

**SOUTHWELL**  
BROTHERS  
**Photographers Royal**

**History of the Business (1857-1883)**

MARGARET DEBENHAM

2011

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## **About the author**

MARGARET DEBENHAM Ph.D 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 the challenge of further developing the use of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) as an innovative Internet research tool whilst pursuing her personal interests in genealogy and music history. Her husband, Michael Debenham, is a great grandson of Amanda Debenham, née Southwell (1843–1884), sister of the Southwell Brothers, William Henry, Frederick and Edwin.

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# Southwell Brothers, Photographers Royal: History of the Business (1857-1883)

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It was whilst researching the Debenham family history that I first stumbled across a link to the three 'Southwell Brothers', William Henry (1823-1870), Frederick (1833-1883) and Edwin (1840-1882), whose work as photographic artists was greatly in vogue in London during the 1860s and early 1870s. In 1866 their youngest sister, Amanda (1843–84), married William Elliott Debenham (1839-1924) another well-known London photographer, brother of two other photographers – Edwin and Arthur – and the great grandfather of my husband, Michael Debenham. This union thus joined two early photography dynasties, examples of whose work survive today in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, and other collections around the world. Thanks to David Cripps (another Southwell descendant) we soon discovered that Amanda and her brothers were four of the ten children (the other six were all girls) born to William Southwell, a pianoforte maker, and his wife Elizabeth Cuming, who were married in London in 1822. And so began the fascinating research trail that uncovered this story.

According to David Webb's research, William Henry Southwell's photographic studio is listed as 16, Baker Street, Portman Square, London from 1857.<sup>1</sup> Further evidence, newly identified by the author, confirms that the business was not only in existence but well established by the Spring of 1858. A contemporary article on important political figures of the time published in *New Monthly Magazine* in May of that year refers to the death of William Henry Curran in Dublin in the Spring of 1858. In it the author mentions the last time they had met in London:

...We wanted his portrait and were to meet at Southwells, 16, Baker-street, one of our best photographers, the next day. He was prevented from coming. We

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<sup>1</sup>photoLondon website: <http://www.photolondon.org.uk/pages/details.asp?pid=7256> (accessed 25 February 2011).

had separated to meet no more. In his last letter [dated February 1858] he recalls the time when we used to steal out of the bustle of London, to get a quiet beefsteak and bottle of port in the vicinity, and enjoy a friendly chat. ...<sup>2</sup>

Moreover we can confirm for certain that the second Southwell brother, Frederick, was already involved in the photographic business at this early stage. The birth certificate of his second son, Frederick William Robinson Southwell, born 20 November 1857, by his union with his partner Charlotte Robinson<sup>3</sup>, records his father's occupation as 'photographer's artist'.

No record has been discovered of where William Henry Southwell received his photographic training, if indeed he ever undertook any formal study in the field. In the 1841 census he appears in his father's household at St. James Place (occupation: pianoforte tuner). In 1851 he again appears living with his father, now at 16, Baker Street (occupation: pianoforte maker). According to Debenham family papers, his future brother-in-law William Elliott Debenham trained at the London School of Photography at 174, Regent Street, so possibly the two may have been fellow students there at some time between the years 1851-1857.

A news item reporting on an exhibition of photographs by the Photographic Society which took place at their rooms, 1, New Coventry-street, Piccadilly in May 1858 makes mention of photographs of 'microscopic objects by Mr. Southwell'.<sup>4</sup> It therefore appears that, initially at least, the firm's interests extended more widely than the business of portrait photography. In the Spring

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<sup>2</sup> 'Chiefs of Parties' in *New Monthly Magazine*, 116:461 (1859 May):85

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte appears in the 1861 census as Charlotte Southwell, wife of Frederick, and the birth certificate of their son William Frederick Robinson in 1857 gives her name as 'Southwell, formerly Robinson'. However, their first son, Henry Rowland, born in July 1855 was registered only under his mother's name, Robinson – though in all subsequent census records, parish registers etc. he consistently appears using his father's surname, Southwell, and therefore appears to have been fully acknowledged by Frederick as his son. We have been unable to locate any record of a marriage between Charlotte Robinson and Frederick. When Frederick married Kate Isabella Lyon (a widow, née Stewart) in 1865 he declared himself to be a bachelor (Parish register of All Souls Church, Marylebone, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1865; Entry No. 324, p162). It therefore seems probable that his earlier relationship with Charlotte was a 'common-law' union and never formalised.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily News*, issue 3751 (24 May 1858)

of 1858 the house of Southwell also offered portraits of the dead as a part of their repertoire.<sup>5</sup> Yet another newspaper report in 1859 indicates that the firm had been active in photographing horses and dogs in the sporting field.

