

SHORT ARTICLES AND NOTES

A DANDYPRAT REFERENCE OF 1511

Philip Grierson

In a previous note I put together and discussed all early printed references to dandyprats that seemed to be known.¹ Professor C.R.Cheney has kindly brought a new one to my attention, and its exceptionally early date makes it worth putting it on record.

The reference dates from September 1511, when Archbishop Warham carried out a visitation of the parish of Hougham in Kent. Amongst some twenty small sums owing for Peter's Pence is one for a dandyprat which a certain Louis Yves, goldsmith, has failed to pay for two years: 'Lewys Yvis withholdithe to the valew by yere a dandypratt thies 2 yeres'. That its value was 1½d. appears from a subsequent Latin note of his offence: 'Evias Goldesmythe pro denariis S.Petri aretro existentes per 2 annos 3d.'²

These entries do not of course imply that coinsworth 1½d. were circulating in 1511, only that *dandyprat* was at that time, at least in Kent, a recognized term for 1½d. The equation presumably came about, as I suggested in my earlier note, through the circulation of some fraudulent coins of Henry VII in 1492. The passage is the earliest strictly contemporary reference to dandyprats that we possess, antedating Jerningham's letter of 1516 by five years.

Notes

1. P.Grierson, 'Notes on early Tudor coinage', *BNJ* xli (1972), 80-5.
2. Lambeth Palace, London. Reg. Warham fos. 50r, 69r.

THE MINT DISPUTE, 1530-32

J. D. Alsop

Dr.Challis has traced the acrimonious dispute of the years after 1526 between the master-worker of the London mint, William Blount, Lord Mountjoy, and his deputies Robert Amadas, Ralph Rowlett, and Amadas' deputy Martin Bowes.¹ Although master-worker over the entire period 1509-1533, Mountjoy's personal involvement with the mint was restricted and he normally exercised the office through deputies drawn from the membership of the Goldsmiths' Company.² The year 1526 was marked by both the alteration of the coinage and a new contract between the master-worker and his deputies. The first

of a series of allegations of wrongdoing in the mint arose after the establishment of a commission of inquiry into mint affairs in June 1527. The commission's report of February 1528 was severely critical of the management provided by Amadas and Rowlett. By 1530 Lord Mountjoy, too, was disillusioned with his deputies and with the declining revenue coming to him under the terms of the new contract. He suspected corruption and, unconvinced by the defence offered by his deputies, began proceedings against Rowlett and Bowes in Chancery. Unfortunately, the outcome of this suit is not known, nor, hitherto, any details of mint administration over the course of the succeeding years until, with Mountjoy's retirement early in 1533, Rowlett and Bowes jointly acquired his position of master-worker (Amadas having died in 1532). Mountjoy, in effect, sold his influence over the appointment to Rowlett and Bowes who were to remain in office until 1543 and 1544, respectively, in spite of further complaints over the quality of the coinage.

This protracted dispute reveals much about the nature of the early Tudor mint's administrators and administration. It is therefore worth-while to draw attention to important new evidence for 1530 at the height of the disagreement. Amadas, Rowlett, and Bowes, in justifying the exercise of their deputyship, are known to have accounted for profits up to Michaelmas 1530.³ Despite Mountjoy's displeasure with his financial returns and the initiation by him of the Chancery case, it has hitherto been thought that he retained his deputies in office until they succeeded him in April 1533.⁴ It can now be ascertained that this was not the case. Mountjoy, in fact, appointed a new deputy for the mint in December 1530. This was Hugh Welshe, or Walshe, a citizen and goldsmith of London. The information is taken from a surviving obligation dated 4 December 1530 by Henry Pepwell, a London stationer, who provided surety for the good behaviour of Welshe as Mountjoy's deputy.⁵ The conditions of the obligation are transcribed below. Welshe is not previously known to have been employed in the Tudor mint,⁶ but significantly he was one of the three individuals who reported so adversely on the state of the mint in February 1528.⁷ He had earlier been a member of the jury empanelled under Sir John Daunce to assess the fineness of the new coinage in October 1526.⁸ It is noteworthy that the allegations of corruption and malpractice against Amadas, Rowlett, and Bowes were serious enough for Mountjoy to replace them with a new deputy. Welshe was reasonably well known within the London mercantile community, but was not a prominent or wealthy individual. He had been on good terms with Sir John Skevington, the merchant of the staple and alderman of London.⁹ Welshe's will of 1532 identifies himself as a parishioner of St. Mary Woolnoth, of modest means, conventional in his religion, married with children living but under the age of majority.¹⁰ His executors included the London draper Christopher Raynwyke and Richard Fetherston, cleric.

