

If we had a time machine

We could skip back 200 years to a time when George III had just died at Windsor Castle in January 1820 and the flamboyant Prince Regent was preparing to be crowned King George IV at Westminster Abbey in July 1821. Regency London saw the end of the long struggle between Britain and France. Victory over Napoleon left its mark on the capital with a new generation of place and street names: Nelson, Trafalgar, Wellington and Waterloo. Regency London was less tolerant of disorder than its Georgian predecessor. Streets became cleaner and paved in stone. The city's most ambitious improvement was a vast new docks complex to the east, providing modern and efficient shipping facilities on the Isle of Dogs, at Wapping and at Blackwall in place of the congested Pool of London.

The centre of London also changed as the 'West End' developed a distinctive sense of place, mixing conspicuous consumption with public fashionability. This was a place to see and to be seen. The Prince Regent re-asserted the Crown's influence on London by becoming the West End's main property developer. Regent's Park, Regent's Street, Piccadilly Circus and Trafalgar Square gave Londoners a network of new public spaces in which to parade their wealth and indulge in the new London habit of shopping. By the 1820's London's shopkeepers had spread out from the City along the Strand and Holborn to new shopping areas around Regent street, Piccadilly and Bond Street.

This was also a time when the Industrial Revolution was changing the face and landscape of Britain and class boundaries became more starkly defined as the rich revelled in luxury and extravagance, while the poor suffered in miserable slums. Despite the yawning financial inequality of Britain the political forces of the day, the Whigs and Tories, oversaw a rising social conscience as slavery was abolished and prison reform was initiated. The British Empire soon accepted the loss of the American colonies granting their independence but continued to expand in other parts of the world bringing riches and prestige to the nation.

Against this backdrop of social and political change we find a thriving aristocracy looking to fill their plentiful spare time with diversions. Playing cards and gambling became hugely popular and led to a significant boost to the humble printers and makers of playing cards.

A deck of early English playing cards to most will simply be an inanimate object of modest interest but to an enthusiast or collector of playing cards they offer so much more and if found in part or all of its original wrapper then the story of their making and history begins to unfold. The wrapper will carry a lot of information e.g. a 'mark' or brand like 'The Great Mogul' or 'Highlander' and a maker's name and hopefully their address. If you are also lucky enough to receive provenance to support the history and ownership of the cards then they are no longer simply an inanimate object wrapped in paper and string, they really come to life with a story to tell.

The two decks of cards shown here are both by the maker James Hardy and were found in their original wrappers. They were first purchased in the 1820's by Daniel Wadsworth Coit from Connecticut US and remained hidden away amongst his possessions for nearly 200 hundred years until the end of 2019 when Daniel's great, great, grand-daughter discovered them.





Self portrait of Daniel Wadsworth Coit – both sets of cards were obtained by Daniel in the 1820's

Playing cards made by James Hardy. c. 1821 – 23 and Great Mogul wrapper.

The makers' traditional practice has been to wrap the pack in paper and tie it with thread. The paper was the maker's wrapper, a large rectangular piece of stout paper, printed to show his pictorial 'mark' and his name and address or location. The first recording of 'marks' was introduced in 1628. At this time there were so many card makers in London that they formed themselves into a company under the protection of a royal charter. The title of the company of card makers was The

Master, Wardens and Commonalty of the Ministry of the makers of Playing cards of the City of London. After the granting of the Royal Charter the company became known as the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards. When the Royal Charter was granted it forbade all future importation of playing cards and imposed small basic duties on home-made cards in order to compensate for the loss of import duty on foreign cards. Every English maker was required to have a "print, stamp, or mark of his own name or invention" so that the maker of such cards might be identified, and a register of these marks was kept by the Company. In the 1711 Act, it states that an official seal was to be put on the resulting package by the Commissioners, and no cards were to be removed from the makers premises without being so sealed. It was this seal that was intended officially to show and carry the sixpence duty, by means of an uncoloured embossed stamp.



