

**Charles Dibdin – Actor , Playwright, Songwriter
1745 - 1814**

Other family members referred to in this chapter:

Thomas Dibdin brother of Charles Dibdin

Charles Isaac Mungo Dibdin brother of Thomas John Dibdin

Thomas Frognall Dibdin nephew of Charles Dibdin

On the internet there are available detailed biographies for many of the Dibdin's referred to. Interesting is the The Contemplator's Short Biography of Charles Dibdin but for very full biographies the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography - is particularly thorough for both Charles and his son Thomas John.

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Charles Dibdin was born in the year of the second Scottish uprising – 1745. Bonnie Prince Charlie won the battle that year but lost the following year at a battle at Culloden Moor and had to escape to exile in France. Those captured were taken to London and executed on Tower Hill.



Executions on Tower Hill after the Battle of Culloden

1745 was the same year that Jonathan Swift, satirist and author of Gulliver's Travels died. This is mentioned because Swift also wrote an article "A Modest Proposal"

***A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People From Being a Burthen to Their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Publick***, is a satirical essay written and published anonymously in 1729. Swift suggests that the impoverished Irish might ease their economic troubles by selling their children as food for rich gentlemen and ladies. This mocks heartless attitudes towards the poor, as well as British policy toward the Irish in general and is mentioned here simply to indicate how the problems in Ireland were there even 100 years before the famine in the 1800's.

George the II was on the throne but he seemed to have spent much of his time in Hanover, so the English must have felt ruled by a German. During his reign, England was a war in Europe and beyond and had many victories such that on his death in 1760 when he passed the kingdom on to his grandson George III, England had a secure and expanding Empire.

Charles Dibdin was born in Southampton on March 15, 1745, one of fourteen to eighteen children of a poor silvermaker.

*(Facts vary)*

Charles applied for the position of organist at Waltham in Hampshire, but was rejected. After being a chorister at Winchester Cathedral, Dibdin went to London at age 15 with the encouragement of his brother Tom who was 19 years older and who found Charles a job tuning harpsichords for a music seller in Cheapside. Tom was the brother who was a sea Captain and after he became ill at sea, died in South Africa . He is celebrated by Charles in the song Tom Bowling

Charles composed songs for the harpsichord, but without his brother's influence, his employer refused to publish them. Dibdin eventually found a publisher, Thompson, of St. Paul's Churchyard, who paid him three guineas for six ballads.

Charles Dibdin had come to London in 1760 the year that George III mounted the throne and with the help of his son, later to be Prince Regent and George IV, radically changed the face of London to look more as we see it today.

It seems that Charles met David Garrick who took him under his wing and helped him a lot, later becoming God father to his son John Thomas, however Garrick probably grew to dislike Charles's lifestyle and they eventually fell out.



**David Garrick by Angelica Kauffman**

David Garrick (19 February 1717 – 20 January 1779) was an English actor, playwright, theatre manager and producer who influenced nearly all aspects of theatrical practice throughout the 18th century, and was a pupil and friend of Dr Samuel Johnson.

This is not the article in which to explore the growth of the British Empire but let it be said that England was taking over the world.

Robert Clive was in India and 1756 was the year of the Black Hole of Calcutta episode. It can be understood that the British Navy was key to this expansionist success and for this reason Dibdin's songs about sailors and seafaring were a great success and very much encouraged by the establishment.

It was said his sea songs were worth ten thousand sailors to the cause of England and were officially appropriated by the British navy to use during the war with France.

We are reminded that Charles was born in Southhampton and that his brother Tom was a sea captain so his affinity to the sea can be understood.

Tom died at sea in 1780 at the age of 53.

Charles' song Tom Bowling, probably referring to his brother, first appeared in *The Oddities* which was performed at The Lyceum in 1789. The song is also known as the *Sailor's Epitaph*.

Thomas Dibdin - born 1726 died 1780.

At the age of 25 commanded the 'Eagle Galley', a Sloop-of-war with 28 guns and a compliment of 220 men. The Sloop-of-war patrolled the Bristol Channel. Under Lord Chatham's administration possibly went to war? Married first wife in 1759. She died whilst he was abroad (India?). He then became a rover around the Indian Ocean. Married Elizabeth Compton in Calcutta in 1775. Lived in Nagore & Calcutta, India. Became ill after being struck by lightning in Jedddah, Saudi Arabia. Died aboard Danish Vessel 'Hoysom' on his return voyage to England and buried in an unmarked grave in Cape Town, South Africa.

*From Simon Dibdin*

George III had settled on the throne and within two years he had bought Buckingham House in 1762 and converted it into the Palace with the help of such as Dr. Johnson, Robert Adams and Josiah Wedgewood. It seems that the aristocracy in England were going through the same state of indulgence as was seen in Continental Europe.



In 1770 Captain Cook had found Australia and New Zealand, claiming them for England and by so doing, generating further expansion to the British Empire.

Music and Art became a significant part of social life in London with the encouragement of George, Prince of Wales who did much to encourage artists and musicians.

In 1764 Mozart at the age of 12 years old came, with his family, to this country and had played for Royalty. However life in London was more difficult that expected and after about a year the family returned to the continent.

In 1778 Dibdin was appointed the exclusive composer for Covent Garden at a salary of 10 pounds per week. However, his relations with managers and performers were poor, and the scandal of his liaison with one of the chorus singers caused a great deal of turmoil. According to his account he was the victim of "ill-treatment and breach of faith."

He left Covent Garden and became one of several parties to build the Circus Theatre (later the Surrey Theatre). Dibdin was appointed sole manager for life and was to be paid one fourth of the profits. This opened 1782



St George's Circus 1782  
The Royal Circus and Philharmonic Academy  
View of the Royal Circus in St. George's fields,  
etching, John Lodge (engraver), London, 1782.

Charles, as so often happened, fell out with his partners.

It later closed but in 1816 Thomas John Dibdin reopened it and it was named the Surrey theatre.

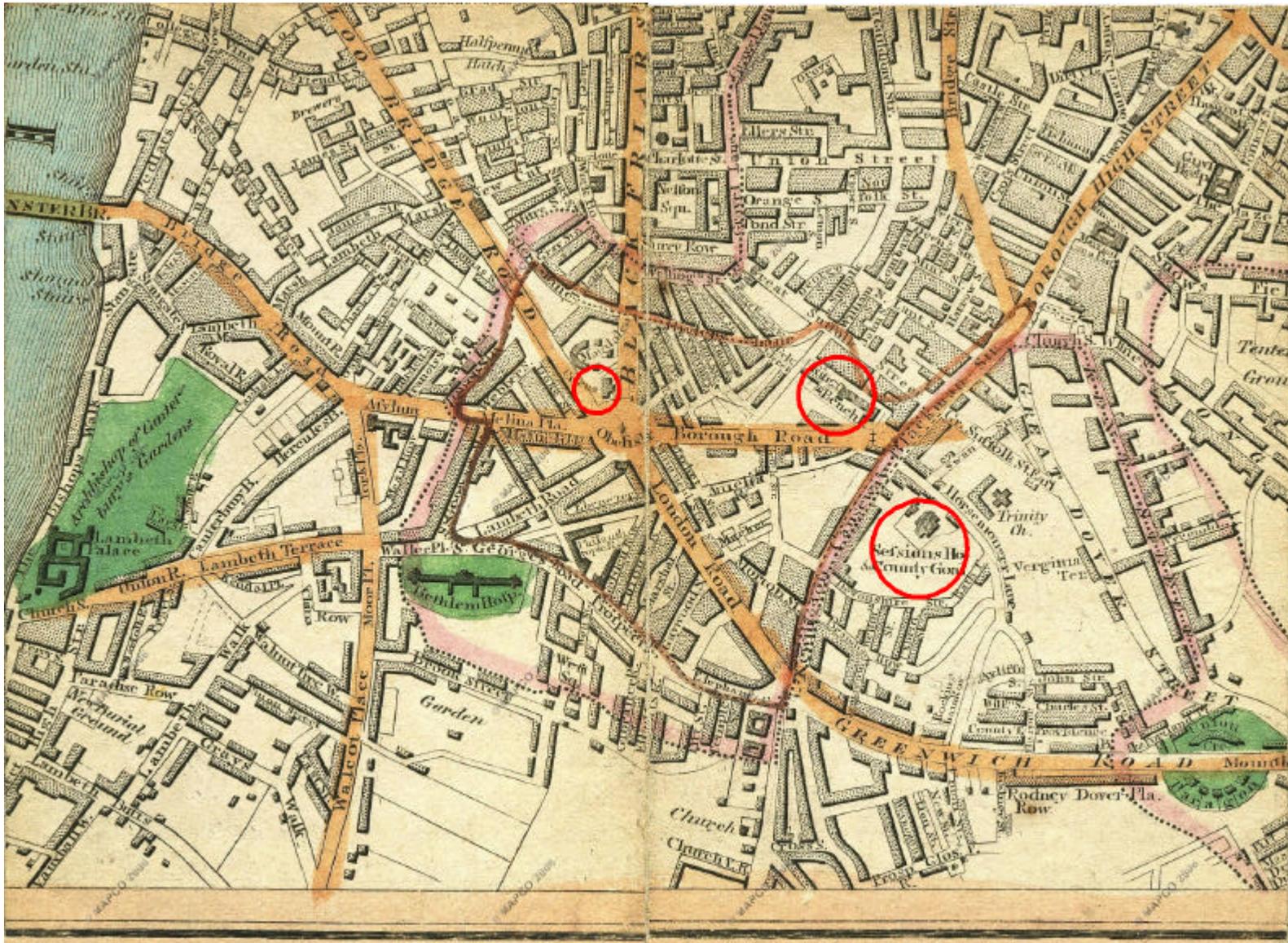
St. Georges Circus is at the junction between Westminster Bridge Road, Blackfriars Road and the London Road which leads down to the Elephant and Castle.



2016 view of St Georges Circus showing that the obelisk in the middle is still there. This has the inscription  
“ One Mile from Fleet Street.”

Although we tend to think of the West End of London, north of the Thames as being the centre of “Theatre Land”, it should be remembered there is and always was considerable activity south of the river. The Globe Theatre was and now is between Blackfriars and London Bridge on the south side and in the last fifty years the South Bank has been developed as quite a cultural centre.

From the Elephant and Castle Junction the road leading out East was called Greenwich Road, the route to the whole Royal Greenwich maritime complex



**South London. Taken from Smith's New Map of London c.1830**

The small red circle shows the location of the Royal Circus. The other circle show the location of Kings Bench Debtors Prison, next to the Marshalsea referred to by Dickens, whose father was sent there in 1824 and who based several of his characters on his experience. The largest circle located the Horsemonger Debtors Prison. Both of these prisons were occupied by members of the family.

From about 1783 onwards, the centre of London became radically changed.

George (before being Regent), Prince of Wales took over Carlton House and commissioned - J.Constable, G.Stubbs, T.Lawrence, J.Reynolds, T.Gainsborough to work on the building and decoration.

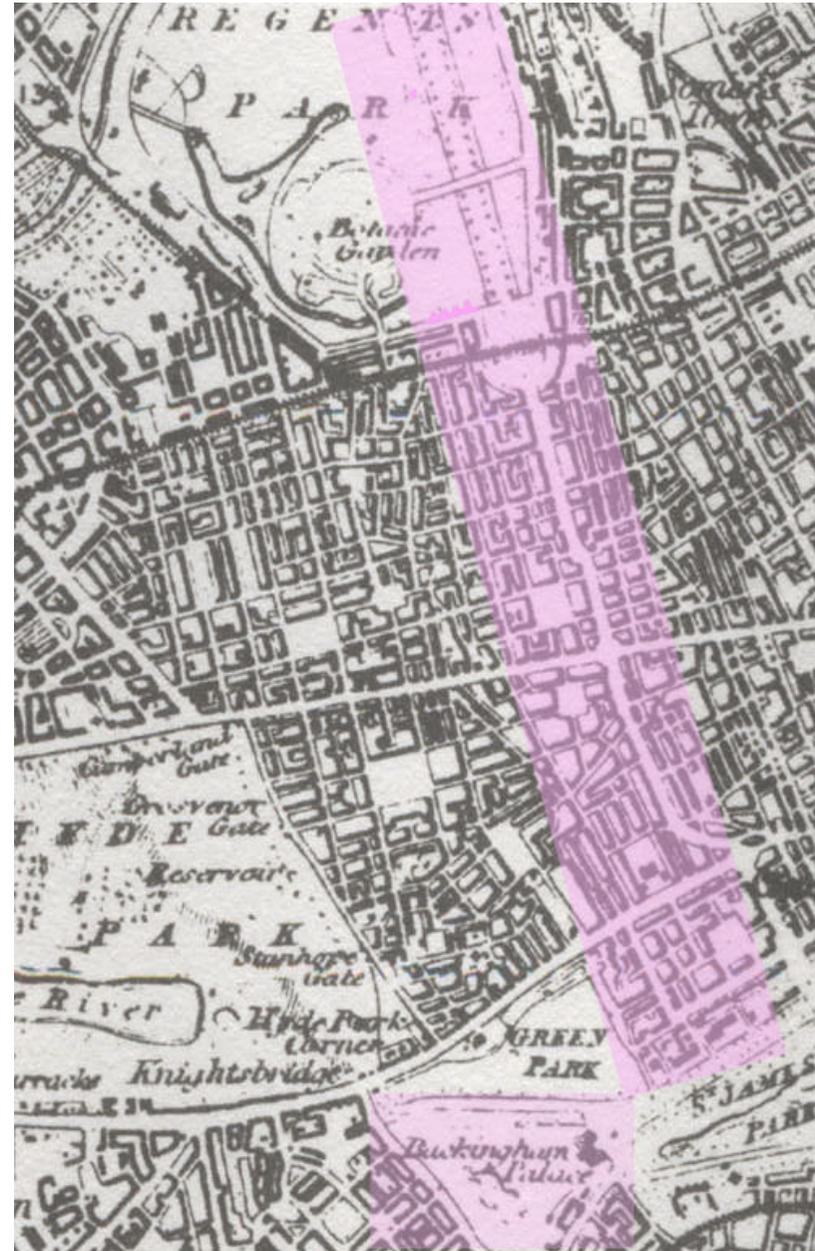
Marylebone Park was changed into Regent's Park and Portland Place and Crescent constructed to give an air of grandeur. Regent's Street was built so that there was a nearly straight run down from Regent's Park to Carlton House which backed or fronted, onto St James Park very close to St James Palace.

This architectural enterprise, with the developments in the Bedford Square area and Fitzroy Square by the Dukes of Bedford and Grafton, respectively, was to play a considerable part in the lives of the Aglio family a few years later and for that matter in the lives of many other artists of the time. Charles Dibdin's grandson Thomas Colman Dibdin, the artist, lived in that area as did many other artists, including a member of the Fleuss Family some 50 years later.

The Fleuss - Guise family married into the Dibdin - Aglio family in 1942.

The distance from Regent's Park to Buckingham Palace is about a mile and a half and would be, without the traffic one of the most elegant walks experienced, crossing Oxford Street and perhaps weaving one's way through Mayfair or nipping across to Hyde Park and entering via Marble Arch.

The route via Regent's Street and Piccadilly takes one past the most exclusive shops or one can take the grand route down the Mall. As will be seen later many of the family must have enjoyed travel in this area nearly on a daily basis.



In 1787 George (Prince of Wales) started building Brighton Pavillion , and in 1815 Nash started extension work.



For the well to do life must have been very exciting in the late eighteenth century and for those successful artists, artisans and writers there was plenty of opportunity if one's luck held.

In 1768 Charles had a son Charles Isaac Mungo and then in 1771 another, Thomas John, both by his mistress Harriet Pitt ( Mrs Davenport), both sons working in the drama scene in London and around England. As will be explored in later chapters travelling must have been quite a challenge.

It seems that Europe was about to enter a period of turmoil and whereas painters were still making a living though beautiful and romantic works of art in the very classical style, encourage by such as the Prince of Wales, the publications of this period began to become very challenging. Schiller in Germany had produced "The Robbers" challenging the ways of the German aristocracy and in the 1793, Blake was challenging attitudes in this country towards woman with his poem "Daughters of Albion". His publications "Songs of Experience and Innocence" also can be seen as challenges any number of aspects of English Cultural life. Later, Thomas Hood was writing comic verse but with a satirical bent and in one poem made reference to Charles Dibdin and no doubt much of Dibdin's work would have been challenging.

England would have been well aware of the French Revolution of 1789, and there must have been tremendous tensions in this country over the immigration and support for the French aristocracy that was being slaughtered, and the righteous demands of the poor for fairness and democracy.

Fanny Burney was writing at the time novels of social commentary with a romantic/gothic touch such as Evelina published in 1778 and in 1796 Camilla, A Picture of Youth.

On the proceeds of this later novel she was able to built Camilla Lacey on the Leladene estate where she settled with her husband Alexandre D'Arblay, a refugee from the French Revolution. This thread of connection is of interest in so far as in 1933 Lionel Dibdin bought the Leladene Estate with a view to developing it and had already bought and was in the process of building on the Betchworth Estate originally owned by D'Arblay.

Fanny Burney was an inspiration to Jane Austen who novels published from 1811 and 1818 looked at the lives of the fairly well to do members of English society. From reading her novels one would get little or no idea of that side of life that existed in the poor environs of London as we entered the Regency Period.

The introduction of Stone Lithography in about 1796 gave great opportunities to the publishing world and Charles Dibdin, and later his sons will have had access to this facility as did Agostino Aglio a few years later.