#### Sporting Intelligence

A propos of photographing, since Mr. Lake Price has been depicting some of the finest views in Rome for the Prince of Wales, no artist has yet attempted to acquire a specialitie for horses and dogs but Messrs Southwell of Baker-street, whose success with the equine and canine favourites of the sporting world has been something wonderful, and the owners of pets have thereby some means of averting the pang occasioned by their loss.<sup>6</sup>

If, as seems likely, this included valuable race horses and sporting dogs, such a specialty would have provided an entrée into the aristocratic circle of owners who were to become the influential client base of their portrait studios throughout the 1860s.

That the studio was highly regarded by Queen Victoria and other members of the Royal family is clear from notices posted in the court circular on a number of occasions. On 3 April 1860 the Court Circular announced:

HER MAJESTY, &c,

From the Court Circular

WINDSOR CASTLE, APRIL 3.

... Mr Southwell, the photographer of Baker-street, has had the honour of attending several times at Buckingham Palace to take photographs of her Majesty, his Royal Highness the Prince Consort, and other members of the royal family.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Illustrated London News* (3 April 1858). Advertisement placed by W. Southwell, photographer (see also *photoLondon*) <http://www.photolondon.org.uk/pages/details.asp?pid=7256> (accessed 25 February 2011).

<sup>6</sup> *The Morning Post* issue 29742 (6 April 1859):5

<sup>7</sup> *The Morning Post*, issue 26925 (4 April 1860):5

A news item on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1860 in the *Morning Post*, describes a selection of these pictures in considerable detail, thus enabling us to positively identify the date on which they were taken.

THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHS. – Under the above appellation Messrs. Southwell of Baker-street, have just announced by the gracious permission of her Majesty, the publication of the portraits taken by them at Buckingham Palace of herself and the elder branches of the royal family. Seldom has the photographer's art been more successfully employed than in the execution of this royal commission, which has been the means of placing within easy reach of all classes of the community the most truthful likeness of her Majesty on the size of a *carte de visite*. The Queen, with that love for domestic habits for which she is so remarkable, and by which she has endeared herself so much to her subjects, is taken in a morning costume, perusing a book. The Princess Alice is attired in a simple *toilette de matin* that well becomes her, while the Prince of Wales is resting on a pillar that admirably sets off the manliness of his figure. The Sailor Prince is appropriately photographed in his naval uniform; and in one of the pictures, when standing by his elder brother we have an excellent opportunity of criticising the two brothers. For fidelity of resemblance, clearness of bringing out, and specimens of the art of photography, these royal portraits stand unrivalled, and from their cheapness must find their way into numberless homes whose occupiers have previously been shut out by the question of expense from gratifying their loyalty with a picture gallery of their Sovereign and the royal family of this country.<sup>8</sup>

On 28 August 1860 the firm itself, this time trading as 'Southwell and Co' advertised in *The Times*:

THE ROYAL FAMILY. – New series of PHOTOGRAPHIC CARD PORTRAITS of the ROYAL FAMILY, by SOUTHWELL and Co. Price 1s 6d each Published by McLean, Melhuish, Napper and Co., 16, Haymarket<sup>9</sup>

Images of surviving examples of these cartes de visite, drawn from our family collection, are shown in the first page of the royalty section of our Southwell Brothers virtual gallery.<sup>10</sup> Other sections, entitled 'The Establishment' and 'The

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<sup>8</sup> *The Morning Post*, issue 27044 (21 August 1860):3

<sup>9</sup> *The Times*, issue 23710 (28 Aug 1860):1

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.debenham.org.uk/Southwell/display.php?type=R&page=1>

Stage', provide a cross section of portraits of a wide range of notable members of society; additionally the section entitled 'Others' is devoted to portraits of subjects who as yet remain unidentified. Taken together with portraits displayed at other sites, most notably the National Portrait Gallery which boasts a large collection,<sup>11</sup> the extant examples illustrate the impressive scale of their work, providing a valuable record of the glitterati of the era.

