

# T.P.S. BULLETIN



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## ROBERT BURNS AND THE ENGLISH RADICALS

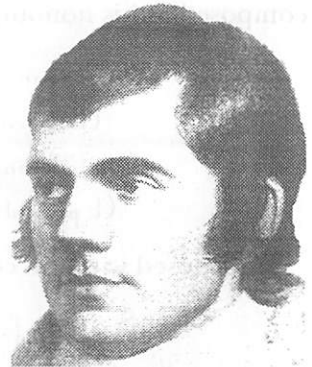
Norman R. Paton

*Entre nous, you know my Politics; and I cannot approve of the honest Doctor's whining over the deserved fate of a certain pair of Personages. What is there in the delivering over the perjured Blockhead & an unprincipled Prostitute into the hands of the hangman, that it should arrest for a moment attention, in an eventful hour, when, as my friend Roscoe in Liverpool gloriously expresses it - "When the welfare of millions is hung in the scale And the balance yet trembles with fate!"*

Comments by Robert Burns, on the executions of the French King and Queen (12, January, 1795).

On the 2 August, 1787, exactly a year after the publication of his much acclaimed, Kilmarnock edition, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, Robert Burns took the decision to lay an account of his young life before posterity. The format he chose was an autobiographical letter of considerable length, which he dispatched from Mauchline, the small Ayrshire town lying close to the family farm of Mossgiel. The recipient of this famous and much scrutinized epistle was Dr. John Moore.

The initial contact between Burns and Moore was Mrs. Frances Anna Dunlop, the eldest daughter of Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, who claimed decent from a cousin of the legendary hero Sir William Wallace. She had been widowed just prior to the publication of Burns's poetry, and, further burdened by financial worries, she had gone through a period of deep despondency, until a chanced reading of *The Cotter's Saturday Night* had started to lift her spirits from the gloom. She immediately ordered six copies of Burns's Kilmarnock edition and made herself known to the poet. On receiving a copy of the book from her, Dr. Moore wrote asking her to inform Burns that he should write to him at his London home. Burns, who was, by now, residing in Edinburgh, took his time about doing so, finally penning a letter to Moore in January 1787. Two further letters were sent, then followed the renowned epistle of autobiography. Within the text of this



Portrait of Robert Burns, by Archibald Skirvings

lengthy letter specific reference was made to Helen Maria Williams, who at this particular time, was acting as an amanuensis to Moore:

*In the very polite letter Miss Williams did me the honor to write me you have got a complaint in your eyes. I pray to God that it may be removed; for considering that lady and you are my common friends, you will probably employ her to read this letter; and then goodnight to that esteem with which she was pleased to honor the Scotch Bard.*

Helen Maria Williams was born in London in 1762, thus she was three years younger than Burns. In her early life she resided much of the time at Berwick-on-Tweed and, her Scottish mother, as she stated, had given her sufficient grounding in the northern idiom to make possible her comprehension of Burns's vernacular verses. Her choice piece seemed to rest on the stanzas addressed to *The Mountain Daisy*; to this end she sent Burns a letter enclosing some verses she had composed in his honour, her poem opened with the stanza:

While soon 'the garden's flaunting flowers decay  
 And scatter'd on the earth neglected lie  
 The 'Mountain Daisy', cherish'd by the ray  
 A poet drew from heav'n, shall never die.

and closed with the couplet:

Scotia! from rude affliction shield thy bard,  
 His heav'n-taught numbers fame herself will guard.

The subsequent fame, or notoriety, depending in the individual viewpoint, of Helen Maria Williams, almost certainly stemmed from her political writings and activities rather than her poetry. Despite the accusation of numerous errors, and a good deal of inaccurate comment, they are still regarded as being well worth reading, if not as factual history of important events, at least as one contemporary opinion of those troubled times. (1)

In 1788 Helen left England to visit France and, when the fall of the Bastille in the following year ushered in the French Revolution, she espoused its ideals of *liberty, equality, fraternity* with gushing enthusiasm, so much so, that Lord Orford (Horace Walpole) branded her as, *a revolutionary fiend!* The fact that she had involved herself with a married man, the English revolutionary, John Hurford Stone, played straight

into the hands of the enemies she was quickly making, she had sacrificed *her reputation to her Spirit of Politics*. She soon formed a deep-bonded friendship with the Girondist leader, Manon Jeanne Roland and, when that lady perished on the guillotine in November 1793, a martyr to her principles, Williams was somewhat fortunate not to share the same fate.

At the beginning of August 1789, Helen received a letter from Robert Burns written at Ellisland Farm. She had sent him a copy of her poem on the slave-trade and, from the text of Burns's reply, it would appear that quite a time lapse had ensued between the exchange:

*I am deeply indebted to you, first, for a most elegant poetic complement; then for a polite, obliging letter; and, lastly, for your excellent poem in the slave-trade; and yet, wretch that I am! though the debts were debts of honour and the creditor a lady, I have put off even the very acknowledgement of the obligation, until you must indeed be the very angel I take you for, if you can forgive me... Your poem I have read with the highest pleasure.*

In offering her a constructive criticism of the poem Burns advised her that he could think nothing superior, not even in Thomson's *Winter*, on the subject of a tempest, than her stanzas 347-351. Helen lost no time in penning an answer:

*I do not lose a moment in returning you my sincere acknowledgement for your letter and your criticism on my poem, which is a very flattering proof that you have read it with attention... You have, indeed, been very profuse of panegyric on my little performance. A much less portion of applause from you would have been gratifying to me, since I think its value depends entirely upon the source from whence it proceeds, the incense of praise, like other incense, is more grateful from the quality than the quantity of the odour.*

Some disparaging comments by W.E.Henley, himself a poet of some merit, in which he sneered at Burns's *alaborate criticism on some worthless verses by that crazy creature, Helen Maria Williams*,<sup>(2)</sup> were not at all called for: bombastic arrogance was, alas, frequently the criterion of Henley! Perhaps he had overlooked the fact that Wordsworth credited Helen Maria as being the inspiration of his youth, he had addressed one of his early sonnets to her, though he did not actually meet her until later in life.

One of Helen's closest friends during the early period of the French

Revolution was Mary Wollstonecraft, who confided in her sister Everina:

*Miss Williams has behaved very civilly to me, and I shall visit her frequently, because I rather like her, and I meet French company at her house. Her manners are affected, yet her simple goodness of heart continually breaks through the varnish, so that one would be more inclined...to love than admire her. Authorship is a heavy weight for female shoulders, especially in the sunshine of prosperity* <sup>(3)</sup>

The fact that Mary Wollstonecraft herself had corresponded with Burns only came to prominence, and general public awareness, after Catherine Carswell produced her biography of the poet in 1930:

*The interesting fact that Mrs Godwin (Mary Wollstonecraft) became 'a particular correspondent' of Burns's, is now for the first time revealed in Syme's unpublished letters. Born the same year as Burns, she died in the year after him.* <sup>(4)</sup>

What then (is the obvious question) became of the letters which apparently passed between the poet and the figurehead of modern feminism? No positive answer can now be sustained by fact, but it is worth noting that, Robert Chambers, still regarded in many quarters as Burns's finest ever editors, suggested in his *Life and Works of Robert Burns* (1851) that:

*It is far from likely that the whole of the democratic poems of Burns have come down to us. For many years that kind of authorship was attended with so much obloquy that his friends studied to conceal than to circulate MSS. that might have brought him into trouble. And even after his death the interests of his young family appeared to demand that nothing should be brought forward which was calculated to excite political feeling against him.*

It is indeed known from a letter written by John Syme to Alexander Cunningham shortly after Burns's funeral (July 26, 1796), that Mary Wollstonecraft, amongst others, had been approached for the purpose of gathering together any stray pieces of verse or correspondence of the poet's that might serve as useful material for a proposed project, combining a complete edition of his works with a detailed critical biography. John Syme, one of the poet's closest personal friends, was considered to be best suited to the task of the proposed volume. In the end, however, the responsibility fell to Dr. James Currie, an Anglo-Scot

then residing in Liverpool.