It was some years later, in 1847, that we saw the first of the Bronte novels, Jane Eyre, published, these novels showing some of the more rugged side of live in the North of England. Charles Dickens seriously drew people's attention to the lives of the poor in the London area with his first publications in 1836.

This period of enlightenment was well into the life of Thomas John Dibdin who, as will be seen later, was reasonably outspoken and did cause problems within London Society.

Aspects of life in London during the early nineteenth century will be explored further in the chapters relating to the Aglios and Thomas John Dibdin.

Charles Dibdin's life was marred by scandal and misfortune and despite great acclaim he died poor.

He took up residence in Camden Town, where he suffered a paralytic stroke in 1813 after which the government granted him a pension of £200.

In 1810 a subscription dinner and concert was held for his benefit. This raised £640, of which £560 was invested in long annuities for himself and his family. He died on 25 July 1814 in comparative poverty, and was buried in St Martin's churchyard there. His widow placed a stone over his grave inscribed with a quatrain from "Tom Bowling".

On the west face of the tower of Holyrood Church in Southampton is a memorial plaque to Dibdin, where he is described as a "native of Southampton, poet, dramatist and composer, author of Tom Bowling, Poor Jack and other sea songs".



In 1889 a Celtic cross memorial was erected, by public subscription, in St Martin's Gardens, Camden Town, after his original tomb collapsed. A verse from "Tom Bowling" is inscribed upon it:

His form was of the manliest beauty,  
His heart was kind and soft,  
Faithful, below, he did his duty;  
But now he's gone aloft.

**Agostino Aglio**  
**1777 –1857**

**Artist born in Cremona**



Agostino Aglio was born in Cremona in Lombardy in 1777, 40 years after the death of Stradivari, the famous violin luthier of that town. According to Giuseppe Grasselli who wrote an encyclopaedia of Artists, Sculptors and Architects of the town in

1827, there must have been over 300 such individuals from the area over the years.



His father, Gaetano Aglio was a notary, that is a lawyer of the time and when Agostino was about ten years old, the family moved to Milan. In this respect it is hard to accept that he was an artist of Cremona. He had a good classical education in a religious establishment and his artistic skills showed themselves at an early age, particularly all over his school work books.

He was the only surviving child of four, one brother and two sisters dying of small pox.

Although we would say that Agostino was from Italy, the country at that time did not exist as such and the Northern states of the peninsula were under the control of the "Holy Roman Empire", centred in Austria. It seems that the control of Austria extended from over the Alps and some way down through what we now know as Italy. It, at various times, would have had control over Venetia, Tuscany, Lombardy as well as most of central Europe. From his autobiography we have that Agostino met a couple of the Emperors, Joseph II and Leopold II and that his talents were recognised so that at the age of 12 years that he was granted a "stall" in the Imperial College, Ghislieri at the University of Pavia by Leopold II for when he was of age.

This opportunity was lost because of the invading armies of the French Revolution.

The writings that we have relevant to Aglio do not give much insight into the state of Europe at the time, however we do have this from his autobiography:

"This passed away the interval time of waiting for my admission to the University, and as the time arrived, the invading armies of the Republican France descending into Italy put a stop to the University. Most of the students caught the delirium of the time and I, amongst the rest enrolled, as a volunteer in the Legion of the Cisalpina Republic and on the 21st February 1797, I was in my first battle crossing the Bridge of Faenza under the command of General Victor, as also at the following surrender of Ancona and at Tolentino when the peace with Pius VI was signed; finally stationed at Perugia where I was taken seriously ill and by the advice of the medical Doctor Savi, with whom I was billeted and left in care by the Colonel, through my father in Milan I obtained my discharge by the Directory and on my recovery proceeded to Rome, travelling through the picturesque mountains of the

Apennines still thoughtless, inconsiderate, and changeable, yet thinking to be an artist."

It may be of interest to ponder on the state of Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and think about some of the leading figures of the time particularly those in the broadly artistic world.

A glance through the time line for this period suggests that there are any number of events and people that may have influenced Aglio and the direction that his career and life developed, so there is no reason to home in on the French Revolution and Napoleon's activities around Europe, but it must be said that these were far reaching for many people. When Aglio was a child it seems that the "Holy Roman Empire" loomed large and so his meeting the Emperor, presumably through his father's connections would have been of great significance. The French Revolution in 1789 and what it stood for, had an immense impact of the thinkers and artist of the time. Beethoven who was born seven years before Aglio was deeply moved and hopeful for the revolution and it is said that he started writing his 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony in 1803 for Napoleon although, when the later declared himself Emperor he scribbled out his name and called the piece Eroica. Beethoven had been greatly affected by the work of Schiller particularly the Play "The Robbers" produced in 1781. Schiller raised many disturbing issues in the play. For instance, he questioned the dividing lines between personal liberty and the law and probed the psychology of power, the nature of masculinity and the essential differences between good and evil. He strongly criticized both the hypocrisies of class and religion and the economic inequities of German society. He also conducted a complicated inquiry into the nature of evil. Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony in 1807 was intended as a celebration of the Revolution, with echoes of La Marseillaise within the music, but by this time Napoleon had occupied Vienna,

Beethoven's home town since 1992, and the way that the Viennese people were treated by the French soldiers distressed him greatly.

It is hard to envisage the state of Europe at the time when Aglio wrote about his encounter with the revolution and subsequent illness and then trip to Rome. His dip into the world of revolution in 1797 seemed such a short spell against what was still happening, as has been indicated above. When in Rome he set out to learn to paint, working with Campovecchio, and became involved in the artistic world of the time.



Angelica Kauffmann 1741- 1807  
self portrait

Angelica Kauffman, a Neoclassical Painter, who, in 1768, was a founding member of the Royal Academy in England, obviously had a considerable impact on Agostino and it was through her and her friends, in particular Canova, the Neoclassical sculptor, that he obtained a introduction to the architect Wilkins of Cambridge University who wished to be accompanied by an working artist while travelling in Magna Grecia.

The History of Art would refer to this period of creativity as the Romantic Period and it is not too difficult to understand why. Europe was in a state of war and revolution, artists were painting either heroic historical scenes or visions of classical mythology, reflecting and challenging the power of the time, and the interest in the Classical World and its stability created a desire to copy the past.

After a year or so travelling with Wilkins, Agostino Aglio emigrated to England with the promise of work in Cambridge in 1803.

It is noteworthy that Giovanni Battista Belzoni who was born in Padua within a year of Aglio, had his life, while in Rome, disrupted by the invasion of the French. He fled to the Netherlands and then arrived in England in the same year as Aglio 1803. After further travels he established himself and his wife as archaeologists in Egypt sending items back to the British Museum.

There is every reason to believe that Aglio did some work for Belzoni as will be mentioned later.

What was life like in the England to which Aglio arrived as an immigrant?

George III was on the throne and presumably giving the impression of madness from time to time because of the illness, Porphyria. He had bought Buckingham House in 1762 and converted it into the Palace with the help of such as Dr. Johnson, Robert Adams and Josiah Wedgwood. It seemed that the aristocracy in England were going through the same state of indulgence as was seen in Continental Europe. In 1764 Mozart at the age of 12 years old had played in this country for Royalty and in 1770 Captain Cook had found Australia and New Zealand, claiming them for England and by so doing, generating further expansion to the British Empire.



George, the Prince of Wales, who seemed to personify indulgence itself had bought Carlton House in Pall Mall and commissioned J.Constable, G.Stubbs, T.Lawrence, J.Reynolds, T.Gainsborough to work on the building and its decoration. Four years later he commissioned the building of the Brighton Pavilion. The Prince of Wales acquired a reputation for his dissolute way of life and when he had become Prince Regent in 1811, his behaviour did not improve.



Beau Brummell and George Prince of Wales

We have a first hand report of concern of a father within the family for his daughters when George and Beau Brummel visited a neighbour's house in Central London. He felt that they would be safer in the countryside in Brixton.

It is no wonder that there were serious concerns that the revolutionary movement sweeping across Europe would reach England. Although we look now with a degree of pleasure and pride at the architecture of that time and enjoy the ability to walk from Regents Park to St. James's Park via an impressive route, the state of London in Regency and Victorian times left much to be desired and, unlike Parks that were later installed for the general population, these were for the amusement of the aristocracy.

Later, we will look at how the successful artists of the day fitted into the geography of London and it did seem that they were pleased to settle and work in these more delightful parts of London.

We see the burgeoning world at which Agostino Aglio arrived in 1803. He was an immigrant with the promise of work. The fact that he had fought for Napoleon only a few years before must have been overlooked. The first person of authority that he met was Captain Walsh, an immigration officer and for whatever reason they were to become lifelong friends. The extent of their friendship was such that Aglio, while working for Wilkins in Cambridge, worked all night painting him a picture which Wilkins did get framed for him. However Aglio at that time was made to feel somewhat as a slave to his academic master and was pleased to receive not only the following advice from Walsh, but also help in getting away from Cambridge and starting an independent working life.



Captain Walsh

*“I know my country and countrymen and as my duty of Inspector of Aliens throw me much amongst foreigners of all nations, I am well acquainted with their general feelings. You now seem delighted to meet a friend and a fellow traveller, with whom you have passed some happy days, but he was then a stranger and from home. You may find him now another man, the which I*

*hope not, but in any case should you find your situation unpleasant and uncomfortable spare me not, but write to me immediately.”*

It seems that Wilkins had a particularly demanding manner which as reported by Aglio was an embarrassment even to his family.

The details of Aglio’s life’s work are well documented in his own autobiography and in a detailed biography as well as the timeline produced by his son Augustine so reference to work will be only in the context of what else was happening in the country. Judging from his self portrait it would seem that Aglio was quiet a charming young man and within two years of arriving in London he had met Letitia Clarke and was married. Her exact circumstances are, at present, unclear but it would seem that she was a lady of her own means and that her father may have been an Alderman of London.

This was in the same year as the Battle of Trafalgar and two years before Beethoven wrote the 5<sup>th</sup> symphony. How he felt about the English versus Napoleon conflict remains a puzzle. At the time that Aglio started a fully active working life in England as a painter of theatres, theatre scenery and country houses, it is worth noting that the steam engine as a vehicle was just being invented and the first passenger trains were not running until the 1830’s. Not only was he having to get around London, but also he travelled in those early years up to Yorkshire and later on to Manchester as well as Wales and Ireland. Time and again the considerations of travelling during the 1800’s comes to mind.

Early in his time in London he obtain work teaching aristocratic young ladies to paint. In 1806 he worked in Drury Lane Theatre (The Theatre Royal) before it burnt down in 1809



Theatre Royal Drury Lane 1808 - Burnt down 1809

and then in the same year the Majestic, later His Majesty’s Theatre



The Pantheon – Oxford Street The morning after the fire  
W.J.M.Turner



In 1811 he decorated the interior of the Pantheon when it was rebuilt after the fire of 1792.



The Pantheon 1772 Burned down 1792  
New theatre decorated by Aglio 1811



Interior of the Pantheon



The Majestic Theatre later to become His Majesty's in Haymarket

This work in the theatre world is of particular interest in a family context. At the same time as Agostino was busying himself decorating theatres and painting stage scenery it seems possible that he would have encountered two members of the Dibdin Family. Charles Dibdin was still living in London. He died in 1814 although his last major work was in 1811 in which he created the song "The Lass That Loves A Sailor". As will be seen in a later chapter, his son Thomas John was busy during this period of time working in the London Theatres as well as elsewhere in the country and he too spent time painting scenery as well as managing theatres, acting and writing. His relationship with the Aglio Family was to be later through his grandson marrying Agostino's granddaughter.

In 1807 Aglio decorated rooms in Ackworth near York and at Woolley Hall in the West Riding. He also found time to visit Killarney in Ireland, painting pictures and making etchings.



Woolley Hall

By 1812 he must have been well established as he and his wife were able to move into a new house in the development of St Edwardes Square in Kensington, very near to Earl's Court.

He was in fact responsible for the design of the layout of the public gardens of the square following a very relaxed pattern of design with curves and apparently random trees and shrubbery. Details of his house and the gardens will be looked at later in another chapter.

During the next few years Aglio decorated part of Woburn Abbey and again worked at Woolley Hall in Yorkshire. Travelling through England must have been quite a challenge at the time presumable using stage coaches.



Stage Coach

The reader is reminded that in 1815, at the Battle of Waterloo, the British defeated Napoleon and by so doing ended the idea of the French Empire and stopped hostilities in Europe for many years.

Traditional school history study in the mid twentieth century seemed to focus on wars, battles and the activity of royalty and so these topics had more significance than everyday life for the ordinary people of the world. It is through the biographies of artists and other observers of the times that we can broaden our insights into history.

It is interesting for a moment to try to consider the reality of life for Agostino Aglio and his family over those early years of his time in Italy and England. He like other artists and musicians of the time must have felt the impact of the injustice and oppression of their time created by the power structures and aristocracy.

The turmoil felt by Beethoven has already been mentioned at the time that he wrote the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> symphonies and one is reminded of Goya's paintings, "The Second and Third of May 1808," which he exhibited in 1814.



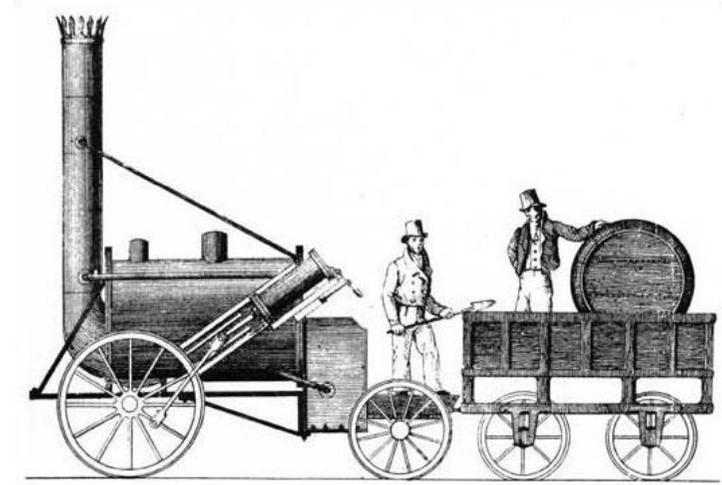
It would seem that these artists and artisans whose job it was to produce art for those that could afford it with portraits, landscapes, classical scenes and amuse the indulgent classes with pleasing music also felt the need to express their attitude towards the state of society at the time.

Even W.J.M. Turner who seemed to have made his living from patrons who generally were rich through exploitation, painting interesting landscapes, was moved in 1840 to pass serious social comment with his painting the Slave Ship as an expression of his disgust at what was happening in the name of British trade.



*Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and Dying — Typhoon coming on*

Aglie must himself, when young, have been swept up in the tide of revolution to have turned down a future education at the Holy Roman Emperor's expense and go and fight for the possibility of a republic. How did he feel when he like so many others, saw the way that people in power all behaved equally corrupt. After his time fighting and serious illness he did turn to developing his skills as an artist but it should be noted that he must have had an adventurous nature. In 1800 travelling cannot have been easy. There were no trains, buses or cars. The well known Stephenson's Rocket which can be seen as the introduction of passenger train travel was not produced until about 1830.



Stephenson's Rocket 1829

The only modes of transport must have been walking, horseback or stage coach with all the associated risks, caused by both natural and human intervention, of travelling across country.

The distance from Venice to Rome is about 350 miles a journey of about 6 hours by car, but how long would it take in 1800 with the challenge of crossing the Apennine Mountains.

With William Wilkins, obviously a man of means or well supported financially, he travelled another 500 or so miles to areas of Southern Italy, Magna Graecia, may be as far as Sicily. In 1803 from Rome he then emigrated to England travelling by ship, leaving Leghorn ( Livorno) in Italy on 14<sup>th</sup> Sept 1803 and arriving in England on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec 1803.

From the Sacchi Biography

*Advised by the cardinal and the recollection of the complete harmony which had existed between the English architect and*

*himself and his desire to see and travel more, England to him a new country induce him to accept the flattering offer – he embarked at Leghorn 14<sup>th</sup> Sept 1803 on board a Swedish vessel and after a disastrous stormy voyage and visits of pirates Aglio arrived at Gravesend near to London the 13<sup>th</sup> December.*



The ship used by Aglio to travel to England

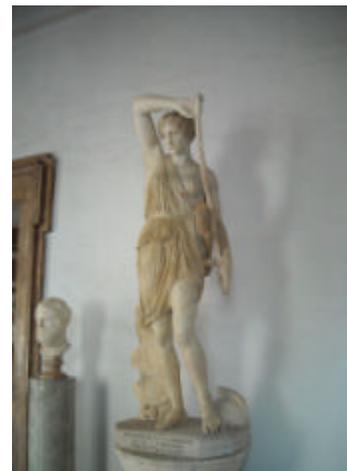
Despite Agostino's early rebellious ways, it seems that for the rest of his life, he seemed prepared, in the main, to direct his energies to working for and earning his living from the aristocracy and supposed aristocracy of this country and there is no further reference to revolutions. His adventurous nature never seemed to fade, as he was prepared to advertise his skills amongst the great and good and travel up and down England and even to Ireland. Most of this travel was carried out before the introduction of main line trains and the building of the London Railway stations.

Returning for the moment to a consideration of those first few years from 1812 when Agostino and Letitia had their first child Emma Walsh Aglio, named after his first friend on arriving in England, Captain Walsh, and they had settled in Kensington.

At a social level, there was much of interest occurring and plenty of opportunity for the ambitious artist. The Regency Period had started with a flourish and Nash, the architect, was developing the geographical central band of London, from the new Regents Park down to Pall Mall for George, Prince Regent. In 1815 Nash also started an extension to Brighton Pavilion the building of which had been had been initiated in 1787.