Most of the surviving photographs - shot either full face or three-quarter pose, with the subject either standing or seated - employ neutral backgrounds and usually include a table, balustrade, or some other object to stabilize the subject during the long exposure time. In contrast the celebrity photographs often show the subject in costume and/or with a backdrop befitting his or her activity.

Confirmation that by March 1862 the trading name had been changed to Southwell Brothers and another shop opened on 31 March 1862, this time at 22 Baker Street, is to be found in an advertisement placed by the firm in the *Daily News* on 18 March 1862. In this they announce that their additional establishment will be ready for the reception of visitors on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1862.<sup>12</sup> In July 1863 the same publication carried a notice announcing that their premises at No. 16, Baker Street, Portman-square in the future would be devoted to photographing children and that the department for adults was now situated at No. 22, Baker Street.<sup>13</sup> In 1864 the Court circular reported that Messrs Southwell had attended Marlborough House (home of the Prince and Princess of Wales) for the purpose of taking photographs – clear evidence of their

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<sup>11</sup> The National Portrait Gallery owns a substantial number of photographic portraits by the Southwell Brothers – see <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp08195/southwell-brothers> (accessed 25 February 2011). Others are scattered at sites worldwide. A list of reference links to other sites is provided as a resource at the end of this article.

<sup>12</sup> *Daily News*, issue 4946 (18 March 1862):1 The date of submission of the advertisement is given as 20 February 1862.

<sup>13</sup> *Daily News*, issue 5350 (2 July 1863):8

continuing popularity with the Royal Family.<sup>14</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1867 they opened yet another studio, at 64A New Bond Street.<sup>15</sup>

Ever the innovators, in an advertisement dated 9 February 1866 the firm announced that in consequence of the fine weather they had commenced making appointments, stating that as they had three glass rooms at their establishment they were able to arrange sittings at very short notice.<sup>16</sup> In those days before the existence of strong artificial lights, maximizing available daylight was imperative to the process of portrait photography, hence the proclaimed advantage of glass rooms.

A news item in *The Times* on 23 December 1862 records an action the brothers took to protect copyright of their work. The Southwells' income was based not only on the taking of photographs for the private use of individual clients, but also on the more lucrative business of selling copies of celebrity photographs to the general public. Taking advantage of a new copyright law, between 1862 and 1864 the firm registered 275 photographs at Stationers' Hall in London.<sup>17</sup> The case in question concerned a vendor of photographs, a Mr. Hayward of Great Portland Street, who was summoned in the Marlborough Street Police Court for selling 'a spurious copy' of a registered photograph of the actress Lydia Thompson of which Messrs. Southwell Brothers were the owners. According to

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<sup>14</sup> *Daily News*, issue 5559 (2 March 1864):5

<sup>15</sup> *The Morning Post*, issue 29111 (30 March 1867):1

MESSRS. SOUTHWELL BROTHERS, Photographers Royal, have the honour to announce that, on 1<sup>st</sup> May next they will OPEN A BRANCH ESTABLISHMENT, No. 64A, New Bond-street, corner of Brook-street. Appointments for and after that date may now be registered. Sitters may always ensure Messrs. Southwell's personal attendance at either of their studios, No. 22, Baker-street Portman-square, and 64A, New Bond-street, W.

<sup>16</sup> *The Morning Post*, issue 28756 (9 February 1866):1

MESSRS. SOUTHWELL BROTHERS, Photographers Royal, beg to inform their patrons that, in consequence of the present fine weather, they have COMMENCED MAKING APPOINTMENTS. Having Three Glass Rooms at their establishment, they are enabled to give SITTINGS at a very short notice.—Baker-street, Portman-square, Feb 1, 1866.

