

## IX

# A Case of Economic Warfare in the Late 18th Century

### 1. THREE EARLY PAPER-MOULDS IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY

*John Philipson*

The Society has since 1938 had in its possession three paper moulds. These were presented by J. H. Nicholson of Hexham, and, besides entry in our Accessions Register,<sup>1</sup> their provenance is recorded in *Proceedings* fourth series, vol. viii, 147. There they are described as "three late eighteenth-century paper-moulds, with specimens of the paper made in them, from the Haughton paper-mill, North Tyne. One of the moulds has been used for the forgery of French government *assignats* of the revolutionary period".<sup>2</sup> It is certain one of the moulds is eighteenth century, a second may now be shown to be, but the third, as will be seen, must be post-1812. The location of the specimens of paper, if they have survived, is not known to the writer.

There is no reason to doubt the statement that all three moulds came from the Haughton mill and the tradition that one of them had been used to make some of the paper on which forged *assignats* were printed is circumstantial and repeated over a period of time. The earliest reference (other than the Swinburne memorandum of 1793/4) known to the writer is the statement by Sir W. C. Trevelyan in 1858 that: *One of the moulds in which the paper was made is still in the possession of the proprietor of the mill, in whose family some of the assignats were also long preserved, but they have now been lost.*<sup>3</sup> Cowen (on the information of John Oxberry) quotes from the Society's minutes: *At the Annual Meeting of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries held on January 25th, 1882, the Rev. G. Rome Hall exhibited the mould or framework in which were made forgeries of French assignats.*<sup>4</sup> The mould was seen again by members of our Society visiting Haughton on a country meeting in 1893,<sup>5</sup> and

again by the Berwickshire Naturalists.<sup>6</sup>

It may be argued that there is a gap in this provenance between 1790 and 1858, but the unbroken association of the Smith family with Haughton through that period provides some assurance of the continuity of the tradition. The evident identity of the mould described at various dates by Rome Hall with that now our 1938.6 establishes a presumption that the mould was one used to make the forged paper, though this presumption in itself falls short of proof.

These three moulds have been in the possession of the Society since 1938 and in that time no full and exact description of them has been published. The publication of such a description, regardless of any special interest of one or more of them, is a proper duty of the Society. Description of features common to all three form the first section following this introduction, succeeded by summary accounts of features specific to each mould.

*General description of the paper moulds:* The frames of these three paper-moulds are made of  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch oak, square-cut for stability,<sup>7</sup> and with a single mortice-joint at each corner. In all, the lower edge of the frame is rounded for ease of handling. The cross-ribs are of softwood, probably yellow pine, which have rounded ends pegged into the frame. The cross-ribs are of wedge-shaped section, about 7 mm at foot, tapering to about 2 mm at the edge supporting the backing-wires and so the cover. The tapering was designed to avoid trapping the water draining through the cover from the pulp. These moulds are all adapted for the manufacture of a *wove*, as distinct from a *laid*, paper, and are covered with a coarse copper gauze. The backing-wires run lengthwise

at intervals of approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch. Their function was to support the wove cover on which the sheet of paper was formed. On one of the moulds (1939·8) over the longitudinal backing-wires are lateral backing-wires parallel to and midway between each adjacent pair of cross-ribs. The implication of this is noted in the specific description of the mould below. The cross-ribs are pierced with fine holes through which whip-stitching with fine wire has anchored the backing-wires. Narrow strips of copper 11 to 12 mm wide are pinned along the upper edge of each side-frame to conceal the edges of the wove-cover and the nailheads between which the backing-wires are stretched. Where these strips turn down at the end of each edge, they have been sunk into the framing. This would ensure that their thickness would not impair the snug fit of the deckle-frame that was fitted over the mould to hold in

the pulp and define the forming sheet of paper. On the surface of the covers are some remains of the fine copper wire sewn to form water-marks.

#### *Mould 1938.6*

Overall: 485 × 302 × 40 mm ( $19\frac{1}{8} \times 11\frac{7}{8} \times 1\frac{9}{16}$  inches)

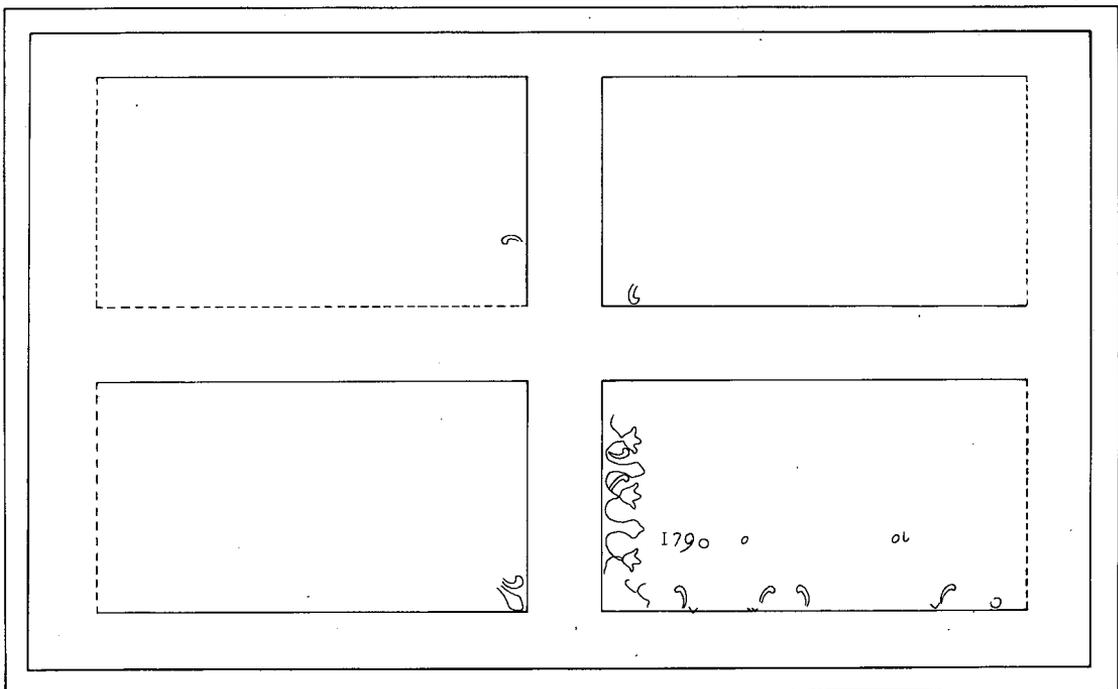
Inside frame: 460 × 278 mm ( $18\frac{3}{16} \times 11$  inches)