In 1814 Aglio went up to paint the drawing room of Woolley Hall in Yorkshire for Godfrey Wentworth. It is difficult to imagine how long such a job would have taken and how long it took to travel up there from London and, for that matter, by what means.

It is noteworthy to mention the activities of two of Aglio's countrymen in 1815. Canova, who have introduced Aglio to Wilkins in 1799 came to London and not only obtained work from George Prince Regent who was seriously into Classical art but also advised the British Museum to acquire the Elgin Marbles with plaster cast copies to be sent back to Florence.



*The works of Phidias are truly flesh and blood, like beautiful nature itself*  
— Antonio Canova



Mars and Venus  
Sculpture by Canova for George Prince Regent

Also while he was in England Canova met with Benjamin Haydon who was renowned for painting classical historic paintings.



The other contemporary of Aglio, mentioned before was Belzoni, an outright adventurer and entrepreneur. He came to England at about the same time as Aglio but seemed to have taken a little longer to get settled. His journey to England was a little more torturous. In 1800 he had moved to the Netherlands where he earned a living as a barber but escaped to England to avoid jail. He started his time in England working in a circus and with Magic Lanterns, and after his marriage to Sarah they went travelling.

In 1812 he left England and after a tour of performances in Spain, Portugal and Sicily, he went to Malta, in 1815, where he met Ismael Gibraltar, an emissary of Muhammad Ali, who at the time was undertaking a programme of agrarian land reclamation and important irrigation works. Belzoni wanted to show Muhammad Ali a hydraulic machine of his own invention for raising the waters of the Nile. After this he embarked upon an archaeological career working with the British Museum. After his premature death in 1823, Sarah continued his work and there is evidence that Aglio must have worked with her, if not her husband, in some way as demonstrated by the etching produced by Aglio from a sketch by Sarah. There is evidence that Aglio did

some engraving or etching work for the Belzonis, and perhaps for the British Museum.



Temple on the Road to Berenice  
A. Aglio after a drawing by Sarah Belzoni

There is no doubt that Giovanni Battista Belzoni, sometimes known as The Great Belzoni was an adventurer remarkable.

It can be understood why the Neoclassical was all the rage at the time and why it was that Aglio was, in 1821, asked to produce his book – The School of Ornamental Design with Hullmandel. A version of this is still available from Dover Publications.

Still working for the aristocracy, in 1821, he painted the doorway for the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey and must have related well with the family as ten years later he produced his book of 50 sketches of Trees and Forest Scenery dedicated to Georgina Elizabeth Russell and Louisa Jane Russell daughters of John Russell the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford.  
Two copies were printed

Dukes of Bedford not only owned Woburn Abbey but also the Bedford Estate in London that included the main Bedford Estate originally extended between Tottenham Court Road, Euston Road, Southampton Row, and New Oxford Street.[2] There were also two separate parts on the other side of Tottenham Court Road and Euston Road. To the south, the Covent Garden Estate north of the Strand was also part of the Bedford Estate. Garden squares in the main Bedford Estate include: Bedford Square, Bloomsbury Square, Gordon Square, Russell Square, Tavistock Square, Torrington Square, Woburn Square

In 1824, he embarked upon his work with Lord Kingsborough, or rather Viscount Kingsborough, an Irish aristocrat to produce accurate facsimiles of original Mexican documents from before the Spanish conquest of the Americas.

This work started by him drawing Mexican Antiquities for William Bullock for display in the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly.

The work of copying Mexican Antiquities took up some years of Aglio's time and must have had serious implications for his domestic life. Not only was he travelling on the continent for some time but the flow of money was not as it should have been. Looking back at that whole period of time it must have been, although interesting, a very ignominious experience. A summary of the whole Mexican Antiquities saga is documented on the website and will be explored in detail in a study by Professor Hook, however it is worth, here, giving an inkling of the drama and some insight into the characters.

## The Drama of the Mexican Antiquities

### William Bullock (c. 1773 - 1849)

William Bullock (c. 1773 - 1849) was an English traveller, naturalist and antiquarian. Bullock began as a goldsmith and jeweller in Sheffield. He used his wealth to accumulate a large collection of artefacts, antiquities and stuffed animals. In the late 1790s Bullock founded a Museum of Natural Curiosities in the city, which moved to Liverpool in 1801.

The Egyptian Hall was also referred to as the London Museum or Museum, or Bullock's Museum.

The Hall was a considerable success, with an exhibition of Napoleonic era relics in 1816 including Napoleon's carriage taken at Waterloo being seen by about 220,000 visitors; Bullock made £35,000. In 1819, Bullock sold his ethnographical and natural history collection at auction and converted the museum into an exhibition hall. Subsequently the Hall became a major venue for the exhibiting of works of art; it had the advantage of being almost the only London venue able to exhibit really large works. Usually admission was one shilling. In 1820, The Raft of the Medusa by Théodore Géricault was exhibited from 10 June until the end of the year, rather overshadowing Benjamin Robert Haydon's painting, Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, on show in an adjacent room; Haydon rented rooms to show his work on several occasions. In 1821, exhibitions included Giovanni Battista Belzoni's show of the tomb of Seti I in 1821, and James Ward's gigantic Allegory of Waterloo. In 1822, a family of Laplanders with their reindeer were imported to be displayed in front of a painted backdrop, and give short sleigh-rides to visitors. . The Hall became especially associated with watercolours. The old Water-Colour Society exhibited there in 1821–22, and it was hired by Charles Heath to display the watercolours commissioned by from Joseph Mallord William Turner forming Picturesque Views in England and Wales. Turner exhibited at the Hall for a number of years and it was also used as a venue for exhibitions by the Society of Painters in Water Colours.

Wikipedia

It was through this work that Aglio met up with Kingsborough and Sir Thomas Phillipps and start work for the publication of several volumes of facsimiles.

In about 1824 he became involved in the work to be published as The Antiquities of Mexico in seven volumes: comprising Fac-Similes of Ancient American Paintings and Hieroglyphics. This work involved copying manuscripts from various sources throughout Europe including The Bodleian Library at Oxford, the Imperial Library in Vienna, the royal libraries of Paris, Berlin and Dresden and the Vatican Library. The price at the time was £120 and £175 coloured.

Aglio spent, on and off, a period of six years on this project which entailed travelling to the various libraries and museums in Europe over three to four years. He visited his home town, Cremona, in 1825. In 1827 he visited Paris and spent time in London.

Aglio's autobiography and other documents indicate that money was always an issue and that his wife probably had to survive and bring up the family thanks to her own means.



Example of the facsimile painting by Agostino Aglio.

### Sir Thomas Phillipps

Sir Thomas Phillipps, 1st Baronet (2 July 1792 – 6 February 1872) was an English antiquary and book collector who amassed the largest collection of manuscript material in the 19th century, due to his severe condition of bibliomania. He was the illegitimate son of a textile manufacturer who inherited a substantial estate which he spent almost entirely on vellum manuscripts, and in doing so put his family into debt. Phillipps recorded in an early catalogue that his collection "was instigated by reading various accounts of the destruction of valuable manuscripts."

### Lord Kingsborough

Edward King, Viscount Kingsborough (16 November 1795–27 February 1837), usually known as Lord Kingsborough, was an Irish antiquarian who sought to prove that the indigenous peoples of the Americas were a Lost Tribe of Israel. His principal contribution was in making available facsimiles of ancient documents and some of the earliest explorers' reports on Pre-Columbian ruins and Maya civilization. However, these were presented in the context of his highly speculative theories, now known to be erroneous.

The eldest son of George King, 3rd Earl of Kingston, Lord Kingsborough represented Cork County in parliament.

In 1831, Lord Kingsborough published the first volume of *Antiquities of Mexico*, a collection of copies of various Mesoamerican codices, including the first complete publication of the Dresden Codex. The exorbitant cost of the reproductions, which were often hand-painted, landed him in debtors' prison. These lavish publications represented some of the earliest published documentation of the ancient cultures of Mesoamerica, inspiring further exploration and research by John Lloyd Stephens and Charles Étienne Brasseur de Bourbourg in the early 19th century. They were the product of early theories about non-indigenous origins for Native American civilizations that are also represented in the

Book of Mormon (1830) and myths about mound builders of Old World ancestry in North America.

On 27 February 1837, Lord Kingsborough died in prison of typhus, two years before he would have inherited his father's title. The last two volumes of Antiquities of Mexico were published posthumously.

The Codex Kingsborough is named after him.

Reference from the British Museum suggests that during that time he must have been based with his family at 48 Berner's Street and then 36 Newman Street. (1820/1), (1831)

The final work was published in seven volumes in 1831, but the outcome of this work was a very sad affair resulting in Aglio's bankruptcy and Kingsborough's death of Typhus in debtors jail in Ireland.



## The Antiquities of Mexico The Aglio - Kingsborough Affair. 1824 – 1836

### A Summary

The history of events is currently being researched at Bristol University by Professor David Hook who is adding to the scholarship of Professor Ian Graham's work in the 1970's. Before coming to England in 1803, Agostino had been on a trip to Sicily, Greece and Egypt with Mr. William Wilkins to draw Antiquities. It is clear that, by nature, he must have had an eye for copying in fine detail.

The handwritten notes of the time written by his son indicate the extent of his time in Europe.

By 1831 the work was published and reviewed in "The Monthly Review January to April 1831" and "The Foreign Quarterly Review January and May 1832".

Sir Thomas Phillipps, an English antiquary and book collector, with the largest collection of books in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, supported the project from the very early days and it seems that by 1831 he and Lord Kingsborough were involved in litigation with Aglio. In 1832 Aglio still had not been paid for all his work and then he became embroiled in actions against Kingsborough by stationers in 1832 and 1833 requiring thousands of pounds for the supply of paper for printing the manuscripts. It seems that during this time was a Petition to the Court of Chancery against Aglio by Kingsborough.

A 42 page document written by Aglio and letters between Aglio and Kingsborough at the time give considerable insight into the whole sad affair in which both went bankrupt. Kingsborough ending up in Debtor's jail three times, finally dying of typhus in

1837. Sir Thomas Phillipps, who has been described as a bibliomaniac and who was planning to buy copies of Mexican Antiquities, was part responsible for the problems as there were some outstanding payments..

These events are being documented within an up to date study of Sir Thomas Phillipps by Professor David Hook of Bristol University

The role of the internet in the unravelling of the history of this affair is of no little significance. Through these web pages David Hook saw that information about A.Aglia was available, more precisely -A Hand written document by AA about his work on Mexican Antiquities "Correct Statement of the transactions between A.Aglia artist and Lord Kingsborough on the work of the Mexican Antiquities from its commencement to its conclusion of the work." and letters between Aglio and Kingsborough.

It is left to further work to give the full details of the affair, however history suggests that in the words of David Hook "Agostino Aglio emerges from all this as a sincere and open individual, probably too trusting given the people he was dealing with. Not one to challenge people to duels and punch a bailiff, unlike his 'patron'."

*Very many thanks to Professor David Hook ( retired from Bristol University) for much of this information and support.*

*He has been researching and writing about the whole issue for some years from Kingsborough point of view and on the basis of a document written by Aglio to his lawyer had to take another view of the main players in the game.*

While on the continent Aglio painted a large picture representing Christ restoring sight to the blind which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in the same year as J.W.M.Turner exhibited the Loretto Necklace



and John Constable exhibited the painting of Hadleigh Castle.



While in Europe he must have done many if not all of the drawings for the book of 50 sketches of Trees and Forest Scenery dedicated to Georgina Elizabeth Russell and Louisa Jane Russell.

The year this was published, 1831, George III died and the Prince Regent took on the Crown as George IV, so socially London life continued much as before or perhaps more so.

For the next three years Aglio was decorating Manchester Town Hall with frescoes. It was as late as 1835 that there was a complete railway connection from Manchester to London so that while doing the Town Hall work Aglio would have had to travel by horse or coach and horses.

Letters indicate that the Aglio family was living in Manchester for a while and that Augustine was probably helping his father perhaps doing some of the administration and maybe the painting.

In fact we have letters that indicate that he and the family were living near Manchester and during that time the issues between Aglio and Kingsborough were coming to a head with the later asking Aglio to send his wife and son over to Dublin to collect cash owed. No mean feat at such a time.

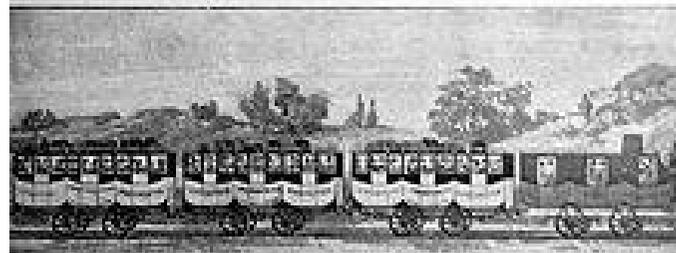
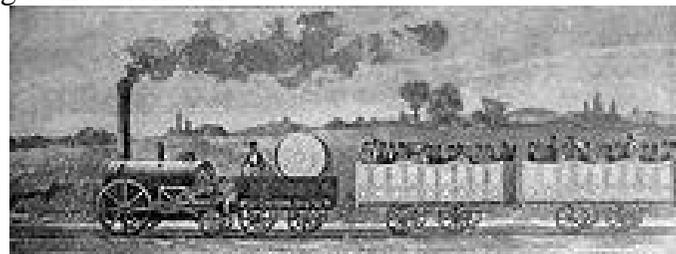
Not only did Kingborough die in 1837 thereby closing the whole saga that started in 1825 but also King George IV died opening the door to a new era within Britain, The Victorian Age.

At that time. Manchester was not only a centre of large industrial and scientific development but also the city was striving to see itself as a cultural centre. In 1857, the year that Aglio died Manchester held an enormous exhibition “**The Art Treasures of Great Britain**” with over 16,000 works on display.

The Neoclassical Town Hall that Aglio decorated was replaced in 1877 by one decorated by Ford Madox Brown.

It may have been during this period that Aglio’s daughter, Emma Walsh, got romantically associated with Captain Walsh’s son

Francis Augustine. Within a couple of years, in 1838, they were married in Manchester and young Walsh went on to fulfil a significant role in the field of health and poverty in Manchester. Aglio seems to have been in the swim with well known and respected artists of the time, enough to have got the work doing a portrait of the new Queen and later other engravings or etchings relating to the coronation.



This new era seemed to have bust forth with the introduction of Railways, the opening of Euston Station, the first mainline station opened in any capital city in the world.

The 1840’s brought a considerable amount of work doing large paintings for “Gentlemen in Yorkshire” leading up to a very busy time involved with an exhibition at Westminster Hall in 1843 and subsequent work for Buckingham Palace.

This was a major venture involving a number of artists. It seems quite clear that there was an Art Establishment and leaders in the field.

This project to paint the Summerhouse at Buckingham Palace is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

George IV had established the idea of a National Gallery in 1824 while he was Prince Regent and The Royal Academy had been formed in 1768.



National Gallery - Built 1838

A study of the letters to Aglio and research by Daniel Boeckmann gives a fascinating insight into the painting activities of a number of artists at the time. It should be remembered that Agostino was by this time at the age of 66 and yet was still taking on commissions right up to the age of seventy one when he took on, with the help of his son Augustine, the decoration of the Olympic Theatre, which opened in December 1849,.

During that year he had a stroke causing paralysis so he had to use his left hand to execute the watercolours that he did up to his death in 1857.

#### Note

Within the archives are many prints, most of which are probably stone lithographs including some in colour.

Some are directly associated with Aglio but many have been printed by Hullmandel.

It is known that the two worked together. The book of Ornamental Decoration drawn by Aglio, with one drawing by Pugin, and 3 by Hullmandel was printed and published by Hullmandel.

There are a number of prints from W. Gooding Colman's book of drawing of churches in Normandy produced for the Duke of Rutland in about 1838. William Gooding Colman was an architect of the time.

It is quoted that T.C. Dibdin was also involved in the early days of Lithography. So some of the archive may have derived from him.

## **The Roman Catholic Connection**

Coming from Italy, it would be reasonable to assume that Agostino was a Roman Catholic however the only reference that we have to his religious life is the comment in his autobiography that he was christened in the Baptistry of the Duomo in Cremona and that he was educated by a religious order. At the end of his autobiography he states

“I have now suffered for 2 years and six months and I am waiting in hope of God’s great mercy to relieve me by calling me to my eternal home. Amen !” .... “May God prosper and bless my children is the prayer of the afflicted”

There is a myth within the family that he, during his time in Italy, fell out with some senior person at the Vatican who imposed a curse on him and his descendants. This is not to unlikely bearing in mind that after his revolutionary activities Aglio was in Rome and communication with Cardinals and the like as well as such artists as Campovechio, Kauffman and Canova.

At the age of 26 years old and having fought for the Revolution one can imagine that he would have been fairly critical of the indulgence and injustice within the Holy Roman Church. It would be quite likely that he would lose respect for the religious establishment.

As the story goes the oldest son of each generation was to die tragically until such a time that the family returned to the church. For the record it can be noted that Agostino’s first grandson died at the age of one. Lionel Dibdin the eldest son of Marian Dibdin nee Aglio died in a plane crash in 1933 and his son Peter died in military accident in 1944. Also it has been found that Agostino had by Letitia a son that died in childhood and that his first born son by three days was illegitimate. To date the life of this child, Peter Augustine Algio, has not been traced.

The myth did take hold within the family.

