



©Courtesy Tim Harding

**WILLIAM SOUTHWELL (1736/7–1825):
ANGLO–IRISH MUSICAL INSTRUMENT INVENTOR
AND MAKER – AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE**

MARGARET DEBENHAM

2013

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank colleagues Michael Cole, David Hunt, Thomas Strange and Marie Kent for kindly reading and commenting on a first draft of this paper; their observations and suggestions have been invaluable. The contribution made by Professor George S. Bozarth to Southwell research in our jointly authored paper "*Piano Wars*" (2009), relating to the legal wrangling over the rights to William Southwell's 1794 patent, is gratefully acknowledged (see citation below).

Thanks to Tim Harding, David Hunt, Kenneth Mobbs, Richard Reason and the private owner of the Southwell square piano (Warwickshire) for graciously giving their permission for use of images of various parts of Southwell instruments. My grateful appreciation to David Cripps and Robert and Vivien Southwell for their assistance over many years, not only by providing information but also visiting archives on my behalf to locate primary source information 'on the ground'. To the many other colleagues and friends who have offered information and support, thank you all.

Particular thanks to The National Archives, UK for granting a licence to reproduce images of original documents from their holdings on the William Southwell website; to the Surrey History Centre for access to papers in the Broadwood Archives; the staff of the Patent Office; the Co-operative Archives, Manchester for access to original letters written by Charles Southwell; the Inns of Court, Dublin for permitting consultation of original records in their archives, and the unfailingly helpful staff of the Suffolk Library service, most especially at Newmarket Library.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to Michael Debenham for all his support and assistance with this project, not least his design and implementation of this website.

Digital archives consulted include: The National Archives, UK; Ancestry.co.uk; Newspaper Archive.com, The British Library 19th Century Newspaper Archive; Irish Newspaper Archives; Trove; *The London Gazette* on-line; Oldbaileyonline.org; Findmypast.co.uk; Familysearch.org. Londonlives.org; Irishgenealogy.ie.

About the author

MARGARET DEBENHAM is an independent scholar living in Suffolk. She was awarded her doctorate at The Institute of Educational Technology, The Open University, UK, in 2001. In retirement she enjoys further developing her use of Computer Mediated Communication as an innovative Internet research and presentation tool, whilst pursuing her personal interests in music history and genealogy.

Her jointly authored paper with Professor George S. Bozarth, "Piano Wars: The Legal Machinations of London Pianoforte Makers, 1795-1806" in [The Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle Vol. 42 \(2009\)](#). London: Royal Musical Association, pp 45-108, was awarded the Frances Densmore Prize, 2011 by the American Musical Instrument Society. Her most recent paper, jointly authored with historian Michael Cole, examines the life and work of three migrant craftsmen in London, Roger Plenius, Frederick Neubauer and H. B. Viator [Vietor] ("Pioneer Piano Makers in London, 1737—1774: newly discovered documentary sources" in [The Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle Vol. 44 \(2013\)](#). Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 55-86). She is author of the 'Roger Plenius' entry in the *Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, 2nd edition (forthcoming).

Citation: Debenham, M. (2013) *William Southwell (1736/7–1825): Anglo–Irish Musical Instrument Inventor and Maker – an Extraordinary Life*. Margaret Debenham: website publication.

Contact e-mail: Margaret Debenham



Copyright © Margaret Debenham 2013. All rights reserved. Permission is given for one copy to be made of this paper for the purposes of personal private research only. No part of it may be reproduced for any other purpose without the express permission of the author.



*Claire,
Kei and Dan*

For

*Robert,
Hannah, Matthew and
Alexander,*

the next generation ...



Table of Contents

Cover picture : Name board on a desk conversion of a five and a half octave square pianoforte by 'W^m. Southwell, Dublin' (© Courtesy of Tim Harding)

Part I

Introduction	1
William Southwell's birthplace and parentage – an unresolved mystery	2
Activities in Dublin, 1776–1794	6
Southwell the commuter: 1794–1803	14
Life after Dublin: the Liverpool and London years, 1805–1825	23
1811–1825: Southwell's oblique pianoforte and John Watlen	30
Southwell's family life in London	32
Endnotes	37

Figures

Figure 1	Flyer attached to a desk conversion of a Southwell square pianoforte, <i>ca.</i> 1794, inscribed 'Wm. Southwell, Dublin' on the nameboard. (© Tim Harding, reproduced by kind permission).	12
Figure 2	Nameboard of a five and a half octave square pianoforte by 'Wllm. Southwell & Son', 1798. (Courtesy of David Hunt: photograph by Margaret Debenham)	13
Figure 3	Square pianoforte (No. 2031) by 'Wllm. Southwell & Son', dated 'March 9 th 1798' (Courtesy of David Hunt: Photograph by Margaret Debenham)	14
Figure 4	Flyer attached to a Southwell square piano (No. 2283), dated 10 July 1802. This advertisement relates to a different type of instrument, which he termed a 'Camerachord', constructed to the design of his 1798 'upright square' patent. (© Image	17

reproduced by kind permission of the private owner, Warwickshire).

- Figure 5 Nameboard of a Southwell square pianoforte (No. 2283) made in Dublin, signed and dated 'July 10 1802' on a key by a workman 'Geo^e. Cooke' (© Image reproduced by kind permission of the private owner, Warwickshire). 21
- Figure 6 Nameboard of a Southwell square pianoforte offered for sale by Piano Auctions, London in 2010 (reproduced by kind permission of Richard Reason). 25

Part II:

- Nicholas Southwell (*ca.* 1760–1832), pianoforte and organ maker, Dublin, Liverpool and London 53
- Family life 56
- Endnotes 58

Appendices

- Appendix 1. Transcription of Frederick Southwell Cripps's Letter to William Cripps (1911), with comments. 61
- Appendix 2: Diagram of Connections between London cabinet makers 68
- Endplate: Dan, a direct descendent of William Southwell, playing a Southwell square pianoforte; David Hunt's workshop, Cambridge, 2009. (© Photograph by Margaret Debenham)

William Southwell (1736/7–1825): Anglo–Irish Musical Instrument Inventor and Maker – an extraordinary life

... He was a man of powerful mind and distinguished himself as the improver or creator of several musical instruments... My recollection of him is shadowy, vague and therefore unsatisfactory; but the impression he left upon my young mind (for he died alas! before reason had well ripened with me) was that he belonged to a class of restless, energetic determined men, to whose “quick bosoms quiet is a hell”¹ – a man of temper unceasingly active and intellect proudly prodigious... (Charles Southwell, *The Lancashire Beacon* No. 8, [1849], 60; and *The Confessions of a Freethinker*, [ca.1851], 5-6)

This evocative first hand description from the pen of [Charles Southwell](#) (1814–1860), youngest and most controversial son of William, conjures up a vivid impression of this creative man, remembered today for his early innovations in the field of pianoforte design. Acknowledged as a creative genius by cognoscenti, William Southwell has not however achieved the widespread recognition merited by his influential work. Prodigiously active in his private life too, over a period of more than fifty years he reportedly fathered more than thirty children.²

For more than a century the received wisdom on William Southwell’s birth and death has reflected inaccuracies that appear to have first emanated from the writing of the American historian Daniel Spillane in 1892,³ further compounded by W H Grattan Flood in 1909,⁴ and consequently widely accepted by other writers. This misinformation is unfortunate, hindering, as it does, a fully informed assessment and understanding of William as an innovator in the design and development of pianoforte actions. According to these accounts, William was born *ca.* 1756 and commenced an apprenticeship in 1772 with the renowned German-born harpsichord maker, [Ferdinand Weber](#) (1715–84) in the city of Dublin. After setting up in business on his own account in Dublin *ca.* 1783, so the story goes, he moved to London on the advice of friends in 1794, opening a shop



in Lad Lane and taking out an English patent for his square pianoforte with additional keys. Later, it is claimed, William retired to his native Ireland in 1836 where he died in Rathmines in 1842. In fact he died in Gresse-street, St. Pancras, London, aged eighty eight, and was buried in St Pancras Old Church on 2 February 1825, a finding first reported in George S Bozarth and Margaret Debenham, "[Piano Wars](#)", 2009,⁵ which also places his birth year as 1736/7, some twenty years earlier than has been believed. Little wonder that subsequent searches for his birth in 1756 and burial in Ireland in 1842 proved fruitless.^{6 7} While it is indisputably true that he was in London in 1794 and registered his first English patent there from an address in Lad Lane, there is evidence that suggests he continued to commute between London and Dublin in subsequent years, spending time in each. It was not until 1803 that he left the Emerald Isle to settle permanently in England, as will be discussed.

Two family documents have provided valuable information as a basis for research. The first is a privately published memoir written by William's youngest son, Charles (1814–1860), *The Confessions of a Free Thinker* (ca.1851);⁸ the second a privately held family letter (see Appendix 1) written by [Frederick Southwell Cripps](#) (1855–1941), a distinguished civil engineer of his day,⁹ to his relatives in Tasmania in 1911 in which he recounts anecdotes told to him by his grandmother, [Frances Cripps](#), née Southwell, (1799/1800–1886) [hereafter Frances Cripps] about her father, William Southwell.¹⁰ As is almost inevitable with accounts transmitted orally through the generations in this way, investigation shows that some of the information given by Frederick Cripps has suffered from the 'Chinese whispers effect' and become distorted in the telling. Nevertheless it has provided a valuable basis for investigation and has helped to unlock previously unreported details of various strands of William's colourful history.

William Southwell's birthplace and parentage – an unresolved mystery

Despite strenuous efforts to trace William's birth, the author has been unable to locate firm information to establish his parentage. No clear connection with branches of either the aristocratic Southwell family¹¹ or other branches of the Southwell family in Ireland¹² has come to light. The search has been greatly hampered by the dearth of extant records in Ireland, much precious archival material having been lost to future



generations when the repository building of the Public Record Office in Dublin was destroyed by detonating explosives and fire in June 1922, along with most of the records, some dating back to the thirteenth century.¹³ However, an important clue to Southwell's early life is to be found in his daughter Frances's reminiscences:

'Her Father, she told me, worked himself up. He was apprenticed to Cabinet Making, and when quite young, made a beautiful model of a grand staircase. Then, he invented some pianoforte actions, and eventually started a factory for making Pianos.'¹⁴

Frustratingly, Frederick Cripps fails to identify William's Master or whether he was apprenticed in Dublin, London or elsewhere; presumably his grandmother did not go into that level of detail. However, if William followed the normal practice of the time, it is reasonable to infer that his apprenticeship to a cabinet maker must have begun *ca.* 1750 when he was aged fourteen and completed seven years later in about 1757 – *not* begun in 1772, as proposed by Grattan Flood. If William joined Weber in Dublin in 1772,¹⁵ it was as an adult aged thirty five, already a trained craftsman presumably wishing to adapt and refine his skills to the art of keyboard making – a situation that closely parallels that of his contemporary John Broadwood (1732–1812) when he left Scotland to join Burkard Shudi in London in 1761.¹⁶

This finding leaves us with further unresolved questions. Where was Southwell born? Where and with whom did he serve his apprenticeship? And what was the nature and location of his work from *ca.*1757 until 1772, when he reputedly joined Weber in Dublin? A newspaper notice placed in 1819 by [John Watlen](#) (1764–1833), proprietor of a London musical instrument establishment, with whom Southwell was closely associated during his final years,¹⁷ advertised: 'IMPROVED OBLIQUE AND CABINET PIANO-FORTES, by the Inventor [William Southwell], who has been upwards of fifty years inventing and finishing Piano-fortes'.¹⁸ The author's exploration of digital images of original eighteenth century records such as Marriage Allegations suggest that at that time the term 'upwards of' was consistently used to mean 'more than', rather than 'almost'. Assuming this is the case in this instance (rather than mere hyperbole on Watlen's part), it raises the possibility that Southwell might have been involved in the pianoforte making business since the late 1760s. Might he perhaps have joined Weber as a young journeyman before 1772, after first completing an apprenticeship in cabinet



making – a scenario which is entirely feasible, since Weber is recorded in business in Dublin from *ca.* 1748/9? Or could it be, one wonders, that William was apprenticed to a London cabinet maker and worked in England before later moving to Dublin to train with Weber?

Circumstantial evidence to link William with a firm of London furniture makers comes from his daughter, who, speaking of the family's time in London in the second decade of the 18th century, told her grandson, 'Mr. Trotter, the man who started and owned the Soho Bazaar, was a great friend of theirs.'¹⁹ [John Trotter](#) (1757–1833), a highly successful military contractor during the Napoleonic wars who later founded the Soho Bazaar in 1816 in his erstwhile military equipment warehouses in Soho Square, was a nephew and one time partner of the prominent Scottish-born cabinet maker. [John Trotter Snr.](#) (1713–1790).²⁰ Trotter Snr. was active in London for many years, from *ca.* 1744. For some years during the 1760s he was a partner of [George Smith Bradshaw](#) (1717–1812), the Master of [John Mayhew](#) (1737–1811)²¹ – later of the renowned house of Ince and Mayhew – and [Charles Smith](#) (–1767).²² Trotter is on record as having supplied furniture for the Countess of Kildare (later Duchess of Leinster) for Carton House in Dublin in 1759, thus demonstrating business dealings with the Irish aristocracy.²³ Mayhew, an exact contemporary of William Southwell, took as his apprentice – or perhaps employed as a journeyman – William Moore (–1815), who later crafted beautiful marquetry demi-lune tables in Dublin during the final two decades of the eighteenth century, reminiscent of the style made fashionable by Robert Adam in London during the 1770s.²⁴ The design of Southwell's elegant bespoke demi-lune pianofortes made in Dublin, for example that owned by Alec Cobbe and displayed at Hatchlands echoes this style. Unfortunately no known extant examples are marked with the date of manufacture, though they are sometimes attributed to the mid to late 1780s. (For images and an informative explanation of the unique technical features of these instruments, see Michael Cole, '[William Southwell – Inventor and Piano Maker](#)'). In this context, it is particularly interesting too that Moore, whose name has often speculatively been linked to Southwell, placed an advertisement in Dublin in 1789 in which he states he is now making pianofortes in addition to furniture:



Inlaid Furniture—plain [*sic*]; ditto—Pianoforte and Harpsichord Manufactory

W. Moore respectfully informs the nobility and gentry, he has removed from Abbey-street to Capel-street, No. 47, where he carries on the cabinet making business in general...²⁵

As will be discussed later, new evidence has emerged that confirms the two men were at least acquainted.²⁶ These various connections (see Appendix 2) led the author to investigate the possibility that Southwell might have been apprenticed to John Trotter (or another well regarded cabinet maker) in London and that he [Southwell] and John Mayhew (Moore's master) were acquainted as young apprentices there at that time.²⁷ However, despite extensive searches, to date no firm evidence has emerged to support this hypothesis.

Frances Cripps told her grandson her father was Irish and, as we shall see later, [John Watlen](#) (his final employer) would refer to him in 1811 as 'an Irish gentleman of great mechanical genius';²⁸ therefore the likelihood is that he was born somewhere in Ireland. This does not however preclude the possibility that earlier generations of his family might have originated elsewhere – as, for example, was the case for Nicholas Southwell's wife, Martha Fazakerley, whose father, [W^m.] Frederick Fazakerley, hailed from Fazakerley, near Liverpool, Lancashire and later moved to Dublin.²⁹ For this reason the author conducted searches to explore whether earlier generations of the family might also have had roots in England and at some point migrated to Ireland.

Two intriguing lines of enquiry emerged. One interesting Southwell branch can be traced back to Womborne, on the Staffordshire-Worcestershire border – and later in nearby Shropshire, a line of religious dissenters, sturdily independent of heart and mind. The patriarch of the clan is said to have fought in the English civil war (1642–51) on the side of Cromwell. The innate characteristics of certain members of this line, as identified from contemporary records, have resonance with the convictions of William Southwell, as described by his son Charles:

From some cause or other so great was his [William's] contempt and hatred of priests that if by any chance one of the tribe found his way into the house he would say, 'Fanny (my mother's name was Fanny), *see to the money drawer and lock up the cupboards*'. 'Robbers'

was the term he usually applied to them, and never missed an opportunity to indulge a joke at their expense. Like the writer of these Confessions, who in this respect decidedly is ‘a chip off the old block’, he hated with intensest hatred the pack of hungry wolves who, in the name of their imaginary *wolf* God, devour the sheep they profess to guard.³⁰

A descendent of this Shropshire line was one [John Southwell](#) (*ca.* 1736–1788), a peruke maker of the parish of St Martin Orgar in London, active there *ca.* 1760–1787, father of the explorer Daniel Southwell (1776–97) and the well regarded cabinet maker, [John Aylward Southwell](#) (1763–1847). The second branch includes a skilled cabinet maker in Liverpool, also named [William Southwell](#) (1768–1852), who may have been related to our William. More information relating to these branches is provided in the ‘Other Southwell branches’ section of this website. However, to date no firm connection with either line has been established.

Activities in Dublin, 1776 – 1794

The first documented evidence of William Southwell’s possible presence in Dublin identified by the author is the name ‘William Southwell’ as a signatory (alongside a large number of Dublin citizens) on a Loyal Address to the King in 1776 made by ‘Gentlemen, Clergy, Freemen, Freeholders, Merchants, Traders, Manufacturers and other Citizens of Dublin’ at the time of the Declaration of American Independence.³¹ However, since the occupations of the signatories are not given it cannot be stated with absolute certainty that this was the William under discussion here, rather than another of that name in the city at that time.