Cross-ribs: 15 ribs, about 11 mm deep.

Backing-wires: between 43 and 46, at right-angles to the cross-ribs.

Cover: gauze of 12 to 13 wires to 1 cm.

Watermark: A year 1790 and the remains of a border repeating a conventional lily motif. From the way the surviving elements of the watermark lie it may be deduced that the



0 10 20  
Centimetres



Fig. 2. Part of mould 1938.6, reproduced at approximately actual size, showing the year and lily border, probably for a 100-livres assignat of 1790.

border was repeated four times in the sheet to trim out as four assignats (see fig. 1).

There is a V scored off-centre on one side of the frame. There is little doubt that this is the mould identified by Mr. Wm. Smith to the Rev. Rome Hall as that used in making assignat paper. Rome Hall describes it, "This mould for four notes is oblong, 19 inches by 12 inches, having 15 crossbars". He adds, "The month is said to have been September, and the

Fig. 1. Remains of watermarks on mould 1938.6. The boxes showing the original limits of the marks are notional; the watermarks to the left were probably laterally reversed. After printing, four notes would be trimmed out of the sheet with clear margins round the watermark borders.

amount one hundred francs or £4".<sup>8</sup> Presumably here he was drawing upon tradition in the Smith family, no doubt assisted as long as they survived by the forged assignats in their possession. It will be seen later that their recollection was substantially correct.

#### Mould 1938.7

Overall: 484 × 327 × 40 mm (19 × 12 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 1 $\frac{9}{16}$  inches)

Inside frame: 457 × 300 mm (18 × 11 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches)

Cross-ribs: 17, about 14 mm deep.

Backing-wires: about 42 survive, there must have been about 46. They run the long-way of the mould, at right-angles to the cross-ribs.

Cover: gauze of about 12 wires to 1 cm.

Watermark: There survive only eleven rings each about 5 mm in diameter which probably formed part of a border design. Their location and much more the location of four areas of notable decay in the cover suggest that the sheet was designed to trim to four leaves, or notes. This aspect will be discussed more fully below.

There is a V-shaped scoring on one side of the frame, not exactly central to its length. An extraneous nail has been driven at an angle through one side of the frame.

#### Mould 1938.8

Overall: 570 × 170 × 35 mm (22 $\frac{5}{8}$  × 6 $\frac{5}{8}$  × 1 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches)

Inside frame: 550 × 145 mm (21 $\frac{5}{8}$  × 5 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches)

Cross-ribs: originally 19, 17 surviving, one broken.

Backing-wires: originally 18, running the long way of the frame. In addition there have been 20 lateral supporting wires above the length-wise backing-wires. These are parallel to, and equidistant from, their adjacent cross-ribs. The purpose of this additional layer of backing-wires is discussed by Hills and need not detain us here.<sup>9</sup> Their significant aspect is that this device was patented by Didot in 1812, which confirms the inference drawn from the superior

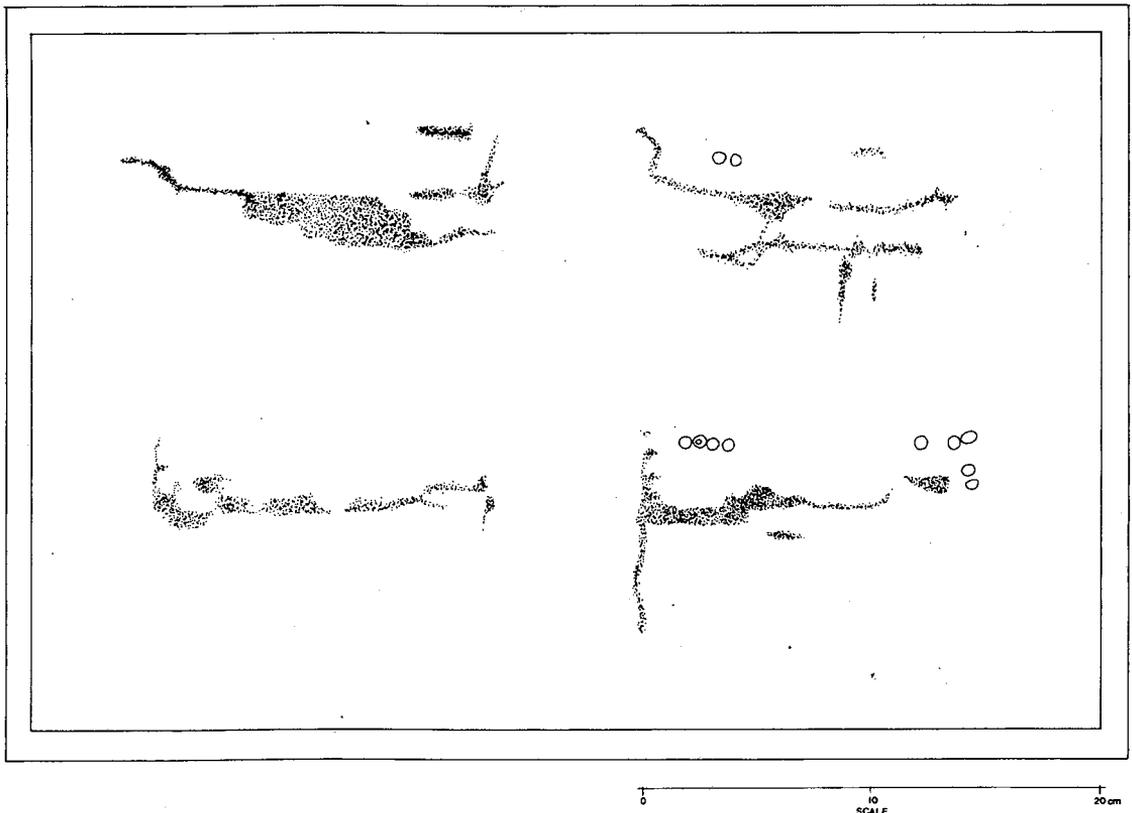
condition of this mould that it is substantially later than the other two.