It should also be remembered that Aglio spent some years of his life, hand painting copies of Mexican Antiquities involving painting and hieroglyphics relating to the Mexican culture before the Spanish Conquest and its destruction by the Spanish Inquisition. There is a whole Appendix in Aglio’s biography relating to a Father Bernardino Sahgun (1499-1590) who, it seems, had respected the Mexican culture and endeavoured to stop the Antiquities from being destroyed through religious fervour.

Whatever his view of the Roman Catholic Church and bearing in mind his wife was probably a member of the Church of England, he did still hold to his faith in God judging from comments in his autobiography. Also the new Catholic establishment must have considered him suitable a person to paint one of their churches in Moorfields.

He arrived in England at a time when the country was fundamentally protestant but when there was an easing of the laws against Catholics. There were relief acts 1778, 1791, 1793 and finally 1829 although there was a violent reaction to the first one in 1780 when there was a week of riots in London. These anti-catholic riots “The Gordon Riots” were virtually like a civil war and caused an immense amount of damage. The military was eventually brought in and in all there were 285 people shot, 200 wounded and 450 arrested.

The military activity over this period of history has been mentioned elsewhere however it is worth re-iterating that at the time of these riots, Britain was fighting the rebels in America following the Declaration of Independence as well as the French, the Spanish and the Dutch, and was desperately hanging onto its Colonies.

Amongst the damage during the riots was a chapel in Ropemakers Alley, Moorfields which had been, by 1820, rebuilt, nearby, as St.Mary's Church in Finsbury Square, Moorfields. In 1819 Aglio painted in fresco much of the church and returned in 1837 to paint the Altar picture.



This church was designed by John Newman in a very classical style, which would have suited Aglio and was seriously criticized by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin for not reminding him of his ancient religion.

Records show that Aglio's three children were baptised in St James Anglican Church in Piccadilly.

The last paragraph of his Autobiography probably sums up the man.

"It has been a general opinion that I have always had a great and very advantageous employment, and of course I have been

condemned as a prodigal in my expenditure, but that never was the case, except, that being born and educated a Gentleman, I never could live like a labourer, nor inhabit a dunghill, but I have never been extravagant, and never had it in my power to be such, as the detail of my principal works must prove, but I never was idle, and my works, I have very frequently sacrificed for a few shillings to procure bread for my family, and for many, who now in my destitute state have forgotten me.

May God prosper and bless my children is the prayer of the afflicted

Augustine Aglio [nee Agostino Aglio]"

**Notes and comment:** see appendix for details

Very recently three new significant points regarding the life of Aglio have surfaced.

?? Agostino Aglio was committed to Kings Bench Prison 13 Jun 1811 ( owing £104.0.0 to James Newman ) discharged from Prison 1812

?? Ancestry records show that Agostino and Letitia had a son John William Emily (Emilius) Aglio baptised at St Mary Abbots Church in Kensington on 5 July 1820. We have no date of birth but it may be assumed that he was born a few weeks before baptism. This is the first reference found to another son and sadly he died a couple of years later in 1922.

?? Ancestry records show that in the same month that Augustine was born, Augustine (Agostino) Aglio and Jane Tomlinson, presumably a lover or mistress, had a son Peter Augustine Aglio born on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct 1816 and baptised 28 Oct 1816 at St Marylebone , Westminster.

What a busy time he must have had! The ancestry record referring to this event was found in Aug.2016 and before this time there had never been any mention of a mistress or lover. The implications of a child of marriage and a love child born in the same month are amazing.

## The Buckingham Palace Summerhouse Story

drawn from letters and other sources

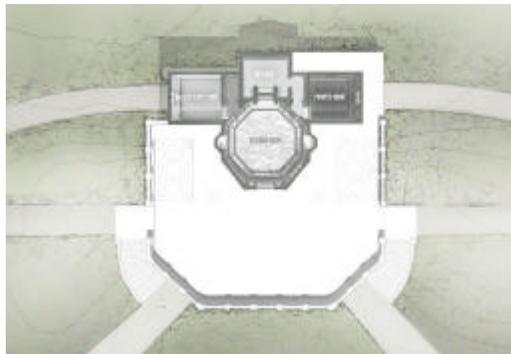
### An endeavour to see how life was in the 1840 through one Royal Project

From a study of the letters to the Aglios it becomes apparent that in 1841 Agostino became involved with a number of artists in fresco work relating to Buckingham Palace. The names that cropped up at the bottom of letters included:

C.L. Eastlake, E. H.Landseer, Mr Stanfield, Daniel Maclise, C.R. Leslie and W.C. Ross, G.R.Ward

It seems that Eastlake was a significant figure within the Art Establishment and so was acting as an organiser but Aglio had a key role to play as he was the expert in Fresco work and some of the others had no experience in the field.

There was an awareness that Aglio had been responsible for work at Buckingham Palace particularly in the context of Encaustic work in the Pompeii Room of the "Pavilion" and with a little research it became apparent that this was part on the new Summer House built in the grounds of the Palace during the 1840's.



The plans show three main rooms, the Octagon, the Pompeii Room and the Scott Room. Study of the lives of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert would explain their thinking behind the rooms.

Fortunately further searching on the internet revealed a fantastic dissertation about Ludwig Gruner, Art Adviser to Prince Albert produced by Daniel Boeckmann in 1996.

This work gives a detailed account of the origin of the Summerhouse and the Artists involved, including references to Agostino Aglio and his role in the whole project.

Quoting from the dissertation, it seems that at first, eight artists were invited to paint frescos on the 8 walls of the Octagon Room. These artists were:

Charles Eastlake, William Etty, Edwin Landseer, Clarkson Stanfield, Daniel Maclise, Thomas Uwins, Charles Leslie and Sir William Ross.

Charles Eastlake, the secretary of the Royal Commission, obviously directed the fresco-painting in the cottage, as Gilchrist recorded: "After applying to Mr Eastlake for particular instructions Mr Etty made sketches of two or three compositions from Comus, the play by Milton

The frescoes in the garden pavilion were begun in June 1843.

Queen Victoria, very much involved in the development of the garden-pavilion decoration, wrote in her diary on 13 June:

"In spite of pouring rain we went up to the cottage and watched the preparations for the painting of the frescoes. An old Italian, Mr d'Aglio, who understands about it, was there. We saw Ross make the first touches. ...After our breakfast" the Queen reported two days later, "we walked out and visited the cottage, where Ross is getting on very well, alas he is so disheartened about it all. The sketch he made, is extremely pretty, with the subject being Comus. There are eight compartments of this shape (drawing of a lunette). The other artists are to be: Eastlake, Landseer, Stanfield, Maclise, Etty & Leslie. The process of fresco painting is very curious. The stucco has to be cut off at the edges, where the painting has been done and must ... on fresh each day. Albert enjoyed watching the whole proceedings so much".

"Maclise has made a most exquisite sketch for his fresco; The subject is Sabrina riding with the nymphs. The grouping of them round her and the figure of Sabrina herself are quite charming". On 8 July, Maclise was still at work at the cottage and "Uwins has nearly finished his fresco". Although there was an Italian artist who should advise the English painters, the new technique seems not to have been mastered by all participants: The Queen's remark in her diary "Maclise's fresco will be quite beautiful, Etty's still too sketchy" announced the difficulties Etty was faced with: He "reluctantly commenced the Fresco 'not expecting to succeed, being unacquainted with the practice of Fresco".

Prince Albert decided in November 1843 on "alterations to the cottage", and in December he discussed "necessary alterations with Mr Blore". Initially the intention had been to decorate only the Octagon Room. Alterations had to be made because Albert decided to have the two side-rooms decorated as well.

On 29 December 1843 Queen Victoria notes

"We visited our cottage, where Aglio is painting the ceiling in encaustic". In the same year, L. Rottmann applied the encausto-technique in Munich in a series of landscape-paintings showing classical views to adorn the new Exhibition Building.

But Etty "being unwilling to execute the Fresco on the wall", "the Prince was obliged to employ somebody else". In July, William Dyce, who had a practical knowledge of fresco-painting was ordered to execute a Substitute for Etty's fresco. The payment to Etty, 40 Pounds, was harshly criticized.



In February 1844, the German engraver Ludwig Gruner - was commissioned by Prince Albert to deliver designs for the decoration of the Octagon walls.

At that time, all the frescoes with the exception of Landseer's, had been completed and the ceiling of one of the side-rooms had been painted by the Italian Agostino Aglio "with large, heavy and colourful arabesques".

For the Scott Room, he commissioned the architectural modellers Bernasconi and Riddell to present models for the plaster works. The Prince was present when Landseer brought his fresco on 7 July to the pavilion and on 30 August Gruner arranged with the

Italian painter Aglio, that he should paint one of the side-rooms in Pompeian style in encaustic and that his payment should be 100 Pounds.



Taken from:  
The Decorations of The Garden Pavilion in the Grounds of  
Buckingham Palace  
Engraved under the Superintendence of L.Grüner.

The room on the right is decorated in the Pompeian style; all the Ornaments, friezes, and panels being suggested by, or actually copied from, existing remains, except the covered ceiling, which, is invented by A. AGLIO. This room may be considered as a very perfect and genuine example of classical domestic decoration, such as we find in the buildings of Pompei,- a style totally distinct from that of the Baths of Titus, which suggested to Raphael and his school, the rich arabesques and Ornaments in painting, and in relief, which prevailed in the sixteenth Century, and which have been chiefly followed in the other two rooms.

Mrs. Jameson, who wrote the introduction to Gruners book called:

"the intermixture of the Ornaments and medallions in relief. .. an idea borrowed from the best era of Italian decoration" which "was first adopted by Raphael ... and suggested by the Ornaments in the Bath of Titus" and claimed "all the Ornaments friezes and panels" in one of the two side rooms, decorated in the Pompeian style as "being suggested by, or actually copied from, existing remains, except the covered ceiling which [was] invented by A. Aglio". As Mrs. Jameson mentioned Gruner only in connection with the landscapes painted in the (romantic) Scott Room "from original sketches by Gruner". it is not surprising that

Gruner's share in the decoration should have remained unclear, although he himself wrote on the second page of the volume that he "was honoured by the gracious commands of Her Majesty and His Royal Highness Prince Albert to present designs for the completion and decoration of the three rooms of which the Summer house consists" that he "was also directed to procure the execution of these designs by the different artists whose names appear in the list printed at the end of Mrs. Jameson's introduction...".



The Defeat of Comus By Sir Edwin Henry Landseer

Even from this short introduction it can be seen that Agostino was very much involved for a few years with the Summerhouse Project although it seems that other artists are given the credit for the original ideas and sketches and he is treated as the skilled artisan.

Within the dissertation written by Daniel Boeckmann one can pick up some idea of the relationships between the artists

involved in the project and become aware of the various frustrations that must have developed with eight independent artists on the job.

Daniel Boeckmann's dissertation is definitely worth reading as it give real insights into the activities of the time.

Life nowadays is similar with artists invited to paint murals for Her Majesty the Queen.



It is interesting to try to get some idea of what London was like during the period of Agostino Aglio's life in the city.



Hackney Carriage about 1800

Travel must have been by foot or with the Hackney Carriage.

A reminder that the first main line train station was Euston built in 1837 and the first Underground train in London was opened in 1868, The Metropolitan Railway, between Paddington (then called Bishop's Road) and Farringdon Street.

The Hansom Cab was patented in 1834 and so would have been around at the time when Aglio was working with many other artists at Buckingham Palace.



Hansom Cab

One can conjure up a vision of these artists travelling up and down the newly built corridor from Regents park to Buckingham Palace carrying all their equipment either by Hansom cab or having to walk. It seem unlikely that they would ride a horse but those that were really successful may have had their own carriage with staff to look after the horse and drive it.



Horse tram 1890

The more public form of transport namely the horse tram was not available until later in the century.

This chapter derives from the research of Daniel Boeckmann and reading of a number of letters relating to the Aglio family.

Although directed towards the Buckingham Palace work, it does point to the activities of other artists at the time and the participation of the Royal Family in the lives of these artists.

A later chapter tries to further develop insights into the lives of people over the early part of the 1800's particularly of those living in London and draws comparison between those living in the West end and those suffering the degradation of those living outside the well to do areas.

## References

?? From Letters relating to The Aglio Family and biographies  
See [www.guise.me.uk](http://www.guise.me.uk)

?? From Chambers Edinburgh Journal

?? From The Athenaeum

?? From a dissertation about Ludwig Gruner, Art Adviser to Prince Albert by Daniel Boeckmann  
This dissertation is submitted for the degree of *Master of Arts*  
School of World Art Studies and Museology  
University of East Anglia Norwich Norfolk 12 September 1996

## Thomas John Dibdin - Actor , Playwright, Songwriter son of Charles Dibdin 1771 - 1841

References from:

Wikipedia

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Thomas was born at 5 Peter Street (now Museum Street),  
Bloomsbury, London.



“Dibdin was the son of Charles Dibdin, a song-writer and theatre manager, and of "Mrs Davenet", an actress whose real name was Harriett Pitt. He was apprenticed to his maternal uncle, a London upholsterer, and later to William Rawlins, afterwards sheriff of London. He summoned his second master unsuccessfully for rough treatment; and after a few years of service he ran away to join a company of country players. From 1789 to 1795 he played all sorts of parts; he worked as a scene painter at Liverpool in 1791; and during this period he composed more than 1,000 songs.”

Thomas was, in effect, the same generation as Agostino Aglio but a few years older and brought up in London in the theatre world, a world in which Agostino was going to be involved for quite some time during his life. When Thomas's father turned against him, his Godfather, David Garrick, supported him. By the time that Agostino was entering the Napoleonic Revolution in Italy Thomas had written his first play and was indicating great potential.

By 1803, when Aglio had arrived in England, Dibdin had already worked and travel extensively throughout the country and had established himself in London. The problems of travelling around London and for that matter up and down the country must have been similar to those experienced by Aglio and train travel would only just have been coming in at the end of his life. Bearing in mind that both Aglio and Dibdin had both worked in the theatre world and both been scenery painters, it is interesting to speculate as to whether or not they ever met up.

As will be mentioned later both were working in the Haymarket, although in the two different theatres there and both had been in the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.



Thomas John Dibdin maybe by T C Dibdin

Thomas married, in 1793, the actress Anne Hilliar and by 1802 had cause riots in London over a comic opera “Family Quarrels” and a play, and “The Jew and the Doctors”. This was one year before Aglio arrived in England as an immigrant.

It is moderately easy to imagine him and his wife living and working in London using either a hackney carriage or walking to get around the centre of London but the prospect of travelling from London to Manchester and then on to Chester is daunting.

How much stuff did he have to take with him? How long did the journey take ? What about the problems of travelling to Inverness?



Anne Hilliar maybe by T C Dibdin

From the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

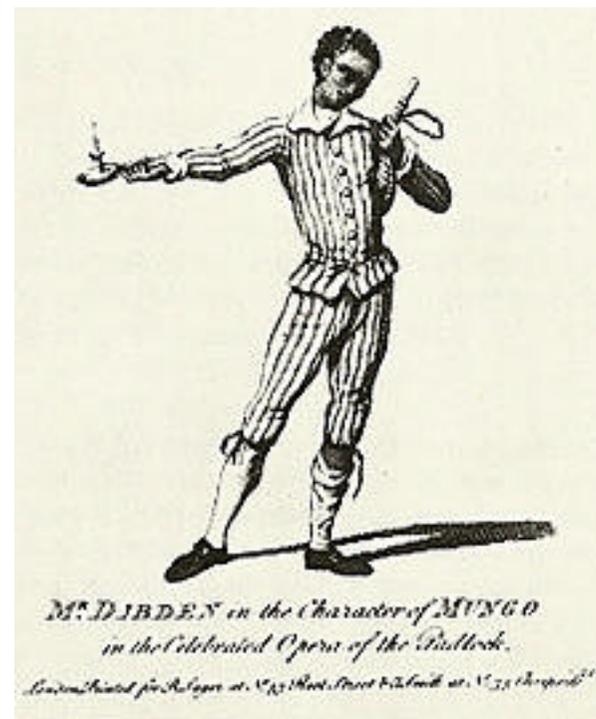
“In 1791, at the jointly managed Liverpool and Manchester theatres, Dibdin achieved his goal of a theatre-royal appointment. With only hours' notice, he played Mungo—‘that most favourite of all my father's favourite characters’ (Reminiscences, 1.111)—in Isaac Bickerstaff's *The Padlock* when the Manchester Theatre reopened after a fire.

Over three years he established himself as a scene-painter and gained valuable experience in stage management; he also performed a season at Chester. In summer 1792 he played as far north as Banff and Inverness.”

The reference to Mungo may explain why his brother Charles Isaac Mungo Dibdin was given that name by his father who wrote the music for in Isaac Bickerstaff's *The Padlock*.

Mungo was a stage negro of a very different stamp, and the first of his race. He figured in *The Padlock*, a comic opera, words by Isaac Bickerstaffe, music by Charles Dibdin, first presented at Drury Lane in 1768. Mungo was the slave of Don Diego, a West Indian planter. It was written for and at the suggestion of John Moody, who had been in Barbadoes, where he had studied the dialect and the manners of the blacks. He never played the part, however, which was originally assumed by Dibdin himself. Mungo sang:

“Dear heart, what a terrible life I am led!  
A dog has a better that's sheltered and fed.  
Night and day 'tis the same;  
My pain is deir game;  
Me wish to de Lord me was dead!  
Whate'er's to be done  
Poor black must run.  
Mungo here, Mungo dere,  
Mungo everywhere;  
Above and below,  
Sirrah, come, sirrah, go;  
Do so, and do so.  
Oh! oh!  
Me wish to de Lord me was dead!”