<sup>17</sup> Reported by Paul Frecker, 2006 - see

[http://www.luminous-lint.com/app/photographer/1\\_Southwell\\_Brothers/A/](http://www.luminous-lint.com/app/photographer/1_Southwell_Brothers/A/) (accessed 25 February 2011).



the reporter, this was the first case of its type under the newly amended copyright laws. Mr. Haywood was fined 40 shillings for his infringement. The sale of copies of photographs of famous people was a lucrative business and one that the Southwell Brothers were intent on protecting.

A number of engravings of pictures of influential members of the sporting scene based on photographs taken by the firm of Southwell Brothers appeared in sporting magazines between the years 1862–1868, as illustrations to biographical articles. These include Mr. Villebois, Master of the West Norfolk Hounds, whose picture was especially well received, as is evidenced from the extract below:

Messrs. Southwell's portrait of Mr. Villebois,—the popular Master of the West Norfolk Hounds, and a sportsman so universally beloved, that he must be one of those happy mortals who never had enemy,—is marvellously true to nature, and fully maintains the reputation of that celebrated firm for super-excellence in photography.<sup>18</sup>

Others include John Scott, a famous racehorse trainer of Malton, Yorkshire;<sup>19</sup> The Earl of Sefton;<sup>20</sup> Lord Middleton, Master of Fox Hounds in Yorkshire;<sup>21</sup> Mr. Reginald Corbet, Master of the Cheshire Hounds;<sup>22</sup> and Viscount Combermere.<sup>23</sup> All of these well known names demonstrate that the Southwells maintained strong connections with the aristocratic sporting community throughout the 1860s.

Most of the surviving Southwell photographs are cartes de visite produced using the albumen process first introduced in 1850 by the French photographer L.D.

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<sup>18</sup> *The Sporting Gazette*, issue 3 (15 November 1862):46

<sup>19</sup> *Baily's Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, issue 26 (1 April 1862):249

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, issue 36 (1 February 1863)

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, issue 69 (1 November 1865)

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, issue 96 (1 February 1868)

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, issue 101 (1 July 1868)

Blanquart-Evrard (1802-1872). Using this process made it possible to produce large numbers of positive prints from the same collodion negative and was thus an important innovation in facilitating mass production of photographic images. The paper used was very thin and was glued to a cardboard mount. Cartes de visite, used as calling cards and also collected in albums, were smaller-sized photographs, the print measuring about two and a quarter inches by three and a half inches, the mount, about two and a half inches by four inches. Larger photographs, called cabinet photos measured about four inches by five inches, with a mount of about four and a half inches by six inches.<sup>24</sup> Other methods of reproduction employed by the Southwells for the surviving copies include sepia carbon prints and stipple engraving. These are particularly interesting in the light of a patent application (No 1364) submitted by the Southwell Brothers on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1866, for which they received provisional protection. It describes a novel lithographic process for the purpose of reproducing photographs in different tints. An extract from the specification reads as follows:

... This invention consists in the production of pictures in which the aid of lithography is introduced for the purposes of heightening the effect of photographs, and is carried out as follows:

The photographs are obtained in the usual way. The lithographic stone intended to be employed in printing is then prepared by the erasing from it or lowering that part of the surface where the photograph is intended to appear, the lithographic printing then takes place, and the result is that the ground or other portions of the entire picture may be of any desired tint or shade ...

An informative description of this process appeared in a news item in *The Morning Post* on 16 November 1866, a transcribed extract of which is given below:

LITHOGRAPHY AN AUXILIARY TO PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAITURE.—Messrs. Southwell of Baker-street have just patented a process whereby lithography is made to assist the artistic character of photographic portraits. ...

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<sup>24</sup> see <http://www.cycleback.com/1800s/earlyphotos.htm> (accessed 25 February 2011).

... The process of Messrs. Southwell is as follows: – The vignette intended to receive the tint is carefully traced on the stone, and the head, to its extreme outline, is bitten or cut out, so as, in printing, to leave the features clear as pure photography. The roller charged with any tint is then passed over the stone, whereby colour is imparted to the print, which then comes forth as an effective drawing on grey, drab or blue paper. This treatment of the vignette, however, shows the head deficient in something to bring it up to the decided and conclusive character of the background. This, in its present state, would be simply colour and from the hands of an accomplished miniature painter one of these portraits would be an all but insoluble enigma not only to a painter, but also to a photographer, as to the means of its production. It cannot be doubted that this invention will be carried much further. ...

