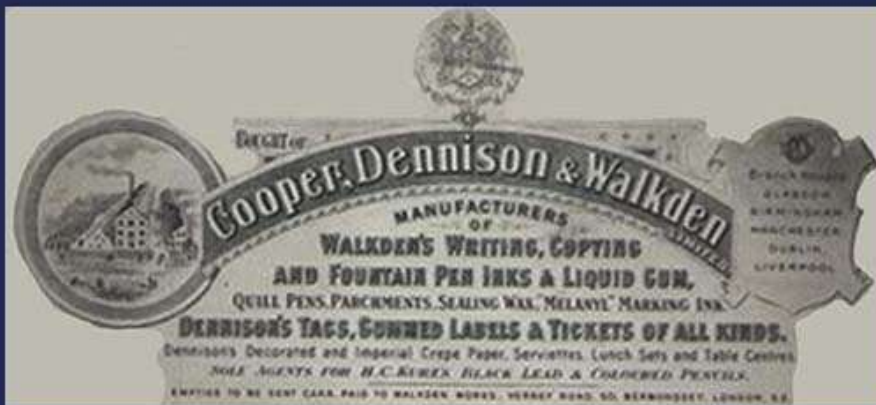


WALKDEN'S INK

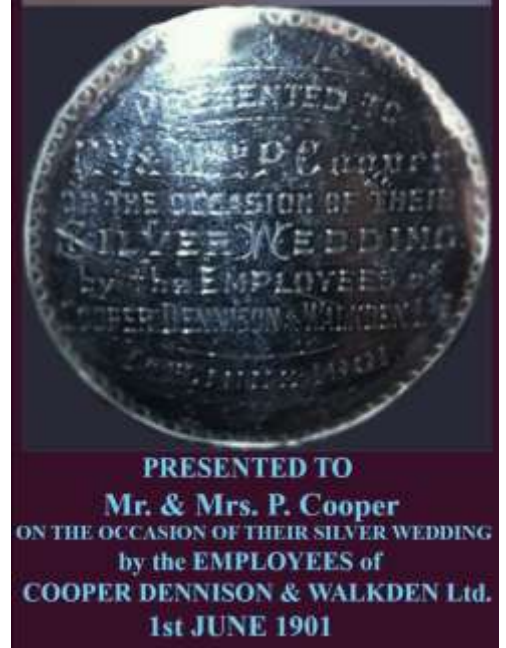
The Early Years

A history of the ink with which history was written.

In 1839 [David Cooper](#) (1803 - 1885), took over a stationery business in Shoe Lane, London, previously owned by his brother in-law, [Charles Terry](#). His son, [Philip Cooper](#) became sole proprietor in 1883 and in 1891, the name of the business was changed to Cooper, Dennison and Walkden Ltd.