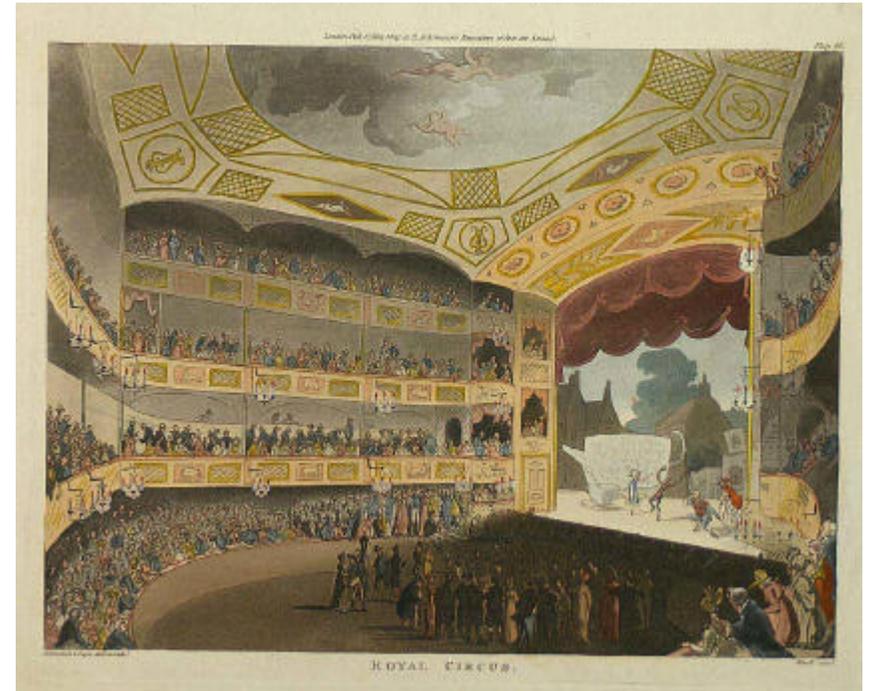
Dibdin was prompter and pantomime writer at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane until 1816, when he took over the Surrey Theatre. The Theatre Royal was another theatre that had employed Agostino Aglio in 1806.

The Surrey was in fact the old Royal Circus in St George's Field in Lambeth that his Father had opened some years before in 1782. It is interesting that this was in 1816, just 2 years after his father had died, perhaps he felt that he could succeed with the theatre where his father had failed only two years after he opened it.



A view of The Royal Circus in St George's Fields

This venture proved disastrous, and in 1822 he became bankrupt with debts of £18,000



From Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

“At this juncture Dibdin accepted a three-year summer contract as stage-manager at Morris's Haymarket, at £200 with one benefit, while Ann superintended the women's wardrobe for ‘a very trifling salary’”

This time in the Haymarket was a disastrous period and Thomas ended up in King's Bench Prison in 1824, the same one that Aglio had entered a few years before.

It is interesting that 1806 Agostino Aglio was busy across the road at the Majestic painting a backdrop.

It is almost mystical how the two families, the Dibdins and the Aglios moved in such similar circles and eventually in 1878 some couple of generations later they join when William Joseph Dibdin married Marian Aglio.

One would think that once in debtor prison would be enough and that a man with his capability would somehow sort life out so that he and his family could be a little more settled. But no! Life had to go on in the same adventurous way.

After this he secured the stage-managership of Sadler's Wells, beginning on 4 April 1825 at £400 per annum, Dibdin moved to the spaciousness of Myddelton Square in the nearby New Town and hoped to start afresh. His contract was renewed at intervals and he continued to write burlettas for Sadler's Wells until mid-1828, shortly before Ann Dibdin's premature death on 29 August. He married Catherine Court at St Pancras on 9 April 1829 and at the age of fifty-eight began a new family.

In 1827 he published two volumes of Reminiscences; and at the time of his death he was preparing an edition of his father's sea songs, for which a small sum was allowed him weekly by the Lords of the Admiralty. Of his own songs, "The Oak Table" and "The Snug Little Island" were popular at the time.

Again in 1834 he spent nearly a year, reportedly in a condition of near starvation, in Horsemonger Lane debtors' prison (near the present day Newington Causway); and in 1838 he wrote despairingly to the fund's managers that 'the situation of my Family and self becomes daily more critically painful'

This was only 6 years before he died at the age of 70 years old.



From Oxford Dictionary of National Biography – Assessment

“Open, forthright, but companionable in nature, Dibdin cultivated a wide circle of friends, including George Colman junior, Charles Farley, Benjamin Thompson, Douglas Jerrold, Sam Russell, and Thomas Harris (almost a surrogate father). He was ‘poet laureate’ of the Covent Garden Beefsteak Club. However, most of his closest friends (and his brother) predeceased him and, in the last decade of his life, with the responsibilities of a young family, the shocking consequences of his indigence deprived him of much of his spirit.”

**Charles Isaac Mungo Dibdin**  
**brother of Thomas John Dibdin**

Born 1767 died 1833



A full biography is in the Appendix

Charles Isaac Mungo Dibdin was a son of Charles Dibdin and the elder brother of Thomas John. He, like his brother, was sent off to Cecil Pitt by his mother when she and Charles Dibdin broke up and Mungo was latter apprenticed to an pawnbroker.

This was to avoid his becoming involved with the stage and world of acting.

Despite this, his career seems to be seems to be similar to that of his brother Thomas involving acting management and writing.

He, like his brother, travelled to Liverpool and Dublin performing although it is likely that he was based in London, the centre of the theatre world.

In 1816 he worked with his brother on the development of the Surrey Theatre, which was originally the Royal Circus started by his father but this ended in financial disaster. In 1819 he was declared bankrupt and ended up in debtor's prison for two years.

He was release from prison when he sold his shares in the Sadler's Wells Theatre which he had managed in 1809 and later went on to manage the Surrey Theatre again.

For Mungo, 4 years older than his brother Thomas John, his life and career can be seen as running in parallel to his brother. How much they saw each other is at the moment anyone's guess but from time to time they worked together and went through similar crises and had similar life styles from an early age.

### **Thomas Frognall Dibdin**

Son of Thomas Dibdin the Sea Captain

nephew of Charles Dibdin

(born 1776, Calcutta [now Kolkata], India—died November 18, 1847, London)



Thomas Frognal was the son of Thomas Dibdin, the sea captain brother of Charles Dibdin, who died in South Africa and is commemorated in the song Tom Bowling.

His mother died soon after his father, so T.F.Dibdin was orphaned at the age of 4 and brought up by an Uncle. He became well educated, trained in law and then entered the church, however he spent his early years writing and living with considerable involvement in the literary world, being a founder member of the Roxburghe Club.

He was born a year before Agostino Aglio and a few years after his cousin Thomas John Dibdin and no doubt lived in London amidst the literary elite of the day.

“Perhaps his most famous book is *Bibliomania, or, Book-madness, containing some account of the history, symptoms and cure of this fatal disease* (1809) This seems to cause quite a stir.”

“In all Dibdin wrote more than forty-six different works including sermons and lectures under at least four different pseudonyms, two of which were Cato Parvus and Mercurius Rusticus.”

By the age of about 50 he chose to give up “bibliography” although and devote his time to clerical duties although he did publish some further works.

A full biography is in the Appendix.

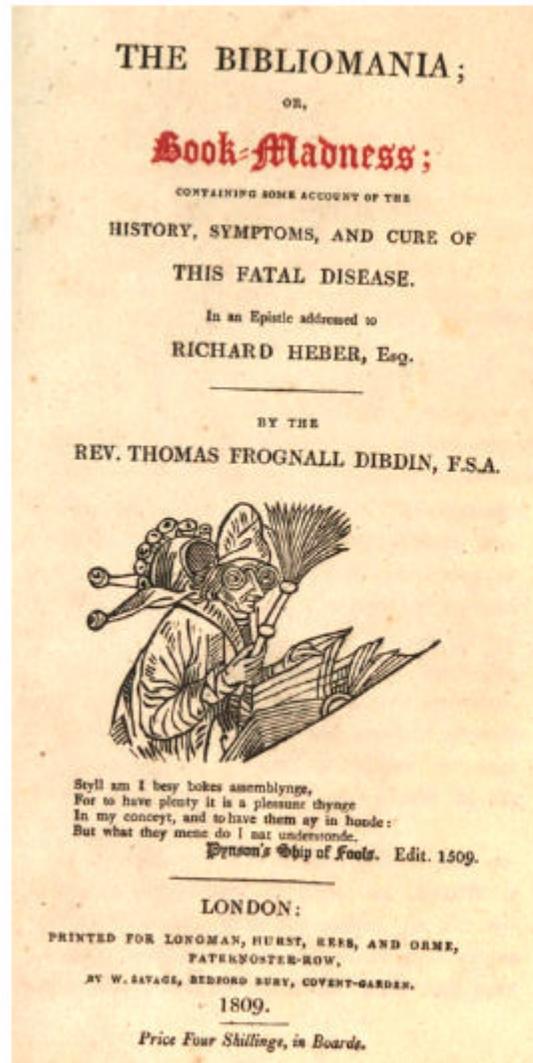
Comment by Mercurius Rustus in response to Thomas Frognall Dibdin in his article Bibliomania.

“In regard to the patronage of literature, what can exceed Lord Kingborough’s patronage of the Antiquities of Mexico, a work put forward by Augustine Aglio ?”

This little excerpt is interesting on two counts

?? It indicates an acknowledgement by a member of the Dibdin family of the work done by a member of the Aglio family.

?? The article written by Thomas Frognall Dibdin is answered by Thomas Frognall Dibdin under two of his aliases.



**BIBLIOPHOBIA.**  
REMARKS  
ON THE  
PRESENT LANGUID AND DEPRESSED STATE OF  
LITERATURE  
AND THE BOOK TRADE.  
IN A LETTER  
ADDRESSED TO THE AUTHOR OF THE  
**Bibliomania.**  
BY  
MERCURIUS RUSTICUS.  
WITH NOTES  
BY CATO PARVUS.

“ FEAR is the order of the day. To those very natural and long established fears of bailiffs and taxgatherers, must now be added the fear of *Reform*, of *Cholera*, and of *Books*.” p. 6.

LONDON:  
HENRY BOHN, 4, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1832.



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## **Thomas Robert Colman Dibdin**

(22 October 1810 – 26 December 1893)  
an English watercolour artist and teacher.



### **T C Dibdin**

born in Betchworth, Surrey in 1810  
Married to Anne Alice Jones in 1834  
and had 12 children  
Became a professional artist in 1838

He did paintings in Gibraltar and India although the latter were created in England, based on detailed sketches. In 1845 he published a guide to water colour painting.

Most of his life was spent in London but he seemed to have travelled throughout England and finally settled in South London.

Dibdin worked at Sydenham College later in life with his brother in law, Rev. William Taylor Jones who was the head. He died in Sydenham. His paintings can be seen in galleries in London and Sheffield.

In 1878, while working for Rev. William Taylor Jones, Dibdin was talking into into donating 6 sketches, at £5.0.0 each, of the site of Mayow Park, which was set up as the first open space made specifically for the general population in South Lewisham was with pressure and financial support from Rev. William Taylor Jones.

Although born and brought up for a while in the country near Box Hill in Surrey, he spent much of his working life in Central London, working first in the General Post Office as a clerk from the age of 17 years old. Records show that at the age of 25 years old in 1835 he was living in Goswell Road very close to the The General Post Office building in St Martin's Le Grand.



*'The Royal Mail's' departure  
from the General Post Office',  
after James Pollard, 1830*

At the age of 28 he decided to become an artist and sometime in his twenties he moved to New Bond Street before moving up to Charlotte Street in Fitzrovia.

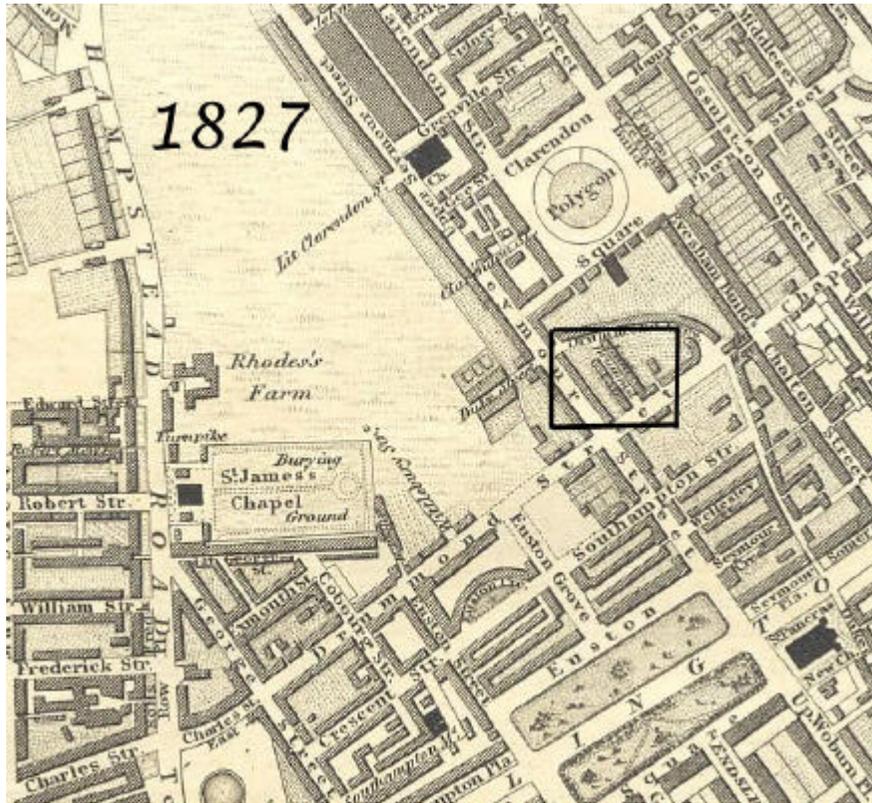
In 1850 he moved to The Polygon in Somers Town which was situated between Euston and St Pancras Station.



#### **THE POLYGON, SOMERS TOWN, IN 1850. (FROM AN ORIGINAL SKETCH.)**

[London : 1878 (or later)]. An attractive antique print of Somers Town in the mid nineteenth century - the Polygon was the home at various times of both William Godwin and Charles Dickens - and the birthplace of Mary Shelley. Engraved by Joseph Swain (1820-1909) from an earlier source and originally produced for the part-work "Old and New London" (London 1873-1878).

See summary of places of residence of members of the family on [www.guise.me.uk](http://www.guise.me.uk)



An article written by Marian Montford nee Dibdin regarding the Artistic Family also mentions that T C Dibdin visited Augustine Aglio with his son, the young William Joseph Dibdin at 4 Oval Road and this is where William would have met his wife to be Marian Aglio.

"The younger children of the Dibdins became very friendly with the three Aglio sisters, Laetitia, Marian and Mysie. Marian Aglio and William Joseph Aglio first met aged nine and ten respectively. He teased her by putting her pet cat over the wall, but he also climbed over the wall to get it back."

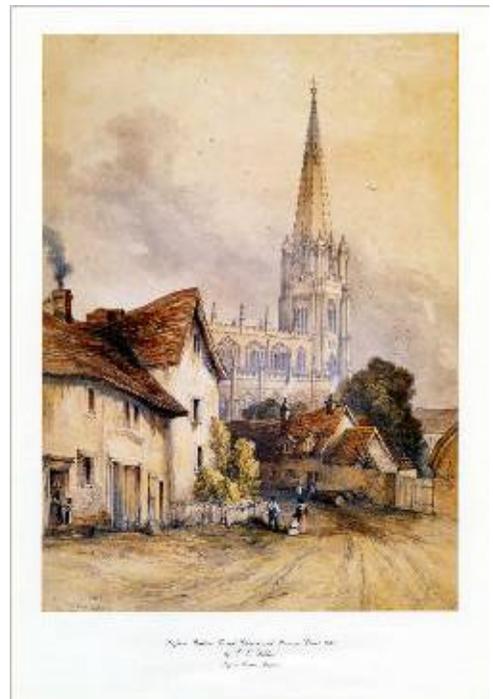
Once he had decided to become a professional artist in 1838 he moved to Bond Street and then to other residences in the Central area of London with one short stay in Banstead in about 1856.

How he met his wife to be, Ann Alice Jone, is a mystery but they got married while he was still at the Post Office, so perhaps he met her at work.



Ann Alice and Thomas Colman

Later he would travel extensively in Essex and probably visited his wife's brother, the Rev. William Taylor Jones who was the head of a school in Saffron Walden where he painted a watercolour of the Parish Church in 1841.



Although living in London most of his life, he must have had a yearning for the countryside as much of his work is of landscapes and local views and there are prints of his work from 1843 to 1861 indicating that he must have travelled extensively throughout England doing sketches and paintings. Areas visited include Berkshire, Cambridge, Cumberland Devon, Durham, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Norfolk, Oxford Surrey, Wales and London.

Looking at the list of addresses:

- 2, Radcliffe Terrace, Goswell Road, Islington
- 33 New Bond Street
- 23 Charlotte Street Fitzroy Square
- 28, Upper Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square
- 25 The Polygon Somers Town
- Banstead, Surrey
- 53 Belsize Road Kilburn
- Sydenham

Thomas must have made the effort to have lived in the swim of things and it is sad that we have no primary history material relating to his life.

There is a tale within the family that when William Joseph Dibdin was called in as an expert to report on the signs of subsidence in St.Paul's Cathedral, London, he said to the Dean "My father restored the paintings in the dome, but I have moved lower down." So T.C.Dibdin may have done some painting renovation in the cathedral.

