

**‘Indeed amongst agriculturalists, there is  
something like free-masonry – we are all  
brethren’: Exploring agricultural friendship in  
late Georgian England**

Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of History

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## Abstract

This thesis concerns a diverse group of men interested in promoting progressive farming and their agricultural friendship. Largely ignored by scholarship, these men were active during the class-conscious world of late Georgian Britain when close social mixing was rare on a quasi-equal basis. It draws attention to the role influential landowners played in bringing together the best scientific and practical agriculturalists regardless of social rank and their importance in engendering fellowship among them, seeing it as essential in moving agriculture forward. It explores what made this friendship possible, how it worked in practice, the parameters it operated within and the extent to which it could negotiate factors such as the class issue. It establishes that respect and mutual benefit were essential elements within the agricultural friendship of the group.

Chapter One explores political affiliation and identifies the importance of Whig egalitarianism in engendering fellowship at their events. Chapter Two establishes the importance of a shared agricultural interest in facilitating relationships between socially diverse men. Chapter Three explores agricultural friendship under tension, revealing how shared objectives and respect enabled men to overcome their differences. The final chapter draws attention to the importance dining together played in facilitating fraternity.

The thesis's investigation into agricultural friendship re-embeds this neglected group into the agricultural social history of the late Georgian period. It draws attention to the patriotic aspect of their events and the part Whiggism played in this. It identifies the importance of fraternity to these agriculturalists, contributing to a clearer understanding of friendship and its capacity to cross barriers. The thesis concludes that where a strong common interest brings people together, sharing knowledge through mutual exchange and practical experience, the resultant fellowship can bridge social divides and, in the process, become a powerful engine of creativity and innovation within their shared field of interest.

The title quotation is from George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 1 May 1805, in F/TWC 2, Holkham Archives.

## **Declaration of Original Authorship**

Declaration: I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Hilary Matthews

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The research for this study has involved visits across the United Kingdom and Ireland. During every step of the way, my husband John has been at my side. While he has enjoyed the visits to stately palatial homes, it cannot have been much fun plodding around overgrown churchyards and muddy farms, sometimes in the most inclement of weather. But he has always steadfastly been beside me. He took photographs, made notes, helped with computer problems, proofread and kept me cheerful. Not once has he complained, just kept me liberally supplied with liquid refreshment and even cooked on occasions! This acknowledgement seems scant reward for the unselfish support he has always given me and continues to do every day.

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## Notes

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## Abbreviations

BL	British Library
BNA	The British Newspaper Archive
KK	Kresen Kernow, Cornwall Archives
MERL	Museum of English Rural Life
NA	Newspaper Archive
NASA	National Archives of South Africa
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
RASE	Royal Agricultural Society of England.
UN	University of Nottingham

## Introduction

### BROTHERS IN BREEDING

I feel myself now justified in having addressed you with so much freedom. Indeed amongst agriculturalists there is something like free-masonry – we all are brethren.<sup>1</sup>

On Tuesday, 5 March 1805, a large group of men chatted together outside the doors of the Grand Hall of the Freemasons' Tavern as they waited to take their seats for dinner.<sup>2</sup> They belonged to a group of around 300 men specifically interested in agricultural improvement, and for the last two days, they had been attending the London Spring Cattle Show.<sup>3</sup> The show had become an annual fixture in the farming calendar, and it was organised and paid for by John Southey, fifteenth Lord Somerville. Although he was one of George III's 12 Lords of the Bedchamber, first and foremost, Somerville was an agriculturalist. He was well respected and popular among this group. As dining was an accepted part of most professional and social events in the Georgian era, Somerville always concluded his show with dinner. Those waiting patiently to be seated outside the Grand Hall that night were his dinner guests, and they had come not only from across the country but also from different sectors of the farming world. It was their shared interest that brought them together tonight, as it did at other farming events throughout the year. The Workington landowner and MP John Christian Curwen thought their mutual enthusiasm for progressive farming created 'unanimity and cordiality of sentiment' among them whilst The Revd Henry Bate Dudley referred to the fellowship generated by this shared interest as 'their agricultural friendship'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 1 May 1805, in F/TWC 2, Holkham Archives. (F/TWC2, Holkham).

<sup>2</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Show', 6 March 1805, *Star (London)*, 3, in The British Newspaper Archive (BNA).

<sup>3</sup> Engraving on the show trophies reveal that in 1805 the show was known as 'Barbican Shew', but later became known as 'Spring Cattle Shew'. This later title that is used throughout the thesis, with shew changed to show.

<sup>4</sup> [John Christian Curwen], 'The President's Report', *The Rules and Proceedings of the Anniversary of the Workington Agricultural Society and the Reports to that Society by its President* (1808), 33. Henry Bate Dudley to Colonel McMahon, 9 June 1812, letter 114, A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Letters of King George IV 1812-1830*, Vol. I (Cambridge University Press, 1938), 112-13.

This group of keen improvers and their agricultural friendship are the focus of this thesis. They came from across the agricultural sector, and the British class system, and the study investigates how these men formed and maintained friendships both on a one-to-one basis and at a group level. It focuses on their interaction through correspondence and personal communication to reveal how friendship works or can work in an applied setting. It explores what tactics hosts such as Somerville adopted to ensure that conviviality existed at their dinners to facilitate interaction between them and considers the wider class, political and gender implications of their agricultural friendship.

After Somerville's show, many attended the four-day Woburn Sheep Shearing, hosted by the sixth Duke of Bedford in mid-June. Days later, they were in Norfolk at Thomas William Coke's Holkham Sheep Shearing.<sup>5</sup> The final big event of the year was the Smithfield Club's (the Club) show, held in London just before Christmas. Many of those at Somerville's dinner that night had been instrumental in forming the Club seven years earlier in 1798, and Somerville was closely involved with it, regularly dining with the sixth Duke of Bedford and around 25 breeders, graziers and butchers from this group after their management meetings. Some of these agricultural improvers also met at agricultural society meetings, smaller sheep shearings, livestock shows, ploughing matches, wool fairs, lamb sales, and farm auctions. Those who lived close by also met up at local livestock markets, including the top New Leicester breeders within the Group who were members of the Dishley Tup Society.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout this thesis, Woburn Sheep Shearing is referred to as three separate words, each word beginning with a capital letter. But when George Garrard's print is being referenced it is spelt as he entitled the print: *Wobourn Sheepshearing*. Georgiana Blakiston lists 224 different ways of spelling Woburn, collected from letters and parcels by the Woburn Postmaster in 1840. Georgiana Blakiston, *Woburn and the Russells* (London: Constable, 1980), 229-30.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this thesis the Society is referred to as the Dishley Tup Society rather than the Dishley Ram Society, as this was how it was generally referred to then. The word tup is also used throughout the thesis rather than ram. Tup was the common term for a male sheep during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and is still the most normal way to refer to a male entire sheep in much of the country today.

Somerville would have known almost all the men who waited outside the Grand Hall that night. Most he would have considered as friends. The Grand Hall was an excellent venue in which to entertain them. It was large enough to accommodate them and, situated on the edge of Holborn, was close to the Barbican stockyard where he held the show.<sup>7</sup> It was a stylish room at any time. At night, with its numerous flickering candles illuminating the classical architecture, the well-dressed tables and the waiting staff in their smart livery, it must have looked very elegant.<sup>8</sup> Somerville was seated in the centre of a crossed table positioned opposite the entrance doors at the end of the room. His guest of honour, Prince Bariatinski from Russia, sat on his left and the sixth Duke on his right.<sup>9</sup>

Somerville's dinner was popular, and this year he had restricted his guests to 250, as the Grand Hall could not comfortably accommodate more. Eventually, over 280 sat down to dine.<sup>10</sup> Although the men had begun assembling in the anteroom from about 4.30 pm, expecting to take their seats as usual at 5 pm, this year they had to wait; the delay necessitated by the need to fit in more tables to accommodate these extra diners.<sup>11</sup> So it was almost 6 pm before the dinner bell finally summoned them.<sup>12</sup> This was the signal for the doors to be thrown open and the usual stampede to begin as the men swarmed into the hall, pushing and jostling to get a seat nearest Somerville.<sup>13</sup> During the period they were forced to wait, they had passed the time sociably chatting among themselves.<sup>14</sup> Although Peter Clark

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<sup>7</sup> Somerville's show was held in Mr Dixon's City Repository, Barbican. 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew', 16 March 1805, *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the Grand Hall, its architecture and its furnishings see *The Hall in the Garden: Freemasons' Hall and its place in London* (The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, 2006), 7-9, 23.

