement and commented with a succinct "This is incorrect." He continued: "In May, 1902, the late Mr. G.J. Holyoake wrote to me that Dr. Clair J. Greece [sic] of Redhill has relics of Paine and his friends." "Relics" does not denote skull. To have known that Dr Coit did not hold the skull, Ward was either close to Coit with whom he had discussed the matter, or, he knew the exact whereabouts of the piece. It is tempting to think that he himself had it. It is possible. If he did, he most likely acquired it from the mysterious Mr Penny who relieved Oliver Ainslie of the skull that his father had purchased in 1853 or 1854. If I am correct in thinking Edward Penny was the same person, the 1901 census gave his age as seventy eight years, an age when one holding an extraordinary article would have been considering its destiny. If, as suggested above, that article changed hands in 1899, it might have gone to H. Percy Ward. A possible problem with this theory is the Diss paper of 1899; the identity of the person who wrapped the skull in the paper is not known.

On 2nd June 1966, an English newspaper published a story regarding parts of a skeleton which had recently been found buried in a tin trunk at Ash, Surrey. It was thought that it might have been that of Thomas Paine. Mr Ashton Booth, then Curator of Farnham Museum, examined the bones carefully; he was hoping to find traces of ink marking which William Cobbett's eldest son had placed on the larger bones of Paine's remains, and would prove that the bones were those of Paine. There were no ink markings, and the bones, dated as being about 150 years old, were dismissed as being part of a skeleton used by a medical student.

On reading reports of the finding of the bones in 1966, a London man unexpectedly contacted the Curator of Farnham Museum telling him that he had the skull of Paine in his possession. The Curator contacted the Chairman of the Thomas Paine Society to whom he had referred the London man. On 10th June 1966, the man visited the Chairman of the Society in London and showed him the skull. The Chairman told the man of his knowledge of a death-mask of Paine; they both thought it would be interesting to compare the two, the mask being in the possession

of a member of the Thomas Paine Society. I am not aware of the comparison ever being made, but a search of correspondence and personal records of members of the Society at that time may yield some information. It would seem that the matter faded into oblivion, but the fact that the Sydney skull was wrapped in a London newspaper of that very week suggests that it is the same as that seen in London in 1966.

Hopes of having found the resting place of Paine's bones were again raised on 18th July 1976 when a backhoe operator at Tivoli, New York, unearthed a seven-foot obelisk marked "In memory of Thomas Paine who was born at Thetford, England Jan. 29, 1737 Died at New York June 8, 1809 Aged 72 years 4 months And 9 days." The stone also bore the name of another person, John G. Lasher. This find too yielded no clues to the resting place of Paine. The stone had been personally chosen and inscribed on two sides to order by Lasher, who was known as a local "eccentric"; he was an admirer of Paine and wished to honour him on his own memorial.

Further interest in the remains of Paine was aroused in 1989 with publication of a speculative article suggesting that persistence of a local legend, said to have originated with the Cobbett family, gave some credence to his remains having been discreetly buried by a Cobbett descendant in the churchyard at Ash, Surrey, close to where Cobbett lived and died. That story may well be true, but there is no documentary evidence to support it. As with the mandible, the main skeleton might have been placed in an open grave. Nevertheless, by linking known facts and suggestions, it seems possible that by the end of the nineteenth century it was in possession of a most unlikely gentleman, the seller of theological literature, Charles Higham. To my knowledge, there have been no reported sightings of it since. Until now, with the exception of Ainslie and the man who revealed a skull in 1966, all who have held any of the bones of Paine have kept their ownership secret.

There are clues relating to the whereabouts of the skull over the last half century, but they remain to be covered in a later work. I managed to make contact with one person in the United Kingdom who had briefly held it in his possession in recent years, but he was reluctant to speak with me. He did tell me that he thought the person who passed it on to him was dead, little more. That is quite understandable in light of the fact that nobody can legally claim

ownership of another's remains. I am not aware, however, of any law against possession of an old box containing harmless contents.

I have sought diligently for any knowledge I have of the bones. Despite public appeals for information, none has come my way; the silence surrounding them endures. My husband and I have not maintained such silence. At a time when the Rare Books Library of the University of Sydney had an exhibition of material which had been suppressed over the years, we loaned the skull for discreet display in the same glass case as *The Age of Reason*, and other rare, early editions of works by Paine.

Beyond my husband, many people have been led to believe from family stories that they are directly descended from Paine. It occurred to me that DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) analysis and comparison may clarify the point. I contacted, and have been contacted by, a number of such people, several of whom have drawn up family trees. Beyond a certain point in the first half of the 19th century, none of them has managed to make the link to Paine.

As a PhD candidate at the University of Sydney, I was recommended by an academic member of staff to approach a scientist at the University of Queensland who he thought would be interested in assisting in my quest. I spoke with him, and he agreed to be involved as an external associate supervisor of my work which was to cross disciplines. He was intrigued with the story of the skull and the fact that he himself might play a part in solving a genealogical puzzle. I first met with him in Brisbane in 1996. Dr Tom Loy, whom I initially sounded out in 1995, also of the University of Queensland, had already agreed to take samples from the skull in an effort to extract DNA for comparison with that of living persons. As Dr Loy, best known for having pioneered the field of archaeological residue analysis and his research on the tools of Otzi the Iceman, was overseas at the time, a rather nervous colleague extracted the stump of a broken tooth from the skull and a small piece of bone from the nasal septum. The plan at that stage was to try to extract DNA from the samples which would be held until I found people, preferably males, claiming a line of descent from Paine who would be willing to offer blood samples or

other material for extraction and comparative analysis.

Of course, the obvious person to test first was my husband, but therein lay a problem. I had learned a little about the processes of DNA profiling, or fingerprinting, and realised that it would be an easier and less expensive process to find another male "descendant" who was directly descended in the male line. I knew that there were in existence some supposed relatives of our family who were still proud to be known by the name of Paine, but over the last eighty years or so they had drifted away and lost touch. Being a descendant of a known line of Burgesses traceable to the eighteenth century, but only four generations down from the wife of one who was a Miss Paine, my husband's descent was through a woman. For purposes of DNA profiling, that meant, if taking samples from the skull and him, one would have had to work back through Y chromosomes, interrupted by a generation of the X (female) chromosome, and back to Y. Such a procedure was and still is impossible. Women do not possess a Y chromosome so are incapable of passing it to their children. A woman's chromosomal composition is known as 46XX and a man's as 46XY, there being twenty-two pairs of autosomes to every sperm and one X and one Y. It is the X or Y chromosome that ensures transmission of hereditary characteristics and determines sex.

Both jointly with my external supervisor and on my own account, beginning in Australia, and later in England, I made broadcasts on national and local radio appealing for likely "descendants" to contact me. I found such men, but others, like my husband, could only make the connection through a woman. In the early stages of my work, my advisors led me to believe that those men by the name of Paine, who knew of stories in their families of descent from Paine, were the most desirable subjects for sampling. As I learned more about the processes of DNA analysis, I soon came to realise that following that path would be futile. The time *may* come when it will be possible to trace hereditary descent through the male line, but, at this stage of scientific development, the likelihood of a man even tracing his own father remains a mere matter of probability utterly lacking in certitude. Beyond that, there is the problem of possible lack of marital fidelity; the fact of a surname is not a guarantee of paternity.

The best way of attempting to match the skull with other material would have been to have had access to further biological

relics of Paine or the remains of his mother Frances Pain who was buried at St Cuthbert's Church, Thetford, on 18th May 1790. I admit to pondering upon the possibility of the latter course, but at no stage did I seriously consider exhumation of the bones of Frances Pain. Beyond my reluctance to disturb an old grave, I learned that the church was rebuilt in 1921 when the tower collapsed. All signs of a churchyard are long gone. Had that option been available, and approval given by church authorities for such an undertaking, it would have been the first time that excavation to obtain DNA material for such a scientific undertaking would have taken place. On making serendipitous finds, I decided to change my course.

