# The papermaker and the prophetess: Elias Carpenter of Neckinger Mill, Bermondsey, supporter of Joanna Southcott

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The aim of this article is to place in context some remarkable events which occurred at Neckinger Mill in Bermondsey at the beginning of the 19th century. In particular, Elias Carpenter, who was a very innovative papermaker at the mill, became the principal supporter of Joanna Southcott, who has been called 'the greatest prophetess'. An account is therefore given of activities at the site of the mill in the late 18th century, of the role played by Carpenter and his associates Hector Campbell, Matthias Koops and Thomas Cope in developing methods of recycling paper and of making new paper from wood and straw, and of Southcott's background in Devon before she came to London. The interactions between Carpenter and Southcott are then explored. Finally a summary is provided of later developments at the mill, of the subsequent lives of Carpenter and Southcott and of further related events.

#### Introduction

Neckinger Mill (TQ 340 793) lies in the parish of St Mary Magdalen in Bermondsey, about 0.5km from the south bank of the Thames and 1.5km downstream from London Bridge. Its site, together with the locations of other significant buildings discussed in this account, is shown in the sketch map of figure 1. The mill took its name from a tidal watercourse known as 'The Neckinger'. This is shown on the detail of Wallis's map of 1787, which is reproduced as figure 2, following Neckinger Road, Nutkine[Nutkins] Corner and Water Lane to Mill Street, where it powered corn and other mills before entering St Saviour's Dock and the river Thames. At this time the mill site, represented by the slightly distorted square plot bounded on its north side by the word 'Neckinger', was being used for bleaching cotton fabrics. On the map this is indicated by the horizontal parallel lines across its southern half which represent water channels, fed by the Neckinger, which were used for crofting. This was the process of laying out pieces of cloth to bleach in the sun and watering them frequently from the channels using long-handled ladles (Montague 1992, 5; Parkes 1815, 32). However, in 1774 chlorine, known as 'dephlogisticated-acid' or 'oxymuriatic acid', was discovered and by the 1790s this was transforming the bleaching industry. In particular in March 1792 the lease of the Neckinger site was transferred to Hector Campbell, who was described as a chemist (Crocker 2001; Land tax 1780–1831; Lease 1792; Rate returns 1788–99). He was already engaged in the bleaching of textiles using liquid chlorine as in 1791 he had interacted with several papermakers in Kent about bleaching rags for papermaking. However he found this method less than satisfactory and in November 1792 was granted a patent (no 1922) for bleaching using gaseous chlorine. This was eventually very successful and went into general use by papermakers (Balston 1957, 104–5; Campbell, 1802, 6–9; Coleman 1958, 115–7).

Campbell only stayed at the Neckinger site for three years and in early 1795 the lease was transferred to Thomas Cope, a papermaker. With this change the rateable value of the site decreased initially from £250 to £200, suggesting perhaps that some of the buildings were unused or were being converted to a new use. However, in 1796 the property was valued at £400, the largest amount in the whole parish (Land tax 1780–1831; Rate returns 1788–99). It seems therefore that Cope immediately established a substantial paper mill on the site. This is confirmed by the diary of Joshua Gilpin, a papermaker from

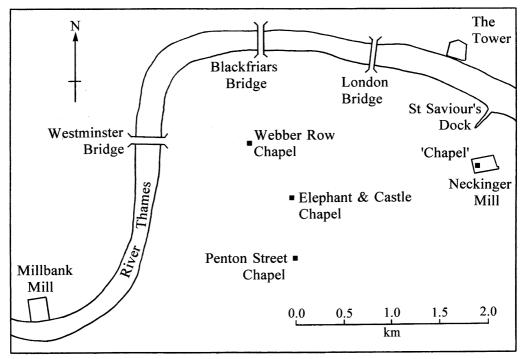


Fig 1 Location map showing the sites of Neckinger Mill, where Elias Carpenter was the papermaker, the associated Millbank Mill, Joanna Southcott's chapels at Neckinger Mill and the Elephant and Castle established by Carpenter and the later Southcott and Carpenter chapels at Webber Row and Penton Street (Amelia Street). The three bridges crossing the Thames in 1800 and the Tower of London are also indicated.

Delaware, who visited the mill in April 1796 (Woolrich 1997, 21). He noted that it was 'originally built for bleaching rags, now carried on for mill. Gave but a bad account of the bleaching business. Very expensive, done by gaz'. He also stated that the mill had a steam engine, four beating engines or Hollanders, which produced the stuff or pulp from which paper was made, and three vats, at which individual sheets of paper were made by hand. A further three vats were to be installed soon, which meant that it would become the largest paper mill in Britain.

In 1799, Richard Horwood completed the publication, in parts, of his map of London, at a scale of 26 inches to the mile (Horwood 1799). On the Bermondsey section he showed a 'Paper Manufactory' with several buildings and watercourses as illustrated in figure 3. The site corresponds to that shown on Wallis's map of figure 2 but large new buildings have been erected in the north-west quadrant. In addition the parallel water channels used for crofting have been merged into a single broad canal. However the presence of 'Calico Buildings' and 'Printers Place' at the south-east corner of the site suggests that bleaching was continuing but occupying a much smaller area. In any case, Horwood's map confirms that by 1799 there was a large paper mill at the Neckinger site.

