

William Hitchin and Thomas Sandon

Early Lives

William Hitchin was born in about 1779, possibly in Cheshire. He claims to have started in the cheese and corn business in Nantwich in 1797¹, when he would have been about 18.

In 1804, William Hitchin (presumed to be the same man) was in Newgate Prison as a debtor. He was discharged on 25th September.²



Figure 1. Newgate Prison
c1810

Thomas Charles Fitzhugh Sandon was born in about 1772.³ In 1807, he married Maria Swinton, apparently twice – on the 10th September at St Mary, Islington and on 5th October at St Bride, Fleet Street. On both occasions, he stated he was of Harston, Leicestershire.⁴

Maria's father, Anthony Daffy Swinton, was a manufacturer and supplier of a patent medicine – Daffy's Elixir.



Figure 2. 1798 Advertisement
for Daffy's Elixir

¹ *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*: t18050529-71, 29 May 1805

² TNA, PCOM 2, *Newgate Prison, London: Lists of Felons (Prisoners) on the Master's Side*

³ TNA, HO 13/22, *Criminal Entry Books 1811-1812*

⁴ London Metropolitan Archives, *London Church of England Parish Registers*, P83/Mry1; *London Church of England Parish Registers*, P69/Bri/A/01/Ms 6542/3

Prior to the Ipswich Banks case, in May 1805, William Hitchin was indicted at the Old Bailey, 'for feloniously forging and counterfeiting an acceptance of a bill of exchange, for the payment of one thousand pounds, with intention to defraud the Duke of Leinster, of Ireland, deceased'. He was found Not Guilty.

In September 1805, Thomas Charles Fitzhugh Sandon was acquitted at the Middlesex Assizes⁵, having previously been held at Newgate Prison⁶. The charge is not recorded and the case was not reported in the press.

The Ipswich Banks

On 1st July 1807, Samuel Sandford Still⁷ and William Hitchen, were indicted for feloniously forging on the 3rd of May, two promissory notes for the payment of five pounds each, with intention to defraud James Page the elder; and a Second Count, for feloniously forging two other like notes with the same intention; and Four other Counts for disposing of and putting away like forged notes with the same intention; and Several other Counts for like offence, to defraud James Page the younger.⁸



Figure 3. Ipswich Bank £5 note

In October 1806, Samuel Still had engaged William Innis, an engraver in Little Bell Alley, Coleman Street, to produce four printing plates. These were for £1, £5 and £10 promissory notes and a 'day check plate' for the Ipswich

⁵ TNA, *Criminal Registers, 1791-1892*, HO 26; Piece: 11; Page: 92

⁶ TNA, PCOM 2: *Prison Commission Records, 1770-1951*

⁷ No other record of Samuel Sandford Still has been found - it is possible that this was an alias of Thomas Sandon

⁸ *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*: t18070701-12, 1 July 1807

Bank of Ralph Holden, Sanders & Co. Innis then printed two hundred notes from each plate.

In December 1806 and January 1807, Samuel Still engaged another engraver, John Kidgell of Gracechurch Street, to make several modifications to the plates. An oak tree was added to the design and Ipswich Bank was altered to 'Ipswich & Suffolk Bank'. Kidgell printed in total twelve thousand notes of £1, £2 and £5 denominations, which were delivered to No. 6 St Michael's Alley, Cornhill, where Still had rented the ground floor of the premises, from a Mrs Vaughan, in September, in the name of Winkley, Brothers and Co.



Figure 4. Modified Ipswich Bank notes

A version of the notes also exists where the name is 'Suffolk Bank'.

William Hitchin meanwhile had gone to Ipswich. Here he rented a house in Queen Street, from a Miss Louisa Smith, 'for the purpose of opening a bank'. The let starting on 30th September 1806.

Hitchin claimed to be in the corn and provisions business with Ralph Holden and Alexander Sanders.⁹

Samuel Still, engaged Thomas Vaughan (nephew of Mrs Vaughan) to act as a clerk in the Cornhill office. He also, in January 1807, engaged Thomas Young to go to Ipswich and act as clerk for Holden & Co.

In London, no-one ever saw anyone of the name of Winkley at the bank, only Vaughan and Still. In Ipswich, likewise no-one ever saw anyone of the name of Holden or Sanders at the bank, only Young and Hitchin. Hitchin was seen to sign the banknotes 'Ralph Holden'.

Banknotes were 'issued' from early November 1806 until the end of April 1807. During this time, all notes that came into either the office at Ipswich or the office in Cornhill, were duly paid. The notes that came into the Cornhill Office, after being paid, were sent to a Mr Hayes in the West of England.