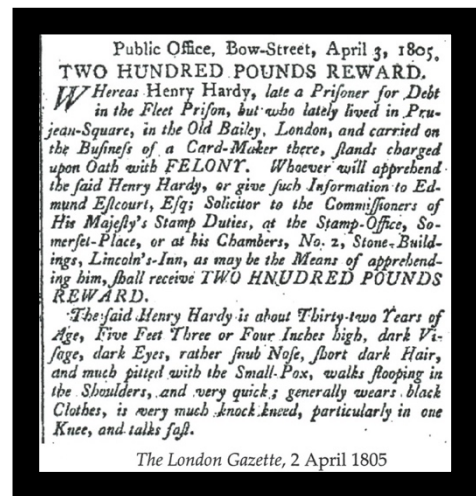
The archives of the Worshipful Company record many makers' 'marks' or brands. In 1706 there was entered the mark of King Henry VIII; in 1714 the mark of the Merry Andrew and in 1741 The Great Mogul and the Valiant Highlander; and these survived for almost two centuries. Whilst 'The Great Mogul' was first registered as a 'mark' to the maker Blanchard, one of the wealthiest card makers of his day, by the latter half of the 19th century they seem to have become the property of any maker who chose to use them, and they began to indicate a rank of quality in the order of Great Mogul, Henry VIII, Valiant Highlander and Merry Andrew.

Playing cards for exportation were not liable to duty and as such the card maker entered into a bond with the Stamp Office to allow an officer from the Stamp office to witness and seal into a

case any playing cards destined for export. As these playing cards were destined for exportation the wrappers do not carry an embossed tax duty stamp

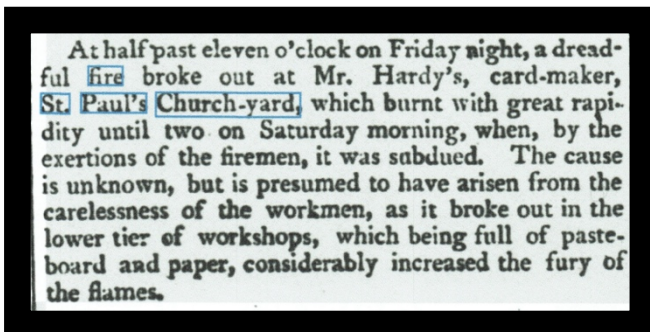
Who was James Hardy

The Hardy family went into the Playing Card business in the early 1770's initially from No. 7 Old Bailey. This started with Henry Hardy, who purchased the Freedom of London through the Goldsmith's Company in 1766. The Land Tax record show Hardy from 1770 onwards on the east side of Old Bailey, just a few houses away from the corner with Ludgate Hill. Both his eldest sons, James and Henry, served apprenticeships and achieved their Freedoms in 1794 and 1796 respectively. The business was to be plagued by bankruptcy with Henry being declared bankrupt in 1786/1787. Henry senior died 2 October 1789 and the business and the supervision of the apprenticeships was taken over by his wife Sarah Hardy who herself was certified bankrupt in September 1797. In 1799 Sarah was trading with her son Henry (Junior) and their fortunes did not change and bankruptcy followed once again in August 1801, culminating in son Henry being admitted to the debtor's prison in Fleet Street London from 1801 until 1804 when he absconded and a warrant was later issued for his arrest for debts owed to 'The King' for fines and debts to various others. Aces from this period were printed with the makers name H Hardy or just Hardy.



James Hardy, the first son of Henry Hardy Senior was also a maker of playing cards and operated from 86 Little Tower Hill between 1798 – 1804 then moved to 7 Old Bailey in 1805. James was apparently a

successful man, being master of the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards in 1802 – 1803 and was also a Churchwarden at the church of St Martin, Ludgate. In 1808 he moved the business in his own name, to No 4 St. Paul's Churchyard where he continued to make playing cards there until 1809, however, in



January 1809 the 'Gentleman's Magazine' reported that there had been an extensive fire at the Hardy premises at No. 4, which burned for 3 hours before it was subdued. In April 1809, James was using additional premises at 6 Little Carter Lane and in 1812 he is recorded in the Land Tax records as moving to 27 St Paul's Churchyard were his family remained until the early 1850's. Playing cards made by James between 1801 – 1828 have the name 'I Hardy' on the ace of spades, thereafter the name changes to Hardy & Sons.