Welshe dated his will 24 April 1532 and probate was granted on 28 June following. It would appear likely that he remained deputy master-worker of the mint until around the time of his death, whereupon Rowlett and Bowes entered into the negotiations which led to them succeeding Mountjoy in the following April. Welshe's tenure of the office was, therefore, not long. But it is significant because of the circumstances in which the appointment took place, as part of the most serious Tower mint dispute of the early sixteenth century.

Appendix

The terms of the obligation dated 4 December 1530 in which Henry Pepwell bound himself in £100 to William Blount, Lord Mountjoy: "11

The condition of this obligation is such that where the above named Lord Mountjoy has granted to Hugh Welshe, citizen and goldsmith of London, to be deputy to the said Lord in the office of master of the mint and worker of the king's moneys in the Tower of London, the realm of England, and the town of Calais and marches of the same, to occupy the said office as deputy to the said Lord Mountjoy according to a pair of indentures made between the said Lord Mountjoy on the one part and the said Hugh Walshe on the other part, whereof the date is the day of the date of this. If the said Hugh well and truly occupy and exercise the same office during the time that he shall occupy the said office as deputy to the said Lord Mountjoy, and also that during the said time he discharge, keep, and save harmless the said Lord and all and every other person and persons, their heirs and executors, that stand bound or hereafter shall be bound as sureties or borowes for the said Lord for any thing concerning the said office, and discharge, keep, and save harmless the said Lord, his heirs and executors of and for all manner articles, covenants, grants, and orders made or hereafter to be made by the king's highness or his most honourable Council between the king's said highness and the said Lord Mountjoy concerning the said office, and also well and truly observe, perform, fulfil, and keep all and singular covenants, grants, articles, and clauses in the said indentures specified and contained which on the part and behalf of the said Hugh, his executors, and assigns are to be fulfilled and kept, that then this present obligation to be void and of none effect. Or else [it is] to stand in full strength and virtue. [signed] hary pepwell

NOTES

1. C.E.Challis, *The Tudor Coinage* (Manchester 1978), pp.78-81.
2. *Ibid.*, pp.63-4.
3. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII.* ed. J.S.Brewer *et al* (2nd edn., 1920-32), iv, 6648.
4. Challis, *op. cit.*, p.80.
5. Public Record Office, King's Remembrancer's office, original bonds, E 114/1, part ii, unnumbered.
6. He is not listed in: C.E.Challis, 'Mint Officials and Moneyers of the Tudor Period', *BNJ*, xlv (1975), 51-76.
7. *Letters and Papers*, iv, 3867 (2).
8. *Ibid.*, iv, 2595. For this jury see Challis, *Coinage*, pp.69-70.
9. *Letters and Papers*, iv, 952.
10. Guildhall Library, London Commissary Court, Ms.9171/10, fos.186v-7.
11. PRO, E114/1, ii, unnumbered. Contractions extended, spelling and punctuation modernized.

FRENCH ASSIGNATS CURRENT IN BRITAIN:
THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

R. H. Thompson

The history of John Wilkinson's re-use of *assignats* to pay his North Wales miners and ironworkers was published long since by Prof. W. H. Chaloner.¹ The main source is a letter to Lord Chief Justice Kenyon of 19 December 1792, which enclosed:

an *assignat*, made payable at Bersham Furnace, endorsed 'Gilbert Gilpin'... The Presbyterian tradesmen receive them in payment for goods, by which intercourse they have frequent opportunities to corrupt the principles of that description of men, by infusing into their minds the pernicious tenets of Paine's *Rights of Man*.²

The writer was Peter Whitehall Davies, of Broughton Hall, Worthenbury, on the opposite side of Wrexham from the Bersham ironworks.³

His letter resulted in the Act (33 Geo. 3, c. 1) to prohibit the circulation of notes etc. issued in France.⁴ The preamble gives the fullest description of what was prohibited:

Promissory or other Notes, Orders, Undertakings, or Obligations, being transferrable or negociable, or purporting to be negociable by Delivery, created and issued... by or in the Name of any publick Authority in France; whether the same be called Assignats, or by any other Denomination whatsoever, for the Payment of Money, or rendering any other Consideration to the Holders of the same.

