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## PAINE'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, AND OTHER COUNTRIES INFLUENCED BY HIS IDEAS

Audrey Taylor

Thomas Paine, an Englishman born in 1739, first became interested in politics when he was living at Lewes in Sussex. Here he joined the Headstrong Club, a society for young men who wished to debate current affairs, politics and poetry. Subsequently he went to work in London where he attended meetings of the Royal Society. Here he had the opportunity of meeting many learned men. This was the beginning of his programme of self-education. In London Paine met specialists in many fields. The one, which intrigued him most, apart from politics, was astronomy, and he drew on his knowledge of this subject many years later when he was writing The Age of Reason.

Books on Paine have been published by scholars seeking to salvage him from oblivion. However they have either aimed their works at other scholars or have failed to reach a popular audience, beyond the academic community. Politicians and polemicists regularly quote him as one of their own; but they usually invoke him only by pulling a phrase out of his texts for present-minded utilitarian purposes. Such partial references to him offer no sense of the man, and distort him into a convenient icon. But, Paine is too important a leading political philosopher of his day, too significant in his exposition of democratic thought and prophecy into the future, to merit this treatment.

This paper will discuss Paine's involvement in the American and French Revolutions. Though he participated in a wide range of activities related to these events, his most effective contribution was through his writings, Paine's involvement in the American War of Independence will be considered in two sections, relating to (1) *Common Sense* and the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, and (2) the *War of Independence* against the forces of King George III together with the *Crisis* pamphlets. This paper will then set out Thomas Paine's involvement in the French Revolution, covering (1) his reply to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, (2) Paine's *the Rights of Man*, and (3) the French National Assembly and Committee to formulate the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, and finally (4) Thomas Paine's return to France for the next 10 years.

At present work is being done both in North America and in England<sup>ii</sup>, which is aimed at authenticating how much the American Declaration of Independence depended for content and form on Thomas Paine. It is well known that Paine came close to losing the fight to establish democracy within the ruling circles in the American Colonies, because of the wish of John

Adams, an American Federalist Congressman, who wanted to have a monarchy in the new United States of America. Paine would never have accepted this, because, to him, democracy was everything.

## PAINE'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

works arrived from Moscow and were translated from Russian into local languages. Therefore it can be said that Thomas Paine was influential from his lifetime to the present day whenever a country has sought its independence.

This was the first indication of Thomas Paine's influence after he wrote Common Sense in which he finally recommended a separation from Britain of these Colonies which he named the United States of America. Thomas Paine decided to join the Colonists' Army following the British Army's massacre of the British Colonists at Lexington and Concord. He was then asked to become our equivalent of a war correspondent and then he wrote the American Crisis series. When there was a tremendous shortage of money in America he made a visit to France to ask them for financial help, which Louis XVI was only too willing to make. By the end of the War of Independence the British Colonists were ready to prepare their Declaration of Independence in which they set forth the rules by which their new country would be run, as suggested by Thomas Paine.

Unfortunately they did not take his advice where slavery was concerned and so had to wait for the outcome of the Civil War before being forced to give slaves their freedom. Paine told the founding fathers that they were unjust in demanding their freedom from Britain when they were not giving freedom to their slaves, who were separated from their families and never paid.

### American War of Independence and the Crisis Series

Paine enlisted in July 1776 with the 'flying camp' a mobile body of one thousand men forming the militia of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Paine was attached to the Pennsylvania division. He served first as volunteer secretary to General Roberdeau and then at Fort Lee on the western bank of the River Hudson, where he became aide-de-camp to General Nathanael Green, retreating with the Continental Army to its winter base in Brunswick, New Jersey.

In Modern terms, Paine was asked to be a war correspondent, enlarging on his series of pamphlets called Crisis (December 1776 to December 1783) on the ideas and principles first sketched in Common Sense, which had crystallized, at least in part, in the Colonists' bold Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776. They began at a genuine moment of crisis for the American troops. In the summer of 1776, the American army had retreated across the Hudson River to New Jersey: Among Americans hatred

of the British army ran high : They were as Paine noted, with some sharpness, in many cases not even British, but Prussians, Brunswickers, German dragoons and Indians with scalping knives. There were even Russian soldiers with their typical weapons the knout.

George Washington, leader of the Colonists' Army, could only muster five thousand men at the Delaware River, although later they were joined by General Williamson's group of soldiers and the Philadelphia militia. This was all the Americans who were available to fight the entire force of soldiers led by the British General, Sir William Howe. Washington had been pressed back along the Hudson River, while Howe occupied Manhattan Island, Long Island and Staten Island, and in December, Paine says that Washington wrote sadly:

"Your imagination can scarce extend to a situation more distressing than upon the speedy enlistment of a new army. If this fails I think the game will be pretty well up, as from disaffection and want of spirit and fortitude, the inhabitants, instead of resistance, are offering submission and taking from General Howe in Jersey."<sup>iii</sup>

The army's situation as Washington had informed the President of Congress, was extremely bad as many of the troops were so thinly clad as to be unfit for their jobs. It was a bitter, icy winter with Arctic winds penetrating the men's scanty clothes and with their feet wrapped in rags, owing to the lack of shoes and supplies. In November, Fort Lee had been surprised and Paine with the soldiers of Washington's Army had retreated in haste, abandoning the boiling kettles and much-needed food baking in the American ovens, to the British.

To his relief Paine had discovered that he did not lack physical courage. However he discovered a different weakness and wrote of it in one of the earliest issues of *Crisis*, addressed to Howe. He wrote with typical sympathy of a soldier's psychological problems:

"We cannot alter nature, neither ought we to punish the son because the father got him in a cowardly mood. However, I believe most men have more courage than they know of, and that a little at first is enough to begin with. I knew the time when I thought the whistling of a cannon ball would have frightened me almost to death: But I have since tried it and find that I can stand it with as little discomfort, and, I believe, with a much easier conscience than your lordship."<sup>iv</sup>

His sincerity was not in doubt. When Paine was at Trenton with the Pennsylvania Navy Board, he urged the men to set fire to the British fleet on the Delaware River, and was restrained with difficulty from personally carrying out the project. In December 1776 alarmed by American defeats and determined to bolster the cause of independence, Paine published the first of

his *Crisis* essays,<sup>v</sup> which built upon the foundation of *Common Sense*. Washington's great Christmas victory at Trenton, a notable turning point of the war, was achieved by troops heartened and inspired by this publication. No.1 contains the most quoted passage that Paine ever wrote:

"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. Tyranny like hell is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."<sup>vi</sup>

Refuting British arguments for American surrender, rallying the Americans' morale and exhorting the Revolutionaries to continue the war, Paine carefully timed his essays and other articles for maximum political effect. The *Crisis* series proved as popular and successful as *Common Sense*, although once again he was never paid for these works. Paine's series provided ample reason for George Washington and other leaders to esteem him and value his writings as essential to the maintenance of the American cause.

In April 1777 Paine became secretary to the Continental Congress's Committee on Foreign Affairs, a title that Paine later shortened, misleadingly, to Secretary for Foreign Affairs. As he worked constantly for the Revolution and urged the creation of a truly national form of government for the fledgeling United States of America, Paine allowed himself to be drawn into the factional in-fighting of the Continental Congress. It was here that Paine showed that his sharpness in writing political documents was not matched by equally sharp debating skills, and this soon became evident to his friends and to his enemies as well.

Thomas Paine's problem was that he was a seeker of truth, totally unable to countenance anything underhand or corrupt. Quite undiplomatically he wrote and published his views about this, using his pen name *Common Sense*. It seemed to him (and he was later to be proved right when letters belonging to the persons concerned came to light), that some American notables, as well as several foreigners, were seeking to make their profits from the American War of Independence. This involved contributions from the French government to help the American colonists in their war with Britain.

The factions within Congress lost no time in aligning themselves on opposite sides of the controversy surrounding Silas Deane, who was the agent for the transactions, together with the author Beaumarchais, but Paine seemed to disregard the political situation, looking rather simplistically at the overall affair. As a result he played into the hands of those he criticised, who became his enemies. In 1779 they tried to have him dismissed, but Congress partially

exonerated him and refused to dismiss him. Paine angrily resigned from his position. He filed a memorandum with the Pennsylvania legislature, detailing his services to the Revolution, and was duly given a position as a clerk.

A new American envoy to France, Colonel John Laurens, was asked to negotiate further contributions from France to help the American war effort. As he was a very young man, he was loath to take on such a responsibility alone, so he asked Thomas Paine, a friend of his father, to accompany him as secretary. Paine took with him a copy of *Common Sense* to give to the French King, where there was no mention of monarchy or aristocracy. Although Paine did not speak or understand French at that time, he and Laurens managed to make themselves understood and Louis XVI was most generous to the American Colonists, who were fighting the enemies of the King Louis, the British. The negotiators were very successful and sent three shiploads of silver and goods back to America.

Throughout this period Paine continued to write the *Crisis* essays analysing the events of the war and other pamphlets calling for American unity and governmental reform. The most noteworthy of these was called *Public Good*, which was published by Paine in 1780, perhaps the bleakest year of the War. In this essay, Paine argued with passion and conviction for the strengthening of the central government, so that the loose confederation of states could truly become one nation. In particular he urged that Virginia cede to the Confederation its claims to western lands, the settlement of which, Paine argued, would help to provide revenue for the United States. In the years following the Revolution and the winning of independence, Paine continued to write essays and pamphlets pleading for a strong national government. It was at this time that Paine met the Marquis de Lafayette, who was going to remain his lifelong friend. Lafayette came from France to fight with the Colonists against the British.

(At the end of the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States formed the League of Nations exactly following Paine's advice but Wilson was not then on good terms with the leaders of Congress, who would not agree to America joining the League. However the United Nations was formed at the end of the Second World War, with its headquarters in New York.)

### Paine's involvement in the French Revolution

#### Reply to Edmund Burke's 'Reflections on the French Revolution'

Edmund Burke was a well-known Whig political orator, whose notable characteristic was a love of order. He resisted when, as he thought, sympathisers with the French Revolution wanted to abolish the government.

He claimed that he loved liberty but only if it was connected to order. He had a distinct veneration for the accumulated wisdom of centuries of experience, and held that liberty should be treated with great caution. He claimed that a political system that had lasted a long time, seemed to him to be an argument that it was fit for a current purpose and should not be changed rashly. With views like this it was inevitable that he would not agree with such a revolution and in fact he threw himself violently into the opposition camp. He could not see the hopeful things emanating from the revolution and he was unable to discriminate between man and motives. His book showed great wisdom and practical insight and led the reaction in England. The book created fame for him within Europe.

The French Revolution had already begun when Thomas Paine went to live in France as an honorary French citizen and an elected member for the Pas-de-Calais region of France in the new government. His great friends and colleagues were the Marquis de Lafayette, who had fought in the American War of Independence, the Marquis de Condorcet and Georges Jacques Danton a lawyer, orator and leader of the Revolution. Although Paine was unable to speak or write French, he was able to take part in discussions in the government, since one or other of his friends would interpret his speeches and let him know what was happening. Condorcet and Paine were elected to a committee to design a new constitution for France, together with its declaration of the rights of man.

Through the Marquis de Lafayette who became the leader of the King's Guard, Paine was able to keep abreast of everything that was happening in Paris. Following the storming of the Bastille and the massacre on the Champs de Mars, there was a lull during which, from time to time, Louis XVI and his Queen made several unsuccessful attempts to leave France.