<sup>9</sup> Prince Bariatinski's name is spelt Barianiski in this report. 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew', 16 March 1805, *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew', 11 March 1805, *Gloucester Journal*, 5, in BNA.

<sup>11</sup> The establishment eventually managed to fit these tables in along the long side of the hall with the windows in it. 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew', 6 March 1805, *British Press*, 3; 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Show', 6 March 1805, *Star (London)*, 3, both in BNA.

<sup>12</sup> 6 March 1805, *Star (London)*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the jostling to get a seat at these dinners see 'Historical Chronicles - Domestic Occurrences', *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. IX (1808), 257.

<sup>14</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew', 6 March 1805, *British Press*, 3, in BNA.

strongly believes conversation played an essential role in uniting club members during the Georgian period, what is striking in this instance is that these were not local club members chatting together, but men from different parts of the country and very different levels of society.<sup>15</sup>

There is no complete extant list of attendees for Somerville's show in 1805. However, Arthur Young, part of this group and the author of many agricultural publications, including the long-running monthly *Annals of Agriculture (Annals)*, listed 125 of the 250 men present at Somerville's dinner the previous year. This list gives an idea of the variation in the social status of the diners that night: 15 were aristocrats and baronets, 25 were butchers, meat salesmen, wool staplers, mechanics and seedsmen, whilst the rest were a mixture of landowners, gentlemen, yeomen and tenant farmers, graziers, specialist breeders, clergymen, bailiffs, land agents, agricultural writers and livestock artists.<sup>16</sup> That sociable interaction was possible among such an eclectic group, not only at shows but also during the dinners that followed, is evident from Young's comments about the 1800 Woburn Sheep Shearing, another event that many of them had attended.

To see a prince of the royal blood, and many great lords sit down at the same table and partake the conversation of the farmer and the breeder; to see all animated with the spirit of improvement, and listening with delight to the favoured topic of the plough, is a spectacle worthy of Britain, and in her blest isle alone to be beheld! Esto perpetua!<sup>17</sup>

Despite Young's optimistic claim that this was a spectacle worthy of Britain, close social mixing on a quasi-equal basis was rare even in Britain. As in other areas of society, looser social mixing did occur in the agricultural world; for instance, both the third Earl of Egremont and Coke were presidents of their local agricultural societies and attended meetings

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford University Press, 2011 rep.), 229.

<sup>16</sup> *Annals of Agriculture and other Useful Arts (Annals)*, Vol. XLII (1804), 75-6. As volumes correspond with years, hereafter the year is omitted.

<sup>17</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXV, 256.

and dined with members.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, for several aristocrats to spend some hours pleurably in the company of tenant farmers, wool staplers, and butchers was not an everyday occurrence. It was certainly not normal for an aristocrat such as Somerville to host a dinner in his elegant Mayfair home where his guests not only included the sixth Duke of Bedford, but graziers, breeders, butchers and others, nor for this eclectic group, including the aristocrats, to be wined and dined in the house of the London butcher Paul Giblett.<sup>19</sup>

How then was such a mixed social group able to enjoy each other's company? Answering this is the crux of this thesis. The underlying ideology of the Group was the furtherment of agricultural knowledge, and their interaction with one another not only allowed them to share, debate and expound upon their ideas but instilled a sense of fellowship into their meetings and dinners.<sup>20</sup> As Harold Carter says, over the four days of each of the Woburn and Holkham sheep shearings there were intense discussions and strenuous social engagements, with the attendees all engaged in the intellectual and convivial exertions of these rural festivals.<sup>21</sup> These men shared not only a keen interest in agricultural improvement but reciprocal respect and admiration for one another's achievements. Central to the fellowship between them was sociably discussing their successes and failures, which is why they could easily pass the time whilst they waited that night. All these factors helped to level the playing field between these men from vastly different social backgrounds when they were together at agricultural events. Although it was the sixth Duke who sat on Somerville's right at the dinner that night, on other occasions, it could be a man of lesser status. At the

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<sup>18</sup> The third Earl of Egremont was president of the Sussex Agricultural Society and Thomas William Coke was the president of the Norfolk Agricultural Society.

<sup>19</sup> 'London', 18 December 1804, *Morning Chronicle*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>20</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXIX, 520.

<sup>21</sup> H.B. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish Flock* (Angus & Robertson, 1964), 285.

concluding dinner of a wool sale in London in 1808, Somerville's companion at the head of the table was the wool stapler William Oakley, another show regular.<sup>22</sup>

Curwen was one of the most indefatigable farming improvers among them. He summed up this sense of fellowship when he told fellow agriculturalists that the greatest stimulus for his labours was 'no less than your friendship, esteem and approbation'.<sup>23</sup> Curwen and Somerville were considered celebrated agriculturalists among these men, but others who earned this accolade included landowners, tenant farmers, graziers, breeders, and men from the ancillary trades.<sup>24</sup> One who certainly earned this honour was Robert Overman. After his untimely death at only 52 years of age, Curwen spoke glowingly about Overman's achievements during his presidential address at the 1808 Workington Agricultural Society's AGM. Curwen said Overman was 'an excellent man' 'of distinguished probity and superior sense'. His large family, landlord, and other friends would lament his death, whilst the public had lost 'one of its most spirited and scientific agriculturalists'.<sup>25</sup> But Overman was not a local West Cumbrian known personally by many at the AGM; he was a Norfolk tenant who had farmed 277 miles away whom Curwen had got to know through attending shows and meetings. Curwen's eulogy highlights the respect and admiration that existed between agriculturalists, irrespective of their social standing. The thesis will argue that this respect between these heterogeneous farming men was the key to the agricultural friendship between them and facilitated the camaraderie at their meetings.

As these two men were from different levels of society and farmed on opposite sides of the country, they would probably never have met had it not been for agricultural meetings

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<sup>22</sup> 'Sale of Merino Wool', 29 July 1808, *Morning Post*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>23</sup> [Curwen], *Workington Agricultural Society* (1808), 112.

<sup>24</sup> George Garrard labelled the top agriculturalists as the Celebrated Agriculturalists. George Garrard, *Proposals for Publishing a Print of the Woburn Sheep Shearing from a Picture by Mr. Garrard, Associate of the Royal Academy* (1811), title page.

<sup>25</sup> [Curwen], *Workington Agricultural Society* (1808), 42-3. In 1808 the Workington Agricultural Society had the largest membership in the country.



and dinners such as Somerville's. Indeed, they were likely to have been among his dinner guests that night. *The Agricultural Magazine* captured the essence of this respect and admiration and the camaraderie among Somerville's dinner guests, saying

Between two and three hundred noblemen, gentlemen, yeomen, graziers, staplers, and other persons actively engaged in the business of breeding neat cattle, sheep, and hogs, for the supply of the markets, dined with Lord Somerville on Tuesday, at Freemasons' Tavern. There prevailed, through the entire hall, that entire fellowship which ought to subsist among men engaged in honorable emulation. Peers of the highest rank, and men of the most opulent fortune, sat promiscuously with their tenants and tradesmen, and there reigned through the whole Meeting but one sentiment – that of receiving and communicating information.<sup>26</sup>

As well as frequent references to camaraderie, the press often stressed the patriotic element of these meetings. During this period, it was fashionable to be interested in agricultural improvement, and the term patriot was often ascribed to landowners, particularly Whigs of a wealthy and liberal disposition, who saw progressive farming as a way of subduing nature to feed hungry mouths, thereby encouraging social harmony and benefitting their fellow citizens.<sup>27</sup> As Susanna Wade-Martins rightly says, patriots were closely involved in the affairs of their country both at a local and national level.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, in the early years of the wars with France (1793-1802) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) that followed, farming publications and the London and provincial daily papers regularly mentioned these men and their objectives, promoting this patriotic view of landowners striving to produce greater quantities of food for an ever-expanding urban population as well as feed and clothe the troops. Even foreign newspapers, such as India's *Madras Chronicle*, relayed news of English agricultural shows and dinners: albeit six months after the event.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> All quotes have been reproduced as they were originally written. 'Lord Somerville's dinner', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 214-15.

