

The Kingston Bank

THE EARLY HISTORY OF WESTMINSTER BANK LIMITED IN KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES



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Town Hall and Market Place, Kingston. T. ROWLANDSON.

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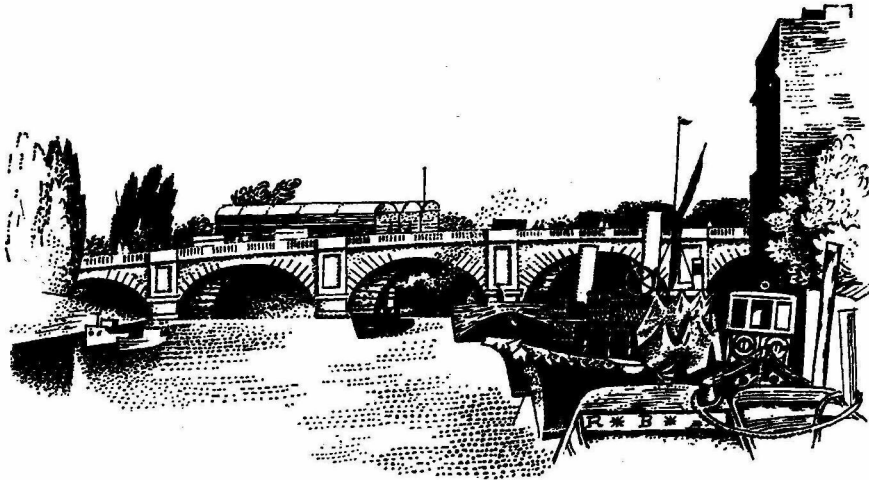
THE MARKET PLACE — *circa* 1800

The cover is a reproduction of a water-colour drawing by T. Rowlandson in the possession of the Corporation of Kingston-upon-Thames and used by their kind permission. Local records indicate that in its early years the Kingston Bank occupied part of the premises at the left of the picture.

The illustration on the title page shows a view of Kingston Bridge as it is today. This was drawn specially for the Westminster Bank by Reginald Brill, the well-known artist and Principal of Kingston School of Art.

The early History of Westminster Bank Limited in Kingston-upon-Thames

Issued in 1956 to commemorate the opening of the Clarence Street Branch of the Bank



KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES BRANCH: 4 & 5, Market Place, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey
(including Kingston Trustee Branch for Executor
and Trustee business and Kingston Income Tax
Branch)

KINGSTON HILL BRANCH: 1 Kingston Hill, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey

KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES CLARENCE STREET BRANCH: 68 Clarence Street, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey

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IN REG K

IN LIBRY BANKING

*Partners in
SHRUBSOLE & CO.
who held the office of
Mayor, or prior to 1835
Bailiff, of the Royal
Borough of
Kingston-upon-Thames.*

1833 - 1834	William Shrubsole (I)
1843 - 1844	William Row
1844 - 1845	ditto
1848 - 1849	William Shrubsole (II)
1854 - 1855	John Shrubsole, J.P.
1855 - 1856	ditto
1877 - 1878	Henry Shrubsole, J.P.
1878 - 1879	ditto
1879 - 18.1.1880	ditto



JOHN SHRUBSOLE, J.P.



HENRY SHRUBSOLE, J.P.

The Bank acknowledges with thanks its indebtedness to the Corporation of Kingston-upon-Thames for permission to reproduce the drawing by Rowlandson, to many of the present officials of the Corporation for their help and co-operation in supplying information and also to the Proprietors of the "Surrey Comet," which has been freely quoted in this booklet.

“The Kingston Bank”

The business of Westminster Bank Limited in Kingston-upon-Thames may be said to have reached its present form in 1922, when the former branches of the London County & Westminster Bank and of Parr's Bank were merged into one office. This followed the amalgamation of those companies in 1918.

At the time of this amalgamation the two banks were situated at Kingston in adjoining premises which together formed one of the finest sites in the town. The existence of the branches side by side, at Nos. 4 and 5, Market Place, was of course entirely fortuitous and indeed it was not until 1912 or 1913 that Parr's had moved to No. 5, having occupied until then the premises at No. 7 which had been used by Shrubsole & Co. before them.