During a search of the royal apartments a lead safe was discovered containing copies of correspondence between the French King and Queen and various crowned heads of other European countries. This was written evidence of treason against the people of France and they were arrested. Paine spoke in the King's defence saying that while he was against the system of monarchy, he found it hard to speak against the King who had been so generous to the British Colonists in America and without whose aid there might not have been an independent republic so soon. He pleaded for their lives as people and not as royalty. He claimed that all the time they were alive it would preclude relatives trying to rebuild the monarchy and this would postpone a genuine republic being formed in France. Paine was proved to be correct in his prophecy, because France did not truly become an independent republic until Louis Napoleon III, his wife and son were granted asylum in Britain by Queen Victoria at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Paine had promised his friends in France that as soon as Burke's book was published, he would ensure that a copy went to them for translation into French. However in January 1790 Burke made a speech in the British Parliament relating to his book, which he was to publish in the autumn of that year. His speech was so contrary to all Whig beliefs, as well as to anything, which he had discussed previously with Paine, that the latter decided to analyse carefully Burke's speech, and then his writing, when the book was eventually published. The speech's warning gave Paine a headstart in writing his book, the first part of which was almost finished by the time that Burke's book was published in November 1790.

Paine's book the *Rights of Man*, was to go down in history not only as a reply to Burke, but as a document of human rights which was to sound the clarion call for Chartism and the Reform Bill of forty years later, and for the universal franchise and social security in our own time. In 1781 Burke had even introduced a Reform Bill, including a proposal to prevent King George III from using large amounts of money from the Civil List on corruption, so there was nothing in Burke's earlier political career to suggest that he would join the King's Party physically or mentally.

Paine and Burke had visited France some sixteen years previously but Burke had not visited it again and his book was based on third party information. Paine was receiving updated information about the Revolution from his friend Lafayette, and therefore considered that he was more likely than Burke to know the true facts of the situation in France. Lafayette was put in charge of the National Guard to the King of France, upon his return from America where he had fought the British.

There was a popular revulsion in France against the activities of the monarchy, the aristocracy and the clergy, by whom the country was dominated. France was in a financial state bordering on bankruptcy and a parlement of 144 notables had been unable to resolve anything. At that time there appeared to be no intention of removing King Louis XVI from the throne of France. The States-General had become the National Assembly, consisting of nobles and clergymen who were considerably outnumbered by the Third Estate, comprising lawyers such as Maximilien Robespierre coming from Arras, and intellectuals such as Volney and the astronomer Bailly, as well as a handful of artisans.

The presence in the movement for reform of leaders such as the Comte de Mirabeau and Lafayette, demonstrated that the group included aristocrats and property-owners, who were certainly not anti-monarchical. Mirabeau was to hold the country together, bridging the gap between the King's party and the revolutionaries. But the ordinary people of Paris, fearing some mischief from the King, stormed the Bastille. This was the destruction of a symbol of power rather than anything else.

The Assembly met to arrange for some new regulations to be put in place. They abolished feudal privileges, serfdom and tax privileges. They clipped the wings of the wealthy priesthood, but this largely backfired because the effect rebounded on the poor clergy. There was even to be a democratic election of bishops.

But the main target of Burke's rage as set out in his book, was the march of the women of Paris to Versailles in October. Burke painted a lurid picture of a violent, uncontrollable mob storming Versailles and bringing the "mildest of monarchs and the most beautiful of queens"<sup>vii</sup> back to Paris in a state of fear. They had ruled over a spirited, honourable and cultivated nobility, a respectable clergy and an independent judiciary.<sup>viii</sup>

Paine challenged Burke point by point in his sober straightforward narrative in the *Rights of Man*, many of his facts having been obtained directly from Lafayette. Since then Paine's account has largely been substantiated by contemporary historians. This march was mainly a protest from half-starving housewives. Lafayette followed the march with the National Guard and soon everything was under control.

The marchers' demands were presented to the King by Lafayette personally. The King agreed to them all, and was content to return to Paris the following day; but in the morning disaster occurred. One of the King's bodyguard saw the crowd beginning to stir from sleep and fired on them. This enraged them and they broke into the palace. This relatively sober explanation was carelessly ignored by Burke who presented it as a dramatic and very gory scene.

Paine returned from England in the winter of 1789 to follow the progress of the revolution and to discuss it with his American and French friends in Paris. Neither the Jacobins or the Girondins had yet acquired any strong leaders and there was still no question of the King losing his throne. Louis XVI had become a constitutional king and, if he had been a clever diplomat, he could easily have preserved the situation. Unfortunately he was surrounded by the courtiers and other sycophants. He was unduly influenced by his wife who was anxious to return to her native Austria. Under these conditions he was quite unable to adapt to the circumstances he now found himself in.

Lafayette had put before the National Assembly, proposals for a Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen, which gave Paine the title for the book he was writing and would publish. While in Paris Paine had written to Burke to advise him on how well everything was going.

Paine's attitude to Burke's book indicated that Paine feared the possibility of war. He said that he had seen enough of war's miseries to wish he might

never see one again, and hopping some other way might be found to settle differences, which occasionally arise between neighbouring countries. He observed that the state of harmony, which then existed between America and France could have been achieved also between England and France. Counter-revolutionary forces from other countries invaded France and induced a panic which led to the revolution's temporary collapse.

Paine's rational reply to Burke, pleading for human rights for the common people, reached even more readers than Burke's book in England overseas. But its greatest impact was in reinforcing the views of those already converted, and in convincing the poor who had nothing on which to stake a claim. Yet the *Rights of Man*, did have an effect on the rich and powerful, because it alarmed the Pitt government, which instituted repressive measures and a level of censorship which Britain had not experienced for many years.

There was a lot of political fighting in America and England at the time of the publication of the *Rights of Man*, doubtless due in part to the fact that the British government was discussing a trading alliance with the American government.. Perhaps Paine was tactless to have addressed his *Rights of Man* to the American President, George Washington.

Paine's description of the French Revolution, both from his own experience and from the information he received from Lafayette, the Marquis de Condorcet and other French friends, is said by modern historians still to be a valuable historical document.<sup>25</sup> At a time when few men were like this, Paine was still able to be impartial in his comments.

Paine tried at all times to be truthful and unbiased, as exemplified by the fact that he did not minimize the incidental loss of life. He said there was no doubt that it was the crowds of ordinary people who committed the burnings and who carried the heads of the beheaded upon pikes in Paris, but then this was not new to Britons who had seen similarly at the time of the English Civil War.

The *Rights of Man* must also be regarded as a blueprint for a new society. Paine contradicted Burke, who claimed that the English Revolution of 1688 had set a pattern of English government 'for all time' and that the country could only be governed by the privileged classes and the aristocracy - to both of which groups he had recently himself been elevated. His claim was that only these men had the necessary experience. Paine considered this to be a violation of democratic human rights, and he said once again that the privileges of monarchs and aristocrats could not be inherited. Everyone, according to Paine, had the right to elect their own government, on condition that they did not require it to be imposed on the next generation. Paine's theme was to stand up for the rights of the living, not of the dead.

At Easter 1791 the French King and Queen tried to leave Paris for their residence at Saint-Cloud under the protection of Lafayette and the National Guard. Everything seemed to be very calm but there had been widespread rumours in Paris, that the royal couple were planning to escape abroad. The crowd found their carriage, and Lafayette, faced with a mutiny by a large section of his Grenadiers, was unable to protect the King and Queen unless they returned to the Tuileries. This caused the King, no doubt on the advice of his Queen, to complain to the Assembly. It was at this point that Lafayette began to feel that the royal family had not told him the truth about their plans and his loyalties became divided.

One wonders how long it took the usually sharp-witted Paine to realize how Lafayette's basically republican feelings were in conflict with his care of the royal family. In June the royal family again escaped from the Tuileries and the following morning Lafayette hurried to tell Paine. Paine would have been pleased if the royal family had reached a foreign country; in this event the Revolution could have continued and the King and Queen would not have been killed. Paine recorded that apart from some wild attacks on aristocrats being released from prison, Parisian life continued throughout the revolution period with the theatres, bars and restaurants being lit up and full of people.

Paine was faithful in his friendships and could not support Marat, whose writings including those in *L'ami du Peuple*, took every opportunity to demand the downfall of Lafayette. But Paine was also ready to show his Republican principles and actively worked to disseminate them. He wrote and issued a Manifesto, which was translated and signed by a French friend, Achille du Chatelet, who may have made minor alterations to Paine's text, which he had to sign, as the law required published documents to be signed by a French citizen. There was still little support for a republic and until September 1792, even Marat favoured a very restricted monarchy.

Madame Roland, who held political discussion groups in her home, thought, like Paine, that it was a misfortune for the royal family to have returned to Paris. As well as sharing Paine's views she also predicted that Louis would continue to obstruct the Assembly, and would make use of the armies of France's enemies. In the *Société Républicaine*, Paine published an article extending the ideas of the Manifesto and referring to the King as 'Louis Capet'. He challenged Montesquieu's theory that republicanism can only occur in small countries, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's view that 'Liberty diminishes the larger the state becomes'.

Paine believed that a Constitution for all to read, as being a likely remedy for the French people, as well as it had salved American ills. He said that France could only be called a civic empire when it had its own Constitution conforming to its Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen.

National Assembly and Committee to formulate the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen.

Paine had returned briefly to England and, according to Clio Rickman at whose home he was staying, Achilles Audibert, the French radical arrived at the house on the 12<sup>th</sup> September, straight from the French Convention to request Paine's personal assistance in their deliberations. Audibert came from Calais, which was one of four constituencies, which invited Thomas Paine to represent them in the National Assembly. On 26 August the Assembly had conferred the title of French citizen on a number of distinguished foreign sympathizers including Paine, Wilberforce, Washington and the American poet friend of Paine's, Joel Barlow. The accompanying invitation read:

"Your love for humanity, for liberty and equality, the useful works that have issued from your heart and pen in their defence, have determined our choice. It has been hailed with universal and reiterated applause. Come, friend of the people, to swell the number of patriots in an assembly which will decide the destiny of a great people, perhaps of the human race."

Thomas Paine returns to France for the next ten years

This then was the reason for Paine's return to France, and not - as maintained by many of his critics - his arraignment for seditious libel in England. A thorough study of all Paine's writings, and a great number of biographies and critical analyses of his works, leads to the conclusion that the Thomas Paine who leaps at you from the written page, would have been divided as to which he wanted more: the opportunity of being physically and actively further involved in the making of the French Republic, or the wonderful opportunity of standing up in court and disputing the charge of seditious libel, from which he would undoubtedly have derived great satisfaction.

In 1791 on the second anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, a republican petition had been prepared by Paine against the King's reinstatement. The excited crowds in the Champ de Mars, lynched two men of whom they were suspicious, and the Mayor of Paris was obliged to call out the National Guard. Lafayette arrived with the Guard to be greeted by a hail of stones. The National Guard fired upon a largely unarmed crowd causing a massacre of some 50 people.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1793, the National Convention declared a Republic at which point the newly-named first month, Vendémiaire, of Year One began. Paine's first triumph at the National Assembly was to cross swords with Danton, newly elected Minister of Justice on a judicial matter. Paine's inability to speak French was not a problem since he was able to converse

with Danton in English. Danton had moved that judges should be chosen from any section of the community, irrespective of legal training or knowledge of the law. However Paine resisted this proposal as being too revolutionary, on the rational and commonsense basis, that justice could only be effectively administered by men of good legal knowledge and training. He further maintained that reforms in the law, where needed, could only be effective if planned as a whole, and not piecemeal. Paine won his point and Danton capitulated.