During my research, I discovered that, apart from the brain, there were still some few physical relics of Paine in existence; the hair taken by Tilly had never been put into gold rings as envisioned by Cobbett. I realised it would be a more viable proposition in validating the skull to attempt to match it with one of these relics rather than seeking descendants. Scientific proof of the identity of the skull would satisfy the sceptics who scoffed at the idea of a vestige of Paine's remains having found its way to Australia. On sighting two swatches in the United States, at the Thomas Paine Memorial Museum at New Rochelle, I realised they met the criteria for sampling; there was soft tissue attached, roots and scalp, just as obtained by Benjamin Tilly long ago. Despite the wonderful cooperation of some former officers of the Association, similar circumstances to those that led to their departure and setting up of other organisations commemorating Paine, forced me to allow my membership to lapse and search for a similar vestige elsewhere. I had pieced together stories of the hair from various sources and found that there were at least five pieces and possibly up to ten. Two are held by the Museum at New Rochelle, and another is still held at the Thetford Library, Norfolk, in the town where Paine was born. As an interesting aside, when undertaking my research at the Goldsmiths' Library, University of London, I came across a small bottle containing locks of William Cobbett's own hair. It bore a typed label: "Mr Cobbett's Hair," and marked in the glass of the bottle itself was the following:

B. Keith & Co
Chemists
New York.

The hair was golden in colour. In the same collection were pieces

of wood from the house in which Thomas Paine was said to have been born.

Public awareness of the locks of hair that Tilly had removed from Paine's corpse did not seem to eventuate until 1887 when, in response to an enquiry on Paine's remains, Edward Smith, a biographer of Cobbett, mentioned that he held a lock of hair which he had acquired some years before. It is probable that Smith acquired this piece and other mementoes of Paine when George Reynolds became involved in "ruinous litigation." Perhaps he advertised, possibly by word of mouth, that he had such memorabilia for sale because he was contacted by Smith and Mr Kegan Paul. Whether or not the piece, which Smith presented to Conway, was sold to Smith is not clear, but it is known that Kegan Paul advised Reynolds to contact the British Museum regarding several of the pieces he had for sale. Hunns told of the Museum having purchased several of Cobbett's papers. I sighted these when researching at the British Library in 1996. At the front of the folios containing these papers, a librarian had noted: "Purchased of G. Reynolds 13 Dec. 1879." That was less than two years after his acquisition of the Paine items from the Ginn family. Those other remainders, pieces of hair cut from his head and intended as lasting keepsakes in golden rings, had begun their own separate journeyings.

It is probable that Reynolds gave Conway a second piece of hair about 1897 because in a letter dated 6th August 1909, written by Reynolds himself, he told of giving a piece to Smith, Conway and Hunns. (He had, no doubt, read Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine*, published in 1892.) Reynolds's letter told of how he kept a remaining piece of hair found in an oiled paper on which was written "Mr Paine's hair brought from Normandy Farm on 21st January 1836 by Mr Wm Oldfield." I have doubts about Reynolds having kept the hair beyond 1879, but he was certainly in possession of it again by 1897. At the time he was suffering his financial problems, all that he had of the Paine relics that he did not sell to Edward Smith, Kegan Paul, the British Museum or Cobbett's son, James Paul, were sold to a friend, Louis Breeze. It is probably the piece of hair from that collection that is now at Thetford Library in the Thomas Paine Collection. Shortly before Breeze died late in 1897, Reynolds repurchased all that he had sold to him with the exception of some pamphlets and books which he regained at the sale of Breeze's effects. He did not recover an

oil painting of Paine or two portraits of Cobbett.

In 1908, Hunns wrote that Reynolds gave him a piece of hair. Reynolds had obviously treasured his collection and thought about the disposal of items after his death. At the Paine Memorial Museum at New Rochelle, I sighted an envelope bearing the following typewritten note:

Portion of the hair of the late Mr. Thomas Paine. Taken from an envelope with the following in the handwriting of Mr. B. Tilly: "Mr. Paine's hair brought from Normandy farm 21 Jan'y, 1836, by Mr. Oldfield."

The original packet of hair is in the possession of George Reynolds, Rookstone, Woodford Green.

The typed signature was Jabez Hunns. I saw the envelope containing the hair and, having seen Tilly's writing, know that Hunns was mistaken. The writing on the envelope was not that of Tilly.

In the previously mentioned letter that Reynolds wrote to the *Brighton Star*, published 13th February, 1909, he told of having the hair that was removed from Paine's skull in 1833. Five years later, on the reverse of Hunns's typed envelope, William Van der Weyde noted, as had Hunns, that the original packet of hair was in the possession of Reynolds. Van der Weyde continued: "together with the original inscription on packet in Tilly's writing, and other locks, &c., left by Tilly, has since (in 1914) been purchased from Mr. Reynolds by the Thomas Paine Nat'l Historical Association." He signed himself as President of the Association, 1924, and did not mention the number of locks.

George Reynolds retained several of his relics. He led Hunns to believe that, due to failing eyesight and a wish that they should be kept together, he offered them first to a grandson of William Cobbett. He was not interested, so the entire collection was sold to Charles Higham who sold part of Paine's brain to Moncure Conway in 1900. I have, however, shown that Reynolds still had swatches of hair which were bought by the Thomas Paine National Historical Association in 1914. In offering the material to Higham, Reynolds told Hunns, he hoped that Higham would advertise it in his catalogue so that it might capture the interest of a public institution or an interested person. It is clear that the brain

had gone to Higham, but Reynolds still held some hair. In my opinion, it is possible that he held more than hair.

The hair now held in the collection at Thetford Library was possibly purchased from Higham at about this time, but it is more probable that it was bought from Reynolds himself about 1914 by Ambrose Barker, a prominent proponent of anarchism and atheism throughout his adult life. Paine's hair was in his possession up to the time of his death in 1953.

So much for the dissemination of Paine's hair.

As shown above, the late twentieth century rekindled curiosity in Paine's remains when I embarked on the endeavour to obtain DNA from the skull and hair. There was rather more publicity than I should have liked, but my contacts at the University of Queensland sought and were given press coverage. As frequently happens when stories are passed on to journalists, they were picked up by other journalists and distorted beyond recognition and published beyond Australia.

The problems of obtaining hair samples from The Thomas Paine Memorial Museum had a rebounding effect. In order that it might be seen that all analyses were fairly practised, I planned to have the American samples tested in the United States. Without funding or wealth, I was dependent upon the benevolence of any scientist willing to undertake the extraction of DNA and compare it with the material already extracted in Australia which would be sent to the States.

I spoke with many but located only one willing scientist, a man of high profile and an international reputation. However, by then, problems had arisen that made it impossible for me to utilise the hair held in the States. As mentioned earlier, I turned my attention elsewhere, to the United Kingdom. Having learned of the expense that would be involved and the awkward inconvenience of forwarding extracted DNA from Australia to the United Kingdom, I decided to consult again with Dr Tom Loy of the University of Queensland. I was prepared to avail myself of the commercial services his department offered if I could obtain a sample from England.

The hair at Thetford was not without its own problems; a

great deal of time was spent in establishing its ownership and the legalities of sampling it. I was assured by Mrs Sue Holt of the Thetford Library that the items in the Thomas Paine Collection were "available on deposit and available for public consultation and permanently safeguarded." The planned exercise did not contravene the conditions. The Librarian took great care to make sure that the Library's legal department and the Thomas Paine Society had full knowledge of the planned procedure, although I soon learned that the piece was in fact privately owned. The venture was to be the first attempt in the world to compare long separated biological relics of an individual figure of history.

Having established that the owner is the present Secretary of the Thomas Paine Society, he agreed to a sample being taken. He had bought the Ambrose Barker collection, and placed the relic in the Library as part of the Thomas Paine Collection. Dr Loy was happy to do the work, and all I needed to do was to find an interested scientist in England who would take a sample from the hair under the sterile conditions required by Dr Loy. I was extremely fortunate in locating an interested biologist in Professor Godfrey Hewitt of the University of East Anglia, a short trip from Thetford. Professor Hewitt agreed to take the sample and, with Loy's requirements for the sterile conditions and method of sampling sent to Hewitt, the project was, after several years of negotiations, contact with likely people, and many disappointments, under way. I did not ask Professor Hewitt to attempt any DNA analyses. The comparison was to be done in Australia.

Dr Loy advised that a further sample from the skull would be required. The submission date for my doctoral thesis, of which the scientific endeavour was to form a part, was approaching fast, but I was confident of including the results, be they positive or negative, despite Dr Loy's tardiness in responding to correspondence. When I heard from Professor Hewitt that he had taken the sample at Thetford on 1st February, 2001, I confirmed with Dr Loy that my husband and I would visit his laboratory at the University of Queensland on 7th February. Professor Hewitt had his doubts about the hair. He thought "some dark material adhering" to it might be "blood, dye or other." He was very surprised to find that the hair was dark. He wrote to Dr Loy, with a copy to me: "Thomas Paine was 73 when he died, and most certainly grey. So the hair is either not his or from earlier times." Conway had noted that the

hair he owned was "soft and dark, with a reddish tinge."

John and I, together with my external supervisor who had, some time before, resigned from his position with the University of Queensland to set up a private commercial laboratory, met with Dr Loy as arranged. He was fascinated with the skull, photographs of the hair, and documentation on Paine's remains which I had taken with me. After discussing the enterprise, we donned masks and gowns before entering the sterility of his inner, clean room where the skull had been irradiated with ultraviolet light to remove any contamination from handling since exhumation. Dr Loy had a student to assist him, later described by Loy as a "very sharp paleopathologist." All being done under strictly sterile conditions, the student held the skull steady on silver foil while Dr Loy drilled a hole through the bone and obtained small fragments of cancellous (porous) bone from within the mastoid process close to the right ear opening. After gentle shaking from the skull through the foramen magnum onto the foil, the sample was ground into a powder with a pestle and mortar.

Having discussed my thesis and research at some length, and how I had moved from seeking people to relics, as we were leaving, Dr Loy's student asked if he might extract some eyebrow hairs from my husband. I thought to myself that to do that he should have approval of his University's Ethics Committee, such as I had sought and obtained from the University of Sydney prior to travelling overseas in 1996, and the written consent of my husband. As I thought on that, I decided it was a good idea as, some time in the remote future, science may develop improved methods of establishing kinship rather than having to rely heavily on mitochondrial DNA, the DNA of each individual inherited intact from his or her mother. The hairs could be stored in the student's care. Some were taken, and I decided the matter of formal consent could wait until such time as they were subjected to analysis, if ever. So far as we were concerned, that was the end of matters; it remained for Dr Loy to endeavour to extract DNA from the material he had secured.

The business done, we returned to Sydney. So much had all participants enjoyed the morning that I quite forgot to pay the required deposit. I emailed Dr Loy with an apology to which he replied not to pay anything until I received an official invoice after receipt of the full report. I anticipated that report with enormous

interest. In the meantime, according to Loy, the sample had not arrived from the United Kingdom. I was anxious to thank the English scientists for the part they had played, so after some time and no news from Brisbane informing me of its arrival, I prodded him. In an email of 8th March, he told of the hair having arrived about a week before. He described "a sample of short hairs in a congealed mat of as yet unknown material, 'perhaps blood or dye or other'" as observed by Professor Hewitt. Loy mentioned that he planned a laboratory day for that very day when he'd look at it and let me know what could be seen under a microscope. He also said he would be able to verify that the hair was human, promising to send the results to both Hewitt and myself.

I was impressed. I had the report that same evening. It concluded: the hair was human; it was a mixture of colours ranging from light straw yellow to a darker brown, but including a few grey strands; the congealed matter was almost certainly blood. A couple of red blood cells were evident; what appeared to be a fragment of skin was embedded in the blood with the hairs; the sample had come from a deceased person who had been in contact with, or buried in, clay soil (this observation was based on the presence on the skull of vivianite, a dark blue/greenish mineral which occurs as concretions in clay); the sample was covered with a network of waste matter of insects and web silk suggestive of soil mites and indicative of contact with soil particles. In all, Loy concluded that the hair sample was of "some antiquity," had been in contact with soil or soil particles, and was human. Simple tests to follow would confirm or deny the congealed matter being blood. Only one third to half the sample would be used for DNA analysis and the rest left in case of any future testing being required.

I heard nothing more but, knowing how busy and involved Dr Loy was with other matters, dismissed my concerns, although I had been led to believe that analysis time would be in the order of approximately thirty days. I too was busy, finishing off other aspects of my thesis. With the project now understood to be on a commercial basis, and hoping to have results soon, I sent a cheque in the amount of half the full fee to him. I felt the arrangement to be on a more solid basis with a deposit in place. I had heard nothing by December so telephoned Dr Loy. He had some results, but not very useful for our purpose. He did know with certainty that both the skull and hair/blood sample were from the same maternal population group, that being British. He was able to

rule out German, Scandinavian, Spanish/Portugese, Italian, etc. as the maternal population group. He mentioned that the DNA was damaged which prevented the usual testing for identity and sex. However, all was not lost, his team had a repair project under way and they hoped to have prepared a methodology in three months or so. The Paine project was second on the list for analysis as soon as a "reliable repair" had been achieved.

The months went by and I completed my thesis but for the scientific side of the story. I nudged Dr Loy several times, each message more urgent than the last. Eventually, in response to a one-worded message, "TOM!," I received a strange reply in light of the brief of which he had complete understanding. The entire project had changed direction. Loy told of discussing the situation in terms of scalping and "other Paleopatholy [sic]," with the student whose expertise lay in that field, "and further DNA analysis." It was agreed between them that the student could write a much more detailed pathology report "including scalping and the healed depressed fracture" on the forehead of the skull. Also, Dr Loy wanted to have "another crack" at DNA analysis, but he needed further "raw material." I was asked if it would be possible to travel to Queensland "in the very near future." The student's analysis could be done in a day, and DNA sampling would take only twenty minutes or so. It was considered that, with results having been so long in coming and results inconclusive, my payment to date was all that would be charged inclusive of any future analysis. My opinion was sought.

My opinion was that it was time to ask questions. I queried my being told the previous year of the DNA being damaged and asked if that meant post-sampling or degraded by age. I asked, if it was the latter, would not another sample produce the same results? I asked if the repair technique had been perfected. If so, would not a little extra time help in making use of the DNA already extracted? I asked if it was possible to work with the DNA extracted in 1996, and mentioned that at the time Dr Loy had concluded that the subject was male. I had been told that some of that sample was held in case any further testing would be required. I quoted his messages with dates and mentioned that, before I would consider anything, I required answers; he had already had two "cracks" at DNA analysis from three samples. I did not want to subject the skull to further impairment, and another trip to Brisbane was more than I could afford. In just over an hour, I

had a reply. Yes, Loy still had DNA from the tooth in his freezer; he had forgotten that he had it. And, yes, "it may be possible to attempt to re-extract from the bone sample recently taken." However, the extraction method was so efficient that it left little behind. As to damage, it happens that during the process of post-mortem drying out of bone and the eventual stabilisation of the DNA, some damage is sustained. This is caused by enzymes present in cells which are part of the repair mechanism in the living cell. Beyond this, water and other compounds change into ruinous "free radicals" which damage the DNA at random, but, once stabilised, there is little further damage until efforts to extract and amplify the DNA. It was hoped that there would be some measure of DNA repair by mid-June, and my samples would be "at the top of the list" once the repair process could be controlled. My response was further questioning regarding the utility of the 1996 extraction and, if it was of sufficient quantity, would not use of that at that stage be a viable option? I did not receive a reply.

In mid-June, I again wrote to Dr Loy asking if he had managed to achieve a repair process and, if not, was it likely to be achieved in the foreseeable future? I further asked whether anything at all had been done with the DNA extraction taken in 1996, and if it was necessary to wait on achieving "some measure of DNA repair." It was time to tell him that it was well past time that I had a report of what had been done, what had been impossible to do, or simply what had not been done. It was time to tell him that I had not had my money's worth (a four figure sum), and to remind him, as he well knew, that journalists were harassing me seeking results. I found it embarrassing to tell them that there was nothing to report. Once again, I did not receive a reply. It was time to take the matter further.

A few days later, I wrote to the Dean of the School which employed Dr Loy telling the full story and offering him copies of all correspondence. All I asked was a written explanation, completion of the project as far as was then possible, and/or a reasonable refund. All I had received for my money was a collection of contradictory emails. I should have appreciated the expected and promised return, a written report. Copies of my letter were sent to the Head of School, the Director of the commercial arm of the Department, Dr Loy, and to the Chair of the Department at the University of Sydney in which I was working on my thesis. Within four days of writing, I had a reply from the Director of the

commercial arm. He was most apologetic, and wrote of having instituted an investigation to determine the state of the consultancy, the causes of the delays, and the best way of bringing the project to a successful conclusion as quickly as possible. He asked for copies of my correspondence with Loy, assured me that he was available to me at any time, and would write again soon. Dr Loy proved to be out of the country. Despite sending reminder emails on 6th and 8th August to the Director, I did not have a reply. Meantime my thesis had been submitted with the scientific details relegated to an inconclusive appendix; all that could be said was that the skull and hair samples were from the same population group, British, and that the matter of my not having been provided with a report was being investigated.

It was, again, time to go further, to the top, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Queensland. I sent him an email on 15th August with a copy of the self-explanatory letter I had sent to Dr Loy's superiors. I also sent the same content in a formal letter of the same date. I waited; there was no longer any urgency. Seven weeks on, I had still heard nothing from Queensland. On 26th September, I picked up the telephone, rang the Vice-Chancellor's office, and asked to speak with him. I was given the expected reply: "He's not here, he is at a meeting." I did not mind the lack of confidentiality, so told his secretary that I had written to him on 15th August and had not had the courtesy of a reply. I was told that she would check a database, and call me back. To my astonishment, she did, informing me that the letter had been forwarded to the Executive Dean and that I would be hearing from the Deputy Vice Chancellor with some "information." Again, I waited.

I telephoned the secretary again on 14th October. She assured me she had personally seen a letter written to me by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on 2nd October. She said she would photocopy it and send it to me. A letter dated 2nd October, processed by Australia Post on 13th October, arrived on 17th October. It was an original signed letter, on letterhead, not from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, but the Vice-Chancellor. The writer had had an opportunity to investigate the matters raised in my letter. His response was absurd in light of the occasional email reports I had had from Dr Loy. He told how the tooth sample had degraded in storage, but in 2001, was crushed and another extraction taken, but it yielded nothing; the hair sample was

entirely destroyed after repeated sub sampling; and the entire sample from the skull was eventually used. The results of the exercise revealed that the skull was from a male person, the skull sample did not share a common maternal lineage with my husband, but, most surprising of all the results, it was found that the hair sample DNA was from a micro organism. I had been informed that it and the skull were from the same maternal population group, that being British. The writer also believed that I had been furnished with a full report on the findings; he understood that no target date was set for the completion of the analyses and report, and that Dr.Loy had explained the difficulties they were encountering. At the same time, he felt that I was justified in feeling that I had had too little information. The scientists, he wrote, had been informed that they must respond in a timely fashion to communications from clients. He understood my disappointment with the results. The entire fabrication was reminiscent of the description of Nanki-Poo's execution as it unfolded in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*. The letter necessitated a reply.

In a letter of 25th October, of necessity long and involved, I informed the Vice-Chancellor that he had been misinformed; that I was not disappointed with the results because I had not been informed of any results; and was still waiting for the work to be completed. I asked, if possible, that Dr Loy should continue with the project. So far as I was aware from our communications, DNA from the tooth was available, the more recent extraction from the skull might have proved viable, and there should have been sufficient hair to continue. If it was not possible to continue, I asked that I be furnished with a full report from Dr Loy of what had been done, the state of the hair sample, the difficulties encountered, the reasons for discrepancies in the information provided to the Vice-Chancellor and to me, and what, if any, valid conclusions were reached in comparing samples. I sought a refund for services not performed or any unauthorised service; the latter covered misuse of an unapproved sample taken from my husband, and unnecessary pathological observations. I also told of the need to fulfil the request made by the owner of the hair when he approved the project, that I write a summary of it for the journal in which it appears. It was necessary to advise the Vice-Chancellor that his letter did not constitute a report such as might have been expected from reading the summary of services offered, and that it was antithetical to the short "reports" I had received. My letter

brought a response by express post in the form of a large plastic envelope, received on 15th November, but of the two letters therein one, unsigned, was dated 15th August.

The day on which I first emailed the Vice-Chancellor was 15th August. He had not then received my formal letter, but perhaps, or perhaps not, had then stirred the Director of the commercial service. Obviously back-dating his letter, he advised me that all the delays had been due to the diligent work that had been put into the project, the latest being his personal insistence that every possible attempt be made to produce a positive result. Images of the aforementioned description of execution resurfaced. Enclosed were a report and a CD outlining in brief all the laboratory procedures that were undertaken and possible explanations for the inconclusive results. In light of the delays and the results, I was offered negotiable discussion on the fee I had paid. It was pointed out that it was not normal to reduce the fee on obtaining such results, but due to the lengthy time delays, it seemed "appropriate." The letter ended with an apology that the institution had not been able to supply the positive results I was seeking. I was quite prepared, at all times, to accept a negative result, but I was not prepared for the astonishing correspondence still to come. I read the report, of which the CD was an exact copy; it was ridiculous. In the opening summary of fourteen lines, which included the conclusion, the brief was described as concerning three separate questions: whether the skull was from a male human; to investigate any population affinity between the skull and my husband; and to report on pathological features consistent with it being that of Thomas Paine. At no time were these questions part of the brief. It was established as early as 1990 that the skull was male, a fact ascertained by examination of muscle attachment (that of a male is more robust than that of a female). My husband was not concerned in the investigation, and all the pathological features had already been noted before Dr Loy was engaged.

However, the conclusion was that DNA sexing revealed that the skull was from a male; the skull and my husband were not of the same mitochondrial subgroup which indicated they did not share the same maternal lineage; and pathology provided the clearest evidence that the skull is that of Paine.

The second letter that accompanied the report was dated 13th November; it was from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Not

surprisingly, as I should have been had I been given the task of dealing with this extraordinary matter, he seemed to find it tiresome. He told me the Vice-Chancellor himself had provided me with a detailed statement of the sequence of events and results, and of his "fear" that the report that was sent to me by the Archaeological Unit on 17th August had not been received. He enclosed a second version, which he hoped I'd find interesting, together with the letter of 15th August. There was further correspondence; I requested the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to seek for me an explanation in writing from Dr Loy of the many inconsistencies in the various "reports," the reason for use of material from my husband, and credible clarification of those matters for inclusion in this article, the planning of which Loy was aware. My letter was acknowledged and, I was told, passed to Dr Loy, it being "entirely up to him as to whether he engages in any further dialogue" about this matter. He advised that he himself would not be entering into any further correspondence. By then I was not interested in further correspondence or seeking a refund.

There, sadly, ended an exciting project that, regardless of positive or negative results, either expected, was a fascinating enterprise which captured the interest of the international press. Unfortunately, the truth of the matter will never be known. It is known, however, that Dr Loy's work has been called into question on other occasions. That, however, does not necessarily detract from his professional aptitude as a teacher. His knowledge in his field was impressive.

As mentioned above, I have presented facts briefly, and speculated on possibilities; I have shared the wonder of our acquiring an intriguing box and contents; and I've faithfully recounted the drawn-out ordeal of an unfathomable business arrangement. The story ends with a tragic twist. When concluding this account, I thought to discover what project Dr Loy was currently engaged in. I was shocked to learn that he died just over a year ago. To my knowledge, his death has never been explained, apart from the fact that foul play was not suspected. He died alone and was not found for some days. He was a personable man who initially showed enthusiasm for the Paine project.

Book Review

D. M. Bennett, *The Truth Seeker*. Roderick Bradford. 412pp. Illustrated. Hardbound. Prometheus Books, 2006. ISBN 13 978 1 59102430 9. £22.99

Roderick Bradford's new biography of publisher D. M. Bennett tells the story of a great free speech advocate and reform campaigner. Bennett's career was an important milestone in the struggle for the freedom of the press. But *The Truth Seeker* is also a tale of religious persecution, of an "American Inquisition."

D. M. Bennett's life is the tale a journey from religious belief to unbelief and the consequences of unbelief in a religious society. Bennett began his adult life in one of the most radical religious experiments in history, the Shakers, but his lifelong intellectual pilgrimage led him to establish America's longest running freethought journal, a periodical he called *The Truth Seeker*, "dedicated to science, morals, freethought, and human happiness." In our own age of worldwide religious upheaval, it is more important than ever for historians to help rebuild our knowledge and sense of connection to the great democratic currents of the past. Roderick Bradford's book is an important contribution to that end and a groundbreaking biography of the man he calls America's "free-speech martyr."

Bennett began his early adult life as a Shaker "physician," a vocation probably dependent on herbs, prayer, and the devoted attention to the ill. He eloped from the celibate religious community in the company of friends who included a woman, Mary Wicks, with whom he was enamoured. They married almost immediately and began a life in pharmacy, patent medicine, and seed-growing.

Bennett added his own name to an already influential roster when he cited Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* as the book that turned his mind from religious superstition to reason. A long agricultural drought in the Midwest led the Paris, Illinois seedsman into a debate on the efficacy of prayer for rain with two local clergymen. When local newspapers printed the views of the clergy, but not Bennett's, he decided to publish his own paper. That decision had a profound impact on the history of democratic reform.

D. M. Bennett and his Truth Seeker Press fought a monumental and precedent setting free speech battle with the infamous postal censor, Anthony Comstock. The sixty-year old publisher was prosecuted for mailing a free love apologetic by Ezra Heywood entitled *Cupid's Yokes*. Bennett was eventually sentenced to hard labour at New York's notorious Albany State Prison, but not before his legal case led to the Supreme Court of the United States in *The United States v D. M. Bennett*. That decision established the legal standard for obscenity in America that prevailed well into the second half of the twentieth century. Bradford's history of the *Hicklin* standard for obscenity is just one of the many valuable historical studies that the author weaves into his biography of Bennett.

Bennett's shame, humiliation, and depression at his incarceration probably did more to kill him than whatever labour he was subjected to. The hearts of family and his many friends in the freethought community were broken. Bennett's may have been, too. He lived only about a year after his release. Bradford gives his readers a moving tale and a powerful case for Bennett's long overdue recognition as an American martyr for freedom of conscience and of the press.

Roderick Bradford is an accomplished independent historian who brings a lifetime of study to this work. He provides an insightful view of Shaker life and history. Who would have guessed that a prominent and respected Quaker leader, Elder Frederick Evans, would have been among Bennett's most loyal defenders during his trial and incarceration for obscenity? The author explores, too, the ideological assumptions of Manifest Destiny and their relationship to Christianity. And who remembers the National Defence Association, a direct predecessor to the American Civil Liberties Union? Why did spiritualism or communication with the dead become the most popular fad of late nineteenth century reformers? Bradford draws on his own wide-ranging interests and experience to create a comprehensive and integral lesson in nineteenth-century reform history.

Scholars and historians will appreciate Bradford's extensive notes and documentation, frequently the highlight of the work. In support of the main text, they provide a wealth of arcana on Bennett's 19th century reform allies like Francis Abbot, Albert Rawson, Mark Twain, Lucy N. Colman, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Edison.

Combined with a comprehensive and logical index, they form the backbone of a generous and valuable source of historical reference, the product of ten years' intensive research.

Remarkably, Bennett's freethought and reform periodical, *The Truth Seeker* is still published near San Diego, California as a more or less quarterly journal, its reputation and circulation both the apparent victims of successive mid to late twentieth century flirtations with vegetarianism, anti-semitism, flying saucers, and conspiracy theorists. With the exception of the anti-semitism, Bennett might have approved. Late in life, Bennett became a devotee of spiritism and theosophy, chapters in Bennett's life that provide more entertaining grist for Bradford's mill. *The Truth Seeker* magazine is nonetheless dear to those who know its history, honour its contributions, and wish it success.

Roderick Bradford's new biography of D. M. Bennett breaks new ground in our understanding of the history of democratic reform and repays an important debt of gratitude. We often overlook those to whom we are honestly indebted. The danger is that, in our forgetfulness, we fail either to learn from the past or enjoy the inspiration and sense of community that come with the knowledge and appreciation of our authentic reform traditions. Rod Bradford's biography of D. M. Bennett is a significant contribution to the scholarship of the nineteenth century that commemorates a heroic free speech activist and restores a vital piece of that memory.

Kenneth Burchell.

PAINE'S INFLUENCE ON 19th and 20th CENTURY RADICALS, SECULARISTS AND REPUBLICANS

Terry Liddle

Text of a talk given at the Thomas Paine Society AGM, November 4, 2006 in Conway Hall.

The advertised title of this talk/article is something of a misnomer. It will go well beyond South London and will include the 20th as well as the 19th century.

Described by T. E. Uttley of the *Daily Telegraph* as "that evil man Tom Paine", Thomas Paine was for generations of radicals, secularists and republicans an example and an inspiration. My first port of call was the Great Harry public house in Woolwich. On the walls there is a pictorial display about Paine and Cobbett, which rightly says that Cobbett married the daughter of a sergeant stationed in Woolwich. It also claims that Paine had a staymaker's shop in Woolwich High Street, but I've been unable to find any evidence of this. What is certain is that from the 1830s the area became a centre of radicalism and secularism.

The link between the Jacobin Corresponding Societies of the late 18th century and the Chartists of the mid 19th century was the tailor Francis Place. While awaiting the birth of his child, Place read Paine's *The Age of Reason*. So impressed was he by the book that he sought out its owner who persuaded him to join the London Corresponding Society. Place remarked that Paine and Burke had made every Englishman a politician. In 1796 Place decided to produce a cheap edition of *The Age of Reason* feeling sure he could sell 2,000 copies through the LCS. The printer Thomas Williams was sentenced to a year's hard labour for producing a seditious and blasphemous libel. In 1819 Place offered to help Richard Carlile who had been imprisoned for publishing *The Age of Reason*. Place wrote for Carlile's *Republican*, which he produced from behind bars. The *Republican* for February 22, 1822 reported a gathering in Stockport to celebrate the natal day of Mr Paine "whom Englishmen ought to

consider the greatest man their island ever produced."

By the mid 1830s Place was a member of the Chartist London Working Men's Association which had been formed by Dr James Black. In the *London Mercury* of March 4 1837 Bronterre O' Brien reported a meeting of 4,000 democrats in the Crown and Anchor in The Strand. (The tavern had been the scene of a celebratory dinner for the radical Unitarian Jerimiah Joyce on his acquittal on a charge of treason. As a member of the Society for Constitutional Information he had been involved in the distribution of 200,000 copies of Paine's *Rights of Man* at the low price of 6d. It was later a meeting place for supporters of the 1832 Reform Act): He wrote that Henry Vincent had given " a capital spicy hash of Paine's exposure of Blackstone's old humbug about the checks of our nicely balanced Constitution." One London Chartist group named itself for Paine, others took the names of Wat Tyler and William Wallace.

O'Brien, editor of *The Poor Man's Guardian* and biographer of Robespierre, had read and admired Paine's *Agrarian Justice* in which "the contrast of affluence and wretchedness...like dead and living bodies chained together" is attributed to the landed monopoly. In a speech made in Glasgow he said "Read Paine...and a host of others and they will tell you labour is the only genuine property." For making a similar speech in 1840 O'Brien was imprisoned for seditious conspiracy. In prison he was allowed to read only the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

A close associate of O'Brien was George Julian Harney. Born in Deptford (the local Chartists met in the Earl Grey pub in Straightsmouth, Greenwich), he went to sea at 14 and on his return became printshop boy at the *Poor Man's Guardian*. Harney organised the East London Democratic Association described by Dr David Goodway as a Painite Club. With a membership of 4,000 it had a strong base in the impoverished Spitalfields silk weavers. Harney edited several Chartist publications the best known of which is the *Red Republican* in which appeared the first English translation of the *Communist Manifesto*. Whenever Harney mentioned Paine's name he printed it in capitals. The issue for October 5, 1850 carried an article on Paine's trial in 1792 for publishing "his admirable and unanswerable attack on Kingcraft - *Rights of Man*."

At numerous Chartist dinners and banquets (such events were less likely to attract the attention of the authorities than overtly political meetings) Paine's name was toasted with great gusto.

As Chartism declined as a national force many members joined secular societies. The Greenwich and Deptford Secular Society was formed by Victor Le Lubez, a freemason and member of the First International, in 1862. In 1865 secularists in nearby Woolwich and Plumstead held a tea party and soiree to celebrate Paine. Such events were quite common. Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* for February 19, 1871 carried a report of a meeting in Liverpool "We had an address from Mr Watts on Paine" On January 31 there had been a ball and soiree in the New Hall of Science, Old Street, to celebrate Paine's birthday. The proceeds went to the Secular Sunday School Fund. The Association of Eclectics in Glasgow had celebrated Paine's birthday on February 2. The meeting was enlivened by songs and recitations. The *National Reformer* for February 4, 1872 reported an address on Paine's birthday given to the South Staffordshire and East Worcester Secular Union.

Some secularists named their children after Paine. The *National Reformer* of July 20, 1873 reported that a Mr and Mrs Coates of the Manchester Secular Institute had named their son Thomas Paine in a ceremony conducted by Harriet Law. The leading Hastings secularist and republican Alfred King also named his son Thomas Paine. Sadly the boy died as an infant.

Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner's *The Reformer* published in its issue for May 15, 1897 a previously unpublished letter from Paine to Thomas Jefferson with a commentary by Moncure Conway, Paine's biographer.

The Bradford secularist and socialist J. W. Gott published a monthly *The Truthseeker* to promote mental freedom and social progress. A special issue carried a cartoon of Paine surrounded by the symbols of his struggle for liberty. The August 1902 issue had a quotation from Paine on its front page and a "marvellously cheap" edition of *The Age of Reason* was advertised price 6d. Gott was the last Englishman to be imprisoned for blasphemy, his imprisonment led to his premature death.

1909 was the centenary of Paine's death. The National Secular Society held various events to mark the event. *The Freethinker*

January 31, 1909 reprinted an article from the *Toronto Secular Thought* by Michael Monahan which pointed out that Paine was 5 inches taller than President Roosevelt who had called Paine " a dirty little atheist". The issue for February 7 carried an advertisement for an edition of *The Age of Reason* published by the Edinburgh Rationalist Club. The March 7 issue reprinted an article from the *Brighton Herald* which claimed that Paine's jawbone had come into the hands of a Mrs Wilkinson of Liverpool. It was claimed a member of her family had buried it in an Anglican churchyard. Branches of the NSS held open air meetings on Paine. Bethnal Green branch held in Victoria Park addressed by F. A Davies. There were two lectures in Birmingham Bull Ring and one in Liverpool by H Percy Ward, a former Wesleyan preacher who had been secretary of the British Secular League. The main event was a meeting in St James Hall, Great Portland Street. Speakers included Herbert Burrows, Harry Snell, Chapman Cohen and G. W. Foote. Watts reprinted Conway's biography of Paine for the Rationalist Press Association. It sold at half a crown. *The Times* of June 8 published an article on Paine calling him the greatest of pamphleteers.

1937 was the bicentenary of Paine's birth, *The Freethinker* for January 31 was a special Paine issue with a portrait on the front page. At the time illustrations in the radical press were rare. Chapman Cohen spoke at NSS branch meetings in Liverpool on *Paine The Pioneer. The Man That shook The World* and on Clapham Common W Kent spoke. NSS members were urged to step up their sales of *The Age of Reason*. It sold for 4p, Ingersoll's *Oration On Paine* cost 2d. The West London branch sold both at Hyde Park. *The Freethinker* for March 14 published an article on Paine and Bourgeois Myths by Jack Lindsay. Another article by H. Cutner was entitled *The Apostle of Liberty*. A bicentenary dinner at which 200 people were present was organised in the Holborn Restaurant, High Holborn. Tickets were 8 shillings and Cohen took the chair. Evening dress was optional. The BBC refused to make a broadcast about Paine but a meeting was held in Thetford with the Mayor in the chair.

In 1965 F. A. Ridley, who had edited *The Freethinker* , was writing about Paine in the Independent Labour Party's weekly, which he had also edited. On a different level Harvey's brewery of Lewes makes an excellent Paine ale and in the original *Star Trek* series a star ship was named for Paine. Another was called *Potemkin*.

2009 will provide many opportunities to celebrate Paine but best of all would be the final victory of his struggle against kingcraft and priestcraft.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

With regret so soon after the author's death, I write regarding the article "Thomas Paine: Observations on Methodism and His Marriage to Mary Lambert" by George Hindmarch published in the last edition of *The Journal of Radical History of the Thomas Paine Society*.

It is an interesting and well-researched piece, but disappointing in that the author gave no sources. I should like to point out that discovery of the baptism and death entries of the infant Sarah Pain, as found in the records of the Parish of St Lawrence in Thanet, was mine. Mention of the child unfortunately leads into Mr Hindmarch's speculation of Paine never having known his daughter. I don't believe this to have been so. The article reads as if Mr Hindmarch was presenting his own research. He and I corresponded and exchanged thoughts. When I told him of my discovery, he replied in a letter of 27th February, 1998, that he thought it "sensational."

Mr Hindmarch was generous in telling me of his work and I promised I would acknowledge any of his findings should I use them. As it happened, I did not consult his works for any writings I have done. I found the two I had read interesting, but did not use them. In a letter of 12th June, 1999, he told me he would like to incorporate my findings on the birth of a child to Thomas and Mary Pain into his long-prepared writing on Paine's early years, so I published in a small way that he might have a source for reference. He did not use it; my article appeared in the *Thomas Paine Society Bulletin and Journal of Radical History*, 5:3, No.6. November 2001, pp. 7-10. Reproductions of the entries are on p. 8. That article was a corrected version of an earlier piece, "To Thomas, a Daughter," *Thetford Magazine*, Summer 2000, pp. 14-6

Hazel Burgess.

PAINE IN AMERICA 1774-77

Peter Gawthrop

How did Thomas Paine come to have such a seminal influence in the American struggle for independence? When he arrived in the American colonies in November 1774, he was 38 years old, and up to that time had experienced a chequered but unexceptional career. There was no indication that within the next three years he would become a famous, and to many infamous, political writer who would play a significant part in the founding of the United States of America. Paine had previously worked as a staymaker, sailor, excise officer, shopkeeper and teacher, and had shown no signs of great literary talent. Whilst living in London he had met Benjamin Franklin, at that time an agent representing American interests in Britain, who gave him a letter of introduction to Richard Bache, his son-in-law who lived in Philadelphia. Paine rented accommodation in the city and visited a nearby bookshop, getting to know the owner Robert Aitken, who was also a printer and publisher.

Editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*

Aitken offered Paine the job of editing a new publication, *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, early in 1775. Paine wrote many of the articles appearing in the magazine himself, often anonymously or using pseudonyms. He covered a wide range of topics, including scientific, literary, social and political matters, and soon developed an accessible and convincing writing style. This was a critical time in the relations between the American colonies and the London government. The Boston Tea Party had occurred in December 1773, the first Continental Congress of the American States met in September 1774 and in April 1775 British and American forces clashed near Boston at the battles of Lexington and Concord. During May the Americans captured Fort Ticonderoga and George Washington was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the newly established Continental Army.

Paine became preoccupied with the idea of independence for the American colonies and during the autumn months he worked on a pamphlet developing his views and calling for action which he discussed in detail with Benjamin Rush, Samuel Adams and

Benjamin Franklin. The final version, *Common Sense*, called for an immediate declaration of independence and was published in January 1776. It was an instant and outstanding best-seller with subsequent editions, many of them pirated, running into hundreds of thousands of copies appearing all over North America and Europe. Translations were made into French, German and Polish and in Britain reprints were published in London, Edinburgh and Newcastle.

At war with Washington's army

Paine volunteered for service with the American Continental Army immediately after the formal Declaration of Independence in July 1776. He joined a local group of volunteers and acted as secretary to their leader Daniel Roberdeau, a Philadelphia merchant. The scratch force marched to Amboy on the New Jersey coast, where they watched the arrival of shiploads of British reinforcements across the straits on Staten Island. They were not called upon to take part in any action and, depleted by desertions, returned to Philadelphia in September. Paine did not go back with them but travelled north to Fort Lee on the west bank of the Hudson River across from present day Harlem. Here he became ADC to General Nathaniel Greene, the ambitious young commander of American forces at Fort Lee and Fort Washington, the latter being a strategic site on the eastern bank of the river. Another period of waiting and observation ensued with Paine messing and working closely with General Greene and his officers. He was also acting as a special correspondent for Philadelphia newspapers, giving them first hand morale boosting reports of local skirmishes and the activities of troops from Pennsylvania.

General Greene was confident that he could hold off the British forces, but he was wrong. They soon captured Fort Washington and crossed to the west bank of the Hudson River north of Fort Lee. The Americans, including Paine, were forced into a long retreat, often under enemy fire. They passed through Hackensack and then Newark, New Brunswick and on to the River Delaware at Trenton, which was later taken by the British. Paine went back to Philadelphia where he quickly prepared the first of a series of essays called *The American Crisis*. This was a rallying cry to re-invigorate the officers and men of the demoralised army and bolster the support of wavering Congress delegates and countrymen. Sections of it were read out to American troops,

including those who took part in Washington's daring Christmas night crossing of the River Delaware and subsequent victories. The stirring words have re-echoed down the years and been quoted by modern right wing politicians: "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

In January 1777 Payne completed a second part of *The American Crisis* and then became involved in Pennsylvania Assembly matters related to Native American and constitutional affairs. At this time he was in need of a steady source of income and, supported by John Adams, he was appointed Secretary to the newly formed Congress Committee for Foreign Affairs in April. Paine's involvement with Washington's army was renewed later in the year after the Continental Army was defeated at Brandywine in September. British troops marching up from Chesapeake Bay threatened Philadelphia. Paine hurriedly completed part IV of *The American Crisis* and arranged to have copies printed and distributed at his own expense before fleeing from the threatened city. In October he joined the American troops near Germanstown, a small village 5 miles north of Philadelphia. Here Washington attacked the British in dense fog, which caused confusion on both sides, and after a hard fought battle the Americans lost the day with heavy casualties. Paine breakfasted with Washington on the morning after the battle when they were able to review events and discuss the difficulties of managing armies. During the remainder of the year he went on to prepare reports for the Committee for Foreign Affairs and to carry out special duties and reconnaissance for General Greene and the Pennsylvania Assembly. He spent Christmas 1777 with his friends the Joseph and Mary Kirkbride who lived on the west bank of the Delaware, across the river from Bordentown in New Jersey, where he later bought a house.

Conclusion

The first three years in America were critical to Thomas Paine's development as a political thinker. They marked his change from being an unknown individual to a man who could influence world events and they were part of the preparation for his later great work *The Rights of Man*. When Paine arrived at Philadelphia in 1774 he was an unknown individual with no great literary skills. His

only credential was a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin suggesting that he was suitable for employment as a clerk, assistant teacher or assistant surveyor. Three years later in 1777 he was widely known in North America and Europe as a persuasive political writer who was the main inspiration of the call for American independence; he was a confidant and adviser to George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and others; and he was the holder of an important government appointment. But also in this period there were indications of some of the difficulties which would recur later in Paine's life.

The most significant of these was shortage of money. Paine never intended to profit from his writings, though publishers and printers in North America and Europe certainly did. In his enthusiasm he often commissioned printing at his own expense and he originally proposed that any profits from *Common Sense* should be split half and half between the publisher and a fund to supply clothing to the Army. This arrangement, and others, got bogged down in acrimonious disputes, and Paine was often pursued by printers with claims for costs whilst his works were also being widely pirated. This lack of financial acumen dogged Paine's later life. He was naïve and disorderly when it came to many matters of day to day living, giving his detractors grounds to denigrate his abilities. All this was surpassed by his achievements between 1774 and 1777 when he played a major part in the foundation of the United States of America.

Main sources: *Tom Paine - A Political Life* by John Keane published by Bloomsbury, London in 1995, is an invaluable source for anyone interested in Paine's life and work. On the American Revolution *The Glorious Cause - The American Revolution 1763-1789* by Robert Middlekauf (Oxford University Press, 2005) and *Rebels and Redcoats - The American Revolutionary War* by Hugh Bicheno (Harper Collins, London, 2004) are good recent publications.

**GENDER, RELIGION AND RADICALISM IN THE
LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY** by Judith
Jennings. Illustrated. 204pp. ISBN 0 7546 5500.
£55.00

This excellent book, sub-titled "The 'Ingenious Quaker' and Her Connections", came my way by chance. I enjoyed reading it.

It is well presented, and beautifully printed. The scholarship is rigorous. The book itself is easy to handle, and the text well written. It is meticulously indexed.

Although a Quaker I knew nothing of Mary Morris Knowles, sometimes called Molly Knowles, nor of her patient determination to live her faith so fearlessly and - more or less - without pretension. Her constancy shines through the text; so does her single mindedness in holding to her beliefs and mounting her attack when forced so to do without bitterness even when wrongly accused, and always with considerable fortitude. A certain tenacity emerges, but one devoid, apparently, of jealousy or pettiness.

Born in 1733 as Mary Morris, Knowles was an accomplished eighteenth century artist and writer who struggled successfully to express her gender within the turbulent ups & downs of George the Third's reign. That vibrant century with its agricultural and industrial revolutions, the emergence of Wesley and English Methodism, the new sciences, the challenge of slavery, the French and American revolutions, Thomas Paine and other enlightened thinkers, but then the loss of the American colonies - could not have been an easy stage on which a woman might make her case, let alone win it. But Knowles was no ordinary woman. She deliberately cultivated new forms of "polite Quakerism" which stood her in good stead throughout life - not least with non-Quakers. She also knew how to use humour so as to subvert traditional Quakerism.

Knowles was a "middling" woman by way of social standing. But she emerges under the skilful eye of author Jennings (Kentucky Foundation for Women, USA), as a powerful, determined woman who thought for herself and acted accordingly - regardless of class, wealth, or standing.

Because of their commitment to non-violence, their assumption of equality as between men and women, their rejection of titles and honours including clericalism, Quakers who sought social advancement were mostly excluded from the recognised norms for making progress – the Crown and its royal court, the Church of England, or the military. Their idiosyncratic faith obliged them to find their own way notwithstanding these closed doors.

Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries many Quakers turned to industry, commerce, or manufacturing for their living. Increasingly, education and science also became an open and creative field of endeavour for many of them. Mainly because of their honesty and plain speaking they performed brilliantly - as the great banking families of Lloyds and Barclays, the manufacturers Carr (biscuits), Cadbury, Rowntree and Fry (chocolates), Clarke of Street (footwear) and many others, demonstrated. Often the entrepreneurs became embarrassingly wealthy as a consequence of their probity and inventiveness. Power came their way, frequently to their inner embarrassment.

Knowles, doubly handicapped as a woman and a Quaker, found her way through force of personality, diligence, and clarity of thought. In not a few instances she helped to create or shape prevailing social conditions.

She chose her own husband when most women did not. Dr. Thomas Knowles was an expert in treating fever, although he would die of it in due course. Their marriage was happy and fulfilled. Knowles was also able to count amongst her personal friends many of the leading Quaker bankers, some of the principle manufacturers and educationalists, many writers and poets. Unusually she was destined to be recognised by the King and became a visitor at court, yet without bending before it.

Her style was to communicate by way of poetry – the heroic couplet more often than not. She travelled widely, enjoyed good health, engaged in music, and a new form of needlework. In the process she developed her radical politics without rancour or bitterness. Moreover, inner serenity and a blend of gender confidence arising from clear religious convictions formed a solid basis for life. By probing these characteristics in the "most minute of particulars" as Ashmole might have observed, Jennings reveals

new insights which rarely appear in the lexicon of standard British history.

Knowles' life was punctuated by a handful of events or occasions which became her "concerns" – itself a special word in Quaker philosophy.

From her twenties she helped to pioneer the new art form of "needle painting". Later Dr. Johnson was to call her art "the sutable pictures which imitate tapestry". It changed her life for on seeing examples of her work the Queen, in 1771, invited her to embroider a full size portrait of her husband, King George the Third. It was an outstanding success such that it went into the Royal collection where it remains today. The King, mightily pleased, gave her £800 (sterling) for her endeavours – a considerable sum of money in the eighteenth century. Knowles was also made welcome in court as, a century earlier, had been Wm Penn who founded Pennsylvania but whose father had been an Admiral of the Fleet.

Both "portraits" and "access to the court" must have been problematic for the Quaker needle painter – but once settled in her mind that her independence had not been compromised, Knowles would not be diverted. She knew that, "Those who tread in Courts tread in slippery places." Her commitment to political liberty and all that flows from that concept emerges as the constant of her personal morality. Jennings unravels this process with sound analysis.

In 1776 Knowles met James Boswell and then the formidable Dr. Samuel Johnson over dinner. Others were present including John Wilkes and his supporter Arthur Lee as well as other radical Whigs. Their host was the liberal Quaker Edward Dilly. Typically, Knowles was the only woman present.

The American colonies were a major subject for debate – but so therefore were religion and liberty – especially women's liberty on which subject Johnson was decidedly negative, complex and, at times, contradictory. He placed individual liberty lower than social cohesion and so had little sympathy for the American revolutionaries.

Knowles' position was the opposite - she abhorred slavery. Being a Quaker she held it self evident that "that there is that of God in

every person". The Quakers were largely responsible for forming the Anti-Slavery Society which continues the work today.

Her argument with Johnson and Boswell embraced the case of a young Jamaican woman – Jane Harry – who had decided to quit the Church of England and was later to attend Quaker meetings. Eventually Harry was disowned by her adopted family and was looked after by the Knowles. Knowles directly disputed Johnson's position. She defended the right of the Jamaican to choose her own religion. She also rebuked Johnson for his negative attitude towards Quakers whom he disparagingly classified as "deists". The dispute thus laid between them was to rumble on for decades.

From the outset of their many encounters Knowles steadfastly claimed that Boswell took no notes during much of the argument as to her own contribution, nor when they met again to dispute much the same range of subjects. She maintained that Boswell only wrote later in respect of her contribution from memory. She asserted that he had paraphrased her contribution, getting it wrong in the process. When Boswell and Johnson visited her in 1790 so as to read to her Boswell's narrative of her earlier meetings with Johnson, Knowles declared that "it was not genuine". It contained too many "fabrications and suppressions". Subsequently, she published her own account. Boswell refused to recognise its authenticity.

It is within the interstices of the arguments which flourished over the years that Jennings is able to unveil and pin-point aspects of gender, morality, liberty, freedom for colonists, the social limits of toleration (Harry), the meaning of death, of Quakerism and the like, which other historians have tended to ignore – except with passing reference. Knowles analysed issues painstakingly. She drew radical conclusions consistent with her spiritual beliefs. Henceforth, Knowles would speak and write carefully, but without restraint and largely in contradiction to what the Doctor claimed, or judged. She gave no quarter whatsoever.

In June 1788, for example, to take but one typical example, Knowles crafted the verse,

"The various tints the human face adorn,
To glorious Liberty Mankind are born:
O, May the hands which rais'd this fav'rite weed (tobacco)

Be loos'd in mercy and the slave be freed!"

Here is what Jennings calls "a female expression of the radical commitment to "glorious liberty".". Knowles viewed liberty as the birthright of all. For her, liberty encompassed politics as well as religion,". ".....liberty had become a rational, non-sectarian, universal, human right", she wrote. We still need to understand that insight two centuries later. She advocated the freeing of all slaves. She practised and extolled the virtues of her Quakerism; she promoted the virtues of liberty and tolerance, especially for women.

Knowles discussed Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* Part 1 with her close Quaker friend, Anne Seward. She also quoted from Paine's *Age of Reason* that "had Quaker taste presided at the Creation what a drab world we should have had." (1794). Two years earlier Seward & Knowles had discussed Paine's *Rights of Man* Part 11 when the former criticised "Paine's pernicious and impossible system for equal rights." This radical difference between the two women gave rise to "sharp tension" for Knowles supported the French Revolution and wholeheartedly approved of Mary Wollstonecraft's, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

Motherhood and a happy, secure marriage were critical to Knowles' understanding of life. She secured and held on to lifelong friendships, not least within the Society of Friends, but also well outside that community. Her verse, her wit, and her fearless but consistent honesty, transcended even her feminism.

The French Revolution as well as lesser issues were dissected, debated and fought over when necessary. She never backed off. Issues included deism, water baptism, wealth, beauty and public fame, all of which featured in her verses, as well as in her discussions with friends and those experts or commentators whom she met.

At the end Knowles, now a rich woman carefully arranged for the transfer of 50 – 60 thousand pounds prior to her death to her son, George, by way of a "Deed of Gift". Prudent to the end, yet despite having practised "polite Quakerliness" all her life, she was finally assailed by doubt as death approached. She died on the morning of 3rd February 1807, aged 73 years.

The real virtue of this riveting analysis of a highly intelligent woman who could and did match any man or alleged "expert" who came her way is in the light it shines on the way the great issues of the day were meticulously discussed in homes and saloons, in court and coffee houses by otherwise ordinary men and women. Many of the issues she tackled through her verse, the exchange of letters, or by debate remain to be resolved 200 years later. But as a guiding light Knowles, an extraordinary woman, can be trusted and followed.

-Brian Walker.

WOULD THOMAS PAINE END UP IN AN ORANGE JUMPSUIT TODAY?

Mickey Z

The coast-to-coast mall known as America just loves to sing the praises of its revolutionary heroes – the land-owning white slaveholders affectionately called "Founding Fathers." But America, the land of denial, would rather ignore the revolutionary roots and spirit behind its birth. In other words, if pamphleteer Tom Paine were around today, well, he might not be around today. Can you say "enemy combatant?"

We are often told actions speak louder than words but the life of Thomas Paine (1737-1809) tells a different story. Born in England, Paine eventually found a home as resident radical in the Colonies. His mutinous pamphlet, "Common Sense," was written anonymously, published in January 1776, and promptly read by every single member of the Continental Congress.

Time out: Every member of Congress read "Common Sense."
(Insert your own punch line here.)

Paine's "Common Sense" went on to sell roughly 500,000 copies and helped inspire a fledgling nation to fight for its independence.

Hold on a minute; we need another time out: A seditious pamphlet sold a half-million copies in 1776. To perform a similar feat today, an author would have to sell more than 46 million books. I doubt even Oprah could make that happen.

"Common Sense" stirred the spirits of colonial America by putting into words what those seeking freedom from British rule had been feeling for long, long time. Viewed through the prism of the twenty-first century, Paine's prose reads, at times, like something one might hear at a hokey school play, for example: "O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mind."

But, dated vernacular aside, "Common Sense" does make clear what Paine is trying to provoke, e.g. "I have never met with a man, either in England or America, who hath not confessed his opinion, that a separation between the countries, would take place one time or other. And there is no instance in which we have shown less judgment, than in endeavouring to describe, what we call, the ripeness or fitness of the Continent for independence."

"Common Sense" popularized the concept that even a good government is, at best, a necessary evil. Paine effectively demonized King George III and argued against a small island nation like England ruling a continent on the other side of the ocean. Perhaps most importantly, "Common Sense" painted a post-independence picture of peace and prosperity. More so than the battles at Lexington and Concord – which preceded the release of Paine's influential pamphlet – it was "Common Sense" that served as the spark to light the revolutionary flame (which is today more honoured in the breach).

"These are the times that try men's souls," Paine once wrote. "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

Standing up against tyranny today rarely results in glory.

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