We have examples of his work done in the Banstead area during his time living in south London.



Banstead Downs T.C.Dibdin 1857



Old Lane Banstead T.C.Dibdin 1861

There is not to much that can be said about life for Thomas Colman Dibdin and his family other than that which is referred to elsewhere. His childhood must have been somewhat tumultuous being the son of someone in the theatre world and the suggestion is that most of his siblings died young. Judging from the family residences over the years, it would seem that his financial status varied widely and there is the comment by his son William Joseph that in 1864, while they were living at Kentish Town or Belsize Park, indicating a degree of poverty.

From W.J.Dibdin's autobiography  
"On the removal of our family from Banstead to London, Kentish Town, I went for 12 months to a school in Fortress Terrace but, when at 14 years of age, I had the opportunity of obtaining a clerkship with the London and North Western Railway at Camden Station and knowing that my father had a hard task to keep a large family going I asked to be allowed to accept it."

The reference to Kentish Town may well have been 53 Belsize Road where records show that the family settled for a few years by 1870 although Fortress Road is about 2 mile away.

The issue over finance seems to have been the bane of both his Father and Grandfather and in fact William, his son, seems to have to have had to cut back considerably in the last 10 years of his life.

Later in his life Thomas Colman went to work for his brother in Law – Rev William Taylor Jones who was the founder and head of Sydenham College in 1857. During the second half of the century, there was considerable interaction between the Taylor Family and the Dibdin Family with a number of the Dibdin Family either working for or attending Taylor Jones Schools.

As mentioned before, in 1875 Rev William got Thomas to donate 6 delightful sketches of the new Mayow Park to be sold for £5 to raise money for the purchase of Mayow which was one of the first public parks in England.

The Taylor Jones – Dibdin relationship is a topic of its own which extends out to include the Tetley family ( of Tetley Tea) This is available in detail on the history website.

It is likely that Thomas Colman was still living at Belsize Road while he was working at Sydenham and so it is interesting to consider how he travelled across London perhaps at the age of 60 years old or more. We know that in 1881 at the age of 71 he was still at Belsize Road although it is recorded that he died 12 years later at Sydenham. His wife was to die a year later.



Photograph of Mayow Park, Sydenham, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By the time of his death in the 1893, his son William Joseph had settled at Mayfield, Grange Rd, Sutton and, although still working for London County Council, would resign and go into private consultancy within a few years. Sutton was only a few miles from Sydenham and probably easily assessable by train.



Watercolour of the North Downs looking towards the South Downs by Thomas Colman Dibdin  
Found in the archive painted on two sheets of paper

**Augustine Aglio  
1817-1885**

Photographer & Painter, Sculptor & Architect  
son of Agostino Aglio and Letitia Clarke



**Augustine Aglio**  
son of Agostino Aglio of Cremona

**Married Margaret Absolon, the sister of John Absolon the painter, in 1846**

**They had 4 children**

**Augustine Joseph Aglio** born March 1847 died 1848

**Letitia M Aglio** born Sept 1848 - Great Aunt Letitia who married Frederick Pape [ In 1881 she lived with Uncle John Absolon, the painter, at 106 Palace Gardens Terrace - In 1891 she was married and was living at 105 Cavendish Road with a family around her including her own mother and her sister in law ]

**Marian Aglio**, (or Marion) born 14 Jan 1851 - Christened 29 Aug 1852 Old Church, Saint Pancras, London, England, who married William Joseph Dibdin.

**Mysie (Mytie Mydie) E M Aglio** born about 1853

It seems likely that he lived with his parents at 2 Osnauburg Road, perhaps working with his father, until he married and move out to 4 Oval up in Camden Town. After some years the family moved to 87 St Pauls Road Islington

Augustine Aglio is an enigma. From the little we know about his life, it would seem that he dabbled in a great deal and achieved much. His paintings are recognised in the art world. Unlike the other main characters of this booklet we do not have biographies or autobiographies. An article by Yockney and a short comment on the website PhotoLondon is all we have to add to a handful of letters that give a clue as to his work activities.

Sadly these do not give much information with which to build up a picture of life for Augustine as we do for his father. It seems that he lived with his father near Regents Park until he got married to Margaret Absolon and then moved up to Camden Town. We have the anecdotal evidence that it was here that he entertained John Absolon, his brother in law who was living near the south west corner of Regents Park and another family artist Thomas Colman Dibdin who lived at Somer Town nearby.

We have the note than during the period the T C Dibdin was living in Banstead with his family they would all stay with Augustine on his visits to London. It was during these visits the his daughter and William Joseph would have met up even at the early age of 12 and initiated their lifetime relationship.



No.4 Oval Road is the second house to the right

We had record that after this Augustine set up business as a photographer in 201, Piccadilly with his nephew in law, Hugh Wolfgang de Mansfield Absolon, for a few years from 1852. We have a summary biography from the PhotoLondon website

Aglione, Ludovico Cajetan Augustinus  
Born Kensington October 1816.  
Christened October 16 1816 Hammersmith.  
Md Margaret Absolon (daughter of John Absolon (q.v.) February 7 1846 in St Pancras.  
Son of Agostino Aglio (1777 - 1857), engraver and lithographer.  
3 daughters.  
Partnership with Hugh Wolfgang de Mansfield Absolon, as Aglio & Absolon.  
[Absolon Family](#)  
STUDIO: 201 Piccadilly, Westminster 1852 - 1853. Successors to Friedrich Droege.  
Exhibited at various galleries 1836 - 1875. (including RA 1854 & 1864).  
1851: as artist, painter, sculptor & architect 34 Sidney Street, Brompton, Kensington.  
As artist and drawing master 4 Oval Road, Camden Town, St Pancras 1858 - 1863.  
At 87 St Paul's Road, Camden Town, St Pancras 1864 - 1881.  
Died at 36 Gloucester Crescent, Regent's Park, St Pancras March 11 1885.  
Sister Mary Elizabeth Aglio exhibited at RA 1851 from Sidney Street, Brompton, Kensington.  
LITERATURE: Alfred Yockney. The Aglio family in Apollo Vol 38 November 1943 pp 145 - 146; Boase Vol 4; Graves.

The above emphasises his work as a photographer and mentions other types of artistic work that he did.

The reference to Mary Elizabeth, his sister is interesting as she was obviously a capable artist and exhibited in the R.A.



By Mary Elizabeth Aglio

It seems likely that Augustine worked closely with his father particularly as he lived with the family until he was 30 and got married and the lived nearby. By the time his father had reached the age of 69, he had complete the Buckingham Palace work but was still painting. In that year he painted several rooms in Woolley Hall in Yorkshire and in 1848 took on the job of

decorating the Olympic Theatre. It is recorded in Agostino's autobiography that his son helped him with the painting of the Olympic theatre. This was when Augustine was aged 31 years old and his father was 71.



The following year Agostino had a stroke and was partly paralysed using his left hand for doing a few watercolours.

It seems that although buried in Highgate cemetery, he was living beforehand at Beresford Road which may have been in Greenwich which is rather strange.

Regarding Augustine Aglio's painting, there is an article by Alfred Yockney. (1878-1963)

"Like his father, the young Aglio developed a taste for sculpture and his first exhibit were in this medium. He also inherited an aptitude for lithography and print however, as a painter in water colours that he is usually "placed." He showed at the Royal Academy, the British Institution, the Society of British Artists, and elsewhere, revealing an instinct for nature which established him in favour as a practising artist and as a teacher of landscape painting. His output was restricted through his duties as an Art Master. He worked mainly in the Home Counties, and when he travelled further a field he preferred Devon, Cornwall, Yorkshire and Shropshire, in which county, particularly at and around Ludlow, he found good inspiration, like many other XIXth century artists from Turner to Steer. With a good eye for a subject. Aglio chose broad acres and wooded country, revelling in the effect of sunshine on foliage, the play of strong shadows on verdant fields, the mystery of distant landscape dissolving into the sky. Spaciousness was one of his guiding motives, and his rural panoramas in full colour give a vivid impression of the England of his day. A church tower, a farmstead, a thatched cottage or a village entered naturally into his compositions. He seemed to prefer these features as accessories, but when he took an architectural theme, such as Ludlow Castle, he understood the structural values and gave due weight to his interpretations. His clean brush work appealed to his fellow artists and remains as a

distinctive characteristic of his style.

The work of artists whose names reappear are sometimes of more interest in history than time has allowed.

It may be so in the case of Aglio. well known for two generations and not forgotten but absent from notice through the scarcity of their works.

Drawings by such artists as Aglio, father and son, were typical of the talent common in the XIXth century."

Yockney refers to Augustine being a teacher and there is a letter from Bedford College in regards to his application for a post to which Eyre Crowe was appointed as Professorship of Drawing.

Eyre Crowe (1824–1910) was an English painter, principally of historical art and genre scenes, but with an interest in social realism. He was born in London but grew up in France.

Artists like many other creative artisans often have to supplement their living by teaching, privately. Agostino did some teaching early in his career in London and it seems that his son did likewise. In 1861 Augustine was paid £6.15.0 by Lady Warwick of St James Palace, Stable Yard for work which was perhaps teaching her family, although it may have been for portraiture.

Between 1870 and 1878 he was living at 87 St Paul's Road Islington with his family.

In 1875 he produced a summary biography for Sam Redgrave who was producing a Dictionary of Artists to include Agostino Aglio.

Augustine would have had similar issues as his father when traveling round London although after 1834 the Hanson Cab was available but not the horse drawn tram.

Alfred Yockney suggests the he did travel round England visiting and painting landscapes and but it is likely that he would have been able to travel by the new mode of transport, the train which was becoming established during the 1840's. The journey from London to Yorkshire by stage coach would have taken a couple of day whereas by train it would be only a few hours.



It is difficult to identify exactly what Augustine did for a living as he seems to have had a finger in so many pies and been competent in so many creative areas. The fact that he was able to devote what ever time was necessary at the age of thirty one to helping his father with painting a theatre and then about 6 years after getting married he sets up a photographic studio in Piccadilly suggest that he was entrepreneurial as well as being a jack of all trades. In 1840 when he was twenty three it is suggested from letters that he took on a project of creating replica stone "Medici Vases" with a view of selling them to various

nobility and well to do gentlemen for their county houses. Sadly there are 11 letters of rejection and none of acceptance. These letters were all addressed to 2 Osnaburgh St but it is unlikely that his father would have been taking on such a project. In 1860 Augustine asked the singer, William Ley to sing for him at the newly opened St James Hall in Regents Street. The invitation was accepted.

The Railway Station by William Frith 1862 giving some idea of the bustle surrounding travel at that time and the style of train



Augustine obviously would have used a train at sometime in his life to travel around the country and there is a possibility that to get around London he may have hired a Sedan chair. These functioned in London like a hackney carriage but although one had protection against the filthy streets they could be slower than walking.

It is worth mentioning that Frederick Rowntree when visiting Chengtu to design the University buildings was carried in a Sedan Chair. See Website.

It may be that Augustine saw himself as an extension of his father, in so far as it must have been him that fed Frederico Sacchi all the information for the Italian Biography written in 1868 and also wrote out by hand the English translation in full.

One letter, in 1877, indicates that he submitted a drawing for publication to the Illustrated London News but this was rejected

Augustine Aglio was a competent water colourist and amongst the paintings in the archive there are many which are signed A.Aglío and which are difficult to identify as to which Aglio painted them.

The classical drawings and paintings are obviously by Agostino as are any prints published of antiquity and some portrait drawings. There are some landscapes which are “classical” in style and so would naturally be assumed to be by Agostino but it would be foolish to assume that all the others which tend to be freer were by Augustine.

Bearing in mind that Agostino had a stroke and still continued to paint with his left hand for a few years, it would be reasonable to assume that some of the landscape sketches were by him.

A thorough analysis of all the available works of art may be able to sort out this issue in the future. It is interesting to note that sometimes one comes across paintings on the internet that are attributed to the wrong Aglio, but this is hardly surprising bearing in mind that the father found it beneficial to use the name Augustine on occasions in England.

A collection of painting by both artists are available to view on [www.guise.me.uk](http://www.guise.me.uk)



Photograph of Augustine Aglio Sketching

It is interesting to speculate as to who all the people in the photograph, but there is a possibility that they may be the grandchildren of Thomas Colman Dibdin or those of his wife's brother John Absolon.

A close look at paintings by Augustine and John Absolon suggests that they spent time together painting.

Augustine Aglio died at Gloucester Crescent, Regents Park. 1885

His wife Margaret Aglio nee Absolon lived on till 1906 and died in the Epsom area.

**William Joseph Dibdin 1850 – 1925**  
**Chemist, Engineer and Entrepreneur**



Full autobiography on website [www.guise.me.uk](http://www.guise.me.uk)

Although in the 1840's and 1850's his father appears to be sufficiently well off to be living in the centre of town or in leafy Banstead, it seems that later in the 1860's money was not so available. William Joseph refers to having to leave school at 14 years old because his father could not afford for him to stay on and tried to teach him to be an artist. He had capability but because of his poor sight which could not in the 1860's be economically corrected, he could only manage to paint copies of his father's work. Thomas Colman Dibdin had a total of 12 children.

From **WJDibdin's autobiography**

“On the removal of our family from Banstead to London, Kentish Town, I went for 12 months to a school in Fortess Terrace but, when at 14 years of age, I had the opportunity of obtaining a clerkship with the London and North Western Railway at Camden Station and knowing that my father had a hard task to keep a large family going I asked to be allowed to accept it.

Much against his wish my father consented and I went one day to the office and on asking what time I was expected to be there on the next day, was staggered to be met with the question " Oh! I suppose you can be here at five o'clock", I meekly answered "Yes Sir" and was there the next day at five am. And so ended my school days and I entered on my life's work.”

At this time the family was living in Kilburn which at the time would have been just on the edge of the built up area of London. See Map of London 1882

At that time the family was probably living at 53 Belsize Road which runs along the [London and North Western Railway](#) (LNWR) to Camden town station and on to the old Broad Street Station next to Liverpool Street.

Coincidentally this was part of the North London Line or informally the Broad Street line that ran from Richmond Station to Broad Street and was used from time to time by the author to get to the city of London or to get the mainline train to School from Liverpool Street to Standon on one of the many branch lines that existed in the 1950's.

It may have been that William travelled across to Camden Town station by train or he may have had to walk the two or so miles. This may have been his first encounter with the more difficult side of life in London

Again from WJDibdin's autobiography

“The strangeness of my surroundings was great and the roughness of the men about me, at first, seemed unkindness itself, especially from those and, not a few, who seemed to think that nothing could be done without the most violent language and there was brought home to me in sad earnest the physical defect I had always suffered from, but largely unknowingly, my short sight. As my normal focus of clear vision is only about four inches and spectacles for children were practically unknown, I soon found that I was not quick enough to scan invoices and hand written documents with the rapidity required and many were the trials I underwent because of my necessary slowness. The defect became

so marked that eventually I had to have spectacles and then one's life was almost a burden. In those days (1864), I suppose I must have been the only boy in London wearing spectacles and it seemed to be the bounden duty of every passing labourer etc in the street to pass remarks as if I was a wicked person who wouldn't see properly with his own eyes, but must, in some spiteful and cowardly way, employ outside aid. I was naturally a nervous child in many ways and the constant annoyance had the effect of still more conducing to personal isolation and a desire to work quietly away from vulgarity. In fact the position was so acute at times that I would gladly have accepted my Father's wish to follow his artistic work, had it not been for the very fact that my eyesight prevented my obtaining a clear view of the thing to be copied. In those days optical science was in its infancy and there was no such thing as a cure for astigmatism etc. Had I been supplied with the corrections to eyesight I now enjoy my whole life might very possibly, and I think certainly, have been very different, but I made the best of things and did my best.”

Life was such that William at the age of nearly 17 years old was driven to emigrate to Australia and he spent about 7 years there until he was 24 and his mother wrote to him saying that his father was missing him.

There is no mention of Marian Aglio in relation to returning from Australia but there is every reason to believe that she may have presented a pull back to England.



The Flying Cloud – the ship on which William sailed to Australia

The journey took 3 months, the first week of which was spent sailing from London to the Isle of Wight and the last week waiting outside Brisbane for a storm to settle.

In 1874 William return to England and re-entered London life with no qualifications but an entrepreneurial attitude and a growing interest in chemistry, through his encounter with photography. It is to be remembered that his father's friend Augustine Aglio whose daughter, Marian, he must have fancied, had worked in the photography world some few years before.

In 1878 he married Marian and over the years she had a total of 10 children, one girl, Sophia, died at birth and one boy, Gus, died at of cancer at the age of 24.



Marian Dibdin nee Aglio

From the distant past there is a romantic anecdote relating to the courtship between William and Marian. Not only do we have the written story of him teasing her at twelve years old with her cat but there is a suggestion that his return to England was coupled with Marian, not just the letter from his mother that his father was missing him as his autobiography suggests. The story or myth suggests that Marian may have been about to get out to Australia to be with William and that they nearly missed one another because of the reversed journey which would have taken 3 months each way

Once back in England, it seems that William quickly talked his way into a job; family anecdote has it that he was asked on a tramcar by a fellow passenger what he know about soap and

having stated confidently that he knew all about it, he read up about the subject enough to get a job and we have on record that by 1881 he was living with his family at Shepherd's bush and working as an analytical chemist.

