

2. Anthony Molteno, Printseller of Pall Mall

DRAFT ONLY

Anthony Molteno's arrival in London

No record of Anthony's arrival exists, but one can imagine the scene. The Pool of London below Tower Bridge. The sailing vessel, just arrived, manoeuvring through the forest of masts and casting anchor. There were no docks where ships could tie up alongside. And passengers on board would have to wait for Thames lightermen to row out from one of the wooden wharves that clung to the muddy banks and take them ashore. The young man, still in his twenties, standing on the deck – an Italian immigrant from far away Milan, with probably not a word of English. And here he was in the huge city of London – the largest in Europe.

But Antonio Molteno (later known as Anthony)¹ was lucky. Unlike most migrants arriving in a foreign country, he had a job to come to. The family who had invited him over had a business he was going to slot into. It would be up to him whether he made a success of it.

Giovanni Battista Torre, also from Milan, had set up shop a generation before in Paris where he had become famous in the 1760s for his skill at staging firework displays. But he also sold books and prints and a decade or so later, his son Antonio Torre moved to London and opened a branch in Market Lane, Pall Mall. He brought with him 'a splendid collection of old engravings formed by the celebrated Mariette' and concentrated on building a reputation for stocking prints produced from the work of famous engravers. He became 'the first large printseller in Pall Mall'.² The expanding business soon needed more staff and he invited a fellow Milanese, young Anthony Molteno, to come and join him. This is how the first trace comes about of Anthony beginning to collect drawings for sale in London from around 1777.³ We know where he had come from because one of his grandsons, the priest Fr. Thomas Mylius Molteno, recorded that his grandfather was 'Mr Anthony Molteno (first) of Pall Mall and Como.... The family came originally from the little town of Molteno, halfway between Como and Lecco.' [FOLLOWING SHOULD BE A FOOTNOTE – No. 4 – BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO INSERT IT: 4. Thomas says 'Anthony Molteno (first) because his own father, James Anthony Molteno, also became known in London's printselling circles simply as Mr Anthony Molteno. H. Willaert, *History of An Old Catholic Mission: Cowdray-Easebourne-Midhurst, Burns Oates and Washbourne*, 1928.]

Things moved quite fast. Five years after arriving, Anthony, now 31 years old, married an English girl, Mary Lewis, in 1782. Torre, his employer, was one of the witnesses at the ceremony in the church of St Martin in the Fields. The young couple began married life at 1 Vigo Lane, Saville Row, which was only a few hundred yards north of Pall Mall where Torre's printshop was located.

¹ I refer to Moltenos from now on by the English rendering of their names, not the Italian by which they would originally have been known, or the Latin renderings in which Roman Catholic chapels in London recorded their marriages and christenings of their children.

² Quotations from Anthony Torre's obituary.

³ This account depends to a significant extent on information provided to Kathleen Murray (17.7.1958) by Mrs Elfrida Manning. She was librarian to the famous art dealers, Colnaghi, which continues in business to this day, and the author of the company's official history *Colnaghi's, 1760-1960*. See <http://www.colnaghi.co.uk/history>.

Around this time Torre recruited another young Italian to help him. Paul Colnaghi was also from Milan where his father, who had recently died, had been a distinguished lawyer.⁴ He was the same age as Anthony Molteno, both men having been born in 1751, and had been working for a while in Paris as Torre's agent selling English prints there in the Palais Royal. He came to London in 1785 to continue working for Torre, and a year after arriving married Torre's sister-in-law, Elizabeth Baker.⁵

There is some disagreement as to which of them, Anthony or Paul, came to London first and which was the principal in the partnership they set up after Torre's retirement. The Colnaghi Librarian, Elfrida Manning, is clear that Paul arrived only in 1785, i.e. about a decade after Anthony. And a copy of a published obituary for Anthony's eldest son, James Anthony Molteno, in 1845 has appended to it a handwritten note (which can only be by one of the latter's two sons, William Frederick Molteno or Fr Thomas Mylius Molteno) which read: 'In this notice of my father, J. Anth. Molteno, the correspondent errs in placing Colnaghi first, as it was my grandfather, Molteno, who was the principal after Torre's death.'⁶

Within a couple of years of Paul Colnaghi's arrival, Torre decided to retire and move back to Italy. The story goes that his father, Giovanni, had owed both Anthony and Paul money before his death in 1780.⁷ This may explain why his son handed the business over to them. The new firm, Molteno, Colnaghi and Co.,⁸ printsellers and publishers, was set up in 1788 at 132 Pall Mall. The two men dissolved the partnership four years later in 1792, each continuing in business as a printseller on his own account.