<sup>27</sup> L.G. Mitchell, 'Review of *Coke of Norfolk 1754-1842: a biography*, by Susanna Wade-Martins', *English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXVIII, Iss. 533 (2013), 983-4, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/cet130>, (accessed 24 March 2021).

<sup>28</sup> Susanna Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk 1754-1842* (The Boydell Press, 2010 rep.), 7-8.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, the Earl of Bridgewater's ploughing match which many of them attended. The report stated that many then went on to the Holkham Sheep Shearing. 'Ashridge Ploughing Match June 15', 24 December 1806, *Madras Courier*, 4, in BNA.

Not only did the press promote wealthy landowners in a patriotic light, but also the agriculturalists lower down the social scale who regularly attended events such as Somerville's show, including tenant farmers, breeders, and ancillary tradesmen. This explains why the Workington Agricultural Society members knew of Robert Overman, despite him farming hundreds of miles away.

But whilst agriculture was a very profitable and expanding capital industry at the end of the eighteenth century, ensuring that even tenant farmers like Overman were not only well-known for promoting agricultural growth but became relatively wealthy in the process, this expansion was bought at a high social cost for farm labourers and their families.<sup>30</sup> Whilst the war years, even during poor harvests, brought landowners and tenants inflated profits, the rural labourers had no share in these profits. Not only was grain at an all-time high level, but factors such as increased farm mechanisation led to greater unemployment, leaving many labourers and families below the poverty line. As profits and prices rose, farmers began to regard themselves as in a class much higher than their labourers, and the tradition of single labourers boarding in the farmhouse ceased, ending the intimacy between farmers, their families and their workers.<sup>31</sup> But not only did the gap between farmer and labourer widen but also between labourer and tradesman, the latter progressing through the ranks of the middle-class as the rural poor sunk deeper into poverty. This ever-increasing divide between the English rural social classes brought a palpable fear of revolution, the country ever mindful of events in France.

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<sup>30</sup> E.P. Thompson, Forward in A.J. Peacock, *Bread or Blood. The Agrarian Riots in East Anglia: 1816* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1965), 9.

<sup>31</sup> Peacock, 24. For more information on the rural poor in England see J.L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, *The Village Labourer 1760-1832* (Abingdon: Fraser Stewart Book Wholesale Ltd., 1995 edn.) and E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin Books, 2013).

However, although concerns about social unrest were certainly there in the background of the minds of the agricultural improvers considered in this thesis, more to the fore was a desire to increase the profitability of their farms and estates allied with a patriotic concern to increase food production nationwide and a desire to contribute to agricultural progress more generally. Crucial to achieving these goals was the agricultural friendship between these men. Exploring this friendship is the main aim of this thesis. It is argued that the key to these men's agricultural friendship was that they not only respected each other but found their relationship beneficial. Exploring these agriculturalists within different contexts, the thesis considers how their agricultural friendship worked in practice, the parameters it operated within, to what extent it could negotiate factors such as the class issue, and whether the fear of social unrest played any part in the alliance among them. In this respect, it contributes to a clearer understanding of friendship and how, on occasions, it could affect broader social issues in late Georgian England.

### ***Woburn Sheepshearing: a window onto a Georgian agrarian idyll***

Although the thesis covers 1793-1822, the period the Board of Agriculture (the Board) was operational; its primary focus is 1797-1813, the years the Woburn Sheep Shearing was in existence. Arguably this was the time these agricultural improvers were at their most active. By 1804 the Woburn Sheep Shearing was in its eighth year, and Carter considers England entered that summer 'with a great burst of agricultural *joie de vivre*'.<sup>32</sup> The livestock artist George Garrard endeavoured to translate this abundant enthusiasm for all things agricultural onto canvas in his depiction of the 1804 Woburn Sheep Shearing.<sup>33</sup> Garrard portrayed and identified the principal agricultural improvers in his painting, many of whom were at Somerville's dinner that night. As the work identifies many attendees and

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<sup>32</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish Flock*, 284.

<sup>33</sup> This thesis takes 1804 as the year Garrard based *Woburn Sheepshearing* on. It was the year he announced his intention to depict the event. However, it is not an accurate representation of the attendees at that year's event, because as Garrard's objective was to provide a correct representation of the event and the major attendees who regularly attended it, he included a handful of agriculturalists who, although they normally attended, were for whatever reason absent that year.

depicts their social interaction, it is a crucial primary source in the thesis’s argument that an agricultural friendship existed among them and therefore requires further consideration.



Figure 1 <sup>34</sup>

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*Woburn Sheepshearing*  
George Garrard (1811)

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George Fussell calls *Woburn Sheepshearing* a ‘masterpiece of meticulousity’, and it took Garrard seven years to complete it.<sup>35</sup> It depicts the annual farming meeting at Park Farm, Woburn, laid on by the sixth Duke of Bedford and over 200 men are portrayed enjoying

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<sup>34</sup> Garrard, *Woburn Sheepshearing*, Uncoloured Mixed Method Engraving, 545 mm x 785 mm (1811), Painted and Published by G. Garrard, May 11 1811.’ ‘Stipled and Outline Etched by M.N. Bate, Figures and Landscapes by J.C. Stadler, Lined by T. Morris, the whole touched and arranged by the original painter.’ For a digital close-up of the print, with the ability to click on the image and zoom in to get a close-up of those portrayed, see Emrys Williams’ excellent 27 Mbyte jpeg 110-megapixel version, or the smaller 9 Mbyte version. Emrys Williams, ‘Woburn Sheepshearing’, *Eversholt2*, [website], <https://village.eversholt.org.uk/eversholt-history/woburn-sheepshearing/>, (accessed 24 May 2018).

<sup>35</sup> G.E. Fussell, ‘George Garrard, Livestock Sculptor, 1760-1826’, in Neville Wallis and G.E. Fussell, ‘General Notes’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. XCVII, No. 4801 (1949), 748, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41363917>, (accessed 13 February 2017).

various farming activities, along with almost 100 animals. As Garrard identified over 90 men, close analysis of the work reveals that men of different social ranks stand together, chatting, observing, and participating in proceedings. For instance, John Ellman, a tenant farmer, talks with the Duke of Clarence whilst pointing towards a mixed group that includes the Earls of Darnley and Thanet, observing a Southdown tup that Nathaniel Stubbins, one of the New Leicester tup breeders, is giving his opinion upon.

Although Garrard worked in multiple mediums, he was primarily a horse and livestock artist, specialising in scale models, engravings and oil paintings of prize cattle, sheep and pigs during this period. He regularly attended the Woburn Sheep Shearings and major farming events and was one of Somerville's guests at his dinner that night.<sup>36</sup> Fussell calls Garrard a man of his time because he understood that many wealthy and powerful landowners were interested in livestock improvement and adapted his work to appeal to their needs.<sup>37</sup> *Woburn Sheepshearing* epitomises this. Garrard knew his print would appeal to his usual subscribers, many of whom he had identified within it but also interest agricultural improvers unable to attend, as well as tapping into the patriotic spirit that farming events like this generated.

Garrard first announced his intention of producing a visual representation of the Woburn Sheep Shearing at the Smithfield Club's dinner in December 1804.<sup>38</sup> At Somerville's

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<sup>36</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Show', 5 March 1805, *Star (London)*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>37</sup> Fussell, 'George Garrard', 747.