Little is known about Thomas Cope and it has been suggested that his name may well be an anglicised form of Matthias Koops (Chick 1985, 144; Crocker & Clarke 2001, 6). In April 1800 Koops was granted a patent (no 2392) for a method of extracting ink from used paper, which was then converted into pulp so that it could be recycled. This was followed in August 1800 and February 1801 by two further patents (nos 2433 and 2481) for manufacturing printing and other paper from straw, thistles, waste and refuse of hemp and flax and different kinds of wood and bark (Chick 1985, 143–4; Hills 1988, 76, 133–5; Hills

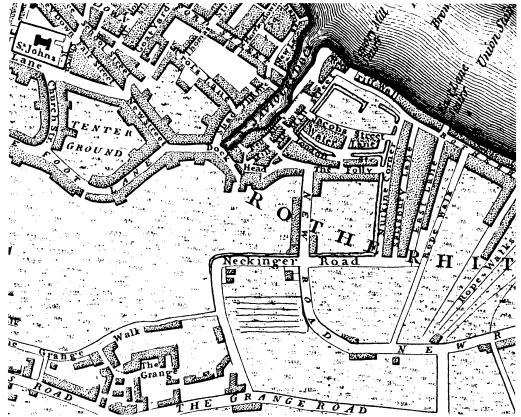


Fig 2 The site on which Neckinger Mill was later established as shown on an enlarged detail of Wallis's map of 1787 which represents an area about 940m across. The property is the slightly distorted square bounded on its north side by the word 'Neckinger'. The watercourse known as 'The Neckinger' follows Neckinger Road, Nutkine[Nutkins] Corner and Water Lane to Mill Street before entering St Saviour's Dock and the river Thames, shown shaded at the top right. Courtesy of Southwark Local Studies Library (retouched).

2001, 8–10; Hunter 1947, 332–40; Shorter 1957, 53–4, 63). It appears (Goulden 1989, 75–85) that Koops was born in Pomerania, as Matthias Koops von Ernst. He was married in London in 1789 and naturalized as a British subject in 1790. Later that year, described as a merchant, he was declared bankrupt. In 1796 he published a book on politics in France and issued a proposal to publish a set of maps of the Rhine. A year later he launched a fire insurance company which soon failed. With this background it is difficult to accept that Koops was responsible for the papermaking innovations revealed in his patents, which clearly involved a thorough understanding of applied chemistry.

In 1800 and 1801, Koops published the first and second editions of his book *Historical account of the substances which have been used to describe events, and to convey ideas from the earliest date, to the invention of paper* (Koops 1800–1). These books are rare but ten copies have been located and examined in detail (Crocker & Hills 2001). They are printed on the recycled, wood and straw papers covered by the Koops patents. Tracings of the watermarks in some of this paper, including the words Neckinger or Neckenger Mill and the dates 1797, 1800 and 1801, are reproduced in figure 4. The Royal Arms watermark in figure 4(b) is a quite accurate representation of the version used between 1714 and 1801 (Crocker & Hills 2001, 24; Hasler 1980, 12–13). The indistinct Royal Arms in figure 4(a) was presumably similar but the shield has a double rather than a single border. In the first edition Koops notes that

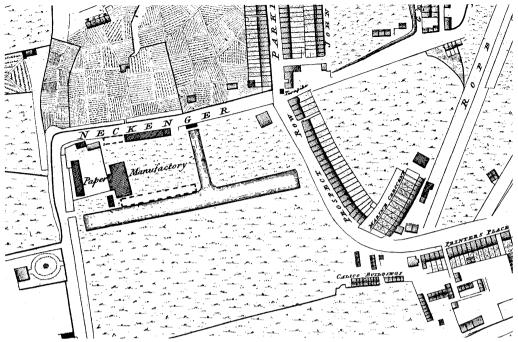


Fig 3 The 'Paper Manufactory' at Neckinger, Bermondsey, on the first edition of Horwood's *Plan of London* published in 1799, with the new south building and the westwards extension to the north building, shown on the second edition published by W Faden in 1807, superimposed in broken lines. The house and garden occupied by Elias Carpenter is at the north-east of the site just west of the word 'Row'. The whole area shown is about 460m across. Courtesy of Southwark Local Studies Library (retouched).

the recycled paper was being made at Neckinger Mill 'under the inspection of the truly ingenious Mr Carpenter' (Koops 1800, 78). In the second edition he states that since 1 May 1800 his invention of re-manufacturing paper had been carried out with great success at Neckinger Mill, an extensive paper manufactory where more than 700 reams of perfectly clean and white paper were being made weekly and that soon double that quantity would be made at the mill.

## **Elias Carpenter**

The 'truly ingenious Mr Carpenter' referred to by Koops was Elias Carpenter who in November 1795, described as a 'gentleman of the Neckinger', was granted a patent (no 2075) for a method of bleaching paper and sizing it without drying. This involved hanging sheets of wet paper over strips of glass placed in grooves in a stout deal box. The box was closed and the paper exposed to 'oxygenated muriatic gas' for eight to ten hours and then sized, pressed and finished. To prevent the noxious gas affecting the workmen a solution of potash in water was placed at the bottom of the box (Rees 1819). This suggests that the technique was already well-established and it seems likely that Campbell and Carpenter had been working together for some years. It also seems clear that Carpenter must have been responsible for the innovations patented by Koops.