This story is not quite in line with the details in William's autobiography but it does reflect his approach to work at the time:

"Now commenced the search for work. I soon found that this was not as so easy to get, but nothing daunted I accepted a suggestion by my brother's [ George Michael Dibdin ] father-in-law Mr.B.W.Fase to collect outstanding accounts for him and others. This I did for a short time, when was offered a travelling agency for a firm of axle makers at Wednesbury. [Between Wolverhampton and West Bromich]

I was young and jumped at anything which promised good business. After scouring London and the neighbourhood for some 50 miles round, I got together a fair amount of business, so much to the satisfaction of the firm that when I finally took up chemistry in earnest as a living, they made me a present of an additional cheque equal to the amount of that which I had earned in recognition of the many new introductions I had gained for them.

While engaged in these occupations, admittedly of a temporary character, my Father earnestly endeavoured to induce me to take up art and follow in his footsteps. I did my best, but as before, my eyesight was against me. How could I draw objects which were all blurred to my vision. One day my brother-in-law, Montague gave me an introduction to a Mr Lloyd, of the London Water Purifying Company, in the Strand near Somerset House. They wanted a general assistant in business who could make analyses of water. My experience, so far as it went, in photographic

chemistry warranted my stating that I was willing to qualify myself for this work in particular my general business experience would enable me to do the rest. My suggestion was accepted and I accordingly went to Prof. J.Alfred Wanklyn who then had his laboratory at 117 Charlotte St Fitzroy Square and was in the Zenith of his reputation. After a months work I received the following certificate from him:"

Laboratory, 117 Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square London W  
13 April 1976

I certify the Mr William J. Dibdin has attended a course of practical chemistry in my laboratory and that he is able to make water-analyses. I entertain a high opinion of Mr Dibdin's ability and aptitude for practical work in a chemical laboratory.

J.Alfred Wanklyn

Note that again the centre of professional life seems to be in Fitzrovia.

It was through this process that William Joseph Dibdin started a career with the London County Council.

Much of his work surrounded issues relating to sewage and the purity of the water of the Thames. We are reminded that in 1854 Dr John Snow had the water pump handle removed from the water supply from the Broad Street Pump as he suspected that it was a source of cholera. It was later found that the supply was contaminated with sewage. In 1870 Bazellgette developed the major sewage systems in London including the complete modification to the Westminster Embankment which was to contain a new road, a main sewer and an underground railway, somewhat narrowing the river Thames.



A view of the new London Embankment after Bazzelgette had built, on the North bank, a sewer and train tunnel alongside the Thames, so narrowing the river, with a road on the top, between Westminster and Blackfriars.



Deepening a Sewer in Fleet Street. 1845

We are considering the "Victorian Era" and poverty was rife in London and although there is little reference to it amongst the family archives, one or two comments in William Joseph Dibdin's autobiography ring through ones memory. Particularly his reporting on the occasion he visited the Crossness Southern sewage Outfall across Plumstead Marshes, with a Mr Ward, a stern old lawyer, distributing picture cards to children of workmen on the site. He referred to the situation as being worthy of Dickens.

Included in his writings are insights into the battles he had over the quality of the gas supply in the city and the corruption that he fought within the LCC.

For insights into the life of William Joseph Dibdin, growing up and working in Victorian London and as a leading member of the London County Council Engineering Department, do read WJDibdin's autobiography



William Joseph Dibdin in his Laboratory at the London County Council  
1882 - 1897

Dibdin in his laboratory at the  
London County Council

William lived with his wife and family in Shepherds Bush until 1883 when he and the family moved to 18 Union Road Tufnell Park for a couple of years before moving to 112 Grange Road Sutton.

There does not currently seem to be a Union Road, Carleton Road, in Tufnell Park however in 1883-5 a Photographic Co. James Russell did occupy premise at 29 Union Road over that period.

Travel from Shepherd's Bush to Central London was probably on the Metropolitan line which was the first "Underground line" built in 1864 but the connection to his office either in central London or later at County Hall south of the River was not available via the Bakerloo line or Northern line until after 1906. There is a possibility that he travelled by horse driven tramcar.

The double deck horse trams used in London from 1870, when the first routes were opened, were twice the size of standard horse buses. This was because it was much easier for two horses to pull a heavy vehicle running on smooth iron rails than on a rough, uneven road service. Early

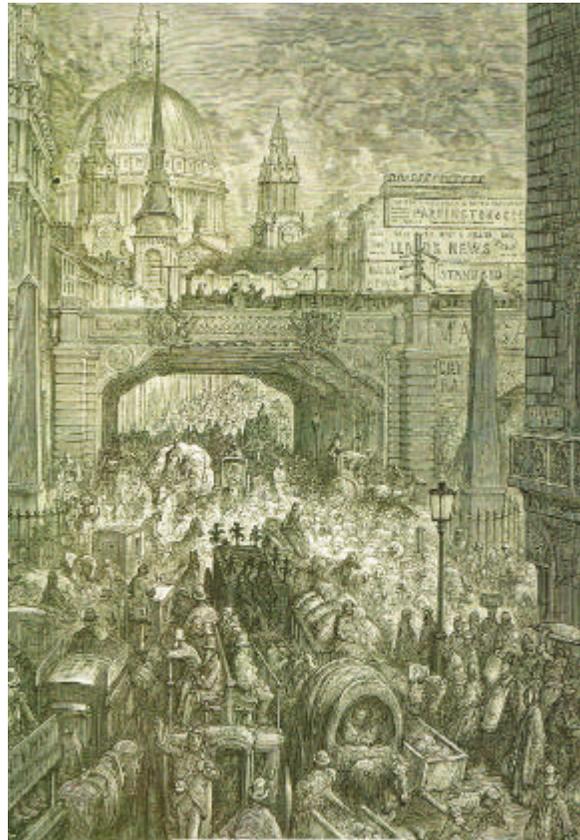


Horse tram 1890

horse trams could carry 46 passengers, 24 inside and 22 on the knifeboard seat outside.

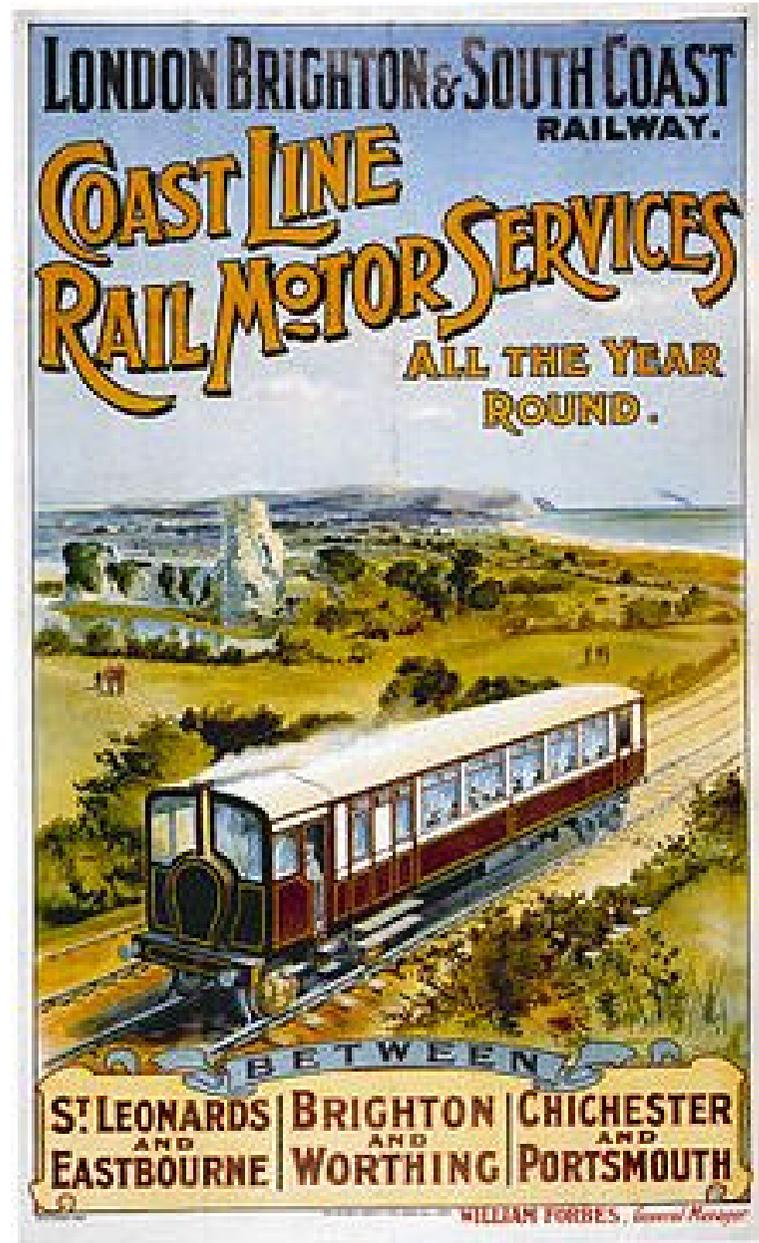
When living at Tufnell Park William would have been able to travel on the Midland line into St Pancras from Kentish Town Station and from Sutton and later homes in South London he would have been well catered for by the growing number of Railway companies.

At least by travelling by train he would have missed some of the traffic jams of the time



above: A "bottle" of traffic jam on Ludgate Hill, around 1870, passing beneath Holborn Viaduct. Most traffic is keeping to the left, for the rest of it.

Ludgate Hill 1870



William Josesh Dibdin worked for the London County Council until he was 47 years old in 1897 and then became so disillusioned by the battles against the corruption around him that he left and went freelance as an Analytical and Consulting Chemist.

While at LCC he spent much time not only fighting the local gas companies to force them to improve the quality of their gas but also fighting vested interests within the Council itself. Time and again he was up against the so called expert advice of “Qualified Scientists and Experts” and in one instance had to prove carefully and conclusively that a fresh supply water pipeline from Wales to London was not really necessary.

He was pleased also to win the battle over the most suitable chemical to help clean up the Thames at the Outfalls near Deptford.

His autobiography devotes one whole chapter to the battle of corruption within the LCC.

His expertise was not just limited to Chemical Science as he was interested in all aspects and so was involved in the testing and measurement relating to Electric and Gas Lighting.

“In the winter of 1882-83 the great Exhibition of Gas and Electricity was held at the Crystal Palace where Siemens demonstrated the transmission of power by electricity. In conjunction with Prof. William Fisher of Middlesex Hospital, I was requested by the Committee of Management to undertake a series of tests of the respective values of different exhibits as to their merits for the development and distribution of lighting power. This work we carried out at the works of the South Metropolitan Gas Company, Old Kent Road during the early months of 1883, the results being presented in the form of a report which was published in the transactions of the Gas Institute for 1883. The various burners etc. to be tested were sent to those

works where the company fitted up a special testing room for the purpose.

Prof. Fisher and I worked there nightly three or four times a week for nearly three months the work having to be done in the evenings, in consequence from other occupations during the day. I don’t think I ever worked harder than at that time. Official routine at Spring Gardens 9.00 – 5.00 with special investigations in connection with the Inquiry on the River Thames by the Royal Commission, General analyses and committee work; supervising 20 Gas Testing Stations and 3 Gas Meter Testing Stations, employing in all and staff of about 60 inspectors assistants etc.

Then to the South Metropolitan Gas Works and then home to Tufnell Park, right across London by the old slow methods of travelling and on arrival often having to take up some private work.”

William’s reference to the “old slow methods of travelling” is interesting as it emphasises how he had lived through an era of enormous change in modes of transport. During his lifetime trains became fully developed and spread over the whole country. Later he would have seen the introduction of the motor car and may well have seen his son Lionel own one.

At the turn of the century, at the end of the “Victorian Era” he would have seen the spread of Electric Trams throughout London and in fact only five years before his death, Croydon Aerodrome opened in 1920 with passage flights to Paris and Amsterdam.



It was only eight years after his death that his son and daughter in law died in the first major plane crash over Belgium.



Lionel and Cecily Dibdin leaving from Croydon Aerodrome 1933

William's scientific and engineering interest was such that he wrote books on Gas and Electricity, Photometry and Building Construction.

We never fully understand what impact historical events have on our lives and how different they would be in another era but it is interesting to note that William Dibdin was conscious of the possible different way that his life would have been had lenses for astigmatism been available to him in his youth as they were later in life.

When 14 he turned down the choice of being trained as an artist by his father because he could not see clearly enough and it seems that there were no lenses readily available at that time with correction for astigmatism, although they had been invented in 1825. William would have possibly been a capable artist and there is reference to examples of his close work, but because of the limitations with his sight and because he disliked the social side of Railway life he went to Australia for a while. His experience there led him into the field of chemistry and practical engineering.

Over his life he moved house round London a number of times, settling in Shepherd's Bush, Tufnell Park and then to the South London – Surrey area. Mayfield in Grange Road seems to have been fairly large but the house, Purleybury, that the family moved to in 1909 was huge with extensive grounds. Here his son, Gus looked after poultry, but sadly they only stayed for a couple of years. Gus died in 1909 and it was about this time that his doctor told William to stop gardening and take up golf. It is not clear where he lived after this except that in 1916, during the First World War, he and Marian were writing from Chelton House, Burdon Lane, Sutton.

During the war in 1917 the family moved to 31 Idminton Road, probably rented accommodation, and the feeling was that the house would just about do, offering some space for a laboratory. Both he and his wife and son lived here until their deaths in 1925 and 1928..

During the war he was expected to work on munitions in Manchester but the work not only bored him, presumably because of the repetitive nature but also he got ill because of the working conditions. The fact that three of their sons were at war as well as numerous other family members seriously worried both William and Marian. During the war he was still working on his sewage process and went on one occasion to sort out a problem with Lord Knutsford, near Manchester, who had a Dibdin installation. He sent his regards to Lionel on the front.

Lord Knutsford was Sidney Holland who was the Chairman of The London Hospital in Whitechapel between 1896 and 1931 and did much to keep the hospital viable and yet serving the poor in the early part of the century.

From being the rather “nervous young boy with a tendency to isolation” William Joseph Dibdin became a well loved and respected member of society. He, when young had joined the temperance movement and while in Australia had taken on any number of jobs and activities.

#### **Taken from Eulogy by J.H.Coste, a colleague**

“Types of mind and character are apt to recur in families. William Joseph Dibdin had much in common with his great-grandfather, Charles, who wrote:

"Go patter to lubbers and swabs) do you see,  
'Bout danger and fear and the like.  
A tight-water boat and good sea room give me,  
And it a'nt to a little I'll strike.  
Though the tempest top gallant mast smack smooth should smite,  
And shiver each splinter of wood,  
Clear the deck, stow the yards, and house everything tight,  
And under reefed foresail we'll scud.  
Avast! I nor don't think me a milksop so soft  
To be taken for trifles aback;  
For they say there's a-providence sits up aloft  
To keep watch for the life of poor Jack!"

These lines, I think, express very fairly W. J. Dibdin's philosophy of life. An ardent, brave, untiring man, he was too straightforward to study diplomacy, and was, without being aggressive, a fighter .

I first met him in 1894, and the first question he put to me was about Frankland's carbon and nitrogen process, in the value of which he believed to his dying day. I satisfied him and was chosen to work in the old laboratory at Craven Street. He at once impressed one as of a genial disposition, with a hearty and, sometimes, dominant manner which, one realised later, was the expression of a kind heart moved by sincere and compelling convictions. Moreover, however unconventional his chemistry seemed, he always had a clear idea as to what he wanted to find out, a keen eye for a likely road to pursue; and a readiness to adopt any hopeful means to an end.

The tendency many of us suffer from, to let learnedness obscure the real point at issue, never showed itself in Dibdin. He was at his best in attacking a technical rather than a theoretical problem. Whether the moral desire to meet some pressing need or the real love of investigation predominated I cannot say, but both motives were present in a marked degree, and inspired him to unwearying effort.

He was an enthusiastic experimenter, clever at designing apparatus and methods. One may mention the ten candle pentane argand, the radial photo-meter, the micro-filter, and a very good mercury pump for extracting the gases dissolved in water. A keen and able microscopist, his old staff remember with joy how, by an adroit touch of the cover glass, he convinced a rather highly qualified medical microscopist that a supposed desmid was nothing more than an air bubble.....”

For more see website [www.guise.plus.com](http://www.guise.plus.com)

Although never academically qualified in the traditional sense and always up against those elite that were, he died a highly respected member of the chemical and engineering world. Like many of the family he was not well off in his later years.

## Living in London in the 1800's

The idea for this chapter came from the study of the letters to the Aglio family. Not only was it possible to become aware of where the family lived at certain times but also it was possible to geographically position a number of their contacts and acquaintances. Confirmation was obtained from the research of Daniel Boeckmann relating to the creation of the Summerhouse at Buckingham Palace.