Cooper, Dennison & Walkden letterhead circa 1910



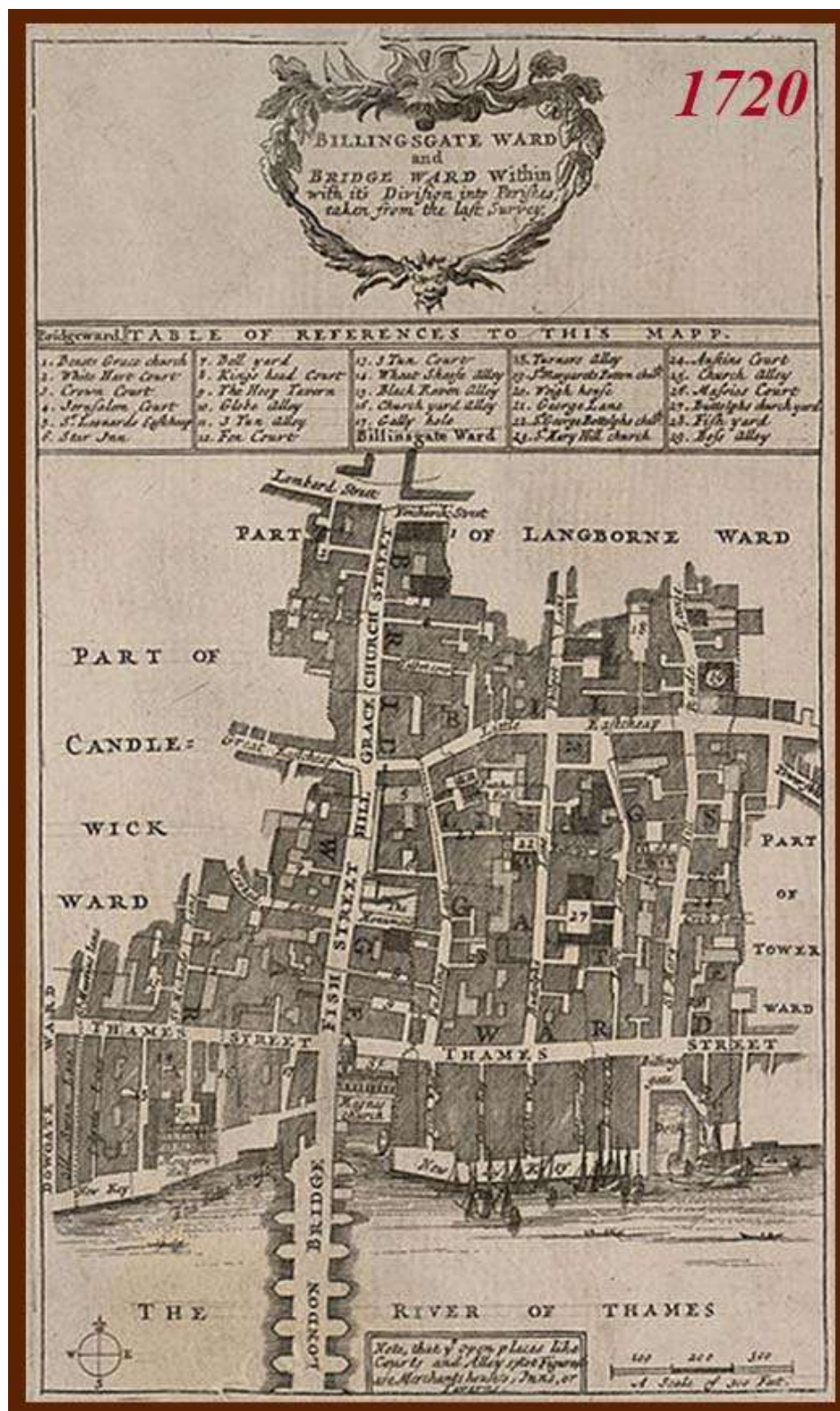
Despite several structural changes, Philip Cooper remained as chairman of the company until his death in 1929 and the name Cooper, Dennison and Walkden lived on almost to the end of the 20th Century. Before it became a limited liability company in 1891, the name of the business had been Cooper & Co. for some years. The addition of Dennison to the new name reflected the close association of the Cooper stationery, quill

and ink business with the American business of E.W. Dennison, a large and successful manufacturer of labels, tickets, luggage tags and associated stationery products, for whom Cooper and Company were the British agents. It is very likely that from 1891, Dennison were also shareholders in Cooper, Dennison & Walkden Limited.

So what then, does the inclusion of 'Walkden' in the name signify? There was nobody of that name



Walkden's Sealing Wax circa 1910



Walkden's Violet Ink

associated with the business but it was the name of their most significant product range and Walkden's Ink in particular, had been at the core of that business, through several changes of name and ownership, for 156 years before 1891.

In the 21st Century, we take for granted that when we write or print on a piece of paper, that the ink will not just remain the solid black that we expect, but will also not simply rub off or even fall off the page. These modern expectations could not so readily be taken for granted in days of yore, as anyone who examines old documents will ruefully attest.

The most common complaint of those sifting through rolls of parchment at the Public Records Office, is of ink-stained hands and shirt cuffs. Almost as frequent are the grumbles about straining to read faded writing and, less often, of sandy old ink simply falling off the paper.

[Richard Walkden](#) had a stationery shop on the northern, city end of old London Bridge, close to the church of Saint Magnus the Martyr and just as close to The Bell Tavern.

Before the days of building numbering, the location of a business was most often stated in relation to the nearest pub or coffee house and far less frequently in proximity to the nearest church. This simple skerrick of evidence proves that 18th century Londoners were not, in their hearts or habits, any more pious than we present-day heathens.

Richard Walkden would have been born around 1710, the son of [Charles](#) and [Elizabeth](#) Walkden. He was apprenticed to his mother, a stationer, in 1724. His father had been a stationer but had died in early February 1721, leaving his widow to carry on the business on London Bridge, where he had been trading since finishing his apprenticeship in 1706.

Richard would have been running the business for some time before officially taking over in 1735, soon after

finishing his apprenticeship and receiving his Freedom of the City of London, through the Stationers Company. He could have finished his apprenticeship and received his Freedom earlier, but the process of gaining citizenship was quite expensive, so he seems to have delayed until his mother's health was obviously failing.