**Watermark:** This mould has been designed to yield a sheet forming two bank-notes. Inside a curvilinear border is the wording ORIGINAL SECURITY BANK,<sup>10</sup> and the same laterally reversed on the other half.

On the inside of one long side of the frame a line has been scored to mark the position for drilling the peg-hole for the central cross-rib. Dividers have then been used to score short arcs setting out the positions for the other peg-holes.

**Condition:** The wooden frames are generally in excellent condition, a tribute to the steps taken in their seasoning to ensure stability. The same cannot be said of the covers which are in a brittle condition, and still less of the water-

marks, which apart from those of 1938.8 (the latest in date) are substantially lost. An attempt has been made, at some date unknown, to reinforce the covers by working in behind some pieces of a finer copper gauze and sewing the loose edges to it. This is unattractive in appearance, but may well have diminished continuing loss. Mould 1938.6 was already deteriorating in 1885 as the Rev. Rome Hall refers to it as "sadly impaired by long neglect" and "with much that is deficient". It had however been good enough to allow of a specimen sheet of paper being "recently taken from it . . . by my late friend Mr. Wm. Smith".<sup>11</sup> Cowen's description in 1938 shows that it was patched then: *The gauze bottoms (sic, actually the tops, or covers) of all the moulds are much patched, and that in the mould used for the assignat paper the wiring*



necessary to produce the watermark has mostly disappeared. There still remains the date 1790, and part of an ornamental border.<sup>12</sup> Evidently there has been little change in their condition, since they came into the Society's care, except for a very slow but continuing loss of the edges of the brittle gauze.

## DISCUSSION

If there were ever any doubt of the authenticity of the tradition that paper had been made at Houghton paper-mill for the production of forged assignats, it has been removed by the contemporary evidence of Sir John Swinburne, the first President of this Society.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately what remains of the watermarks in our moulds in no case corresponds to the watermarks in any of the specimens of the paper collected by Sir John in 1793/4, nor do the sheet-sizes correspond. A number of moulds must have been used if paper for this purpose was in production over any period of time. In counterfeiting a watermark a forger would be copying one in a paper already existing and likely therefore to be earlier than the date of illicit manufacture. Our mould 1938.6 bears the date 1790, but it cannot however from this fact alone be known to have been in use in 1790.

In the draft of this paper at this stage I laboriously weighed each item of inconclusive evidence that mould 1938.6 had been used to make paper for printing assignats, and concluded: *Confirmation, that would leave the matter beyond doubt, may come from the recognition by those with ready access to collections of assignats of the watermark the remains of which are recorded in Figs. 1 and 2.*

Mr. Peter Bower, a paper historian with a special interest in *assignats*, provided the

*Fig. 3. Drawing of mould 1938.7 showing the eleven rings that are all that remain of the watermark on the mould. The areas of stipple show where the wove surface has broken down through being weakened by indentation to form "shadows" in the paper.*

answer. He wrote:

From the description and illustration of mould 1938.6 it would seem likely that this mark relates to the assignats issued under the decree of 29th September 1790. These were issued in two types:

TYPE 1—192 mm × 103 mm

50 livres, 60 livres, 70 livres, 80, 90 and 100 livres all printed in black on white paper.

TYPE 2—192 mm × 135 mm

500 livres, printed in black on white paper

1000 livres, printed in red on white paper.

Judging from the figure, it would appear that type 1 would be most likely. The whole watermark would have been the words:

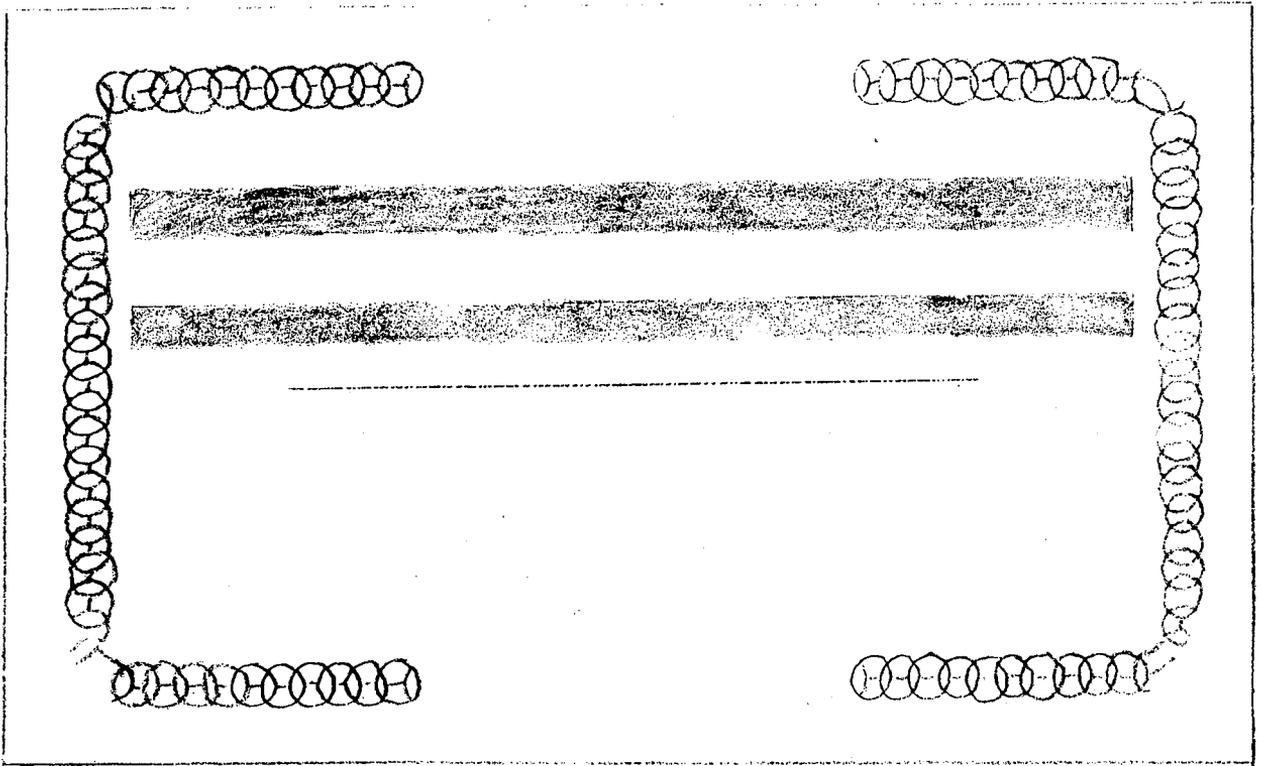
Obligation National de ..... (whichever value note it was)

1790 la loi et le Roi

bordered by a fleur-de-lys, and in the centre, or to the left of the note, a letter or number indicating the position of the note on the mould. The Type 2 watermark is slightly different.

Later Mr. Bower has pointed out that the Rev. Rome Hall's recollection "the month is said to have been September and the amount one hundred francs", makes sense, if we suppose it to have been a 100 livres (not franc) note issued under the decree of 29th September 1790. It may be accepted therefore that this was the most probable end-product of the paper made in our mould 1938.6.

Encouraged by this notable advance, the writer sent to Mr. Bower a drawing of the remains of the watermark on our mould 1938.7 which had previously been thought altogether too slight to be capable of identification. After some correspondence it has been established that mould 1938.7 was designed to make paper on which to print forged assignats of the value of 250 livres under the decree of 28 September 1793. The watermark consists of two "shadow" bars, a thin shorter shadow rule, and a border of overlapping rings. A "shadow" in paper is an area in which the pulp has settled more thickly and may be seen as a darker area when the finished paper is viewed by transmitted light. In this mould the cover has been indented so as to form two bars and a rule of



*Fig. 4. Watermark of 250 livres assignat issued under the decree of 28 September 1793, reproduced from a drawing of Mr. P. Bower and showing the border of rings, with the two bars of shadow and the shadow rule traces of which may be found as indentations in the wove-cover of our paper-mould 1938.7.*

shadow in each note and the indentations correspond to the shadows in the 250 livres note of 1793. The ring border on the contrary stands up from the cover and over them the pulp forms more thinly giving a light ornamental border when the paper is viewed by transmitted light. Such of these rings as survive (eleven only) are correctly placed.

One effect of the sharp indentation of the cover of 1938.7 has been to weaken the copper gauze, the surface of which has tended to break about where the indentations had been made. The breaks are distributed in the four quarters of the mould, from which the paper for four *assignats* would be formed with each sheet.

With the invaluable assistance of Mr. Bower it has thus been possible to confirm the tradi-

tion that mould 1938.6 was used to make paper for the printing of forged assignats probably of a value of 100 livres under the decree of 29 September 1790 and to discover that our mould 1938.7 also was used to make paper for forged assignats of 250 livres under the decree of 28 September 1793. (Lafaurie 170). Possibly mould 1938.7 was set aside by the Smith family at some point for preservation with the other in the knowledge that it was of equal historic interest, but somehow, before 1858 when Sir Walter Trevelyan refers so firmly to there being one surviving mould, the memory was lost. Whether there was likewise any especial story attached to mould 1938.8 to warrant its preservation remains to be discovered.