The first fully confirmed sighting is his entry in *Wilson’s Dublin Directory* in 1783,³² in which he is listed as a harpsichord maker at 26, Fleet-street, Dublin, thereby establishing that he went into business on his own account not later than the closing months of 1782 (when the directory would have gone to press) – and before Weber’s death in 1784. He remained at this address until 1786. The burial of a ‘Mrs Southwell’ of Fleet-street, Dublin [frustratingly no forename given] is recorded in the parish register of St Mary’s Church on 22 February 1778; thus it seems likely that he was already living in Fleet-street at this time (though possibly still working for Weber) and that this entry records the death of his first wife. However, an alternative possibility is that the lady



may have been his mother – or step mother, given his much younger brother Nicholas' birth year, *ca.* 1760.³³

If William was indeed widowed in 1778, it was not to be long before he re-married. In 1780 a Dublin marriage bond records the marriage of William Southwell and Ann Dowlan [Doland].³⁴ The name 'Dowlan' is most probably the result of a scribe's mishearing of 'Doland', since the latter is the name recorded in a legal document dated 1799 relating to their son [Henry](#) (1783–1866), stated there to be William's fourth son, as his mother's maiden name.³⁵ The baptism of a daughter, [Harriot](#) [*sic*], appears in the parish records of St. Thomas Church, Dublin in 1784.³⁶

The year 1784 also marks the earliest identified contemporary evidence of a performance given on one of William's instruments. An advertisement for a performance of Orpheus and Eurydice at the English Opera-House, Capel-street in *The Freeman's Journal* on 10 June 1784 announced:

In Act 3d, Mrs Billington will accompany one of her
Airs on a very capital Celestina Harpsichord, made by the
Celebrated Southwell of this City.³⁷

No further information on the construction of this instrument has emerged, though, from its name, it seems possible it included the 'Celestina stop' invented by [Adam Walker](#) (1731– 1821) who had strong Dublin connections at this time.³⁸

Dublin directories reveal that William moved from 26, Fleet-street to 70, Marlborough-street, probably towards the end of 1786 since he is listed in *Wilson's Dublin Directory* as a harpsichord maker at the latter address from 1787–91.³⁹ Rachel Webber [*sic*], widow of Ferdinand is listed in the same publication as a harpsichord maker at No. 71 in 1786, so was at that time active close by. William then moved to 86, Marlborough-street in 1792, where he was to maintain a business presence until 1802, as will be discussed below. It may be significant that the year 1792 also marks the first occasion on which we find him specifically listed as both a harpsichord *and* pianoforte maker. In May 1792 he placed the following advertisement in *The Freeman's Journal*:

Music

WILLIAM SOUTHWELL

Has finished and ready for inspection, one of his much admired GRAND ORGANIZED PIANO FORTES; His last improvement on the small Piano Forte has been found on trial superior to any thing ever yet attempted; it enables the performer to play with more expression, and adds much to the brilliancy and sweetness of the tone. Marlborough-street. ⁴⁰

This notice is of particular interest for two reasons. Firstly it reveals that Southwell was making some form of combined instrument (a fact previously unreported) – given the name, most likely a combined organ-pianoforte. A firm family connection with organ building is later confirmed by the partnership of Nicholas Southwell with one Stephen White, trading as ‘Southwell and White, organ builders, Liverpool and London’, from an indeterminate date until its dissolution in 1820.⁴¹ Nicholas is subsequently listed in Liverpool trade directories as an organ maker as well as pianoforte maker.⁴² However, the possibility that the instrument might have been a combined harpsichord-pianoforte cannot be completely discounted, given that William himself appeared in Dublin directories from 1783–1792 only as a ‘harpsichord maker’, and subsequently (1793–1801) as a ‘harpsichord and pianoforte maker’ – never as an organ builder. In this connection, it is worthy of note that ‘a Patent Grand Piano Forte and Harpsichord, which has the fine Effect of Two Instruments in one Body or Case’ would later be offered for sale by Longman & Broderip in London in January 1795, less than two months after Southwell had entered into a licensing arrangement with them, permitting them to manufacture and market square pianofortes made to the design of his seminal 1794 patent.⁴³ Note in particular the word ‘Grand’ in the title, leading the author to consider the possibility that Southwell might have made a similar deal with them to market his ‘Grand Organized Pianofortes.’ No further supporting evidence has emerged however, and this question remains open.

Secondly, the similarity in wording of William’s descriptions of his improvements on the small pianoforte to that of a advertisement he later placed in Dublin in November

1794 (see below and note 51) suggests that these may have been among the first constructed to his design 'with additional keys', in advance of his seminal 1794 English patent, which will be discussed later. (For an appraisal of the novel technical aspects of Southwell's innovative designs see Michael Cole '[William Southwell – Inventor and Piano Maker](#)')

The following year Southwell advertised pedal harps and an intriguing newly invented instrument he termed a 'Dolce Flauto' played with keys.

PEDAL HARPS, &c.

Southwell, ever anxious that any thing Musical shall not escape him, has now in his hand a number of PEDAL HARPS, which he is determined to have finished in the first stile, and at the same time paying every due attention to tone, &c. The mechanism of the Pedals, which is justly considered a masterly piece of workmanship, he hopes will bear the most critical inspection; and to render the above more perfect, has invented a little Instrument, which he calls a Dolce Flauto, played with keys; the tones are as sweet as the finest Flute, consequently is particularly adapted to accompany the Harp, and will serve as a standard to tune it by. What renders it more valuable is, that there is no possibility of its going out of tune, except injured by accident. One of them and a Harp is ready for inspection; – likewise a grand organised Piano Forte, which for tone, elegance, and variety of stops, &c. stands unrivalled. The very great demand for his improved Piano Fortes obliges him to apologise for some disappointments. – No. 86, Marlborough-street.⁴⁴

In 1798 William was to file a patent for the design of a harp which seems likely to have been similar to that described in this advertisement.⁴⁵ The exact nature of the Dolce Flauto is not known.⁴⁶

By 1793 William Ware of Belfast, who also had a relationship with the firm of Broadwood in London since at least 1778,⁴⁷ was acting as an agent for the sale of Southwell instruments. An advertisement placed in the *Belfast Newsletter* in July

announced that he has for sale a new PIANO-FORTE made by Southwell, Dublin that had a 'Swell Lid'.⁴⁸

With Europe in turmoil at the time of the French Revolution and increasing unrest in Ireland within the Catholic community, in 1794 William took his invention across the water to London where he applied for an [English patent \(No. 2019\)](#) from an address in Lad Lane, London.⁴⁹ The received wisdom holds that he established a shop there; however, the author has found no mention of his name in the Land Tax records at this location at this time, so possibly he was using a temporary 'convenience address'. Alternatively he may have rented a workshop in the area so that the premises would be listed in his landlord's name rather than his own. As soon as the patent was granted he sold sole rights for its manufacture in England to Longman and Broderip of Cheapside, who agreed to pay him half a guinea for each instrument made. At first sight this appears an astute business move on his part, but sadly for William, within a short time he was to find himself embroiled in the bitter disputes relating to the licensing rights to his patent following the bankruptcy of Longman and Broderip.⁵⁰

However, back in Dublin at the end of the year 1794, the future seemed rosy and proceeding according to plan for our hero. On 20 November 1794 he placed an advertisement in *The Freeman's Journal* which records his arrangement with Longman and Broderip and at the same time clearly demonstrates his intention to continue production of his new 'pianofortes with additional keys' in Dublin on his own account.

BY THE KING'S ROYAL PATENT.

SOUTHWELL'S

NEW IMPROVED PIANO-FORTES.

Sweetness of tone, sensibility of touch, and simplicity of construction were the Patentee's grand-objects, which, to the astonishment of all the Professors, both of this and the sister kingdom, he has fully accomplished, by means singularly adapted to the purpose, viz. The introduction of a So-novent in a part of the instrument, heretofore unnoticed, has an amazing effect. The perpendicular Dampers, without springs, are of such various utility, that it is impossible to have a Piano-Forte in perfection on any other construction.



The Harp Stop over the Strings, and the very curious manner in which the Additional Keys are added, by which the compass of the instrument is enlarged without encreasing [*sic*] the dimensions, and [*sic*] only some of the advantages which this newly-improved instrument possesses over others. The size of the Piano-Forte is not enlarged by way of forcing out tone, but rather under the usual extent, whether with the additi-*[sic]* Keys or not and that the Public may have equal convenience in London as in Dublin of procuring these instruments, SOUTHWELL, sole Patentee, has appointed LONGMAN and BRODERIP, of Cheapside and the Haymarket, London, on certain specific conditions, to manufacture and vend the same for 14 years; by whom all orders will be attended to in London and by SOUTHWELL, The Patentee, at his his [word repeated] house, No. 86, Marlborough-street, Dublin, and nowhere else → N. B. A new HOUSE to LET, in Hume-street, Stephen's-green – Apply as above.⁵¹

This advertisement is interesting in two other respects. Firstly, here he has coined the novel term 'sonovent' to describe the delicately carved fretwork sound vents backed with silk in the triangular space at the back right hand corner of the soundboard, which, along with the two similarly carved fretwork vents at each end of the nameboard, became a striking hallmark of his instruments. A desk conversion of a Southwell square manufactured at this time (owned by Tim Harding) is inscribed 'Wm. Southwell, Dublin' on the nameboard, notably without the addition of '& Son', which was to appear in subsequent years until 1802. Attached to this instrument case there is an original 'flyer' which repeats the text of the above advertisement almost verbatim, suggesting that this instrument was made within a short time of the English patent being granted (Figure 1). Unfortunately the serial number in the centre of the nameboard roundel is so worn that it is no longer legible.⁵² Secondly, William advertised a house to let in Hume-street, which he had constructed on this site, seemingly as an investment.⁵³

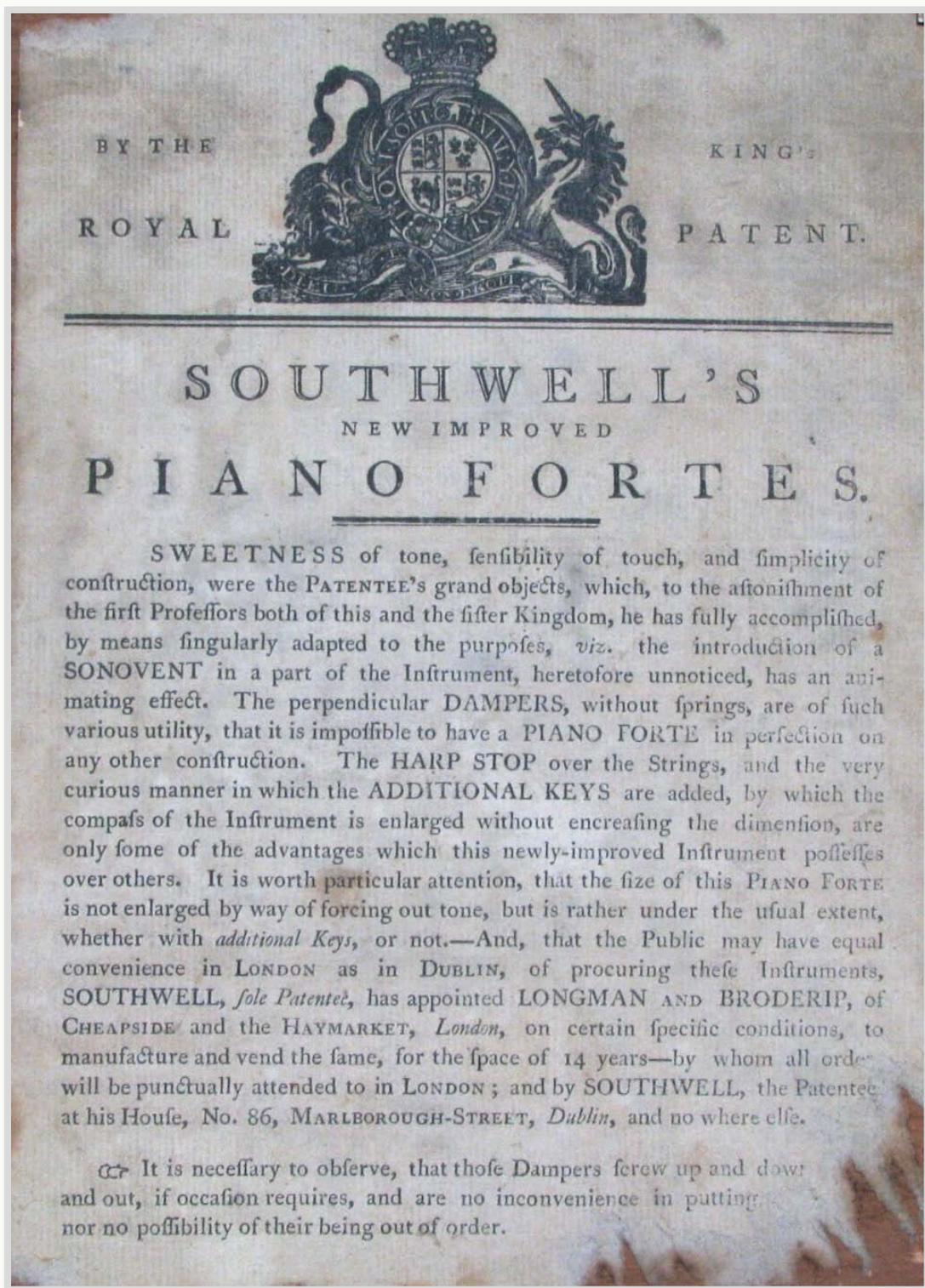


Figure 1: Flyer attached to a desk conversion of a Southwell square pianoforte, ca. 1794, inscribed 'Wm. Southwell, Dublin' on the nameboard. (© Tim Harding, reproduced by kind permission).

No further advertisements placed directly by Southwell himself have been located in Dublin during the latter half of the decade. However, two placed in the *Belfast Mercury* in 1796 by a 'Mr Murdoc' cite Mr Southwell's endorsement of the quality of his work.

A CARD

MR. SOUTHWELL, PIANO FORTE-MAKER, &c. Dublin, –recommends Mr. MORDOC, (who has done business for him a long time) as a person very capable of Tuning and Repairing Organs, Piano fortes, &c....⁵⁴

Each of the extant examples of square pianofortes 'with additional keys' known to the author from Southwell's Dublin workshop between 1794 (the year he was granted his English patent) and 1802⁵⁵ bears hand painted stylised images of the lion and unicorn surmounted by a crown on their nameboards (see, for example, Figure 2), as also do two upright square pianofortes made to his 1798 patent design.



Figure 2: Nameboard of a five and a half octave square pianoforte by Wllm. Southwell & Son, 1798. (Courtesy of David Hunt: photograph by Margaret Debenham)

At first sight this would seem to indicate that Southwell's political sympathies lay with the English crown. However, these symbols do not appear on four examples of earlier five octave Southwell squares known to the author, which have nameboards that differ from each other and are more individual and freeform in style. Nor do they appear on the Croft Castle pianoforte, (see Cole, '[William Southwell – Inventor and Piano Maker](#)') which, it has been suggested, may be one of the earliest examples of Southwell's five and a half octave model. Arguably incorporating these symbols could

have been no more than an astute way of publicising his English patent rights, with an eye to attracting the market of British aristocrats and upper class citizens in Dublin. However, as will be discussed later, according to first-hand testimony of his daughter Frances, in *ca.*1803 Irish rebels set fire to his house in Dublin ‘because they thought he was not on their side.’⁵⁶

The earliest recorded serial number for a piano by ‘Willm. Southwell *and Son*’ is No. 1617, held in the Cobbe Collection at Hatchlands Park, an unusual example since it has evidence of an altered lid, which it has been suggested may be the result of a factory alteration of an earlier five octave model.⁵⁷ The earliest *dated* example known to the author (Figure 3) that similarly bears the joint names is a five and a half octave square (No. 2031) signed and dated by a workman March 9th 1798 on the side of a key. In this instance the ‘& Son’ refers to William’s son John – a partnership which was to endure until 1802.⁵⁸



Figure 3: Square pianoforte (No. 2031) by Willm. Southwell & Son, dated ‘March 9th 1798’ (Courtesy of David Hunt. Photograph by Margaret Debenham.)

Southwell the commuter: 1794 – 1803

Back in London, Longman and Broderip lost no time in offering to the public pianofortes made to William’s new design. On 31 January 1795 they announced:

LONGMAN and BRODERIP respectfully recommend to the Musical World a new Patent Piano-Forte, with additional Keys, Harp-stop, and new Patent Dampers, which, from the superiority of its construction, possesses a brilliancy of tone far exceeding any Instrument ever before offered to the Public.⁵⁹

Barely a year later, an advertisement placed on 7 January 1796 indicates that already they had become painfully aware that William's 1794 design was being copied by other makers in breach of his patent rights.

HARMONIC PIANO FORTES.