The Kingston Branch of the London & County Banking Co. was opened in March 1863 in temporary premises and removed to No. 4, Market Place in 1877. One of the parties to the deeds held by the Bank is a John Baker who came from a family of grocers, one member of which achieved lasting fame in Kingston

by causing the sudden removal of the Post Office :

“ Mr. Thomas Baker, a grocer living next the Druid's Head . . . fell in love with the fair postmistress and married her. The Post Office was removed to his shop, which was on the site now occupied by the London & County Bank. There it continued for many years. . . .” (From *Half-a-Century of Kingston History*, by F. S. Merryweather, 1887).

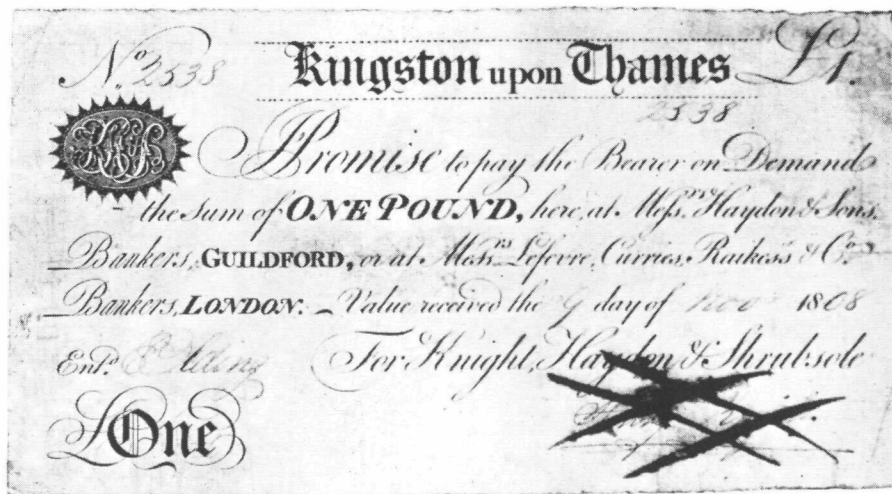
It is, however, through its Parr's Branch that Westminster Bank Limited has its deepest roots in Kingston although the period during which the business was carried on under that name was of comparatively short duration. The existing business of the Kingston Bank, Messrs. Shrubsole & Co., was acquired by Parr's Banking Co. and the Alliance Bank Ltd. (later styled Parr's Bank Limited) in 1894, and was carried on by them until the amalgamation in 1918 with the London County & Westminster Bank. The building occupied by Shrubsole & Co. in 1894, at the time of the

amalgamation, is now part of the premises of Hide & Co., Ltd., Drapers.

It is a pleasure to mention that it is through the link with Parr's Bank back to Shrubsole & Co. that the Bank has had the honour of acting as bankers to the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames since 1870.

The year of establishment of the firm is given

by one authority as 1792, and there is little doubt that it was around this date that a banking side was added to a linen drapers business of some 50 years standing. No precise information as to the origin of the Bank has been found in local records but the fullest and probably the most reliable is that given by the "Surrey Comet" newspaper when reporting in May 1894 the absorption of Shrubsole & Co. by Parr's Bank :



The note, issued in 1808, now held by the Bank at Kingston

“ It is, we understand, a little uncertain who started the old bank but it is generally supposed to have been a Mr. Rowlls who was a draper in the town. About 1790 it was carried on by a Mr. Clarkson at the Clattern House where he lived. After that the firm became Clarkson, Knight, and Pratt, followed by Knight, Haydon & Shrubsole who issued their own notes. Subsequently the style of the firm was again changed, to Shrubsole & Lambert, the latter continuing in the Bank for 55 years.”

This information can also be confirmed from a publication held in the historical archives of the Bank, for this shows a firm named Rowlls & Co. as being bankers at Kingston, Surrey, in 1804.

In 1873 when commenting on the sale by Messrs. Shrubsole of the drapery side of the business the same newspaper recorded that :

“ the retirement of Mr. John Shrubsole from premises that form no unimportant feature in the appearance of the Market Place is a local event that cannot be passed over without a brief notice, for the firm of Shrubsole & Co. holding the Royal Warrant as drapers to Her Majesty

has become closely identified and intimately associated with the town. For a long period of nearly 150 years the family of which Mr. John Shrubsole is a member has been connected with the business which is now changing hands, first in the person of Mr. Knight—the owner of the estate on the south side of the Fairfield now known as Knight’s Park—who was succeeded by his son-in-law Mr. W. Shrubsole, father of the now retiring member of the firm.”