On 1 May 1800 a new company, Cope & Co, was formed to operate Neckinger Paper Mills (Sale 1805). Then in October 1800 Thomas Cope leased to Elias Carpenter, described as 'papermaker and superintendent of the manufactory lately raised by Cope', a house and garden at Neckinger mill for seven years. The term was back-dated to 1 May 1800 and the rent was only one shilling a year (Lease 1800). This was the property shown

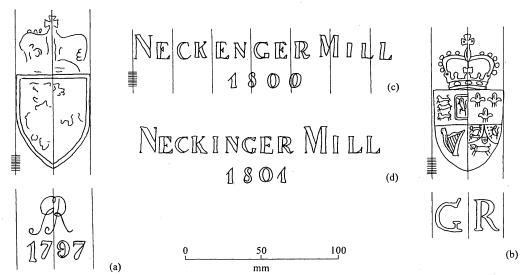


Fig 4 Tracings of watermarks in paper made at Neckinger Mill. (a) Laid wood paper in the 1st edition of Koops (1800) held by the British Library. (b) Laid straw paper in this copy of Koops (1800). (c) Laid straw paper in other copies of the 1st edition of Koops (1800). (d) Wove re-made paper in the main text of the 2nd edition of Koops (1801). The locations of the chain lines in (a), (b) and (c) are indicated by vertical lines and the spacings of the laid lines by horizontal groups of lines.

in the north-east corner of the site in figure 3. Carpenter does not however appear to have been a partner in the Company. This is indicated by the following list of names headed 'Neckinger' and dated 17 April 1802 which survives in one of John Rennie's notebooks: 'John Agnew, John France[?], John Forbes, John Hunter, Daniel Slater, R Twiss No 3 Upper Tichfield St, M Koops, John Twicket, Bookkeep Sheffield St' (Richard Hills, pers comm). It is also very striking that this list does not contain the name Thomas Cope, although according to the Bermondsey land tax records, Thos Cope & Co continued to occupy the Neckinger Mill site until 1807 (Land tax 1780–1831). It does however contain M Koops, which again suggests that Cope and Koops were one and the same person.

In 1801 Matthias Koops floated a new company to build and operate what would easily have been, with 32 vats, the largest paper mill in Britain (Hills 1990; Hills 2001). The 22 shareholders included all of the above 'Neckinger' names except Twicket, in some cases with different spellings. They also included Elias Carpenter of Bermondsey, who held 10 shares out of a total of nearly 1,000 (Hills 2001, 9). The site (TQ 294 779), as shown in figure 1, was at Millbank on the north bank of the Thames about 2.5km upstream from Westminster Bridge and the mill was known as Millbank, Thames Bank, Westminster or Chelsea Mill. The aim was to exploit the Koops patent for making paper from straw. However, before the new buildings were completed the company became bankrupt and the mill was forced to close at the end of 1802. The equipment, including only four vats, was offered for sale in October 1804 and a gatekeeper was paid until November 1805.

It is not known whether Neckinger Mill also closed at the end of 1802 but no watermarks dated later than 1801 have been discovered. A history of Surrey, published in 1804, states that there was a steam engine by the side of the Neckinger Road at a mill which was recycling old paper (Manning & Bray 1804, 229), but this information would have been a few years out of date. The engine was presumably the one which Joshua Gilpin said was being used in 1796. It is also mentioned in a letter written in 1805 to the papermaker William Balston, who was planning to install a steam engine at his new Springfield Mill at Maidstone in Kent, with the remark: 'There must be a new steam engine on a better principle than the present, which consumes too many coals' (Balston 1954, 39). There is

## -00000**@**00000 **PARTICULARS**

Those Capital and greatly Improved Premises,

MOST ADVANTAGEOUSLY SITUATED AT

## BERMONDSEY.

KNOWN BY THE

# NECKINGER PAPER MILL,

Valuable Steam Engine, VATS, PRESSES, CISTERNS,

AND OTHER

NECESSARY UTENSILS for carrying on the PAPER MANUFACTORY;

TOGETHER WITH

# A very convenient Dwelling House,

Spacious GARDEN, &c.

Fig 5 Detail of the cover of the particulars for the sale by auction of Neckinger Mill and its dwelling house by Messrs Griffith & Co at Garraway's Coffee House, Change Alley, Cornhill on Thursday, 6th June, 1805 at 12 o'clock. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library (retouched).

no record of this engine in the Boulton & Watt archives and their patents did not expire until 1800. It was therefore probably a 'pirate' engine and would appear to have been only the second used to power a paper mill, following the first at Hull in 1786 (Hills 1988, 162). One piece of information does however suggest that Neckinger Mill was still active after 1802. In September 1803, Boulton & Watt gave an estimate of £259 for providing 'a 30 horse boiler & apparatus for Mr Dacie, Neckinger Mill' (Boulton & Watt 1803). Unfortunately Mr Dacie is otherwise unknown and in particular no papermaker of that name has been recorded.

Neckinger Mill was advertised for sale by auction on 6 June 1805 (*Reading Mercury* 1805). It was said to be abundantly supplied with water, let on a lease of  $f_{i}$  1000 a year, to have a dwelling house in the occupation of Mr Carpenter and held for a term of 20 years, subject to a ground rent of f 86 a year. Further, far more detailed, information about the premises is provided by the full particulars of this sale, part of which is reproduced in figure 5 (Sale 1805). They explain that the mill had a well of fine spring water and was almost surrounded by a canal supplied from the Thames. There were buildings on the north, south and west sides of the site and also at the 'back front of the mill'. The north building was stated to house a drying loft nearly 240ft long and the south building, which was said to be 'uniform' with this, also had a drying loft. A 24hp steam engine and boiler were housed at the centre of the west building, which had a turret clock and also contained 2 washing engines, 2 beating engines, 6 vats and 6 presses. The dwelling house was described as follows: 'A convenient dwelling house, situated near the corner of the Neckinger Road, - suitable for a family; also a very spacious garden, laid out and stocked in a handsome way, with a stream of water: - in the occupation of Mr Carpenter.'