<sup>38</sup> 'Proceedings of Agricultural Societies: Smithfield Cattle Show, December 14', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XI (1804), 456.

Figure 2<sup>39</sup>



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**Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810)**

George Garrard portrays himself dispensing his livestock models to some of the sixth Duke of Bedford's children. His hand rests on his folio of cattle engravings. On the ground is his bust of the late fifth Duke of Bedford and a plaque commemorating the marriage of the sixth Duke and Duchess of Bedford in 1803

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dinner, 10 weeks later, he had already started work, making sketches of some of those present.<sup>40</sup> When Garrard finally published the print in 1811, he produced an explanatory pamphlet alongside it. In this, he explained that he intended to give 'a correct Representation of the busy Scene that occurs in the Farm Yard upon the Occasion' and that he had portrayed 'the Nobility, Gentry and Celebrated Agriculturalists, who usually attend the Meeting'.<sup>41</sup> One of those Garrard had included, Sir John Sebright, clearly thought he had succeeded, proclaiming upon seeing the work at the 1808 Smithfield Club dinner that it strongly reminded him of the event.<sup>42</sup>

Garrard listed those he had identified, his initial subscribers and those who 'sat' for their portraits within the pamphlet. Around 60 of these oil-on-paper preparatory portrait

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<sup>39</sup> Garrard, *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, Proof, Hand-coloured Engraving, 545 mm x 785 mm (1810).

<sup>40</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 213.

<sup>41</sup> Garrard, *Proposals*, title page.

<sup>42</sup> 'Mr Garrard's large picture now hanging behind the President, [John, sixth Duke of Bedford], so strongly reminded him of a scene, which had repeatedly given pleasure to most present, that he could not refrain from giving - The next Woburn sheep-shearing, with three times three.' Sir John Sebright raised his toast at the Smithfield Club's dinner on Monday 20 December 1808 at the Freemasons' Tavern, London. *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol III (1809), 422. 'Three Times Three' was the highest accolade in toasting etiquette. See Chapter Four for more information on toasts at the agricultural dinners.

sketches are still extant.<sup>43</sup> They depict those Garrard considered the celebrated agriculturalists among the Group, revealing that very few were nobility and gentry. These portraits, the print and pamphlet are pivotal within this study for two reasons; firstly, they corroborate contemporary reports of the diversity of this group, and, secondly, 74 of Garrard's identifiable men form the defined population for an analytical study, undertaken by this thesis to understand better those at the forefront of promoting agricultural improvement at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The defined population of agriculturalists are referred to as the Woburn Group or the Group throughout the thesis. However, it is stressed that these were an informal collection of men whom Garrard considered the most influential within their fields and the regulars at major farming meetings, such as the Woburn Sheep Shearing. Although many belonged to the Smithfield Club, this thesis does not claim that they were ever a group in the recognised or conventional sense of an organisation, club or society. Instead, the Woburn Group is a convenient title to label them throughout this study.

Contemporary reports often listed the attendees at these major events. These reveal that to a considerable extent, the wider group in *Woburn Sheepshearing* mirrored the make-up of this core group, attending the same events and sharing the same interests. Although it would have been useful and interesting to investigate this larger group, the practical restraints of research time made this impossible, and the decision was taken to focus on the core Woburn Group. However, the wider population is referenced as the Wider Woburn Group throughout the study.

The time required to produce over 200 individual portraits undoubtedly played a part in Garrard's decision not to identify all the regulars. But another factor was lack of space,

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<sup>43</sup> Garrard's portfolio of oil on paper sketches for *Woburn Sheepshearing* are part of the Woburn Abbey Collection.

requiring enough to accurately represent what happened during the week. He achieved this by condensing each day's farming activities into vignettes, portraying them as if they occurred concomitantly. He threaded these together using different groups of men, all either observing, talking or actively taking part.

### **The political and agricultural narrative: an overview**

A brief appraisal of the political and economic conditions that prevailed at the end of the eighteenth century will better situate these men within their historical context. Only by appreciating the position the country found itself in during a prolonged period of warfare and understanding the importance of agriculture to British life can it be understood what motivated this group of agricultural improvers, particularly the Whigs at its head.

Britain was at war with France from 1793 until 1815, despite a brief respite between 1802 and 1803.<sup>44</sup> As J D Chambers and Gordon Mingay rightly point out, during this period, 'only the capacity of British agriculture to tap the potentialities of the soil stood between the nation and sheer famine.'<sup>45</sup> But in *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, there is no indication that this agrarian idyll is taking place against a backdrop of war during a period of political upheaval. Nor is it immediately apparent that it depicts a number of prominent Whigs, many of whom were Foxites, loyal supporters of their charismatic leader Charles James Fox.<sup>46</sup> After the loss of the American colonies, George III had appointed 24-year-old William Pitt as his head of government, a position Pitt held for the next 18 years, overseeing the war with France and the

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<sup>44</sup> This thesis dates the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars between 1792-1815, but England's involvement from 1793-1815. It dates the French Revolutionary Wars between 1792-1802 (The War of the First Coalition, 1792-1797 and the Second Coalition, 1798-1802), and the Napoleonic Wars between 1803-1815. Although the First Coalition originally pitted Austria and Prussia with partial engagement of the Holy Roman Empire against France in 1792, by the spring of 1793 it had brought in England and several other countries. These dates are taken from Mike Rapport, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>45</sup> J.D. Chambers and G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1984 rep.), 13.

<sup>46</sup> Charles James Fox (1749-1806).



union with Ireland.<sup>47</sup> During this period, the opposition Foxite Whigs were active and vociferous adversaries of the King, Pitt and his government's policies, supporting George, Prince of Wales, many of whom were his personal friends.<sup>48</sup> But although a Tory government prevailed for most of the wider period this thesis focuses on, it did not equate to political stability, and during the years the Woburn Sheep Shearing was in existence (1797-1813), there were seven changes of prime minister, two necessitated by death.<sup>49</sup>

It was also a period of instability within the British monarchy, as the psychiatric illness that had beset George III since 1788 steadily worsened<sup>50</sup> During the recurring bouts he suffered before eventually succumbing to insanity, his son, the Prince of Wales, and his Whig friends strove to wrest the crown from him.<sup>51</sup> George III was the antithesis of his son. He was a religious, honest and humane monarch who insisted on social conventions and never allowed his honour to be compromised.<sup>52</sup> Although the Whigs detested him, his moral conduct and love of agriculture made him a popular monarch and earned him the nickname 'Farmer George'.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> William Pitt, the Younger (1759-1806). British prime minister from 1783 to 1801 and from 1804 to 1806. Pitt resigned in 1801 following differences with George III over Catholic emancipation. Catholic emancipation was one of the few areas where Pitt and the Whigs agreed.

<sup>48</sup> George, Prince of Wales (1762-1830). Reigned as Prince Regent 1811-1820 and as George IV 1820-1830.

<sup>49</sup> William Pitt died in 1806 from natural causes. Spencer Percival was assassinated in 1812. After Pitt's death in 1806, leading Whigs did take some part in government when a coalition between three parties held office until 1807. This coalition is referred to as the Ministry of all the talents and was formed by William Wyndham Grenville, Baron Grenville. The 'talents' included several Whigs including influential Foxites: Charles James Fox, Richard Brinsley Sheridan and Charles Grey, Viscount Howick (afterwards second Earl Grey). Richard A. Gaunt, 'Ministry of all the talents (act. 1806-1807)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/95330>, (accessed 21 September 2021).

<sup>50</sup> George III (1738-1820). Reigned from 1760-1820.

<sup>51</sup> It has long been considered that George III suffered from porphyria. Recently Dr Peter Garrard has shown that it was not porphyria rather a psychiatric illness where George III exhibited classic displays of manic behaviour. Lucy Worsley, 'What was the truth about the madness of George III?' *BBC News*, [website], <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22122407>, (accessed 3 September 2021).

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Roberts provides a good overview of George III's good and bad points in his conclusion to his recently published book on George III. Andrew Roberts, *George III: The Life and Reign of Britain's Most Misunderstood Monarch* (Allen Lane, 2021), 673-6.