THE Musical Dilletanti are particularly requested, by LONGMAN and BRODERIP, to be cautious in respect to the places where they may apply for the purchase of Mr SOUTHWELL's new invented Patent Piano Fortes with additional keys, as those manufactured and sold by them at their respective Houses, No 26 Cheapside, No 13 Haymarket and No 141, Tottenham-court road, are universally allowed to be infinitely superior in point of tone, touch and quality, to those which are attempted to be offered to the Public, under the Idea of the same invention and improvements, yet differing widely in their actuating principles.⁶⁰

For a full and detailed account of the complex legal wrangling that ensued over the patent rights in subsequent years see George S. Bozarth and Margaret Debenham, ['Piano Wars', 2009](#).⁶¹

It appears that William was spending a considerable amount of time in London during this period, leaving his son John to manage the manufacturing business in Dublin. In 1798 he took out another innovative [patent \(No. 2264\)](#),⁶² this time for an upright square pianoforte and, in the same application, [a harp](#), this time giving his address as Broad Court, St. Martin in the Fields. Again there is no sign of his name in the Land Tax records for Broad Court in 1798, so perhaps this was another convenience address for



patent purposes, though conceivably he might have been a sub-tenant of one of the three occupants listed in that location – Jos^h Wateridge, ‘Winter & Hay’ and Jn^o Burnham. By serendipity, the original patent specification handed in for enrolment on 6 December 1798 and personally signed and sealed by William Southwell is extant in the holdings of The National Archives, Kew, providing us with [a rare example of his signature](#).⁶³

In connection with this patent, a very interesting flyer preserved on a Southwell square piano dated 1802 has recently come to light (Figure 4)⁶⁴ which reveals the fact that William had entered into an arrangement for production of this new model with Clementi and Co. similar to that of his earlier agreement with Longman and Broderip. The details appearing on the flyer include the dimensions, ‘Height 4 feet 6 inches; depth 1 feet 6 inches; Withe [*sic*] 5 feet 1 inch. A transcription of the text that appears below the image of an engraving of William Southwell’s 1798 patent drawing is given below.

The Construction of the New Patent Microchordon is entirely different from any Instrument ever before offered to the Public; & from the Simplicity of the action & truth of Mathematical Measures it possesses an excellent Touch & Tone & keeps perfectly well in Tune – This Invention has received the decided Approbation of the most eminent Professors: & the agreeable Variety afforded by the occasional Introduction of the Drum & Triangle particularly in Military Movements, Waltzes, Rondos Reels &c. renders it a valuable acquisition to the Musical World.

LONDON

Printed by Muzio Clementi & Co. No. 26 Cheapside

The above Instrument was invented by Mr. Southwell of Dublin, and is called

A CAMERACHORD

[In a Ribbon] King’s Royal Patent

Southwell’s New Invented Camerachord

OR

CHAMBER PIANO-FORTE to be had only of THE PATENTEES

86 Marlborough Street DUBLIN or Longman Clementi & Co.

London

Price with additional
Key[sic] 35 Guineas

with Drum and Triangles
44 Guineas Do’

with Six Octaves
38 Gui.s.





Figure 4: Flyer attached to a Southwell square piano (No. 2283), dated 10 July 1802. This advertisement relates to a different type of instrument, which he termed a 'Camerachord', constructed to the design of his 1798 'upright square' patent. (© Image reproduced by kind permission of the private owner, Warwickshire).

The reference to 'Longman, Clementi and Co.' tells us that this part of the text must have been written *before* the dissolution of the partnership between John Longman (brother of James) and Clementi on 28 June 1800.⁶⁵ However, the name of the printer is

given as 'Muzio Clementi & Co.', indicating that this printing took place *after* this date. Supporting evidence that this model was indeed offered for sale by Longman, Clementi and Co. is found in an advertisement placed by the firm in October 1799.⁶⁶ The square pianoforte to which this flyer is attached is dated by a workman, Geo. Cooke, on the side of a key July 10, 1802, which infers that the upright square model was still in production at this time. The text also provides confirmation that Southwell was still manufacturing instruments on his own account in Dublin in 1798. An example of the case of an upright square pianoforte made in Dublin to this design (minus its action) is extant in the [Mobbs Keyboard Collection](#), now held in Golden Bay, New Zealand.

In about 1797/8 at the age of sixty William took another wife, Frances (*ca.* 1783–1847) – a young girl of 16.⁶⁷ It is perhaps significant that Charles Southwell was later to observe in his *Confessions of a Free Thinker*:

But though a Sampson in intellect, like Sampson my poor father had not always strength enough to resist temptations spread for him by the fair sex; and the Bible hero shorn of his locks was not more impotent than *he* sometimes was under their influence. He loved woman heartily as every man should, but his love was not always tempered with discretion.⁶⁸

Frances is said by their daughter, also named Frances, to have been 'the daughter of a London hairdresser', which suggests he met her there while living in the capital.⁶⁹ No formal record of a marriage ceremony has been located, but Frances went on to bear him at least seven children.⁷⁰ If the union was ever formalised in church, it would appear he committed bigamy, since a legal document relating to his son Henry's apprenticeship to the Dublin Attorney Sobieski Kildahl in 1799 states that 'he is the son of William Southwell of Marlborough-street in the City of Dublin Gentⁿ and Ann Southwell, otherwise Doland his wife.'⁷¹ Another extant original document in the same set is a sworn statement dated 5 April 1799 (personally signed by William Southwell and witnessed in Dublin), that he was the father of Henry Southwell and that his son was of 'full age of sixteen years', therefore born in 1783.⁷² This document thus confirms William's presence in Dublin at this time.



Further evidence that he continued to be active in Dublin is found in *Wilson's Dublin Directory*, 1801, where he is again listed as a Harpsichord and Piano Forte maker at 86 Marlborough-street. Confirmation that this indicates no mere token presence comes from a newspaper notice placed by an influential group of Dublin cabinet makers in February 1802, seeking skilled workmen to come over from England to join their workforce.

CABINET MAKERS WANTED

In the CITY of DUBLIN,

By the undersigned PERSONS carrying on the
CABINET-MAKING BUSINESS.

A NUMBER of INDUSTRIOUS WORKING MEN in the above Line, who will, instantly on their Arrival in Dublin, be put into constant and ample Employment, at the Rates now payable in London by the Book of Cabinet Prices of 1797,⁷³ or by any other New Book of Rates which shall hereafter become the Standard in London, with the Benefit of English Money as now paid in Ireland; viz. 1s. 8d. in the Pound.

Every Man who brings with him a good Chest of Tools, shall be paid THREE GUINEAS for his Expences, on Application to:

Robert Mallett	John Gillington
John Davis	George Jennings
Robert Morgan	N. Southwell
John Mack	William Southwell
John Wandsford Wright	Henry Eggeso
William Bradshaw	James Flood
John Young	John Preston
Richard Mc.Owen	Nathaniel Preston
Christopher Dougherty	William Warren
Hall Kirchoffer	Robert Gibton
St George Campbell	John Evat
John Gardiner	William Moore ⁷⁴

Observe that not only William and 'N' Southwell but also William Moore are among this illustrious group of craftsmen, indicating that they were at very least acquainted. The group also includes the renowned Irish furniture makers John Mack, Robert Gibton and John Gillington whose pieces are greatly prized and command high prices at auction today.



Meanwhile however, back in London there were ominous rumblings of trouble brewing for William Southwell. On 24 March 1802 James Longman and three of his creditors brought a case against John Longman (James' brother), Clementi and Co. in the Court of Equity, seeking redress for monies that Longman claimed were due to him from sales of square pianofortes made by the firm to Southwell's patent design.⁷⁵ In a move which may be reasonably interpreted as an attempt to protect his assets when anticipating possible financial hazards ahead, on 1 June 1802 William executed a legal deed in Dublin, ostensibly retiring from the business – though as we shall see in fact he was destined to continue to work for many years to come. The deed, which interestingly gives two addresses for the Southwell premises in Marlborough-street, No. 86 and No. 34 (the latter being the address of the firm found in following years), terminated his existing partnership with his son John and in its place established a new partnership between two of his sons, John and Francis, and his brother Nicholas. In return the new firm contracted to pay William a premium on each instrument sold. In the case of square piano fortes this was to be two pounds; for harpsichords three pounds; for flat Grand Pianofortes four pounds and for upright Grand Pianofortes five pounds. It is worthy of note that both flat and upright Grand Pianofortes are mentioned in this legal document, suggesting that both were made by the house of Southwell – later confirmed by auction advertisements placed in 1819 and 1823 that included Southwell Grands.⁷⁶ The nameboard of a square pianoforte manufactured shortly after this deed was executed clearly illustrates the change of name of the firm (Figure 5). The left hand section of the ribbon reads 'Piano forte', the central section 'Southwells' and the right hand section 'Makers', and the address given below is '34, Marlboro St. Dublin'.

Also in the same year (1802) William sold the title to the houses he had built in Hume-street, Dublin to another son, [Thomas](#) (1782–) at that time a Lieutenant in the 46th Regiment of Foot,⁷⁷ probably the eldest son of his union with Ann[e] Doland.





Figure 5: Nameboard of a Southwell square pianoforte (No. 2283) made in Dublin, signed and dated 'July 10 – 1802' on a key by a workman 'Geo^e. Cooke' (© Image reproduced by kind permission of the private owner, Warwickshire).

Played out against a background of increasing unrest and rebellion in Ireland that would ultimately lead to the Act of Union in January 1803 and the disbanding of the Irish Parliament, in London events were moving apace.⁷⁸ James Longman and his creditors continued to press home Longman's claims against Clementi and his partners and it is apparent that at this point Southwell was by this time coming under increasing pressure from Clementi & Co. to assert his rights by taking action against those allegedly constructing instruments that blatantly used elements of his design.⁷⁹ Consequently, on 8 March 1803, Southwell, perhaps at their insistence, filed a complaint against John Broadwood and his son James Shudi Broadwood in the Court of Equity, this time giving his address as 3, Duke's Court, St Martin in the Fields.⁸⁰ The Broadwoods' response was swift and ruthless. Their skilled lawyer managed to interpret a part of the patent specification in such a way that meant it could not be fully defended.⁸¹ Though no record of a judgement in the case has been located, testimony by Clementi and Co. in a later case concerning the disputed rights makes it clear that Southwell pragmatically decided to retreat in the face of the Broadwoods' opposition and the escalating costs involved, only too aware that by then a number of other makers were openly copying his design.⁸²

It seems William must have returned to Dublin, perhaps metaphorically to lick his wounds, shortly before the Irish rebellion led by Robert Emmet took place on 23 July 1803. Certainly the family were in Dublin at about this time since one of Frances [Southwell] Cripps most vivid childhood memories was of being carried from the house on her father's shoulders as a small girl after the rebels set fire to their house – a very frightening scenario and one that strongly suggests that the rebels believed that Southwell's sympathies lay with the Protestant ascendancy rather than the Catholic majority.

At the age of 3 she was carried away from their house on her Father's shoulders, she recollected looking back and seeing the house in flames, it having been set fire to in one of the Irish Rebellions, because they thought he was not on their side. This was in Dublin. They ran for their lives and went into a Hotel which they found occupied by the rebels enjoying themselves. They fled to Liverpool.⁸³

According to Frances (as told to her grandson), after fleeing to Liverpool in the wake of the fire, the family then started up again in business, first in Liverpool and then in London. The *Liverpool Directory* for 1805 contains the first known confirmation of the Southwell business operating in that city, with an entry for Nicholas, 'J' and 'F' Southwell (the three new partners in the business established by the Dublin deed of 1802), musical instrument makers, Duke-street. A year earlier, in 1804, a William Southwell is recorded at a different address in Liverpool, 1, Case-street – a residential area of substantial houses.⁸⁴ Possibly this is the address where William installed his family at this time, after the flight from Dublin. Certainly his wife [partner] Frances was in Liverpool in this year, since census returns for 1851 and 1861 give their son [William Southwell Junior's](#) birth place as Liverpool, 1804.⁸⁵

It can be confirmed from other sources however that [John Southwell](#) remained in Dublin. He is recorded as a music seller and publisher at 17, North Earl-street ca. 1803–1806.⁸⁶ And on 5 June 1804, now said to be of Marlborough-street, along with one James LaPrelle of Abbey-street he signed a Bond in the sum of £100 as a guarantor for his brother Henry on the occasion of his entering the Honourable Society of the Kings Inn of Court, Dublin after completing his apprenticeship with Kildahl, evidence of a close



connection between LaPrelle and the Southwell family. This assumes particular significance when one discovers that LaPrelle is recorded as being a cabinet maker at 48, Capel-street from 1787–1794, next door to William Moore’s premises at 47, Capel-street, his address from 1789–1810. Moore is listed at 48, Capel-street in later directory entries from 1810 through to 1814, the year of his death. One wonders if LaPrelle and William Moore may have had some form of co-operative working relationship for a time; however, no further evidence to support this possibility has emerged to date.

Life after Dublin: the Liverpool and London years, 1805 – 1825

Despite the trials and tribulations of William’s relationship with James Longman, it seems he maintained – or re-established – amicable relations with Francis Fane Broderip in subsequent years. An advertisement placed by Broderip and Wilkinson in May 1806 announced that their new musical publications were available from ‘Messrs Southwell, Duke-street, Liverpool’⁸⁷ and also ‘their piano-fortes with additional keys’. Augustus Leukfeld of Tottenham-street, London had been under an exclusive contract to supply Broderip and Wilkinson with five and a half octave pianofortes made to the Southwell patent since 1801,⁸⁸ so one may deduce that those supplied to Southwell and Co.’s Liverpool shop [by Broderip and Wilkinson] would have come from Leukfeld’s workshop.⁸⁹ After Broderip’s death in 1807, Wilkinson took over his business⁹⁰ and, not later than 1808, established his own close relationship with William Southwell in London, as we shall see.

On 8 April 1807 William filed yet another [patent \(No. 3029\)](#), this time for a full upright cabinet pianoforte with an action that worked in front of the soundboard.⁹¹ A major advantage was that it was no longer necessary to cut through it [the soundboard] to allow hammers or dampers access to the strings, thus creating a stronger, more stable instrument in which the strings go down to the ground. His address in the patent rolls is given merely as Dublin, indicating that he was still returning to Ireland from time to time. With the advent of the Act of Union in 1801, patent law was now applicable across the whole of the United Kingdom and it was no longer necessary to use an English address for this purpose. James Shudi Broadwood was later to claim in 1838 that Southwell’s design was based on a sketch he had given to Southwell in 1804.⁹² Perhaps



some form of informal out of court settlement may have taken place after the acrimonious court case in 1803; however, the author has located no firm evidence to support this hypothesis.

In this context it is however interesting that in 1807–08 the Broadwood out-letter books⁹³ record correspondence which documents a business relationship between the Broadwoods and Southwell's son Henry (1783–1866), now practising as a recently qualified solicitor in Dublin.⁹⁴ It appears they were referred to Henry by a Mr Galbraith of 2, Locke-street, Dublin, whom the Broadwoods had initially approached for help in obtaining settlement for a bad debt on 28 November 1804.⁹⁵ Two letters addressed to Southwell at 18, Westmoreland-street, Dublin (Henry Southwell's address) on 11 December 1806 and 2 January 1807 concern another matter, a debt owed to them by William Ware of Belfast (an agent for the sale of both Broadwood and Southwell instruments and to whom Broadwoods had lent money).⁹⁶ In a letter dated 5 February 1807 they make reference to Henry's father, [William Southwell]:

5th February 1807

[in margin:] Southwell [then:] Mr Attorney Dublin

In 1803 we sent Mr Ware a copy of the then / standing account which acc^t we now send you / and to which we have added the Interest up to / this Time and also given him credit for the sum / received since = You will observe a difference between / this and the Acc^t. before transmitted you and the Articles / Octob^r: 12/99 on the Credit side and October 26 /99 on / debit side were omit^d. because enter^d against each other in / a [crossed through] the [then] Retail Ledger and were never posted to Mr Wares / proper account = We told your father you might give up the Interest [crossed through:] ~~as we~~ [then:] on his pay^t & the Principle as / we considered him a Poor Devil – but if he troubles / us by Law expenses we will not. Enclosed we send a / Copy of a Letter rec^d. from Mr W. acknowledging the Debt / Dated Jan^y 12th 1807.⁹⁷

The exact meaning of the reference to 'your father' here is unclear. Do they mean they consider William Ware a 'poor devil' – or are they referring to William Southwell? Without knowing the exact context, it is tantalisingly ambiguous. What it *does* establish however is that they must have been in communication with William [father of Henry Southwell] at this time. Further evidence to support this comes from another letter



written a few months later on 19 October 1807, recorded in the Broadwood letter book, which suggests some form of discussion had occurred.

—with regard / to Mr Ware’s bond when Due you will please deduct / one half for the trouble and expenses you may have/ incurred agreeable to the promises made Mr Southwell [Sn^r]⁹⁸

From Charles Southwell’s testimony in *‘The Confessions of a Free Thinker’* we learn that by the time William Southwell died in 1825 more friendly relations had resumed between the houses of Broadwood and Southwell, since, at that time two of Southwell’s sons were already employed by Broadwoods and Charles, the youngest, was, he tells his readers, taken on at this time by the firm, ‘out of respect for my father’.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, not later than 1808 Nicholas Southwell established a manufactory presence at 49, Rathbone Place, London (backing onto Gresse-street) in addition to his premises at 99, Duke-street, Liverpool. A square pianoforte dated 1808 and held in a private collection bears both addresses on the nameboard.¹⁰⁰ Another example offered for sale by Piano Auctions in 2010 also clearly shows both addresses (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Nameboard of a Southwell square pianoforte offered for sale by Piano Auctions, London in 2010 (reproduced by kind permission of Richard Reason)

Investigations of the Land Tax records for Rathbone Place reveal one Robert Bill at this London address from 1807. The *London and Country Directory*, 1811 lists him as a ‘patent pianoforte manufacturer’, giving his addresses as 16 and 49, Rathbone Place – the latter appears to have been the workshop address, the former his residence. He is reported to have made pianofortes of a novel design ‘without temperament’ under an 1808 patent granted to William Hawkes of Newport Shropshire’.¹⁰¹ On 2 April 1809 an advertisement placed in Hawkes’ name advertised for sale:

A GRAND PIANO-FORTE, improved upon the same principle as his Organ, so highly approved of, after a critical trial, by many of the most Eminent of the Profession, and may be seen at No. 49, Rathbone-place Oxford-street, any day between the hours of Eleven in the Forenoon and Four in the Afternoon; – Besides the superiority of harmonic perfection in this instrument (in which those harsh and disagreeable tones to the extent of five flats, and as many sharps, termed wolves, are done away). The application of the Patent Springs to the strings, so celebrated for keeping stringed Instruments in tune, is an acquisition of great importance, as the thumping of unskilful Performers cannot injure or put them out of tune....¹⁰²

What, if any, may have been the nature of the relationship between Hawkes and the Southwells remains a question yet to be resolved. At some time between 1811 and 1813 Bill moved to 5, Berner's Mews, a few blocks away,¹⁰³ where he remained until 1820. This is particularly interesting in the light of Frances Cripps reporting to her grandson that the family had had premises in Berners-street.