The sale particulars are not accompanied by a plan but clearly by 1805 the mill was much larger than indicated on Horwood's map of 1799. Fortunately however this map was revised and the 1807 edition (Horwood 1807) corresponds well with the 1805 description. In particular it shows a new south building and an extension to the north building and these have been superimposed in broken lines on figure 3. These changes must indicate the conversion of the 1795 paper mill into the large mill of May 1800 which Koops mentions in his *Historical account*. In this connection the sale particulars also reveal that Neckinger Mill, including the implements, utensils, fixtures etc, was leased to John Hunter and others for 21 years from 1 May 1800 for £1000 annual rent. Hunter appears in the Rennie list of Neckinger names given above and he was also a major shareholder of Koops's Millbank Mill Company (Hills 2001, 9; Hunter 1947, 335). Indeed in 1807, with Joseph Bramah, he took over the Millbank buildings as a steel works (Chick 1985, 144). It would appear therefore that Hunter played a key role in developing the Koops plans for making paper from waste paper and from straw.

An intriguing feature of the sale particulars is the occurrence of a rag warehouse, a rag sorting room and two washing and two beating engines each for  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cwt of rags. There is no mention of straw, wood or used paper as raw materials. It therefore appears that, after the failure of the Koops company at Millbank, Neckinger had become a conventional paper mill. Another interesting point is that there were six vats, corresponding to Joshua Gilpin's note in 1796 that there were '3 vatts and 3 more to work soon'. This means that Neckinger was the biggest paper mill in Britain, the largest reported number of vats in 1800 being five (Shorter 1957, 409). Incidentally, as two beating and two washing engines would each have required about 5 or 6hp, the 24hp steam engine was a suitable size.

The Bermondsey land tax returns (Land tax 1780–1831) indicate that the 1805 sale of Neckinger Mill was unsuccessful and a second advertisement appeared in September 1806 stating that the steam engine, boilers, washing and beating engines, cisterns, stuff chests, screw presses, paper moulds etc were to be auctioned (Simmons 1940s). It had clearly been decided that the days of papermaking at Neckinger Mill had ended.

#### Joanna Southcott

Joanna Southcott was a devout Christian who at the end of the 18th century genuinely believed that God was calling her to be a prophetess. Indeed she has been called 'the greatest prophetess', but others have simply referred to her as a religious fanatic (*DNB* 1898, 685–7; Thompson 1968, 420). Her life-story, including interactions she had with the papermaker Elias Carpenter, has been told by Balleine (1956) and more recently by Brown (2002). However the research which has been carried out on Carpenter and Neckinger Mill, which is outlined above, now enables these interactions to be explored in greater depth.

Southcott was born in 1750 at Gittisham, between Honiton and Ottery St Mary in Devon, the fourth daughter of a farmer. She became a domestic servant and an upholsterer and remained single. Then, when she was 42, she started to have apocalyptic dreams and to hear a 'Voice', which she concluded was that of God. Her Voice instructed her to write down the messages she had received and she then found that her hand moved automatically scrawling supernatural admonitions. At first she told no one of these visitations but towards the end of 1793 decided that her messages were so important that she must obtain recognition. However the Methodists, the Anglicans and other churches all rejected her claim that 'the Day of Wrath was at hand'. In February 1801 she published her first religious booklet The Strange Effects of Faith, which described her experiences and her struggles to gain recognition, and within a year a further five parts appeared. Then in May 1802, following a rumour that she had prophesied that Exeter would be destroyed like Sodom, she left Devon for London. Her publications continued and included A continuation of prophecies (1802), A word to the wise (1803), Sound an alarm in my holy mountain (1804), A warning to the world (1804) and Divine and spiritual communications (1809) (Thompson 1968, 425; Brown 2002, 337-9).

In London, Joanna Southcott attracted many followers including some who had previously supported Richard Brothers, a prophet who in 1794 had published, in two

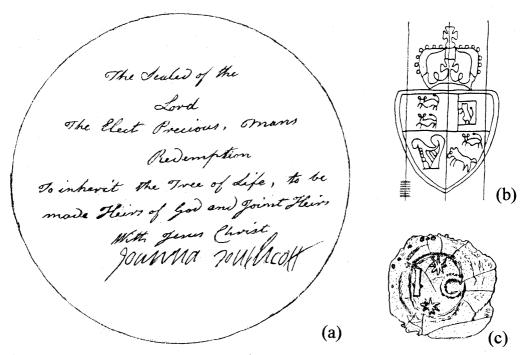


Fig 6 A Joanna Southcott seal showing (a) the text written in a circle and signed by Joanna, (b) the Royal Arms watermark in the laid paper and (c) the wax impression of Joanna's ring, with the monogram 'IC' (Jesus Christ) and two stars, which is affixed to the back of the paper. The circle in (a) is 140mm in diameter, the shield in (b) 62mm across and the wax in (c) 22mm across. The locations of the chain lines in (b) are indicated by vertical lines and the spacings of the laid lines by a horizontal group of lines. This particular seal was not issued and therefore does not have a follower's name and is not dated. Courtesy of the Panacea Society.

parts, A revealed knowledge of the prophecies and times, wrote under the direction of God by the Man that will be revealed to the Hebrews as their Prince. In the second part he wrote: 'The Lord commands me to say to you George III, King of England, that, immediately on my being revealed to the Hebrews as their Prince, and to all Nations as their Governor, your crown must be delivered up to me, that your power and authority must cease.' He began to win disciples, some of whom were influential people, and the Government grew uneasy. In 1795 he was arrested, certified as insane and confined to an asylum where he remained for 11 years. He continued to publish his prophecies and demands but, when his predictions did not come to pass, his supporters gradually drifted away. However, many had been convinced that the Second Advent was at hand and were ready to transfer their allegiance to Joanna (Balleine 1956, 27–36).