It is a tradition in the Shrubsole family that the Kingston Bank was founded by William Shrubsole (1759-1829) who was first Home Secretary of the London Missionary Society and Secretary to the Committee of Treasury of the Bank of England. It seems, however, that it was a later William (1774 or 1775-1848) who was first actively engaged in the business of the Bank in Kingston, this younger William marrying the daughter of the senior partner, Mr. Henry Knight.

It is intriguing, however, to speculate on the relationship between the Kingston William and his namesake only fifteen or sixteen years his senior. Was there frequent family contact with this man of influence in Central banking,

and is the fund of knowledge and experience of financial matters that may thus have been at hand in the early years the foundation stone of the sound reputation and apparently trouble-free life of the Kingston Bank?

By 1808, however, there is solid basis for our history, for there is still in the possession of Kingston-upon-Thames Branch a £1 note drawn "for Knight Haydon & Shrubsole" by Henry Knight. This note was payable also at Guildford and at London.

In 1816 Mr. William Shrubsole alone of the three partners remained, because in a letter dated October of that year, which is displayed to-day on the wall of the Waiting Room of the Bank at Kingston, he wrote informing a customer that in consequence of the lamented death of his late Partner, Mr. Haydon, "after the 31st instant the business of the Kingston Bank will be carried on under the firm of Shrubsole & Lambert."

The new partnership name appears on another note also held by the Bank at Kingston. It is for £5, dated 12th November 1817, and signed "for Shrubsole & Lambert, William Shrubsole." It also was payable at Guildford and at London. At a little over forty years of age William Shrubsole had thus become the Senior Partner.

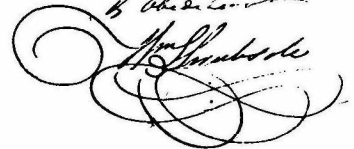
Sir

In consequence of the lamented death of my late Partner Mr. Haydon I beg to inform you that after the 31st inst. the business of the Kingston Bank will be carried on under the firm of "Shrubsole & Lambert," respectfully soliciting a continuance of your patronage.

I am Sir

Your very oblige

Wm Shrubsole



Kingston }
19 Oct 1816 }

Of the next sixteen years there is very little record, but a Poor Rate Book for 1821 in the Public Library at Kingston shows the following entries :—

Rate of 2s. 6d. in the £ for the Relief of the Poor.

p. 76 *High Row*. William Shrubsole
House Offices etc.

Assessment £34. rate £4 5s.

p. 89. *West by Thames*.

Land in Littlefield.

Assessment £34. rate £4 5s.

“ Now Wm. Shrubsole ” pencilled in.

Even in those days William Shrubsole could feel some impact of the Welfare State.

In 1837 Messrs. Shrubsole's shop had a very limited frontage, the southern end being devoted to the Bank. It is recorded in some reminiscences of a local octogenarian, Mr. Geo. W. Ayliffe, which were published by the “ Surrey Comet ” in 1914, that “ the windows of the Shop were small and of antique appearance. It was the first shop in the town to introduce plate glass and roller shutters, the novelty of the latter attracting people into the Market Place at closing time to see the porter wind the shutters down.” Thus even those in humbler banking roles may gain an unexpected immortality !

From the various records of this time it would appear that the Bank end of Shrubsole's shop was situated at what later became No. 9 Market Place (now part of Messrs. Hide's store) and that later, probably between 1857 and 1862, it was removed to No. 7, where it remained until Parr's Bank moved in 1912 or 1913.

The next reference to the firm in Mr. Ayliffe's notes is when Mr. William Row was Mayor of Kingston for two consecutive years, 1843-44 and 1844-45. It appears that he was concerned only with the drapery side of the business. Mr. Ayliffe recalled that Mr. Row lived in a house near the entrance to All Saints Church from the Market Place and remembered him as :

“ a very popular man, the pink of fashion and of courtesy, and a generous supporter of local charities and institutions.”