... Thus if a photograph be worked over by a skilful hand as a chalk drawing –say with red and black chalk –or even touched with pastel, and the finish, touch for touch, be transferred to the stone, and prepared for printing, it is thought that by perfection of registering, and the use of several stones, an entirely successful reproduction could be obtained. By another method might be completed a fully coloured portrait—that is, by a succession of stones and means similar to that of chromo-lithography. Messrs. Southwell have patented their invention and intend to grant licenses for working it, which of course presupposes a process readily intelligible and practicable.<sup>25</sup>

The patent does not appear to have proceeded past the provisional stage to full patent status. It would be interesting to establish whether the technique was ever widely used.

Just when everything was going so well, in 1870 disaster struck. William Henry, the eldest brother and driving force behind the enterprise, died suddenly of heart problems at the young age of 47 at the home of his father in law, Edward Buckingham; a notice reporting his death appeared in *The Times* dated 17 September 1870.<sup>26</sup> One may imagine the shockwaves that must have reverberated round his family—and it seems his untimely demise dealt a severe

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<sup>25</sup> *The Morning Post*, issue 28996 (16 November 1866): 3

<sup>26</sup> *The Times*, issue 26858 17 September 1870,1

On the 15<sup>th</sup> Sept, suddenly, at the residence of his father-in-law, E. Buckingham Esq., North Hall, England-lane, WILLIAM HENRY SOUTHWELL, of the Firm of Southwell Bros., 22, Baker-street, Portman-square, aged 47, deeply mourned by his family circle.

blow to the business. On 31 August 1872 a notice was placed in *The Morning Post* reporting proceedings commenced in the Court of Bankruptcy before Mr. Registrar Hazlitt for the appointment of a receiver and an interim injunction relating to the bankruptcy of Frederick and Edwin Southwell.

COURT OF BANKRUPTCY. –August 30.

(Before Mr. Registrar Hazlitt.)

...

IN RE FRED. AND EDWIN SOUTHWELL

This was also an application for the appointment of a Receiver, and an interim injunction. The debtors carried on business in partnership at 22, Baker-street, as photographers. The debts are estimated at about 4,000*l.*, and assets 700*l.*, consisting of stock in trade 500*l.* And good book debts, 200*l.*

Mr. Venus, of the firm of Linklaters, Hackwood, and Co., solicitors, of 7, Walbrook, now applied for the appointment of Mr. James Waddell, public accountant, of 7, Poultry, as receiver, and for an interim injunction, restraining the proceedings of several suing creditors.

His Honour granted the application.<sup>27</sup>

Whilst Frederick and Edwin undoubtedly possessed artistic flair and expertise as photographers, the fact that the business went downhill financially so rapidly after this point suggests they lacked business acumen. A notice in *The London Gazette* dated 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1872 reveals they were seeking Liquidation by Arrangement or Composition with Creditors, both in respect of their partnership and individually.<sup>28</sup> It seems that this must have been successfully achieved. However, according to the *photoLondon* website, in October 1876 the business had been taken over by Frederic Thomas Burrows and Joseph Dufais Colton,<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *The Morning Post*, issue 30805 (31 August 1872): 7

<sup>28</sup> *The London Gazette*, issue 23892 (2 September 1872): 3907. Further notices appeared in issue 23901 (24 September 1872), 4475; issue 23907 (8 October 1872), 4801 and issue 23976 (16 May 1873): 2475.

<sup>29</sup> A reference to a publication by F.T. Burrows & J.D. Colton (successors to Southwell Brothers, Photographers Royal, 22, Baker Street 1876) appeared in *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* Vol.

most likely as a result of the settlement process, though this is yet to be confirmed.

It seems that F. T Burrows and J.D. Colton also soon ran into financial difficulties and on 13 April 1877 a notice appeared in *The London Gazette* advertising that they had instituted their own proceedings for Liquidation by Arrangement in respect of their photographic business at 22, Baker Street<sup>30</sup> and that subsequently the business passed to one William E. Gibb on 9 May 1877, as an 'absolute arrangement.'<sup>31</sup> It appears that F.T Burrows continued to run the business, presumably on behalf of Gibb, between 1877-1878<sup>32</sup> when it passed into the hands of Boning and Small, as we shall see presently.