It is thus not reasonable to suppose '*assignat*' merely a scaremongering term rather than actual French notes,⁵ especially since Wilkinson subsequently returned *assignats* to France through the agency of Joseph Priestley.⁶ They included a parcel of 898 as late as December 1793, which needed to be presented before Christmas as they bore the head of Louis XVI.⁷

To Chaloner's account of this peculiar episode it is possible to make a small addition. He regretted that Whitehall Davies did not indicate the value or values at which the *assignats* circulated;⁸ this, however, is one of several points of interest to have emerged in the House of Commons debates on the Bill, which can be pieced together from Almon and Debrett's *Parliamentary Register*, and from the less well-known *Jordan's Parliamentary Journal* and *The Senator*. The speakers were Sir Archibald Macdonald, attorney general; Edmund Burke; and Michael Angelo Taylor.⁹

Moving the Bill on 24 December 1792 (only five days after Whitehall Davies wrote), the attorney general observed that¹⁰

the circulation of *assignats*, and of other French paper currency, in this country, might become very dangerous; he enumerated many of the evils which in his opinion would be felt by the people of this country, if a timely check should not be put on this sort of commerce.

According to another account, he complained of¹¹

a practice which... was very prevalent at this time, of paying workmen and labourers in *assignats*. ... it was highly incumbent on the Legis-

lature to adopt some measure that should stop the farther progress of the evil.

Alternatively, he stated what he considered an alarming fact, that¹²

there were vast numbers of labourers, tradesmen, &c. who received their payments in French assignats, by which means the currency of this country was greatly prejudiced.

Thereat Mr. Burke declared himself a sincere friend to the principle of this Bill: 'the circulation of these assignats, and other papers for the payment of sums of money from France, in this country, was of a treasonable nature...' ¹³ Alternatively, he declared the impossibility on his part of opposing the principle of such a Bill: ¹⁴

The circulation of French paper in this country was carried on for no other purpose than that of assisting the circulation of French principles. It was a treasonable fraud, and ought to be checked in its operation.

On Boxing Day, when the Bill received its first reading, Mr. Taylor objected to the Bill, as 'its prohibition of payment in assignats implied that the payment of assignats had been legal; they were already illegal, and, of course, he could see no necessity for the present Bill.' ¹⁵ He therefore suggested it be immediately printed. The attorney general replied that ¹⁶

the law, as it now stood, did not render the payment ¹⁷ illegal, but the tender. The payment in assignats was legal, if accepted; but the present Bill went to make the payment illegal, as well as the tender.

In the debate on the second reading, which took place the following day, 27 December, Mr. Taylor allowed that ¹⁸

if there were any assignats in circulation, that circulation ¹⁹ ought to be suppressed; but he wished to know whether if any foreigner, on his arrival in this metropolis, entirely ignorant, ²⁰ as the case was likely to be, of the nature of the present Bill, with an assignat in his pocket, was to offer it at the house of Messrs. Thellusson and Co., or any other commercial house, he would or would not be liable to the penalties of the Bill now before the House for circulating assignats.

The attorney general observed in reply that ²¹

the general objects of complaint under the title of assignats were those for 3s.6d. each, or some such trivial sums, which were now in circulation in this country. With regard to the question of his learned and honourable friend, he must declare he knew not where to draw a line of distinction without incurring the hazard of an evasion of the Bill.

Mr. Taylor thereupon declared it to be his opinion as a lawyer that the case to which he alluded could not be deemed a circulation. ²²

The Bill passed its third reading on 28 December, and was carried to the Lords, who also quickly passed it (1 January); it received the royal assent on 8 January 1793. ²³ Priestley was to agree with Wilkinson that 'the reasoning of the Attorney General about your use of the assignats was foolish enough, but it appears to have been a fair specimen of their reasoning and conduct in more important things.' ²⁴

No specimen is known to survive of the French *assignats* made payable at Bersham Furnace for a sum such as 3s.6d.; ²⁵ endorsed 'Gilbert Gilpin'

(the reverses being blank), and regularly paid out on Saturdays.²⁶ For material evidence of Gilpin's activities in this area one must turn to his Dawley tokens of 1811.²⁷

