

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

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Some further notes on Jacob Forster (1739-1806), mineral collector and dealer

IN an interesting paper on Jacob Forster and the etymology of forsterite, Frondel (1972) gave some valuable biographical data on this mineral collector and dealer, much of it derived from Forster's Will and from published and unpublished notes of Sir Arthur Russell. My own studies on the London natural history dealer George Humphrey and on Emanuel Mendes da Costa, Clerk of the Royal Society until his disgrace and subsequent imprisonment in 1768, touch briefly on Dr. Frondel's story and a few further scraps can be added to our meagre knowledge of Jacob Forster, his family and friends.

Forster's brother: Frondel (1972, p. 547) gives Forster's brother as '[Igham] Henry Forster' who ran Jacob's mineral store in Paris. In fact, this is Ingham Forster and a certain amount can be learnt about him from letters in the da Costa Collection in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum (Add. MSS. 28534-544). Ingham Forster evidently showed considerable loyalty to da Costa during the latter's detention in the King's Bench Prison (1768-72), bringing to da Costa work (cataloguing) at a time when money could do much to alleviate conditions in a debtors' jail. Forster's letters are affectionate, at times jovial in a slightly condescending tone; he chides and encourages da Costa in such terms as:

You have been a very good Boy indeed!—Let us go on Briskly [with the catalogue] while the days are long and the weather fine. (Ingham Forster to da Costa, 5 August 1771)

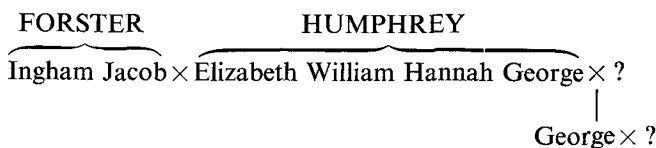
As I have given you a large number of Holidays, I hope *like a good Boy* you will apply closely to business. (As above, 24 January 1772)

In a draft of a letter to his friend Mitford Flower, written 12 September 1772, da Costa refers to 'Mr Ingham Forster in Clement's Lane Lombard Street' and that address appears on some of Forster's letters. There is no hint at this period that Forster visited or lived in Paris. In an early letter to da Costa (30 May 1769), Forster spelt his name 'Foster'. In subsequent letters he signed himself 'I. F.', but after May 1772 he becomes 'Ferrum' (the etymology of this name is not explained). The last of Ingham Forster's letters is dated 6 May 1779.

Jacob Forster's wife: Frondel (loc. cit.) states that Jacob Forster's wife was Elizabeth *née* Humphrey, of London, who 'had a relative, George Humphrey'. This was the well-known natural history dealer who had premises at 48 Long Acre (later at

4 Leicester Street) and who briefly ran a museum (1778–9) at 70 St. Martin's Lane. He is best known to conchologists, chiefly for his catalogues of some famous shell collections.

In the da Costa correspondence (BM. Add. MS. 28538, p. 229) there is a draft (in French and in Humphrey's hand) of the advertisement for da Costa's *Conchology*, to which da Costa has added at the foot of the page 'sent by Mr Humphrey's brother in law (Mr Forster)'. Since it was Ingham and not Jacob Forster who frequently visited da Costa in prison, this must surely refer to Ingham Forster. It does, however, suggest that one of the Forsters was married to George Humphrey's sister. The relationship is clarified by Hill (1965), who refers to George Humphrey's son, also George, as the nephew of Hannah, who in turn is stated by Frondel (*loc. cit.*) to have been Elizabeth's sister. Elizabeth was thus the sister of George Humphrey. Hill (*loc. cit.*) also mentions William Humphrey, an older brother to Hannah. On present evidence, therefore, the following relationships emerge:



Except in the case of William and Hannah, I have not been able to find the birth dates; these would establish whether Ingham, Elizabeth, and George were older or younger than their brothers or sisters.

Hannah Humphrey and Gillray: William Humphrey was the first in the family to sell satirical prints and he was the principal sponsor of James Gillray the caricaturist before the latter began his curious relationship with Hannah, who was also in the publishing and print selling business. Gillray lodged with 'Mrs' Humphrey for the last eighteen years of his life. After his death in 1815, Hannah continued the shop at 27 St. James's Street until her death three years later, when George Humphrey's son George junior took over (see the excellent biography of Gillray by Hill, *loc. cit.*).

When George Humphrey junior died in 1835, the contents of the shop (including a large number of Gillray's works) were sold by E. Foster (not Forster) as '... the Entire Stock of Mrs Humphrey, widow of the late Mr Humphrey, Printseller, St. James's Street . . . Catalogues to be had of Mrs Humphrey, 24 St James's Street . . .' In this case, Mrs. Humphrey is the wife of George Humphrey junior, who already had a shop three doors along the street, as is shown on a receipt dated 19 April 1823 (BM. Add. MS. 27337, p. 151).

In 1811, and having entered into his final years of insanity, Gillray did a portrait sketch in pen and ink of George Humphrey junior, a wild and agitated drawing but one that was kept and thus may have been something of a likeness (Hill, *loc. cit.*: pl. 141). I have been unable to find, however, any portrait of George Humphrey senior.

George Humphrey: information on this important eighteenth-century dealer is scattered through the literature, chiefly in conchological works. With Dr. Adrienne

Kaeppler (Mrs. P. Gathercole) I am preparing an account of Humphrey's sale catalogue, the *Museum Humfredianum*, together with all that can be gleaned of his activities. This, and also a paper on the authorship of da Costa's *Conchology*, will be published in the *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History*, London.

Da Costa: the eleven volumes of da Costa's letters in the British Museum seem to have been rather neglected but well repay study. Da Costa had extremely wide interests and corresponded with many of the prominent men of his day. These letters were at one time in the possession of John Nichols, who reproduced a number of them in his *Literary Anecdotes . . .* and also in his *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*.

J. R. Forster: Frondel (loc. cit.) referred to the possible relationship between Jacob Forster and Johann Reinhold Forster (1729–98), the much maligned naturalist and scholar who accompanied Captain Cook on his second voyage to the Pacific. More light on this may emerge from a biography of J. R. Forster now being prepared by Michael Hoare of the Australian National University, Canberra.

Acknowledgement. Historical papers relating to a particular discipline are frequently missed by an interested specialist in another field. I am indebted, therefore, to Mr. Peter G. Embrey of the Mineralogical Department of this Museum for drawing my attention to Dr. Frondel's useful study.

*British Museum (Natural History),
London, S.W. 7 England*

P. J. P. WHITEHEAD

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Dichroic pigment-layers in Blue John fluorite

IN a recent contribution concerning the nature of the coloration in Blue John fluorite from Derbyshire and elsewhere, MacKenzie and Green (1971) reach certain conclusions that are incompatible with observations recorded by the present writer (Holgate, 1941, pp. 139–48). The writer's interest in the problem presented by this coloration stems from his earlier recognition of an unexpected dichroic effect in pigmented layers in fluorite crystals in a thin section of a fluorite-bearing dolomite originating from the