William Shrubsole was one of the two Bailiffs of Kingston in 1833 and his name appears on a list of Churchwardens of the Parish Church of All Saints for 1837 and again for 1838.

In 1845 and 1846 the name William again appears as a churchwarden but it is most likely that this was a son who it is known became Mayor in 1848, the constitution of the

borough having been changed from two bailiffs and freemen to Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors in 1835. A tablet in All Saints Church facing the south doorway records the death of William Shrubsole on the 19th March 1848 at the age of 73 years, and of his wife, Elizabeth, on the 26th October 1864 at the age of 78. This memorial was erected by Sarah Ranyard and Mary Booth "their surviving daughters" and is of particular interest in that it links the Shrubsoles with the Ranyard family who were also of considerable importance in the town at that time. Mr. Samuel Ranyard who married Sarah Shrubsole came from a family of candle makers "famed throughout Surrey." This was, it seems, a lucrative occupation at that time and the Ranyards appear to have lived in most comfortable style. Samuel held numerous offices in the district and he was also Mayor of Kingston in 1847-8. It was to the former candle shop of the Ranyard family, established in 1762, that Shrubsole's Bank removed some time after the shop had closed in 1857.

Not a great deal is known of the later William. After about 1858 he seems to have withdrawn from public life, the business passing into the hands of his younger brother John (1822 or

1823-1874) in the early 1860's, though it has not been possible to ascertain the actual date that this occurred.

In May 1852 both Mr. William and Mr. John Shrubsole were Councillors of the Town Ward, Kingston, as also was the brother-in-law, Mr. Samuel Ranyard, and from Biden's "History of Kingston-upon-Thames" published in 1852 it is found, indirectly, that at that time the Bank was closed every Shrove Tuesday for a rather unusual holiday :

"The houses in and about the Market Place are closed and the windows barricaded ; so that, to a stranger, the place appears almost in a state of siege. Two rival companies of men collect about the Druid's Head Inn in the Market Place and at 11 o'clock the Football is started. The sport continues with much spirit during the day ; one party endeavouring to kick the Ball to the Great Bridge and the other party to Clattern Bridge ; at five o'clock the game ceases and all parties adjourn to talk of their exertions, and to enter on the business of another year with a firm determination to renew their riotous sport on the next anniversary of their forefathers' prowess."

This football match was a favourite subject for contemporary artists and there are several drawings and prints of that time depicting the barricaded shops. There is no question that the Bank had the doubtful privilege of being well in the thick of this peculiar contest, which was finally suppressed in 1867.

Some time between 1865 and 1869 the death of Mr. Robert F. Lambert took place. He had served as a partner for 55 years. Probably it was upon his death that the firm took its final title, Shrubsole & Co. Mr. John Shrubsole devoted his time mainly to the drapery side of the business, the management of the Bank being left to Mr. Edward Shill Phillips, later to become proprietor, who had entered the employment of the firm in 1856. It appears that John Shrubsole, having served his time as Mayor and Alderman at a comparatively early age, took a less active part in local affairs in later years.

A former Churchwarden of All Saints, who is also a customer of the Bank at Kingston-upon-Thames, tells us that it was the custom of the later Shrubsoles to stop their carriage at the Bank on their way to church each Sunday. The altar plate would be removed from the Bank safe, taken to church for the service and

restored to the Bank immediately afterwards. By 1873 John Shrubsole was seriously handicapped by a heart affliction and in the "Surrey Comet" dated 27th December 1873 an advertisement appeared giving notice of his withdrawal from the drapery business which was now to be continued by a Mr. Joseph Hide formerly of Gosport. There was also a comment in another column of this paper stating that "the change in no way affects the Bank which will be carried on as heretofore in the same proprietary and under the same management."