<sup>53</sup> James Fisher, 'Farmer George?' Notes on Agriculture', [blog], *Georgian Papers Programme*, [website], <https://georgianpapers.com/2017/01/19/farmer-georges-notes-agriculture/>, (accessed 16 December 2021).

Nevertheless, despite being popular with his subjects, George III today is primarily remembered as the mad king who lost Britain America. Andrew Roberts has recently provided a convincing argument to restore George III's tarnished reputation. Still, there is little doubt that throughout his reign, George III was often uncompromising in his active participation in the country's government, for instance, with his dogmatic stance towards Catholic emancipation. His actions regarding American policy led to the rebellion by colonists and Britain's subsequent defeat in the American War of Independence (1775-1783), something for which the Whigs never forgave him.<sup>54</sup> But despite their political antipathy towards him, the Whig agriculturalists appreciated the King's keen interest in agricultural improvement, and the Monarch's health was always the first to be toasted at their farming dinners. For his part, the King patronised the Smithfield Club's shows, sending his stock for exhibition, despite the strong involvement in the Club by its first two presidents, the fifth and sixth Dukes of Bedford: staunch Whigs and close friends of his eldest son and Fox, both men he despised.

Paradoxically, despite these problems, British agriculture was flourishing. Although Britain suffered defeat in the war with America, the post-war economy boomed, experiencing a dramatic upsurge during the 1780s. Although the American war saw the loss of 13 important colonies, the British Empire was rapidly expanding: the West Indies, particularly, provided valuable resources. Agriculture in England was an essential part of this post-war economy, and looking back on this buoyant period 80 years later, Lord Ernle described farming as animated with a new spirit of energy and enterprise.<sup>55</sup> The need to feed and clothe a rapidly expanding population that had grown by 70% between 1701 and 1801 had fuelled

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<sup>54</sup> For more information about the Whigs and George III see H.T. Dickinson, 'George III and Parliament' from the History of Parliament Annual Lecture 2010, *Parliamentary History*, Vol. XXX, Part 3 (2011), 395-413, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/j.1750-0206.2011.00267.x>, (accessed 31 January 2022).

<sup>55</sup> For a short resume of this period in relation to agricultural production see Lord Ernle, *English Farming Past and Present* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1919 edn.), 209-10. The book is based on an article by Ernle (then Roland Prothero) that appeared as an article in the *Quarterly Review* in 1885.

this demand.<sup>56</sup> The rising urban population also increased in prosperity, which escalated the demand for meat, milk, butter and cheese.<sup>57</sup> The country's need for agricultural produce further increased in 1793 after the onset of the war with France. With the troops requiring to be fed and clothed, not even the scrawniest beast remained unsold at the end of trading at Smithfield market. Concomitant with this need to produce more agricultural produce was a demand for more land to grow and raise it on, and between 1760 and 1800, there were over 1,900 private Acts of Parliament which enclosed over three million acres.<sup>58</sup> Young assiduously wrote about the benefits of enclosure because, as P M Jones points out, for men like him and other keen agricultural improvers, it was self-evident that withdrawing land from common cultivation, consolidating dispersed parcels, and, if appropriate, enclosing them would greatly aid the renovation of the agricultural system.<sup>59</sup> However, today, economic historians doubt whether enclosure benefited yields, whilst social historians have documented the hardship endured by the lower classes after the enclosing of wastelands ended the meagre living they eked out from these areas. As E.P. Thompson rightly says, against the increased yields achieved from enclosure, the break-up of the traditional village community must be set.<sup>60</sup>

Agriculture would remain profitable for most of the first decade of the nineteenth century. To put this exponential increase in agricultural output into perspective, in 1700, one acre fed 0.18 persons, but by 1800 this had risen to 0.26 persons. This rise equates to an

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<sup>56</sup> Between 1701 and 1801 the United Kingdom population grew from 9.4 million to 15.9 million (70%). Chambers and Mingay, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Trow-Smith, *A History of British Livestock Husbandry 1700-1900* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), 1.

<sup>58</sup> Arthur Johnson calculates that between 1761-1801 there were 1,479 Acts of Parliament relating to common field and some waste, enclosing 2,428,721 acres and 521 Acts of waste only, accounting for 752,150 acres, giving a total of 3,180,891 acres enclosed from 2000 Acts. This figure is comparable to Derek Jarrett's figure of 1,900 Acts enclosing over 3,000,000 acres between 1760-1800 quoted in the text above. Arthur H. Johnson, *The Disappearance of the Small Landowner* (Oxford University Press, 1963 edn.), 90; Derek Jarrett, *Britain 1699-1815* (Longmans, 1966 2<sup>nd</sup> imp.), 329.

<sup>59</sup> P.M. Jones, 'Arthur Young (1741-1820): For and Against', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXVII, No. 528 (2012), 1116, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23272740>, (accessed 21 September 2021).

<sup>60</sup> Thompson, in Peacock, 9.

increase in output per acre of 44%.<sup>61</sup> By 1800 agriculture accounted for one-third of the national income. It not only fed and clothed the nation, but it also employed nearly a third of the occupied population.<sup>62</sup> It was undoubtedly a period of economic profitability for both landlord and tenant. Landlords charged ever-increasing rents, but the expanding market and demand for their produce meant most tenants could afford these. Like their landlords, many of the tenant farmers discussed in this thesis made a great deal of money throughout the war years, especially the Norfolk tenant farmers, who bought land and leased it out.<sup>63</sup> But against this exponential growth in agricultural production must be considered the hardships it brought to the poor, whose livelihoods not only suffered from the effects of factors such as changes in harvest technology and enclosure but directly through increased staple foodstuffs, especially during bad harvest years. The cost of bread illustrates this well. Although the price of a 4lb loaf of bread was almost the same in 1793 (6.67d) as it was in 1822 (7.6d), during the war years when the Woburn Sheep Shearings were in existence (1797-1813), it averaged 11.46d/loaf. During 12 of these 17 years, it reached double figures, and in 1812 it hit 16d, the highest price ever recorded for a 4lb loaf between 1600-1950.<sup>64</sup>

But despite these hardships for the poor the rapid innovation and high levels of investment in agriculture made farming ‘an indispensable and integral part of the Industrial Revolution’, bringing about a ‘transition to the modern technological age of mass-production of food, as well as manufactured goods.’<sup>65</sup> Out of this period emerged a great interest in

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<sup>61</sup> E.L. Jones arrives at these figures by assuming that 101% of England and Wales’ population was fed from domestic supplies in 1700 and 90% in 1800. E.L. Jones, ‘Agriculture, 1700-80’, in: Roderick Floud and Donald McCloskey (eds.), *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, Vol. I: 1700-1860 (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 70.

<sup>62</sup> Deane & Cole, cited in Jones, ‘Agriculture, 1700-80’, 69.

<sup>63</sup> For instance, the Norfolk tenants John Reeve and William Money Hill owned land and buildings, as did the Bedfordshire tenant farmer Edward Platt. For more information see their biographies in Appendix II.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Appendix A: Bread Prices since 1600’, Ronald Sheppard and Edward Newton, *The Story of Bread* (Boston: Charles T. Branford Company, 1957), 167-9, <https://www.foodtimeline.org/londonbreadprices.pdf>, (accessed 24 July 2022). The figures in Appendix A are the average price of a 4lb loaf of bread in London between 1600-1956.

<sup>65</sup> Chambers and Mingay, 5.

agricultural science, which Sarah Wilmot rightly says was seen as an emblem of national culture: ‘progressive, powerful and (with some necessary qualifications), patriotic’.<sup>66</sup> This new spirit of enquiry into scientific farming is nowhere better illustrated than by those portrayed in *Woburn Sheepshearing*, their aim to unite ‘well-grounded practice and theory’.<sup>67</sup> Although it is anachronistic to refer to the Woburn Group as the movers and shakers of agricultural improvement, they undoubtedly were and included many of the country’s most significant livestock breeders.