Notes

1. W.H.Chaloner, 'John Wilkinson as note issuer and banker', *Seaby's Coin and Medal Bulletin* (1948), 550-3; also his 'Dr. Joseph Priestley, John Wilkinson and the French Revolution, 1789-1802', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., viii (1958), 31-4.
2. *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part iv: The manuscripts of Lord Kenyon* (1894), 536-7, no.1373. The letter had previously been published by the Hon.G.T.Kenyon, *The life of Lloyd, first Lord Kenyon* (1873), pp.270-1; Chaloner (1958, p.32) gives a slightly different transcript. Knowledge of the complete letter would have saved the present writer from supposing the subject to be Wilkinson's tokens: 'The dies of Thomas Spence (1750-1814)', *BNJ* xxxviii (1969), 153, following J.Bronowski and B.Mazlish, *The Western intellectual tradition*. (1963), p.372. There is no record of the enclosure in *HMC Fourteenth Report*, nor, as Lord Kenyon has kindly informed me, is it now to be found with ms.no.1373, or in files of uncalendared letters.
3. A.G.Veysey, *Guide to the Flintshire Record Office* (1974), pp.98-9. For Whitehall Davies see G.A.Usher, *Gwysaney and Owston*. (1964), 145,157, and 162-4. I am indebted to the Clwyd County Archivist for both these references.
4. A note by Kenyon acknowledges the connexion: *HMC Fourteenth Report*, App, Pt iv, 537.
5. T.S.Ashton, *Iron and steel in the Industrial Revolution* (3rd edn., 1963), pp.228-9; G.Unwin, *Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights* (2nd edn., 1968), pp.180-1.
6. Chaloner, 1948, p.552; 1958, p.33.
7. J.Mazard, *Histoire monétaire et numismatique contemporaine, tome I: 1790-1848* (1965), pp.110-30, types I (16-17 April 1790) to XIII (31 August 1792). Chaloner considers that they were acquired as a speculation in foreign exchange, for which cf. R.Ruding, *Annals of the Coinage* (3rd edn., 1840), ii, 93, s.a. 1792. For the possibility of direct trade cf. A.H.Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales* (3rd edn., 1971), p.139.
8. Chaloner, 1948, p.552.
9. All three are in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.
10. *The Parliamentary Register, or, History of the proceedings and debates of the House of Commons...*, 34, 1793, p.195.
11. *Jordan's Parliamentary Journal*, (1), 1792-3, p.176.
12. *The Senator, or, Clarendon's parliamentary chronicle...1792-3...*, 6, p.114.
13. *Parl. Reg.* p.195, and *The Senator*, p.114.
14. *Jordan*, p.176.
15. *The Senator*, p.146; *Jordan*, p.186.
16. *Jordan*, pp.186-7.
17. *The Senator*, p.146, reads 'payments'; otherwise as *Jordan*.

18. *Parl. Reg.*, p.207; the *Annual Register*, 1793, p.44, refers to 'trifling opposition' from Mr.Taylor.
19. Jordan, p.188, reads 'that such circulation'.
20. Jordan, p.188, reads 'knowing nothing'.
21. *Parl. Reg.* p.207; Jordan, p.188, ending at 'distinction'.
22. *Parl. Reg.* pp.207-8; Jordan, p.188.
23. *Journals of the House of Commons*, 48, 1792-3, p.62; *Journals of the House of Lords*, 39, 1790-93; pp.508-10, 513-4.
24. Chaloner, 1948, p.552.
25. It was also at 3s. 6d. that Wilkinson circulated his silver token of 1788: C.Pye, *Provincial coins and tokens* (1801), p.18.
26. Chaloner, *ibid.* I am grateful to the officers of the following institutions for negative reports on their holdings: British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals, National Collection of Banknotes; Clwyd County Record Office; National Museum of Wales, Department of Archaeology and Numismatics; Warrington Central Library, and Warrington Museum. Dr. M.J.Jubb of the Public Record Office has kindly looked in the Treasury papers (T1) and the Home Office papers (HO42 and HO48), but without finding any trace of the original enclosure to Lord Kenyon.
27. W.J.Davis, *The nineteenth-century token coinage* (1904), p.94, Shropshire 1-2; R.Dalton, *The silver token-coinage* (1922), p.25, Shropshire 1. For Gilpin see W.H.Chaloner, 'The life of Gilbert Gilpin, chief clerk at Bersham Iron Works, near Wrexham, 1786-1796...', *Cylchgrawn Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru = The National Library of Wales Journal*, xi (1960), 383-4; Ifor Edwards, 'Gilbert Gilpin, clerk to the Wilkinsons at Bersham Furnace', *Trafodion - Cymdeithas Hanes Sir Ddinbych = Transactions - Denbighshire Historical Society*, xxix (1980), 79-94.

POSTSCRIPT

M.Jean Lafaurie, who contributed the section on *assignats* to Mazard (above, note 7), and has recently published *Les assignats et les papiers-monnaies au XVIII^e siècle*, has kindly offered the following observations (here translated and slightly abridged) on the identity of the *assignats* involved.

Given that these *assignats* were used to pay workmen, it is probable that they were low-value notes, those for 10, 15, 25 and 50 *sous* authorised by the decree of 4 January 1792. It is unlikely that the *assignats* of 5 *livres* issued since 6 May 1791 would have been employed for this marginal usage since they still possessed some purchasing power in France. Another possibility is the *billets de confiance* put out in great quantities by numerous municipalities, private companies, and individuals. These notes were declared no longer legal tender by decree of 8 November 1792; their currency was extended until 1 January, then 1 July, 1793. The denominations of these notes were often 1 *sou*, 2, 2½, 3 *sous*, etc.