Two of James's sons Henry and Edmund, were apprenticed to their father in 1814 and 1817 respectively, for seven years with the Goldsmiths' Company. They both completed their apprenticeships and became Freemen of the City, Henry in 1821 and Edmund in 1824. From insurance records with Sun Alliance dated March 1825 we can see that



James Hardy still owned and Insured property at 27 St Paul's Churchyard but "No cards made or store therein". A second policy was taken out for their 'dwelling & manufactory' at 3 Little Trinity Lane. Soon

afterwards a large fire caused destruction of many houses in Marylebone, including the card manufactory there of 'Hardy & Sons'.

It was not uncommon for card makers to advertise their products and particularly if they also manufactured for export which James Hardy evidently did.

**The Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser
Wednesday 23 October 1822**

we can see an advert placed by James Hardy where he "respectfully informs the Public that he has just completed an extensive STOCK of PLAYING CARDS for the present Season, of a superior quality, which will be found extremely



pleasant to use, and in every respect equal to the best manufactured in the kingdom." In addition, it states "Merchants & C. supplied for Exportation on very moderate terms".

Wednesday 19 April, 1826 in the Public ledger & daily Advertiser,

James Hardy & Son, Playing Card makers 27 St Paul's Churchyard, "respectfully inform Merchants and others operating in South America that they have ready for shipping a quantity of PLAYING CARDS made from an approved Spanish pattern, which they have been in the habit of supplying for the Spanish Market upwards of twenty years. The prices are now greatly reduced. English cards plain and coloured backed backs of the best quality, for Home Consumption and Exportation."

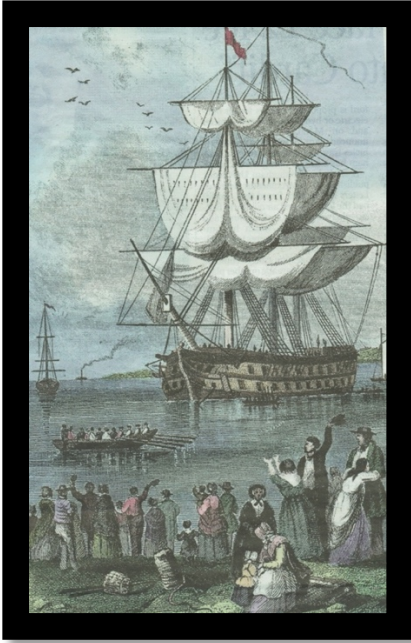


In 1831-2 James Hardy became, for the second time, Master of the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing

Cards. In January 1837 there was an assignment of interest in the business from James Hardy to his two eldest sons, Henry and Edmund Hardy. In December 1837 James Hardy died, and was described as 'Gentleman, of St. Paul's Churchyard'; he was buried at St. Martin Ludgate.



Playing cards made by James Hardy & Son c.1825 with Great Mogul wrapper



Daniel Wadsworth was an exceptional character and we are very fortunate that some of his expeditions and incidents of his eventful life were recorded by his own hand in many letters to his family and friends throughout his life. The content of these letters along with his own biography and subsequent autobiographies by family members Joshua Coit in 1887 and William Gilman in 1908 now provide a detailed account of his extraordinary life.

D. W. Coit of Norwich Connecticut, US was born on 29 November 1787 and died in the same house as he was raised in 1876. During his life he travelled extensively in South America (1818-28), Europe (1820-22, 1829-32) Mexico (1848-49), and California (1849-52), all on business. In the course of these travels he made, lost, then regained a fortune.