In particular, Elias Carpenter became Joanna's most fervent disciple. Although Neckinger Mill may well, like Millbank Mill, have been in difficulties, it appears that, personally, he was wealthy enough to be a philanthropist and ran a night school at the mill in which his wife taught reading and writing. He started to hold meetings at his house twice a week for the study of Joanna's writings and provided her with paper from the mill from which she produced her 'seals' (fig 6). These bore the text 'The sealed of the Lord, the elect and precious, man's redemption to inherit the tree of life, to be made heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ'. This was written inside a circle with the date and her signature and sealed with a seal she had found in the shop where she had worked in Exeter. This bore the monogram 'IC' and two stars, as shown in figure 6(c). Joanna interpreted the monogram as being the initials of Jesus Christ and wondered whether he had placed it

where he knew she would find it. It seemed to her that she had been entrusted with the safe keeping of 'the seal of the Living God'. She had used this seal earlier on her prophesies and now proposed to use it to seal people as well. She intended to issue 144,000 of these seals using Carpenter's paper. By the beginning of 1804, 8144 people had been sealed (Balleine 1956, 46) and 10,000 seals had been applied for by the beginning of 1805. By 1808, seals had been issued to 14,000 people but then she decided to stop using them (Balleine 1956, 54). However, another estimate states that 100,000 were sealed (Thompson 1968, 423). Incidentally, Joanna insisted that all her male followers must have beards (Thompson 1968, 425), so it is assumed that Carpenter must have had one. Otherwise there is no known record of his appearance.

In 1803 Joanna preached to the converted at Neckinger House and Carpenter set up a chapel in the mill. This was not however a new building but part of the steam-engine house which had two entrances marked Boys and Girls which suggests that it was also the building used as a school. At this time Joanna predicted the terrors of the apocalypse and instructed her followers to settle their affairs so that they could be ready to leave at a week's notice. She told them that she would inform them where to go. The Government heard about this and Carpenter was arrested twice but released (Balleine 1956, 47).

Another of Joanna's supporters was the Rev Thomas Foley and in January 1803 a public inquiry into her claims, organised by her friends, was held at the Paddington home of his cousin Lord Foley. Joanna had written to the king asking him to send his ministers and personal invitations were sent to bishops and other clergy but in practice the only people who attended were her supporters. The arrangements were bizarre. Joanna's prophecies were put in a box on top of which Thomas Foley's baby son was perched. Everyone attending had to kiss the baby, who was then placed in the judgement seat. Eleven believers, including Carpenter, acted as assessors and twelve more as jurors. The box was opened, the prophecies read and all present confirmed that they were fully convinced that the writings were the work of the Lord. A statement about the outcome of the inquiry, headed 'Examination of Prophesies' was printed and Carpenter was one of the two witnesses (Examination 1803). It is reproduced as figure 7 and provides a valuable insight into the beliefs of the sect. However, Joanna recognized that the proceedings had been a fiasco.

Another public trial of Joanna's writings was arranged by her supporters at Neckinger House in December 1804 (Balleine 1956, 49–50; DNB 1898, 277–9). There were 23 judges and 24 assessors and Colonel Harwood, a recent convert, took the place of the baby. An attorney was appointed to examine witnesses, some of whom had been brought from Exeter. Believers arrived from all over Britain but, in spite of forceful invitations, no opponents appeared. The trial started on Wednesday 5 December and on the first two days established that Joanna had an excellent character, that her enemies had destroyed part of the evidence and that her writings were entirely her own and not the work of her supporters. On the third day Joanna, who was staying in the house but had not taken part, appeared and stopped the proceedings because there were no opposers. She decided that a real trial could not take place until the bishops and the learned came forward to contest her claims. On the Saturday she preached to 700 of the 'sealed', on Sunday and Monday she answered questions put to her by her judges and on Tuesday she attempted a public meeting in one of the fields at the mill. However, a multitude of non-believers broke in and tried to trample her underfoot and throw her into the canal. That evening the judges and assessors drew up a report which stated: 'Being invited for seven days to the examination of Joanna Southcott's prophecies, we do individually and voluntarily avow by our separate signatures that her prophecies and spiritual communications emanate wholly from the Spirit of the Living God.' (Balleine 1956, 49–50; Brown 2002, 174–9).