Elizabeth Walkden died in 1736: the year after her son had officially taken over the business.



1758 Northern end of London Bridge. St. Magnus on right

Walkdens leaves London Bridge, 1761

‘Public Advertiser’ of

Saturday, December 26th, 1761: ‘Thursday last, the workmen employed in pulling down the Bear Tavern at the foot of London Bridge, found several pieces of gold and silver coin of Queen Elizabeth, and other moneys, to a considerable value.’”

“By no means unlikely,” replied I; “and I may also add, that at this period was probably removed the house of the original manufacturer of Walkden’s Ink-powder, with which we are still familiar. We learn the situation of his dwelling by his Shop-bill, an impression of which is in the possession of Mr. Upcott of the London Institution, engraven on a copper-plate, measuring 6¼ inches by 4½. Within a double line, and beneath an ornamented compartment, containing a Bell, is inscribed:—

‘Richard Walkden, Stationer at y^e Bell on London Bridge, near St. Magnus Church, Makes and Sells all Sorts of Accomplants and Shopkeepers Books, y^e greatest Variety of Paper-Hangings for Rooms, and all other Sorts of Stationary Wares, Wholesale or Retail at the Lowest Prices. Where may be had Bibles, Common Prayers, Testaments, Psalters, &c. N. B. He is also the Maker of the fine British Ink-Powder, for making Black Writing Ink, w^{ch} is Universally Allowed to Excel all other whatsoever, yet made, and is of the greatest Convenience for Country Shopkeepers to make their own Ink, to Sell again, as Likewise for Merchants and Sea Captains who goe or Send Ventures to Sea, to whom great allowance will be given with printed Directions of its Excellence and Use. At the same place may be had y^e best Liquid Ink, in its Greatest Perfection. Customers may Depend on being Serv’d as well by Letter as if present.’

It could have been either Charles or Richard Walkden, or possibly each of them in turn, who perfected the formula for the particularly reliable black ink that made the name Walkden’s famous and the family wealthy.

It is most likely that Walkden’s Ink was a variation of the basic iron gall ink that has been around for a couple of thousand years, becoming the most common ink in the western world from the Middle Ages up to the 20th Century.

All iron gall ink recipes have three basic ingredients in common: iron salt, usually ferrous sulphate (vitriol); plant tannins extracted from materials such as oak tree galls; and a binder such as gum arabic that keeps particles in suspension and helps the ink to flow. The essence of this ink’s indelibility is in the blue-black metallo-organic complex formed between iron and tannic acid.

Whilst the greatest advantage of iron gall ink is its durability: resistance to fading when exposed to light, there is a down-side, in that it tends to degrade paper and parchment. This is now causing some problems for repositories of ancient documents.

Having a shop on the northern end of London Bridge, which included those few buildings between the end of the actual bridge and the intersection with Thames Street, must have been just about the best retail location in London.

1758 London Bridge, southern end, looking from downstream side.



Apart from the great flow of trudging pedestrians crossing from Southwark to The City having to pass your door, you would also have been more easily accessible to those remaining on the northern side of the river, who would not have had to jostle through the cramped masses to reach an establishment above the middle of the river.

Walkden's Stationery had been at that same location since 1706 and would no doubt have stayed there ad infinitum, had the decision not been taken at the end of the 1750s, to remove all buildings from London Bridge, to allow for an easier flow of traffic.

In 1861, Richard Walkden moved to 113 Lower Thames Street which, as you can see on the above map, was about as close as he could possibly get to his old location. (Though it was historically just called 'Thames Street', at some point the name evolved into 'Upper Thames Street', for upstream of London Bridge and 'Lower Thames Street' for that part downstream of the bridge).