They then lived in Werners [Berners] Street, Oxford Street, and many are the stories Grandma told me of the great people she met while living there with her Father.¹⁰⁴

The author has identified evidence from contemporary advertisements, Land Tax records and directories that William Southwell and his family were in fact resident at 11, Gresse-street from 1811 until his death in 1825.¹⁰⁵ However, given the earlier connection to 49, Rathbone Place, the fact that at some point between 1811 and 1813 Robert Bill moved to a workshop at 5, Berner's Mews, backing directly onto Berners-street, may be significant. One wonders whether this may have become the London workshop of Southwell and Co (headed in England by Nicholas) and that Bill had continued to work for the firm there, though this remains unproven.

Returning to the year 1808, on 21 June Wilkinson and Co., late Broderip and Wilkinson,¹⁰⁶ placed an advertisement for a new design of cabinet pianoforte, for which they had acquired the manufacturing rights from William Southwell.

A PIANO FORTE on a new and improved Construction. –WILKINSON and Company, late Broderip and Wilkinson, No. 13 Hay-Market, beg to inform the No-



bility and Public in general, that they have received his Majesty's royal Letters' patent for a Piano Forte on an entirely new construction, called a New Patent Cabinet Piano Forte. – The superior qualities it possesses are a brilliancy of tone[sic] unequalled by any Piano Forte, united with a peculiar delicacy and facility of touch. The simplicity and strength of its construction prevent the possibility of its being out of tune so frequent as any other Instrument. – From the peculiar application of the Pedals, it is particularly adapted for executing with unprecedented effect, either Vocal or Instrumental Music, at the same time the elegance of its form, combined with a complete conveniency for Music Books, &c. renders it as a piece of furniture far superior to any Piano Forte ever made. –Dimensions –Height 5 feet 6 inches –Breadth 3 feet 6 inches –Depth 1 foot 8 inches.– N.B. Wilkinson and Company, the Proprietors of the above patent Piano Forte, being fully persuaded of the superiority of its standing in tune over all others, engage to keep those sold in town in tune and repair for Twelve Months, free of expence – It may be necessary to add, that the Cabinet Piano Fortes are finished under the immediate inspection of the Inventor W. Southwell, at their Manufactory, No. 3, Windmill-street, and at No. 13, Hay-Market. ¹⁰⁷

An illustration of this type of model appeared in *Ackermann's Repository of Arts, Literature, Fashions, Manufactures, &c* Vol.7 February 1812, see: ['Hand-colored print of cabinet upright piano titled "Messrs. Wilkinson & Wornum's Upright Patent Pianaforte" \[sic\]](#) (reproduced in Wikipedia).

Yet again we find William re-visiting his strategy of maximising the return on his inventive efforts by licensing manufacturing rights to others rather than taking on the burden of the costs of manufacture for himself – an approach with which many modern entrepreneurs could identify. However, this time he varied his tactics slightly, since he was personally employed in supervising the production process in Wilkinson's workshop. One must remember that he was now about 70 years old and supposedly retired, but with an ever growing young family to house, feed and clothe, doubtless he would not



have been able to afford to cease work. A number of agents across England placed advertisements for the Wilkinson [Southwell] cabinet pianos at this time, including Ralph Guest of Bury St Edmunds, J. Hardy of Hull and S. Ball of Ipswich,¹⁰⁸ suggesting that Wilkinson had inherited a good distribution network from the old Broderip and Wilkinson partnership.

During this period too Robert Wornum (1780–1852), was working as a foreman for George Wilkinson¹⁰⁹ and would have had ample opportunity to observe Southwell's techniques and methods at first hand. Wilkinson and Wornum were to become partners in 1810 – a relationship destined to be cut short by a disastrous fire that destroyed their new premises at 315 Oxford-street (though leaving 11, Princes-street intact) in early October 1812.¹¹⁰ Wornum's involvement with Southwell assumes particular significance in the light of another of the stories told to F S Cripps by his grandmother.

When quite young and while living in London, she remembers Wornum coming to work for her Father as a poor boy. He was half starved, so she often took him meals down, herself. He afterwards stole one of her Fathers idea (patents) and became one of the big Pianoforte makers of London. I think the firm still exists—at any rate Broadwoods does.

This is another example of a tale that must have become twisted in the telling. Since Frances was not born until about 1800, at this time Wornum was already a young man in his late twenties, not a boy. It is possible that, looking back with hindsight in her old age, Frances might well have used the term 'boy' in the loosest sense. When one becomes advanced in years, age can become relative. It is however likely she would have encountered Wornum during the years he worked alongside her father in the Wilkinson workshop from 1808 – *ca.* 1810.

The idea to which Frances referred may have been the sticker action first introduced in Southwell's upright square patent of 1798, which, as John Watson notes in his description of a vertical piano by Robert Wornum Junior held in the Colonial Williamsburg Collection,¹¹¹ was an idea adapted for use by Wornum in his 'improved upright pianoforte', patented on 26 March 1811 (No. 3419). The model is sometimes referred to as the 'Unique', as is borne out by a label found on a Wilkinson and Wornum upright instrument in the Colt collection giving 'DIRECTIONS FOR THE NEW PATENT UNIQUE



PIANO-FORTE'.¹¹² Since this label bears the address 315, Oxford-street and 11, Princes-street the instrument must have been made before the fire destroyed the premises in 1812.

In the light of Frances' story, the wording of an advertisement placed personally by William Southwell in *The Observer* on 27 September 1812 assumes new relevance, suggesting, as it does, that William did indeed lay claim to being the inventor of 'unique pianofortes'.

PIANO FORTES – By the King's Royal Patent. –

Amateurs, Professors &c. of the Piano Forte are most respectfully informed that they can be supplied with real UNIQUE PIANO FORTES, upon simple and permanent principles, totally different from any thing hitherto submitted to the Public, with drawers in front, or other conveniences for music, at the option of the purchaser, and six octaves of keys, will stand in playable tone for six months, touch and tone unequalled. Has likewise for Sale a Specimen of his much admired Cabinet Piano Fortes, for which he obtained His Majesty's Letters Patent, but with such very essential improvements, as will make it a valuable acquisition to the purchaser. –To be seen at the Patentee's W. Southwell, No. 11, Gresse-street, Rathbone-place, from eleven to five o'clock; and at Mr J. Balls, Piano-Forte-maker, No. 27, Duke-street, Grosvenor-square.¹¹³

Later, in 1819 John Watlen, with whom Southwell was associated from 1813 until his death in 1825, would refer to him in an advertisement as 'the Inventor of the additional Keys, the upright Dampers, the Cabinet Pianoforte, the Harmonic Pianoforte, the Oblique Pianoforte', thus lending weight to this possibility.¹¹⁴ The above advertisement is interesting too in its reference to Southwell cabinet pianos being available at the premises of [James] Ball, indicating that a rift may have occurred between Southwell and Wilkinson and Wornum by this time. The disastrous blaze which destroyed the Wilkinson factory, started accidentally by a candle dropped by the wife of an employee,¹¹⁵ took place two weeks *after* this advertisement was placed and therefore the split in the working relationship cannot have happened as a result of the fire.

1811 - 1825: Southwell's oblique pianoforte and John Watlen

Not later than 1811 William Southwell took up residence at 11, Gresse-street, Rathbone Place in the parish of St Pancras, as is evidenced from directory entries, Land Tax records and advertisements he placed personally for individual instruments he had constructed.¹¹⁶ A close neighbour at No. 13 was George Dettmer, whose name appears as the occupant of No. 7, Gresse-street from 1799 until 1803 – and probably until 1809.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately there is a gap in the extant Land Tax records, but from an advertisement placed in July 1809 we learn that Dettmer's son William had recently moved to larger premises, 50, Upper Marylebone Street.¹¹⁸ Also at around this time, the Lancastrian born portrait painter James Lonsdale (1777–1839), then living at 8, Berners-street, painted Southwell's portrait, which he exhibited in Liverpool in 1813.¹¹⁹ Sadly, despite extensive enquiries, the author has been unable to locate the present whereabouts of this portrait. One lives in hope that it may yet surface from obscurity.

From his address in Gresse-street William filed yet another [patent \(No. 3403\)](#),¹²⁰ this time for the accurately – though somewhat inelegantly – named 'Piano sloping backwards', which was to be marketed as 'the oblique pianoforte', a much updated variation on the design of his upright square of 1798. With a case only four feet six inches high and five feet five inches wide, this was a neater instrument than the tall uprights of other makers still in production at this time. A particular advantage was that it did not need to be placed against a wall and it was low enough for a singer to be able to be seen and to project their voice over the top of it. It is interesting to note that on the same day John Trotter, proprietor of the Soho Bazaar (whom, it may be recalled, was said by Southwell's daughter Frances to have been a great friend of their family) also filed a patent for a [novel pianoforte keyboard \(No. 3404\)](#).¹²¹ The patent drawing is skilfully executed and one wonders if Southwell may have had a hand in its preparation.

As we learn from a notice which appeared in a London newspaper in December 1811, an 'Irish gentleman of great mechanical genius' (who is fully confirmed from later advertisements to be William Southwell) sold the manufacturing rights for this latest design to John Watlen¹²² of 5, Leicester-square:



The new Patent Grand Oblique six octave Piano-forte, so much admired and spoken of for its many excellent qualities, particularly those of standing in tune and elegance of form, is not Mr. WATLEN's invention (of Leicester-place), but that of an Irish gentleman of great mechanical genius, for which he paid him 500 guineas.¹²³

Watlen was to become a prolific advertiser over the following decade and it is thanks largely to his unwitting testimony we can glean that Southwell had yet again repeated his strategy of selling manufacturing rights to his inventions to another maker. His wordy outpourings reveal that William acted as a superintendent of his [Watlen's] workshops from the commencement of the manufacture of the oblique pianoforte until at least 1823 – and by inference right up to the time of his death in 1825.

From the outset of the launch of this new model, Watlen's newspaper notices and advertisements are extravagant in their claims for its features. On 31 October 1811, a notice placed in *The Morning Chronicle* claims

The new Patent Oblique Six-octave Piano-forte, of Watlen's, Leicester-place, is now esteemed superior to all others for its many excellent qualities. An amateur of high respectability says that it will supersede all other Grand Piano-fortes, and Mr C.W, a Professor of great eminence gave it his unequalled approbation, but thought it too cheap at forty five guineas....

Moving on to the closing years of the decade in 1819 we find a notice placed by Watlen (by then of No. 13, Leicester-place) which has particular relevance to our story:

To THE MUSICAL WORLD. – ADVERTISEMENT. He is yet alive and at work, aged 81 – Wm SOUTHWELL, the Inventor of the additional keys, the upright Dampers, the Cabinet Pianoforte, the Harmonic Pianoforte, the Oblique Pianoforte, which is the last, and certainly the best, particularly the new Improved Oblique Pianoforte; it has as fine a tone as any Grand Pianoforte, and a much lighter touch; its elegant form and its moderate price will in time supersede all other Pianofortes. ...¹²⁴

Another notice placed in the same year is most interesting,

IMPROVED OBLIQUE AND CABINET
PIANO-FORTES, BY THE Inventor, who has been upwards of fifty years inventing and finishing Piano-fortes; every judge must own that the tones and touches are unequalled; the elegant form of the Improved Oblique, the compact size suits either palace or cottage. Price 45 to 75 guineas.¹²⁵

As discussed earlier, the phrase ‘upwards of fifty years’ in the business takes us back to the late 1760s, thus raising the possibility that Southwell may have already been involved with inventing and finishing Piano-fortes for several years prior to his oft cited commencement date with Ferdinand Weber in Dublin in 1772.¹²⁶

Watlen’s advertisements for the oblique piano forte continued to be placed at frequent intervals through to 1823 and indicate that the model was made and sold in large numbers, which makes it all the more surprising that no known working examples have survived, with the exception of a case converted into a display cabinet, sold at auction in 2009.¹²⁷ In 1815 he announced he had supplied an oblique pianoforte to The Duchess of Angouleme (eldest child of Louis XVI of France and Marie Antoinette), who was then resident for a short period at The Retreat, Battersea;¹²⁸ and eight years later in 1823 he proudly proclaimed that his client list for this model included the Royal Families of France and the Netherlands and the Duchess of Clarence.¹²⁹

In 1821, by now well over 80 years old, while still involved with Watlen, William took out yet another [patent \(No. 4546\)](#), for an improved cabinet pianoforte, this time for a back check, designed to catch the hammers, thus preventing them from rebounding against the strings, another novel design which would be adopted and is in use to the present day.¹³⁰

Southwell’s family life in London

During these final years in London, so Frances Cripps told her grandson, William was deeply involved with the London theatre scene and often wrote reviews of productions.



... many are the stories Grandma told me of the great people she met while living there with her Father. Kemble, Keane and Macroedy [*sic*] the Actors, and all sorts. Her Father, she said, had the entry to all theatres and Concerts and used to write criticisms.

A connection with the world of theatre is also suggested by the involvement of some of his children. [Francis W. Southwell](#) (ca. 1774 –), one of William's sons of probably his earliest marriage, became well known in his day as a composer of popular airs and orchestral pieces both in Dublin and London, though he cannot be considered to be of the first rank. It is interesting to note that Bartlett Cooke, the Dublin music dealer and father of Tom Cooke (1782–1848), published one of F W Southwell's compositions in Dublin. Tom Cooke moved to London in 1813 and was active in the Theatre Royal in London, both as singer composer and conductor, during the same period when two of Southwell's children, Henry F and Maria, are on record as performing there; and a notice in *The London Gazette* in 1818 relating to the bankruptcy of Cooke and his Dublin partner Michael Brennan as music sellers in Dublin and London, makes reference to their former solicitor Henry Southwell of Dublin.¹³¹ [Henry F Southwell](#) (ca.1798–1841), confusingly given the name Henry despite the fact that he already had a half brother named Henry,¹³² became an actor first in Dublin and then a leading man at Drury Lane in London during the early 1820s, before being recruited by Francis Courtney Wemyss to join his theatre troupe in Philadelphia in 1827. [Maria Southwell](#) appeared as a singer in the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in 1826 and the English Opera House, and followed her brother to Philadelphia by 1829, ultimately marrying a Mr Golden and settling in the USA.

William's family life too took another dramatic twist during the Gresse-street years. His youngest son Charles (1814–1860) claimed that his mother, whom he names as 'Fanny' in his *'Confessions of a Free Thinker'* married his father, said to be 'upwards of seventy' – therefore after 1807.

I am the youngest of thirty-three children, all begotten in the regular legal way by one father, who, to borrow a scriptural mode of expression, went in unto three wives, most evidently the last of whom was my mother. She had kindled the flame of love in the breast of my father while residing with him in the capacity of servant ...

... When upwards of seventy he married my mother (a buxom, and some who knew her say, handsome lass of twenty), which to my less courageous intellect appears a bolder stroke than any prudent person would make for the handsomest of young wives. 'Wives are old men's nurses', and rather in the capacity of nurse than wife did my mother act towards my father for many years before his death. Up to the period of my birth, and I believe two or three years after, they cohabited together; but my birth (though not, like Glo'ster, born with teeth) cost my mother agonies so acute and distressing that she vowed never again to bear children. . .

At the time of Charles' birth in 1814, William was seventy seven years old – a startling thought. Charles' statements are confusing, since his description of his birth suggests that he was his mother's first child. Additionally, when one examines the logistics closely (see note 133) it seems most unlikely that his mother, 'Fanny', could have been one and the same person as Frances, mother of Frances [Southwell] Cripps.¹³³ If another marriage ceremony did take place – and the author's searches have drawn a blank (with the exception of a marriage on 21 May 1820 between a William Southwell and Frances Ann Say at Christchurch, Newgate-street, for which only a Bishops transcript of the register survives [therefore minus the original signatures of bride and groom]) – it must again have been bigamous since his wife [partner] Frances, with whom he had been since *ca.* 1798, was very much still alive at the time. Since her children were still living in the family home in London, one possibility is that there may have been an unorthodox 'ménage a trois' operating within the Southwell household during the 1810–1820 decade.¹³⁴ A telling comment in Charles' introduction to his memoir accounts provides a possible clue:

Persons of either sex with whom during my past life I have had associations, tender or otherwise, will not for obvious reasons appear in these Confessions under the names they bear or have borne. But though names may be false all the facts will be true and it is with facts not names the reader has to deal. Were it otherwise I should shrink from gratifying a prurient curiosity by laying bare family secrets, or wounding the delicacy and honourable pride, whether of families or individuals. I do what I will with my own reputation; I feel myself warranted in doing so, but no one can be warranted in torturing, or wantonly sporting with, the feelings of others. For these reasons then, if no

other, these *Confessions* will not give the real names of persons, except where I am fully satisfied there is no occasion to suppress them.¹³⁵

In the light of this statement, a likely explanation seems to be that 'Fanny' was a pseudonym he adopted for his mother in his memoir, rather than her real name.