The Molteno and Colnaghi families remained lifelong friends. Paul's wife, Elizabeth Colnaghi, kept a series of diaries where she refers frequently to 'Mrs Molteno' (Anthony's wife Mary) calling to see them. [INSERT FOOTNOTE: According to Elfrida Manning.] A further close connection between the two families developed in the next generation when the Colnaghis' daughter, Caroline, married John Scott, Editor of *The Champion* and a considerable figure in intellectual London life. John's sister, Margaret Scott Glass, had become the wife of Anthony's son, Charles Dominic Molteno. Even half a century after that, Margaret's daughter, Miss Glass, wrote to Caroline Murray at the Cape how: 'Our friends Mr Colnaghi and his family were disappointed at not seeing your father [John Charles Molteno had become an increasingly well-known figure in Cape politics and was by then Prime Minister].' The latter had been on a visit to England at the time.⁹

⁴ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, entry for Colnaghi family.

⁵ Source: *The London book trades 1775-1800: a checklist of members.C.* (created by Ian Maxted, 2001). Part of Exeter working papers on British book trade history.

⁶ This item located in the UCT Archives.

⁷ Source: Jenny Molteno's researches on the Internet, May 2009.

⁸ Its name as listed in London directories for those years.

⁹ Miss Glass to Caroline Murray, 13 Nov. 1876.

There is, by the way, an exciting story about how Paul Colnaghi came to leave his native land in the first place. He had apparently been forced to leave Milan hurriedly for France for political reasons, arriving in the full dress uniform of an Austrian Colonel (a clever disguise since the Austro-Hungarian Empire ruled Northern Italy at the time). It was an offence, however, to enter France wearing the uniform of a foreign power and he was brought before the Royal Governor in Lyons. This gentleman courteously advised Paul to change into civilian clothes and then invited him to dinner!¹⁰ A different and much more improbable story is told how, when Paul first arrived in London, he supported himself as a street trader selling things from a barrow, only to be discovered and rescued by his fellow countryman, Anthony Molteno!¹¹

Being Roman Catholic in London – The terror of the Gordon Riots

Anthony had arrived in England at a remarkable moment in English history. The Industrial Revolution was getting going. The country was also facing a huge overseas crisis – the long drawn out war with its American colonies. This only came to an end in 1783, a few years after he had settled in London, with Britain being forced to recognise the newly formed United States of America as an independent republic. At a stroke, this reduced the British Empire at a stroke to the islands it held in the Caribbean, its Canadian colonies and the English East India Company's growing commercial-cum-military ascendancy in India. These great happenings probably made little impression on Anthony, however, as he concentrated on getting to know the printselling business and settling down to married life in London.

One political event, however, could not have escaped his attention. On 2 June 1780 riots in London broke out and swept through the city like a bush fire. The London mob already had a reputation for violence and the city's 6,000 gin shops helped fuel the outbreak. But the violence on this occasion had a particular target – Roman Catholics and their property. For Anthony who had come to London in order to build a new life, things must have looked bad. Political oppression in Milan under the Austrians was one thing; rioting street protestors targeting your religious community quite another. And the violence could not be escaped. London was too small for that.

Anthony was a Catholic, of course. The number of Catholics in England and Wales was tiny, about one percent of the population,¹² but ever since the Reformation and more particularly the flight of the last Stuart monarch in 1688, they had been the object of popular prejudice and political suspicion. Anthony was therefore subject to the swathe of discriminatory laws targeted at Roman Catholics. He could not attend Mass or get his children baptised except in one of the handful of chapels attached to the London embassies of the European Catholic powers. What's more,

¹⁰ *Illustrated London News*, 21 Jan. 1961, reviewing E. Manning, *Colnaghi's, 1760-1960*, privately published.

¹¹ Catholic Records Society (CRS), Vol. XIX, p. 388. The official Colnaghi & Co. website makes no mention of this story.

¹² P. Kirkpatrick, *A Chronology of Faith: English Catholic History since the Reformation*, Bath, Downside Abbey Press, 2011, p. 86.