Currie was deeply conscious of the fact that, in the latter stages of Burns's life, many had viewed his radical politics with distrust and suspicion. Mindful of the fact that the main priority of the exercise was to raise funds for the poet's young widow and family, Currie made it clear from the outset, to Syme, that he intended to suppress all allusions to Burns's political opinions. (5) It would, therefore, seem a reasonable assumption to conclude that, letters written to correspondents containing political references were wilfully destroyed. Even the letters which Burns is known to have written to Currie's own friend, the writer and historian, William Roscoe, have not survived. Doubtless, the exchanges between Burns and Wollstonecraft, fell victims of the same purge.

There is, of course, every possibility that Burns had written to Mary congratulating her on her book, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, just as he had written to Roscoe full of enthusiasm for the song on the, *Anniversary of the French Revolution*. There would seem little doubt that Wollstonecraft's plea for feminism had favourably struck Burns's imagination: not long afterwards he wrote the prologue: *The Rights of Women*. This, *Occasional Address*, was spoken by the addressee, Louisa Fontenelle, on 26 November, 1792, at the theatre in Dumfries. The poem opens in a forthright manner:

While Europe's eye is fix'd on mighty things:  
The fate of empires and the fall of kings;  
While quacks of state must each produce his plan;  
And even children list the *The Rights of Man*;  
Amid this mighty fuss just let me mention  
*The Rights of Women* merit some attention.

The *Rights* advocated by Burns however, reflected nothing of Wollstonecraft's feminism; the prologue merely meanders rather drearly through three distinct pleas for, *Protection*, *Decorum* and *dear Admiration*. The final four lines, however, according to the Burns editor, William Scott Douglas, brought something near tumult in the audience:

But truce with kings, and truce with constitutions;  
With bloody armaments and revolutions!  
Let majesty your first attention summon,  
Ah! *ca ira!* The Majesty Of Woman!

Scott Douglas doubtless allowed his Conservative bias to show when he protested that the first line if this closing quatrain was thought by many *to be far too bold*, and that: *the finishing stroke, ca ira! was intolerable*. The Parisian Sansculottes, bedecked in their read *Caps of Liberty* had, of course, made the revolutionary chant *Ca ira!* their undisputed battle-hymn. Shortly afterwards the Excise Board ordered an investigation into the political conduct of their most famous officer, Robert Burns; whilst he, in turn, wrote to the Commissioner of the Scottish Board of Excise, Robert Graham of Fintry, pointing out that his prologue, *The Rights of Women...had...nothing whatever to do with Politics.* (6)

A somewhat turbulent relationship between the philosopher William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft eventually brought marriage on March 29, 1797; five months later their daughter, also named Mary, was born. Complications, however, arose from the birth and, on September 10, Mary Wollstonecraft died. Her daughter later married the poet Shelley on December 30, 1816. Encouraged by her husband and Lord Byron, Mary Shelley achieved her own literary fame by writing the classical horror story, *Frankenstein*.

In the aftermath of Mary Wollstonecraft's death her husband produced a clumsy biography of her, doing little more than presenting the public with unnecessary scandal regarding her private affairs; and her good friend William Roscoe, who had commissioned her first known portrait in 1791, sadly reflected:

Hard was thy fate in all the scenes of life,  
As daughter, sister, parent, friend and wife  
But harder still in death thy fate we own,  
Mourn'd by thy Godwin - with a heart of stone.

The same Roscoe of Liverpool whom Robert Burns had been yearning to meet; and had, indeed, planned a journey south for this purpose. In a letter to the Rev. Edwards, a Birmingham pastor, Roscoe has confirmed the Scottish Bard's intention:

*I had not indeed the pleasure of his personal acquaintance; but at the time he (Burns) was taken ill he was preparing a journey to Liverpool, & had done me the honour (& it is an honour of which I shall always be proud) of sending me word that he intended to pay me a visit.*

Their correspondence appears to have started after Burns had read with enthusiasm a copy of Roscoe's song, *For the Anniversary of the French*



*Revolution*, the third stanza of which runs: (7)

Let Burke\* like a bat from his splendour retire,  
 A splendour too strong for his eyes;  
 Let pedants and fools his effusions admire,  
 Entrapped in his cobwebs like flies.  
 Shall insolent sophistry hope to prevail  
 Where Reason opposes her weight,  
 When the welfare of millions is hung in the scale,  
 And the balance yet trembles with fate.

The concluding two lines if this verse were quoted by Burns in a letter to Frances Anna Dunlop, written on January 12, 1795; the outcome of which brought their long, frequently chequered friendship to an abrupt end. This lady had several times admonished the poet that she did not wish to have his republican views foisted upon her; she had two daughters married to French royalist refugees, and the crude comments made in the letter were too much for Mrs. Dunlop to stomach:

*Entre nous, you know my Politics; and I cannot approve of the honest Doctor's whining over the deserved fate of a certain pair of Personages. What is there in the delivering over the perjured Blockhead & an unprincipled Prostitute into the hands of the hangman, that it should arrest for a moment attention, in an eventful hour, when, as my friend Roscoe in Liverpool gloriously expresses it - 'When the welfare of millions is hung in the scale And balance yet trembles with fate!'*

The honest Doctor was John Moore, who, like his protege, Helen Maria Williams, had been in Paris and witnessed scenes of the Revolution. Burns obviously had thought Moore more liberal than the sentiments which came from the Doctor's writing of *Journal During a Residence In France*. The poet, nevertheless, attempted to excuse Moore and, in the same letter, he continued:

*But our Friend is already indebted to People in power, and still looks forward for his Family, so I can apologise for him; for at the bottom I am sure he is a staunch friend to liberty.*

Moore was of a similar age to Mrs. Dunlop, some thirty years older

than Burns; the last known letter addressed to him by the poet was written from Ellisland farm on February 28, 1791. In the previous July Burns had written him and concluded his letter with the hope that Miss Williams was well and still composing poetry. It is unlikely that Burns ever again contacted Maria Williams after his letter criticizing her verses on the slave-trade. If he did so, the correspondence has not survived. The horrors of the slave-trade were, incidentally, bitterly attacked by William Roscoe and his friend Dr. James Currie (Burns first major biographer) who both worked strenuously to have it abolished by parliamentary law. Indeed this very issue may have persuaded Roscoe to a career as an MP. He was elected to the Commons as the Member for Liverpool in 1806, as a radical Whig. In the following year Wilberforce had his Bill against slavery passed in the House. Roscoe's writings denouncing the slave-trade included the poem *The Wrongs of Africa* and the pamphlet, *A General View of the African Slave Trade*. He is, however, best remembered for his interest in and work on Italian culture. Roscoe's principal achievements were his biographies of Lorenzo de' Medici, published in 1796 (8) and of Lorenzo's son, Giovanni (published in 1805), who became Pope as Leo X in 1513. The Medici were a famous Florentine family; Lorenzo the Magnificent, as he was named, being sole ruler of Florence from 1478-1492; he was described as *a benevolent tyrant in a constitutional republic*. He was, however, a magnificent patron of the arts, literature and science and a poet of notable ability. Commenting on his friend Roscoe's tract on Leo X, James Currie declared: *He will be in his religious sentiments as neutral as Gibbon, but rather, as I tell him, Canny to the Catholics.*

The outstanding English radical of this particular period, by universal consent, was the Thetford-born staymaker Thomas Paine. The concluding part of this essay is given over to a brief account of his role in the major events which took place during the latter half of the 18th century.