⁹ There is no record of such a business other than an entry in the 5th May 1807 edition of the *London Gazette*, announcing the dissolution of the partnership on 27th April

In early 1807, a young man set up a shop as a druggist, in Salisbury, Wiltshire. His father, who arrived with him and had apparently impeccable credentials, proceeded to purchase goods from various businesses, all of which were paid for using notes of the Ipswich Bank or the Ipswich & Suffolk Bank¹⁰.

Some of the notes found their way to London and were paid at the supposed London agents. However a London tradesman, hearing of the drug trade speculation and that the druggist's name was Hayes recalled that he had a bill drawn on the firm of Charles King, Hayes & Co. of the Langton Bank in Dorset for which neither party had been found in the previous two years.

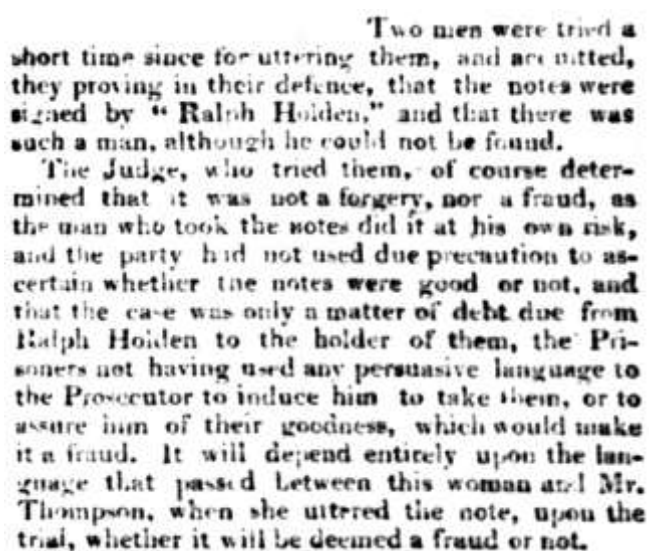
A writ was sent down and Hayes was arrested on the 29th April 1807; he paid the debt and was released.

As the news circulated, a great many of the notes were sent to London for payment, which was refused. The bank had, apparently, a shortage of ready cash because of the actions of Hayes, who had stopped sending remittance for the notes he had been sent and had 'gone off with the money'.

On 28th April, Still gave Thomas Vaughan notes to the value of £800 and instructed him to raise cash. He was to do this by visiting various market towns, buy items of small value, always tendering notes, and accumulating the change. The actual purchasing of goods was mostly done by two young ladies that Vaughan was instructed to take with him - Mary Elizabeth Primrose and Sarah Osborn. Notes were passed in Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Worcester, Birmingham and Oxford.

On Friday 22nd May, Samuel Sandford Still and William Hitchin were arrested. On 3rd July, Still and Hitchin were tried for forgery at the Old Bailey. They were found not guilty but retained on other charges¹¹. They were acquitted on the subsequent charges – following the 'not guilty' verdict no evidence was offered by the prosecution.¹²

The defence had called witnesses who claimed that Ralph Holden was a real person. Despite his not being found, sufficient doubt was deemed to have been established.



Two men were tried a short time since for uttering them, and acquitted, they proving in their defence, that the notes were signed by "Ralph Holden," and that there was such a man, although he could not be found. The Judge, who tried them, of course determined that it was not a forgery, nor a fraud, as the man who took the notes did it at his own risk, and the party had not used due precaution to ascertain whether the notes were good or not, and that the case was only a matter of debt due from Ralph Holden to the holder of them, the Prisoners not having used any persuasive language to the Prosecutor to induce him to take them, or to assure him of their goodness, which would make it a fraud. It will depend entirely upon the language that passed between this woman and Mr. Thompson, when she uttered the note, upon the trial, whether it will be deemed a fraud or not.

Figure 5. *British Press* 22nd April 1808

¹⁰ *Salisbury & Winchester Journal* 4 May 1807

¹¹ *Salisbury & Winchester Journal* 6 July 1807

¹² *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*: t18070701-13, 1 July 1807

On 5th September 1807, it was reported that several of the £1 and £5 notes had been circulated in York¹³.

In April 1808, Elizabeth Barker and Mrs Esther Hymes were charged with uttering £5 notes of the Ipswich Bank at shops in Whitechapel, the Strand and Covent Garden. They were remanded¹⁴.

The following announcement appeared in the 16th October 1810 edition of the *Oxford University & City Gazette*:

Caution.- Two men are going about to the country fairs, buying horses, for which they pay in fictitious notes of the defunct Ipswich bank, of the nominal value of 10l each. One is a tall, stout man; and the other is about 5 feet 4 inches high, thin made in person, very thin face, and has somewhat the appearance of a horse dealer.

The same announcement with similar wording appeared in a number of newspapers, from Carlisle to Canterbury.

Five years later, a middle-aged man was reported in Ramsgate passing one of the Ipswich & Suffolk Bank £5 notes and attempting to pass a £10 note¹⁵. Even as late as 1817, the notes were still being passed in towns in Kent and Sussex.¹⁶

Southampton & Hampshire Bank

A fraud was perpetrated in 1808, by William Hitchin and Thomas Charles Fitzhugh Sandon, in collusion with William Peter Joggett.

In May 1808, John Willis, an engraver in the Strand, London, in his evidence stated that he was approached by William Hitchin and asked to engrave a plate to print £1 notes for the Southampton & Hampshire Bank. Willis engraved the plate and printed 1000 notes which he delivered to the office of Joggett & Co. in New City Chambers, London on the 21st May. Willis stated that he delivered an additional 1000 notes on each of the successive three days and that he also engraved a plate for £5 notes and ran off 200 notes.

In July, it was reported in the local press¹⁷ that people had been passing £2 notes of the fictitious Southampton and Hampshire Bank, in Folkestone, Kent. The perpetrators were unknown. It is likely that Hitchin and Sandon had employed a second engraver to engrave the £2 plate.

The organisation of the fraudsters was such that a letter was sent to the *Kentish Weekly Post*, which had reported the Folkestone incident, and the following week they issued a retraction.

¹³ *Lancaster Gazette* 5 September 1807

¹⁴ *British Press* 22 April 1808, *Morning Advertiser* 25 April 1808

¹⁵ *Kentish Gazette* 4 August 1815

¹⁶ *Kentish Weekly Post* 5 December 1817

¹⁷ *Kentish Gazette* 8th July 1808

The *Salisbury & Winchester Journal* also published a statement. They had received a letter threatening prosecution if they copied the paragraph from the *Kentish Chronicle* 'tending to injure and defame the Bank recently established at Southampton, under the firm of Bullock, Horner & Co.'¹⁸.

CANTERBURY, July 15.

We have received a letter from Messrs. Joggett, Sheppard, and Co. merchants, of New City Chambers, London, informing us, that the statement relative to the Southampton and Hampshire Bank notes, given in our paper of the 5th instant, is false, and that the holders of any such notes may immediately receive the amount of the same, on their being presented for that purpose.

Figure 6. Retraction

On 6th August, a Colonel John Gordon presented for payment at the Southampton office of the bank, one of the £1 notes. He was told by a servant girl that they had all 'gone away'.

The partnership on the fake banknotes is Joseph Albert Bullock, John Horner & Co. Bullock and Horner appear not to have been real people. The London agents are shown as Joggett, Shepherd & Co. William Peter Joggett was a London merchant and insurance broker who was declared bankrupt in 1803¹⁹ and again in September 1807²⁰. In May 1807, Joggett had been discharged from Fleet debtors' prison, his discharge record recording more than a dozen aliases by which he had been known.

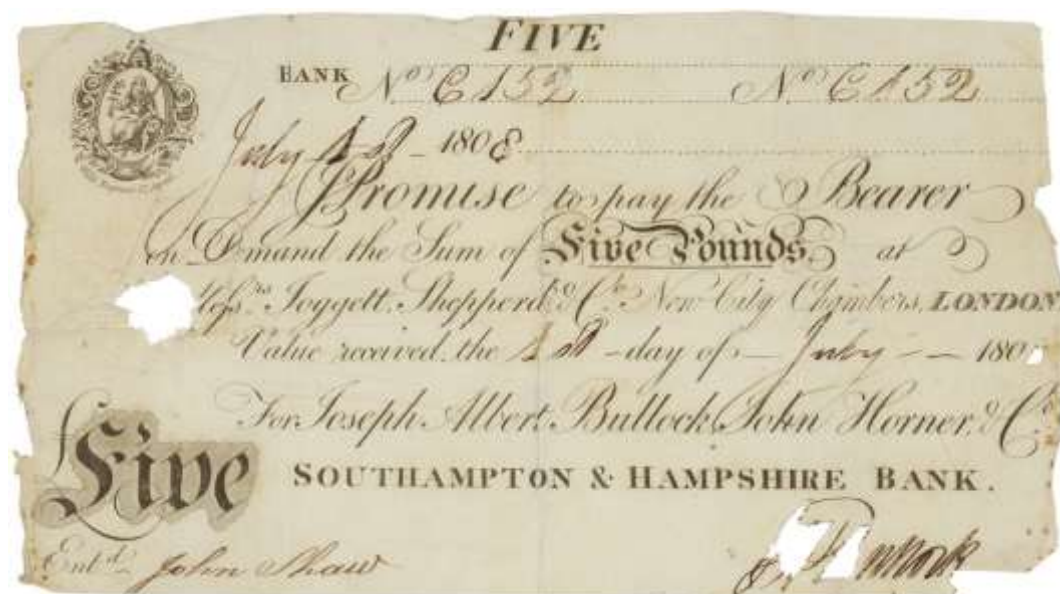


Figure 7. £5 note of Southampton & Hampshire Bank²¹

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Ten days after Colonel Gordon's visit to Southampton, Sandon and Hitchin arrived in Warwick where they passed some of the fake £5 notes. Suspicions were aroused and a gentleman who had heard of the parties said

¹⁸ *Salisbury & Winchester Journal* 25 July 1808

¹⁹ *London Gazette* 1st March 1803

²⁰ *London Gazette* 10th September 1808

²¹ The Chartered Institute of Bankers' collection at the British Museum has four examples of the notes.

the note was forged. Sandon and Hitchin were followed to Coventry and Dunchurch where in both places further notes were passed.

Two of the notes from Warwick were presented for payment at Joggett & Co. A man who might have been Joggett (the room was 'very dark') replied that the bank had 'stopped payment'.

Sandon and Hitchin were arrested in Dunchurch and were tried at the 1809 Lent Assizes in Warwick for forgery. After the evidence had been presented, the Judge addressed the jury: "... though the pretended banking-house might have been set up for the purpose of fraud, yet I do not think the facts are sufficient to constitute a forgery". Sandon and Hitchin were acquitted²². Again the basis of their defence was witnesses who swore that there were people called Bullock and Horner (although they could not be found).

They were held and tried in the summer assizes for conspiracy and fraud. They were found guilty and sentenced to 12 months imprisonment and to stand in the pillory²³. Sandon & Hitchin stood in the pillory at Warwick on Saturday 9th September. They were described as 'well dressed, very impudent in their behaviour' and 'vowing vengeance against their prosecutors'.²⁴

Transportation

Sandon & Hitchin were due to be released at the end of their term of imprisonment in July 1810.

Sandon was set at liberty. In March 1809, a Thomas Charles Sandon was awarded a Royal Pardon, along with Anthony Daffy Swinton the Elder Anthony Daffy Swinton the younger and Daniel Banch, regarding the case of John Stow Lundie.²⁵ Given that Anthony Daffy Swinton the Elder was Thomas Charles Fitzhugh Sandon's father-in-law, it is inconceivable that this is not the same man, despite him being under arrest in Warwick at the time. [John Stow Lundie was brought before the Old Bailey in December 1808 on a charge of forging Bank of England notes. He appeared in the dock in a deranged state and was not prosecuted]²⁶

Hitchin however was immediately taken into custody on a charge of being in possession (when arrested at Dunchurch two years earlier) of a stolen exchequer bill²⁷. He was indicted for 'feloniously stealing, on the 16th of April 1806, an Exchequer bill, value £100, the property of William Kent'. He was found guilty and sentenced to transportation for seven years.

²² *The Globe* 8 April 1809

²³ *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* 12 August 1809

²⁴ *Kentish Gazette* 15 September 1809

²⁵ TNA, HO 13/19, *Criminal Entry Books 1808-1809*

²⁶ *National Register* 12 December 1808

²⁷ *Oxford Journal* 11 August 1810

In October 1811, William Hitchin was given a conditional Royal Pardon, ‘*on condition of his quitting this our United Kingdom of Great Britain within fourteen days from the day on which he shall be discharged out of custody and not return to or be found within our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland for and during the remaining term of the said sentence which is yet to be undergone and performed...*’.²⁸ The pardon was awarded ‘*in consideration of some favourable circumstances humbly represented unto us in his behalf*’.

In July 1823 Sandon, now aged 51, was convicted at Newington of obtaining money by false pretences. He was sentenced to seven years and imprisoned aboard the Prison Hulk *Leviathan*, moored at Portsmouth²⁹. He was given a full pardon on 8th August 1827.³⁰

²⁸ TNA, HO 13/22, *Criminal Entry Books 1811-1812*

²⁹ Prison hulks were decommissioned ships that authorities used as floating prisons in the 18th and 19th centuries. They were extensively used in England. The term "prison hulk" is not synonymous with the related term convict ship. A hulk is a ship that is afloat, but incapable of going to sea, whereas convict ships are seaworthy vessels that transport convicted felons from their place of conviction to their place of banishment. HMS *Leviathan* was a 74-gun Third-rate ship of the line launched in 1790 at Chatham. She fought at the Battle of Trafalgar, and was used as a prison hulk from 1816. In October 1846 she was used as a naval target, and was sold out of service in 1848.

³⁰ *Prison Hulk Register*, National Archives, HO 9/8

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