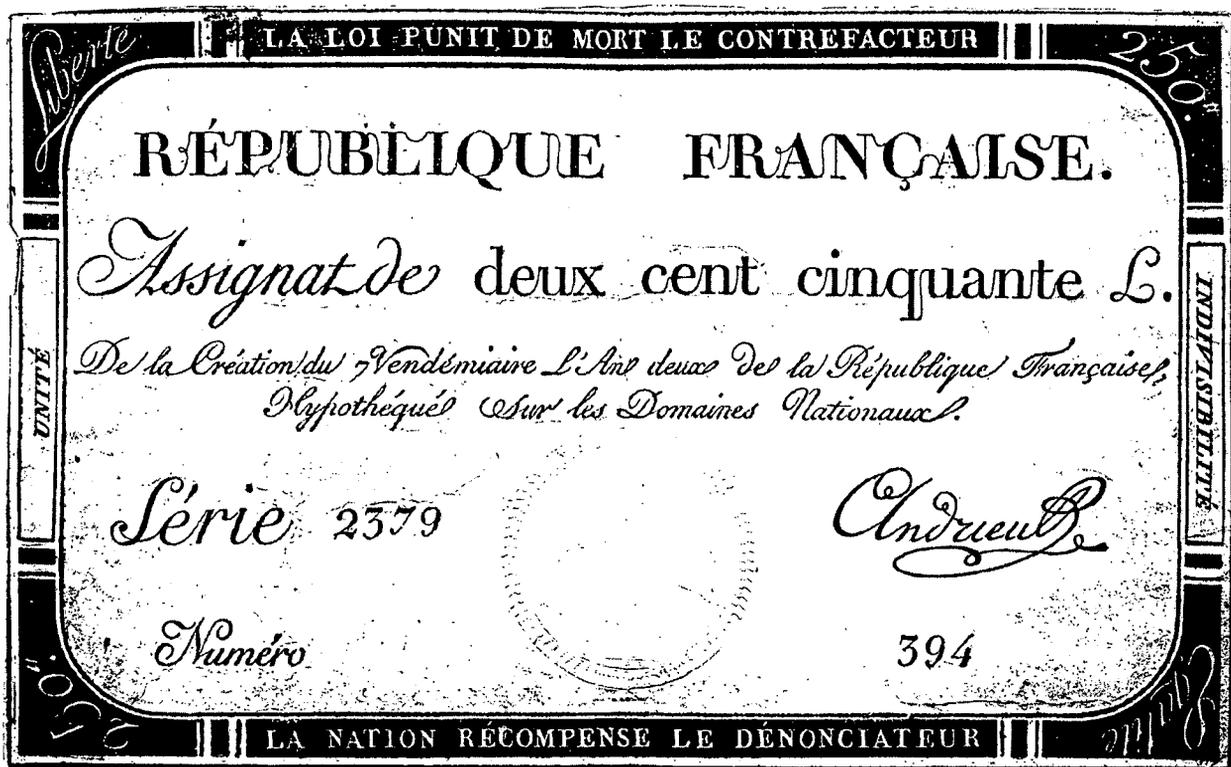


Fig. 5. 250 livres assignat issued 7 Vendémiaire An II (28 September 1793) Lafaurie No. 170 (Actual size). Reproduced by courtesy of Mr. P. Bower.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> As 1938.6, .7 and .8, inf: L. Allason-Jones. These numbers are stamped on the frames.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of *assignats* and Pitt's involvement, first exposed by Cobbett and later Thomas Doubleday in his *A Financial . . . History of England* (London 1847), see Isaac below.

<sup>3</sup> Notes and Queries, second series, vi, 255–6. See also *Monthly Chronicle* (1888), 61.

<sup>4</sup> PSAN, fourth series, vii, 151.

<sup>5</sup> PSAN, fourth series, vi, 62.

<sup>6</sup> *Berwicks. Nat. Club*, xi, 145 et seq.

<sup>7</sup> I owe this point to Mr. H. T. Eyres: to whom I am indebted for his observations on the wood and the joinery of mould 1938.8.

<sup>8</sup> *Berwicks. Nat. Club*, xi, 155.

<sup>9</sup> R. L. Hills, *Papermaking in Britain 1488–1988*, 36–37.

<sup>10</sup> This is probably a description rather than the

name of a bank. No bank of this name is listed in the *Catalogue of the Maberly Phillips collection of bank-notes etc.* (London 1903), nor in Hilton Price *A handbook of London bankers* (London 1876).

<sup>11</sup> *Berwicks. Nat. Club*, xi, 155.

<sup>12</sup> PSAN, fourth series, viii, 151.

<sup>13</sup> NRO: ZSW 590. See Isaac below.

The author is indebted to Miss L. Fambely for the drawings reproduced in figures 1 and 3.

## 2. SIR JOHN SWINBURNE AND THE FORGED ASSIGNATS FROM HAUGHTON MILL

*Peter Isaac*

“Altho’ ” it was not easy to convict ministers of being party to this proceeding, of so fatal an example, in a commercial country whose existence depends on good faith, I believe little doubt will exist . . . of the share ministers had in this scandalous business”.<sup>1</sup> So wrote the first President of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, Sir John Swinburne, in 1793–4 of the making, at the Haughton Castle Papermill, of paper with false watermarks for the forgery of French *assignats*, early French paper money of that time. Mr. Philipson has demonstrated that the Society’s paper moulds 1938·6 and 1938·7 were used for this purpose, probably soon after the mill was established by William Smith in 1788.<sup>2</sup> Further evidence of the part played by this mill in these forgeries is provided by Sir John’s memorandum, and particularly by the samples of the paper collected by him from the mill at the time, and now deposited with his memorandum in the Northumberland Record Office.