The young Maximilien Robespierre took over the Convention in the autumn of 1793 and Paine found they had much in common. Incorruptibility, war and the death penalty were three main areas of agreement. Paine heard with pleasure of Robespierre's proposal to abolish the death penalty. The liberal moral code of both Paine and Robespierre, included their belief in religion without intermediaries, and Robespierre envisaged replacing the Church by an "Etre Suprême". There would be celebrations to this personage on the Champ de Mars in Paris for everyone to enjoy.

Louis XVI was unable to defend himself at his trial, because a quantity of correspondence with the enemies of France had been found in the royal apartments. The object of this correspondence was the enemies' successful invasion of France and the restoration of the King on the throne as absolute monarch. Paine, the humane idealist who could never forget the help of Louis to the American cause, tried to help him. In a paper read to the Convention on 21 November, he stated the following:

"I think it necessary that Louis XVI should be tried; not that this advice is suggested by a spirit of vengeance, but because this measure appears to me just, lawful and conformable to sound policy. If Louis is innocent let us put him to prove his innocence; if guilty let the nation determine whether he shall be pardoned or punished."<sup>x</sup>

When Louis was found guilty on 17 January 1793, Paine wrote, as a member of the National Assembly, confessing that he was far more ready to condemn the Constituent Assembly, when he thought of the unaccountable folly, which restored the King's executive power. Paine suggested that the United States of America could become a royal asylum, bearing in mind the amount of help, which Louis XVI gave to the American War of Independence. There, Louis might learn from the constant aspect of public prosperity, that the true system of government consisted in fair and equal representation. Paine submitted the suggestion, remembering the debt of gratitude, which America owed to every Frenchman. Paine said that he was normally the enemy of monarchy, but he could not forget their human frailties. He reminded the court it had already been proposed by Maximilien Robespierre, that the death penalty should be abolished.

In his Address to the People of France, Paine was both adulatory and optimistic, ending with the suggestion that they should begin the new era by instructing, rather than taking revenge, and by ensuring a greatness of friendship to welcome the approach of union and success. He was delighted when he was appointed to the Committee for framing a new French Constitution. This Committee originally had been the idea of the Marquis de Condorcet, and it was he who led the discussion while Paine drafted a Declaration for Rights to accompany the Constitution. These documents were adopted after many amendments, on 25 June 1793.

Paine's apparent friendship with the American Ambassador, Gouverneur Morris had added to Marat's dislike of Paine, because Morris was distrusted by the Revolution due to his relationship with the English Court, and the Assembly had finally written to America asking them to replace him. The Assembly was also suspicious of Paine because of the stand he had made for saving the King's life. Paine had written to Marat, whose suspicions of Paine may have been lulled as a result, so that when Robespierre demanded a more stringent law against foreigners, Paine was one of two foreign deputies, who were excepted.

#### Ten months in the Luxembourg Prison and then return to America

Paine had been warned against attending the Assembly, because Danton was to be arrested, and, as a friend of Danton, possibly Paine would also be arrested. Paine had been advising Barère in charge of the Committee of Public Safety, on a project for sending commissioners to America in order to obtain American food aid for France during the war with England. Barère feared a massive country-wide famine. At his request Paine wrote long and lucid arguments for Barère to use, and spent a good deal of time taking the matter up with American sea captains whose vessels had been held up in Bordeaux, because the French feared that the English navy would seize them. The captains appealed personally to Paine after their useless application to the American Ambassador, Morris.

Barère instigated the Reign of Terror, when he presented a report to the Convention on 5 September, which contained the words: "Let us make Terror the order of the Day". Paine had already published Part 1 of The Age of Reason, and planned to leave it with the American poet Joel Barlow, if there was a risk of him being arrested. It was also Barère who made the speech leading to Paine's arrest. He gave some very incredible excuses to Paine, but at least in his Mémoires, he told the truth about Paine's help in saving France from famine.

When Paine was arrested he found an excuse to visit Joel Barlow's lodgings with his captors and was able to leave with him Part 1 of The Age of Reason, without his captors' knowledge. Various reasons have been put forward as to

the reason for his imprisonment, but none of them have been confirmed. Paine was able to complete the second part of The Age of Reason despite his poor state of health while in prison. When James Monroe was brought in as the new American Ambassador Paine was at last released. At first Paine was nursed by Mrs Monroe when he was so ill that they feared he would die. Gradually he recovered and moved into the home of Nicholas de Bonneville, who produced a radical newspaper in Paris, and his family. With the coming of Napoleon Bonaparte came an amnesty for all émigrés and Paine finally was able to return to America. It has been said that he actually met Napoleon Bonaparte while staying with the de Bonneville family and that Bonaparte had read many of his works and found them 'most interesting'. However I must say that there is no actual proof of this meeting.

### Paine's involvement in British and Irish affairs

Paine had drawn up a detailed topographical plan for the invasion of Britain but this must have been kept with the rest of his manuscripts, which he left for safe keeping with Madame de Bonneville, who gave them to her son. Nicholas de Bonneville was a French Radical friend of Paine and when he knew that Paine was returning to the U.S.A. he asked him to take his wife and three sons to America where de Bonneville thought they would have better lives. However following his death Madame de Bonneville inherited everything belonging to Thomas Paine and his land and house were divided between the two elder de Bonneville boys, who had remained with Paine. His manuscripts were subsequently passed to General de Bonneville and were "accidentally" lost in a fire at the General's home.

When Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Theobald Wolfe Tone asked Thomas Paine to obtain French ships and men to invade Ireland the French government was not averse to helping them, but on the advice of an Irish American they did not do so immediately because he recommended waiting until the United Irishmen were more of a cohesive group. It is believed that this Irish American was a Colonel William Tate who later led a French invasion force to Bantry Bay, but on their first attempt they were prevented by violent storms. The very fact that this fleet had been sent encouraged the United Irishmen particularly since the British then used military coercion in Ulster in 1797. The rebellious Irish were mixed Catholics and Protestants and the rebellion was severely squashed.

The first French-based raiding party after that was due to attack Newcastle where the Légion Franche were to burn the docks and shipping and destroy the coal mines. The second party was to land at Bristol going on to Wales and Liverpool with the Légion Noire. These two groups of soldiers comprised mainly convicts. It was a weak plan based as it was on expecting great military action, but using the poorest quality of troops. Martello Towers



had been built on Bere Island in Bantry Bay and were the forerunners to those later built by the English.

Britain had been saved because none of the French troops spoke or understood English and only the aristocracy could speak and/or understand French so that there was no rapport between the French and the English. The non-appearance of the British Navy, the one, which Pitt had reassured Parliament in October 1796 was the "national defence of this kingdom in case of invasion" did nothing to persuade the ordinary Englishmen that this was a cause for them to join in. After the recapture of Killala, Wolfe Tone was captured by a British warship and committed suicide. The utter failure of the Irish invasion did not stop the related diversion raid against Wales. The French arrived at Fishguard in February, for what was to prove to be the last time that Britain was ever invaded. It was not planned to harm the British people but to be the first step in liberating the oppressed poor of the country from the domination of the English ruling classes, thereby alighting the fire of independence and democracy.

The French had left Brest in Brittany on 18 February and anchored to the north-west of Fishguard. From information received from a captive, they were misled as to the size of the fort's militia and they sailed out to Carreg Wasted Point, out of reach of the militia's guns. Meanwhile the French soldiers were looting and setting fire to churches in a manner hardly conducive to encouraging the local people to join in a revolution and rise up against their oppressors. Lord Cawdor on behalf of the British Army demanded Tate's surrender.

All of these events led to a run on the Bank of England and it suspended cash payments, but instituted bank notes to the value of £1 and £2. People were suspicious of these novel notes and many found them hard to use in a commercial way. Things gradually calmed down and normal trade continued.

With the failure of the French-aided attempts at invasion of the British Isles followed by Admiral Nelson's destruction of the French fleet in Aboukir Bay in 1798 the immediate threat of further invasions seemed to disappear until Napoleon created himself Emperor when considerable monies were spent on fortifications such as 74 Martello towers on the South Coast of England and 40 on the east coast. Each tower had a cannon on top with a one mile range. They cost £3,000 each to build and were to carry 24 soldiers each.

This was the time of the Royal Military Canal being built from Rye towards London and Birmingham and when Weedon Beck in Northamptonshire was planned to be the emergency capital of Britain in case London were to fall. Chatham was the next fallback position and this time led to the birth of the semaphore system between Chatham and Portsmouth. In 1852 when Louis

Napoleon III came to power further large sums were spent on fortifications against the French.<sup>11</sup>

### Paine's involvement in Russia

Common Sense reached either St Petersburg in Russia or, more probably, Leipzig, where it had been translated into German. The young Russian Radical, Alexander Radishchev, was studying jurisprudence there at the instigation of Catherine the Great. Several books have been written on the subject of Radishchev: "The First Russian Radical", by David Marshall Lang while Jesse Clardy wrote another, but the most up to date information has been researched and written by a fellow Russian, Klara Rukshina, who is presently working in the U.S.A. In her work she established that Radishchev was familiar with Common Sense from its inclusion in G. Th. Raynal's A History of the Two Indies (1780 edition). Until now the question of Paine's influence on Radishchev has received no scholarly attention, writes Rukshina. This was probably due to the fact that when Common Sense was first published it did not have Paine's name on it as the author.

Raynal described Common Sense as the ideological foundation of the French Revolution. However Rukshina claims that Radishchev had an excellent command of English and could have read an original English-language copy when he was at Leipzig University or in the famous multi-lingual library of his employer, the Count Vorontsov. The main difference between Paine's book and that of Radishchev's A Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow is that Radishchev considered the monarch's death essential and unavoidable while Paine only wanted the position of the monarch to be removed.

Radishchev's ideas laid the groundwork for the revolutionary tradition in Russia. Karl Marx is said to have had a library containing two copies of each of Thomas Paine's works and Nikolai Lenin was known to have read Radishchev's work as well as that of Raynal, and, during his time in London was to have read the rest of Paine's works in English. Therefore the thinking behind the Russian Revolution of 1917 can be said to have been influenced by Thomas Paine.

### Cuba and South America influenced by Paine

Copies of Paine's works had been circulated throughout Argentina, Bolivia and Mexico since 1816, so they had been read and considered by the Castro family and other revolutionary-minded young men for generations before Fidel Castro came on the scene in 1953. In 1955 Castro went to Mexico and teamed up with the Argentine doctor, Che Guevara.

Fidel Castro had tried several times to overcome the right-wing government of Batista in Cuba and did not succeed until, accompanied by his brother Raúl

and Dr Ernesto Che Guevara, they won a rousing victory with the backing of the ordinary people in January 1959. Castro assumed control of Cuba and governed without a formal constitution until 1976. Castro frequently asked for financial aid from the government of the U.S.A. but when this was not forthcoming, he publicly proclaimed his allegiance to Marxism-Leninism on 2 December 1961. Although Castro retained political independence from the Soviet Union, the Cuban economy came to depend on billions of dollars in Soviet aid.

Che Guevara was a keen follower of Thomas Paine, and Fidel Castro in his defence before the court of Santiago de Cuba in 1953, claimed that "Thomas Paine said that a just man deserves more respect than a crowned rogue", thereby indicating that he was well aware of Paine's political writings.

In Latin America Common Sense and the American Crisis papers were only translated in part, but were used as symbols by leaders of independence movements. In South America no biographical details about Paine were known and his political writings were concentrated upon. Paine was a symbol of toleration and individual human rights. In Argentina a Spanish translation of Common Sense circulated in Buenos Aires during 1816 and inspired heated discussion in the local press. A number of political documents such as the Declaration of Independence and several state constitutions were circulated in translation but only Paine's major political works attracted comments in the press.

The works of Paine, which were readily available consisted of parts of Common Sense, the Dissertation on First Principles of Government, the Rights of Man, the Dissertations on Government, the Affairs of the Bank and Paper Money. The sections from Common Sense include Paine's famous distinction between government and society, and his demonstration of the superiority of republican over monarchical government. Paine's forthright method of expression was well received in Buenos Aires.

It could be argued that Paine's ideas were foremost in the minds of Central and South American revolutionaries, because they were all reared on the works of Karl Marx and Lenin. It is also possible to argue that wherever revolutions have taken place in the world in modern times, the leaders were also educated in Marxism or Leninism. Either Paine's works arrived in countries, directly in English, say from America, and were then translated into local languages, or his work was directly translated into Spanish or Portuguese.

## CONCLUSION

Few men could have led such a fascinating life as Thomas Paine. He saw two momentous revolutions at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in America and France

and was heavily involved in both of them. He always felt that the only one which was a true Republic was America, though he could easily be accused of prejudice where America was concerned. Nevertheless by 1802 when Paine left France, the country had an imperial monarchy ruled every bit as tyrannically as that before 1789. Paine had forecast that this would happen and events proved him right. By contrast the U.S.A. was, and remains, a genuine republic.

Paine never claimed that his writings were original; what was original was the way in which he wrote. He used a simple, straightforward style, which was very easy to understand. Paine did not write for the academic audience but for the ordinary people and it can be argued that following the publication of Common Sense followed by the Rights of Man and the tremendous number of copies of each that were sold or borrowed or available in taverns or reading rooms, his words did not reach exactly the people to whom they were addressed. It can be said therefore, that Paine achieved what he set out to do, which was to make the ordinary people understand that they could eventually enjoy the social reforms, which he talked about. He did not guarantee when this would happen, nor that it would happen without them being involved in pushing their politicians to take action.

If taxation was tackled – and he showed how this could be done equitably – there would be sufficient money to carry out all the social reforms, which he had described. His aim in life had been to improve the life of the ordinary people, who had nobody else to speak for them. He considered that if a government was run according to the plans he had suggested, then people would be happy. Paine said that insufficient food, clothing, housing and work was not sufficient to make people happy.

Without the benefit of modern communications, Paine was able to act as a prophet to two revolutionary bodies: the American fight for independence and the French for liberty, equality and fraternity. Equally he made major contributions to the English evolution towards extended suffrage. His failure to make the American Revolution into an egalitarian movement must have been a bitter blow to him. It was the English, after Paine's death, who made policies out of his proposals.

Paine is still a controversial figure, but his ideas have never lost their power or their appeal. To read any of his works today is to read a modern, well written and easily understandable text.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Moncure D. Conway, in The Life of Thomas Paine, 1892, Eric Foner, in Tom Paine and Revolutionary America, 1976, Alfred Owen Aldridge, Man of Reason, The Life of Thomas Paine, 1960

<sup>2</sup> Gary Berton, past President of the Board of Trustees of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, on the Committee of their Journal and their Research Committee and Audrey Taylor, Assistant Honorary Secretary of the Thomas Paine Society in England

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Paine's The first Crisis, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1776

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Williamson, Audrey, Thomas Paine, His Life, Works and Times, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973, p.94

<sup>8</sup> Burke, E.M., author of Reflections on the French Revolution, edited by J G A. Pocock, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989, page 153.

<sup>9</sup> Doyle, William, The Oxford History of the French Revolution, Oxford University Press, p.167

<sup>10</sup> Ibid p.178

<sup>11</sup> All the information in this section came from a programme on Channel 2 on 20 August 2002 initially, and eventually from a book called "Invasion" by Dan Cruickshank, Bantam Pan Macmillan 2001.

## THE STIRRINGS IN SHEFFIELD ON SATURDAY NIGHT

W.A.S.Sarjeant

To hear "God save great Thomas Paine" sung on the British stage is surely a rare experience, verging on the unique. This was the privilege of the audience at Sheffield Playhouse recently, during the presentation of 'The Stirrings in Sheffield on Saturday Night', a sort of documentary with music written by Alan Cullen.

The setting was in Sheffield of the 1860s, an unhappy time when the emerging trades unions were struggling for survival in the teeth of adverse legislation. Their efforts were directed to the maintenance of the level of wages and the support of the unemployed by levies on those actually working. In this aim, harsh measures were often resorted to in dealing with anyone who undercut the accepted rates of pay, employed a disproportionate amount of apprentice labour, produced shoddy goods, or otherwise menaced the livelihood of his fellows. First of all, warning letters (often with a feminine signature such as, "Mary Ann") were delivered; if this failed, the tools and gear of the offender were removed or put out of action -- a procedure called "rattening". If this failed, the offender was likely to find his home or premises blown up by gunpowder, or him being disabled by being beaten up or shot.

Behind much of this violence loomed the figure of "Auld Smeelum" ("Old Smit-Em"), an epithet cloaking the identity of William Broadhead, the Secretary of the Saw Grinders Union. Broadhead, the licensee of the Royal George Inn in Carver Street, was well-read, intelligent and wholly devoted to the interests of trade unionism, apparently for wholly altruistic reasons. Although reluctant to resort to it, he was convinced that violence was necessary under the circumstances then prevailing. His agents were Samuel Crookes and James Hallam; their activities culminating in the inadvertent killing of James Linley (a cutler who made overmuch use of apprentice labour), brought about a reign of terror. Extra constabulary were drafted in from outside Sheffield; their presence was in the highest degree unwelcome, and one scene depicted the breaking-up of a resentful crowd who were defiantly singing "God save great Thomas Paine".

Ultimately, a newcomer to the town, William Long, was appointed editor of the *Sheffield Telegraph*; undeterred by the atmosphere of hostility and fear then prevailing, he assembled enough evidence of violence to bring about the establishment of a Royal Commission of Enquiry. In order to get to the roots of the troubles, the Commission offered, to anyone willing to give evidence, a certificate of immunity from prosecution for offences committed. James Hallam was frightened into a confession; and Broadhead, to save himself, had to admit his deeds.

Though no prosecution followed, the local magistrates would not permit Broadhead to renew his license as a publican, and he was unable to get other work. His friends organised a benefit at a local music hall, enabling him to immigrate to the United States; some years later he returned to Sheffield, dying at Uppertorpe in 1879.

"The Stirrings...." Was a brilliant evocation of a troubled era, the character of Broadhead (played by Wilfred Harrison) being portrayed very sympathetically. Light relief was provided by an interwoven second plot (chronologically inexact, since a decade earlier) about the unsuccessful attempts at launching a Consumer's Gas Company by Councillor Isaac Ironside. Excellent sets and a leavening of songs, some of the era and some specially written, brought the story spiritually to life; most memorable was the grim folksong, "The Grinder's Hardships", including these verses:-

"To be a Sheffield grinder, it is no easy trade.  
There's mere than you'd imagine in the grinding of a blade.  
The strongest man among us is old at thirty-two,  
For there's few who brave the hardships that we poor grinders do.

"And every working day we are breathing dust and steel,  
And a broken stone can give us a wound that will not heal.  
There's many an honest grinder ground down by such a blow,  
For there's few that brave such hardships as we poor grinders do.

"Thus many a poor grinder whose family is large,  
With all his best endeavours cannot his debts discharge.  
When children cry for bread, how pitiful the view,  
Though few can brave such hardships as we poor grinders do."

This brings home the reality of the period and provides justification for the deeds of men like Broadhead. Their reward was to see the beginnings of recognition for the unions.

"The Stirrings...." Was first performed on May 31, 1966; the acclamation with which this was received brought performances on July 22 and 23, and it is understood that further performances will open the Sheffield Repertory Company's Autumn season.

This article was published in the *TPS Bulletin*, Vol.2. No.2. 1966, and is hereby republished in memory of Professor Sarjeant, the first life member of the TPS, whose death we have recently heard of. An appreciation of him will appear in a future issue of *News Briefing*.

## **Eighteenth-Century Stays: Their Origins and Creators**

By LYNN SORGE

Whoever has a mind to abundance of trouble,  
Let him furnish himself with a ship and a Woman,  
For no two things will find you more Employment,  
If once you begin to rig them out with all their Streamers,  
Nor are they sufficiently adorned,  
Or satisfied, that you have done enough to set them forth.

Plaut. *Poenulus*. Act. 1 Scen 2<sup>1</sup>

Although this play was written around 200 B.C., the sentiment expressed here may be timeless. This passage could easily refer to the importance of fashionable dress to the eighteenth-century woman, and to the complex nature of its many and varied components. Primary written documents, portraits, and artifacts reveal that the eighteenth-century lady was often clothed in fine attire, and undoubtedly spent much of her time with those craftsmen and trades people responsible for her overall appearance. She knew well her Stay-maker, Mantua-maker, and Milliner, for example.

The eighteenth-century female silhouette was dictated almost wholly by its underpinnings, with stays, hoops or pocket-hoops laying the foundation for the petticoat, skirt, bodice, or gown. Surviving examples of eighteenth-century stays are masterpieces in engineering; many reveal their creators to have had a fine sense of proportion, and highly-developed skills as artists and crafts people. Who were the creators of these female underpinnings, and how did they achieve their ends? Did they make patterns for stays, and if so, did they draft them, or drape them on a live model? Were the patterns made from paper, or did their creators work directly in fabric? This paper will discuss the origins of eighteenth-century stays, elaborating on the scholarship of those who have already delved into this area of our past.<sup>2</sup> Also, artifacts representative of both the upper and lower sorts will be analysed as a means of deciphering 'pattern language'.

### *Origins of Stays*

Examination of both British and French sources reveals that eighteenth-century crafts-people living and working in Europe devoted little time to recording their method of pattern creation, or to leaving instructions for generations-to-come. German sources, however, revealed texts circa 1713 and 1724 which provided invaluable clues about the origins of stays.<sup>3</sup> In all three countries, stays were considered to be a branch of tailoring, and were made by men. In England, creators of stays were called 'Stay-makers', in France the Stay-maker was called 'Le Tailleur du Corps de Femmes et Enfants',<sup>4</sup> and in Germany he went by the name 'Zeichmeister'.<sup>5</sup>



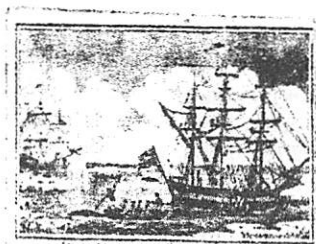
The story begins, however, with the whaling industry, for the most commonly-used stiffening device in eighteenth-century stays was whalebone, or baleen. The trade card of *Henry Smith, Whalebone and Cane Merchant* gives the modern eye a taste of the eighteenth-century seascape (Fig. 1). One of the trades listed in T. Waller's *General Description of all Trades, Digested in Alphabetical Order*, is that of Whalebone Men. Waller stated: 'There are only a few [Whalebone Men] in comparison to other Trades, but then they are top Dealers, and Business, which is chiefly carried on in a Shop or Warehouse, [is] esteemed very reputable and genteel.'<sup>6</sup>

The plate *Fanons de Baleine* (Fig. 2) from 1783 shows the anatomical location of the baleen, and its appearance after removing it from the mouth of the whale. The remaining figures in the plate illustrate the tasks performed in preparing the whalebone for sale to Stay-makers. R. Campbell concurred with the process illustrated here, saying that the whalebone was boiled in a large Copper or cauldron until it was soft and pliable. Upon removal from the water, and while still hot, it was placed in a vice, and split into long or square pieces to be sold to haberdashers, and subsequently to Stay-makers.<sup>7</sup>

It was the task of the Stay-maker to cut the whalebone into thin slices of a uniform thickness and length suitable for boning stays, using a special knife designed for that purpose.<sup>8</sup> Figure 3 shows a piece of baleen recovered from the mouth of a twentieth-century whale.<sup>9</sup> Although small whales in the eighteenth-century could not be used because their baleen was too short, not strong enough, and broke easily,<sup>10</sup> it is a feast to the modern eye to be able to see the kind of detail our ancestors took for granted.