In the meantime a notice placed in the *London Gazette* on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1877 reveals similar 'liquidation by arrangement' proceedings took place for Frederick Southwell (occupation 'Artist'), this time in the County Court of Surrey, in which two new addresses are given for him, 27, North End, Croydon and 23, Oakfield Road Penge.<sup>33</sup> A carte de visite in our collection gives the addresses of 22, Baker Street and 23, Oakfield Road, Penge, S.E. for Southwell Brothers, so clearly Frederick must have maintained some connection with the Baker Street business until 1877 at least.

A further intriguing complication has emerged from an advertisement dated 12 March 1877 headed 'HER MAJESTY'S DRAWING ROOMS' placed by a Miss

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XVII 1876: 725. Additionally announcements in the *London Gazette* in June and October 1876 reported that these persons had filed a Patent application in respect of an invention "for improvements in desks for use in retouching photographic negatives". (*London Gazette*: issue 24337 [16 June 1876]: 3521; issue 24371 [10 October 1876]: 5423).

<sup>30</sup> *London Gazette*, issue 24443 (13 April 1877): 2597

<sup>31</sup> Information from entry for Burrows & Colton on *photoLondon* website <http://www.photolondon.org.uk/pages/details.asp?pid=1172> (accessed 25 February 2011).

<sup>32</sup> See note 31

<sup>33</sup> *London Gazette*, issue 24499 (31 August 1877): 5077–8. The terms of their father's will proved in 1880 suggest that he had settled their debts at the time of the bankruptcies. Each is left only a nominal £5, with a statement that their father forgives them any debts they owe him at the time of his demise.

Scotter, 22, Baker Street, Portman Square in which she advertises 'elegant designs in COURT ROBES, &c. for the approaching DRAWING ROOMS.'<sup>34</sup> From a widely quoted exemplar of case law<sup>35</sup> it seems that the Southwells sublet the upper part of the house to a Miss Sarah Scotter in 1875 for three and a half years. A report in Woodfall's Law of Landlord and Tenant summarises the subsequent events thus:

Surrender after assignment of future rent. — In the peculiar case of Southwell v. Scotter, the plaintiff, having let to the defendant, assigned the reversion, but agreed with the assignee that they should continue to receive rent from the defendant, to whom they gave notice of the agreement. The defendant afterwards surrendered to the assignee of the reversion, and it was held that such a surrender was valid, and that the rent accruing due after it could not be recovered by the plaintiff from the defendant; but it seems that the plaintiff would have had a remedy against the assignee, though it was not necessary to decide that point.<sup>36</sup>

The *photoLondon* website records a Bill of sale by Frederick Southwell to Richard P. Staines November 21 1877 in the sum of £950 and later Frederick & Edwin Southwell as reregistered to Staines November 20 1882, again in the sum of £950, but does not cite the source of this information.<sup>37</sup> Presumably Staines was the assignee referred to in the court case.

David Simkin has stated that in 1878 Frederick Burrows sold the Baker Street studio to Boning & Small, a firm of photographers headed by Robert Boning (1826-1878) and Charles James Small (1836-1886).<sup>38</sup> It is perhaps significant

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<sup>34</sup> *The Morning Post*, issue 32668 (12 March 1877):1

<sup>35</sup> *The Law Journal Reports*, 1949 Vol. 49; London: Ince:357

<sup>36</sup> William Woodfall *Woodfall's Law of Landlord and Tenant* Vol. 1:62 (Full text book available on line at [http://www.archive.org/stream/woodfallslawofla01wood/woodfallslawofla01wood\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/woodfallslawofla01wood/woodfallslawofla01wood_djvu.txt) accessed 25 February 2011).

<sup>37</sup> *photoLondon* entry for Frederick Southwell  
<http://www.photolondon.org.uk/pages/details.asp?pid=7254> (accessed 18 November 2010).