Then in 1805 Carpenter opened the chapel at the Elephant & Castle (TQ 320 790), shown in figure 1, which was to be the headquarters of Joanna's work (Balleine 1956, 51). This no doubt was because Neckinger Mill, including the chapel in the steam-engine

# EXAMINATION OF PROPHECIES.

THE PROPHECIES of JOANNA SOUTHCOTT have been closely examined for Seven Days, by Twenty-three Persons, chosen by DIVINE command, and proved by them all to be from the SPIRIT of the LIVING GOD. The Examination of her Writings was made public to every one that wished to come, and none were refused admittance. From Twenty to Forty were present six days, and on the seventh when all was summed up, and Joanna had given her clear Evidence; the Twenty-three unanimously agreed that the Calling was of God, as well as Thirty-five others, who were then present, and all signed their names of approbation to the Above Truth. Now, if any will say the Calling is not of God they must say, the Lord had not a Friend to step forward to defend His Cause, and prevent a Woman from saying, "The Lord saith," when they think He had not spoken so if they still say, this Calling is not of God, they must say, Religion is gone from the World; as Unbelievers were publicly invited in the Newspapers, and privately invited by repeated letters sent to Ministers and others. So now let every mouth be stopped, and every tongue be silent, and know the end is near at hand, that Satan's power will be destroyed, and CHRIST's KINGDOM NEAR TO COME.

WE, the CHOSEN PERSONS, believe it a duty incumbent on us to congratulate the Public, even all the Generation of Adam, on the glorious, happy, and blessed prospect of the speedy fulfilment of the great Promises of the Gospel in the Seed of the Woman bruizing the Serpent's head, and the Restoration of Man from the Fall to the IMAGE of God, by the Merits and Death of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour, and of the destruction of the works of Satan; the Devil, and his being chained down to the Bottomless Pit for a thousand years, and a seal set upon him, that he may not deceive the Nations any more till the thousand years shall be fulfilled—That the Earth may be filled with the Glory of God, and all the Kingdoms of this World become the Kingdoms of our God and His Christ, and that He will reign a thousand years: having subdued all things unto Himself, that there may be no more Curse; but the Name of the Lord alone be exalted and worshipped by all the Familiers of the Earth, and that all Flesh may see the Salvation of God.

Now, we believe, and are clear, from the diligent Examination of the Writings of Joanna Southcott, that they are of GOD by the Spirit of JESUS, which is the Spirit of Prophecy, the MIGHTY COUNSELLOR, The EVERLASTING FATHER, The PRINCE OF PEACE: and in them are found wondrous Prophecies, the greatest wisdom of Counsel, and the clearest Revelations of Peace and Happiness, resting upon the Scriptures, pointing out how Man will be enabled to do the Will of God on Earth, as the Angels do it in Heaven;—and to the above Testimony we here sign our Names:

\*Rev. STANHOPE BRUCE,
\*PETER MORISON,
WILLIAM JOWETT,
\*WILLIAM SHARP,
ELIAS CARPENTER,
W. ROUNDELL WETHERELL,
\*GEORGE TURNER,
CHARLES TAYLOR,

CHARLES ABBOTT, RICHARD LAW, ELIAS JAMFSON FIELD, GEORGE STOCKS, JOHN MORRIS, WILLIAM COY, WILLIAM BELK, WILLIAM TAYLOR, JOHN YOUNG, LAYTON WINTER, JOHN TORIN, THOMAS STEPHENS.

References to the above Persons may be had as below.

JOANNA SOUTHCOTT is now so clear that her Calling is of God, that she is ready to meet any Divines, or any of the learned, and will prove from the Scriptures, that they must deny their Bibles, if they deny that her Writings come from Divine Inspiration, as some already have done. And let them weigh deep, how a thing sown in so much weakness in 1792, by a simple Woman, is now rising with so much Power, according to the Truth of her sealed Prophecies, some of which will soon be laid before the Public.

JOANNA SOUTHCOTT'S PROPHECIES sold at E. I. FIELD's, No. 3, Broad Court, Long
Acre, London; and at SYMONS's, Gandy Lanc, Exeter.

PADDINGTON, JANUARY, 22, 1803.

Witness to the Truth of the above Subscriptions,
WILLIAM SHARP, and E. CARPENTER.

London: Printed J. GREENHAM, 45, Drury-Lane.

Fig 7 Hand-bill announcing of the results of the inquiry into Joanna Southcott's prophecies held in January 1803. The name of Elias Carpenter appears as one of the eleven assessors at the left and also as one of the two witnesses at the bottom. The names of the twelve jurors are given at the right. Courtesy of Southwark Local Studies Library.

house, was being sold. Carpenter called the new chapel 'The House of God' and the subjects of Joanna's dreams were depicted on the walls (*DNB* 1898, 277–9). Remarkably, as shown in figure 8, which is a detail of an engraving of a pen and watercolour painting



Fig 8 Elias Carpenter's first 'House of God' and the Elephant and Castle public house as shown on a detail of an engraving of a Thomas Rowlandson pen and watercolour painting dated 1805-20. The view is from the north-west looking across to Newington Butts and the Fishmongers' Almshouses. The engraving has been selected for reproduction as in the painting Rowlandson has emphasised the figures in the foreground so that the background features. including the House of God, appear to be less well defined. Courtesy of Southwark Local Studies Library, P20450; painting held by The Museum of London, 58,28.

by Thomas Rowlandson, it was very close to the Elephant & Castle public house. Joanna stated that it was 'opened by express command of God through me'. However, by this time Carpenter had gathered around him several other zealots (Balleine 1956, 50–2). First came Prescott who saw visions and drew pictures which at first Joanna had published with her own comments. Then came Dowland who, when Joanna was away, anointed Carpenter and others as apostles. Next came Jared whom Joanna denounced as a fraud but Prescott claimed that God had told him that Jared had to be obeyed. This led Prescott to instruct Carpenter to close the new chapel, which he did, Joanna stating that Prescott was inspired by the devil. As a result one of Joanna's followers, Peter Morison, a cotton printer of Liverpool, found and repaired an abandoned Baptist chapel for her followers. Its site, which is indicated in figure 1, was at Duke Street, Webber Row, Southwark (TQ 314 795). William Tozer, a disciple from Exeter was appointed lay reader and attracted large congregations. By Joanna's orders only the Anglican prayer book was allowed (Balleine 1956, 52). As far as is known Elias Carpenter and Joanna Southcott never interacted again.