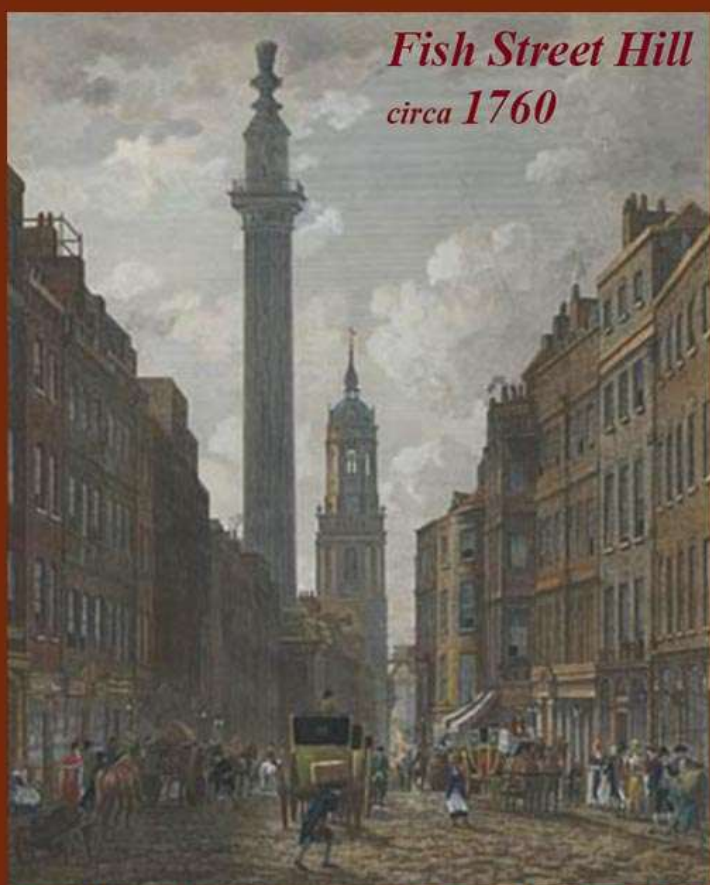
You will see from the somewhat rambling shop-bill, above, that Walkden's Ink could be bought either as a liquid or, for easier bulk transport, as a powder.

The shop-bill also reveals that like any good stationer, Richard Walkden also sold a range of paper products, including wallpaper, the best of which at that time, would have been made in Paris. One difference between Walkden's and a modern stationer or newsagent, is that rather than purveying piles of glossy magazines, Walkden kept a stock of Bibles and other pious religious tracts (which probably sat there gathering dust for year upon year). The shop-bill does not mention what might have been available from under the counter.

Richard Walkden seems to have married in 1734, which ties in with his taking over the business from his mother. He had five children of whom we know, over the next decade, the last being his only surviving son, [John Walkden](#), christened in 1744. John was, in turn, taken on as his father's apprentice in 1759, making him the third generation of Walkden to run the stationery business.

At some point, Richard Walkden did what most well-to-do Londoners did at that time: bought a villa amidst the salubrious green fields directly north of

*Fish Street Hill
circa 1760*



*Looking down towards London Bridge.
Passing Monument (to Great Fire) and Saint
Magnus tower, at intersection of Thames Street.*

The City, reached by carriage along the straight high road, first built by the Romans, that ran through Hackney, Shacklewell, Stoke Newington, Stamford Hill, Tottenham and then to Edmonton, where Richard raised his family.

The high road out to Edmonton was in fact, a straight line from London Bridge, so we can imagine that the carriage in the picture of Fish Street Hill, was that of Richard Walkden, carrying him from his villa down to his stationery business. Sitting next to Richard would be his 16 year-old son, and apprentice, John, watching the passing parade of London street life, as they bumped over innumerable pot holes.

"Father?"

"Yes, John."

"What is the nature of those pamphlets and texts that you have secreted under the counter, next to the cash box?"

"Ummm. Those are special philosophical tracts on matters that can only be read by gentlemen, for their edification and enlightenment. They are kept locked away so that coarse brutes of the lower classes and women, with their delicate dispositions, will not have their mental equipoise disrupted"

"So may I, perchance, peruse these enlightening journals also, Father?"

"One day, my boy, perhaps. In the meantime, you can seek spiritual nourishment from the dust-covered testaments and prayer books in the display cabinet."

John Walkden finished his apprenticeship and took over the sole running of the business, at 113 Lower Thames Street, in 1767: his father, being in his late fifties, presumably choosing to pass his days in comfortable retirement out at Edmonton.



Fleet Street at Temple Bar, 1760s
Even with new footpaths on each side of the filthy street in 1767, it was still advisable to travel by sedan chair.

Like his father, John also married in the year that he finished his apprenticeship.

Whilst his father was at Edmonton, it may be that John was residing across the recently cleared, smoothly flowing bridge, at a property that he owned in Southwark. He and his wife seem to have stayed there for the first seven or so years of their marriage.

