

Finding a Horned Viper in a Stratford Solicitors' Office CR1596/Box 146/3

Our collections at the Record Office come from a wide range of places all across Warwickshire. Generally each collection is formed from a group of material all concerning one organisation of some kind - an important family, perhaps, or a specific parish or business.¹ From looking at a collection as a whole, we can normally gain an understanding of the people associated with the records - we can see who wrote them, who they mention, or who they belonged to. Which is why this Document of the Month is so intriguing...



Engravings of a range of flora
Warwickshire County Record Office, reference CR1596/Box146/3

Slatter Son & More, Stratford

We can only guess who had these beautiful engravings in their possession, and why. They are part of the Slatter Son & More collection, a firm of solicitors who plied their trade in Stratford throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. These engravings form a part of the collection which was deposited with us in the 1970s, taken from the Warwick Road premises in which the firm used to operate. They may have belonged

¹ For example, the Waller of Woodcote Collection, or the Willans Works Collection.

to a client of the firm and been held for safekeeping, or they may have been owned by the solicitors themselves.



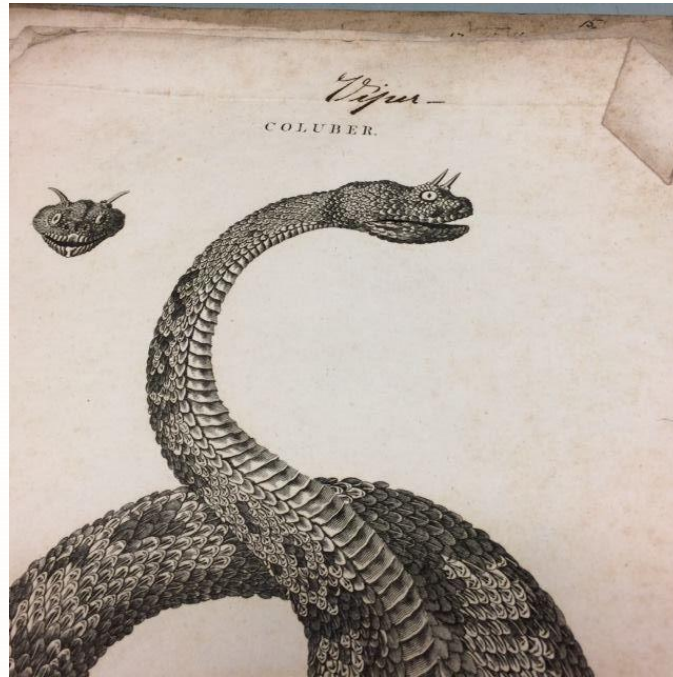
A 'Boatbill', now known as a boat-billed heron.

See also the doodling on the far right.

Warwickshire County Record Office, reference CR1596/Box146/3

A Little Artistic License

They date from around 1800, and cover a wide range of flora and fauna from around the world. These particular engravings have a clear biological focus, but also contain a smattering of artistic license - just look at the habitat where the 'Boatbill' is pictured, and the devilish face of the 'Coluber', which is in fact a horned viper. Although to us they are beautiful works of art, they served a more informative purpose to the Georgian public. With no photography, artwork like this was one of the only ways such knowledge could filter back into the armchairs of the public in Warwickshire.

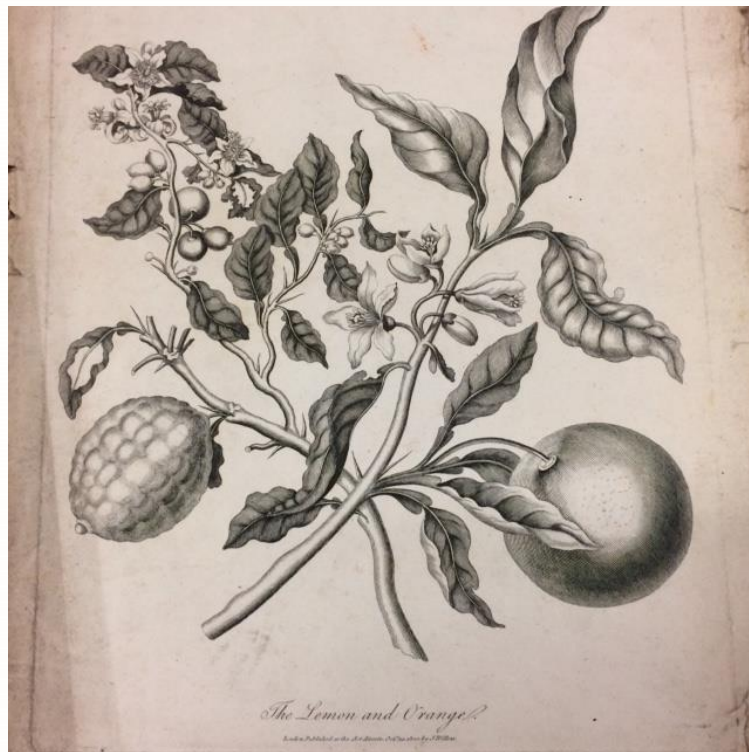


The 'Coluber', or horned viper.

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A Mystery

There are doodles and scribbles drawn on some of the pages, but there is no name to be found on them. They remain nestled in a box surrounded by other miscellaneous printed material, exactly as it was stored at the solicitors. There are named papers and documents around it, but it's impossible to tell for sure whether or not there's any connection between those records and these – all we know is that it was housed with those other papers in the solicitor's office, for whatever reason. It's one of the mysteries of archives.



Engraving of a lemon and orange.
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