In January 1818, William's daughter Frances married Thomas Cripps at St Pancras Old Church, her father signing as a witness at the ceremony. Relating her history, her grandson Frederick reported:

As to Grandmother running away from Boarding School to be married, I have always heard the same thing. I think she told me herself that she married the Purser of an East Indiaman. She said she would only have him on condition he gave up going to India. So he afterwards had one of the Margate Boats, a steamer taking people down the Thames from London to Margate. She told me, she went with him and remembered the Steamer being burnt to the water's edge, he being the last to leave the ship, which he jumped from into the cold water, thereby causing a severe illness. What he did after that I do not know. I also understood that Grandma was only about 16 when she ran away with him. ...

... Oh, I remember Grandma telling me her Father (Old William Southwell) "cut her off" and would never see her after she ran away to be married.¹³⁶

At the time of her marriage in 1818, Frances was about eighteen years old, so if Frederick's account is accurate, she must have co-habited with his grandfather for some little while *before* the marriage. And if William did indeed cut her off after the marriage, he was present at the ceremony. Presumably he needed to give permission for the union, since she was a minor at the time. The reason for William's abandonment of his daughter is unknown. It can however be reported with certainty from a letter written by Frances to her son William in Tasmania in 1861 that she enjoyed a close relationship with her mother, who at some unidentified date went to live near to her in Brighton, where she [Frances senior] worked first as a nurse and then as a servant and where she died in 1847.¹³⁷

Frances [Southwell] Cripps' full brother, [William Southwell Junior](#), who was also to distinguish himself in the field of pianoforte making, was born in Liverpool in 1804,

according to the 1851 and 1861 census records, and by the time of his father's death in 1825 was employed by the firm of Broadwood as a pianoforte maker. It seems probable that he had been trained by his father at a younger age than the normal fourteen years for an apprentice (as did sometimes happen), since William Junior married at the young age of eighteen, which he would not have been free to do had he still been serving an apprenticeship. Unlike his father, he was to remain faithfully married to the same wife, Elizabeth, for 58 years until her death in early 1880. He survived her by less than six months.

Having remained actively in harness to the end, William Southwell died, aged eighty eight, on 24 January 1825, as reported in a death notice placed by his brother in the *Liverpool Mercury* on 4 February 1825.

On Monday, the 24th ult. at his house, in London, at an advanced age, Mr. Wm. Southwell, piano-forte manufacturer and brother of Mr. Nicholas Southwell, of this town. He possessed splendid abilities, as a mechanic, and was the inventor and patentee of that well-known improvement in piano-fortes, *the additional keys*, besides numerous improvements in piano-fortes in general¹³⁸

His son Charles paints a graphic picture of his final hours.

On the bed of death, as in the haunts of his life, his haughty soul, like that of the late Richard Carlile, towered above pigmy theologians; and how little he dreaded the King of Terrors was manifest to all who were with him at that trying hour. He died with a jest in his mouth, for the lower extremities having mortified some hours before 'the spirit took its flight', and one of the nurses (an uncommonly nice woman) having tried to rub life into his dead limbs, he said, with the peculiarly expressive twinkle of the eye I can never forget, 'Ah, you may do that now, but let me tell you it would not have been safe to do it a little while ago'.

Thus departed this life William Southwell, defiantly unconventional to the last. Flawed in judgement and unlucky in his business liaisons, he was nevertheless an extraordinarily gifted man whose inventive genius and seminal influence in the field of pianoforte design are deserving of wider approbation and acclaim. His is a story worthy of the telling!



¹ Here Charles Southwell makes reference to Lord Byron's poem *Childe Harold*

But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,
And *there* hath been thy bane; there is a fire
And motion of the soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

(Lord Byron, *Childe Harold*, Canto III. St. 42, verse XLII)

² According to his daughter Frances' account, as told to her grandson, William married three times and fathered 32 children – and Charles Southwell claims 33. (Letter from Frederick Southwell Cripps to his cousin William Cripps in Tasmania, 1911– in private family possession – copy consulted by kind permission of David Cripps; and Charles, Southwell, *The Confessions of a Free Thinker* [London, ca 1851], 6)

³ Daniel Spillane, *History of the American Pianoforte: Its Technical Development, and the Trade* (New York, 1890), xi, 34–5, 38.

⁴ W. H. Grattan Flood, "Dublin Harpsichord and Pianoforte Makers of the Eighteenth Century" in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 39 (31 March 1909), 144–145

⁵ The information on the parish register entry which records William Southwell's death was first reported in George S. Bozarth and Margaret Debenham "Piano Wars: the Legal Machinations of London Pianoforte Makers" in *The Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, Vol. 42 (2009), London: Royal Musical Association, 70-71 (hereafter referred to as '*Piano Wars*'). Unequivocal confirmation that this is the William Southwell in question appears in a notice of his death placed by his brother Nicholas (*The Liverpool Mercury*, [715], 4 February 1825) – see p.35 and note 138.

The vital clue that led to the discovery of William's true place and date of death came from Charles Southwell's comment that he was aged eleven and a half when his father died in London (*The Confessions of a Free Thinker*, 13). The year of Charles' birth, established as 1814 from records of his age at date of death (forty six) in New Zealand in 1860, prompted the author to undertake searches of the London parish registers in the St. Pancras area for the year 1825, where the record of William's death was



located in both the parish register and burial fees book of St. Pancras Old Church. (First reported in Bozarth and Debenham, *'Piano Wars'*, 2009, 70–71 and Figure 9).

⁶ In 1982 the distinguished Irish lawyer and historian Terry de Valera contributed much valuable new information relating to Southwell's activities (Terry de Valera, "Two Eighteenth-Century Musical Instrument Makers," *Dublin Historical Record* [1982/3], 36/41). His findings included an extant fragment of the 1821 census which gives the age of Southwell's son Francis as 47, thus establishing a birth year of 1774; and the existence of an important Memorial of a Deed of Partnership executed in Dublin on 1 June 1802 (Registry of Deeds in Dublin: book No. 551, pages 111–12, memorandum No. 362400) – mistakenly reported as dated 1 June 1804 by de Valera – in which William handed over control of his Dublin business to a new partnership between his brother Nicholas and two of his sons, John and Francis. (For a full transcription of this legal document see Bozarth and Debenham *'Piano Wars'*, 2009, Appendix 5). However, although de Valera rightly suspected Grattan Flood's chronology was incorrect, despite wide ranging searches of both Irish and English records his attempts to identify William's place of birth and true place and date of death proved unsuccessful.

⁷ See also Alec Cobbe's informative article on Southwell and his instruments (Alec Cobbe "Beethoven, Haydn and an Irish Genius: William Southwell of Dublin" in *The Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 13 (1997), 70–77); and Michael Cole, *The Pianoforte in the Classical Era*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1998), 104–107.

⁸ First published in a local news sheet, *The Lancashire Beacon*, 1849, which (with some additions) he later published privately as a short book, *The Confessions of a Free Thinker ca. 1851*, in London. Charles had by that time become a prominent figure in the 'Free Thought' movement. He attained fame (or perhaps more accurately, notoriety) when he was prosecuted for blasphemy for his article "The Jew Book" in 1841. As it transpired, he became the last person in England to be tried for this 'crime'.

⁹ Frederick Southwell Cripps was a grandson of Frances Cripps, née Southwell (1799–1886) and great grandson of William Southwell. Born in Worthing, the eldest son of Frederick Cripps (son of Frances), a tailor, he was a distinguished civil engineer of his day, author of several influential papers and with many patents in the field of gas and water engineering to his name.

¹⁰ Letter from Frederick Southwell Cripps to William Cripps, Hobart, Tasmania, 22 January 1911 (first cited in Bozarth and Debenham, *Piano Wars* (2009). For a transcription of this document see Appendix 1.

¹¹ The aristocratic line of Southwells in Ireland can be traced back to their arrival from England in the 1600s and include the distinguished Sir John Southwell (†1680); Sir Robert Southwell (1635–1702), Secretary of State for Ireland; and Sir Thomas Southwell (1665–1720), a member of the Irish Privy Council (1710). Sir Thomas is well remembered for his acceptance of Palatine refugee families fleeing from



Catholic attacks from France at his estate, Castle Matrix. He was raised to the rank of Baron in 1717. Later descendants include Sir Thomas Southwell junior (1698–1766), 2nd Baron, Governor of Limerick, member of Irish Privy Council (1726); and Sir Thomas George (1721–80), 3rd Baron, 1st Viscount (1776). (A brief summary of the lineage of this family may be found in [‘Vicount Southwell’](#) (Wikipedia, accessed 15 July 2013))

¹² There were non-aristocratic families named Southwell in Dublin during this period too. When he died in 1729, a wealthy usurer named James Southwell left £431 in his will to St Werburgh’s Church to provide a clock and peal of six bells for its tower. Reports of his death, including certain of his bequests, appeared in the *Weekly Journal* 193 (London), 1 February 1729. Later, in mid century, a medical doctor and male-midwife, Thomas Southwell, was mentioned in the *Proceedings of the Dublin Obstetrical Society* in 1742 for an outspoken published response to Fielding Ould’s *Treatise of Midwifery*. He [Thomas Southwell] issued a major publication, *Medical Essays and Observations* in 1764 and is recorded in practice in Abbey Street in 1766–68.

¹³ [The National Archives of Ireland](#), (Wikipedia: accessed 2 May 2013).

¹⁴ F S Cripps letter, 1911.

¹⁵ The date of Southwell’s commencement with Weber, 1772, is that handed down in the literature, but with no sources cited to support this information.

¹⁶ David Wainwright. *Broadwood by Appointment: a History*, (London, 1982), 28; Michael Cole *Broadwood Square Pianos* (Cheltenham, 2005), 5-6. Additionally, a news snippet from an 1840s newspaper many years after his death suggests a link between a relative of John Trotter Snr. and John Broadwood as young apprentices in Scotland. ‘Mr Broadwood, the celebrated piano-forte make, London, and the late Mr Trotter, cabinet-maker, Princes-street, Edinburgh, were at one time fellow apprentices to the village wright at Innerwick, in the east of Haddingtonshire’ (*The Leeds Mercury*, 16 December 1843). John Trotter was one of a large number of children of Alexander Trotter and Jean Steuart of Castlesheill, Berwickshire and branches of this line became highly regarded cabinet makers in Edinburgh.

¹⁷ See pp 30–32. John Watlen was to employ William Southwell in his manufactory to supervise production of oblique pianofortes made to the design of the latter’s 1811 patent for a ‘pianoforte sloping backwards’ from 1813 through to at least 1823. This is fully documented in a number of newspaper advertisements placed by Watlen.

¹⁸ *The Morning Chronicle*, 11 October 1819. Another advertisement placed by Watlen at the beginning of 1819 states:

PIANO-FORTE MANUFACTORIES, Nos. / 13 and 58, Castle-street. –J WATLEN informs the Pub- / lic, that his Piano-fortes are manufactured there; and that a / very large assortment of second- / hand and new ones may be seen / at his Warehouse, 13 Leicester-place. Also the improved Pa- /



tent Oblique, invented by that ingenious artist, W. Southwell, who invented the Cabinet, and finishes J. Watlen's Piano-fortes / in his unique style. The Oblique is certainly the best of Southwell's. Productions, and surpasses every other Piano-forte now in / use; its general qualities are such as will stand the minutest in- / spection; references can be given to 100 people of the first con- / sequence who have bought them. (*The Morning Chronicle*, 28 January 1819,1)

It is perhaps significant that at about this time Robert Bill vacated the premises at 5, Berner's Mews – see also note 103.

¹⁹ F S Cripps letter to his cousin in Tasmania, 1911. John Trotter filed a patent application (No.3404) on 4 March 1811, the same day that Southwell filed his application for his 'piano sloping backwards (No.3403) – and they are consecutively numbered (see also p. 30).

²⁰ John Trotter of Frith-street was a liveryman in the Joiner's company in the City of London. Three of his apprentices are recorded in the Apprenticeship Stamp Duty records, John Hill (1745); Julius Stewart (1753); and Samuel Betts (1754), but since he was in business for many years after this time there would undoubtedly have been others.

²¹ John Mayhew, son of William Mayhew, dyer and Susanna was born 13 June 1737 and baptised 26 June 1737 in the parish of St Mary, Stratford Bow. He was buried 18 May 1811 at St. James, Piccadilly (records accessed via Ancestry).

²² The dissolution of the partnership between Smith, Smith-Bradshaw and Trotter is recorded in *The London Gazette* (10411), 21 April 1764, 3 – a previously unreported fact, identified by the author.

Whereas the partnership between Messrs Charles Smith, George Smith Bradshaw, and John Trotter, which for some Years has been carried on at the Upholstery and Cabinet Warehouse in Portugal Street (late Lincolns Inn Playhouse) was by mutual consent of all Parties dissolved on the 18th Day of September last.

This notice is therefore given that the said George Smith Bradshaw and John Trotter have no longer any concern in the said joint Business, but that the same is now carried on by the said Charles Smith on his own and separate Account.

Those indepted [*sic*] to the late Partnership are desired to pay such Debts to the said Charles Smith; and whoever has any Demands on the said Partnership by applying to Mr. Smith on the Premises will be paid the same

Chas. Smith

G.S. Bradshaw

John Trotter

²³ A letter written to the Countess of Leinster by her sister exists which refers to two chairs being made for the Countess at Carton House by J Trotter of Frith Street, Soho, London in some detail (The Knight of

Glin and James Peill *Irish Furniture: Woodwork and Carving in Ireland from the Earliest Times to the Act of Union* (New Haven, 2007), 129, citing Brian Fitzgerald, ed., *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster (1731–1814)* (Dublin, 1949), 1:194).

²⁴ Moore is first found in business in Ireland in Waterford in 1779 (The Knight of Glin and James Peill, *Irish Furniture* [2007], 163). In 1782 he advertised from his premises in Dublin:

THE INLAID CABINET WAREROOM

William Moore most respectfully acknowledges the encouragement he has received, begs leave to inform those who may want Inlaid work, that by his close attention to business and instructions to his men, he has brought the manufacture to such perfection, to be able to sell for almost one half his original prices; as the greatest demand [is] for Pier-Tables, he has just finished in the newest taste a great variety of patterns, sizes and prices, from three guineas to twenty; Card tables on a new construction (both ornamented and plain) which appear like small Pier Tables, which every article in the inlaid Way, executed on shortest notice, and hopes from his long experience at Messrs. Mayhew and Ince, London, his remarkable fine coloured woods, and elegant finished work, to meet the approbation of all who shall please to honour him with their commands. (*The Dublin Evening Post* on April 16, June 6, and July 11, 1782, cited by The Knight of Glin and James Peill, 2007 *Irish Furniture*, 163)

²⁵ *The Dublin Evening Post*, 19 December 1789, cited by The Knight of Glin and James Peill (2007) *Irish Furniture*, 165.

²⁶ The names of William and 'N.' Southwell and William Moore all appear in an advertisement in 1802 placed by Dublin cabinet makers recruiting skilled workers from England and Scotland (see note 74).

²⁷ The author's on-line searches of the Apprenticeship Stamp Duty records and City of London Freedom records (via Ancestry.co.uk) have revealed no immediately likely matches for William Southwell. However, since Masters were not required to pay stamp duty on apprentices who were assigned by the common or public charge, such apprentices are not recorded in the former. For example, even though John Mayhew is on record from later contemporary sources as having been apprenticed to George Smith Bradshaw, his name does not appear in the *Apprenticeship Stamp Duty* records; and the full range of apprenticeship records of the City Livery companies are not yet available on-line.

²⁸ See note 123.

²⁹ The notice of the death of Nicholas Southwell's sister-in-law, Jane Fazakerley, at his home in Duke-street, Liverpool states that her father was John Frederick Fazakerley of Fazakerley, and latterly of Dublin (*The Liverpool Mercury* 25 April 1828). The notice of his wife Martha's death in 1831 states that she was the daughter of 'the late Mr. Wm. Frederick Fazakerley, of Fazakerley' (*The Liverpool Mercury*, 7 October 1831) The difference in forenames between the two notices perhaps means that his full name was 'William John Frederick Fazakerley'. A marriage between a John Frederick Fazakerly, schoolmaster, and



Jane Crawford took place at the Church of St Michan, Dublin, 9 February 1771, which may be that of Martha's parents. ([Irish Genealogy](#) accessed 14 July 2013).

³⁰ Charles Southwell *The Confessions of a Free Thinker* (1851), 6.

³¹ *The London Gazette* (11629), January 6–January 9 1776. A second loyal address in 1785 also lists William Southwell among the signatories (*The London Gazette* (12,614), January 18–22, 1785, 37).

³² *Wilson's Dublin Directory*, 1783.

³³ The burial record of Nicholas Southwell in St. James cemetery, Liverpool in 1832 gives his age as 72, thus establishing a birth year *ca.* 1760. The parish register of St. Bartholomew the Great, London records the baptism of a William Nicholas Southwell, son of Mary Southwell (no father's name is given) on 22 April 1763 – the only example of a Nicholas Southwell located by the author in baptismal records of this period.