### **Agricultural friendship: an overview**

It is evident from the report of Somerville’s dinner that shows and dinners like his created a sense of camaraderie among the eclectic farming men who attended them. Although they understood the interaction among them as their agricultural friendship, it is a concept not readily understood today. This is not surprising because although friendship is an essential component of being human, and philosophical treatments of friendship would appear crucial in society today, they have, as John R Scudder points out, been somewhat neglected, with the exception, as he also notes, of James Grunebaum’s important recent contributions.<sup>68</sup>

Certainly, Grunebaum’s work has been influential in helping to understand how the friendship among this group functioned. In *Friendship: Liberty, Equality and Utility*, Grunebaum comprehensively compares Aristotle’s three models of friendship: virtue, utility and pleasure, with Immanuel Kant’s models of friendship and lesser-known ideas, including C S Lewis’.<sup>69</sup> The study has identified aspects of each friendship model within agricultural

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<sup>66</sup> Sarah Wilmot, ‘The Business of Improvement’: Agriculture and Scientific Culture in Britain, c.1700-c.1870’, in *Historical Geography Research Series*, Number 24 (1990), 3.

<sup>67</sup> John, Lord Somerville, *The system followed during the two last years by the Board of Agriculture* (W. Miller, 1800 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), 18-19.

<sup>68</sup> John R. Scudder Jr., cited in James O. Grunebaum, *Friendship: Liberty, Equality and Utility* (State University of New York Press, 2003), back cover.

<sup>69</sup> Grunebaum, 3.

friendship, particularly Aristotle's concept of a friendship of utility.<sup>70</sup> For this type of friendship to work, it had to be beneficial to all parties, each party gaining something from it. Kant's friendship of taste, similar in many respects to Aristotle's utility friendship, differed in one crucial respect; Kant believed that a friendship of taste worked best between men from different social classes and occupations, the sort that proliferated the Woburn Group.<sup>71</sup> For Aristotle, utility friendship was a superficial relationship, not as deep or as long-lasting as a friendship based on virtue.<sup>72</sup> Gruenbaum disagrees, saying that rather than a 'fair-weather friendship', it was easier to begin and then maintain, arguing that it is not only more accessible but as valuable as Aristotle's virtue friendship and Kant's intimacy friendship.<sup>73</sup>

In Aristotle and Kant's eyes, a utility-based friendship was not a social or cultural friendship, such as where people go to the theatre together; it functioned through a mutual interest, with benefits for both sides. In the case of the Woburn Group, this was promoting agricultural improvement and learning from one another and, in many cases, dealing professionally with each other. But in meeting up together to discuss and debate farming ideas and trends, agricultural friendship bore many of the hallmarks of Lewis's concept of friendship whereby those who shared a passionate interest and a common goal, not shared by others, often become friends. They were not interested in each other's personal lives, only wanting to talk about their shared interests.<sup>74</sup> As the study will reveal, this sentiment very much summed up the ethos of what agricultural friendship meant to this heterogeneous group of men. They did not want to discuss social or cultural aspects of their lives or converse about

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<sup>70</sup> Lesley Brown (ed.), Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. David Ross (Oxford University Press, 2009 edn.), 144.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Heath and J.B. Schneewind (eds.), Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, tr. Peter Heath (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27:426, 187, <<https://cdchester.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Lectures-on-ethics-Immanuel-Kant-Peter-Heath-Jerome-B.-Schneewind-eds.-Peter-Heath-trans..pdf>>, (accessed 24 March 2021).

<sup>72</sup> Brown, Aristotle, 144.

<sup>73</sup> Gruenbaum, 168.

<sup>74</sup> C.S. Lewis. 'Friendship-The Least Necessary Love', in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, Neera Kapur Badhwar (ed.) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), cited in Gruenbaum, 22.

politics; they wanted to discuss and debate livestock breeding, fine wool production, turnips and Norfolk ploughs.

Because agricultural friendship involved men from across the farming sector, and many of them dealt with one another professionally, it was evident that there was a trade element inherent in their relationships. Adam Smith and other contemporary Scottish Enlightenment philosophers provide an insight into friendship in a commercial situation during the second half of the eighteenth century. Smith argued that ‘necessity or expediency of mutual accommodation’ very frequently produced a friendship not unlike that among family members, whereby ‘colleagues in office or partners in trade call one another brothers; and frequently feel towards one another as if they were so...’<sup>75</sup> Although Smith’s exact interpretation of friendship in commercial society has created debate among sociologists, including Lisa Hill, Peter McCarthy and Allan Silver, within the context of this thesis, what is important is Smith’s belief that in the Georgian period, commercial friendship could create a sense of brotherhood between partners in trade or colleagues working together.<sup>76</sup>

In the twentieth century, ideas on how friendship could work in commercial situations also shed light on how agricultural friendship worked. Using the model of the hairdresser/client relationship, Linda Price and Eric Arnould have determined that ‘the characteristics and recurrent nature of service encounters’ can lead to more intense friendships forming.<sup>77</sup> Somerville’s friendship with Henry King Jnr, an Essex grazier and the son of a Leadenhall butcher, displays aspects of both models, Smith’s through mutual

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<sup>75</sup> D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (eds.), Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 223-4, cited in Allan Silver, ‘Friendship in Commercial Society: Eighteenth-Century Social Theory and Modern Sociology’, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XCV, No. 6 (1990), 1481, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2780332>, (accessed 1 April 2018).

<sup>76</sup> Lisa Hill and Peter McCarthy, ‘Hume, Smith and Ferguson: Friendship in commercial society’, in *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. II, Iss. 4 (1999, pub. online 2007), 33-49 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698239908403290>, (accessed 17 December 2021).

<sup>77</sup> Linda L. Price and Eric J. Arnould, ‘Commercial Friendships: Service Provider-Client Relationships in Context’ in *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. LXIII, No. 4 (1999), 38-56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1251973>, (accessed 17 December 2021).

accommodation and Price and Arnould's through service encounters. Both Somerville and King Jnr were active within the Woburn Group and shared a keen interest in agricultural improvement. King bought stock off Somerville and exhibited at his show, whilst on occasions, Somerville employed King to graze his stock on the Plaistow Marshes. The two attended slaughterhouses together, assessing the prize winners' carcasses for the Smithfield Club, and after the Club's management meetings, they dined together. Despite the vast gulf in class between them, it was a valuable friendship for each, with commercial benefits for both.

Somerville was egalitarian by nature, but he was not a Whig, unlike Coke and the Dukes of Bedford. Although the format of his show very much reflected his personal views on agricultural improvement, his dinners followed the successful format of these staunch Whigs. Whig ideology allowed for egalitarianism.<sup>78</sup> The thesis argues that these leading Whigs organised their dinners to encourage egalitarianism and make them as social as possible to enable interaction among those present. Georg Simmel believes if dinners are to be sociable affairs, all those present must want them to be friendly and cordial.<sup>79</sup> However, for Claude Grignon, formal dinners such as these agricultural dinners, where aristocracy and sometimes royalty were in attendance, could not be convivial affairs because they created segregation and social division. He argues that a convivial dinner is where family and close friends eat together.<sup>80</sup> The thesis challenges Grignon's belief. It argues that these Whigs and Somerville organised their dinners with the knowledge that dining together encouraged

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<sup>78</sup> Joe Bord, *Science and Whig Manners: Science and Political Style in Britain, c. 1790-1850* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 13.

<sup>79</sup> M. Symons, 'Simmel's Gastronomical Sociology: An Overlooked Essay.' *Food and Foodways* 5(4): 333-51, cited in Surinder Phull, Wendy Wills and Angela Dickinson, 'Is it a Pleasure to Eat Together? Theoretical Reflections on Conviviality in the Mediterranean Diet', *Sociology Compass* 9/11 (2015), 979, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12307>, (accessed 18 December 2021); Kendall Vanderslice, 'Making and Breaking: An Embodied Ethnography of Eating', *Graduate Journal of Food Studies*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (2017), 31-2, <https://gradfoodstudies.org/2017/03/01/making-and-breaking/>, (accessed 21 December 2021).

<sup>80</sup> Claude Grignon, 'Commensality and social morphology : an essay of typology', in P. Scholliers (ed.), *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 23-33, cited in Claude Fischler, 'Commensality, society and culture', in *Social Science Information*, 50, No. 3-4 (2011), 535, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018411413963>, (accessed 18 December 2021).



interaction among men from across the agricultural divide, stimulating an exchange of ideas and creating a sense of camaraderie.

The Georgian preoccupation with socialising together is well documented by Peter Clark and R J Morris, who have shown the essential part clubs and societies played in British life. As Clark says, they were a vital component of the social life of the educated English-speaking classes.<sup>81</sup> Many of those in the Woburn Group were instrumental in forming the Smithfield Club. Like most clubs, it was male-only.<sup>82</sup> Mary Ann Clawson sees organisations such as this as being bound up with and defined by the masculinity that subsisted ‘between and among men’; the fraternity within them being clearly visible.<sup>83</sup> Martin Kagel, discussing male friendship in eighteenth-century Germany, believes friendships between men met the communicative and emotional needs of Enlightened individuals and provided a model for social emancipation. He argues that ‘Politically, male-friendship circles anticipated a society of equals where members would be valued for who they were, not as representatives of rank or class.’<sup>84</sup> This description is very much the Freemasons' philosophy, its members drawn from across the social divide. However, it could also be ascribed to agricultural friendship. Indeed, George Tollet and Robert Bakewell thought there were similarities.<sup>85</sup> But there were also fundamental differences. Agricultural friendship was not all-embracing; there were limits to how far the interaction among this eclectic group of farming men could extend. As the thesis will discuss, these social boundaries were clearly understood.

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<sup>81</sup> Clark, 2; R.J. Morris, ‘Clubs. Societies and associations’, in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950: Social agencies and institutions*, Vol. III (Cambridge University Press, 1993 edn.), 395-443.

<sup>82</sup> Clark, 3.

<sup>83</sup> Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender and Fraternalism* (Princeton Legacy Library, 1989), 45.

<sup>84</sup> Martin Kagel, ‘Brothers or Others: Male Friendship in Eighteenth-Century Germany’, *Colloquia Germanica* 40, No. 3/4 (2007), 213, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23982101>, (accessed 21 December 2021).

<sup>85</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 1 May 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham; Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 13 February 1790, in H. Cecil Pawson, *Robert Bakewell: Pioneer Livestock Breeder* (London: Crosby Lockwood & Son Ltd., 1957), 150.

## **The Agricultural Revolution and the Woburn Group: an evolving historical narrative**

Today, although a handful of those whom Somerville entertained that night still maintain their place in the pantheon of agricultural improvement, many, including Somerville himself, are barely remembered, and the camaraderie among them has long since been forgotten. However, during the nineteenth century, historians and journalists regularly wrote of the great rural festivals of Woburn and Holkham and eulogised the men who hosted and attended them.

Around the middle of the twentieth century, a significant surge of interest in agricultural history saw a reappraisal of British farming.<sup>86</sup> Although historians tended to adopt a more specialist approach, focusing on the social and economic conditions that impacted upon broader social issues, for instance, the poor laws, labour, enclosure, and the role of the landed interest, Chambers and Mingay's *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880* provided a fresh appraisal of agricultural progress during this period. Their book has subsequently become the standard text on British agricultural history. One of the ways it differs from earlier accounts is that it challenges two long-held beliefs: firstly, that the agricultural revolution took place between 1760 and 1840, and secondly, that an agricultural revolution sprang from the originality and enterprise of a few significant improvers.<sup>87</sup>

Chambers and Mingay see the start of the agricultural revolution going back far earlier than 1760, its roots stretching deep into the Middle Ages. Their thinking reflected fellow historians such as Eric Kerridge, who disparagingly laid the blame for the 'myth' that

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<sup>86</sup> The British Agricultural History Society (BAHS) was founded at Reading University in 1953 as part of this surge of interest in agricultural history.

<sup>87</sup> Chambers and Mingay, 61.

the agricultural revolution was a relatively recent affair on Lord Ernle, whose book on the history of English agriculture had been the standard text for almost 80 years.<sup>88</sup>

The second point their book challenges is that the agricultural revolution was down to the heroic endeavours of a handful of improvers. It is an important consideration within the thesis because it relates directly to how historians' views of the status of individual improvers have changed over time, some of whom were integral to the Woburn Group. By the end of the nineteenth century, a handful of men, such as Coke and Bakewell, were lauded in the accounts of English agricultural history by Ernle, Russell Garnier and others, who saw them as instrumental in changing the course of agricultural history. During the latter years of the nineteenth century, detailed articles by Ernest Clarke, Walter Rye, and others regularly documented the endeavours of these individual improvers in the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England* (RASE), maintaining interest in them. However, in their chronicling of the agricultural revolution, Chambers and Mingay scotch this heroic view of a handful of men working in isolation, saying that many others were influential in moving agriculture forward. For instance, although they acknowledge Coke's many achievements, they do not credit him with transforming the main features of Norfolk farming as earlier historians have done, nor do they believe Bakewell's developments with livestock breeding were achieved in isolation, rightly pointing out that many other Midlands breeders were also involved.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Eric Kerridge, 'The Agricultural Revolution Reconsidered', *Agricultural History*, Vol. XLIII, No. 4 (1969), 464, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4617724>, (accessed 12 December 2021). In his article, Kerridge states that as early as 1880, R.E. Prothero, as he was then, first wrote that the Agricultural Revolution occurred between 1750-1850. As Lord Ernle, he continued to support this claim in *English Farming Past and Present*. For a very long period this book was the seminal text on English agriculture.

<sup>89</sup> Chambers and Mingay, 61.

Figure 3<sup>90</sup>



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*Robert Bakewell*

John Boulton (c. 1788-1790)

© National Portrait Gallery, London

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However, whilst the thesis is in complete agreement that a handful of men working in isolation were not solely responsible, it queries the omission of this group of agriculturalists and the part both they and their shows and meetings had in promoting agricultural improvement. This oversight is surprising given that Mingay had earlier acknowledged that farming shows and agricultural societies were a most effective vehicle for men such as

Coke, the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Egremont to promote ideas on improved farming.<sup>91</sup> Indeed David Brown has recently reassessed the influence of the aristocratic improver, using the fifth Duke of Bedford as a case study, arguing that he was influential not only in his county but in the broader development of scientific agriculture.<sup>92</sup> Mingay's contribution to chronicling agricultural improvement and providing a better understanding of those involved with the land has been immense.<sup>93</sup> His work has prompted a group of historians, including B A Holderness and Michael Turner, to contribute to a book of agricultural essays to honour him, embracing significant interests of his long and

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<sup>90</sup> John Boulton, *Robert Bakewell*, Oil on Canvas, 710 mm x 910 mm (c. 1788-90), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D5949.

<sup>91</sup> Mingay, *English Landed Society*, 170.

<sup>92</sup> David Brown, 'Reassessing the Influence of the Agricultural Improver: the Example of the Fifth Duke of Bedford (1765-1802)', *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2 (1999), 182, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40275571>, (accessed 23 February 2019).

<sup>93</sup> For a list of all Gordon Mingay's academic writing to 1991, excluding book reviews, see, J. Whyman, 'G.E. Mingay: A Bibliography', in: B.A. Holderness and Michael Turner (eds.), *Land, Labour and Agriculture, 1700-1920: Essays for Gordon Mingay* (The Hambleton Press, 1991), xxi-xxiv.

distinguished career: agriculture, land ownership, and the landed interest.<sup>94</sup> But much of Mingay's research relating to agricultural improvement is wide-ranging, spanning the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In his recording of the agricultural changes that occurred between 1750 and 1880, he can often do little more than pause momentarily on factors that he considers played a role in agricultural progress, able only to draw attention to them. The Woburn Group was active for less than 30 years but probably most active for about 15. Researching within such a narrow time frame has enabled the study to put meat on the bones of those whom Mingay knew promoted agricultural improvement but was unable to investigate further, for instance, in its disclosure that the group was more heterogeneous than Mingay believes. In shedding light on the diversity of this group and the sociable interaction among them, this study adds its voice to those of Holderness, Turner, and others, who have explored themes that have interested Mingay.