#### Assignats

The bicentenary of the French Revolution has drawn renewed attention to the paper money issued, on the authority of the *Assemblée Nationale*, from November 1789 for some nine years, and to the many forgeries of this money.<sup>3</sup>

At least one of the factors contributing to the Revolution was the parlous state of the national finances of France, and, in early November 1789, the Assembly confiscated all the lands of the Church, covering about one-tenth of the area of the country. These *Domaines Nationaux* were to provide the security for interest-bearing bonds—the *assignats*—which were to be issued to raise the necessary revenue. The release of so much land onto an already depressed market gravely reduced property prices, and consequently the value of the bonds fell. The earliest *assignats* had a face value of 1000 livres, but as the issue developed face values fell, and a true paper currency grew

out of the original bonds. By May 1791 interest was no longer paid, and *assignats* were finally withdrawn in 1795, being replaced at first by *Rescriptions* and, from 1796 to 1798, by *Mandats Territoriaux*. By the time of its withdrawal an *assignat* with a face value of 100 livres was worth no more than 15 *sous*, representing inflation of 13 000%!<sup>4</sup>

“La grande préoccupation de l’administration des finances, pendant la Révolution, fut la lutte contre les faussaires qui, non seulement imitaient les monnaies métalliques, mais inondaient le pays de faux assignats”.<sup>5</sup> Already as early as the beginning of 1790 forgers were circulating imitations of the paper money being printed at the Louvre. Groups of forgers organized themselves, and even had access to the papermill near Angoulême, which had originally supplied the paper to the Treasury (*Caisse d’Escompte*). At first the forgers made a good job of the imitations, but later “quality was sacrificed to quantity”; in this the counterfeiters, who produced mainly the lower-value notes, were assisted by the fact that these would be largely in the hands of illiterates.<sup>5</sup> Clearly the British counterfeiters were in plenty of “bad company”.

It appears that at least three papermills in England were, at one time or another, making paper for counterfeit *assignats*.<sup>6</sup> As well as the mill at Haughton Castle, Charles Ball at Albury Park Mill in Surrey,<sup>7</sup> and John Finch at Dartford in Kent were making paper with forged watermarks.<sup>8</sup> The Surrey mill was making paper for the Comte d’Artois, later Charles X, King of France. Amongst other purposes the British Government used the counterfeit notes to pay its troops in Flanders, and to subvert the Royalist rising in La Vendée in 1793. Bower describes this “scandalous business” as “the controlled and political use of forgery, by foreign governments and emigré leaders, as a deliberate weapon to bring a nation to defeat”.<sup>8</sup>

### Haughton Castle Mill<sup>2</sup>

The papermill at Haughton Castle was established, in 1788, by William Smith, owner of the Castle. William Smith & Co had a paper warehouse in Newcastle upon Tyne. It may be that, as Maidwell suggests, the remoteness of this mill, in the valley of the North Tyne, recommended it to William Pitt's Government as suitable for the production of the forged paper.<sup>9</sup> Smith's foreman/manager Magnay became his partner in Magnay & Smith, but the business was purchased by Alexander and John Annandale in 1799. (One of Magnay's sons went to London, where he became a successful wholesale stationer (i.e. paper merchant), later becoming Lord Mayor of London.<sup>10</sup>)

Sir John Swinburne, whose memorandum is reproduced in full in the appendix, having heard about the forged paper, went to the mill, on the introduction of a Humshaugh acquaintance, and begged some samples of the forged paper, which are briefly described below. He learnt from the foreman that as much as ninety reams per week of the paper was made and was sent to London by mail coach—an expense that appalled him. He gives the name of Smith's London partner as Brook Watson, and indicates that false declarations had been made to the local Exciseman, Michelson, to minimize the duty paid on the paper.

Sir John wrote to Mr. Grey (presumably Charles Grey, Member of Parliament for Northumberland and later the second Earl Grey) to raise the matter in the Commons. He also reports, at secondhand, that Thomas Bewick was asked “by a considerable person at Birmingham” to engrave plates for counterfeiting the *assignats*, but he refused to do so, which Swinburne describes as honourable. (This lends support to the statement of T. Fordyce that “the notes were sent to a midland town to be printed”.<sup>11</sup>)

### Paper Samples

The memorandum and other notes in the Northumberland Record Office are accompanied by eight sample sheets of paper, carrying the forged watermarks. These are as follows. (The numbering has no particular significance.)

1. 389 × 210 mm in two unequal pieces. With ink note “50 sols (unfinished)”. Carries 8 circular watermarks, outside diameter 45 mm, with RF in large joined italic letters over 50 S (side-ways).
2. 213 × 190 mm. Similar watermarks.
3. 122 × 234 mm (roughly torn or cut). With ink note “first of 50 sols”. Double “barbell” watermark in double rectangle 94 × 201 mm; lefthand circle contains italic LL over R; right-



Fig. 6. An assignat of 50 sols (Lafaurie 167).

hand italic 50 SOLS; and bar has LA over NATION.

4. 149 × 206 mm (roughly cut). With ink note "50 Livres". Watermark within a Greek key-pattern border, outer dimensions 91 × 183 mm,

LIBERTÉ ÉGALITÉ  
NATION FRANÇAISE

(The four initials are swash)

5. L-shape cut from a sheet 237 × 366 mm. With ink note "25 livres". Watermark repeated three times. Within a rectangular border 84 × 138 mm there are two beehive-shaped "watermarks", which appear to be produced by thickening of the paper; below them, and centred between them, is

REP. FRANÇ.

6. L-shape cut from a sheet 440 × 539 mm. With ink note "10 livres not used now". It carries 6 (out of 8?) sets of watermarks, which are arranged tête-bêche on either side of the horizontal centre-line. It looks rather like a trial sheet, since the watermarks consist of two disparate elements:

a. within a border 75 × 112 mm RP FR over two sets of *fascés*;

b. (for every pair of (a) three sets of) the double "barbell" watermark described in (3)

above, placed at right angles to (a).

7. 381 × 292 mm. With ink note "50 sols". 12 repeats (3 × 4) of watermark (1) above.

8. 345 × 465 mm. With ink note "50 sols". 6 tête-bêche repeats (2 × 3) of watermark (3) above.