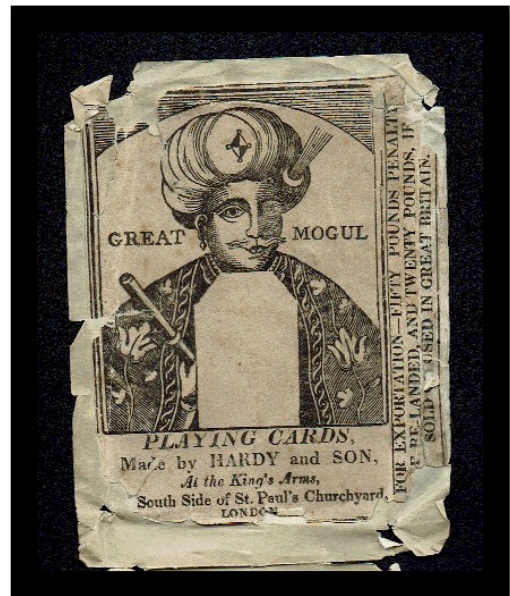
For the purposes of this article we focus on a small window within the life of Daniel around the timeline that these cards were first printed to see and understand how he may have procured them.

The first set of 'Hardy' cards can be dated to around 1821/3 (ref: Ken Lodge / Paul Bostock) based upon the design of the court cards the die number and 're-cut- marks and the wrapper which identifies the maker as James Hardy before his son/s join the firm.

The second set has a wrapper with the name Hardy & Son and a more modernised court cards (Type III Ref: Ken Lodge) and must date later than the first set but are within a year or so of one another. Both sets of cards were printed for export and from the advertisements placed by James Hardy we know that he was actively selling to merchants exporting to South America.

From family records we know that Daniel Coit began business on his own account in 1808 and after 10 years of improving his business acumen in commission and shipping business engaged with merchant friends Howland & Harmony and sailed with a ship and valuable cargo of munitions, particularly fire-arms and sabres, from New York to Peru in 1818. At this time Spain had possessed the entire coast from Cape Horn to Panama with the exception of Chili which recently acquired her independence and remained at war. Not long after arriving in Lima and the arms were disposed of to the government collection of his debt of \$30,000 due, became a tedious business as the government continued to refuse his claim. Eventually with the support of a local business man the government consented to allow a cargo to be taken from the country free of duties in settlement of the debt. After securing the services of an American gentleman whose acquaintance he had made and who had available for hire a large Swedish ship, they loaded the vessel with cocoa and agreed to sail together to Gibraltar where they would sell the cargo and divide the proceeds.

Not long after concluding business in Gibraltar Daniel proceeded by "mules and post chaise" onto London via Spain and France. He was a prolific artist and sketched many vistas and buildings throughout his travels including St Paul's in London. He was also fortunate to attend the Coronation of George IV at Westminster Abbey in July 1821.



It was whilst Daniel was in London that he looked to extend his business contacts and first became acquainted with the partners of the firm of Frederick Huth & Co. and described them as “they possessed a large capital and had long been established in London, where they enjoyed a high reputation among merchants.” Daniel made representation to Frederick Huth, the founder,



about the opportunities in trade with Peru and succeeded in being

TRADE WITH SOUTH AMERICA.
To the Lords of His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council.
 The Humble Memorial of the Undersigned Merchants, Ship-owners, Manufacturers, and Traders of London.
SHEWETH—That since the establishment of Independent Governments in the countries in South America, which were formerly under the dominion of Spain, an extensive trade has been carried on with them from this country, either directly, or through the medium of other places.
 That this valuable trade, which, with due encouragement and protection, may become of much greater importance, has been interrupted, and (according to the declaration of Mr. Zea, the Minister deputed to the Powers of Europe by the Government of Colombia, is likely to be lost, or subject to serious disadvantage, unless timely measures be taken by His Majesty's Government to place the commercial intercourse between the United Kingdom and those countries upon such a footing as will be conformable to those regulations which they appear to have adopted as the rule of their Government in that respect.
 That the principle of those regulations appears to be, to admit into their ports the ships and merchandise of nations which recognize and admit the flags and merchandise of their respective countries.
 That your Memorialists therefore beg to submit for the consideration of your Lordships, whether, in perfect consistency with the spirit of the Navigation Laws, the letter of them may not be so far relaxed, as to admit vessels belonging to the several newly established countries in South America, to trade, as with, at the several ports of this Kingdom, in the same manner as ships of the United States and Brazil.
 That unless the ships of those countries be admitted to a participation in that advantage, your Memorialists are apprehensive that foreign countries, especially the United States (whose regulations are governed by the rule adopted by the said newly established Governments) availing themselves of the opportunity which any hesitation on the part of this nation might afford, will secure to themselves most important advantages, at the expense of the shipping, commercial, and manufacturing interests of this Kingdom.
 Your Memorialists therefore entreat, that the subject may engage your Lordships' attention, and that such measures may be timely adopted to secure the advantages of a direct and extensive commercial intercourse with the United Kingdom, which are offered in the change of the Government of the countries before mentioned, as to your Lordships shall seem most and expedient, for extending and improving the commerce of this empire.—And your memorialists will ever pray.
 London, April 25, 1822.
 Baring, Brothers and Co. G. W. and S. Hibbert
 Richard, Mackintosh, Law, Joseph Murray and Son
 and Co. Hallet, Brothers, and Co.
 Barrett, Farquhar, Crawford, Richard Jeffrey
 and Co. H. and B. Brown, and Co.
 Reid, Irving, and Co. Dickson, Pizey, and Co.
 Finlay, Bannatyne, and Co. G. I. and G. Ranking
 Campbell, Bowden, and Co. Barclay, Brothers, and Co.
 Smith, Inglis, and Co. Barclay, Brothers, and Co.
 Paxton, Cockerell, Trail, & Anthony Gibbs, and Sons
 Co. G. and J. Brown
 W. and T. Raikes, and Co. Backles, Bagser, and Co.
 Fletcher, Alexander, and Co. Wilson and Hunsford
 Bainbridges and Brown John Jacob.
 Palmer, Wilson, and Co.
 Copy of a Note from Messrs. Cock and Willoughby, to the different Firms which subscribed the Memorial to the Privy Council.
 Gentlemen—We have the pleasure to acquaint you, that the Lords of the Council have decided favourably on the application for admitting to entry in this country the ships of the Independent Governments established in the Spanish part of South America, conformably to the Petition presented to their Lordships on the 23d instant. We have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your most obedient servants.
 (Signed) COCK and WILLOUGHBY.
 25, New Broad-Street, April 27, 1822.

commissioned by Huth & Co to select and purchase a cargo for shipment to Peru. The ship would sail later in September 1821 and Daniel was encouraged to join it on its journey to Peru but he had other ideas and looked to establish himself in Gibraltar in commercial business with the assistance of Mr Huth and other good friends he had made in England.

Daniel departed for Gibraltar early in 1822 making time to stop at Southampton, The Isle of Wight and Paris on his way. In the interim Huth and other merchants petitioned the government to allow ships trading from South America greater access to the ports in the United Kingdom.

Reported in the Glasgow Herald 3 May 1822 - London April 22, 1822 Frederick Huth and other merchants successfully petitioned the House of Lords to admit entry to this country the ships from Independent Governments established in the Spanish parts of South America.

“To his great surprise Daniel was recalled from Paris by letters from Mr Huth so urgent and important that he had no alternative but to abandon his plans for Gibraltar and return immediately to London.”

Mr Huth proposed a co-partnership to last 6 years, for the transaction of commercial business in Valparaiso and Lima, under the name of Frederick Huth, Coit & Company. A vessel with a valuable cargo was to be fitted out immediately and he was to go out in her and have full

control of the business in Lima where he would make his residence. In company with Mr Huth he then visited the principal manufacturing towns in England, making purchases for shipment and negotiating for further

consignments. Arrangements were perfected for sending a large and valuable cargo in a fine English ship in which he was to sail. He and Mr Huth continued their tour as far as Liverpool. It was not until June 21 1822 that the ship ‘Catherine’ with Robert Young as master and pilot to the coast of Chile and Peru, with Mr Coit and a gentleman whom he had consented to receive on board as a passenger, took her departure.”

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JUNE 22.—Wind S. E.—Arrived the Hornby, Corkindal, from Rio Janeiro.
 Sailed the Jane, Braber, for London.
DEPT. JUNE 21.—Wind East.—Came down from the River and sailed, the **Catherine Young** for Valparaiso and Lima; Betsy, Smith, for Tobago; Caroline, Dunlop, for Malta; and Snowden, Humphreys, for Gibraltar.
 Arrived and remains, the Britannia, Olders, for Leghorn.
 JUNE 22.—Wind East.—Sailed for the River, the Britannia, Oldis, from Leghorn.
 Arrived and sailed for the River, the Laing, Clark, from St. Vincent's.