³⁴ Marriage Licence Bond of William Southwell and Ann Dowlan (*Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records and Keeper of the State Papers in Ireland. Dublin, Ireland* [Alexander Thom & Co., 1895–1899]); accessed via Ancestry.com; 6 June 2012).

³⁵ In 1799 Henry Southwell, a son of this marriage, was apprenticed to the Dublin Attorney Sobieski Kildahl of North Earl-street, the same street in which Henry's brother John had a music publishing and selling premises. His mother's name is given as 'Ann Southwell, otherwise Doland.' Since this spelling appears on a legal document it may be regarded as accurate; it therefore appears that her name in the Marriage Bond [Dowlan] was written incorrectly – a quite frequent occurrence, as the author has discovered from other genealogical records. (Edward Keane, P. Beryl Phair and Thomas Ulick Sadleir, *King's Inns Admission Papers, 1607–1867* (Dublin, 1982), 458; original documents extant in the King's Inn Library, Dublin).

³⁶ Baptism of Harriot (sic), daughter of William and Anne Southwell, 9 May 1784 (Raymond Refausée(ed) *The Register of the Parish of St Thomas Dublin 1750 to 1791* [Dublin, 1994], 70).

³⁷ *The Freeman's Journal*, Dublin, 10 June 1784,1 (with thanks to Irish Newspaper Archives, <www.irishnewspaperarchives.com >).

³⁸ Adam Walker first appears in the membership of the Dublin Society in the early 1770s. From 1783 – 1800 he is listed as an Honorary Member.

³⁹ *Wilson's Dublin Directory* lists him as a harpsichord maker at this address 1787 – 1791.

⁴⁰ *The Freeman's Journal*, 17 May 1792, 1 (with thanks to [Irish Newspaper Archives](#)). A similar advertisement followed a few days later on 24 May 1792.

⁴¹ *The London Gazette* (17,654), 25 November, 1820, 2199:



Liverpool, November 6 1820. The Partnership existing between us the undersigned Nicholas Southwell and Stephen White, carrying on business as Organ-builders at Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster, under the firm of Southwell and White, is this day dissolved by mutual consent. As witness our hands. Nichs. Southwell, Stephen White.

A barrel organ by Southwell and White survives in an Australian collection

‘RESIDENCE OF NORM GESCHKE, 42 Andrew Street. (1) Roll-operated mechanical organ, B. Frank Pitt (26-note). (2) Barrel organ, B. c.1802-1832 Southwell & White, Liverpool & London. 4 ranks, 18 notes, triangle, drum.’ (J. Maidment, *Gazetteer Victorian Pipe Organs* 2nd ed., 2004)

⁴² Nicholas is listed as an ‘organ and piano forte mfr. and music seller, 110, Duke-st., Hanover-st.’ in the *History, Directory, and Gazetteer of the County Palatine of Lancaster, 1821*; and ‘organ builder’ in *Gore’s Liverpool Directory, 1824*.

⁴³ *Stuart’s Star and Evening Advertiser*, 16 January 1795.

⁴⁴ *The Freemans Journal*, 7 May 1793, 1 (with thanks to Irish Newspaper Archives).

⁴⁵ A part of William Southwell’s patent No. 2264.

⁴⁶ It may have been some form of small keyboard instrument, but without further information one cannot be sure. (The author wishes to thank Michael Cole for his observations on this instrument.)

⁴⁷ Michael Cole, *Broadwood Square Pianos* (2005), 44.

⁴⁸ *The Belfast Newsletter* 23-26 July 1793. Ware later advertised a Fine Ton’d NEW PIANO FORTE’ by Southwell, Dublin for sale in *The Belfast Newsletter* 9 December 1800.

⁴⁹ The National Archives, UK, C210/47. An image of the original 1794 patent drawing is reproduced on this site under licence (by kind permission of The National Archives Image Library), together with the author’s transcription of Southwell’s specification. (Image first reported in Bozarth and Debenham, *Piano Wars* (2009), Figure 6, 56). The author wishes to thank Robert and Vivien Southwell for their kind assistance in undertaking searches on her behalf to locate Southwell’s patents in the Patent Rolls at The National Archives, Kew.

For more information on William Southwell’s licensing arrangement with Longman and Broderip and the legal actions relating to the rights to his 1794 patent, see Bozarth and Debenham ‘*Piano Wars*’ (2009). After the Act of Union in 1801 it would no longer be necessary to take this step in order to obtain an English patent; in the earlier years one needed to be resident in England for this purpose.

⁵⁰ For a full account of the legal proceedings relating to these disputes see Bozarth and Debenham ‘*Piano Wars*’ (2009).



⁵¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, 20 November 1794; repeated 21 February 1795 (with thanks to Irish Newspaper Archives). A typographical error occurred in the first advertisement, where the word 'and' appears in line 13 instead of 'are'. This is corrected in the second advertisement, which concurs with the wording of the flyer in Figure 1.

⁵² The author thanks Tim Harding for kindly providing information on this instrument case and flyer.

⁵³ William was to sell [or make over] the leases of this and an adjacent property to another of his sons, Thomas (1782–) who was commissioned into the army and was probably the eldest of his sons by Anne Doland.

⁵⁴ *The Belfast Newsletter*, 16 September 1796, 3. A similar advertisement appeared in the same publication on 11 November 1796.

⁵⁵ 1802 was the year in which William Southwell ceded control of the Dublin business to the new partnership between his brother Nicholas and sons John and Francis. A later extant piano of 1808 is badged more simply 'Royal Patent Southwells Dublin and London'.

⁵⁶ See note 83.

⁵⁷ The author wishes to thank David Hunt for kindly providing information about this instrument.

⁵⁸ From the legal Deed of Partnership executed on 1 June 1802, in which William signed over his Dublin business to two of his sons, John and Francis, and his brother Nicholas for certain consideration, it becomes clear that the '& Son' in question was John, since this initial 'father-son' partnership was dissolved as part of the same transaction. We may safely deduce that his son John went into partnership with him sometime after the end of 1794 and not later than 1798, the date of the first firmly dated piano which bears the inscription '& Son' on the nameboard.

⁵⁹ *Stuart's Star and Evening Advertiser*, 16 January 1795.

⁶⁰ *True Briton*, 7 January 1796,1. A second similarly worded advertisement appeared in *The Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 1 February 1796. A slightly different advert with the names of Longman and Broderip removed, presumably at the behest of their assigns, appeared in *The Times*, 3 February 1796. The culprits in the frame here were most probably Culliford Rolfe and Barrow, who were embroiled in a court dispute with Longman over the matter (see Bozarth and Debenham, '*Piano Wars*' [2009], 58 n.39; 61-63)

⁶¹ Bozarth and Debenham, '*Piano Wars*' (2009), 65.

⁶² The National Archives, UK, C210_65_001; 002; 003. An image of the original patent drawing is reproduced on this site under licence, by kind permission of The National Archives Image library.

⁶³ The National Archives, UK, C 217_90_001. This image of William Southwell's original signature is reproduced on this site under licence (by kind permission of The National Archives Image library). In addition to his original signature on this 1798 patent document, two other matching extant examples have been identified. The first appears on his signed declaration that he is the father of Henry Southwell on the Dublin Inns of Court documents relating to the latter's apprenticeship with Sobieski Kildahl in 1799 (see also note 72); the second is his signature on the Memorial of the Dublin Deed of Partnership, 1802 which terminated his partnership with his son John and established the new partnership between his brother Nicholas and sons John and Francis.

⁶⁴ The author gratefully acknowledges the kind assistance of the private owners of the square piano to which the flyer is attached, including the information that it is signed by a workman, Geo. Cooke and dated July 10, 1802 on the side of a key.

⁶⁵ See Bozarth and Debenham, *'Piano Wars'* (2009), 84. Charles Southwell refers to his father as inventor of the 'Camerichord' – the only other similar reference to this name located by the author. (Charles Southwell, *The Confessions of a Free Thinker* [1851], 6)

⁶⁶ BY THE KING'S ROYAL PATENT
A New-invented INSTRUMENT, called
MICROCHORDON, being a small, elegant, upright
PIANO-FORTE, with Drum and Triangle (ad libitum) ...
...It is now ready for inspection at Longman, Clementi and
Cos. No. 26, Cheapside.. (*The Star*, 25 October 1799,1)

⁶⁷ For a man of his advanced age to take a wife of such tender years seems quite inappropriate and distasteful. However, William was not alone amongst pianoforte makers of this era in doing so. In 1779, Arnold Frederick Beck, already twice widowed and by then at least well into middle age, took as his wife the fifteen and a half year old Rose Ann Shudi, a minor and daughter of Joshua Shudi (deceased), harpsichord maker and nephew of Burkat Shudi the elder. That he did so with the full consent of her widowed mother, Mary Shudi, is recorded in the Marriage Allegation Bond filed in advance of their marriage and signed by both Beck and Mary Shudi, dated 7 September 1779 (accessed via Ancestry.co.uk, 28 April 2012).

⁶⁸ Charles Southwell, *The Confessions of a Free Thinker* (1851), 6. Both Charles Southwell and Frances Cripps independently claimed that their father had been married three times. Frances states he had thirty two children; Charles states thirty three, going out of his way to proclaim they were all legitimate, though it is difficult to believe this could be true. William does however appear to have maintained a relationship with each 'wife' over a number of years, fathering a new family in each case.



⁶⁹ F S Cripps letter, 1911, recounting his grandmother's memories. Interestingly, a known descendent of the Southwell Shropshire line investigated by the author was a well known peruke maker in the parish of St Martin Orgar in the City of London at this time. One of his sons was John Aylward Southwell, a cabinet maker, and another was the explorer Daniel Southwell whose correspondence with his mother and his uncle, the Revd. Weedon Butler, is preserved as a valuable historical resource at the British Library. Though it is tempting to presume a connection between William and this family, for the present this remains no more than suggestive.

⁷⁰ The author has located seven children of this union – Henry Francis (1798–1841); Frances (1799–1886); William Junior (1804–1880); Matthew (1805–1893); Edward (–1827); Maria (ca. 1805–) and probably Isabella (1813–), who was brought up by her half brother, Henry William (1783–1866) in Dublin. There may be others, as yet unidentified. No baptismal records have been located, probably because William Snr. was so greatly opposed to organised religion, making identification dependent on other primary source records, including census returns and contemporary newspaper and magazine reports.

⁷¹ It will be recalled that a Marriage Bond recorded this marriage in Dublin in 1780. A burial of an 'Anne [sic] Southwell' aged seventy three is recorded in the parish register of St Audoens, Dublin on 5 February 1827, possibly Ann Doland Southwell. However no firm evidence to confirm that this was the same lady has been found. Henry Southwell was apprenticed to the Dublin attorney Sobieski Kildahl, on 5 April 1799, as reported earlier. Most confusingly in some cases William re-used children's names with each new wife [partner].

⁷² One of the set of original extant documents relating to Henry Southwell's apprenticeship in the archives of the Inns of the Kings Bench, Dublin.

⁷³ *The Prices of Cabinet Work, with Tables and Designs, Illustrating the Various Articles of Manufacture, Revised and Corrected by a Committee of Master Cabinet Makers* (London, 1797).

⁷⁴ *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 25 February 1802 and 11 March 1802; and *The Caledonian Mercury*, 27 February 1802 and 1 March 1802.

⁷⁵ Bozarth and Debenham, '*Piano Wars*' (2009), 67 and 84 (Document 13)

⁷⁶ *Registry of Deeds, Dublin, Book No. 551*, pp. 111–12, Memorandum No. 362400 (first transcribed and reported in full in Bozarth and Debenham, '*Piano Wars*', 2009, Appendix 5, 96-98). Further corroborative evidence that Southwell 'Grands' were indeed made is found in two advertisements for such instruments placed by auction houses in *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 11 February 1819, 1: and 11 April 1823, 1.

⁷⁷ *Registry of Deeds, Dublin*; Deed dated 13 February 1802.

⁷⁸ Ireland was now governed by the laws of England, one consequence of which was the rapidly escalating discontent on the part of the Catholic majority in Ireland, which was to culminate in the bloody but short lived Irish rebellion initiated by Robert Emmet in June of that year.

⁷⁹ The National Archives, UK, C13/46_002. Bill of Complaint, 23 Jan. 1804 by James Longman's creditors, Styán, Hovil, and James, and his Executrix, Frances St. John (cited by Bozarth and Debenham, '*Piano Wars*', 2009, 75 and 85).

⁸⁰ F S Cripps, 191, reporting his grandmother's stories, touches on this event:

One patent was infringed by the great firm of Broadwoods, London. He attacked them and had the greatest Lawyer of the day, Sir Thos. Erskin [*sic*], to fight for him. The trial lasted three years and in the end he lost. The expense of this—bringing witnesses over from Ireland, year after year, etc—upset his business and he eventually, although he was reputed to be very rich at one time, gave up the Dublin business, started again in Liverpool, and finally in London.

This is another example of a story having become distorted in the telling. It was not Erskine who represented Southwell but William Cooke and there is no evidence to suggest that he [Southwell] continually brought witnesses over from Ireland. Nevertheless it *is* quite true that he sued the Broadwoods, and the facts might have remained buried had the clue contained in this letter not been thoroughly investigated. (See also Bozarth and Debenham, *Piano Wars* (2009), Appendix 1, Document 18, 85.

⁸¹ See Bozarth and Debenham, '*Piano Wars*' (2009), 69.

⁸² See Bozarth and Debenham '*Piano Wars*' (2009), 75.

⁸³ F S Cripps letter, 1911

⁸⁴ 'It was also around 1745 that Clayton Square was laid out by Sarah Clayton – her brother-in-law was Thomas Cases after whom the adjacent Cases Street is named' <<http://bdaugherty.tripod.com/liverpool/history.html>>, accessed 12 February 2011.

⁸⁵ William Southwell Junior (1804–1880) was to establish himself as a foreman and key employee of Broadwoods, to whom he assigned the rights to his patent for a design modification for the grand piano in 1837, known as the 'Victoria Grand'. His three sons, William Henry, Frederick and Edwin, achieved acclaim in their own right in a quite different field, as portrait photographers in Victorian London (see [Southwell Brothers: Photographers Royal](#)).

⁸⁶ I M Hogan *Anglo-Irish Music 1780–1830* (1966), 7. A few years later in 1809 John's brother, Francis (F W) Southwell advertised an improved model of pianoforte for sale from 34, Marlborough-street, Dublin 'at the sign of the King's Head', providing evidence of the firm's continuing activity from this address in

later years. John Southwell is listed in *Wilson's Dublin Directory* at 34, Marlborough-street from 1815 through to 1821.

⁸⁷ *The Courier*, 9 May 1806, 1.

⁸⁸ Bozarth and Debenham, *'Piano Wars'* (2009), 75

⁸⁹ It is clear from advertisements placed by Nicholas Southwell in *The Liverpool Mercury* between 1811 and 1820 that he was both manufacturing instruments on his own account and buying in instruments from Clementi and Co. during those later years. Earlier Liverpool newspapers are not yet available on-line, but one may surmise that a similar situation may have existed from 1804, when the Southwells first arrived in Liverpool.

⁹⁰ Henry Broadhurst Wilkinson. *Souvenir of the Broadhurst Wilkinsons*, (Manchester, 1902), 22. See also note 106.

⁹¹ Patent No. 3029. The National Archives, UK C66/4065. Although this patent is recorded in the indices of The National Archives, the author was unable to locate the original drawing and specification in the patent rolls. A copy of the engraving of the drawing and transcription of the specification published by the Patent Office, printed by George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode (1856) is included on this site, for completeness.

⁹² Henry Fowler & James Shudi Broadwood. *Some Notes Made by J. S. Broadwood, 1838, with Observations & Elucidations by H F Broadwood* (London, 1862).

⁹³ Surrey History Centre, Broadwood letter books. The author wishes to thank Robert and Vivien Southwell for kindly undertaking searches of these records on her behalf.

⁹⁴ See also note 35.

⁹⁵ Out letter book from the office of John Broadwood. Item ref 2185/JB/6/1/1, Surrey History Centre.

⁹⁶ Out letter book from the office of John Broadwood. Item ref 2185/JB/6/1/1, Surrey History Centre.

⁹⁷ Out letter book from the office of John Broadwood. Item ref 2185/JB/6/1/1, Surrey History Centre.

⁹⁸ This 'S' is very similar to the 'S' of Southwell in the margin at the beginning of this copy letter – but might also be a 'J' so this abbreviated word could be Snr or Jnr. However, it seems much more likely to be Snr, given the previous allusion to 'your father'.

⁹⁹

...At this critical period my father died at the advanced age of eighty eight, and out of respect to his memory I was admitted into the firm of Broadwood and Sons, Piano Forte Manufacturer, where two of my brothers were then employed. They designed to make a Tuner of me; but having got it into my head that working at the bench was more manly and becoming than the



lighter and (most people think) genteeler occupation of tuning, I resolved . . . to achieve so desirable an object . . .

(Charles Southwell, *The Confessions of a Free Thinker*, 14).

¹⁰⁰ The author wishes to thank Michael Cole for kindly providing information about this instrument, seen during the course of his own researches.

¹⁰¹ Specification of the Patent granted to William Hawkes of Newport in the County of Salop, Esquire for 'Improvements on musical-keyed Instruments of twelve fixed Tones' in *The Repertory of Patent Inventions*, Vol. 8 (1808), 248–9. Also referred to in *The Monthly Magazine or British Register*, Vol. 29 (1810), 116.

¹⁰² *The Observer*, 2 April 1809, 1.

¹⁰³ Robert Bill is listed in the *London and Country Directory*, 1811 as a pianoforte maker at 16 and 49 Rathbone Place. He first appears in the Land Tax records for 49, Rathbone Place in 1807. (In 1806 the premises is listed as empty). In 1811 his name is given as the occupant of No. 49, which is specifically listed as a 'Workshop'. The records for 1812 are unfortunately missing from the database (inferring they have not survived). From 1813–20 he is listed as the occupant of a workshop at 5, Berner's Mews.

¹⁰⁴ F S Cripps letter, 1911.

¹⁰⁵ Land tax records commencing 1813 though to 1824 record the Southwells at 11, Gresse-street, under various initials. Confirmation from William himself that his address was 11, Gresse-street is found in a number of contemporary newspaper advertisements for individual instruments offered under his own name, for example, *The Observer*, 27 September 1812, 1; *The Morning Post* 24 March 1814, 1; *The Morning Post*, 20 January 1813. Additionally he is listed in *The London and Country Directory*, 1811 at this address.

¹⁰⁶ George Wilkinson took over the business on his own account following the death of Francis Fane Broderip in May 1807, paying out his late partner's share to his widow, and, after her death later that year, to Broderip's son, John (his surviving executor). The final instalment was paid on 22 November 1807. (H F Broadhurst Wilkinson *Souvenir of the Broadhurst Wilkinsons* [Manchester, 1902], 22 (first reported in Bozarth and Debenham, 'Piano Wars', 64).

¹⁰⁷ *The Morning Chronicle*, 2 August 1808.

¹⁰⁸ *Bury and Norwich Post*, 17 August 1808; *The Ipswich Journal*, 13 May 1809; *The Hull Packet and Original Weekly Commercial, Literary and General Advertiser*, 31 October 1809.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Wornum became Wilkinson's partner in 1810, at the time of the move to the Princes-street premises, (H F Broadhurst Wilkinson, *Souvenir of the Broadhurst Wilkinsons*, 24).

¹¹⁰ H F Broadhurst Wilkinson, *Souvenir of the Broadhurst Wilkinsons*, 25. An advertisement placed in *The Times* shortly afterwards records that the Princes-street part of the premises survived:

MESSRS. WILKINSON and WORNUM embrace / the earliest opportunity of acquainting their numerous/Friends, and the Public in general that that part of their pre-/ mises situated in Princes-street, Hanover-square, having been / preserved from their late calamitous Fire / is now open for the / exhibition and sale of those Piano-fortes happily also preserved from injury (*The Times*,13 October 1812).

However, it is evident from Henry Broadhurst Wilkinson's account that this proved insufficient to save the business as a viable entity and the partnership was dissolved in the following year, after which time the two former partners would continue in business independently on their own account.

¹¹¹ John Watson, *Changing Keys: Keyboard Instruments for America 1700–1830* (2013), 75

¹¹² C F Colt and A Miall, *The Early Piano* (London, 1981), Plate 14, 57-59.

¹¹³ *The Observer*, 27 September 1812, 1.

¹¹⁴ *The Morning Post*, 12 February 1819.

¹¹⁵ H F Broadhurst Wilkinson, *Souvenir of the Broadhurst Wilkinsons*, 25.

¹¹⁶ See note 113. Other advertisements placed by William personally appeared in *The Times*, 28 December 1812,1; *The Morning Post*, 24 March 1814; and *The Morning Post*, 16 November 1814, 1

¹¹⁷ Land Tax records.

¹¹⁸ *The Morning Post*, 26 July 1809, 1.

¹¹⁹ 'Portrait of Mr. W. Southwell, the inventor of the Patent Square Piano Forte, with additional keys' by James Lonsdale of 8, Berners Street, London (Edward Morris and Emma Roberts, *The Liverpool Academy and Other Exhibitions of Contemporary Art in Liverpool 1774–1867: A History and Index of Artists and Works Exhibited* [Liverpool, 1998], 39).

¹²⁰ The National Archives, UK C54/8881 (An image of the original patent drawing is reproduced on this site under licence, by kind permission of The National Archives Image library)

¹²¹ The National Archives, UK, C54/8887 (Images of the original patent drawings and associated description are reproduced on this site under licence, by kind permission of The National Archives Image library. Photographs courtesy of Robert Southwell)

¹²² Watlen had previously been employed by Corri and Sutherland in Edinburgh in the 1780s. He later opened his own business, at 17, Princes-street, Edinburgh and then 13 North Bridge-street. After going

bankrupt there in 1798 he moved to London and started over again, moving around several addresses and taking a partner named Cobbe before setting up again on his own account at 5, Leicester Place in 1807, until 1818 when he moved to 13 Leicester Place (see John Watlen Timeline).

¹²³ *The Morning Post*, 9 December 1811, 3. The use of the word "Grand" here must be a newspaper error. In two later advertisements Watlen correctly suggests that the oblique 'upright' "supercedes" grand pianos. An obliquely strung 'upright' has longer strings and so may be thought better than a (short) grand. An obliquely strung grand at that period would not make sense. (My thanks to David Hunt for this information – private communication).

¹²⁴ *The Morning Post*, 12 February 1819. Another advertisement in the same year gives the location of the manufactory as 13 and 58 Castle-street and offers:

‘the improved patent Oblique, invented by that ingenious artist W. Southwell, who invented the Cabinet, and finishes J. Watlen’s Piano-fortes in his unique style. The Oblique is certainly the best of Southwell’s productions and surpasses every other Piano-forte now in use; its general qualities are such as will stand the minutest inspection; references can be given to 100 people of the first consequence who have bought them’.

A later advertisement in 1823 states that the oblique pianofortes ‘having always had the advantage of the inventor ... to superintend his manufactory’ (*The Times*, 25 September 1823).

¹²⁵ *The Morning Chronicle*, 11 October 1819, see also note 18.

¹²⁶ *The Morning Chronicle*, 11 October 1819.

¹²⁷ A display case converted from one of these instruments was sold by JS Auctions, Bodicote, near Banbury in 2009.

¹²⁸ *The Morning Post*, 10 July 1815, 1.

¹²⁹ *The Morning Chronicle*, 23 January 23, 1823, 1.

¹³⁰ The National Archives, UK. C54/9970. My thanks to David Hunt for his observations on the longevity of this modification – private communication).

¹³¹ *The London Gazette* (17,468), 8 August 8, 1818. For more details see Henry Southwell’s timeline.

¹³² According to her age at date of death, William’s daughter Frances’ birth year was *ca.* 1800. Census returns variously give her place of birth as Middlesex, London, Lancashire and Chester, suggesting that she may have been born at the port while her mother was in transit between London and Dublin at the time.



¹³³ Since Frances, mother of Frances Cripps, died at the age of 64 in 1847 we may deduce her birth year was 1783. Since Charles states his mother ('Fanny') married his father when he was over seventy years of age (therefore not earlier than 1807 – and probably several years later, given that Charles was not born until 1814), *her* birth year cannot be before 1787. Frances (daughter of William and Frances) was born *ca* 1800, when 'Fanny' (mother of Charles) would have been not more than thirteen years old and therefore too young to have been her mother.

¹³⁴ As is confirmed by her death certificate (copy held by the author, courtesy of David Cripps) Frances Southwell died in Brighton in 1847 aged sixty four from a fall down some stairs. A letter from Frances Cripps to her son William in Tasmania in 1861 (in private family possession) after they had been out of touch for many years, confirms the circumstances. She recounts the story of her mother's death when she [her mother] was working as a servant in Brighton, in domestic employment, close to her daughter's family home.

¹³⁵ Charles Southwell *The Confessions of a Free Thinker* (1851), 2.

¹³⁶ A privately held family letter written by Frances Cripps to her son, William Cripps (then in Tasmania) in 1861.

¹³⁷ Death certificate of Frances Southwell, 1847 (copy consulted courtesy of David Cripps).

¹³⁸ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 4 February 1825.



Part II.

Nicholas Southwell (ca. 1760 – 1832), pianoforte and organ maker, Dublin, Liverpool and London.

Nicholas Southwell (ca. 1760–1832) may be positively identified as the much younger brother of William Southwell (1736/7–1825) from contemporary documents. Firstly, he is named as William’s brother in the Dublin Deed (dated 1 June 1802), by which he [William] formally retired from his Dublin business, handing over control to two of his sons, John and Francis, and his brother Nicholas, the three new partners of Southwell and Co.¹ From the information in this document, it is clear that Nicholas had been active in the business for some years previously in Dublin. As is the case for William, despite extensive searches, it has not proved possible to establish his parentage;² however, the record of his burial in Liverpool in 1832, aged seventy two years, establishes a birth year of ca 1760. Given the large age difference between the two, it seems likely they were half brothers, with different mothers.

We next hear of him in Liverpool, where is on record as being active as a pianoforte and organ maker from a number of addresses in Duke-street from 1805 until his death in 1832. He is first listed in the 1805 *Liverpool Directory*, as a musical instrument maker in Duke-street, along with his nephews ‘J. and F.’³

Not later than 1808 he established a manufacturing presence at 49, Rathbone-place in London – an address shared with Robert Bill, as is evidenced from the address shown on the nameboard of a pianoforte sold at auction in 2010, though no detailed information on his activities in the metropolis has emerged.⁴ However, a number of advertisements identified by the author in *The Liverpool Mercury* from 1811 onwards provide useful information about his business there. One such notice placed in July 1811 reads:

BY THE KING’S ROYAL PATENT
Newly improved
PATENT PIANOFORTES
N SOUTHWELL



Impressed with gratitude to the ladies and Gentlemen of Liverpool and its environs, for the flattering encouragement he has hitherto received, begs to return them his sincere thanks, and respectfully solicits their inspection of the different PIANO FORTES, now for sale, at his Manufactory, 99, Duke-street, Liverpool.

He requests, particularly, to mention his lately improved Patent SQUARE PIANO FORTES, with six turned feet, crescent drawers in front, and gilt ornaments. His newly invented ELLIPTICAL DITTO, with eight feet, crescent drawers, &c. particularly adapted to stand occasionally in the centre of a room: an advantage highly desirable in musical parties. The rich and elegant exterior of these instruments is their least recommendation, as they possess a most brilliant, sweet and full tone, uniting a power and delicacy, rarely to be found in a Square Piano Forte. The touch is extremely light, sensible and quick.

N.S. is lately appointed principal Agent for the sale of Messrs. Clementi and Co.'s recently improved PIANO FORTES (of which he has now an elegant assortment, with six-and-a-half Octaves, carefully selected by himself from their extensive manufactory in London) and also to superintend and keep in order, any PIANO Fortes, of their make, that have been, or may in future be sole in Liverpool and its vicinity, being the only person in this part of England qualified as a manufacturer to do so. It is his intention to visit London, twice at least, every year, when he will have an opportunity of personally selecting and forwarding to those who may favour him with their orders, the best Instruments, both from his own manufactory, and Messrs. Clementi and Co.'s.⁵

This advertisement is of particular interest in two respects. Firstly, his elliptical square pianos appear to be of a novel design. They have the rounded corners of the type most often attributed to the house of Dettmer (close neighbours of William Southwell in

Gresse-street), raising the question of whether there may have been possible collaboration between the two firms. However, Nicholas states that his instruments have eight feet, which by inference suggests they have two keyboards facing each other, a novel feature that perhaps echoes William Southwell's much earlier demi-lune pianofortes. Sadly no examples of this type of model made by Nicholas are known to have survived. Secondly, the advertisement establishes the existence of a close business relationship between Nicholas Southwell and Clementi and Co. at this time.

In another notice placed the following year, Nicholas advertised for sale examples of 'the new invented Piano Forte, called the Celestina, manufactured by Messrs. Clements [*recte* Clementi]', which 'for richness of tone, simplicity of construction and elegance of appearance, is allowed to be superior to anything of the kind ever before offered to the public'. Whether this was a square or upright instrument is not stated and the author has been unable to identify any further references to it in advertisements placed by Clementi and Co. themselves.⁶ Several years later in 1817 Nicholas announced:

...In particular, he wishes to introduce to their notice A SUPERB CABINET PIANO FORTE, which he has just completed. Of this elegant Instrument he has no hesitation in believing that he may be permitted to say, that in the taste of the ornaments. The diversity of its powers, and in the sweetness, fullness and richness of its tone, it surpasses any hitherto offered for the approbation of the Public. THE CABINET PIANO FORTE was originally the invention of his Brother, Mr. Wm. Southwell, of London, Patentee; but he trusts he shall not be deemed arrogant in remarking, that he has subsequently so improved this admirable Instrument, that he has combined strength and delicacy in the melody, and increased the facilities of light, expressive, and rapid execution. The exterior has been exquisitely finished in the best Chinese stile, by Messrs. Smith and Mason, artists

of the first celebrity, from London.⁷

Here we find evidence that Nicholas had been working on refinements to William's upright cabinet pianoforte design. It is also of interest that he names the artists responsible for the decorative embellishments of the case. The author has identified two London japanners of these names who appear a likely fit for Messrs. Smith and Mason – George Smith, cabinet japanner, 33, St. John's Square, Clerkenwell, London and John Mason, next door at No. 32, both listed in *The London and Country Directory* of 1811.⁸

In 1820 a notice in *The London Gazette* announced the dissolution of the partnership of Nicholas Southwell and Stephen White, organ builders of Liverpool, the first intimation of Southwell involvement in this field located by the author.

The Partnership existing between us the undersigned Nicholas Southwell and Stephen White, carrying on business as Organ-builders at Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster, under the firm of Southwell and White, is this day dissolved by mutual consent. As witness our hands. Nichs. Southwell, Stephen White.⁹

Two advertisements for a Mr. White, Organ Builder, No. 24, Cumberland-street, Middlesex Hospital [London] appeared in the press in 1802 and 1805, but with no mention of Southwell.¹⁰ However, in this context it is noteworthy that there is in Australia an extant example of a barrel organ by Southwell and White, Liverpool and London.¹¹ After the dissolution of the partnership in 1820 Nicholas is listed in Liverpool directories as an organ builder as well as a pianoforte maker until 1829.

Family life

Though no record of the marriage has been located, later sources reveal that Nicholas Southwell married Martha Matilda Fazakerley sometime before 1793 (the birth year of their eldest daughter, Caroline), when presumably the family were still resident in Dublin.¹² From death notices for Martha's sister Jane in 1828 and Martha herself in 1831 we learn that their father was [Wm. or J^{no}.] Frederick Fazackerley of Fazackerley [near Liverpool], 'latterly of Dublin'.¹³ This suggests that when the Southwells fled to Liverpool

after their house was set on fire by Irish rebels in 1803, they were returning to a place where they had friendly family connections.

Nicholas and Martha had a large family of at least five sons and three daughters¹⁴, a number of whom were born after the move to Liverpool. Sadly most died when quite young and Nicholas was survived by only two, a son Robert and a daughter [Julia](#). Robert, his youngest son, was lost at sea shortly afterwards,¹⁵ leaving only Julia, who a year before her father's death had married Isaac Yehiel Lopes, a merchant from Jamaica of Jewish descent. Isaac Y Lopes, a much older man, is on record as having been a slave owner and who had probably left Jamaica in the wake of the slave rebellion of 1831.¹⁶ After his death in 1849¹⁷ Julia and her daughters sold up in Liverpool and are next found living in Staffordshire in the 1851 census. The reason why they should have moved to this location is puzzling. It is though, the area where some descendants of the [Womborne line of Southwells](#) were living, leading the author to conjecture that Julia may have taken her children to settle near to relatives; however, no evidence to establish a clear connection has been identified.

It is however Nicholas' eldest daughter [Caroline](#) (1793–1828) who is of most interest in the context of the Southwell story. In June 1817 she married the renowned flautist, Charles Nicholson Junior, in Liverpool. It appears she remained based in that city for a number of years after the marriage, while her husband travelled around the country giving recitals. In 1822 she advertised her services as a piano and harp teacher from her father's Duke-street premises. However, after Charles' appointment as the first Professor of Flute at the Royal Academy, the couple moved to London and by 1824 are found living at 12, Caroline-street, Bedford Square.¹⁸

The couple had three children, one son and two daughters, of whom the second died in infancy, followed to the grave not long afterwards by Caroline, who died in July 1828. Brilliant flautist though he was, it seems Charles was profligate with money and contemporary newspaper reports record that when he later died in 1837 he left his two young children and elderly mother destitute and in dire straits. To their credit, his musical colleagues rallied round and arranged a benefit performance in aid of the family, attended by more than a thousand people.¹⁹



Nicholas Southwell died in 1832, only a year after the death of his beloved wife, to whom he was clearly devoted,²⁰ and was buried in St. James Cemetery, Liverpool.²¹

¹ *Registry of Deeds, Dublin, Book No. 551*, pp. 111–12, Memorandum No. 362400 (first transcribed and reported in full in Bozarth and Debenham, *Piano Wars*, 2009, Appendix 5, 96-98). Other sources include an advertisement for a cabinet pianoforte made by Nicholas states: ‘THE CABINET PIANO FORTE was originally the invention of his Brother, Mr. Wm. Southwell, of London, Patentee’ (*The Liverpool Mercury*, 3 January 1817); and a notice in *The Liverpool Mercury* in 1825 announcing William’s death specifically mentions that he was the ‘brother of Mr Nicholas Southwell of this town’. (*The Liverpool Mercury*, 4 February 1825).