<sup>38</sup> Hastings Photographers, Robert Boning – Boning & Co. – Boning and Small – Charles J. Small.  
<http://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk/HastingsPhotgrsBoning.htm> (accessed 25 February 2011).  
According to *photoLondon* Robert Boning and Co. earlier had London studios at 112, Cheapside 1862-3; 13 and 16 Wellington Square, Chelsea, in the same years; and at 162, Regent Street in

that Sophia Rogerson, a sister of the Southwell Brothers, had been working for Robert Boning at Verulam Place, St Leonards-on-Sea for many years, having moved there from London sometime in the latter half of the 1860s, so there was a pre-existing connection between the families. Sophia was later to take over the Verulam Place studio from Boning and Small.<sup>39</sup> Certainly there is confirmation that the firm of Boning and Small had taken over the 22, Baker Street studio in 1880, though by this time Robert Boning himself had been dead for two years.<sup>40</sup> An advertisement in *The Times* of 28 September 1880 announced Boning & Small's intention of destroying all the negatives taken by their predecessors after a given time limit, unless specially instructed by clients to the contrary—a decision that must have been taken by the surviving partner, Charles Small.<sup>41</sup> So, not only did the Southwell Brothers' celebrated photographic partnership come to an abruptly tragic and premature end, but it also seems a major part of the archive of their important work was destroyed by their successors. Perhaps there is more to this than meets the eye. Frederick Southwell was still alive and active at this time and the reason why the archive of negatives was not passed back to him, or perhaps to one of his sisters, is perplexing, particularly since, as we have seen, Sophia Rogerson had close connections with Boning and Small in Hastings. Posterity is doubly fortunate

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1868. *PhotoLondon* also lists Boning & Small studios at 22, Baker Street, London, 1878–88. Although notices in the *London Gazette* on 25 September and 21 October 1885 record receiving orders against Charles Small's (trading as Boning & Small at 22, Baker-street and 10, Verulam-place, Hastings and residing at The Amatolas, Everfield-road, Richmond, Surrey), a notice in December of the same year records his discharge, after paying a dividend to his creditors. So the business survived. (*London Gazette*: issue 25514 [25 Sept 1885]: 4586; Issue 25518 [9 October 1885]: 4718; issue 25542 [22 Dec 188]: 6233)

<sup>39</sup> See David Simkin's very informative site relating to the work of Sophia Rogerson, née Southwell in St Leonard's-on-sea: <http://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk/RogersonSophia.htm> (accessed 25 February 2011).

<sup>40</sup> A notice in *The London Gazette* (18<sup>th</sup> June 1878): 3685, relating to the administration of Robert Boning's estate following his death on 25 May 1878 alludes to 22, Baker Street as his former address.

<sup>41</sup> Similar advertisements appeared in *The Standard* on 11, 18 and 28 June 1880. Later advertisements placed in the same publication on 17 September and 8 October 1880 state that Boning and Small are extending the deadline until 9 November and 30 November 1880 respectively as a result of many requests from abroad.

that many examples of the Southwell Brothers work survive in prints, but these surely represent only a very small sampling of what must have been a vast number of images.

Sadly Frederick Southwell died on 5 February 1883 at the age of 50 of 'Sarcoma of Neck (Tumour)' at Grove Place, Brompton. One may wonder if the cancer from which he died might have been connected to the use of hazardous chemicals in the photographic reproduction processes.

Edwin, the third Southwell brother, remains a shadowy figure. Few details have emerged about his life. No marriage has been found for him, and in the 1861 and 1871 censuses he appears living in the homes of siblings. An obituary in *The Times* dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1882 records his death of paralysis at the home of his sister Louisa Robins in Massa Carrara, Italy.

Reports of that time record just how successful the Southwells had been in their heyday. Recalling that Baker Street was 'a photographic resort,' the issue of the *Photographic News* for 10<sup>th</sup> April 1884 credited the Southwell Brothers Studios as being responsible for this: 'it may be remembered, [they] kept three studios going all day long. From seventy to one hundred pounds daily were the average takings of the big Baker Street firm'. The same issue describes Southwell Brothers as 'perhaps the highest class photographic establishment' in London.