\*Edmund Burke was also the subject of Roscoe's 1796 publication: *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters (in the Regicide Peace)*.

## PAINÉ AND BURNS

*Priests have denounced them, but they are rising in the estimation of those who are best worthy of notice, men of literature and - the mob!* (9)

Charles Bradlaugh (1833-91), Radical MP for Northampton.

Thomas Paine was in his thirty-eighth year when he left England to make a new life for himself in America. He sailed on the London Packet

at the end of September, 1774, and almost died during the voyage, a fever epidemic, presumed typhus, had spread through the vessel. He arrived in Philadelphia on November 30, so weak that he had to be stretchered off the ship. When he was sufficiently recuperated from his illness he began to seek-out suitable employment. Before leaving England he had formed a friendship with the influential Benjamin Franklin from whom he had obtained a character reference of introduction to Franklin's son-in-law, Richard Bache.

In the following year Paine turned to writing, one of his first printed pieces being an account of African slavery in America. Some five months later, in August 1775, he published a short text on women's rights which some sources have concluded pre-empted Mary Wollstonecraft's famous volume on feminism. Paine, however, fell quite short of Mary's trenchant demands for sexual equality. During their later close friendship in London and in Paris, they no doubt discussed and reached broad agreement on the subject. One month after his feminist plea Paine composed his best-known poem, *Liberty Tree*. However, the stunning impact he was to make in his adopted country came early in the New Year of 1776. The pamphlet, *Common Sense*, originally published anonymously, burst upon America with colossal effect. It is no exaggeration to claim that it was this book which fired the initial spark leading to the independence of the United States. Fifty-six editions were printed in America on 1776 alone; the sales in England, Scotland and Ireland, indicated it as a best-seller; soon it was translated and sold in several European countries, particularly France and Spain. America's War of Independence, the struggle to throw off the yoke of the British crown raged on. Paine committed himself fully to the cause of his new homeland. He was no traitor, being fully aware that many prominent people back in England were emphatically supportive of what they viewed as America's just grievances. He had every confidence that sustained pressure back home from liberal-minded statesmen would secure the eventual capitulation of the reactionary elements, headed by King George III, within the British government.

To keep the momentum of inspiration going among American troops during the dark days of war, Thomas Paine took upon himself the task of producing a series of encouraging essays. He entitled them *The American Crisis*, wrote sixteen in total, leading off with what is surely the most famous passage in all his work:

*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. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives only that gives every thing its value. In the second Crisis Paper, Paine gave his new country a new name: "These United States of America" will sound as pompously in the world or in history, as "the kingdom of Great Britain"; the character of General Washington will fill a page with as much lustre as that of Lord Howe; and the Congress have as much right to command the king and parliament in London to desist from legislation, as they or you have to command Congress.*

It is interesting to note that Robert Burns, in a letter published in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* commenting on the recent celebrations of the *Glorious Revolution* of 1688, observed that, the American Congress in 1776 will, in posterity, be regarded *as able and as enlightened, and, a whole empire will say, as honest as the English Convention in 1688.* The poet's prediction that their fourth of July will become as sacred to them as our fifth of November is to us, has been stymied somewhat by the deeds of a certain Guy Fawkes, completely overshadowing any celebrations in our times of the 1688 English Revolution. There is no doubt whatever that Burns was thoroughly with the course of events leading to the loss of the colonies: his *Ballad On the American War* offers sufficient proof. Although it did not emerge prior to December 1786, when Burns *showed the political ballad to Lord Glencairn* (the Whig nobleman, and his early patron), the original draft was probably composed in 1784, the year the war finally came to an end.

The cessation of hostilities between Britain and America also made possible Paine's return for a visit to England. He now made the acquaintance of Edmund Burke whom he regarded as one of the more progressive political figures, and a true friend if the American cause. In the summer of 1788, Paine, accompanied by Burke, made a tour of the northern iron foundries, and later spent a week at Burke's estate. He certainly seemed to impress Burke who referred to him in a letter to John Wilkes as, *Paine the great American.*

The French Revolution, and their respective writings on that momentous event, however, put paid to any thought of lasting friendship.

When Paine crossed the Channel to France in the hope of assisting

their Revolution he continued his friendship with Burke until unleashing on his 'friend' the suggestion that he should attempt to introduce revolution into England under the guise of 'Reform'. Burke, to put it mildly, was flabbergasted! It is perhaps, something that he troubled to reply, but he did by shooting off:

*Do you really imagine Mr. Paine, that the constitution of this kingdom requires such innovations, or could exist with them, or that any reflecting man would seriously engage in them? You are aware that I have, all my life, opposed such scheme of reform, because I know them not to be Reform!* (10)

It is now well known history that Edmund Burke pleaded the cause of the aristocracy in his flowery prose, *Reflections on the French Revolution*; and that Thomas Paine after informing George Washington: *A share in two revolutions is living to some purpose*, then proceeded to demolish Burke's line of argument in the book which he decided to dedicate to the American President, *Rights of Man*.

Whatever else of Paine he may have read, it is definitely known that Robert Burns had obtained and read copies of *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man*. Indeed, the striking parallels between Paine's book and Burns's song, *A Man's A Man For A' That*, has excited considerable opinion since the matter was first raised by John Maccunn, a Professor of Moral Philosophy. Those familiar with Burns's stanzas will readily recognize the sources in the quotations:

*The patriots of France have discovered in good time that rank and dignity in Society must take a new ground. The old one has fallen through. It must now take the substantial ground of character instead of the chimerical ground of titles... The artificial Noble shrinks into a dwarf before the noble of Nature... Through all the vocabulary of Adam Smith there is not such an animal as a Duke or a Count... It (the love of titles) talks about its fine blue ribbon like a girl, and shows its new garter like a child... For what we can foresee, all Europe may form one great republic, and man be free of the whole.*

Professor Maccunn concluded with the sentiment: *Can we help wishing that all political philosophers could find their poets?* (11) Robert Burns had made it abundantly clear where the ideas of the song came from by stating that it was: *two or three good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme.*

Another great Scottish poet who had fallen under the spell of Paine's book was the Paisley weaver, Alexander Wilson, one of several persons privileged to meet both Paine and Burns. Wilson wrote:

*The Rights of Man* is now well kenned, (known)  
 And red by mony a hunder, (read by many hundreds)  
 For Tammy Paine the hulk has penned, (book)  
 And lent the court a lounder, (severe blow)  
 It's like a keeking-glass to see (looking-glass)  
 The craft of kirk and statesmen,  
 And wi' a hauld and easy glee, (with a bold)  
 Guid faith the birkie beats them (good) (smart fellow)  
 Aff hand this day, (off-hand)

Following a three month gaol sentence for writing some satirical verses Wilson decided to leave illiberal Scotland and, in May 1794, sailed for America. In the year 1808, he visited Thomas Paine and persuaded the old revolutionary to subscribe to *American Ornithology*, then due for publication, Wilson the erstwhile weaver poet was now the outstanding naturalist of his time and has been recognized as America's greatest ever ornithologist. He was fascinated, as many other also were, by the sheer brilliance of Paine's luminous eyes: *the penetration and intelligence of the eye bespeak the man of genius and of the world*, wrote Wilson to his collaborator, Alexander Lawson. (12)

At around the time Alexander Wilson was leaving for America, verses of a republican poem, *The Tree of Liberty*, began to circulate in Scotland. Many years later (c.1838), a copy in the handwriting of Robert Burns came to light in Springburn, Glasgow. From this, Robert Chambers, the Burns editor to whom it had been loaned, assumed that Burns was the author. Others, however, have challenged this on the grounds that: (a) the fact it was in Burns's hand merely confirmed he had copied it; proof of his authorship was not conclusive; (b) it was possibly a clever forgery. Henley, presumptuous as ever, ventured his opinion that, *Burns neither wrote nor copied the trash*. Did Burns (or the unknown author) reflect on Paine's *Liberty Tree* when composing the stanzas? An interesting thought!

The blistering ode, *Scots Wha Hae* was certainly the product of Burns's gifted pen and was, quite definitely, a coded reaction to the infamous sedition trials of Muir and Palmer.

By oppression's woes and pains!  
 By your sons in servile chains! (13)  
 We will drain our dearest veins,  
 But they shall be free!

As Robert Chambers made clear in his edition of Burns's work:

*Under the cover of a fourteenth-century battle-song he was really liberating his soul against the Tory tyranny that was opposing liberty at home and abroad, and, moreover, striking comfort at his own fireside. (14)*

There is indeed evidence that Burns felt the very security of his young family threatened by the actions of the excise Board in raising the question of his political loyalty. He had been ruined in farming; his literary ambitions lay in serving, without payment, the task of furnishing Scottish traditional music with new lyrics or amending and updating unsuitable ones; his Excise salary, meagre as it was, stood between him and utter ruin. If discharged by the Excise for political disaffection, the prospect of alternative employment on such a reputation was, to say the least, remote.

One month after Thomas Muir had been sentenced to fourteen years penal servitude in Botany Bay, Burns decided to present a book to Dumfries Library, *The Constitution of England* by John DeLolme. He had chosen to inscribe this volume, but such was his state of mind that, on the following day he again called at the library, requested the book, and stuck the flyleaf to the frontispiece with some paste he had brought, this obliterating his inscription. Years later the pages were carefully separated and it was possible to read:

*Mr Burns presents this book to the library, and begs that they will take it as a Creed of British Liberty - until they find a better*  
 R.B.

At the trial of Muir damning evidence against him had been led by the prosecution concerning the manner in which he had propagated Paine's book, *Rights of Man*. Burns, learning of this, must have feared the possibility of the Excise Board ordering a search of his own house in Dumfries; after revisiting the town library and pasting the flysheet of DeLolme's book, he took from his own library the copies of *Rights of Man* and *Common Sense*, giving them over to the safe keeping of a trusted neighbour, George Haugh. These books remained as prized souvenirs with the Haugh family for many years after the incident.

Meanwhile in France, during this year of 1793, Thomas Paine was to find himself in dire straits. His credentials as a revolutionary seemed impeccable; however, the Jacobins, having gained supremacy over the Girondists in a power struggle to direct the course of the revolution, began to settle the feud between them in a bloodbath. Paine, who broadly allied himself with the Girondists, brought the wrath of extremism upon himself by attempting to save Louis XVI from impending execution: *Kill the monarchy, but spare the man*, was his passionate plea to the Convention. Paine felt indebted to the king for the support he had offered America during the War of Independence: Louis, of course, had merely exploited the situation to the chagrin of Britain. However, Paine, who had been involved in seeking aid from Louis for America, saw he as *le bon roi*, and spoke, with conviction (through an interpreter), against the death sentence, pointing out that, although the British government would inwardly gloat at their old adversary falling a victim to his own subjects, paradoxically they might well use such a situation as a pretext to unleash a war that France had no wish to fight.

The French revolutionaries guillotined their king of January 21, 1793. A member of the National Guard escorting Louis to the scaffold was a young physician William Maxwell of Kirkconnell. His revolutionary activities in London and Paris had aroused the temper of Edmund Burke who 'named' him in the House of Commons; the newspapers branded him Britain's number one Jacobin, and his mother lived in fear of what she might next learn of him. The death of the king and the declaration of war with Britain, which quickly followed, served notice on Maxwell to review his situation. He took the decision to leave Paris and return home.

Arriving in Dumfries in 1793/4, to set himself up in a medical practice, it was really inevitable that Maxwell should meet-up with the poet Robert Burns. By September 1794 Burns was informing Frances Anna Dunlop:

*Maxwell is my most intimate friend, and one of the first (finest) characters I have ever met with; but on account of his Politics is rather shunned by some high Aristocrats, though his Family & Fortune entitle him to the first circles.*

During his period in Paris Maxwell lived at White's Hotel, 7 Paddage des Petits-Peres, later the Hotel de Philadelphie; this establishment was the quarters of most of the British/Irish contingent supportive of the revolutionary cause. Not long after the king's execution Paine left White's to take quarters in another hotel adjacent to the rue de Richelou.



The cheap taunts of *king-killer* directed against Maxwell by the loyalists of Dumfries were, of course, inexcusable. It was the politicians who had sealed Louis's fate, many leading Girondists voting with their Jacobin opponents for the death sentence. Maxwell as a member of the National Guard, would have been summoned for duty, the refusal of which would have brought dire consequences upon him. The Guard, a citizen/police corps, had been formed by the celebrated Lafayette, he who had entrusted the keys of the Bastille to the keeping of Thomas Paine, to be passed-on to George Washington, as a token of revolutionary friendship twixt France and America.

The eventual arrest of Thomas Paine in Paris appears to have been the consequence of several factors. His plea for the king's life no doubt prompted a reaction against him; he had also fallen foul of Marat, the idol of the Sansculottes, and it became known that, along with Jacques Pierre Brissot, a Girondist leader later guillotined, Paine had formed a conspiracy to discredit Marat; and, when the opinion of Robespierre, a one time admirer of Paine, also swung against him, the danger signs loomed ominous for the English revolutionary. When Brissot fell, Paine was immediately vulnerable. In the early morning of December 28, 1793 came the arrest at White's Hotel where Paine had attended a meeting which ran late and he had decided to stay overnight at his former accomodation. A written instruction that the accusations against Paine would serve America as well as France, was later found among Robespierre's papers.

The period of detention in Luxembourg Prison brought upon Paine a bitter change to his character. He had every faith that his friend, George Washington, would soon demand of the French authorities that he must be released. Washington, after all, sent an American frigate to Botany Bay for the expressed purpose of freeing the Scottish reformer Thomas Muir. However, Paine waited in vain for his friend to act. His prison ordeal almost cost him his life on two counts. A serious illness threatened to make a journey to the scaffold unnecessary; even so, only a fateful oversight prevented him from joining his comrades in the Girondist camp who perished by the blade. As it turned out, Robespierre, not Paine, fell the victim of circumstances; he being seized and executed in July 1794. Paine was not allowed to emerge from prison until November 4 and, when released, his pent-up rage he determined to direct at one man, his erstwhile friend, President George Washington, *dedicatee of Rights of Man*.

To what extent Washington deserved criticism for his part in the affair is an arguable issue. There is no doubt whatever that Paine's judgement had been impaired by sheer temper, and the text of the 'open letter' which he addressed to the President was well beyond the

acceptance of reasonable conduct. The real culprit has to emerge in the form of Gouverneur Morris, the envoy appointed to look after American affairs in France; and he detested Thomas Paine. Witness the tone of a letter sent to Thomas Jefferson:

*Lest I should forget it, I must mention that Thomas Paine is in prison, where he amuses himself with publishing a pamphlet against Jesus Christ. I do not recollect whether I mentioned to you that he would have been executed along with the rest of the Brissotins if the advance party had not viewed him contempt.*

It was the duplicity of Gouverneur Morris, more so than Washington's apparent casual indifference that brought Paine to the brink. Whilst assuring the authorities back in America that he was following their instructions to press for Paine's release, he was equally involved in advising Robespierre that America cared nothing about Paine; that, with a few exceptions he was thoroughly disliked back there. <sup>(15)</sup> Morris was finally replaced, not before time, as the American envoy by James Monroe, who later served as a fine president of his country, famed for his presentation of *the Monroe doctrine* to Congress in 1823. On securing Paine's release, James Monroe took him into own home in Paris where, with the caring attention of Monroe's wife, Paine was slowly nursed back to better health. Monroe made his feelings quite clear when he wrote of his patient:

*I shall certainly pay the utmost attention to this gentleman, as he is one of those whose merits in our Revolution were most distinguished.* <sup>(16)</sup>

Alas, James Monroe was unable, despite considerable pleading and attempted reasoning with Paine, to prevent the dispatch of the 'open letter' to Washington. A copy of this was sent, July 30, 1796, to Franklin's nephew, Benjamin Bache, whom Paine knew to have an intense dislike of Washington. Instructions to make it public accompanied the letter. This, added to *the pamphlet against Jesus Christ*, as Gouverneur Morris had styled Paine's publication, *The Age of Reason*, brought upon the old hero of 1776, a good deal of resentment from the American people, or at least from those who remembered him, for time had quickly moved on and, to the new generation of Americans, the name of Thomas Paine excited no great feelings. One instance of the backlash against him came from the New York freemasons who dropped his name from 'Thomas Paine's Lodge, No.27', in 1797. <sup>(17)</sup> The President was the most revered member of the American Masonic fraternity.

At the very time when Paine was busy composing the 'Washington' letter in July 1796, the poet Robert Burns, who had endured ill-health for several months, died on the 21st of the month. On Tuesday, July 26, he was buried in St. Michael's churchyard, after an impressive procession through the streets of Dumfries. One Robert Banks Jenkinson, full of his own pomp and importance, enjoyed a prominent role in the proceedings, riding at the head of his cavalry from the south coast Cinque Ports; they had lately arrived to take quarters in Dumfries, and Jenkinson had made known his dislike for the town's most famous son, *on political grounds*, when the dying poet yet had breath. Burns's biographer, Catherine Carswell, got it just about right when she noted:

*As Earl of Liverpool, this celebrated nonentity, 'my friend Jenkinson,' as Pitt called him, was destined to hold the office of Premier for one of the longest periods on record. (18)*

The father of, *this celebrated nonentity*, had been the financial backer, according to William Sherwin, of the extremely hostile biography of Thomas Paine, written by 'Francis Oldys'. (19) This book had been produced for the sole purpose of blackening Paine's character; the author (Oldys being merely a pseudonym), was the Scottish historian, George Chalmers, an ardent royalist, whose apologists have pointed out that Paine did not contest the unsavoury anecdotes and aspersions cast against him, that he didn't do so merely emphasised his contemptuous attitude toward this publication.

Thomas Paine decided to spend the latter stage of his life back in America. To the delight of his old friend, Thomas Jefferson, who was now President, arrangements were made allowing Paine to sail from France on September 1, 1802, arriving in Baltimore two months later. Jefferson greeted him warmly, but the powerful Federalist faction in American politics, backed by the reactionary clergy, had no intention of forgiving him *The Age of Reason*. The vigorous attack on George Washington also rankled. Former friends and political comrades made it known that he was now their enemy. The few years prior to his death on June 8, 1809, were none too pleasant. He suffered many rebuffs, perhaps none more so than being denied the right to vote on the charge that he was not an American citizen.

Such were the rewards for the man who had proclaimed, *to do good is my religion*. He had been tried in his absence in England and outlawed for ever, the charge was not treason, as some writers have claimed, but one of seditious libel, a different matter entirely. He had been imprisoned and came close to execution in France. Although an undoubted hero of the American Revolution, and a founding father of

the Republic, he was spurned and neglected in death. No homage was paid at his simple funeral by any American statesman; yet, two Negroes walked twenty-five miles to be there, offering their deep respects to one renowned for supporting their race. The wife of his French friend, Nicolas de Bonneville, placed her son Benjamin at the head of his grave, standing herself at the opposite end, and, as the earth was piled upon his coffin she cried out:

*O Mr. Paine, my son stands here to represent grateful America,  
and I am here for France!*

Thomas Paine and Robert Burns, two men of similar characteristics. Both were of identical height (5'.10") and build; the outstanding feature in each was the fascinating genius that shone from their glowing eyes. Excisemen both; Paine victimised for organizing in pursuit of better wages and conditions, Burns close to being discharged for political disaffection and warned *to be silent and obedient* in future. Both were denounced as drunkards, though, in truth, any of their famous contemporaries drank more with no such blemish staining *their* laurels. Paine was decried for attacking the Bible though no counter-argument ever proved him in error. Burns attacked Calvinism because the democratic theology of the 16th. century had fallen into the hands of conservative clerics and religious fanatics in the poet's time. Paine's most famous book was dedicated to George Washington; Burns wrote a superb *Ode to Liberty*, the second part of which is now given as *Ode For Washington's Birthday*. Paine wrote nothing on Burns though he surely must have known much about him. Would Thomas Christie of Montrose, Paine's close friend during the Paris days, not have mentioned the Bard of Alba? Christie contributed letters to the *Morning Chronicle*, the paper which first printed *Scots Wha Hae* - anonymously - in compliance with the author's fear; the 'paper, too, which had offered Burns a position as journalist. Would Lord Daer, the young Jacobin who travelled from Paris to London with Paine not have commented on his meeting with Burns at the home of the philosopher, Dugald Stewart, and of the panegyric verses written about the occasion? Burns had clearly heard much of Paine's activities and had obviously read his books. If he made any significant comment about Paine, it has not survived. A mock epitaph transcript in the Cowie MSS., *On Tom Paine's Death*, does not at all seem like a Burns composition. Professor Kinsley has commented:

*It may be his (Burns's) work; but he usually managed to be  
wittier on this theme.*

The political and religious opinions of both men have been traced to

the common source of the 17th century philosopher, John Locke. In a studious biography of the poet written in 1988, Richard Hindle Fowler, has devoted considerable space in highlighting the influence of Locke on Burns's thinking. (20) Regarded as the philosopher of the *Glorious Revolution* and the theoretical inspiration of the American Constitution, Locke is now dismissed as being *philosophically feeble...the favourite thinker of vulgar liberalism*; however, due allowance must be ascribed to the fact that, although the course of social evolution over a period of three centuries has weakened and eroded his arguments, Locke, when placed in his proper context, was a positive contributor to progressive ideas. The opening section of *Common Sense* and passages in *Rights of Man*, suggested that Thomas Paine had reflected much on the principles of John Locke; however, Paine indignantly denied the accusations of plagiarism. Indeed he frequently declared that he had never read Locke:

*Cheetham had accused Paine of following John Locke, idea for idea, in his writings on heredity and elective government. Paine retorted in a passage highly significant in reference to his own intellectual history, "I never read Locke nor ever had the work in my hand, and by what I have heard of it from Horne Tooke, I had no inducement to read it. It is a speculative, not a practical work, and the style of it is heavy and tedious, as in all Locke's writings are." \**

It is perfectly feasible, of course, that Paine absorbed much of Locke's theories from conversations with those who were familiar with them; the example cited by Paine himself of Horne Tooke discussing the subject with him, may point to this conclusion. Burns, incidentally, in the letter that estranged his friendship with Mrs. Dunlop, had expressed his relief and satisfaction that, Horne Tooke, along with his compatriots, Hardy, Holcroft and Thelwall, had all been cleared of the treason charges brought against them by the Pitt government....

*Thank God, these London trials have given us a little more breath, and I imagine that the time is not far distant when a man may freely blame Billy Pitt, without being called an enemy to his Country.*

The *honest Doctor* mentioned in the same letter, John Moore, to whom Burns had addressed his autobiography, was a regular companion of Paine's in Paris along with the Earl of Lauderdale. (21) The earl, who wore a *Cap of Liberty* in the House of Lords, supped with Burns in

Edinburgh and won his praise in the song, *Here's A Health To Them That's Awa'*. Paine's counsel, Thomas Erskine, is the *Norlan' laddie* in the third stanza of the same effusion. Of all the similarities between Paine and Burns, the best surely lies in the fact that both arose from the common people; that they taught themselves to write, reason and reflect; that their ability to think was projected on behalf of the people and, despite the efforts of the ruling class of their day to silence them, they have continued down through the course of two centuries, to appeal to a section of the common people who feel that a thorough study of their work may well prove a positive factor towards a much better world.