With the cooperation of the Northumberland Record Office Dr. Ian Doyle, of the Palace Green Library of the University of Durham, has made beta-radiographs of the watermarks in these most unusual paper samples. With the aid of these, and with the assistance of Mr. Peter Bower, it has been possible to identify the *assignats* that were to be counterfeited with the papers. These are best indicated by using the catalogue numbers of Jean Lafaurie.

Samples 1, 2 & 7 correspond with Lafaurie no. 167, an *assignat* of 50 sols.

Samples 3 & 8 correspond with Lafaurie no. 151, also for 50 sols.

Sample 4 corresponds with Lafaurie no. 164, for 50 livres.

Sample 5 corresponds with Lafaurie no. 168, for 25 livres.

Sample 6 corresponds with Lafaurie no. 161, for 10 livres.

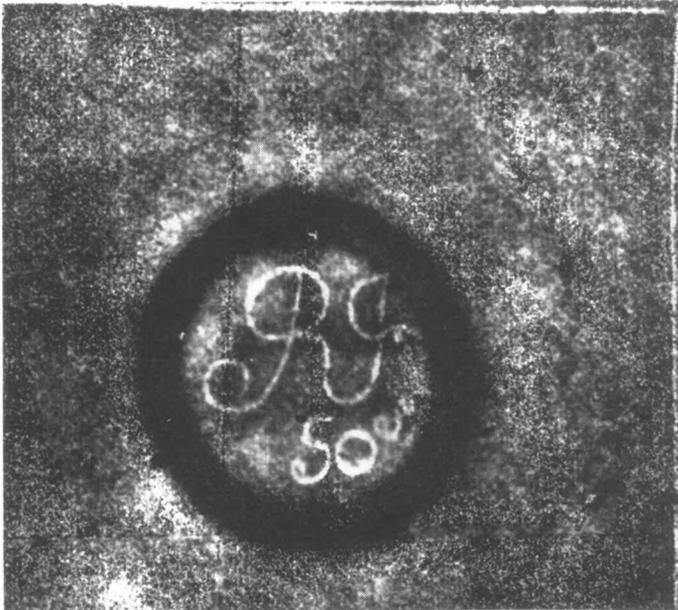


Fig. 7. Beta-radiograph of watermark RF/50 s encircled by a shadow as in paper samples 1, 2 and 7. By courtesy of the Northumberland Record Office and Durham University Library.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from a memorandum of 1793–4 in the hand of Sir John Swinburne, now in the papers deposited by Mr. John Browne-Swinburne in the Northumberland Record Office (ref ZSW 590). The full memorandum is given in Working Paper PH 52/December 1988 of the History of the Book Trade in the North, and is reproduced in the Appendix. It is not clear that it was accepted by Lord Kenyon in the case of *Strongitharm v Lukyn* (*Espinasse's Reports*, Mich Term, 36 Geo iii, 1795) that the forgery of the *assignats* had official approval, but there was no formal denial of this. Caslon (presumably the typesetter) had introduced Lukyn to Strongitharm, who was an engraver, to obtain engraved copperplates for the forgeries. The defendant declined to pay on his promissory note on the ground that the consideration for the payment was illegal. In his judgment Lord Kenyon found that the engraver “supposed that they [the *assignats*] were circulated by the authority of the higher powers of this country”.

<sup>2</sup> See Alfred H. Shorter, *Paper Mills and Paper Makers in England 1495–1800*, (Hilversum, 1957), p. 222, and Working Paper PH 52 pp. 6–7, for brief notes on the mill.

<sup>3</sup> A very brief account is given by Peter Bower in his “What one man can make, another can copy” in *Bond & Banknote News*, Oct/Nov 1988, pp. 19–20. A very detailed description of the genuine and forged money is given in Jean Lafaurie’s *Les Assignats et les Papiers-Monnaies Émis par l’État au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris, 1981). In a recent paper to the Bibliographical Society, “La ‘Direction des artistes’ et la fabrication des assignats”, Mme Jeanne Veyrin-Forrer has given an account of the official production of assignats, and of the eventual destruction of the equipment. (This paper will, no doubt, be published, in due course, in *The Library*.) I am grateful to Mr. Bower for great assistance in understanding *assignats* and related paper money, and their forgery. Three not entirely consistent accounts of the counterfeiting, in England, of the *assignats* are given in *The Monthly Chronicle of North-Country Lore and Legend*, Vol. ii (1888), pp. 61–3.

<sup>4</sup> Bower “What one man can make”, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Lafaurie *Assignats*, p. 56.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Doubleday, in Letter vii of his *A Financial, Monetary and Statistical History of England* (London, 1847), pp. 124–50, discusses the production of *assignats* by the French authorities, and their forgery by the British Government. He writes “the

paper of which the forgeries were made, is now known to have been manufactured, by direct order of government, at Langley paper mill, situated near the city of Durham, a site chosen, probably, for this purpose, on account of its remoteness from the seat of government”. Shorter, *Paper Mills*, p. 163, notes that J. Smith & Son were at Langley Mill in 1803, and that John Smith had a paper warehouse in Newcastle in 1790. The similarity of this Smith and the founder of Haughton Mill—both with paper warehouses in Newcastle—calls for further enquiry.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Crocker, *Paper Mills of the Tillingbourne: a history of paper making in a Surrey valley 1704–1875* (Oxshott, 1988), pp. 37–9.

<sup>8</sup> Bower, “What one man can make”, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> C. F. Maidwell, *A Short History of Paper Making in the North-East* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1959), pp. 5–6.