Mr. John Shrubsole's retirement was of no avail and he died on 19th May 1874. With his sudden death the Bank was left without a head and with no obvious sign of a successor, and the history of private banks in the past half century or so had been such that no hiatus or uncertainty could be allowed to persist. Nevertheless one must admire the expeditious manner in which the problem was solved for at the foot of the leading article in the "Surrey Comet" of the 23rd May 1874 there appeared the following unobtrusive but reassuring announcement :

"We have authority to state that the old banking firm of Shrubsole & Co. will be continued by Mr. Henry Shrubsole, the

brother, and Mr. Samuel Barker Booth, brother-in-law of Mr. John Shrubsole, and that shortly the present Manager, Mr. Edward S. Phillips, who has been in the establishment over 18 years, will be admitted a partner. The latter will seek, and no doubt will obtain, the several appointments of treasurer to the various local boards and public bodies filled by the late Mr. Shrubsole, holding as he does already the important post of Treasurer to the Borough of Kingston."

Although older than his brother John, Henry had not been brought up on either side of the family business, but at an early age had entered a firm of Parliamentary Agents. He had come to live at Surbiton Hall (now demolished) in about 1871 with his brother and sister-in-law, Sarah, who is understood to have lived to a great age. She took a keen interest in Kingston Library and in later years gave a donation of £500 to it in memory of her husband and brother-in-law. Henry appears to have entered enthusiastically into local affairs. By 1st February 1875 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Kingston and it was later recorded that "justice and consideration had ever since characterised his magisterial acts."

The day-to-day management of the Bank remained throughout this period in the hands of Mr. E. S. Phillips, now with twenty years service in the firm, assisted by a young member of a well known local family, Mr. John Drewett, who had joined the Bank on the 1st April 1867.

Henry Shrubsole became Mayor of Kingston in 1877 and he was re-elected in 1878 and again in 1879, having achieved the then unprecedented honour of being chosen for the third consecutive year. He died suddenly in 1880 after distributing purses at a gathering of old people in Kingston. There is still, outside the Bank premises in the centre of the Market Place, an impressive drinking fountain erected to his memory by public subscription bearing a plaque showing his head in profile. It was unveiled by H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge on 1st May 1882.

With the death of Henry Shrubsole, Mr. S. B. Booth and Mr. E. S. Phillips seem to have carried on without any further change in the constitution of the firm. It is doubtful though if Mr. Booth was taking any effective part by then because the records of the Bank held at the Branch show that an account was opened on 19th October 1880 by his wife, probably an indication that her husband was failing. He

died on 3rd February 1881 and Mr. Phillips then carried on alone, assisted by Mr. John Drewett, who had won great popularity in the town.

Although Mr. Phillips was connected with the Bank for over forty-three years, not a great deal is known about him. His father was Manager of a local brewery, and the son, apart from the Treasurerships, seems to have taken a less active part in local affairs than did the Shrubsole family.

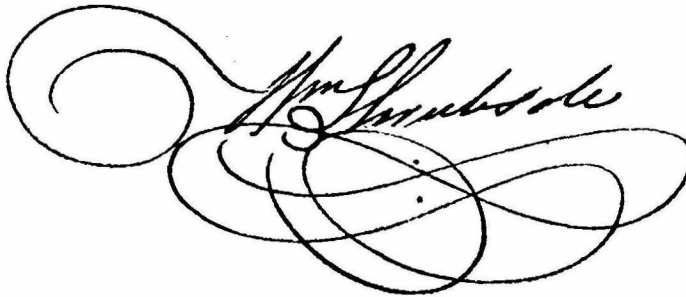
It is not recorded in what manner, if at all, Mr. Phillips and Mr. Drewett celebrated the Bank's centenary in 1892, but the end of the chapter was near. Quite unexpectedly and unsolicited, according to Mr. Phillips, an offer came from Parr's Bank and Shrubsole & Co. were amalgamated with that Bank in May 1894. Mr. Phillips was appointed a Local

Director and Mr. Drewett continued as Manager of the Branch.

Parr's Bank Limited became amalgamated with the London County & Westminster Bank Limited in 1918, and the combined title was shortened in 1923 to Westminster Bank Limited.

The Bank has thus had a long history in Kingston—for over seventy years it was the only bank in the district—and it takes pride in its long association with this Royal and ancient borough.

In addition to the Bank Notes and documents mentioned in these pages, there are a number of photographs and various other records at the main branch in the Market Place. It will give pleasure to the Manager of that office to show these to any customers or other persons who may be interested.





BY APPOINTMENT
TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
PRINTERS

KNAPP, DREWETT AND SONS LIMITED
KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES

