

# **Robert Bingham printing in France glass negatives of London Exhibition of 1851.**

*Unpublished research by R. Derek WOOD*

## *I. Source materials*

### *Source No. 1:*

**Letter dated [Saturday] November 29<sup>th</sup> 1851 from Edgar A. Bowring, Acting Secretary of the Commissioners of the Exhibition of 1851, to G. C. Lewis, Financial Secretary of the Treasury <sup>1</sup>**

Palace of Westminster,  
November 29th 1851

Immediate

[To] G. C. Lewis Esqre, MP,  
Sir,

I am directed by Her Majesty's Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851 to acquaint you, for the information of the Lords of the Treasury, that they purpose presenting the Governments of the different Foreign Nations that have contributed to the Exhibition and also the British Colonies, various Public Libraries &c with sets of Photograph Copies of the chief Articles exhibited, to the number of between 130 & 140 sets of about 180 Photographs each, and that for the purpose of their satisfactory production, which the state of the atmosphere during the winter months does not admit of in this country, they have despatched an Officer to France, charged with the superintendence of their execution there.

The French Government have authorized the admission of the glass "negatives" required for the preparation of the Photographs, and which were produced in England before the close of the Exhibition, without the usual Custom House examination, in consideration of the risk of accident which would be caused by such examination, and which might be fatal to them.

It is proposed to send back the Photographs to this Country, from time to time, as they may be executed. They would be forwarded in boxes, directed as follows :-

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<sup>1</sup> National Archives, Kew, UK, Treasury Board Papers T1/5718B/file 26028 [file 24161 transferred into 26028]

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via Dover

Her Majesty's Commissioners for the  
Exhibition of 1851  
1 Palace Yard  
Westminster.

Not to be opened.

Photographs from -  
(signed) R. J. Bingham (the Officer in charge)

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Having in view the national character of the object for which these Photographs, which are for presentation only, are intended, Her Majesty's Commissioners direct me to request that you will move the Lords of the Treasury, should Their Lordships think fit to accede to this application, to give the necessary instructions to the Custom House authorities at the Port of Dover to admit such boxes as may be directed in the manner above mentioned, without payment of duty, and without that examination which, as already mentioned, might be fatal to their contents.

I have the honor to be, Sir,  
Your most obedient Servant,  
Edgar A. Bowring

With little delay a meeting of the Treasury Board on Tuesday 2nd December 1851 dealt with Bowring's request:

“Let a copy of this letter be transmitted to the Commissioners of Customs & inform them that under the special circumstances therein stated My Lords of the Treasury are pleased to authorize them to give the necessary instructions to the officers at Dover.”<sup>2</sup>

In Treasury Chambers a copy of Bowring's letter was made and along with an appropriate authorization signed by the Financial Secretary, G. Cornwall Lewis, was sent on 4<sup>th</sup> December to Custom House, London, in time for a meeting of the Customs Board held the same day. Speedily the two letters were sent to Dover for the Customs Collector and Comptroller there to “take care that the directions therein contained be duly obeyed”. At 11 am on Friday, 5th December, 1851 the Comptroller of Customs and the Controller, W. Wilcox, at Dover entered their own instruction on the letters passed through from the Treasury: “The Landing Officers to see this”.

Thus, Bowring's letter of Saturday 29th November 1851, through authorization by the Treasury, the orders of the Customs Board in London, the directions of the Controller of Customs at Dover, had been fully delivered in exactly a week with

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<sup>2</sup> National Archives, Kew. ‘Treasury Board Minute Book Oct-Dec 1851’, 2nd Division, 2 December 1851: T29/545/pp. 459-60.

the “necessary directions to your officers at Dover for the admission of the boxes of Photographs alluded to in the said communication, without payment of duty and without examination”.<sup>3</sup>

**Source No. 2:**

**16th November 1851: Three letters of W. H. F. Talbot pursuing his dispute with Commissioners of the Exhibition** <sup>4</sup>

The drafts of these three letters are on four sides of one folded sheet dated November 16, 1851, from W. H. F. Talbot to George Knight, J. H. Bolton, and William Carpmael:

Nov 16 /51

[To] Knight I request you will have the goodness to inform me immediately whether you have made a contract with the Executive Committee to supply them with several thousand positive copies, because if you have made no such contract it was made by an unlicensed party against whom my lawyer will / ~~I believe~~ probably / take immediate proceedings.

[To] Bolton

I have to request your immediate attention to the following. Henneman writes me word that the Executive Committee have signed a contract with ~~a person~~ Mr. Bingham to make 10000 or more copies in France, thus defrauding my licensees to that amount. Mr. B is still in London but leaves for France on Wednesday [19th November] I propose to call on you about noon tomorrow (Monday) Previous to that time I should be glad if you could call on Messrs Knight of Foster Lane and see one of the brothers so as to make sure that they have nothing to do with it. For if the contract were virtually made with them, they being my licensees, I should only say that it was a very singular [or irregular?] ~~thing in them to employ Mr. Bingham (who has no licence) else this was and is not in their / without previous notice to me and was~~ transaction on their part and contrary to the terms and to the spirit of their license. But I apprehend that they have nothing to do with the matter, and this is what I wish to ascertain.

That being ascertained, I should propose to apply to the Court of Chancery for an ex parte injunction to restrain Mr. Bingham from infringing my patent in anyway / and specially from doing so in the way above mentioned (surreptitiously introducing his [the?] copies from France) /. The urgency as to time prevents our giving notice of the intention to apply for the injunction which is usual, but not necessary. It only ~~produces~~ causes more expense to the party obtaining the injunction in case the same is afterwards dissolved.

~~You will of course lay~~

I think you had better see the counsel Mr. E. F. Smith. The present point is so simple a one, that it does not involve any knowledge of the processes of photography of which perhaps Mr. Smith has no knowledge. You may state to him that Mr. Bingham has ~~many~~ several

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<sup>3</sup> National Archives, Kew. ‘Custom Board’s Minutes, 1 Oct 1851 to 31 Dec 1851’, meeting of 4th December 1851: CUST28/206, pp. 541-6. ‘Customs Commissioners Letters 1851’ to the Collector at Dover: CUST54/265, letter No. 224

<sup>4</sup> In the early 1970s these documents concerning the exhibition of 1851 were in file 148 of the ‘Fox Talbot Collection’ at the Royal Photographic Society at that time in London. Many years later that Collection was transferred to the National Museum of Photography at Bradford. The following three drafts of letters of 16 Nov 1851 (to Bolton and Carpmael and Knight) are now catalogued at NMP as Doc No.s 06514-6 and their text (indexed under the names of the recipients) has also since been made available online by the Talbot Correspondence Project at <http://foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk/>

times applied to me for a license, thus recognising the patent right, but I have been unable to arrange with him.

I had a letter from Mr. Cole of the Executive Committee the day previous ~~containing~~ not even alluding to this proceeding. Really this is too much duplicity, taken in conjunction with the evasive letter ~~in reply to~~ written to you. I shall likewise propose to you to call on Mr. Cole (in your company) in order to see if he admits ~~or denies~~ having signed this contract. Please to send a retainer to [William] Grove.

[To W. Carpmael, Talbot's Patent Agent]

Cpm] I want your advice under rather perplexing circumstances (I will call for an answer tomorrow Monday [17th November] ). The Executive Committee have gone so far as to sign a contract with a party to make 10,000 or more photographic copies in France, thus defrauding my licensees to that amount. The party [Robert Bingham] is now in Town but leaves for France on Wednesday, Can I in the meanwhile obtain an ex parte injunction against him, to restrain him. ~~from~~.

If I give him notice he will be off. The Executive Committee have I believe given him a guarantee of indemnity against any action I may bring. They spend the public money in that way. That is the way in which British inventions are encouraged.

Yours truly

**Source No. 3:**

**Draft manuscript of a letter dated 1 December 1851 from W.H.F. Talbot to the second Earl Granville (Lord Granville: George Leveson-Gower (1815-1891) chairman of the Finance Committee of the Exhibition of 1851) <sup>5</sup>**

This draft by Talbot of his long letter to Lord Granville is doubtless the most significant in providing his own version of events - it provides Talbot's perspective:

[To] Ld G[ranville] Dec 1 /51

My Ld, I shall endeavour to lay before your lordship in the following remarks upon the causes which have impeded the execution of the plates of the great work on the Crystal Palace.

This photographic work was unfortunately undertaken after the 3 finest months of the year (M.J.Jy [May, June, July] ) had elapsed. At the end of July and during my absence at B'lin <sup>6</sup> the Executive Committee applied to Mr Henneman to undertake it. He entered into the idea with ardour, but being a foreigner and having no one at the moment to advise him, he unfortunately did not see how necessary it was before ~~entering into an~~ undertaking a work of such magnitude, to have a written contract drawn up and signed (which would have avoided all future difficulties by defining every part of the matter). ~~As it was, the only agreement he made with the Executive Committee in nature of a legal contract~~ He however contracted to supply the committee with 200 negative pictures on glass ~~of the objects they~~

<sup>5</sup> Like the three draft notes above (Source No. 2, and footnote 4), this draft letter of 1 Dec 1851 was, when the present author first saw it, held in the early 1970s in the 'Fox Talbot Collection' at the Royal Photographic Society in London, but in a separate file 148b. After that Talbot Collection was transferred to the National Media Museum at Bradford, this file 148b (the MS very abbreviated and difficult to decipher draft, see fig 1), does not seem to have received attention or separately catalogued at Bradford.

It has earlier been placed online here on this Midley website but rather hidden away at [www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20110311230150/http://www.midley.co.uk/articles/talbot\\_1dec1851g.htm](http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20110311230150/http://www.midley.co.uk/articles/talbot_1dec1851g.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Berlin : Talbot was "on the Continent in order to observe the total solar eclipse of the 28th of July... at the little town of Marienburg", H. F. Talbot 'On the production of instantaneous photographs', *The Athenaeum*, 6 December 1851, p.109

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~~wish for at~~ at the rate of 3 guineas each, and with 100 negatives on paper at the rate of 2 guineas each and with 1 positive copy of each at the rate of 5 shillings, it being understood that ~~this 1st positive copy was to be made with particular pains, therefore to be paid for at a higher price than~~ the subsequent copies were to be furnished at a much lower price.

He [Henneman] immediately sent to Paris to engage the 2 best French photographers on glass Martens and Ferrier, and finding there was a difficulty in obtaining their services he started himself, going and returning I believe in 36 hours. No one could display greater zeal in the matter. He thus engaged the services of these artists at the rate of 2 guineas which was to be paid them for each picture, and all their expenses connected with taking the pictures (such as chemicals apparatus &c) would be provided and paid for by Henneman.

But M. Martens not liking the terms of this engagement in almost a fortnight threw up his engagement and returned to Paris, alleging he was so thwarted and impeded at the Crystal Palace that he could do nothing. Mr Ferrier remained and executed the contract, but his complaints on the same score were continual. There was great difficulty experienced owing to the bad light in the building from the calico which covered the roof being dirty, and the declining light of the sun in September, and still more in October. M. Ferrier also greatly complained that when he had everything prepared to make a fine view of some statue or other object he was frequently prevented from doing it, by the Committee [one illegible word] who informed him they had not yet procured the owner's leave to have it copied. A thing they ought to have taken most anxious pains about. Under these circumstances it is marvellous only a wonder that such good pictures should have been obtained. Mr Henneman and M Ferrier would undertake to photograph the collection of any British nobleman in a tenth part of the time (supposing the number of ~~ob~~ pictures made to be the same) however of course ~~such~~ the nobleman would himself give every facility for the accomplishment of the work he ordered. But in this instance M Ferrier could only work from 6 till 9 in the morning when the advent of the public obliged him to withdraw with his instruments. 227 negatives were taken in this way, but the profit derived by Mr Henneman from the affair, was not sufficient to remunerate him for his great loss of time and neglect of his own business. The only part of this original contract between the Committee and Mr Henneman which would have been really remunerative was that for 100 negatives upon paper. In this part (being done by Mr Henneman himself) of course he received all the profits of it. But upon his furnishing to the Committee the first 20 pictures under this contract, the Committee exercised the right of rejection (which they had reserved to themselves) and rejected 19 of them. Of course Mr Henneman could not attempt to proceed further. And he ~~made~~ executed no more paper of that contract therefore [or thus?] losing nearly 200 guineas to which he ~~was~~ would have been fairly entitled. He had unfortunately (trusting entirely in the Executive Committee) neglected to stipulate for himself any right of ~~appeal or~~ arbitration or appeal against an unjust decision. That it was an unjust one in this instance appears from what follows. The rejected pictures were shown to Sir David Brewster, when he assured me that he thought most of them were excellent, some most beautiful.

It had all along been intended by the Executive Committee that Mr Henneman should make the positive copies from the glass negatives and it was to that he looked for his remuneration. The only question was as to the price to be paid to him. Mr Henneman since he has been in business I believe never sold a negative picture to any one, and certainly never would have sold these to the Executive Committee except that he thought he was dealing with a public body, of the highest honour, and they assured him repeatedly these negatives would become national property and be deposited most properly in the British Museum - but that he would be allowed the use of them occasionally even after they were so deposited. Upon this assurance he did what he never did before, he consented to part with the negative pictures.

On September 29 [1851] the negatives being nearly finished the Committee offered to make with Mr Henneman a contract for the positive copies at the rate of 2/6 [2 shillings and 6 pence] each, they to have the right of rejecting bad copies &c. He accepted this offer by return of post copying their own words respecting the right of rejection &c &c. ~~Never the less they~~ The Committee made no answer for a considerable time and then withdrew their offer, on the ground that Mr Henneman had refused to comply with other matters contained in the same letter of 29 September. But what were these matters? One of them was the following, which is certainly one of the most extraordinary [exty ?] proposals which ever emanated from any ~~Exee~~ public body. It was that Mr Owen of Bristol (to whom I had [previously?] given my license suitable to do so) should make a certain number of positive copies and ~~for~~ send them to Mr Henneman who should ~~therefore~~ pay Mr Owen for them and forward them to the Committee at the same price who should then pay Mr Henneman for them the same price he had paid to Mr Owen, leaving Mr Henneman (this is expressly stated) to pay out of his own pocket ~~the~~ any royalty ~~due to myself~~ I might claim on the ~~said~~ pictures (NB. the Committee were evidently not then aware that I had relinquished ~~all~~ any such claim to royalty on this occasion). This beneficial arrangement, together with 1 other point of the letter Mr Henneman refused to comply with. And it was upon that ground that the Committee rescinded the contract of the 29 September. The one other point I here allude to was this. The Committee had promised to Mr Henneman as the most beneficial advantageous part of the whole transaction to him that after the completion of the work, he should be allowed to make copies, and sell them to the public for his own benefit (see extract No. 2 and ~~the same~~ on many previous occasions). They now however stated that they would impose upon him a maximum price which he must not exceed (without saying what price this would be). Mr Henneman replied [several draft words deleted here] (A) / (A) that he ~~was willing~~ thought 5 shillings would be the proper maximum price. The committee made no reply at the time. But they rescinded the contract of 29 September in consequence of this alleged noncompliance./

After this no comment was received from the committee for some time, when we heard to our amazement that they were going to have the work executed in France. ~~A remonstrance was sent thro Dr. L.~~ Sir D. B. [Brewster], immediately undertook to communicate with Col. Reid on the subject ~~but~~ which if he had done I think the subsequent difficulties would have been avoided. But he sought for him in vain at L & Wch [London and Woolwich?] during 2 days after which he was obliged to go to Scotland and shortly after the Col. [Reid] departed to Malta. <sup>7</sup>

A private Remonstrance was then [6 November] sent to the Committee through Dr. L. Playfair,<sup>8</sup> but remained unattended to. The points urged were that this being a patent involved the committee could not legally employ any non-licensed person to execute the photographic plates in England, nor could they legally import them from France ~~without taking into account the~~ not to say that this would be a most painful return for the courtesy with which all their wishes had been met on my part. The Executive Committee [merely?] informed me by letter [dated 8 November 1851 <sup>9</sup>] 1st that the price of 2/6 [2 shillings and 6 pence] per copy was too great, 2ndly that Mr Henneman made bad copies which would not

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<sup>7</sup> Sir William Reid (1791-1858) of the Royal Engineers was chairman of the Executive Committee and "undertook the duties of communicating with the public departments". Reid had been Governor of the Bermudas and then Windward Islands during most of the 1840s. His departure for Malta mentioned by Talbot was to take up his new appointment as Governor there.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Lyon Playfair (1818-1898), Chemist and a Statesman of Science, had been appointed "Special Commissioner in charge of Juries". He and Henry Cole were a complementary pair and when the Science and Art Department was established in South Kensington in 1853 Playfair was Science and Cole Art. Some draft notes of Talbot's letter to Playfair, dated 6 November 1851, survive in the Talbot Collection, Lacock Abbey, LA51.75 [Note that the Talbot Collection previously at Lacock, Wiltshire, in 2005 was transferred as a gift to the British Library, to be its permanent home.]

<sup>9</sup> Letter dated 8 Nov 1851, C. Thurston Thompson (on behalf of the Executive Committee) to Talbot, Lacock Abbey Collection, LA51.80

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~~last~~ possess any permanence. To the 1st point I replied [on 9 November <sup>10</sup> ] that the price of 2/6 was their own proposal [to Henneman] of September 29th. And to the 2nd I replied by the following offer which I trust your Lordship will consider a very reasonable one - "Would the Committee like to see specimens of positives produced by Mr Henneman from 6 to 10 years ago which have remained unaltered? In that case I would forward a parcel containing 100 of them for their inspection"

Not the slightest notice was taken by the Committee of this offer. Mr Henneman subsequently informed me that the defects in a few copies complained of by the Committee were caused by their having been done in a hurry by one of his assistants while he was himself absent making views at Osb [Osborne House, Isle of Wight] by command of her Majesty,

Finding that Mr Cole ~~was prejudiced against Mr. Henneman~~ had objected as to Mr Henneman's pictures I advised my other licensee Mr Knight of Foster Lane, Cheapside, to see Mr Cole and offer to take the contract ~~either alone or~~ making Mr Henneman such indemnity as might be agreed on between them. Mr Knight accordingly waited on Mr Cole when Mr Cole offered him the contract to make the copies at 1/ each [1 shilling]. ~~This~~ It seems inconsistent that Mr Cole should ~~make him~~ offer him the contract, and it shows (I may fairly argue) that the price which Henneman asked was the real ground of objection with the Committee and not any ~~real or fancied~~ imperfection in his [Henneman's] work. Mr. Knight however rejected the offer as too low and withdrew. We soon afterwards learnt that the Committee had actually made a contract with Mr. Bingham /who has no license from me / to execute the copies in France at the price of 1/6 per copy, and to furnish them to the Committee at the rate of <80?> per diem at which rate the work would be executed in 8 months.

I called [either on 17 November or "some days" later <sup>11</sup> ] upon Mr Knight with reference to this matter ~~and stated it as my opinion~~ when on my ~~pointing out~~ remarking that great expense would be incurred by Mr. Bingham in establishing a photographic manufactory in the south of France (supposing him ~~to be allowed~~ ever to do so) he informed me that Mr. Bingham would not have undertaken the contract at the price of 1/6 per copy if this had been the only consideration, but that the principle one was that ~~Mr. B~~ the Committee had granted to Mr. Bingham the right of selling to the public for his own benefit as many copies as he pleased, after furnishing the stipulated number to the Committee and that as Mr. Bingham intended to sell them in France ~~where~~ whither my patent does not extend ~~it~~ /the permission/ would be very valuable undertaking. I replied that the Committee could not grant such privilege to Mr. Bingham, because (apart from all other considerations) they had already granted it to Mr. Henneman: but Mr. Knight persisting in the correctness of his information I had an interview with Mr. Bingham himself when Mr. Bingham fully confirmed the statement. Nor did it appear from what he said that the Committee had taken any security or in any way ~~tied him down~~ bound him not to sell some of these copies in France even during the time he was employed ~~by~~ about the work of the Committee.

~~Under these circumstances the only remedy seemed to be to seek the protection of a Court of Law, and give publicity to all the proceedings. But it was thought best /~~

I have omitted to mention that some days previous to this I was advised/ to ask for a personal interview with the Committee - then consisting of only 2 members in activity - Mr. Cole and Mr. D. [Charles Wentworth Dilke (1810-1869)] - Accordingly I went, accompanied by my Solicitor [J. H. Bolton of Price & Bolton, Lincolns Inn, London] and

<sup>10</sup> A draft copy of Talbot's letter to the Executive Committee dated 9th November has survived in the Lacock Abbey Collection, LA51.81

<sup>11</sup> According to Talbot's letter of 16 November 1851 to his solicitor J. H. Bolton, Knight was to be interviewed by Bolton, and presumably Talbot also could have gone with him, on the following day of 17th November.

had a conference with these gentlemen in the Great Exhibition Building on Monday the 17 November [1851]. The Committee then stated that ~~they had made such arrangements with Mr. Bingham that~~ it appeared to them the best way of terminating the difficulty would be to ~~offer~~ ask me to sanction their arrangement with Mr. Bingham and to offer me compensation. I replied that I had all along disclaimed any pecuniary compensation - but that I would agree to accept a certain number of copies of the photographic part alone of their great work, and on that condition would myself undertake to partly compensate Mr. Henneman with a present of £200 thus undertaking ? (quite unnecessarily I must confess) a portion of the just responsibilities ~~justly~~ of the Committee. Mr. C and Mr. D. accepted the proposal and after a short consideration the number of copies was fixed at 15. Mr. Cole and stated that the cost of each copy to the Committee would be £30, the total therefore of 15 copies £450. I undertook on my part not to sell any of the copies but give them all away. ~~me to put the offer~~ The Committee then desired me to put the agreement in writing and let them have it that Monday [17 November]. I replied I would send it as soon as I could. I accordingly drew it out as follows and posted it the same evening and they of course received it on Tuesday morning [18 November] /I must observe that/ The sentence "I presume [... space of one line follows here in the draft manuscript] was not a part of the agreement entered into that day with the Committee but was merely mentioned by me as a thing that had been frequently promised (see for instance extract from correspondence No. [Space for actual number left blank in manuscript here] ). Not having an idea at the time that their sale had been likewise promised to Mr. Bingham I did not allude to it /the subject <sup>12</sup> / during that interview. My Solicitor who was part of the interview will bear witness that ~~the~~ letter my letter of 17 November of which the ~~foregoing~~ following is a copy ~~correctly~~ contains precisely the same offer which the Committee had accepted. (letter <sup>13</sup> ) I now considered the matter settled, except the mere formality of a reply. On Tuesday and Wednesday I heard nothing from the Committee - But on Thursday [20 November 1851] came the following answer <sup>14</sup> repudiating the contract.

I have only to add that I then for the first time heard of the existence of the "Financial Committee" that the gentlemen of the Executive Committee during the interview of the 17th gave no intimation that they were not fully authorized and empowered to treat with me, that my Solicitor and myself consider ~~at~~ both parties to be bound in honour by the agreement, that for my part I had no idea that I was a liberty to change the terms of that agreement if on reflection I should be dissatisfied with them and that such a proceeding strikes at the root of all honorable arrangement of the difficulties which must occasionally occur in the settlement of all important or complicated transactions.

[To] The Earl Granville &c &c.

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<sup>12</sup> Talbot must mean here the subject of Bingham being allowed the sale of prints rather than the production of prints by Bingham which had certainly been discussed - see earlier in Talbot's letter.

<sup>13</sup> The actual text of "letter" was not included here in the draft manuscript.

<sup>14</sup> The answer of the Executive Committee dated 19 November appeared as item B on a separate sheet of Talbot's observations and extracts from letters, in Fox Talbot Collection file 148b, Royal Photographic Society: "(B) Answer. November 19 [1851] - I am directed by the Executive Committee to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th Nov. and to say that it shall be submitted to the Finance Committee at their 1st meeting. At the same time I am to say that the proposal as now ~~made~~ submitted in your letter is one which the Executive Committee would not feel themselves justified in recommending for the sanction of the Finance Committee. G. Francis Duncombe for M. D. Wyatt"

Wyatt was Secretary of the Executive Committee and G. F. Duncombe (with F. M. Harman) translated into French the official Catalogue of the Exhibition.



205 ~~105~~ Dec 1/57  
 My dear Lord Granville I have before me  
 in the following remarks upon your circular which  
 is published in the report of the Committee on  
 the subject of the proposed alterations in the  
 law relating to the duties on spirits &c.  
 This paper is so unfavourable to the  
 interests of the revenue (Mr. J. J. J.) had  
 Mr. J. J. J. & I being absent  
 before the Committee applied to Mr. J. J. J.  
 to undertake it. He undertook to  
 do so, but by a proposal of his  
 no more at the moment I advised, he  
 would not be here next it was  
 before the Committee and Mr. J. J. J.  
 suggested, to have a separate  
 Committee drawn up & so on  
 with a view to the future of the  
 subject, but I am not sure that  
 it will be of any use. I am  
 with great respect your obedient  
 servant  
 I have however to be  
 paid to supply the  
 200 copies of the  
 at a rate of 3 pence each  
 before on paper at a rate of 12 pence each  
 and with 1 penny copy of each at the  
 rate of 5 pence it being understood that the  
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Fig 1. First page (out of 15) of Talbot's draft of letter to Lord Granville, dated Dec 1, 1851.

**Source No. 4:**

**4a. Letter from Helmut Gernsheim to R. D. Wood (1983)<sup>15</sup>**

28. November 1983

Dear Derek Wood,

Thank you for your letter of November 8 and the copies of various historical documents concerning the printing of the calotypes for the Reports of the Juries by Robert Bingham in France.

My information had been based on information given me in 1953 by Harold White as these documents were at that time not available to me. They can only have surfaced- like so much else - through the excellent work of Valerie Lloyd as curator of the Royal [Photographic Society] in the 1970s. As far as I can see they do prove the correctness of Hunt's and your statements.

There remain two questions in my mind, and perhaps you can answer them from your study of other material not sent.

1) How did Bingham contrive to establish so quickly a printing establishment in France to cope with the vast number of prints (over 20000) in such a short time, and where was it situated? Talbot writes of "The South of France"

2) Did Bingham print all the negatives or only those by Ferrier? For I have noticed a marked difference in quality in the prints from Hugh Owen's and Ferrier's negatives, the French ones being stronger in colour. Moreover, the letter from Edgar Bowring to the Treasury of 29. November 1851 contains this statement: "the French Government have authorized the admission of the glass negatives required"... which would refer only to Ferrier's. [An unwarranted assumption by Gernsheim, see for example Source 5 below]

Reading the correspondence one cannot escape feeling a sympathy for Talbot for once. I do think that the Commissioners treated him and Henneman unfairly in their negotiations. Henneman was admittedly a careless printer, but Bingham did not even possess a licence. With Henneman they quibbled over the price, yet Bingham they permitted to make additional profit from the sale of extra prints to the public.

As you have invested so much time in investigating this correspondence I wonder whether you would not like to make it available to other historians? It would surely make a very interesting contribution to the otherwise very dull History of Photography quarterly for which you wrote before. Personally I think this journal is rotten in layout, editing and contributions and could do with a face-lift.

With best regards,



Helmut Gernsheim

With best regards,

[signature]

Helmut Gernsheim

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<sup>15</sup> In his *Origins of Photography* edition of 1982, Helmut Gernsheim set out (p. 207) what might be called a standard account of the production ("the printing was executed in London by Henneman") of the "Calotype" photographs of the *Reports by the Juries* of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Exactly the same text as in his previous edition of *History of Photography* of 1969 (pp. 174-175), but with a new conclusion: "These facts clearly contradict Robert Hunt's statement [Feb 1853] that the calotypes for the *Reports* - ... - had been printed in France, and Derek Wood's claim [1975] that the English photographer Robert Bingham, who had settled in Paris in 1851, was the printer. Obviously ...". Thus it seemed necessary to convince Gernsheim that "Wood's claim" had substance, by writing in November 1983 to Gernsheim, sending him a selection of notes and copies of the same source documents now presented here for wider consideration. This letter was his reply.

#### **4b. Extracts from R.D. Wood's reply (19th December 1983) to Helmut Gernsheim.**

... I do not fully understand why you should think that Valerie Lloyd must have been involved in some way with the 'surfacing' of Talbot's notes on his dispute with the Commissioners of the Exhibition of 1851. The research was done before her time at the RPS, and indeed I have never met her (and apart from a short article on the photographs of Dr. Barnardo's have not read anything by her). It must have been 1967 that I first saw the material at the RPS when they were still at Princes Gate [London]. I can well remember what hard work it was to get access and how Mrs Johnston seemed to have all the time in the world without any understanding of how my own time was so short. (well nothing seems to have changed in that way except that I now have no time:).

I did think that you had seen the material at the RPS because you had apparently used some material there on, for example, the uncatalogued petition presented to the RPS by John Leighton. Arthur Gill must surely have known of the Talbot material at the RPS. It was certainly not until the winter of 1969/1970 when the RPS were at Maddox Street [London] that I obtained xerox copies of the file No. 148 regarding the 1851 Exhibition dispute. Apart from the copy of the sheet I sent to you on 8th November, those xerox copies went to Arthur Gill in 1977 along with the major part of my files on the history of photography.

Where and how did Bingham establish the printing in France?

The central question and the lack of an adequate answer is the reason why I never managed to reach publication on the whole subject.

I would be very surprised, however, if the place turn out on deeper investigation to be anywhere else but Versailles: see my paragraph in my letter of 8th November 1983 regarding Bingham's marriage in 1853 when he was resident at Versailles and quotation about Thompson from obit in [Art J](#).

The wording of the phrase "the printing of the negatives then being taken at Versailles" (my italics) worried me when I first saw that obituary because it might be considered to indicate that he was not printing negatives taken in London: however, another reference to this visit to Versailles was made by Samuel Redgrave, a close associate of Thompson's at the South Kensington Museum (and therefore more dependable than the [Art J](#) obituary) says CT Thompson "took a prominent share in the arrangement of the Great Exhibition of 1851. After this, having undertaken the superintendance of the works of the photographers ... In the following year he was employed by the Exhibition Commissioners to superintend the photographic printing which was done at Versailles..." ([A Dictionary of Artists of the English School](#) by Samuel Redgrave 1878 p.429).

Redgrave became involved with arrangements of later exhibitions of English contributions at Paris Exhibitions for example in 1855 when in his [Richard Redgrave. A Memoir](#) 1891 he mentions going to Fontainebleau for two days "to see Thurston Thompson to work photographing". More research on Thompson would likely be rewarding: I feel sure he is important and his father John Thompson was involved with the same French artists such as Delaroche and Ary Schaeffer as was Bingham. CT Thompson's uncle Charles died near Paris in 1843 spending his life in France involved in many illustrated works produced in Paris.

In 1851 Robert Bingham was the photographer for Richard Colls' 'Gallery of Modern Art' at 168 New Bond Street, London (premises which within two years were taken over by Phillip DeLaMott and which had some close association with Henry Cole) and is an association more likely to have been significant for him becoming the printer of the photographs for the Reports by the Juries than his connection with George Knight & Sons, which at first sight might seem more obvious.

**Source No. 5.**

**Statement by Talbot on use of Collodion Glass negatives for photographs in the *Reports by the Juries of the Exhibition of 1851* <sup>16</sup>**

**Affidavit by Talbot sworn on 6 May 1854 in the case of Talbot v. Henderson, paragraphs 21, 22 and 23.**

[Para] 21 That ... on the occasion of the Great National Exhibition of one Thousand eight hundred and fifty one the Commissioners appointed by Her Majesty to manage the same (comprising individuals of the first rank in this realm as well as other persons eminent in science and art) applied to me and obtained my leave and consent to use my said invention [Calotype patent of 1841] for the purpose of making and obtaining numerous photographic plates or pictures where with to illustrate the great work intended to be published by them on the results of the said Exhibition entitled “Reports by the Juries on the subjects in the 30 classes into which the exhibition was divided - 4 Vols large quarto – 1852”.

[Para] 22 That it was the intention of the said Commissioners as expressed to me at the time of their said application as stated in the last preceding paragraph to make or cause to be made photographic images of divers objects contained in the said Exhibition upon plates of glass covered with a photographic skin or film instead of making them on iodised paper as described in my said [Patent] specification And accordingly a large number of photographic images upon Glass were made by Mr Nicolas Henniman or the artists employed by him pursuant to the orders and directions of the said Commissioners And the photographic pictures made upon paper which now illustrate the said Great Work on the results of the Exhibition are copies from the pictures first obtained on the said glass plates.

[Para] 23 At the time of my giving my consent to the said Commissioners to use my invention they agreed with me that they would give and present to me fifteen copies of the work aforesaid illustrated with photographic plates when it should be completed in recognition of my patent right and as an equivalent and compensation for my said leave and permission and they have accordingly given and presented to me the said fifteen copies.

**Source No. 6:**

***Robert Bingham's Birth***

His baptism (so presumably his birth would have been few weeks earlier) is recorded in the Billesdon (Leicestershire) Parish Register:

***7 March 1824 Robert Jefferson son of John Cowener <or Cowaner> and Martha Bingham, baptised.***

***Father's occupation: Exciseman***

Nothing substantial is known about Robert Bingham's parents, for their families seem not to have lived permanently in the Leicester area. On behalf of the present author, Mrs. G. C. Parkes of the Leicestershire Record Office in 1983 kindly searched for any relevant local records, concluding that apart from that of 7 March 1824 “No other baptisms are recorded between 1813 and 1850 in this parish, and Robert's parents were not married in Billesdon between 1813 and 1824. The family appears to have resided in the area for only a short time. [Only in] our series of annual Land Tax assessments for Billesdon John Bingham is recorded as the occupier of land owned by Joseph Cart in the 1823 and 1824 assessments, ... at 1s. 0d. on both occasions.” A more recent search of online genealogical records has not been able to positively identify Robert Bingham's ancestors, although a marriage on 19 July 1826 in Manchester of a John Bingham to Martha Fowler might conceivably be that of his father and mother.

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<sup>16</sup> National Archives, Kew, Chancery Affidavit C31/1048/No. 666: Affidavit by Talbot sworn on 6 May 1854 in the case of Talbot v. Henderson, paragraphs 21, 22 and 23.

Source No. 7:

Bingham's Marriage (26 July 1853)<sup>17</sup>

Register of Marriages solemnized at Paris

42

1853.

Robert Jefferson Bingham of the Parish of Bilston.  
in the county of Leicester now residing at Versailles, Bachelor  
and Emma Reeve, of the Parish of Kinjare  
in the county of Stafford new residing at Paris, Spinster,  
were married at the British Embassy Paris, on the twenty sixth day  
of July in the year of our Lord one Thousand eight Hundred and fifty three

Robt. J. Bingham. (By me. J. H. Hale, D.D.  
Emma Reeve. Chaplain to the Embassy

In the presence of { Maria Vanshaugh Clayfield  
Sarah Mary Fitter  
Kempston Mary Walker  
Clement de Verdade de Cozeilla

The entry on the above Marriage Certificate for Bingham being of the Parish of "Bilston" in the county of Leicester is not perfectly correct. Obviously a phonetically derived mistake, for it should be Billesdon.

<sup>17</sup> National Archives, Kew, UK. 'Marriages 1852 to 1855 British Embassy Paris, Vol. 61', RG33/73,p.42

**Source No. 8:**

***Robert Bingham's Death in Brussels (21 February 1870)***<sup>18</sup>

Ville de Bruxelles, Etat Civil Décès d'Étrangers, Extrait de Registre.

No. 874. Le Vingt trois fevrier mil huit cent soixante-dix à trois heures de l'après midi a été dressé, apres constatation, par nous C H Lemaiyer Officier de l'Etat de Ville de Bruxelles, l'Acte de Décès de Robert John [sic] Bingham photographie décédé en cette ville, de vingt et un de ce mois, à onze heures du Soir, rue de l'Écuyer No. 18, 4 Dom [Don], age de quarante [sic] ans ne a Londres, et y domicile veuf de Emma Jefferson [sic], fils de Robert Bingham sous autres renseignements

Sur la declaration de Ernest <Kande?> Driessche, Sculpteur, agé de quarante ans domicile a Saint Gilles

et de Charles Haeck, chef Machiniste, Âgé, de quarante quatre ans, domicile a Schiverbeek...

le <22?> Mars 1870.

[on reverse is an office stamp with date of "23 Mars 1870"]

[writing transcribed between < > is uncertain reading]

Apart from the place, date and time of death, the other personal information provided for the death certificate was obviously not from a source that could be authoritative or reliable to any great extent.

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More source material could be provided here on Robert Bingham, but here is enough with regard to the Exhibition of 1851.

Talbot's draft letter of 1 Dec 1851 to the Commissioners does provide a fascinating insight into his attitude, but Commissioners and Treasury letters to the officials of Dover to allow the unexamined glass negatives to go through Customs with Bingham are the most significant documents.

Writers on the history of photography in articles and books, in library catalogues, in auction house sale catalogues, continually describe the prints in the *Reports by the Juries* as "calotypes". Indeed the same applies to many photographs of the 1850s even when collectors and archivists can see that the quality of the image shows the negative must have been collodion, or albumen, on glass. But "calotype" continues to be an automatic response, showing to a great extent a continual influence of Talbot's own self-promotion.

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<sup>18</sup> National Archives, Kew. General Register Office: 'Misc Foreign Deaths, Vol. 2 Belgium, Part 2 (Brussels 1841-1870)', pp 1105-1106, RG 35/2, pp 1105-1106