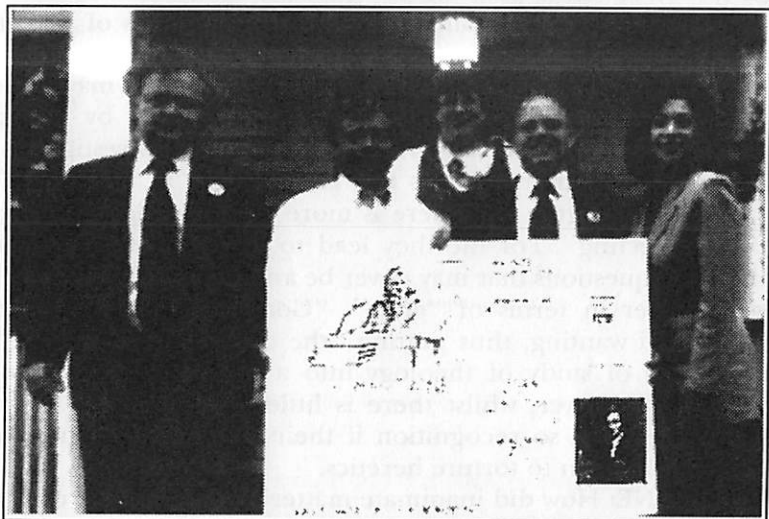
\* See, *Man of Reason*, by A. O. Aldridge. p.309.

## Notes & References

1. Helen Maria William's political writing, letters, accounts and anecdotes reflecting her views of the upheaval in France, comprising nine separate volumes, have been collected in C. A. Coquerel's, *Souvenirs de la Revolution*.
2. See, *The Poetry of Robert Burns*, edited by Henley & Henderson, Vol. IV (ie. Henley's 'Essay on Burns').
3. *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*, by Claire Tomalin. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974. p.164.
4. *The Life of Robert Burns*, by Catherine Carswell. Canongate Publishing, Edinburgh, 1990. pp.399-400. n.19.
5. A letter written by Dr. Currie to John Syme, dated September, 1796, makes this quite clear.
6. Letter to Robert Graham, 5, January, 1793.
7. *William Maxwell to Robert Burns*, by Robert D. Thornton. John Donald, Edinburgh, 1979. p.161.
8. Roscoe paid Burns a compliment in his book. For details see, *James Currie (the Entire Stranger) and Robert Burns*, by Robert D. Thornton. Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh & London. p.338, n.40.
9. Quoted in *Thomas Paine, His Life, Work and Times*, by Audrey Williamson. Allen & Unwin, London, 1973. p.278.
10. This exchange between Burke and Paine is taken from the biography of Burke, *Memoir of a Political Life*, by George Croly. Edinburgh, 1840.
11. *Life and Works of Robert Burns*. Chambers-Wallace (1937 reprint). Vol. IV. p.186. For Burns's comment regarding the *prose thoughts inverted into rhyme* see his letter to George Thomson, January, 1795.
12. *Man of Reason*, by A.O. Aldridge. Cresset Press, London, 1960. p.315.
13. Muir and Palmer were chained in Woolwich hulks prior to being transported to Botany Bay.
14. Chambers-Wallace. *op.cit.* Vol. IV. p.38.
15. The treachery of Morris is admitted by his biographer, Daniel Walther: *Gouverneur Morris*. New York, 1934. pp.247-8.
16. James Monroe, September 15, 1795. See the introduction to Philip S. Foner's edition of Paine's works, Citadel Press, New York, 1948.
17. Williamson. *op.cit.* p.239. N.1.
18. Carswell. *op.cit.* p.403. N.21.
19. William Sherwin in his *Memoir of the Life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1819), stated that Lord Hawksbury (later earl of Liverpool) paid Oldys (George Chalmers) the sum of £500 to write the book. Chalmers was employed as a clerk, at that particular time in Lord Hawksbury's employment.

20. *Robert Burns*, by Richard Hindle Fowler. Routledge, London, 1988. pp.47-58.  
 21. *The Life of Thomas Paine*, by Moncure D. Conway. G.P.Putnam's Sons, New York & London, 1892. Vol.2. pp.63-4. ? 1996. Norman R. Paton.

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Members of the newly established Thomas Paine Memorial Committee of the Bordentown Historical Society (USA). Left to right: David Henley, Gary Berton (Chairman), Peggy Berton, Jim Downey and Margaret Downey.  
 Photograph by TPS member, George Earle.

## TWO UNANSWERABLE (?) QUESTIONS

M.F.Culpin

As one who has been concerned for many years with some of the ideas of physical science, and latterly with the management of their use in generating wealth, i.e. manufacture of usable goods, I am continually amazed that controversies of a theological nature can run and run and run, yet get nowhere at all. Although not as widely read as I should like to be, I have gained the impression that nobody has satisfactorily contested the conclusions of *The Age of Reason*, that, in effect, the Bible is no more the "work of God" than a Mills and Boon novella. That is not, of course, to say that at least in part, the former is not a good deal more interesting than the latter.

Scientifically established knowledge has grown enormously in the last two hundred years. With the agreement of those who are competent to judge the issue, it links cause and effect in many different fields of enquiry. For those who find religious dogma generally unpalatable,

especially when poetic imagery is mistaken for objective fact (miracles, weeping statues, etc.), this growth of knowledge has been of some comfort, but not entirely. Nor of course does it detract from enjoyment of the arts, which do nevertheless demand some technological input, whether it is an Altamira painting or "Cosi fan Tutti" (however did they do it?). The element of discomfort lies in the questions of the title of this note.

The background reading in relation to the questions may be found in the list of titles given below, which of course is by no means exhaustive. The books were all written by world-class investigators who are also first-class communicators to "lay readers" as well as to their peers; and they all agree that there is more to the world than "Physics and stamp-collecting". For me they lead to the conclusion that there are some basic questions that may never be answered. All transcendental answers, whether in terms of "gods", "God", "spirits" or whatever, would be found wanting, thus putting "the opium of the people" and all the subjects of study of theology into a class of wishful thinking. Extraordinary. However, whilst there is little comfort to be had from asking the questions, so recognition of their intractable nature should reduce any inclination to torture heretics.

**Question ONE:** How did inanimate matter reach the stage of self-replicating large molecules ?

**Question TWO:** How did the increasing complexity of molecules and organisms lead to self-consciousness ?

### **Bibliography (latest editions or still in print)**

- J.D.Watson. *The Double Helix*. Penguin, 1970.  
 Richard Dawkins. *The Blind Watchmaker*. Penguin, 1988.  
 Richard Dawkins. *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford, 1989.  
 Francis Crick. *What Mad Pursuit*. Penguin, 1990.  
 Richard Leakey. *Origins Reconsidered*. Abacus, 1992.  
 Stephen Jay Gould. *Eight Little Piggies*. Penguin, 1994.  
 Steve Jones. *The Language of the Genes*. Flamingo, 1994.

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## **EDITORIAL NOTICE**

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## THE BRUNEL PAINE COLLECTION AT THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT LIBRARY, SALFORD (1)



Frontispiece from the Thomas Spence periodical  
'Pigs Meat or Lessons for the Swinish Multitude'

Thomas Paine was born in Thetford, Norfolk, in 1737. In 1774 he went to America at the invitation of Benjamin Franklin. He worked as editor of the *The Pennsylvania Magazine* and wrote numerous articles. He was author of *Common Sense*, the most influential popular appeal for American independence. During the American Revolution he inspired the colonial troops with his *Crisis Papers* and is credited with having coined the title, the United States of America.

In 1787 he went to France where he was elected to the National Assembly, eventually being imprisoned for his views during the Reign of Terror. Paine returned to the United States in 1802 and died in 1809.

Paine's works, particularly, *Rights of Man*, in which he outlined the case for democratic government and *The Age of Reason*, a critical assessment of organised religion at the time, were extremely influential and have never been out of print.

The Thomas Paine Collection was assembled by Adrian and Christopher Brunel over a period of fifty years. It consists of books, pamphlets, prints, tokens and ephemera. The books are not only by and about Paine but also reflect the contemporary scene of the 1790s in America, France and Britain. Paine played a significant part in the affairs of each of these countries and influenced events in them. The collection reflects the polemics and controversies of the time. As a playwright and film director, it was natural that Adrian Brunel should choose Paine as the subject of a number of scripts. Christopher Brunel

and his wife Margaret added to the book collection and formed an extensive collection of tokens relating to Paine, both in favour of him or hostile to him and his ideas.

The first shot in the fierce pamphlet war in which Paine played a central part was fired by Richard Price, a dissenting minister. His sermon, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country* <sup>(2)</sup> was delivered on November 4th., 1789 gave 'the right to choose our own government, to cashier them for misconduct, and to form a government for ourselves'. Edmund Burke's, *Reflections on the French Revolution* <sup>(3)</sup> was written in reply to Price. He defended the privileges and power of the ruling aristocracy, reverence for tradition and authority and condemned the common people as 'the Swinish multitude'. <sup>(4)</sup>

Paine was infuriated by Burke's book, especially as he had been friendly with him. Paine spoke for the governed in a class divided society where the rich plundered the poor of their rights. Government appeared as Court parasitism and he recognised taxes as robbery to benefit rich pensioners and also to pay for wars of conquest.

Paine's answer to Burke was *Rights of Man*. Part I was first published in London in 1791 and Part 2 a year later. <sup>(5)</sup> Fifty thousand copies of Part I were sold before Part 2 was issued. In the second part, Paine argued for a Republican government against the monarchy, for democracy against aristocracy and that 'The Rights of Man' meant the rights of all to representation. He linked political and economic demands. He advocated a graduated income tax to alleviate the conditions of the poor, family allowances, education of all children and old age pensions as a right.

While *Rights of Man* remained an expensive volume, Paine was not prosecuted. But after a sixpenny edition was published on May 21st., 1792, <sup>(6)</sup> he was prosecuted and a Royal Proclamation was issued condemning the book. At the trial, <sup>(7)</sup> the Attorney General stated that it was 'ushered into the world in all shapes and sizes, thrust into the hands of subjects of every description, even children's sweetmeats being wrapped in it.'

In America, where Paine's, *Common Sense* and *Crisis Papers* had already had a tremendous impact, *Rights of Man* was first published in 1791. The publisher printed as a foreword an extract from a letter from the Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson, 'I am extremely pleased to find this will be reprinted and that something is at length to be said publicly against the political heresies which have sprung up against us.' This was a direct attack on the Vice-President, John Adams, whose adherents flocked to his defence. The subsequent controversy considerably enhanced the sale of the book and it was translated into many

languages and printed in many cities both in Europe and America. (8)

Paine replied in stinging terms to the Royal Proclamation and to the charge of seditious libel. He called it, *Address to the Addressers* (9) and it was published in October 1792 by Symonds and Rickman, both of whom were prosecuted for doing so. Paine outlined a plan for a Convention to review English law. He suggested that only those laws found worthy should be retained whilst the remainder should be scrapped.

Although Paine managed to escape to France just in time to avoid arrest, the trial (10) went ahead. Paine was defended by Thomas Erskine, noted for his vigorous defence of constitutional rights; (11) A pensioned judge and venal packed jury found Paine guilty and as a result he was outlawed.

There were many replies and hostile reviews of *Rights of Man*. (12) In Paris it was enthusiastically acclaimed and Paine was elected as Deputy to the National Assembly by four Departments.

Whilst in Paris Paine wrote *The Age of Reason*. (13) This was an attack on revealed religion exposing the myths, dogmas and absurdities of the bible. In its place he substituted the religion of humanity and international brotherhood. He was immediately called an atheist and strongly condemned although in fact he was a deist. (14) Among the numerous attacks on Paine, (15) the Brunel Collection contains six editions of Richard Watson, bishop of Llandaff's, *An Apology for the Bible in a Series of Letters to Thomas Paine*. (16)

During more than two hundred years, much of Paine's writing has been reprinted, in some instances as separate works but also in numerous collected and selected volumes. (17)

Over seventy biographies have been published about Paine both in book and pamphlet form. The collection contains over forty of them including all the early ones. (18)

There are two books in the Brunel Collection of particular and special interest and importance. One belonged to Thomas Walker (19) the leader of the Manchester Radicals in the 1790s who defended his house in The Parsonage against a church and king mob. This volume contains a scurrilous *Life of Paine*, *The Trial of Paine*, and *The Two Trials of Daniel Isaac Eaton* (20) for publishing Paine. It also includes a very rare tract, *The Case of Thomas Walker*. There are several annotations throughout the volume. *The Trial of Thomas Paine* is inscribed "To Thomas Walker Esq., from the Hon. Thomas Erskine". While on page 196 Walker wrote: "How instinctively conscious the supporters of despotism are that the whole system is fraud - wrong and error - if they were conscious that it was right they would court enquiry".

The other volume of special interest is *The Political Works of Thomas Paine*, <sup>(21)</sup> published by T. M. Wheeler at the office of the Chartist Co-operative Land Society. This volume contains a two page preface by the Executive Committee of the National Charter Association and the final item is the people's Charter adopted at Birmingham in 1842. The preface states that the aim of the Chartists was to: "*enrich the popular mind with the principles of political truth, create an ardent desire for the possession of liberty as well as to dispel those myths of obloquy with which malignant bigotry, stupid prejudice and stolid ignorance have enveloped his character.*"

Among many books which cover the social scene and political events in Britain, France and America are France Plowden's, *Jura Anglorum: The Rights of Englishmen*, published in London in 1742, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Franklin*, in three volumes, and, *Lives of Remarkable Characters Who Have Distinguished Themselves from the Commencement of the French Revolution to the Present Time*, also in three volumes published in London in 1814.

The Collection contains, apart from books, a number of contemporary prints by Gillray which are mainly anti-radical. There are press cuttings of book reviews and accounts of Paine exhibitions and commemorations and leaflets and correspondence of the Thomas Paine Society. There are also invaluable catalogues and bibliographies which assist one in finding a way in the world of the 1790s. Some of the most interesting items are the typescripts of Adrian Brunel's plays written for radio and stage production.

Although Paine wrote two hundred years ago, his thinking and ideas are relevant today. He possessed a gift of clarity of exposition - calling a spade a spade - which still appeals to his readers. In his farewell article to his readers in *The Observer*, Neil Ascherson wrote: <sup>(22)</sup>

*"You sent me a great many letters over several years about Paine. Again, the version that Paine was forgotten proved to be quite false. Indeed, a powerful Paineite tradition turns out to have survived, underground at times, since the 1790s. It wasn't unexpected to find among Scottish readers or Welsh. But I had not imagined that there were still so many English Radicals who used Tom Paine's analysis on their own nation.*

*Its worth spelling out what this implies. An alternative version of British history has survived, dating back to the Enlightenment, which regards our 'constitution' as an authoritarian sham. This version recognises the doctrine of the sovereignty of Parliament as a tyrannous archaism: the people should be sovereign, and the Parliament they elect should be subject to a written Constitution. That Constitution would define the rights of the citizens and allow the citizens to sue the State in Court when those rights are violated."*

## Notes

1. The most comprehensive Paine Collection was made by Richard Gimbel and is now deposited in the Library of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. There is a copy of the catalogue in the Working Class Movement Library. The Brunel Collection is comparable with the Ambrose Barker Collection in Thetford Library (presented to them via the Thomas Paine Society). A printed catalogue of this (and other material from the TPS Library, also deposited at Thetford) was published in 1979. The WCML acquired the Brunel Collection as a bequest from Christopher and Margaret Brunel in 1989.
2. A copy of Price's *Discourse* is in the WCML (5th edition with addition).
3. There are seven copies of Burke's *Reflections* in the Brunel Collection, including the 1st., 2nd. and 4th. editions published in the 1790s. There are also the 1910 and 1950 editions. The 1793 edition of Burke's *Reflections* is bound with Paine's, *Rights of Man*, 1792.
4. Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, 1790 (page 117) contains the phrase: "*The swinish multitude*" which invoked angry replies in many satirical pamphlets and periodicals. Thomas Spence called one of his periodicals, *Pigs Meat or Lessons for the Swinish Multitude*, of which the three volumes of the third edition are in the WCML. Each has a print as a frontispiece showing the pig trampling the orb and sceptre, the symbols of royalty, underfoot.
5. The Brunel Collection contains about fifty editions of *Rights of Man*. By 1793, two hundred thousand copies had been sold and one and a half million by 1809. Of these early editions the Brunel Collection contains the Fourth, two copies of the fifth, two of the sixth, the seventh, two of the eighth and the thirteen part one only. Part two was published by J.Jordan and there are copies of the third, fourth, two of the fifth, two of the eighth and the ninth.
6. The sixpenny edition was published by H.C.Symonds. The Brunel Collection contains multiple copies of the first edition of part one and a single copy of part two.
7. *The Whole Proceedings on the Trial of Thomas Paine for a Libel*, taken in shorthand by Joseph Gitney, 1793, second edition (page 47).
8. It was published in New York, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Paris, Chicago, London, Copenhagen, Berlin, Amsterdam, Dublin, Rennes, Glasgow, Greenock, Boston, Albany, Londonderry, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Lundenburg (Vermont). The Brunel Collection contains the French edition printed in Paris in 1791 and 1792, the Dublin editions of 1791 and 2, the Greenock 1832 edition and the Amsterdam edition of 1793. There is also a copy of the vest-pocket edition published by E.D.Cousins in 1837.
9. There are four editions of *The Address to the Addressors*, apart from those in the collected works and bound volumes of pamphlets.
10. There are seven versions of *The Trial*, among them that of Joseph Gurney and J.S.Jordan. In addition to *Reports of the Trial*, Erskine's speeches are contained in the *Speeches of the Hon. Thomas Erskine*, collected by James Ridgeway, four volumes, 1810.
11. Thomas Erskine, first Baron Erskine (1750-1823). He was a barrister in a spectacular series of trials for libel and high treason. He was Member of Parliament for Portsmouth, member of several radical societies and finally Lord Chancellor.
12. The Brunel Collection contains fifteen of these replies to *Rights of Man*. Included are, *A Letter to Mr.Paine on his Late Publication* (Dublin, 1792); C.H.Elliot, *The Republican Refuted* (1791); T.Hardy, *The Patriot* (1793); J.Hunt, *Rights of Englishmen* (1791); *Remarks on Mr.Paine's Pamphlet* (Dublin, 1791); P.White, *Rational Freedom* (Edinburgh, 1792) and *A Protest Against Thomas Paine's 'Rights of Man'* (1792).

13. There are thirty editions of *The Age of Reason* in the Brunel Collection excluding those in the collected works or bound in with other works. The first edition was printed by Barrois in Paris and sold by Daniel Isaac Eaton at the Cock and Swine in London in 1794.
14. In *A Discourse Delivered to the Society of the Philanthropists* in Paris in 1797, Paine made a frontal attack on atheism. A reprint in 1798 was published by J. Johnson under the title, *Atheism Refuted or a Discourse to Prove the Existence of a God*. There is a copy in the Brunel Collection and one in the Library of Congress in Washington.
15. Among the replies to *The Age of Reason* are, E. Winchester, *A Defence of Revelation* (1796); W. Grisenthwaite, *A Refutation of the Argument Brought against the Truth of Christianity* (1825); G. Wakefield, *An Examination of the Age of Reason* (1794); Joseph Priestley, *An Answer to Mr. Paine's The Age of Reason* (1796); *Reply of the Bishop of Llandaff to the Second Part of The Age of Reason* (1819).
16. There are the second and third editions of 1796, a Belfast edition of the same year, the 1817 edition and one published by the American Tract Society under the title, *Reply to Paine*, which is undated.
17. It was not until Edward Truelove published the *Complete Works* in 1850 that a satisfactory collection appeared.
18. The first two biographies of Paine by George Chalmers (Oldys) and James Cheetham were hostile. The two which followed, by Clio Rickman and W.T. Sherwin were sympathetic. The definite *Life* was written by M.C. Conway and published in two volumes in 1892.
19. For Thomas Walker see Frida Knight, *The Strange Case of Thomas Walker*, London, 1957.
20. Daniel Isaac Eaton (?1752-1814) was a courageous radical publisher who was persecuted and put on trial nine times. His retrial in March 1812 for publishing the Third Part of Paine's, *The Age of Reason*, resulted in imprisonment for eighteen months. This stung Shelley to write his spirited, *Letter to Lord Ellenburgh*.
21. Not recorded in *The Chartist Bibliography* by J.F.C. Harrison and Dorothy Thompson.
22. *Observer*, 29-10-1989.

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## *IMPROMPTU TO THOMAS PAINE AT PARIS, JULY 1802*

Franklin, your old and faithful friend,  
 Who wit and truth did always blend;  
 With energy would oft' declare,  
 'Where freedom is, my country's there.'  
 And you as oft' would make reply,  
 While genius sparkled in your eye,  
 (That eye where wit and judgement keen  
 And brilliant intellect are seen)

“Where freedom is not, that’s my land,  
 And there I’ll live, and make a stand,  
 Against what tyranny has plan’d.”

By this good rule, my friend! I vow,  
 Your station is most proper now;  
 Nor need you any further dance,  
 Instead you’re quite at home in France.

*Thomas Elia Rickman.*

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## CORRESPONDENCE

By chance a copy of the *TPS Bulletin* (No.3.1994) containing the obituary of my old school friend, Doreen Morrell, came my way. The news of Lal’s (the name I knew her by at school) death has filled me with a great sadness, even though for many years now we have had no contact.

Lal (this was her father’s pet name for her) when I knew her was a girl full of fun, yet at the same time with a very serious side to her which was manifested when she commented on the social deprivation we saw around us in Liverpool, though as both our fathers were successful businessmen we did not suffer this.

If Lal can be said to have had a religion it was her passionate interest in languages. My father was Chinese and my mother English, so my home was bilingual. Lal found this wonderful and I would say without hesitation that on her many visits to my home she started to obtain a fairly good knowledge of spoken Chinese, at least of the Chinese used by my father.

I do not think the obituary really brings out what a warm-hearted and generous person Lal was. She frequently went out of her way to help people, often never receiving any thanks for what she did. But it was not, in my view, Paine’s influence which converted her to unbelief, for I recall her as always displaying a marked scepticism about religious matters. Perhaps this is why she and I got on so well as my family had no religious belief, though I think my father was brought up as a Buddhist.

Lal and I lost contact when I left Liverpool following my father’s retirement from business, consequently reading of her death came as a shock to me. The obituary brought back happy memories, even though they are now tinged with sadness. I wish the society my old friend helped to launch every success.

Ethel Sir,

Hong Kong.

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