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(Public Ledger & Daily Advertiser – Monday 24 June 1822 advises the reader of Ship Catherine sailing to Valparaiso & Lima)

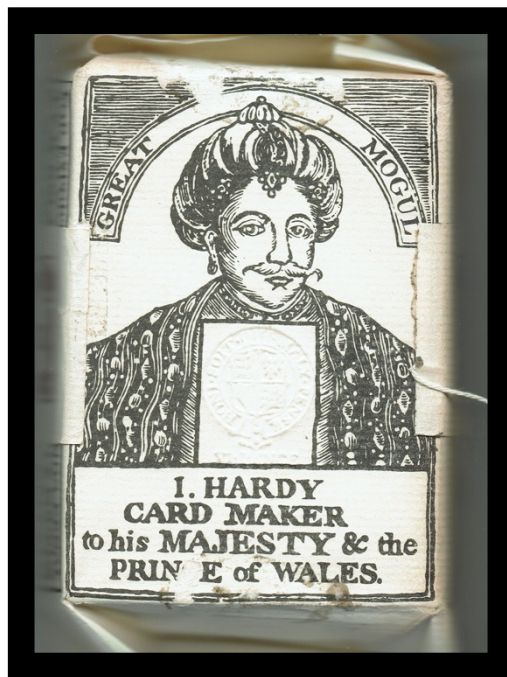
Daniel's commercial venture with Frederick Huth and Co in South America was immensely successful as can be evidenced by his letters one of which to his mother he writes "Our business keeps our house constantly thronged with captains and supercargoes, who give me not a moment's leisure or peace except when I am in bed". In February 1825, he had 8 vessels in port consigned to him with cargoes amounting to \$400,000. In August he names eleven more and in January following he was overwhelmed with business cargoes coming from the United States, England, France and Germany exceeding \$1,000,000. The business continued to exceed all expectations and Daniel's partnership was to expire as previously agreed on the 11 April 1828. He was to return to America late 1828 but In May 1829 on the packet ship Columbian he was to sail back to England to complete his business with Huth and enjoy a further tour of Europe before returning to America for the final time in 1832. Daniel continues with many more exciting adventures including joining the '49 ers' in California at the height of the gold rush but we have to leave it here for now.
(<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Coit-21>)

I think from the documentary evidence we can conclude that Daniel more than likely acquired the playing cards made by James Hardy from goods purchased in the UK which he exported to Peru on the ship 'Catherine' or possibly obtained them whilst working in Peru between 1821 – 1828 during which time he was responsible for the transaction of commercial business in Valparaiso and Lima, under the firm name of Frederick Huth, Coit & Company. From James Hardy's own advertisement we know that he had been supplying the Spanish market with playing cards for upwards of twenty years.

It is not often that one gets very excited over an ordinary deck of playing cards but as can be seen from this tale there was a lot to get excited about.

Colonial Williamsburg Facsimile deck:

When one holds and looks at a genuine Hardy deck you can readily identify the differences when comparing it to the Colonial Williamsburg facsimile of an exportation pack by I Hardy. The cards in the facsimile deck are made of thick card stock of a poor quality and the printing of the court cards are not as sharp, the die number is always No. 33 and the wrapper and label both with carefully embossed stamps are quite of the wrong period and inaccurate as export cards of this time were not taxed.



Information sources:

Newspaper articles from National Archive of British Newspapers.

London street views (website) with (Hardy) family information provided by Linda Green

Taxation on Playing cards – John Berry

Standard English Playing cards – Ken Lodge / Paul Bostock

Information on D W Coit, personal sketch of St Paul's & the following family printed records courtesy of Eleanor Hoague.

Information sources continued

Autobiography of Daniel Wadsworth Coit – Joshua Coit

A Memoir of Daniel Wadsworth Coit – William C Gilman