

This 'explanation' is attractive, though it awaits the confirmatory evidence of the printer's records. If compositors *were* identified in this way gathering M illustrates the possible ambiguity: what is to link two pages, widely separated and in different formes, with a compositor, and what if our hypothetical apprentice (did he forget to mark I9^r?) had marked only 11^v in sheet M, or if M1^r had not been figured? Are other apprentices lurking in other books behind the isolated marks which pass for spasmodic press figures?

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PAPER DATED TO THE MONTH

IN BRITISH-MADE PAPER from 1794 to 1811 a date is commonly found either as the sole watermark or in conjunction with another mark. The presence of the date is due to a requirement of the 'Act for repealing the duties on paper, pasteboard, millboard, scaleboard, and glazed paper; and for granting other duties in lieu thereof' (34 George III (1794), c.20). Oldman summarizes the relevant sections (XXVIII, XXX and XXXI) thus: 'The first states that paper made in Great Britain may be exported, and a drawback (a refund of part of the duty already paid) allowed on certain conditions; the second allows printers and booksellers to export books and consequently to claim the drawback; and the third stipulates that they cannot claim the latter unless the paper on which the books are printed bears a watermark date.'¹ Hence the frequent placing of the date at one or more corners of the mould so that the date in the paper could be seen in a lower margin when the sheet had been printed on. Though the regulation was abrogated in 1811 (51 George III, c.95, sect.III) dates continued to appear in paper made in Britain well into the twentieth century,² even if in general use the practice of dating paper had died out by about 1830.

A dated watermark can be of value to the modern bibliographer when the date of printing is not stated or is thought to be wrong, since it must be presumed that the date of printing cannot be earlier than the date in the paper, even though the date in the paper cannot be proved to be the date that a sheet containing it was actually made. For example, paper dated '1873' provides one terminus (Forman's sale in November 1884 provides the other) for the printing of R.H. Horne's *Galatea Secunda*, Harry Buxton Forman's 'first slip down the path that was to lead to the wholesale production of forgeries well before he met [T.J.] Wise.'³

The problem of dating the printing by reference to the paper is compounded by the fact that some dates — as with personal names in watermarks — became conventional, being used in moulds made long after the particular year: thus '1742' was a conventional watermark in French paper — paper made much later in the century. Similarly, as Balston points out,⁴ the date in the mould might be

changed irregularly, thus affording only unreliable evidence for the date of manufacture of the paper.

Dated paper can provide a terminus for the printing of volumes of the Journals of the House of Commons in the early nineteenth century, since they lack imprints. Though one terminus is provided by the contents — obviously the printing of any sheet cannot antedate the proceedings contained in it — the paper can give some idea of the speed with which the Journals were produced. Vol.55, which covers the proceedings of 24 September 1799 to 31 December 1800, is of particular interest. It is a folio, collating [A]² B-9P² 9Q1 9R-11D² 11E1, plus index ²A-O² (in the copy examined, in the State Library of Victoria, 6H has been removed). On the evidence of the watermarks printing probably took over a year: most of the sheets up to 3Z have '1800' in one corner and 'C 1800' in the opposite; most from 4A to 5F '1801' and 'C1801'; and most from 9C to ²O '1802' and 'C1802'. (In passing, it might be asked what the 'C' represents: could it be 'Commons', the paper perhaps having been produced solely for use in printing for the House?) '97' appears in one corner of sheets 7K 7O-8D, and '1801' in one corner of sheets 8E-8S. The remaining sheets — L 3E 3I 3N 4K 5A 5H 5I 5L-5Z 6B-6N 6P-7E 7G-7I 7L-7N 8T-9B 9E 9F 9L 9N-9P 9S 10D — have '1801' in one corner, and in the opposite 'C1801' surmounted by a cursive 'May', which I take to be the month.

A sampling of other volumes of the Journals of the House of Commons from the beginning of the nineteenth century reveals no other additions to the dates in the paper, thus lending support to the supposition that 'May' is the month and not a personal name. It is usually thought that in continuous use a pair of moulds would not last for more than a year.⁵ It is tempting to see in this isolated instance evidence of an anticipated life of very brief duration, and perhaps, in the absence of any month after May 1801, evidence that that brief life did in fact extend beyond a month.

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NOTES

¹ C.B. Oldman, 'Watermark dates in English paper', *The Library* 25(1945), 70-71.

² It might be noted here too that dates in British paper anticipated the Act of 1794 — see Thomas Balston, *James Whatman father & son* (London, 1957), p.160.

³ Nicolas Barker, 'The New *Enquiry*, a preview [Part 1, 'Sowing the seed']', *The Book Collector* 31(1982), 463-480 (pp.466-7).

⁴ Thomas Balston, *William Balston paper maker 1759-1849* (London, 1954), p.164.

⁵ Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford, 1972), p.63.

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