## Later developments and events

It appears that the sale of equipment at Neckinger Mill in September 1806 was successful and on 30 December Samuel and Henry Bevington, local leather manufacturers, signed an agreement to take over the lease from Thomas Cope of Fenchurch Street, London, for the remainder of a period of 34 years for £5,250, the annual rent being £86 2s 0d (Bevington 1993, 28). Records of the Bevingtons' early occupancy of the site provide useful information about the paper mill. In particular the first known illustration of the mill is the pen and wash drawing of 1826 by J C Buckler which is shown in figure 9 (Buckler 1826). It is a view from the north-east showing the north and south drying lofts, at right and left respectively, and the west building with a turret and a chimney for the boiler of the steam engine. A later engraving of the leather mill, after the London & Greenwich railway had



Fig 9 Pen and wash drawing, dated 1826, of Neckinger Mill by John Chessell Buckler. At that time Bevingtons used the mill as a leather works but the buildings illustrated appear to be those described in the 1805 sale particulars of the paper mill. Note in particular the drying lofts at the right and extreme left, and the steam engine house with the turret and chimney stack to the left of the tall trees. The view is from the north-east. Courtesy of Southwark Local Studies Library, P4288.

been built diagonally on arches across the site in 1836, shows men working at tanning pits

in the yard (Dodd 1843, 160).

Bevingtons & Sons continued to occupy the site until 1950 (Bevington 1993, 204) but none of the original buildings now survive. Most of it has been redeveloped for housing but a four-storey yellow-brick building dated 1864 still stands on the north side. It is in multiple occupation, used for warehousing, studios and apartments, and has a pediment bearing

the inscription 'Neckinger Mills, Bevingtons & Sons'.

Following his split with Joanna, Carpenter continued to hold meetings in The House of God at the Elephant & Castle. However, in 1819 he was forced to move about 500m to new premises, again called 'The House of God', at Penton Street, now Amelia Street, in Walworth. Its location (TQ 321 784) is indicated in figure 1 and an engraving of the building is shown in figure 10. The services gradually became similar to spiritualistic seances (Balleine 1956, 50-1; DNB 1898, 277-9; SRS 1997, xcii). A register of baptisms survives for The House of God, being of the 'Primitive Christians denomination', from 1806 to 1837 (Register 1806-37). In this Elias Carpenter is described as 'Minister of The House of God' and he witnessed the last entry on 9 July 1837. However on 13 August 1840, when the chapel was closed, the minister was George Wilmot who described himself as 'Executor to Elias Carpenter's Estate'. Clearly therefore Carpenter died between these dates and it is likely that the Elizabeth Carpenter of Dover Road, who died on 27 June 1831 in her 73rd year and was buried in the churchyard of St Mary, Newington, was his wife (Newington 1880, 56). In 1851 The House of God served another sect called 'The Expectants of the Lord Jesus Christ to chain the Strong man Armed and to take possession of man and to put him in Possession in what Adam Lost'. It had 300 free sittings and no

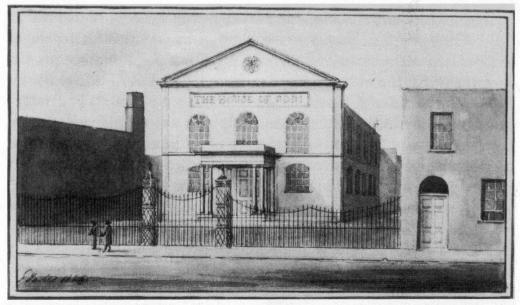


Fig 10 Elias Carpenter's second 'House of God' at Penton Street (now Amelia Street), Walworth, as shown in a lithograph by C Bellamy based on a watercolour by George Yates of the mid-1820s. Courtesy of Southwark Local Studies Library, P938.

other sittings or standing room. The average attendance on Sunday mornings was 50 and there were no services on Sunday afternoons or evenings (SRS 1997, 25).

The likeness of Joanna Southcott, reproduced as figure 11, was engraved in January 1812 by William Sharp. He was one of her devoted followers, was an acquaintance of William Blake and in 1803, as shown at the foot of figure 7, had been Elias Carpenter's partner in witnessing the 'Examination of Prophecies'. In early 1814 Joanna's Voice told her that she would give birth to Shiloh, the son of God. However when she died, aged 64, on 27 December 1814 the post-mortem revealed no evidence of her ever having been pregnant (Balleine 1956, 59–66; Brown 2002, 245–94). She was interred (TQ 2704 8297) at a newly consecrated burial ground attached to St John's chapel-at-ease in the parish of St Mary-le-bone, now St John's Wood Church (*DNB* 1898, 279; *GM* 1814, 678–9; Oliver & Bradshaw 1955, 38–40). Her tombstone is said to have been overturned and shattered in October 1874 when a barge carrying 5 tons of gunpowder blew up under Macclesfield Bridge (TQ 275 833) which spans the Regent's Park Canal about 600m away (*DNB* 1898, 279; McKnight 1975, 378; Oliver & Bradshaw 1955, 35–6). However, it is also claimed that other tombs were badly damaged but Joanna's remained intact (*LM c* 1919, 450; John Coghill, pers comm).