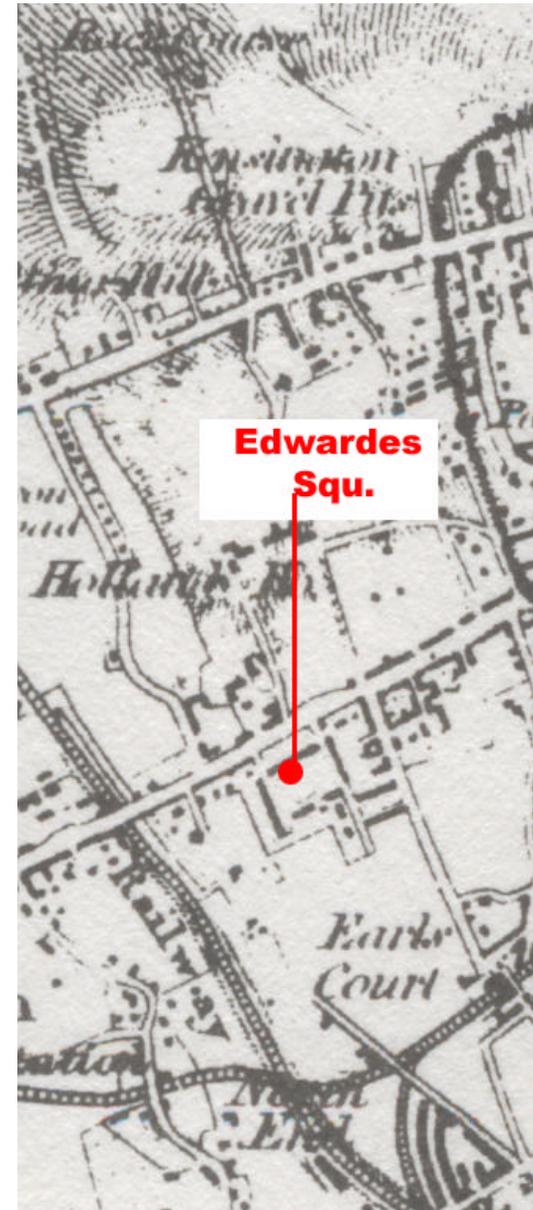
It became apparent that a number of artists were living in the Regents Park area of London in the mid 1800's and obviously although not amongst the very rich they seemed to be fairly comfortable.

Aglio arrived in England in 1803 and settled and worked for a short while in Cambridge however by 1805 he had moved to London and married Letitia Clarke, the daughter of Robert Clarke, an Alderman of London and possibly one time mayor.

In 1814 they settled in a new house at Edwardes Square in Kensington where they lived until 1820

The map alongside shows how little building there was in the area near Earls Court was .

Edwardes Square is now much as it was then after the square was built, but with a somewhat increased price tag.



This map of London shows how sparsely built on the West End was and how London seemed to have stopped at Kensington Gardens and Chelsea..

This map is taken from 1822 ordinance map but the train lines were added in 1891

The map shows how un built up the area west of London was particularly round the Kensington Earl's Court area

Edwardes square seems to have been built on a green field site some time before the train routes, were laid. They were part of the Metropolitan District Railway now the District and Circle lines.



Below is the House in Edwardes Square were Agostino settled for a few years



He took on the job of designing the square ie the public gardens situated in the centre of the new housing complex. The residents of the square celebrated its 200<sup>th</sup> year and were pleased to recognise the work of Agio in the design of the gardens.



It will be observed that the Square was not laid out in the traditional London Square pattern with straight paths and classical borders but with gentle curves. It is interesting to note that this style was repeated by Aglio's Great grandson, Lionel Dibdin, in the 1920's when designing the lay out for housing estates in the Surrey area.

All three of Agostino and Letitia's children, Augustine, Emma Walsh and Mary Elizabeth were born at Edwardes Square but it seems that in 1820 they moved elsewhere but the address is unknown.

The next recorded address in London, we have at present, is that in 1838 that Mrs Aglio received letters at 2 Osnaburgh St, near Regents Park, however during those years between 1820 and 1838 Aglio had had a fairly busy time. He had done some theatre backdrop painting and done decoration at Woburn Abbey. He then spent 4 years travelling in Europe making facsimiles of the Mexican Antiquities during which time we have no idea how his family managed other than it is expected that Mrs Aglio, nee Letitia Clarke, had support from her family. In the early 1830's he was working on the Town hall in Manchester and it seems that his wife and possibly family were living with him just outside the city.

By 1838 the family had returned to London and at that time he became involved in work associated with Queen Victoria. He drew and painted pictures of the coronation and then was brought into the Summerhouse Project. It is through this work that we get insights into his contact and relationships with other artists of the time and it is possible to build up a picture of where they all lived.

Osnaburgh Street is located very nicely on the South East corner of Regents Park and it is from here that Aglio must have carried out his work and the young family must have enjoyed the London life. Through the Buckingham Palace - Summerhouse job and the letters associated with it we get some idea of the artist community that he was part of. Of the eight or so working at Buckingham Palace, there are letters to Aglio from about six.



**Research by Daniel Boeckmann** indicates that Aglio was working with the following artists: Charles Eastlake, William Etty, Edwin Landseer, Clarkson Stanfield, Daniel Maclise, Thomas Uwins, Charles Leslie and Sir William Ross and that within the archives are letters from six of these.

Addresses of these artists include several in Fitzrovia and others in central London near either Regents Park or Hyde Park. The excerpt of the map from before the Second World War shows some of the areas of interest. Current maps show some changes as a result of the war destruction to the centre of London and of course new building work. No 2 Osnaburgh probably does not now exist.

For more details please refer to the database of letters for details of addresses and the contents of them for some idea of how involved Aglio was with the activities associated with the Summerhouse Project. This is on the history Website.

The one mystery address is that of C.R. Leslie, 12 Pine Apple Place, as so far no current reference to that place can be found.

Augustine Aglio must have met and married, in 1846, Margaret Absolon, John Absolon's sister, from his father's home and they, when married, moved not too far away up the road to Oval Road in Camden Town. At that time John Absolon may well have moved to Cornwall Crescent on the South West corner of Regents Park having been living in Jermyn Street of Piccadilly in 1841. Later the Absolon family moved to Palace Gardens and then to Palace Gate, all residences comfortably central for London life. Reference is made in an article written some time ago within the family that John's father, also John Absolon, had lived with his family in Bond Street.



"Madge (Margaret Absolon) was born in 1813 and at the age of two and a half was lifted from her cot to see the sashes of the windows of the street lined with lighted candles. The impression of these illuminations in honour of the victory of Waterloo remained with her all her life."

Her father, John Absolon Senior, was so strict that when Beau Brummel and the Prince Regent had visited a neighbour's house, he sent his three teenage daughters away immediately to a Boarding School in the country village of Brixton.

Reference: the article on the website regarding the **Artistic Family Dynasty**

While living at 4 Oval Road Augustine Aglio set up as a photographer in partnership with his brother in law's son, Hugh Wolfgang de Mansfield Absolon, for a couple of years. They had premises in 201 Piccadilly which is thought to be on the south side of the street in the block between Green Park and the Ritz. Apparently this was in about 1852 just after the invention of the Collodion Process for photograph making.

It must have been quite a pleasant journey to work from Camden Town, down through the side of Regents Park, round Park Crescent and down Regents Street to Piccadilly Circus. Alternatively he could have travelled down through Fitzrovia - Fitzroy Square, Upper Charlotte Street, Soho Square and Shaftesbury Avenue, passing on the way any number of the homes and probably the studios of artists known to his father and possible to himself.

How he travelled is anybody's guess but it may have been by the taxicab of the time, the Hanson cab, invented in 1834.



It is also noted in the article about the family of Artists, written by Marian Montford, a daughter of W.J.Dibdin, that Thomas Colman Dibdin was a contemporary of Aglio and there is every reason to believe that he and his family visited Augustine Aglio up in Camden Town. One can imagine Dibdin, Aglio and Absolon all socialising at no. 4 Oval Road.

See Reference: the article on the website regarding the Artistic Family Dynasty

This article also mentions that young William Joseph Dibdin visited Augustine Aglio with his father at 4 Oval Road and this is where he would have met his wife to be Marian Aglio.

From **Artistic Family Dynasty**

"The younger children of the Dibdins became very friendly with the three Aglio sisters, Laetitia Marian and Mysie. Marian Aglio and William Joseph Aglio first met aged nine and ten respectively. He teased her by putting her pet cat over the wall, but he also climbed over the wall to get it back."

"When he came up from Banstead Thomas Colman Dibdin always looked up his old friend John Absolon and his (John Absolon's) brother in law, Augustine Aglio. As the elder members of his large family left home, T.C.Dibdin and his wife brought the younger children back to London and settle in Chalk Farm where a lively laughter loving family with musical, artistic and scientific interests. Their home was a centre of attraction to many contemporaries."

So now we know the whereabouts of four members of the family living in central London and knowledge of another eight artists that lived close by, including areas such as in Charlotte Street and Fitzroy Sq. all within reasonable walking distance of each other and the Parks of London. It is worthy of note that Fitzroy Sq comes up as a place of residence of a member of the Fleuss Family, Oswald Fleuss who was a stained glass artist but he was working in the area later in the century. The Fleuss Family and Dibdin Family conjoined in 1942 when the granddaughter of William Joseph and the Grand son of Vera Fleuss married.

It is of interest that amongst all the artist that we know about in relation to the Aglios, and T.C.Dibdin we have no reference to William J Turner or John Constable although both may have been within their circle of acquaintances bearing in mind that they were both in London at the time and that Charles R.Leslie was a close friend of Constable who sadly had died in 1837. There is an oblique reference to Turner under a painting in a scrap book of Aglios's.

So what was life like in London at the time?

A look at maps of the town over the years can give an indication of population densities and hence the qualities of life lived by people in various areas and we can be fairly confident that for

those living around the West End and the Royal Parks life was not too difficult. Agostino Aglio himself must have overcome his bankruptcy problems of the 1830's and with the help of his wife's support and his own work must have offered his family a reasonable quality of life.

See Map of London 1882 in the appendix.



We can imagine the scene, with the help of pictures from that time. These London Parks that include Regents Park, HydePark, Kensington Gardens and St James' Park are all referred to as Royal because of having been acquired by Henry VIII and so had a well to do atmosphere about them.



*A promenade in St James's Park, with Buckingham House (later Palace) in the background, by Edward Dayes, 1790*



This view of Cheapside in 1823 shows quite a lot of traffic and is a bit crowded but there is still a aire of elegance about the scene.

Monet's scene of Westminster and the River Thames shows the delightful view but in no way gives us an insight into that other side of London that anyone with the slightest knowledge of Victorian London will be aware of. A mile or so from these views of calm and elegance, were the scenes of dereliction and immense poverty that were so well portrayed by Gustav Dore in his illustrations of London.



From the many pictures by Gustav Dore from the Book "London" published in 1872 , these two show the depth on poverty and hardship in London,.

The picture on the left is titled "Found in the Street" and that above " Scripture Reading in a Night Refuge". These scenes show the extreme other side of London compared with those above, probably experienced by the Aglio Family and other artists of the time.

We get no inkling of this side of London life from any of the family archive material except references to aspects of Victorian life with the autobiography of William Joseph Dibdin. He, in writing in the twentieth century, was aware of Dickens observations on the poverty in London and referred to it explicitly with records to his visit to the sewage outfall at Plumstead Marshes. Working for the London County Council until 1897, nearly the end of the official Victorian Age he must have seen and experienced much in the way of change. Considering London from the year that Charles Dibdin arrived in London, 1860, it would have change considerably during his lifetime.

The Aglios and the two Thomas Dibdin would have seen the introduction of mechanised transport in England and particularly in London and William would have seen the full introduction of trains in the city as well as the invention of the internal combustion engine and the car and finally the aeroplane.

He himself was involved in generating the benefits gained by improved sewage and the development of better gas quality and electric light. It would have been fascinating to see the changes to London and the life of people in it over the years and yet we may well be appalled at how poor living conditions were for some people in the East End of London as late as the 1950's.

## Summary and Reflections

This article has been assembled very rapidly, not just from the existing family archives, but with the help of continual reference to the internet. Without that facility it would have taken hours of research, reading and probably travelling to collect the information required to make the connections and sometimes assumptions about life for the members of the family at their time in history.

It seems that some members of the family specialised in bankruptcy or near poverty although not poverty as seen amongst many in some areas of London during that period of time.

**Charles Dibdin** grew to be a success and took on big ventures in partnerships that failed. He had a somewhat excessive lifestyle with a wife, three mistresses and God knows how many children and seems to have the ability to upset significant numbers of people. He ended up supported by charity.

**Thomas John** also of dramatic disposition took on grand ventures in the theatrical word and went bankrupt over the re-opening of the Surrey Theatre that his father had started as the Royal Circus. He entered debtors prison twice.

**Agostino Aglio**, admitted himself to be inadequate in business matters and had the unfortunate experience of going bankrupt after tying himself up for a number of years with Kingborough who himself went bankrupt because of overreaching himself with the Mexican Antiquity Project. Kingsborough ended up in debtor's prison in Ireland and Aglio had, earlier in his life, entered prison for none payment of debt, probably rent.

**Thomas Colman Dibdin** became a successful painter but did not quite hit the highlights as did other painters of his era. Although living in central London most of his life he did seem to move out of the central expensive area later on.

**William Joseph Dibdin** had an exciting early life in Australia and demonstrated himself to be a very capable and then got a senior job within London County Council. Unfortunately for him because of his perfectionist nature and his battles with corruption within the system he had to resign. It was probably his perfectionism that prevented him being highly profitable during his time as a consultant and entrepreneur.

There is much written about the lives of individual members of the Aglio and Dibdin Family, however there is little that strives to put each person into the context of their local or national environment and history. Whereas the Rowntree family had its roots in the North of England particularly Yorkshire, this family was centred in the South of England and especially in London.

The 170 years covered by this booklet, ie 1745 to 1915, were a period of considerable turmoil and it is interesting to strive to look at it through the eyes of those in the creative world not just with the traditional historical approach concerning the power struggles of the time.

Other creative names associated with the era are:

Goethe , Schubert, Berlioz, Paganini, Rossini, Shuman, Liszt as well as the names referred to in the main chapters.

A study of these individual's lives opens up further ideas about how people in Europe saw the world.

This recent study has opened up a considerable amount of new information regarding the lives of the family. Looming large is the issue of debt and prison experienced within a life of fair comfort or gentility. Although they did not live at the level of extreme poverty experienced by many of the time, none of the family referred to in this booklet, could hold onto money and accumulate wealth from their work.

The debt acquired by Thomas Dibdin of £18,000 in 1822 represents in present day terms somewhere in the region of £1,500,000.

It seems that the following members of the family experienced debtor's prison

Thomas John Dibdin - twice

Charles Isaac Mungo Dibdin

Agostino Aglio

and although Charles Dibdin ( senior ) did not seem to enter debtor's prison, he did die in poverty.

Up to now, there has been no reference to Agostino Aglio's time in prison or that one of his children died very early in life and another was born to a Jane Tomlinson in the same month that Augustine was born.

Frederico Sacchi's biography of Aglio attends mainly to his work activity and sadly his own autobiography only occasionally makes reference to his personal life and observations.

As will be appreciated, much of this booklet have been derived from a mass of family archive material as well as from the internet and it would be interesting and not impossible although very time consuming to assemble it all with a much more academic approach.

The effort to explore the environment in which the family lived has been fruitful in so far as it has drawn out the problems and dramas of the times as well as pointed to the technological developments. Aglio joined the revolution that had started in France and he like many other artists and creative people express themselves in one way or other about the injustices of the period. Beethoven in Austria had strong views about the corruption of aristocracy and then was torn apart by the arrogance of Napoleon. Charles Dibdin and his son Charles Mungo were aware of the injustice of slavery and wrote songs about it, just as Turner a few years later painted the picture of the slave ship. These people all had to make a living from the 'well to do' of the society of the time, but many seem to find ways of expressing their dissatisfaction. It is salutary to draw a parallel with our world now. Who are those that try to express dissatisfaction with the injustices that exist and the suffering imposed on so many. Perhaps it is now the comedians and singers of the day, as well as the news commentators?

Three of the family experienced debtor's prison, and some must have seen the poverty as portrayed by Dickens or drawn by Gustave Dore. William Joseph Dibdin confronted corruption within the London Council Council and the Gas Supply Companies, corruption that is no different from that confronted today within statutory organisations and private companies.

Are the past experiences any worse than some of what is experienced throughout the world today and in some instances the injustices experienced in England ?

It is worth mentioning, perhaps, that whereas many of the family and those referred to in this booklet, seemed to have been working as creative artists in the broad sense of the word and so their impact on the world would have been indirect through observation and reflection, there were one or two that had a more direct effect.

William Joseph Dibdin's work must have done much to improve life or at least the infrastructure for life in London and it is noteworthy that Agostino Aglio's daughter married a man, Francis Augustine Walsh, the son of a special friend to Aglio, who according to records devoted time to directly helping with the desperate needs of the poor in Manchester.

About Francis Augustine Walsh

In 1831 he was appointed to assist a friend, Mr Hyatt, Secretary to the Irish Distress Committee and remained in the service of that committee till the close of their labours in August of the same year. Upwards of £50<sup>m</sup>/ was raised and distributed in the shape of provisions to the starving population.

In April 1832 was appointed Secretary to the Manchester Board of Health - appointed to deal with the visitation of Asiatic Cholera in Manchester during that year and remained with the board till the [completion] of their labour in January 1833. 1335 cases occurred of which more than half (674) proved fatal.

A brief assessment of this booklet indicates how inadequate it is at achieving the goal of planting the family into a historical perspective.

A few names from the artistic or creative world have been mentioned but much of the immense change that occurred in the two centuries has not been referred to.

Charles Dibdin must have been aware of the rise of Empire and Agostino Aglio of the changes that were immanent as the

Regency and Georgian romanticism faded during Queen Victoria's reign.

Augustine Aglio will have seen radical changes within society with the introduction of technology and the move towards modern art and more challenging music.

No mention has been made of the scientific advances towards the end of Augustine's life and during that of William Joseph.

The work of Faraday was obviously significant and at the turn of the century we saw the growing understanding of nuclear physics and the technology of radiation.



*Poverty by Floodlight*

In how many ways were the lives of our ancestors different from the lives of us today and how many of the issues are the same? Are the scenes so graphically drawn by Gustav Dore really very different to those of today.

History is there for us to learn from; will we?

*Raoul Guise September 2016*