While it appears that little was written in England on the origins of eighteenth-century underpinnings, there is considerable information about English trades of the period. Advice on the various attributes of specific trades was given freely to parents and other interested persons. Waller's *General Description of Trades* is one of the earliest published works of this nature, written in 1747. Waller stated that Stays were 'principally made by men, though both Women and Men work on them, and the Work may very well be called a Branch of Tyloring.'<sup>11</sup> R. Campbell expanded upon this saying, 'I am surprised the Ladies have not found out a Way to employ Women Stay-Makers rather than trust our sex with what should be kept as inviolable as Free-Masonry'. He seemed to be referring to the quality of secrecy necessary to become a successful and trusted Stay-maker, stating that makers of stays were 'obliged by Art to mend a crooked shape, to bolster up a Fallen Hip, or distorted Shoulder'.<sup>12</sup> Campbell's explanation for women entrusting men with the delicacy of stay-making was that women do not have the strength necessary to 'raise Walls of Defence about a Lady's shape'.<sup>13</sup>

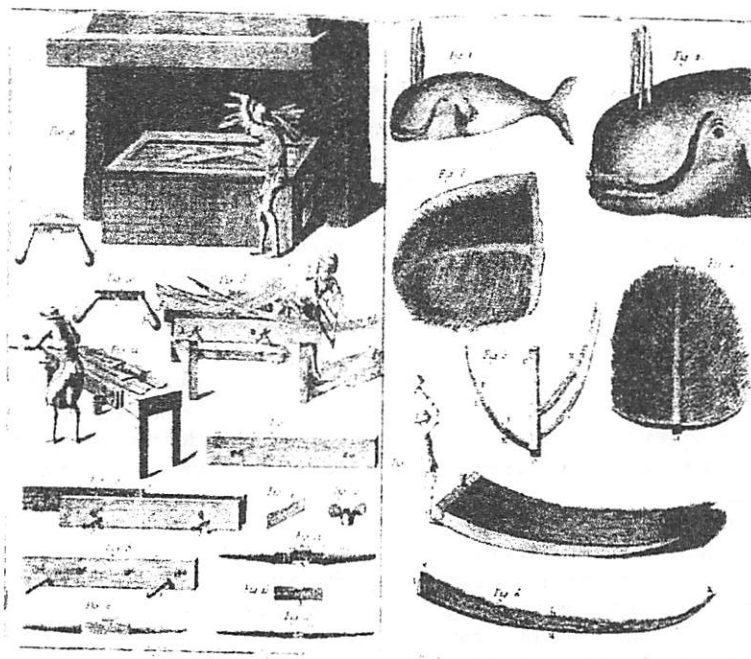
Within the trade itself, tasks were performed by various individuals. For example, Campbell said that while it was the male Stay-maker who cut out the stays, he gave them to Women to be stitched. After the whalebone had been cut into 'thin slices of equal Breadths and the proper Lengths, it . . . [was] thrust in between the rows of stitching' by the Master or Foreman who had the strength required successfully to perform the task.<sup>14</sup> Garsault's engraving of the French Stay-maker's shop clearly shows males cutting and fitting stays, while females appear to be doing the stitching



**HENRY SMITH,**  
*Agent & Partner to the late*  
**WHALEBONE & CANE**  
*Merchant*  
*5 Bell Street, New Street*  
*near Cripplegate*  
**(LONDON.)**  
*All sorts of Whalebone & Cane*  
*on the most reasonable terms.*

FIG. 1. Banks trade card. *Henry Smith,*  
*Whalebone & Cane Merchant*  
*Engraving, British Museum, London*

FIG. 2. *Façons de Baleine, Encyclopedie*  
*Methodique ou Par Ordre de Matiers, 1783*  
*Engraving, British Museum, London*



*Pl. II. Façons de Baleine, ou de Cane, de l'Inde, &c.*

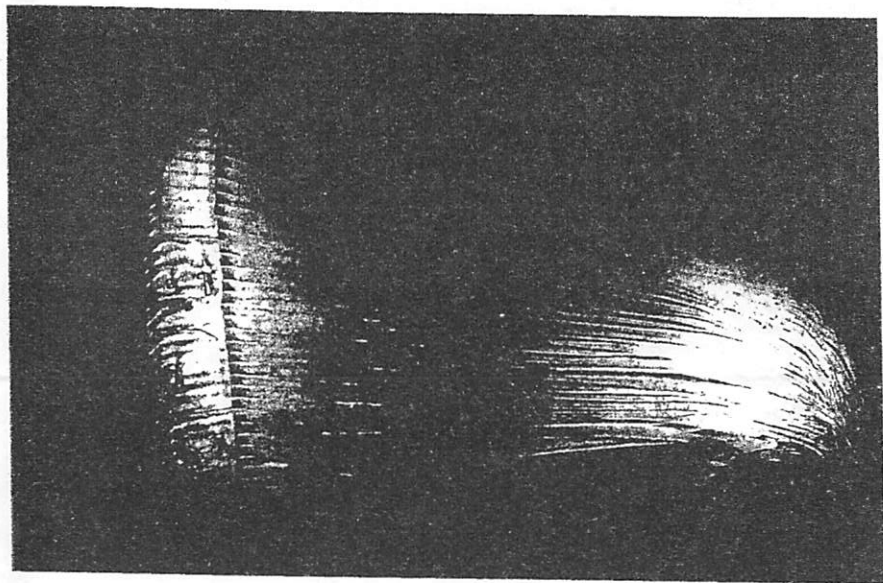


FIG. 3. Photograph of portion of upper section of baleen recovered from mouth of twentieth-century whale

*Photograph by Findlay Muir, Dalhousie Photographic Services*

(Fig. 4). It is likely that the story told through this engraving is similar to that of English Stay-makers, as well.

Trade cards reveal that there is a distinct separation of Stay-makers from Tailors. Cards such as *John Harrison — 1781 — Stay-maker* in 'Craven Buildings, near the New Church in the Strand'<sup>15</sup> and *The Old Red Stays; Jonathan Nuttill — Stay Maker*<sup>16</sup> make no mention of the word 'Taylor' anywhere in their advertising. At the same time, the cards classified under 'Tailors' do not include Stay-making as one of their specialties. For example, the card of the firm *Newby* specifies that Mr Newby is a 'Draper, Taylor, and Habit Maker, near the Market Place, Morgate',<sup>17</sup> giving the impression that he had never made stays.

British directories give names and trades of the inhabitants of many towns and villages, helping to complete the image of Tailor/Stay-maker as two separate and almost unrelated trades.<sup>18</sup> In the town of Hereford in 1791 William Bradford, Stephen Meyrick, and Charles Powers were Stay-makers, while Edward Howells was a Taylor;<sup>19</sup> in Worcester there are many tailors listed, but only two Stay-makers — Thomas Milner and Joseph Mitchel.<sup>20</sup> The conclusion may be drawn, then, that the two trades were not one and the same, and that different skills would have been needed for each of them. While R. Campbell said that Stay-making was a 'species of the Taylor's Business', he also separated it from the Tailoring trade, saying it was 'rather the Most ingenious Art belonging to the Mechanism of the Needle'.<sup>21</sup>

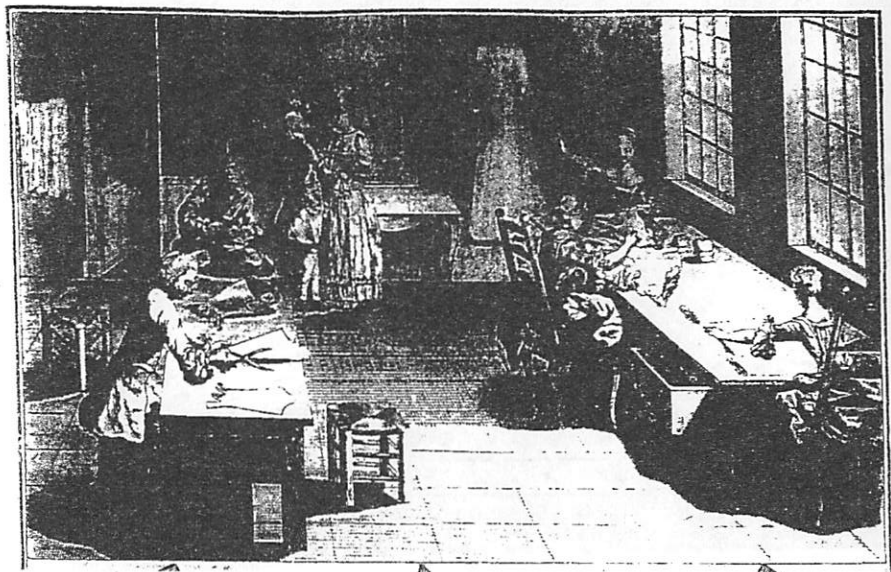


FIG. 4. Plate XIII from *Art du Tailleur*, 1769, showing a Stay-Maker's shop. The male Stay-maker is illustrated cutting and fitting the stays, while females appear to be doing the stitching  
Engraving, British Museum, London

Garsault provided invaluable information about the makers of eighteenth-century French stays, devoting a complete chapter to the creation of stays in his *Art du Tailleur*. He drew attention to a distinct separation between Tailors and Stay-makers in France, evidenced by separate chapters on 'Le Tailleur d'Habits d'Hommes' and 'Le Tailleur de Corps de Femmes et Enfants'. Many French engravings, such as *L'Essai du Corset*,<sup>22</sup> show the tailor of stays at his work.

It became necessary to piece together information from various sources to obtain a clear image of the origins of pattern development of eighteenth-century stays. Mention of patterns is made in French, German, and English sources. Garsault told his readers that 'the tailor [of stays] must have many samples of paper patterns of different sizes and lengths to guide him in his work'.<sup>23</sup> The Masterpiece books of the German Master Tailors show patterns,<sup>24</sup> and R. Campbell said that 'any Bungler may cut out a Shape, when he has a Pattern'.<sup>25</sup>

There is evidence, however, that patterns were not used extensively in England. Writing of the necessity of men's Tailors to absorb changing fashion, Campbell said that 'a good Workman takes it by his Eye in the passing of a Chariot, or in the Space between the Door and a Coach', rather than relying on a pattern.<sup>26</sup> *The Taylor's Complete Guide*, written by a Society of Adeptes in 1796, gives instructions about how to take the client's measurements, and goes on to say, 'When you have your materials before you intending to cut out, . . . lay on your measure to mark out for cutting your

cloth. . . .<sup>27</sup> With these words, the authors may have been instructing their students to draw the garment pieces directly on the fabric. The Society of Adepts seemed to have little respect for those who used patterns, telling its readers about an ill-fitting coat which was cut by a particular Tailor for a country parson. Its poor quality was explained as being the result of 'working by Patterns . . . [which] is too much followed by the Trade . . . instead of following Nature in every existing Circumstance'.<sup>28</sup> It appears, then, that some cutters used patterns, while others did not.

Whether or not patterns were used, a method of arriving at the individual shapes of various garment pieces must have been employed. Examination of early works on cutting such as *Libro de geometrica practica quel al trada de toccanto officio de sastre*, written by Juan de Alcega in Madrid in 1589,<sup>29</sup> and *Le Tailleur Sincere* by Benoit Boullay, written in Paris in 1671,<sup>30</sup> reveals that these works showed how to lay pattern pieces on the cloth only, making no mention of pattern-creation methods. The earliest English work on cutting, *The Taylor's Complete Guide*, written in 1796, also gave no instructions for making patterns. Garsault provided a detailed account of various kinds of stays, measurements to be taken on the body, and of construction. The only mention he made of patterns, however, was of the necessity for tailors to own several in different sizes. Therefore, German sources were examined.

Throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries German and Austrian Master Tailors compiled what were known as Masterpiece books containing patterns for various garments, and specifications for length of sleeve, width of hem, overall length of the garment, kind of cloth to be used, and occasionally the method of laying garment pieces on the fabric. Information contained in the Masterpiece books was used to test the skills of journeymen tailors who wanted to take the examination for the title of Master. The Master Tailor would choose a number of garments from his book, and the journeyman was 'expected to demonstrate the cutting of the selected masterpiece by an oral explanation and by drawing in chalk on a board of table'.<sup>31</sup> It is unclear whether or not the journeyman was required to construct the garments as well, but it would seem logical that tailoring skills would also be examined.

The Masterpiece books of Johannes Stöckhel from 1713 and of Johannes M. Wolfsegger from 1724, studied and edited by Lucie Hampel, were republished in Linz in 1960.<sup>32</sup> The book from 1713 contains twenty-five diagrams, while the latter repeats many of these but also contains new ones, making a total of thirty. Both books include drawings of English and French stays, which were also worn in Germany and Austria.

Like the French Garsault source, or Diderot's *Encyclopedia*,<sup>33</sup> no information is given in these rare books on the origins of pattern development. Lucie Hampel says that 'the tailors of the 18th century didn't know any pattern systems, for those appeared only in the 19th century. The pattern was usually called *Patrone*. This was the big secret of the tailors. . . . The first *Patrone* was made after the garment which had been modelled on the body'.<sup>34</sup>

Undoubtedly, Edward B. Giles would agree. Writing *The History of the Art of Cutting in England* in 1897, he described the evolution of cutting as beginning with 'the rule of thumb period, through the paper model time, to the commencement of breast measure methods, and thence to the origin of geometrical, admeasurement, and anatomical systems, with their various combinations'.<sup>35</sup> Having explored many of the

older works on the subject himself, including *The Taylor's Complete Guide* of 1796, he came to the conclusion that by the beginning of the nineteenth century 'methods of cutting were not yet published', and that a tailor by the name of Mr Hearn wrote the first book on cutting, called *A System of Cutting*, in the early nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

It would seem, then, that patterns drafting systems had not yet been developed in the eighteenth century, and that Stay-makers arrived at the shape of their patterns in any way they could, possibly from draping the garment on the body initially, and then by merely adapting it to the individual measurements of specific clients. It is entirely likely that Garsault's declaration that the tailor of stays must have patterns of 'different sizes and lengths' at his disposal is not exaggerated, and that English and German tailors managed their businesses in the same manner.

Nowhere does this seem to be recorded, however. The reasons for this may be two-fold. It is likely that competition among various craftsmen must have been keen, with each vying for a share of the market. If the creators of eighteenth-century under-pinnings were to have put into writing the sources of origin of their patterns, there is every chance that this information might have fallen into undesirable hands.

The second reason relates directly to the role played by apprentices who began as early as twelve or fourteen years of age. After seven years they were deemed ready to assume the title and responsibilities of Master,<sup>37</sup> apparently without taking the examinations requisite for the German Master tailors. It would seem logical that working so closely with someone for that length of time would enable a clever apprentice to absorb a great deal of information without putting anything in writing, and in fact, he would receive the kind of training not to be forgotten easily. It also seems logical that the tailor who intended to leave his business to his apprentice, journeyman, or son would give little consideration to leaving pattern-making documentation in his will. *The Taylor's Complete Guide* lends credence to this idea, saying that 'the Taylor sits down upon the forlorn hope of struggling through without ever acquiring farther than the maxims of his father, or what his master always did before him',<sup>38</sup> thereby inferring that the knowledge of the apprentice or journeyman is the same as that of his father or master.

Daniel Defoe went so far as to advise a tradesman to 'make his wife so much acquainted with his trade, and so much mistress of the managing part of it, that she might be able to carry it on if she pleased, in case of his death'. Otherwise, he said, she might feel a necessity to marry her husband's apprentice in order to maintain control of the business. Defoe also advised the tradesman's wife to become familiar with her husband's business so as to preserve it 'for the benefit of his son, tho' left too young to enter upon it at first'.<sup>39</sup>

Trade cards abound with information about businesses being inherited. A card from 1785, for example, is in the name of 'Flack and Lea: Stay Makers', while the card from 1788 advertised the Stay-making business of 'T. Lea, Nephew & Successor to the late Mr. Flack', undoubtedly the same business.<sup>40</sup>

### *Artifact Analysis*

A pair of stays at the Worthing Museum and Art Gallery (Fig. 5), probably originating between 1775 and 1785, is beautifully made from a natural linen, and lined with a

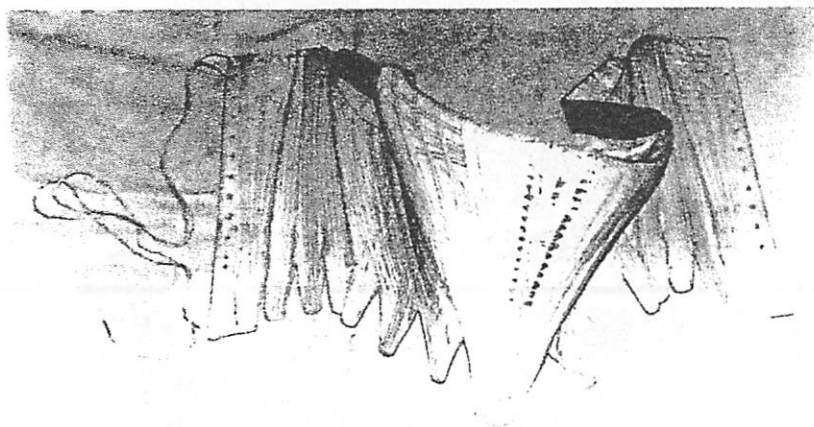


FIG. 5. Lined linen stays, 1775-85, accession #57/200, Worthing Museum & Art Gallery. Quality of construction, stitching, and workmanship is exemplary; stays front has been permanently moulded into a curved shape

lighter weight linen. The stitching of the bone casings is flawlessly uniform. The spacing of the casings is aesthetically pleasing.

The front of these stays seems to have been moulded into a permanently-rounded form, giving them an elegant appearance. A combination of factors appears to be responsible for this distinctive shape: the vertical bones are crossed by horizontal ones near the top of the front of the stays; a larger piece of curved whalebone, probably shaped before being inserted, has been placed horizontally across the top of the stays between the lining and the whaleboned outer layers, encompassing the entire breast area from armhole to armhole (Fig. 6).<sup>41</sup> In addition, the front of the stays was probably 'set' into the rounded form after completion, for Garsault advised tailors to 'press the stays with a warm iron on the wrong side to make them even: the heat will warm the whalebone and give the stays the shape they should have'.<sup>42</sup> The laced centre front has a gusset of the same fabric inserted behind it, and a busk, probably of whalebone, sits just inside the lining down the centre front (Fig. 7). The curved piece of whalebone running horizontally across the top renders the lacing impractical — the lacing appears to have been placed there for aesthetic reasons only. Garsault's description of English stays in 1769 seems to support this idea: 'English stays are closed five inches from the bottom; then open from there to the top, and laced to within one inch from the top with a small lace, stopped by a very thin bone on the inside'.<sup>43</sup>

Beautifully designed and executed, these stays appear to have been made by a professional Stay-maker, probably for a lady who was well-provided-for and had few,

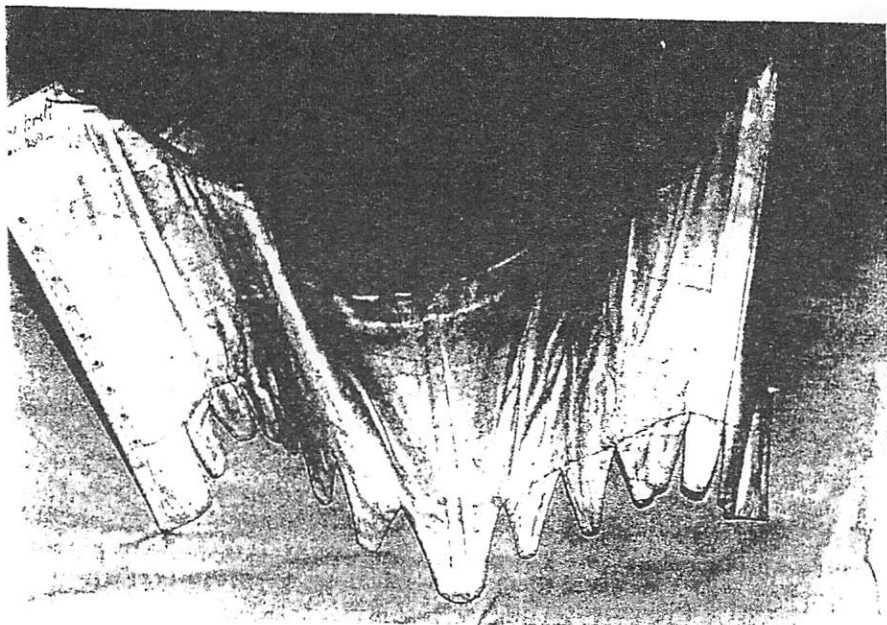


FIG. 6. Inside of linen stays, 1775-85, accession #57.200, showing enclosed curved whalebone placed horizontally across breast area, and busk down the centre front. Worthing Museum and Art Gallery

if any, financial worries. The stays are in very good condition, may have been the lady's 'best' stays, and may not have been worn extensively.

By contrast, a pair of stays from approximately the same period found at the Hereford and Worcester County Museum, is of noticeably poorer quality (Fig. 8). The pattern reveals that although they have not been cut from as many separate pieces as the above stays, the shape of the pieces, and the direction of the vertical bones, is similar (Fig. 9). They do not have any horizontal bones in the front, however, and therefore lie completely flat when not on a body. Laced at the centre front also, these stays do not have a gusset under the lacing. A busk, made from what appears to be wood, has been inserted down the centre front of the stays, rendering the lacing decorative only.

Unlined, these stays are coarsely-constructed and stitched, and have been mended and patched many times (Fig. 10). The bone casings, for example, have not been stitched through to the outside, unlike the first pair analysed. Instead, the outer layer of fabric was applied on top of each of the boned pieces, and sewn with what appears to be an unevenly-spaced back or running stitch. The hip tabs have been lined with the same fabric which forms the casing for the busk, but the edges have been crudely-finished. The closely-spaced black and blond whalebone is very fragile, and splintered in many places.



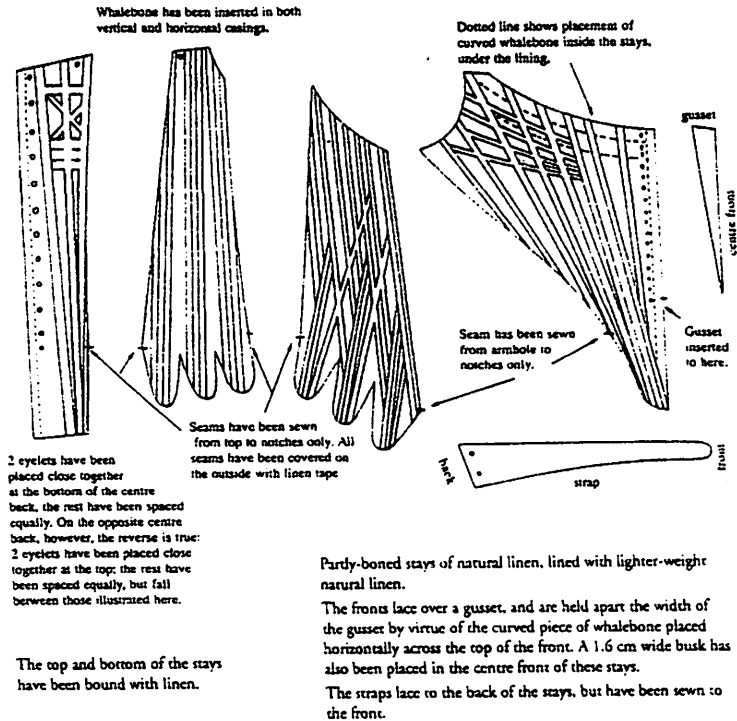


FIG. 7. Pattern of stays, 1775-85, accession #57/200, Worthing Museum & Art Gallery

Just as it was possible to draw some conclusions about the wearer of the first pair of stays, so it is possible to form a hypothesis about the owner of these stays. Crudely executed, they were probably not professionally made, for a Stay-maker undoubtedly would have executed his work more carefully. Perhaps, then, they were 'home-made' by someone who could not afford the services of a professional.<sup>44</sup> The fact that their wearer wanted stays when she may not have been able to afford them leads one to conclude that she was fashion-conscious. She must have been aware of current fashions because the pattern she designed, or copied, resembles that of stays worn by the upper classes, including the detail of the false lacing at the top. It is interesting that the creator of these stays neglected to include the centre front gusset under the lacing, and the horizontal boning, features which helped to give stays from this period their beautifully-rounded shape.

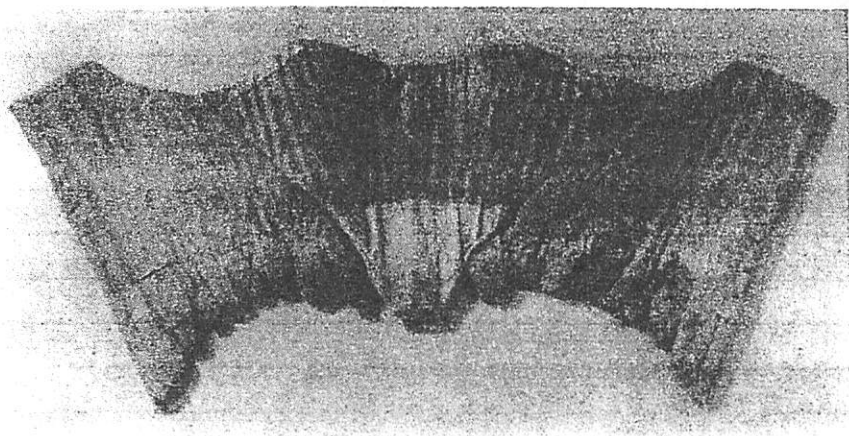


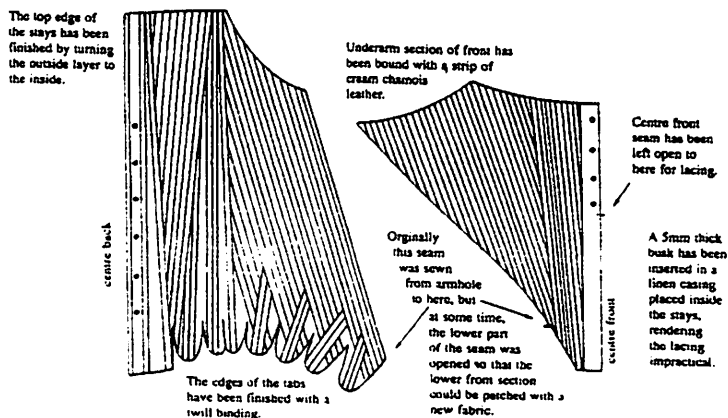
FIG. 8. Unlined stays, patched and worn, 1775-85. Accession #1976.173, Hereford and Worcester County Museum

Using information from the analysis of this artifact, social and cultural forces influencing the life of its wearer can be identified. It would appear that she was a member of the lower sorts, and possibly of the poor. It is likely that she lived in rural England because her knowledge of fashionable stays existed to some extent, but was limited. If she was the creator of these stays, although she was not skilled in the art of stay-making, clearly she was a hard and energetic worker. The tenacity and creativity of the person who designed and constructed these stays is to be admired and respected.

### *Conclusion*

It seems that pattern-making began not as the science it is today, but as an art form, with formulated pattern-drafting systems not originating until the nineteenth century. It is likely, then, that the creators of eighteenth-century stays draped or sculpted pattern pieces directly on the body, possibly never making paper patterns. It is also probable that many cutters copied existing garments, and adapted favourite patterns to individual measurements and other body types.

Pattern-creation was highly secretive. Stay-makers undoubtedly competed with each other for clients, and appear to have carefully guarded the secrets of their trade. The written information they passed on had little to do with pattern development, for they relied on the thorough training of their apprentices for the preservation of this knowledge.



Fully-boned stays of cotton twill, unlined. It appears that the casings have been sewn through the inner layers only; the outside fabric was then laid on top of the completed inner layers and attached with unevenly spaced rows of back or running stitches. The individual pieces were then seamed together.

These stays have been patched and repaired many times. Both black and blond whalebone has been used; it is now fractured and splintered, and appears to have been layered, one piece on top of the other in many places.

Drawn in the scale of .25 cm = 1 cm  
or 1/4" = 1".

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FIG. 9. Pattern of stays, 1775-85, accession #: 1976/173, Hereford and Worcester County Museum

The eighteenth-century cutter of stays, then, 'took it by his Eye', relying on his innate sense of design and proportion, and on his ability to create beautifully-shaped garments. As R. Campbell said of the qualifications necessary to become a fine Tailor, He must be able, not only to cut for the Handsome and shaped, but to bestow a good Shape where nature has not designed it; . . . He must study not only the Shape, but the common Gait of the Subject he is working upon, and make the cloaths fit easy in spite of the stiff Gait, or awkward Air. His hand and his head must go together; he must be a nice Cutter, and finish his work with Elegancy.<sup>45</sup>

Undoubtedly, similar qualities were essential to becoming a fine Stay-maker, and many of the eighteenth-century stays in existence today are testament of the skill and artistry of their creators.

#### *Acknowledgements*

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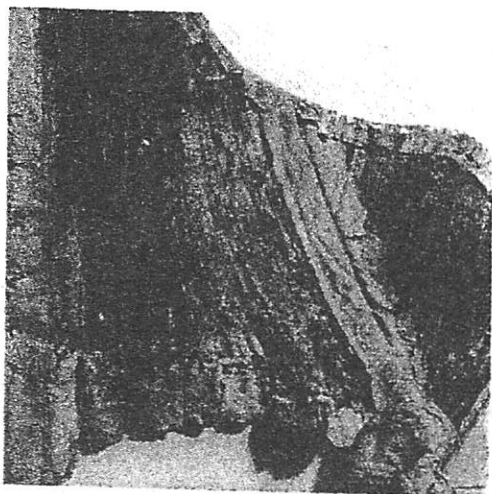


FIG. 10. Detail of inside of stays, accession #1976/173, showing fabrics, construction details, and workmanship

author is indebted to Ann Wise, Worthing Museum and Art Gallery, and Anita Blythe, Hereford and Worcester County Museum, for making artifacts available for study. Thanks also to Pegaret Anthony, Madeleine Ginsburg, and Maureen Heneghan Tripp.

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- <sup>3</sup> Lucie Hampel, 'Zwei Linzer Schnittbücher aus dem ersten Viertel des 18 Jahrhunderts: Das Meister-Stück-Buch des Bürgers und Zechmeisters Johannes Stöckel aus dem Jahre 1713 und das Meister-Stück-Buch des Bürgerlichen Schneidermeisters Johannes M. Wolfsegger von 1724', *Historisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Linz* (1960). I am grateful to Madeleine Ginsburg for suggesting I examine these Masterpiece Books, and to Gaby Christ for her acquisition and translation of them.
- <sup>4</sup> Francois Alexandre de Garsault, *Art du Tailleur* (Paris, 1769), p. 38.
- <sup>5</sup> Hampel, p. 243.
- <sup>6</sup> T. Waller, *General Description of all Trades, Digested in Alphabetical Order* (London, 1747), p. 221.
- <sup>7</sup> R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman*, 3rd edn (London, 1757), p. 225.
- <sup>8</sup> Plate IV from Garsault's *Art du Tailleur* shows tailors' tools, including figure 'g' illustrating the kind of knife used to cut baleen.
- <sup>9</sup> The author wishes to thank Dawn LeBlanc for lending her this artefact to be photographed.
- <sup>10</sup> *Encyclopédie Méthodique, Arts et Métiers Mécaniques*, 8 vols (Paris, 1783), vol. 2, p. 504.
- <sup>11</sup> Waller, p. 200.
- <sup>12</sup> Campbell, p. 224.
- <sup>13</sup> Campbell, p. 225.
- <sup>14</sup> Campbell, p. 225.
- <sup>15</sup> Banks Trade Cards, British Museum, #112.13.
- <sup>16</sup> Banks, #112.24.
- <sup>17</sup> Banks, #112.63.
- <sup>18</sup> Stuart Maxwell, 'Two Eighteenth Century Tailors', reprinted from the *Hawick Archaeological Society Transactions* (1972), p. 22. In Edinburgh, Maxwell says there were 'specialist (male) staymakers when our tailors were active, but James Turnbull made and repaired at least half a dozen pairs of stays'. It would seem, then, that in Edinburgh as well, tailors of men's clothing making and repairing stays was rather unusual.

- <sup>19</sup> *The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce, and Manufacture*, 4 vols (London, 1791), vol. 3, pp. 223–25.
- <sup>20</sup> *Universal*, vol. 4, pp. 852–65.
- <sup>21</sup> Campbell, p. 226.
- <sup>22</sup> A. F. Denzel after P. A. Willie, *L'Essai du Corset*, engraving 1780.
- <sup>23</sup> Garsault, p. 40.
- <sup>24</sup> Hampel, pp. 243–300.
- <sup>25</sup> Campbell, p. 192.
- <sup>26</sup> Campbell, p. 192.
- <sup>27</sup> Society of Adepts in the Profession, *The Taylor's Complete Guide, or, a Comprehensive Analysis of Beauty and Elegance in Dress* (London, 1796), pp. 48, 49.
- <sup>28</sup> Society, p. 48.
- <sup>29</sup> Juan de Alcega, *Libro de geometrica practica quel al trada de toccanto officio de sastre* (Madrid, 1589).
- <sup>30</sup> Benoit Boullay, *Le Tailleur Sincere, Contenant de Qu'il faut observer* (Paris, 1671).
- <sup>31</sup> Ingeborg Petrascheck-Hiem, 'Tailors' Masterpiece-Books', *Costume*, 3 (1969), p. 8.
- <sup>32</sup> See note 3 for complete citation.
- <sup>33</sup> Diderot & D'Alembert (eds), *Encyclopédie des Sciences* (Paris, Academie Royale des Sciences, 1751–69).
- <sup>34</sup> Hampel, p. 250.
- <sup>35</sup> Edward B. Giles, *The History of the Art of Cutting in England: preceded by A Sketch of the History of English Costumes* (London, 1897), p. 73.
- <sup>36</sup> Giles, p. 90.
- <sup>37</sup> Campbell, p. 103.
- <sup>38</sup> Society, p. 82.
- <sup>39</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman* (London, 1726), p. 353.
- <sup>40</sup> Banks, #112.6, 112.7.
- <sup>41</sup> Waugh, p. 154. When making reproductions of eighteenth-century stays, Waugh says that the horizontal whalebones 'should have been previously curved to shape by heating' before inserting in the stays. This may have been done with originals, as well.
- <sup>42</sup> Garsault, p. 42.
- <sup>43</sup> Garsault, p. 45.
- <sup>44</sup> These stays may also have been purchased ready-made. There is growing evidence that in addition to clothing being custom-made for specific individuals by eighteenth-century tradespeople, there was a burgeoning growth in the availability of ready-made clothing, as documented by Beverly Lemire, 'Popular Fashion and the Ready-Made Clothes Trade, 1750–1800', *Textile History*, 15 (1984). See also Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain 1660–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 161–200.
- <sup>45</sup> Campbell, p. 192.

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## UNIVERSAL INHERITANCE, UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AND THOMAS PAINE

Dane Clouston

Thomas Paine is someone I had heard of, but not known much about, in spite of having read for a degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford between the ages of 32 and 35, as part of my youthful ambition to become Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer. I had previously been in the Royal Navy and in banks in the City, to which I returned having decided that I could not afford to continue with academic studies. I had hoped to study the Economics of Inheritance. I still hope to arrange for the republication of the book of that title by Josiah Wedgwood. I had scraped an Upper Second and had simultaneously just failed to become Liberal MP for Newbury in the two 1974 General Elections, regrettably either side of my finals. It was not until after I had left Oxford that in conversation with Alan Ryan, my erstwhile tutor and now Warden of New College, I mentioned to him what I thought had been my original idea of Universal Inheritance. In response, he remarked - rather absent-mindedly - that Tom Paine had suggested something along those lines. I was not pleased, but thought no more about him!

I had already published "Inheritance for All" in the Liberal Party magazine *New Outlook* in March 1976. The idea was to make the sale of council houses to tenants fair to others, and to spread wealth more widely. In the event, the sale of the century went ahead. Lucky for some, but not for others. Then, over the years, I went on arguing in the City and elsewhere for my views about the need for "greater equality of opportunity in education, health and the inheritance of wealth", together with "the privatisation of all activities except those which cannot, or ought not, to be rationed by price". Liberal Party discipline had been even weaker in 1974 than it is now, and that had been the platform upon which I had stood in Newbury. The voters had approved, but it is still not a combination available from any political party. Had I known there was to be a second General Election in October 1974, I would have spent the summer canvassing Labour voters instead of completing my degree. With those views, it would not have been difficult to squeeze the February Labour vote enough to turn the October Con 24,000, Lib 23,000, Lab 10,000 result into a very unexpected Liberal victory. If pigs had wings! The same ideas were included in my Liberal Party Election Address in the 1979 South West Herts Parliamentary By-election, in which I was unwise enough to stand, early in the Thatcher years. But maybe some seeds were sown.

Years later, in 1998, having been inspired by a life-stopping moment two years earlier, I formed the Campaign for Universal Inheritance. In 2000, to my great delight, the Fabian Society came out with a very similar idea in a leaflet entitled, amusingly for a socialist society, "A Capital Idea". This no doubt encapsulates and explains why I could never persuade Labour Party activists whom I met in the course of politics to take the idea

seriously. The authors of the leaflet claimed originality ten years beforehand, in 1990, while very fairly drawing my surprised and recollected attention to Thomas Paine's original proposal in *Agrarian Justice* written in 1795-6.

Hence my joining the Thomas Paine Society. I am only just beginning to learn more about him. I have also been helped by the enthusiasm of my cousin, Louise Simson, a great Thomas Paine admirer, who has written a film script about him that I hope will come to fruition. I have also briefly met Lord Attenborough at my request, through Anthony Smith, the President of Magdalen College. If a film is made about Thomas Paine, I hope to get in a plug.

What is the proposal? Paine suggested in 1796 that every young person should receive an inheritance of capital of £15 at the age of 21, financed by a fund to be created out of a levy on inheritance. I unknowingly reinvented this idea and named it Universal Inheritance, in parallel with Universal Suffrage. It will transform our country, as did universal suffrage.

The Campaign for Universal Inheritance's most recent formulation is as follows:

" Every young man and woman born a British citizen should have the right not only to a vote but also to an inherited share in the wealth of the country, regardless of the fortunes or misfortunes, generosity or lack of generosity of parents.

Lower the rate of British Inheritance Tax on *giving* from 40 per cent to between 10 and 20 per cent, according to political taste. Introduce in tandem with it a new progressive tax, starting at the same chosen rate and remaining there for most beneficiaries, on *all* inheritance and capital gifts *received*, except from partners or spouses. Avoid double taxation by transferable tax credits.

Use the proceeds to give every British-born young man and woman on reaching the age of 25 a minimum British Universal Inheritance of between £5,000 and £10,000, itself subject to the new progressive tax on lifetime receipts of capital gifts and inheritance received.

The figures and tax rates should be arrived at in the context of political preferences and of the average wealth in Britain at the end of 2002 for every adult and child, which according to the Office of National Statistics was £85,000."

As I wrote in a recent memorandum to the members of Michael Howard's new Shadow Cabinet, this is an entirely extra instrument of economic and social policy. It is a meritocratic proposal as radical and revolutionary in its way as the Thatcherite sale of council houses

Unlike the New Labour Government's hare-brained Baby Bond proposal, which will go not only to those babies who will inherit nothing else but also to those who will become inheritance billionaires - British Universal Inheritance is means-tested by reference to



other inheritance and capital gifts received. It could if necessary absorb the Baby Bond proposal, which is for £250 or - if parents just happen to be on income support at the time - £500. This could be treated as just another inheritance, to be received at 18, added to the chosen figure of between £5,000 and £10,000, and be likewise subject to and financed by the 10 to 20 per cent tax on inheritance received.

The Baby Bonds, sadly, are a cynical New Labour "good news story" that sounds good but will benefit no one except for investment advisers for 18 years. They are the products of New Labour's unwillingness to tackle the last class, media and political Great Taboo - on the judicious positive redistribution of inherited wealth in each new generation. As a result the government is eschewing the means test in the one area in which it would be wholly beneficial - the inheritance of wealth.

British Universal Inheritance will enable home ownership and enterprise. £5,000 is the maximum the Prince's Trust will invest in a small business. (He should pay inheritance tax too!) It will help to reduce alienation, crime, policing costs, social exclusion and welfare state dependency. This judicious, positive redistribution of the stock of capital will enable taxation on the flow, or stream, of income and expenditure to be reduced (towards Oliver Letwin's 35 per cent target?). 25 is a good age for financial responsibility. Banks would be able to lend against the certain receipt of British Universal Inheritance for certain approved purposes after the age of 18. The Fabian Society suggested £10,000 at 18 - too much too young, at least during the introductory period. Once introduced, the amount and the progressive rate of tax will grow under the pressure of democratic debate.

There are always problems of transition. On first introduction, British Universal Inheritance should ideally be tapered down from the chosen figure at the age of 25 to zero at 30 - with a balance making it up to the chosen figure at the age of 75 and above, so that all may expect to benefit eventually. The amount and initial tapering will have to be set with this in mind.

The wider spread of the private ownership of capital will transform society, just as did the wider spread of the right to vote - another human right for all. Being self-financing, the cost of this country-transforming proposal will be merely the annual yield of the present exemption-riddled 40 per cent British Inheritance Tax - about £2.5 billion a year.

At present, receipts by the next generation of £ billions of business, farming and shareholding assets and of lifetime gifts are scandalously and shamefully free of tax. While others inherit nothing at all. Unless New Labour comes to their senses, the Conservative Party may well adopt British Universal Inheritance first. This will confound New Labour and make sense to many more voters of Conservative Party policy slogans for "choice" and "a fair deal for all", not to mention "making this country theirs as much as it is ours".

Given that the New Labour government has completely ignored the idea, it is left to OPPORTUNITY (The Campaign for British Universal Inheritance) to carry forward

Thomas Paine's original proposal for positive redistribution of inherited wealth and popular - as opposed to dynastic - capitalism in Britain. Fairer Capitalism in the United Kingdom. (FCUK?) Let us make it happen. It will be very good and inclusive for all citizens of our British community, including, topically - all our British-born Muslim brothers and sisters. Maybe The (continuing and British) Liberal Party, whose constitution still calls for the wider spread of wealth and power (not the same as the Euro-fanatic Lib Dems) will get there first. That will be a start, for others to follow.

And let no one get away with talking about the importance of reducing poverty, either nationally or internationally, without being reminded of the need for National Universal Inheritance schemes in all countries. It will be easier to gain support in rich countries for aiding poor countries if wealth in the rich countries and also in the poor countries is more evenly spread. In every country, those who would inherit great wealth should inherit less in order that all others in their country should inherit at least some minimum amount of capital at the age of 25, to be gradually clawed back by initially modest taxation on further receipts of capital gifts and inheritance.

Let us vindicate again Thomas Paine, that great reformer. E-mail [daneclouston@universal-inheritance.org](mailto:daneclouston@universal-inheritance.org) and be kept in touch with our activities, lobbying and meetings. Visit [www.universal-inheritance.org](http://www.universal-inheritance.org). Join OPPORTUNITY as a Supporter. Students and over 65's Free, Others £5 - to help bring a minimum inheritance of between £5,000 and £10,000 to all. Larger donations most welcome. Post cheques, please, to OPPORTUNITY (Campaign for British Universal Inheritance) PO Box 1148 Oxford OX44 7AT with your full name, address and e-mail address. All will be acknowledged.



A James Gillray caricature showing Thomas Paine as a corset maker taking the measure of Britain.