When Joanna died the box containing her prophecies was entrusted to William Sharp, who had engraved her portrait. It is now held by the Panacea Society based at Bedford (*Church Times* 2001; Crampton 2001; Martin 2001; *Spectator* 2000; Vallely 2001). Joanna had instructed that the box should only be opened at a time of national emergency in the presence of 24 Anglican bishops who agreed to study the contents for seven days. These conditions have never been met so that the box remains unopened (Balleine 1956, 107,

128 - 33).

Joanna Southcott's chapel at Neckinger Mill, the steam-engine house, survived until 1930 when it was demolished (fig 12). Neckinger House, where Elias Carpenter lived adjacent to the paper manufactory, was the home of Samuel Bevington for some years and later became the Orderly Room and Officers' Mess of the 6th Battalion The Queen's



Fig 11 Joanna Southcott as engraved by William Sharp in 1811. Sharp, who was one of Joanna's staunchest supporters, was an engraver of European fame, and an acquaintance of William Blake.

Royal Regiment and was occupied by them until shortly before its demolition in 1973 (Bevington 1993, 28).

## **Postscript**

In order to investigate the report that Elias Carpenter supplied Joanna Southcott with paper from which she produced her seals an attempt has been made to locate seals in order to examine the paper and particularly the watermarks. The only ones discovered are held by the Panacea Society and seventeen have been studied. Two of these had been issued, folded and sealed with wax using Joanna's 'IC' ring but had subsequently been opened. The remaining fifteen are complete, being signed by Joanna, but had not been issued. One bears the name of a follower but none of them have been dated, folded and sealed with the ring. They do however bear a wax imprint of the ring on the back of the paper. The Society holds further examples but these had been issued, remain sealed and could not be examined.

The paper in the seals inspected was conventional rag paper, not made from wood or straw and not recycled. This need not mean that it was not made at Neckinger Mill because, as indicated above, there is evidence that, after Matthias Koops became bankrupt in 1802, it made rag paper. However, unfortunately, none of the watermarks could be linked directly with Neckinger Mill. Indeed, eight of the seals are written on paper that can be associated with other mills and four of these bear the date 1806, by which time Neckinger Mill had definitely closed. Of the remaining nine seals, four bear a Post Horn watermark with the date 1804, three the Royal Arms and one Britannia, all of which were used by a large number of papermakers (Shorter 1957). One of the Royal Arms watermarks is shown in figure 6(b). The shield has a double border, as in the example from Neckinger Mill shown in figure 4(a), and is a simplified and inaccurate form of the version employed from 1801 to 1816 (Crocker & Hills 2001, 24; Hasler 1980, 12–13). In particular, quadrants 1 and 4 have only two rather than three lions passant and in quadrant 4 one of the lions looks remarkably like the horse of Westphalia. This occupied the same position in the

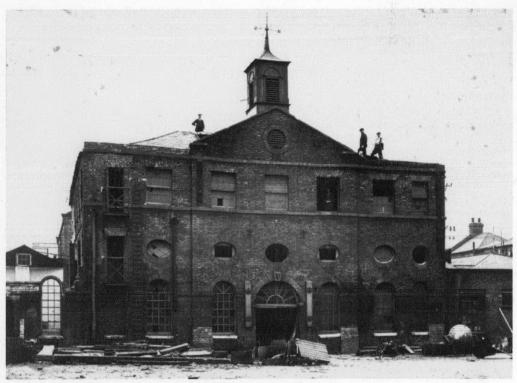


Fig 12 Photograph of what was known in Bermondsey as 'Joanna Southcott's chapel' at Neckinger Mill being demolished in 1930. The view is from the east and the building is clearly similar to that in Buckler's pen and wash drawing of 1826 shown in figure 9, only the openings of the bay at the left having been altered. The plan of the building is represented near the west end of the paper manufactory on the 1799 edition of Horwood's map shown in figure 3. In the sale particulars of 1805 it was described as a brick building containing a 24hp steam engine and boiler, two washing engines, two beating engines, six vats and six presses. Courtesy of Southwark Local Studies Library.

previous version of the Royal Arms, a Neckinger Mill example being shown in figure 4(b). The watermark in the remaining seal, issued to a William Stockwell, has the date 1803 with a monogram which is difficult to read but might be TC, conceivably Thomas Cope, but not EC for Elias Carpenter.

Presumably the 15 seals which were not issued were prepared shortly before Southcott decided to cease sealing her supporters in 1808. It is therefore perhaps unlikely that they were written on Neckinger Mill paper as Carpenter had stopped supporting Joanna in 1805 and the mill might have closed in 1802. Also, one of the two issued seals, which is on Whatman paper, was signed by the recipient, John Wilson, on 28 December 1806 and is again late. Therefore perhaps only the seal with the 1803 watermark might be on paper from Neckinger Mill but even this is extremely doubtful. There is therefore a need to study further seals and it is hoped that publication of this account will encourage those who know of other examples to arrange for them to be examined. In addition some of the prophecies in Joanna's box may also be written on Neckinger Mill paper so we look forward, in due course, to the box being opened.

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International Association of Paper Historians

SLSL: Southwark Local Studies Library

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