<sup>10</sup> There is an interesting connexion between the Magnays and both banknote paper, which was made at Dripsey Mill, near Cork, which they leased by the 1820s, and the mill at Albury—one of those recorded as producing paper with the counterfeit watermarks—which they were working by 1825. These connexions are demonstrated by Michael Bailey in his study *Robert Stephenson & Co and the Paper-Drying Machine in the 1820s* (History of the Book Trade in the North Working Paper PH 56, March 1990). The Newcastle engineering firm supplied paper-drying machinery to the Magnays for both these mills.

<sup>11</sup> *The Monthly Chronicle of North-Country Lore and Legend*, Vol. ii (1888), p. 62. Peter Bower, in a recent personal communication, tells me that he has traced an engraved woodblock for Lafaurie 151 (Haughton paper samples 3 and 8). It is in the Palaeography Room of the University of London Library.

## APPENDIX

It is worth giving in full Sir John Swinburne’s memorandum and some small accompanying notes. They are reproduced here with the permission of Mr. John Browne-Swinburne and of the Northumberland Record Office.

## The Memorandum

In the years 1793 & 94 Government, Mr Pitt being Minister, caused an immense number of *assignats* of various values to be fabricated in

England, & a prodigious quantity was poured into France, as well from Flanders, as from the coast of Brittany for the rebels in La Vendée—Altho' it was not easy to convict ministers of being party to this proceeding, of so fatal an example, in a commercial country whose existence depends on good faith, I believe little doubt will exist, after the perusal of the following facts (which came within my own personal knowledge) of the share ministers had in this scandalous business—in the [Autumn] of 1793 a report reached me that a large quantity of what was called French paper was manufactured, at a Mill about 12 miles from Capheaton called Haughton Castle, I applied to a Gentleman that lives at Humshaugh of the name of Richmond, who informed me it was true, & that it was the paper with the French water mark that was made at this place, his note no. 1 [see below], indicates the paymaster, & the agents for the distribution of these notes The Manufacturers' name at the above place is Smith. He has a partner in [London] of the name of Watson; [insertion in other hands—"quere Brook Watson yes"] if these people were not employed by government, how came they connected with so notorious a hireling as Mr Playfair author of the still more notorious pamphlet on the partition of France by the Allies? Mr Richmond saw the original French assignat from that which the others were made (those of 50 Livres) in Mr Smith's possession, he Smith, therefore, could not plead ignorance of the purpose for which their water marked paper, was intended—in consequence of this information, I went a few days afterwards with Mr Richmond to the Mill at Haughton & found the mill at work the foreman I did not see Mr Smith informed me that, while they had had for this paper very great orders & for several months they had made nothing else, some times *ninety reams* of different kinds per week, that were sent to Mr Watson the partner in London every week, often by the mail coach (what private individual would chuse so expensive a conveyance for such heavy goods?) that they were paid for the paper, ready money on delivery—This man likewise informed me, the

paper had for some time, been stamped by Michelson the Exciseman at Hexham under the denomination of fancy paper, but he at last refused to stamp it any more, as the duty on that paper was very low, & he was sensible of the imposition, upon this Mr Smith went to Town, where he had several meetings with Playfair, & on his return to the North Michelson came the next day & stamped all the paper under the name of *Banker Bills* the duty upon which is very high [insertion in another hand "35 shillings per ream"]—The foreman then gave me several sheets of the paper of different kinds, I then begged some might be made before me which was done, & tied up with this paper, are specimens of the different kinds which have often varied & wire mark frames were sent from London (frequently of course when any change was made in the paper in France—This is as near as I can recollect the sum of my information on this subject, (this paper I was likewise told, was made at 2 other mills only in England) I wrote to Mr Grey about it, & I believe Mr Sheridan once alluded to my Letter in the House of Commons, since which it has passed unnoticed—about the same period, I was informed from very good authority an application had been made to Bewicke the engraver at Newcastle, by a considerable person at Birmingham, to engrave several plates, of which the broken pieces were sent him, begging they might be cut very sharp, as a very great number of impressions would be wanted—Bewicke on putting the plates together, found they were assignats of different values, upon which he very honourably declared, he would have no hand in such business—these combined circumstances, leave not the least doubt in my mind, of the forgery of the assignats being at that time carried on to an immense extent; these facts were well known in the country, & government took no steps to put a stop to them, nor investigate the business & of course were even the forgery of assignats a private speculation, it could not have been carried on, without the knowledge & assistance of Ministry, for my own part I am persuaded it was carried on, by their orders, & supported at

their, or rather our expense—

Capheaton

John E. Swinburne

[in another hand] 1793 & 94

NB The following year 1795 this manufacture of assignats paper ceased at Haughton Mill.

**Note Attached**  
(in two hands)

(In Sir John Swinburne's hand)

Mr Watson, partner to Smith in Wapping  
Mr Lightley clerk to the warehouse in London  
Michelson Exiseman refused to put his mark on it at first but since Mr Sm[ith] returned from Town where he had had several conferences with Playfair—Thought it is surveyed and stampd under the name of Banker's Bills which bear a high duty it was first called at first *fancy paper* to evade the duty, I believe it is near 35s a ream now.

NB Mr Richmond saw the original 50 sols assignats in Smiths hands

No 1

(In the other hand)

Mr Thelusson is the person who pays the Papermakers for the French paper & Mr Playfair, the Author of several political Pamphlets, is the Agent who manages the Business & who lately went over to Ostend with Mr Brook Watson—The assignat Paper is manufactured at two other Mills in the South of England—

**Further small note**

The circumstances of the Troops in Flanders being paid in Assignats, that were found on examination on the frontier to be forged, was subsequently made known to me by Col. Scott Aide de Camp to Sir David Dundas serving there as well as that Brook Watson was the agent.