One decision that John took as soon as he was in charge, was to move the business from Thames Street, with its constant bustle of wagons loading and unloading cargos from The Pool of London, up to 13 Salisbury Court, just off Fleet Street, where the predominant passing trade would have been finely dressed lawyers, thinkers and writers, such as Dr. Samuel Johnson and businessmen in the publishing and printing trade, rather than the merchants and shift-eyed sailors populating the riverside vista at Thames Street.

By that time, Walkden's were exporting ink to France and the North American colonies, so that might be seen as a reason to stay close to the docks. On the other hand, book publishing had been centred around St.Paul's, just up from Fleet Street, for many centuries, so it was logical for the burgeoning newspaper industry of the eighteenth century to locate itself thereabouts. Perhaps then, John Walkden had a vision of his ink feeding the ever-thirsty printing presses about Fleet Street and Paternoster Square.

John Walkden acquired several properties over the years, so it is difficult to say where he and his wife, [Elizabeth](#) were living at any given time, but it does seem that they moved to a residence above the

In the name of God amen
I George Washington of Mount Vernon a citizen of the United States, and lately President of the same, do make, ordain and declare this Instrument, which is written with my own hand, and every page thereof subscribed by my name, to be my last Will & Testament, revoking all others.

In witness of all, and of each of the things herein contained, I have set my hand and seal, this ninth day of July, in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety and of the Independence of the United States the twenty fourth.
G. Washington

George Washington's WILL, 1799

First & Last Parts

PROBABLY WRITTEN WITH WALKDEN'S INK

appears that Darby took up the offer.

When studying persons' lives, it is comparatively rare to discover details that go beyond the basic statistics. But in the case of John Walkden, we know that he had another area of interest completely separate from the world of ink and parchment and that was the music of George Frideric Handel.

John Walkden was a reasonably accomplished organist and had an organ installed in the music room of his house at No.1 Highbury Grove, in Islington. He had a bust of Handel atop the organ and amassed a large collection of original Handel manuscripts. So large in fact, that after his death, the auction thereof supposedly took six days, though one is inclined to think that that might have been the time taken to clear the entire estate.

Reflecting on what I said about an interest completely outside the realm of ink and parchment, I suppose the collection of original Handel manuscripts (possibly also written in Walkden's Ink), does in fact link Walkden's hobby to his trade.

business in Salisbury Court by 1774. Six years later, Richard Walkden died, leaving most of his estate to his son and then in 1781, John moved the business and his residence, across Fleet Street to 5 Shoe Lane.

In 1785, John Walkden took on a partner, [Zachariah Foxall Darby](#). It is not clear why he did this but might have been because John and Elizabeth Walkden did not have any children to whom they could leave the business. Better then, perhaps, to sell a part of the business to someone who would take over when John Walkden retired or died, so that there would be no disruption to the running of the business, allowing for the smooth liquidation of John Walkden's remaining share for the financial benefit of his widow and/or heirs.


It might be also, that Zachariah Darby brought to the business, contacts or expertise that was to their mutual advantage, although his apprenticeship, to do with metal working and joinery give no indication of what that might have been.

As mentioned, Walkden's exported their ink to North America and when George Washington died in 1799, amongst his papers was discovered a wrapper from Walkden's Ink. Analysis of his famous will has shown that it was written in ink of the same constituency as Walkden's.

In 1786 the name of the business was changed to Walkden and Darby and seems to have carried on without any further noticeable changes, at 5 Shoe Lane, until John Walkden's death in 1808.

In his will, John Walkden offered Darby the chance to buy the remaining portion of the business for the substantial sum of four thousand pounds and it

George Frideric Handel



...knew how to handle a quill.
Not afraid to splash the ink about.
NO WONDER JOHN WALKDEN WAS A FAN!



Walkden's Ink name.

This did not stop unscrupulous rivals from trying to cash in on Walkden's fame and in 1838 Charles Terry had to take out an injunction to stop another stationer from claiming to be selling Walkden's Fine British Ink Powder.

You can read more about Charles Terry in a separate entry on this website: "The Unstoppable Charles Terry."

Zachariah Darby continued on his own under the name Walkden and Darby, until selling a share of the business to [Charles Terry](#) in 1817. In 1818 the name was changed to Walkden, Darby & Terry.

In 1821, Charles Terry married [Susannah Cooper](#), eldest daughter of the wealthy London silk mercer, [Philip Cooper](#).

In 1826 the partnership between Darby and Charles Terry was dissolved with Terry continuing the business on his own. He reportedly paid a very large sum to Zachariah Darby for the exclusive right to the

COMING SOON TO THIS WEBSITE:

Walkden's Ink

The 19th and 20th Centuries and The Cooper Family