² A record of the baptism of a William Nicholas Southwell, son on Mary (no father’s name given) appears in the parish register of St Bartholomew, near the Royal Exchange, London on 22 April 1763 – the only record of a child of this name at this time located by the author.

³ Liverpool Record Office report on searches requested by the author, 2005.

⁴ See Part 1. “*William Southwell*, 19–20.

⁵ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 5 July 1811.

⁶ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 24 July 1812; and 31 July 1812.

⁷ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 3 January 1817.

⁸ *The London and Country Directory*, 1811.

⁹ *The London Gazette*, (17,654) 25 November 1820, 2199.

¹⁰ *The Morning Post and Gazetteer* (10,489), 19 May 1802; and *The Morning Post* (11,521), 20 July 1805.

¹¹ J. Maidment, *Gazetteer Victorian Pipe Organs* 2nd ed., 2004.

¹² Caroline’s birth year is identified by her age at date of death in 1828. She was thirty five.

¹³ The notice of the death of Nicholas Southwell’s sister-in-law, Jane Fazakerley, at his home in Duke-street, Liverpool states that her father was John Frederick Fazakerley of Fazakerley, and latterly of Dublin. (*The Liverpool Mercury*, 25 April 1828). The author has located a marriage of a John Frederick Fazakerly [*sic*], schoolmaster, and Jane Crawford at the Church of St Michan, Dublin, 9 February 1771, which may be he ([Irish Genealogy](#) accessed 14 July 2013). The notice of Nicholas’ wife Martha’s death in 1831 states that she was the daughter of ‘the late Mr. Wm. Frederick Fazakerley, of Fazakerley.’ (*The Liverpool Mercury*, 7 October 1831). The inconsistency in the forename may be a scribe’s error – or perhaps his forenames also included William.



¹⁴ Children of the marriage located by the author in parish registers etc. are:

- Caroline (1793–1828)
- Francis (1799–1819)
- William (1801–1806)
- Elizabeth (1807–1816)
- Julia (1809–1870)
- Henry (– 1828)
- Amelia (1812–1830)
- Philip (1816–1816)
- Robert (1816–1833)

¹⁵ Robert, youngest son of Nicholas Southwell., died on 28 April 28, 1833 “at Rio Grande, in the 18th year of his age” (*Liverpool Mercury*, 20 September 1833).

¹⁶ *Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1812-1834* (accessed via ancestry.co.uk, 26 June 2012).

¹⁷ A notice of Isaac Y. Lopes’ death, aged fifty seven, appeared in *The Liverpool Mercury* 17 April 1849.

¹⁸ Sun Fire Office (The National Archives, UK. MS 11936/497/1016730).

¹⁹ *The Morning Post*, 3 July, 1837.

²⁰ A notice in the *Liverpool Mercury* reads:

‘to attempt to delineate her virtues is as vain as to deplore her loss; but who can say to the heart of the mourner be still,—who dares measure the tears of the afflicted, or put a shackle on the tongue, when it speaks the worth of the lost and loved one? Her virtues were not merely the virtues of a sect or sex,—they were universal; her talents too were of an uncommon order,—they were solid as well as shining’ (*Liverpool Mercury*, 7 October 1831).

²¹ A brief announcement of his death appeared in *The Liverpool Mercury*, 21 September 1832:

‘Died . . . Yesterday morning, at his house in Duke Street, Mr Nicholas Southwell.’

His burial is recorded in the burial Register of St. James Cemetery, Liverpool (1832), entry no. 1857, 233.



Appendix 1:

Transcription of Frederick Southwell Cripps's Letter to William Cripps (1911)

Original text

Margaret Debenham comments

Jan 22nd 1911

Dear William,

I owe you a letter in reply to yours of the 15th. I have not heard from your Solicitor, nor has Mr Gates written me on the subject since he wrote to say all had been settled and that he had forwarded the money to you or your Solicitor. I am anxiously awaiting a letter from you to say it has been received and that all is now settled satisfactorily.

As Mrs. C. (my stepmother) gave way, I rather hope your Solicitor received the money before writing to Mr. Gates, so as to avoid any possible re-opening of the question.

As to Grandmother running away from Boarding School to be married, I have always heard the same thing. I think she told me herself that she married the Purser of an East Indiaman. She said she would only have him on condition he gave up going to India. So he afterwards had one of the Margate Boats, a steamer taking people down the Thames from London to Margate. She told me, she went with him and remembered the Steamer being burnt to the water's edge, he being the last to leave the ship, which he Jumped from into the cold water, thereby causing a severe illness. What he did after that I do not know. I also understood that Grandma was only about 16 when she ran away with him.

I have heard my Father say that his Father furnished the Brighton hospital and met his death by falling off a ladder. So if this is the

- Frederick Southwell Cripps' grandmother, Frances Cripps (née Southwell), was born *ca.* 1800 and therefore sixteen years old in 1816. Her marriage to Thomas Cripps took place on 31 January 1818, when she was seventeen/eighteen, which suggests they had co-habited for a little while before the marriage.

- The story is confirmed by a report in the *Brighton Gazette* in 1841.



same man I presume he took to building or furnishing buildings in some way.

Thomas Cripps died on 2 April 1841

My Father has also said that they sprung from Horsham in Sussex. But I can never get any precise information from him, on the subject. He used, to speak of how he lost his Father when quite a child, and that he told his Mother not to worry as he would look after her. How she had a dressmaking business on the Grand Parade, Brighton—a carriage trade, meaning only swell people were customers.

Oh, I remember Grandma telling me her Father (Old William Southwell) “cut her off” and would never see her after she ran away to be married. She used to tell me stories of her early life when I was about 16 or 17 years old, as I often used to spend an evening with her—at least once a week. It may interest you to know some of the things she told me.

At the age of 3 she was carried away from their house on her Father’s shoulders, she recollected looking back and seeing the house in flames, it having been set fire to in one of the Irish Rebellions, because they thought he was not on their side. This was in Dublin. They ran for their lives and went into a Hotel which they found occupied by the rebels enjoying themselves. They fled to Liverpool

Her Father, she told me, worked himself up. He was apprenticed to Cabinet Making, and when quite young, made a beautiful model of a

- William Southwell Senior was a witness at his daughter Frances’ marriage to Thomas Cripps at St. Pancras Old Church in 1818. His signature appears in the parish register. Why he should have “cut her off” is a matter for conjecture.
- The timing of this event is consistent with the Irish Rebellion led by Robert Emmet in 1803.
- According to the census returns for 1851 and 1861, William Southwell Junior, son of William was born in Liverpool in 1804.
- The Southwells’ Liverpool shop is listed at various addresses in Duke-street, Liverpool in trade directories from 1805 –1829.
- Assuming the normal starting age of 14 for apprenticeships, William’s apprenticeship in



grand staircase.

Then, he invented some pianoforte actions, and eventually started a factory for making Pianos.

He had a shop in the principal street in Dublin. He invented many things and patented them in connection with Pianos, etc.

One patent was infringed by the great firm of Broadwoods, London. He attacked them and had the greatest Lawyer of the day, Sir Thos. Erskin[sic], to fight for him. The trial lasted three years and in the end he lost.

The expense of this—bringing witnesses over from Ireland, year after year, etc—upset his business and he eventually, although he was reputed to be very rich at one time, gave up the Dublin business, started again in Liverpool, and finally in London.

They then lived in Werners [Berners] Street, Oxford Street, and many are the stories Grandma told me of the great people she met while living there with her Father. Kemble, Keane and Macroedy [sic] the Actors, and all

cabinet making would have begun *ca.* 1750, but his Master remains unknown.

- This statement is true.
- It is true that William brought a case against Broadwood for infringement of his 1794 square pianoforte patent in 1803. He was not however, represented by Erskine, but by William Cooke (1757-1832). Nor did the trial last three years, it was over very quickly.
- This statement may be the result of a conflation of the time taken by the series of cases brought by James Longman and his creditors against Longman, Clementi and Co., and the Southwell v. Broadwood case.
- It is true that the Southwells moved first to Liverpool (not later than 1805, according to the Liverpool trade directory); and to London (not later than 1808 when a newspaper advertisement confirms that William Southwell was supervising the manufacture of cabinet pianofortes made to his 1807 patent design in Wilkinson's London workshop).
- Contemporary records establish that the family lived at 11, Gresse-street, a few blocks away from Berners-street from 1811–1825.



sorts.

Her Father, she said, had the entry to all theatres and Concerts and used to write criticisms.

She often went with him, and remembers going to hear Jenny Lind sing the first time at Drury Lane Theatre. The crush was so great she was lifted off her feet and carried on the heads of the people into the building.

She also went every night for a fortnight when Kemble gave his concluding performances on the stage, when he acted a different thing every night.

Mr. Trotter, the man who started and owned the Soho Bazaar, was a great friend of theirs.

When only about 7 years old she was at Boarding School in Liverpool, and when in bed one night, heard a noise in the chimney, presently a man came down (they were big chimneys in those days, because boys had to climb them to sweep them), walked across the bedroom and downstairs. She then jumped out of bed and called the people up quietly. The

- There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that they may have also had a workshop in Berners Mews, backing on to Berners-street, 1812 – 1820.
- A strong theatrical connection is suggested by the activities of two of William's children, Henry F. and Maria, who became performers at The Theatre Royal, Drury-lane and the English Opera House in the 1820s, and later in America.
- If Frances Cripps heard Jenny Lind sing it must have been on a visit to her brother William (or another family member) since Lind did not make her London debut until 1847. So this is another example of an account which has suffered from the 'Chinese whispers' effect.
- Kemble's final performances on stage at Covent Garden took place in 1817, therefore this is quite possible, though unproven.
- John Trotter filed a patent for a novel type of keyboard on the same day on which William Southwell filed his patent for the 'piano sloping backwards'.
- This claim remains to be investigated. The Liverpool newspapers pre-1811 are not yet on-line and the author has been unable to check out the hard copy records at the Liverpool Record Office.



burglars were shot in the front garden.

When quite young and while living in London, she remembers Wornum coming to work for her Father as a poor boy. He was half starved, so she often took him meals down, herself.

He afterwards stole one of her Fathers idea (patents) and became one of the big Pianoforte makers of London. I think the firm still exists— at any rate Broadwoods does.

Her father was married three times, had 32 children in all.

I think she was either the eldest or youngest of the last wife's. Of course her Father was an Irishman.

- Robert Wornum was foreman to George Wilkinson between 1808–1810, at the time when Wilkinson had purchased the rights to Southwell's cabinet piano patent of 1807.
- Southwell was supervising production of cabinet pianofortes in the Wilkinson workshop; therefore Wornum would certainly have had the opportunity to observe his work and methods.
- Wilkinson and Wornum became partners in 1810, a relationship which endured until shortly after their factory was burnt to the ground in October 1812.
- Only one formal marriage ceremony for William Southwell has been located, that is to Ann Dowlan [Doland] in Dublin in 1780.
- His sons John and Francis were already born well before this date, so there must have been a previous relationship.
- *Ca.* 1798 William Southwell began a relationship with Frances [maiden name unknown], (1783–1847), mother of another set of his children, including Frances [Southwell] Cripps, but no record of a formal marriage ceremony has been identified.
- Frances junior had a slightly older brother, Henry F. and is therefore more likely to have been the



eldest *daughter* rather than eldest *child* of this union.

Her mother was the daughter of a London Hairdresser.

Her Father was in his 100th year when he died—never kept his bed until the last two days of his life, and wrote a letter to one of his Sons without spectacles the last day.

Grandma told me much of his many Sons. One was Mayor of Cork.

One was a good Actor—used to act with Macredy [*sic*]. Died in Jamaica in Soldiers clothes, in accord with a dream she had, which so preyed upon her mind that she wrote out and found it was true.

Two others were Photographers to Royalty—the best in London. It was in Baker Street.

Her Father was buried at Highgate Cemetery. Just inside the Gates may be seen a large tomb on which is inscribed “the family vault of William Southwell.”

- The Cripps letter provides the only identified evidence of Frances senior’s parentage as ‘daughter of a London hairdresser’.
- This statement is an example of hyperbole, since William’s age at date of death is recorded as eighty eight years in the parish burial register of St Pancras Old Church.
- There is firm evidence however that he was still actively at work as late as 1823, one/two years before he died in January 1825.
- No evidence has been found that any of his sons was ever Mayor of Cork
- The actor was Henry F. Southwell who left the London stage in 1827, first for America to join the theatre troupe of Courtney Wemyss and later to Barbados, where he formed a theatre group and where he died of a fever in 1841.
- The photographers in question, [‘Southwell Brothers’](#) were Frances Cripps’ nephews, sons of her brother, William Southwell Junior. They were William Senior’s grandsons, *not* his sons.
- The tomb exists, but it is that of William Southwell Junior (1804–1880), Frances Cripps’ brother, *not* her father



Now I think I have told you pretty well all I know of Grandma's early life and people. Perhaps it may interest Aunt, if you read it over to her, and it may touch some strings of memory in her own mind, which may be of interest.

As one good turn deserves another, I hope you will punish me with an equally long letter, telling me all you know of the family tree and history. Much of what I have written would of course appear trivial to the outsider, but when only little is known about those whom we can question no longer, that little assumes some importance in the eyes of those concerned. I think recent events have proved how desirable it is to ask: questions of those who may not long be with us.

Had I foreseen what trouble would arise over Aunt's affairs, I should have got more precise information from Grandma. Aunt Fanny was always very close. Any enquiries, she used to rebut with "children must not be inquisitive" and so forth.

Your affectionate cousin,

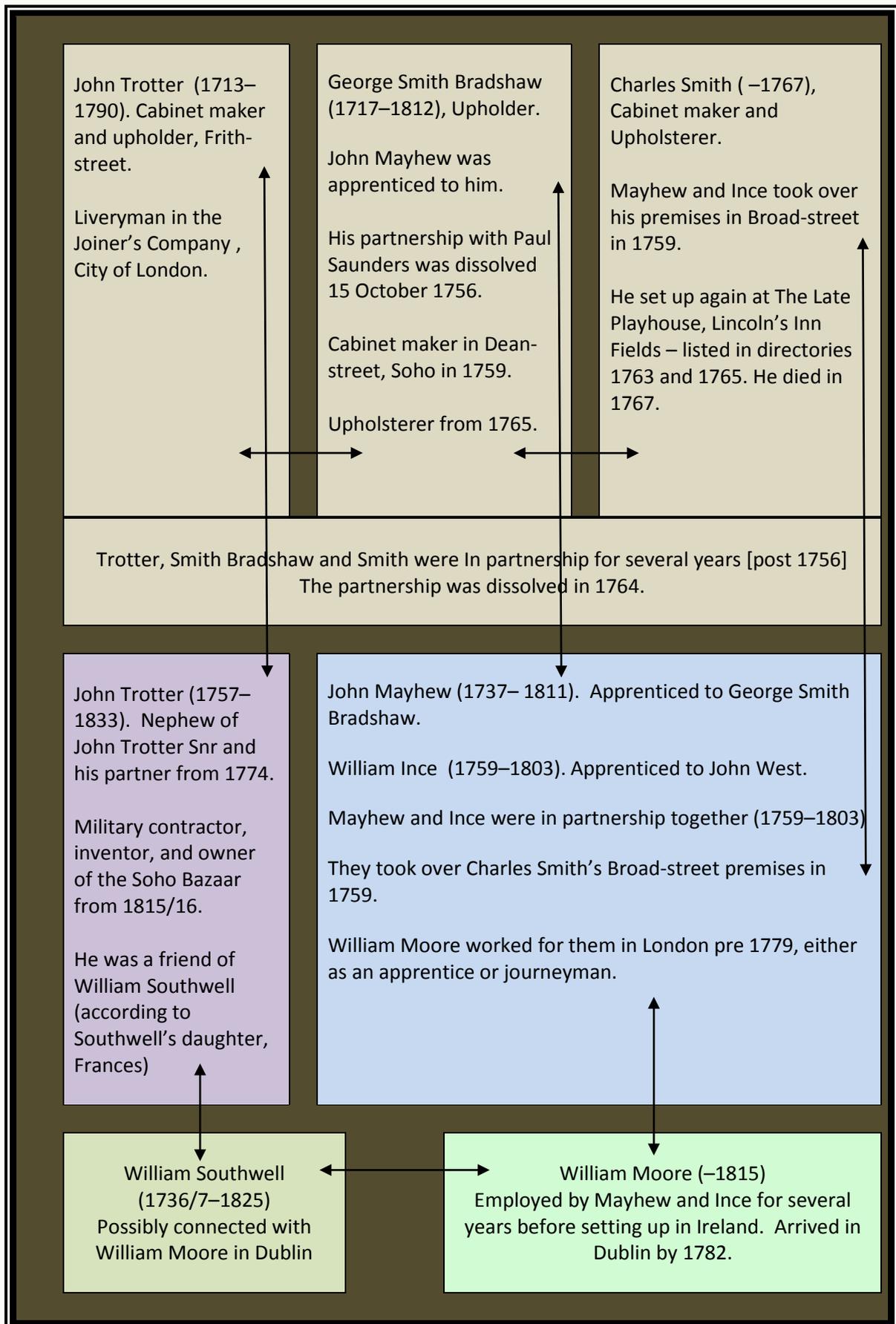
Fredrk. Southwell Cripps

Mr. William Cripps,

101 Elizabeth Street, Hobart. Tasmania.



Appendix 2: Diagram of Connections between London Cabinet Makers





... Dan playing a Wllm. Southwell & Son square pianoforte,

Workshop of David Hunt, 2009

(photograph © Margaret Debenham)