It is appropriate to mention here that three of the Southwell sisters were also closely associated with the photography business. As briefly noted earlier, Sophia Rogerson (née Southwell, 1831-1908) became a photographer in her own right and was closely associated with Robert Boning in St Leonards-on-Sea. She eventually bought Boning and Small's Verulam Place studio from Charles Small's widow in 1888. David Simpkin has also provided a comprehensive account of the work of Frederick Oakes [Devereux]<sup>42</sup>, husband of another Southwell sibling, Selina (1838- 1922). Adopting Devereux as his trade name, Oakes was active as a photographer in the Brighton area for many years from about 1870. The youngest sister, Amanda Southwell (1843-1884), married the

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk/BTNDevereux.htm> (accessed 25 February 2011).



well known Regent Street (London) photographer William Elliott Debenham in 1866.<sup>43</sup>

It is clear that these members of the Southwell family made an important contribution to the popularisation of photography in mid-nineteenth century London and elsewhere. Portraits from the Southwell Brothers studios are stylish, composed with an eye to the integrity of the whole image and possessing a degree of artistic flair that surely places them at the forefront of this photographic genre of the period.

## Read more about it - Internet and other resources

British Columbia Archives <http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca> (accessed 25 February 2011).

Includes a copy of a Southwell Brothers photograph of the politician Frederick Seymour, who served as Governor of British Columbia, 1864–69.

Debenham, M J. "Photography and the Debenhams" - part of Michael Debenham's *Debenham Family History* website.

<http://www.debenham.org.uk/History/Photography.php> (accessed 25 February 2011).

Includes information on William Elliott Debenham (brother-in-law of William Henry, Frederick and Edwin Southwell) and his brothers Edwin and Arthur, as well as John Worley Debenham, son of Arthur, who specialised in theatrical photography.

Frecker, P. 2006. Southwell Brothers Photographic Gallery at the 'Luminous Lint' website. [http://www.luminous-lint.com/\\_switchbox.php?action=ACT\\_SING\\_PH&p1=1\\_Southwell\\_Brothers&p2=ABCDEFGHIJKLN](http://www.luminous-lint.com/_switchbox.php?action=ACT_SING_PH&p1=1_Southwell_Brothers&p2=ABCDEFGHIJKLN) (accessed 25 February 2011).

A substantial collection of examples of cartes de visite by Southwell Brothers

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<sup>43</sup> More information on William Elliott Debenham may be found at Michael Debenham's 'Debenham and Debnam Family History' website – see <http://www.debenham.org.uk/History/Photography.php> (accessed 25 February 2011).

Johnson, W.S. 1990. Entry No. S918: "Lithography an Auxiliary to Photographic Portraiture" in *Art Journal* (Aug 1866) 250 (Process patented by Mr Southwell of Brighton); in *Nineteenth-century Photography: an annotated bibliography 1839-1879*, 585. Boston: GK Hall & Co.

National Portrait Gallery n.d. *Southwell Brothers (floruit 1862–1883)*; Internet Gallery images  
<http://www.npg.org.uk/live/search/person.asp?search=sa&sText=Southwell+Brothers&LinkID=mp08195&role=art> (accessed 25 February 2011).

photoLondon The Database of 19th Century Photographers and Allied Trades in London: 1841-1901, based on research by David Webb; website project managed by Mike Seaborne and Bob Pullen  
<http://www.photolondon.org.uk/default.asp> (accessed 25 February 2011).

Roger F. Vaughan Collection: Carte de visite Victorian Photographs  
<http://westwood.fortunecity.com/saintlaurent/697/pixs/carte-a.htm> (accessed 25 February 2011).

Contains examples of the work of Southwell Brothers, Robert Boning and Boning & Small

Simkin, D. 2005a. Brighton Photographers 1841-1910; in *The History of Photography in Brighton*.  
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/DScontents.htm> (accessed 25 February 2011).

Simkin, D. 2005b. Brighton Photographers 1841-1910 Index: *The History of Photography in Brighton*. Internet publication available at:  
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/DSindex.htm> (accessed 25 February 2011).

Simkin, D. 2005c. Index P-R: *Directory of Photographic Studios in Hastings & St. Leonard's-on-Sea 1848-1910*  
<http://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk/HASTINGSdirPR.htm> (accessed 25 February 2011).

University of Washington library. <http://content.lib.washington.edu/index.html>  
(accessed 25 February 2011).

Photographs of the actors Charles Kean and Ellen Tree by The Southwell Brothers are held in the Photographic Archives of the University of Washington, Seattle.