Hardwicke's Clandestine Marriages Act of 1753 voided any marriage not solemnised in the Church of England (only Jews and Quakers being given special exemption) which is why Anthony and Mary had had to marry in an Anglican church.¹³ Another 50 years were to pass before a new Marriage Act in 1836 allowed Catholics and Non-Conformists to celebrate their marriages according to their own legal rites. No Catholic burial grounds were allowed, something not formally rectified until the Burial Act of 1852. Roman Catholic landowners paid a double land tax. And if ever Anthony or his offspring had wanted to stand for public office or serve as an officer in the British Army or the Royal Navy, that too was forbidden. The Penal Laws of 1700 also provided for life imprisonment of any Catholic priest if caught¹⁴ and offered a huge reward (£100) to informers exposing them, and they prevented 'papists' purchasing or inheriting landed property. The list goes on and on.¹⁵

This first, and very limited, reduction in the legal disabilities Catholics suffered from was prompted by the Army's manpower crisis during the war against the American colonists. The authorities desperately needed Irish recruits, but this was not possible until swearing the Oath of Supremacy was no longer obligatory.¹⁶ So a statute, the Catholic Relief Act, was passed in 1778 which allowed Irish and other British Catholics, if they wished to join His Majesty's armed forces, to swear an oath of allegiance without taking the Oath of Supremacy acknowledging the King as Supreme Head of the Church in England – something no Roman Catholic could do.¹⁷

What then happened is that a politician, Lord George Gordon, thought to gain advantage for himself by exploiting fears the Act might open the door to a return of Roman Catholicism in England. He formed a Protestant Association and whipped up the frenzy on the streets. On 2 June 1780, he led a crowd, 60,000 strong, to the House of Commons with the intention of intimidating Members of Parliament into repealing the Act. This lit the fuse. The mob invaded the Lobby. Violent scenes ensued. And an excuse for a day off and a bit of rough horseplay exploded into full-blown chaos.

Day after day mobs tore along the streets. The houses of well off Catholics were attacked and often torched. The oldest Catholic place of worship in London, the Sardinian Ambassador's chapel in Lincoln's Inn Fields, was sacked. The Bavarian Chapel was gutted by fire. These were two of the main places where Mass could still lawfully be celebrated with English people informally in attendance.¹⁸ The Catholic Vicar Apostolic for London, Richard Challoner – whose post, of course, was not officially

¹³ *Catholic Ancestor*, Vol. 12, No. 2, August 2008, p. 79ff.

¹⁴ The last Catholic priest imprisoned for life was in 1767, a few years before Anthony arrived in London. *Catholic Ancestor*, op. cit.

¹⁵ For a more complete list of Catholic disabilities, see P. Kirkpatrick, op.cit., p. 77ff.

¹⁶ R. Tombs, *The English and their History*, London: Allen Lane, 2014, p. 356.

¹⁷ By far the most detailed source of information on the legal disabilities the tiny number of British Catholics suffered from are the many volumes published by the Catholics Records Society.

¹⁸ There were some eight such Embassy chapels in London; otherwise there were no lawful Catholic places of worship until 1791. *Catholic Ancestor*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Aug. 2008, p. 95ff.

recognised by the British authorities – had to flee London and take shelter in nearby Finchley.¹⁹ A Catholic-owned distillery was broken into and 120,000 gallons of gin flowed in the gutters and then caught fire as some of the rioters, on their hands and knees, lapped up as much as they could get. Ordinary Catholics were attacked in the streets although no one was actually lynched. Even the Bank of England was targeted and several prisons stormed and their inmates released. The City authorities did nothing. And the violence and fear went on day after day.²⁰

A young Catholic serving woman, Frances Onslow, captured the sense of panic in a letter to her mother, dated 7 June 1780, the day after the house where she was working was invaded and demolished by the rioters. ‘All most distracted, I sit down to tell you where I am to be found... The mob are quite inexpected this morning. They seized me, would not let me go until I told them where my Mr [Master] was. ... I just escaped with Life, have hurt my right arm but think it will go off[f] again by using proper means... It is said the Mob will destroy every Catholic house in town and country.’²¹

The Gordon riots, as they came to be known, were ‘the most destructive outburst of collective violence in modern British history’.²² Eventually King George III himself intervened and pressed the government into ordering in the troops. 12,000 soldiers were deployed and they resorted to widespread firing on the crowds in order to restore order. In the end some 700 people were either wounded, shot dead, or trampled underfoot in the panic.²³

We can only imagine what these days were like for Torre and Anthony. The anxiety whether their printshop would be attacked. Not knowing if the rioters would start murdering Catholics as well as destroying their homes and premises. Hearing the gunfire echo along the streets when the Army intervened. And the future? Would this outbreak be a harbinger of more violence to come? Was anti-Catholic prejudice going to get worse? It must have seemed quite a bleak prospect for a young man like Anthony intent in living out his working life in Britain.

A foreigner

¹⁹ Challoner used to celebrate Mass secretly in a room over a pub in the 1770s. *The Ship* in Gate Street, near today’s Holborn Underground station, was one such venue. Everyone would buy a pint of beer and place it ostentatiously in front of himself; the subterfuge being that, if an informer burst in, each man could claim he was just having a drink. At the end of the service, everyone would down their pint, except for Dr. Challoner. Catholic Records Society, Vol.XIX (London, 1917) Miscellanea XI, p. 209.

²⁰ G. Rue, ‘The Gordon Riots’, *Catholic Ancestor*, Vol. 3, No. 3, November 1990, pp. 95-100.

²¹ Sister Frances Agnes Onslow, ‘The Gordon Riots: An Eye-witness account’, CRS, *Recusant History*, Vol. 13, p. 15.

²² R. Tombs, *The English and their History*, London, Allen Lane, 2014, p. 356.

²³ British Library website <http://www.bl.uk/>; National Archives website <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>; E. R. Norman *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England*, London, George Allen & Unwin; and M. D. R. Leys, *Catholics in England, 1559-1829: A Social History*, Longmans, 1961.

Anthony, of course, was not only of a different faith from the official Church of England. He was also a foreigner. The Italian community in London at this time was minute, only one or two hundred at most.²⁴ 'Little Italy' in the streets around Hatton Garden did not yet exist²⁵ and the days of poverty-stricken Italian hurdy-gurdy players and ice-cream sellers still lay half a century ahead. And as so often with first generation immigrants, the shortage of women meant men – Anthony Torre, Anthony Molteno and Paul Colnaghi all being examples – marrying not fellow Italians, but women in the host community; of 94 marriages contracted by Italian men in Britain as late as 1851, for example, 74 were to British women.

Anthony's original social circle must have been the tiny world of Italian dealers in art – not just the handful of printsellers, but engravers and printers too. Buying prints had become all the rage in the English upper classes. Being a printseller who had good artistic judgement and the right contacts to engage the finest engravers across Europe gave a man some status. It also provided an entree into English society, not on a footing of equality of course, but commanding some respect as an expert. As the author of an obituary to Anthony's son, James Anthony, in 1845 put it, 'the highly respected Paul Colnaghi, Molteno, Torre, Zanetti, Bolongaro, Salmoni etc [were] men to whom much merit is due for introducing a love of Art to this country'.

Examining the names of the godparents of Anthony and Mary Molteno's children recorded in the Bavarian Embassy Chapel's baptismal register between 1784 and 1802, illustrates the tight Italian circle the family moved in. The same names recur – in particular, members of the Artaria and Callione families, Sando Tassary, Gaetano Testolini (who was probably Anthony's brother-in-law)²⁶ and Gaetano Bartolozzi (the engraver). But in every case Anthony and Mary made sure each of their children had an English godparent as well.

In 1803 Joseph Moretti opened the first 'Italian Eating House' just off Leicester Square. And shortly afterwards, John Baptiste Pagliano, who had come to London as the Venetian Ambassador's cook, opened the Sabloniere Hotel, also in Leicester Square, 'where there is good cheer after the Italian manner'. One cannot resist wondering whether Anthony or his offspring ever took themselves off to share in this celebration of Italian cooking and family meals.²⁷

London in the late 18th Century

²⁴ Even as late as 1861, there were only 5,000 Italian-born people in all of England and Wales. R. Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, London, Little Brown, 2004, p. 144. Ibid. p. 147.

²⁵ Rod Saunders, 'Italian Migration to Nineteenth Century Britain: Why and Where', Anglo-Italian Family History Society website. Less than 2,000 Italians settled in London during the 30 years following Anthony Molteno's death.

²⁶ See 2nd Annex at end of this chapter.

²⁷ 'History of Italian Restaurants in Britain', www.resthof.co.uk/italianhistory.htm

What was London like as a place to live in? How did it feel to Anthony as he strode the streets keeping appointments with engravers and printers, meeting customers, and all the other activities of everyday life?

The city was changing incredibly rapidly at this time. Its population of about 740,000 in 1770 was already very large compared to other European cities – about the same number of people who now commute into the city from outside London every day. And it was also doubling every 30 years or so. By 1900, it was to reach ten times the number in Anthony's time – over 7 million.

The area London covered in his time, however, was very compact. It lay almost wholly to the north of the Thames. It comprised only the City itself with Finsbury, Holborn and Westminster to the north and west, and Shoreditch, Stepney and Bermondsey to the east.²⁸ [INSERT MAP of London c 1746, from G.D.H.Cole and R. Postgate, *The Common People, 1746-1946*, London: Methuen & Co.] People were densely packed together – piled on top of one another in tenements and crammed into dark and insalubrious courts and alleys off the bigger streets. Even 'respectable' inhabitants were none too safe from pickpockets and the like, and regarded the slums as 'no go' areas. Anthony and Mary's son, John, was mugged in broad daylight on one occasion, as we'll see in the next chapter.

London's air was also getting increasingly polluted as the growing population burned more and more coal. Dense fogs, London's famous pea-soupers, became commonplace. As for clean drinking water, let alone water-borne sewage, those breakthroughs in public health lay two generations into the future.

Eighteenth Century London was still a city where most people worked near where they lived. Purely residential suburbs in the modern sense hardly existed. Everyone walked to get around. Horse-drawn traffic was the privilege of only a tiny minority. It was sixteen years after Anthony's death that London got its first horse-drawn buses in 1832. But having to move about on foot did not mean that London's streets were good walking environments! Westminster where Anthony and Mary lived their entire married life only got permission to make public provision for street paving in 1762.

The family were fortunate to live in one of the more salubrious streets. Anthony's business premises were located in Pall Mall almost all his life though he moved to different addresses on the street a couple of times – from 1789 to 1793 at No. 132; in 1797 at No. 48; but most of the time at No. 29.

Pall Mall, the hub of London's art world

Pall Mall today is one of Central London's most elegant West End streets. At its eastern end it opens into Trafalgar Square which did not even exist in Anthony's time. At the western end is Marlborough House, now headquarters of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The street is home to many of the upper class's great clubs – the Reform, the Athenaeum, Travellers, Army and Navy, and several

²⁸ G.D.H.Cole and R. Postgate, *The Common People, 1746-1946*, London: Methuen & Co., p. 52. Other sources used here: R. Porter, *London: A Social History*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994) and www.hrionline.ac.uk/oldbailey/history/london-life.

others. But these handsome buildings date back only to the first decades of the 19th century. There is in fact not a building in the street today that Anthony would recognise.

In his time, Pall Mall had a rather mixed social ambience. The elegance of the street in 1764 was 'greatly disfigured by several mean houses of the lowest mechanicks being interspersed in it in many places, and many of them joining to the most sumptuous edifices'. This contrast continued into the early years of the 19th century when it was a 'stately aristocratic-looking street' with 'private mansions fit for the residence of the wealthy and noble' but still 'bordered with many filthy alleys, inhabited by abandoned characters.'²⁹

More to the point, Pall Mall had established itself in the mid 18th century as the leading location for booksellers, as well as printsellers of engravings and prints.³⁰ Its 'vicinity to the Queen's Palace, the Park [St James's Park], the Parliament-House, the Theatres, and the Chocolate and Coffee Houses where the best Company frequents' all helped. Robert Dodsley's well-known bookshop – it was he who suggested to Dr Johnson that he compile his famous Dictionary – was just two doors along from Anthony Molteno's print shop at No. 48. And when it closed, it was replaced by the Shakespeare Gallery belonging to John Boydell who had become a wealthy engraver and printseller himself. It was a prime location for exhibitions of new paintings.³¹ No wonder several leading printsellers located themselves in Pall Mall, nor that Anthony's son, James Anthony, continued the family printselling business there after his father's death in 1816, first at No. 29, and then at No. 20, until his bankruptcy in 1836.

Printselling – Anthony Molteno, the successful businessman

A painting in the late 18th century was still the only way to record a person's likeness, or a landscape or great event. To share it with others meant producing prints and that in turn necessitated a skilled engraver to capture the artist's work on a metal plate from which printing could take place – copper being preferred because it was soft enough to be more easily worked. The skills of both artist and engraver were needed. England already had great painters like Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough; skilled engravers were more rare. This imbalance, combined with the country's growing prosperity, is what created the commercial opportunity for Italian entrepreneurs like Torre, and his protégés Anthony Molteno and Paul Colnaghi, to thrive.

Italian engravers were likewise attracted to London. The most notable was Francesco Bartolozzi. He was so famous that he was invited in 1764 to come and engrave Guercino's drawings for the Royal Collection and given the post of engraver to King George III. He became one of the founders of the

²⁹ Extracts from G. Reeves, *A New History of London*, 1764, p. 182 and T. S. Boys, *Original Views of London As It Is*, n.d., cited in www.british-history.ac.uk

³⁰ R. J. Mitchell and M. D.R. Leys, *A History of London Life*, Pelican Books, 1963, p.215.

³¹ 'Pall Mall, North Side, Past Buildings,' *Survey of London: Vols 29 & 30: St James Westminster, Part I*.

Royal Academy and engraved its diploma³² which Anthony Molteno published as a print. He was particularly well-known, and created a vogue for, what is called stipple engraving. He produced a huge number of portrait engravings after the most distinguished English painters of the time. He, Anthony and Paul developed a close relationship which continued even after he moved to Lisbon in 1802 to become Director of the Academia de Belas Artes. And he continued sending Anthony his engraved plates as late as 1813, only a couple of years before both men died.³³

If his business was to prosper, Anthony had to become an expert in all the complexities of this niche market. The skills required make a formidable list. He had to build relationships with influential people who wanted prints of their portraits to be made available. Some were royalty or aristocrats; others prominent personalities of the day, like Charles James Fox, the prominent Whig supporter of the American colonists and the French Revolution. Anthony published prints of Joshua Reynolds's portrait of Fox.

Another genre was classical scenes, one example being delightfully entitled 'Relics of antiquity: or Remains of ancient structures...'. Another was landscapes, not just rural but urban scenes like Paul Colnaghi's very popular *The Cries of London*.

On occasion, a shrewd move was to produce a print that took advantage of a political occasion. When George III recovered from a prolonged bout of madness, Anthony joined with another printseller on 4 June 1790 to bring out an allegorical print congratulating the monarch on his recovery.³⁴

Good judgement was essential in selecting the work of fine painters and high quality engravers. This required not only discovering new talent, but, as was said of the printseller Henry Graves, 'knowing what would take the public taste, and sparing neither money nor pains in bringing such work before the public'.³⁵ Even in those days a businessman had to have a sense of what would sell. Anthony was also lucky in having got to know Bartolozzi from the start and becoming with Paul Colnaghi the great engraver's preferred outlet.

Anthony's good judgement is confirmed to this day. The National Portrait Gallery holds over 40 prints that he brought out³⁶ and art dealers still advertise and trade some of his prints.³⁷

³² *The Dictionary of Art*, Vol. 7, New York and London, Grove Dictionaries Inc. & Macmillan, pp. 308-9.

³³ Elfrida Manning to Donald 'Jervis' Molteno, 16 Nov. 1956.

³⁴ A. W. Tull, *A Biography and Descriptive Account of the Life and Career of Francesco Bartolozzi RA*, London, Field & Tull, 1885, p. 139.

³⁵ *The Times*, cited in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for the Graves family.

³⁶ In this section, I have not tried to distinguish between the prints Anthony produced up to his death in 1816, and those his son James Anthony brought out in the 20 years that followed his taking over his father's business. Interestingly, the art world today remains thoroughly confused and muddles the two men up frequently.

³⁷ A search of the Internet under Anthony's name immediately confirms this.

Raising capital was also necessary. This is probably why, when Anthony first took over the business when Torre retired, he drew Paul Colnaghi in as his partner. Years later in the 1830s, his son James Anthony formed a partnership for a time with Henry Graves, the company being called Molteno and Graves. Doubtless this relationship was facilitated by Henry's brother Francis having served an apprenticeship with Anthony in the early 1800s.³⁸

Anthony certainly succeeded in building up the business on a considerable scale. Following his death, the accumulation of engraved copper plates and stock in trade was so large that the sales in order to wind up his estate were spread over several years. The first auction was organised by a 'Mr Christie' – the company that remains famous in the art world to this day – in his Great Room in Pall Mall on 4 June 1817. The advertisement referred to 'the very extensive and highly valuable collection of beautiful original drawings by Cipriani and Bartolozzi, formed in the course of many years with great assiduity and expense by the late Mr Molteno.' Two years later some 30,000 engraved copper plates 'comprising a numerous assemblage of portraits, topography, historical and fancy subjects, particularly the superior work of Bartolozzi ... and other celebrated artists' were put on sale. The 8th and final portion, comprising 'his collection of books ... connected with the rise and progress of the fine arts', was only sold in 1823.³⁹

Anthony must also have successfully acquired the financial skills he needed. He had to negotiate with the artists themselves, the engravers, and also his printers. What rights to buy, how much to pay, what prices a particular print could fetch all required good judgement and negotiating skill that only experience could bring.

As with any business, he had also to market his prints successfully. Pall Mall was *the* street to be in as a printseller, little wonder Anthony had his premises there almost all his working life. The shop was where exhibitions were held. He presumably also did what Paul Colnaghi did – hold levees to which well-known and wealthy customers would be invited. Both men certainly built a significant reputation for their shops. The famous English essayist, William Hazlitt, recommended to his readers: 'A capital printshop (Molteno's or Colnaghi's) is a point to aim at in a morning's walk – a relief and satisfaction in the motley confusion, the littleness, the vulgarity of common life [in London].'⁴⁰

Another way of marketing prints was to attach oneself to a prominent personage. This produced commissions as well as an entree into society. Anthony became printseller to Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York. And also to the Duke of Norfolk. This latter appointment is particularly interesting

³⁸ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, entry for the Graves family.

³⁹ *The Times* on line, reports and advertisements, dating from 18 May 1817 to 8 May 1823.

⁴⁰ W. Hazlitt, *Picture Galleries in England*, 1824.

since the Duke, whose town-house in St James's Square was only a stone's throw from Anthony's shop in Pall Mall, was England's most prominent Roman Catholic.⁴¹

Sharing production and marketing costs was another device Anthony and his fellow printsellers often resorted to. With a print where the costs were particularly great, several of them would club together to sell it – which is why 'A. Molteno' is often listed along with a number of other printsellers on a particular print.

One wholly unexpected event, however, nearly brought the printselling sector to grief. It was quite early in Anthony's career. In 1789 the French Revolution broke out. He and Paul had just started running their business together. Politics had probably not impacted on Anthony before this time, apart from the riots which had shaken London nine years earlier. But the Revolution now led to war between Britain and France with hostilities lasting almost continuously for over 20 years. The market for English prints in Europe collapsed. The Royal Navy blockaded the Channel ports and Napoleon retaliated with a Europe-wide ban on British exports. Several printsellers went under. Anthony and Paul Colnaghi managed to weather the storm⁴² and eventually left their businesses as thriving concerns to their sons. And both were remembered in London's intellectual circles with affection and respect.

Two Genealogical Puzzles

Anthony Molteno's middle name – George or Charles?

Anthony was always known in the trade as Anthony. Some prints say 'Published by Anthony Molteno'. Or simply 'A. Molteno' or 'Molteno, Pall Mall'. Others name the company – Molteno, Colnaghi & Co., or Messrs. Molteno and Colnaghi, or just Molteno & Co. No print adds a second forename 'George' and Elfrida Manning, with her long experience as Colnaghi's in-house librarian, confirmed she had never come across any reference to Anthony's other name being George.⁴³ What's more, in the marriage register at St Martin in the Fields, Anthony signed his name 'Anthony C. Molteno' and his wife's tombstone simply reads 'wife of Mr Anthony Molteno'.

Some family trees nevertheless list him as George Anthony Molteno, as does Kenneth Lee in a letter to Barkly Molteno in 1938.⁴⁴ Ken had done a lot of investigation into the history of the family and I

⁴¹ Bertie Molteno recollected his father telling him of his great grandfather that 'the old man was also Librarian to the Duke of Norfolk, and their private home was next door to the ducal town residence in St James Square'. H.G. Molteno to K. Lee, 26 May 1942.

⁴² *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Colnaghi family entry.

⁴³ Elfrida Manning to Kathleen Murray, 15 July 1958.

⁴⁴ F. W. Hirst, unpublished biography of Percy Molteno, galley p. 91. Available at <http://www.moltenofamily.net/biographies/a-man-of-principle-the-life-of-percy-alport-molteno-m-p-by-francis-hirst-2/>

have only seen a small part of what he found out. But unfortunately his letter doesn't mention what his source was.

What's the truth of the matter? The answer is suggested by examining Anthony's signature in his marriage register. He clearly signs himself – Anthony C. Molteno. It strikes me that Ken and others who saw this signature may have concluded for some reason that the initial was G (for George), when it could as easily be C (for Charles). When one bears in mind that Anthony and Mary did not give any of their sons the name George but did christen one of them Charles, I think the conclusion is clear.

Did any of Anthony's brothers and sisters also settle in London?

Telling the story of the first Moltenos in England would be easier if we could be certain that Anthony was the only one to have come over and that, as a result, all the Moltenos genealogical research throws up from the late 18th and early 19th centuries are most likely his descendants. But the reality may not be so simple. Several sources indicate that two of his brothers and even a sister also came over, even if not necessarily at the same time. Percy Molteno, writing in the 1890s, states unequivocally: 'Three brothers had come from Italy with their friends the Colnaghis.'⁴⁵ He gives no source and he was wrong, as we have seen, about Anthony Molteno and Paul Colnaghi coming to London together.

Another of Anthony's descendants, Kate Molteno, who was born in the 1840s, told Betty Molteno she had been told that three Molteno brothers, 'all unmarried', had come and settled in England.⁴⁶ She even named them – Anthony, John and Charles Dominic. Unfortunately, she may have been wrong about the last mentioned since the only Charles Dominic we know about for certain was actually one of Anthony's sons, not his brother.

Ken Lee also asserted that Anthony Molteno had a brother called John. Elfrida Manning came to the same conclusion that three Molteno brothers came over.⁴⁷ She had actually done some original research, in particular going through the marriage registers at St Martin in the Fields. She named the brothers as Anthony, John, and possibly Abraham or George. This John Molteno definitely existed because she found him listed as a printseller in Fleet Street in 1783 (his name appearing on certain prints of that date). In addition, she tracked down a Molteno woman marrying Gaetano Testolini, who was an engraver. They married in 1791 at St Martin in the Fields. This connection explains why I came across a couple called Testolini present at the baptism of one of Anthony and Mary's children.

The identity of the third possible brother is more problematic. Abraham married at a date that is too early, 1771, to fit with Anthony's arrival. What's more, the register records his surname as Moulton, not Molteno. As for George, he married Elizabeth Woodman in 1783, a date much more consonant

⁴⁵ P. A. Molteno, *The Life and Times of Sir John Molteno.....*, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1900, Vol. 1, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Catherine 'Kate' Molteno to Elizabeth 'Betty' Molteno, 27 Jan.1922.

⁴⁷ Elfrida Manning to Kathleen Murray, 15 Jul.1958.

with being a brother of Anthony. But his surname is also recorded as Moulton. This does not rule out his actually being a Molteno because Anthony's surname was also officially recorded in the register as Moulton! In Anthony's case, however, we can see his own signature which makes clear his surname was Molteno. But it is quite common for immigrants to adapt their foreign-sounding surnames to the language of the country they have settled in. It is possible therefore that both George and Anthony were Moltenos.

To make things even more confused, Elfrida Manning also came across a 'Charles Moltans' marrying Anne S [indecipherable] in 1774. Their witnesses were Richard and Sarah Ryland whose family were stipple engravers!

What are we to make of all this? There being these other Moltenos explains why, when going through Embassy Chapel records – and we must remember that there were no state records of births, marriages and deaths until 1837 – I encountered a handful of Moltenos whom I could not definitively place as Anthony's descendants. But the mystery remains: how come these two possible brothers of Anthony left next to no trace in historical records of any kind? The contrast with Anthony is stark. Two possibilities, of course, might explain this fact. Both may have died young. Alternatively, they may not have settled happily in London and returned instead to Italy.