### **Fellowship among agriculturalists: a biographical perspective**

Although historians have largely overlooked the potential *Woburn Sheepshearing* offers to shed light on a little-known group of farming enthusiasts, the art historian Elspeth Moncrieff considers the print a perfect introduction to the agricultural world at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>95</sup> Moncrieff's book on eighteenth and nineteenth-century farm animal portraiture is the pre-eminent work in this field. Her specialist training as an art historian has allowed her to analyse Garrard's print minutely, so she is aware of the great diversity among those he portrayed.<sup>96</sup> Quoting Young, who said, "we are all farmers now," "from the Duke to the apprentice," she is also mindful of how a great interest in agricultural improvement could unite agriculturalists during this period.<sup>97</sup> Other specialists, including curators and archivists

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<sup>94</sup> Holderness and Turner, *Land, Labour and Agriculture*.

<sup>95</sup> Elspeth Moncrieff with Stephen and Iona Joseph, *Farm Animal Portraits* (Antique Collectors' Club, 1996), 19.

<sup>96</sup> Moncrieff et al., 19-23.

<sup>97</sup> Arthur Young, cited in Moncrieff et al., 16.

at stately homes, such as Woburn Abbey, Holkham Hall and Southill Park, also recognise the interaction and friendship among agriculturalists. Indeed Jon Culverhouse, the curator at Burleigh House, refers to these agricultural enthusiasts as ‘brothers in breeding’.<sup>98</sup>

Among historians, those whose work delves deeply into individual agriculturalist’s lives and working practices best recognise their interaction. Chief among these are Harold Carter, John Gazley and Susanna Wade-Martins. Their well written and authoritative oeuvres reveal the years each has spent researching these influential Georgians; in Gazley’s case, he spent over 40 years meticulously chronicling Young’s life. His strictly biographical approach has drawn criticism from Mingay and others who consider he fails to look at Young and his life within the broader historical context. Nevertheless, in providing a comprehensive view of Young, his place within this Group, and his interaction with these men, Gazley’s book has been informative within this thesis.<sup>99</sup>

Carter’s extensive research on Sir Joseph Banks and George III’s flock of Spanish Merinos has involved him transcribing over 1,400 letters on sheep and wool matters which Banks wrote or received over his lifetime.<sup>100</sup> Banks was a regular at the big farming events, and Carter is aware of the conviviality between those present. He readily acknowledges Banks’ pleasure from attending them, calling him a ‘genial companion of the dinner table’.<sup>101</sup>

Banks’ letters reveal he corresponded with men across the social spectrum, with friends as diverse as George III and the old wool stapler, Henry Lacombe. In discussing Banks’ friendship with Lacombe, Carter calls their friendship an ‘artless’ one and rightly points out that Banks was ‘not so much the benevolent patron, as the true friend of Henry

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<sup>98</sup> Personal communication. Jon Culverhouse, Curator, Burleigh House, Stamford, Lincolnshire.

<sup>99</sup> John G. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young 1741-1820* (American Philosophical Society, 1973).

<sup>100</sup> H.B. Carter, *His Majesty’s Spanish Flock; The Sheep and Wool Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks 1781-1820* (The Library Council of New South Wales in association with the British Museum (Natural History), 1979).

<sup>101</sup> Carter, *The Sheep and Wool Correspondence*, xxiii.

Lacocke who always so regarded Banks and served him accordingly'.<sup>102</sup> Not only does Banks and Lacocke's correspondence support Carter's belief that their relationship grew slowly into a mutual dependence, but it demonstrates well how agricultural friendship worked in practice.<sup>103</sup>

Wade-Martins also recognises the fellowship among the keen agricultural enthusiasts. The thesis has made much use of her extensive research into Coke, the Holkham estates and Norfolk farming, even physically retracing her footsteps around some of the model farms of those within the Group, whose buildings she has meticulously researched.<sup>104</sup> Although her biography of Coke paints a vivid picture of the great agricultural patriot overseeing a large agrarian estate Mark Rothery has pointed out that because Coke ordered the destruction of his private papers at his death, his voice only appears as an echo in her book.<sup>105</sup> But on the contrary, Coke's presence and personality resonate from every page, and his voice is clearly heard.

Wade-Martins touches upon Coke's relationship with Tollet, a Staffordshire farmer, saying that even smaller players like Tollet could be included within the small coterie of keen Whig agriculturalists.<sup>106</sup> But this thesis contends that although there was indeed a close affiliation among the Whig faction, particularly the Foxites, the agricultural friendship among the Group did not depend upon support for the same political party.

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<sup>102</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish Flock*, 126, 129.

<sup>103</sup> The letters between Banks and Lacocke were written between 18 July 1798 and 14 March 1809.

<sup>104</sup> Susanna Wade-Martins, *A Great Estate at Work: The Holkham Estate and its inhabitants in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge University Press, 1980); *Historic Farm Buildings including a Norfolk survey* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1991); *The English Model Farm: Building the Agricultural Ideal, 1700-1914* (Windgather Press, 2002); *Changing Agriculture in Georgian and Victorian Norfolk* (Poppyland Publishing, 2002); *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes: Rural Britain, 1720 to 1870* (Windgather Press, 2004); *Coke of Norfolk 1754-1842* (The Boydell Press, 2010 rep.).

<sup>105</sup> Mark Rothery, 'Review of *Coke of Norfolk 1754-1842: a biography*, by Susanna Wade-Martins', *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. LVIII, No. 1 (2010), 137, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25684243>, (accessed 18 November 2020).

<sup>106</sup> Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 187.

Anne Secord's work on the artisan botanists in the Northwest of England in the nineteenth century has also been helpful, particularly concerning the communication networks these botanists set up between themselves and gentlemen naturalists.<sup>107</sup> Chapter Two explores the correspondence that began the friendship between some of the Group's most enthusiastic Merino breeders. Although it establishes similarities between the letters of Secord's artisan botanists and those written by middle and lower class agriculturalists, crucially, it also identifies differences.

### **Agricultural and scientific organisations: a changing perspective**

Although there has been little interest in exploring these agriculturalists as a group who regularly came together at shows and meetings, some historians have explored scientific or agricultural organisations they belonged to, for instance, the Board. The importance of the Board is apparent in *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, where the current president and secretary, three former presidents and several ordinary and honorary members are depicted. Writing about the Board, Rosalind Mitchison understands the constraints it had to work under better than most and considers the improving farmer and landowner gained confidence and enthusiasm from its existence.<sup>108</sup> However, when Somerville became the Board's president in 1800, he found the opposite, with practical farmers having no faith in the organisation.<sup>109</sup> Mitchison sees Somerville's reign (1798-1800) as one of marking time whilst the Board got

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<sup>107</sup> Anne Secord, 'Corresponding Interests: Artisans and Gentlemen in Nineteenth-Century Natural History', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4 (December 1994), 383-408, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4027623>, (accessed 18 December 2021); 'Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire', *History of Science*, Vol. XXXII, Iss. 3 (1994), 269-315, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F007327539403200302>, (accessed 21 December 2021).

<sup>108</sup> There have been three accounts of the Board: [Sir John Sinclair], *Account of the origin of the Board of Agriculture, and its progress for three years after its establishment* (1796); Ernest Clarke, 'The Board of Agriculture', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Third Series, Vol. IX (London: John Murray, 1898), 1-41; Rosalind Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture (1793-1822)', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 290 (1959), 41-69, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/559147>, (accessed 19 December 2021). Mitchison mentions the section on the Board by Elie Halévy in *England in 1815* but says that it contains a number of significant errors. Elie Halévy 'History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century', *England in 1815*, Vol. I (1949, England tr.), 224-30, cited in Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture', 41, fn. 1.

<sup>109</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 4-5, 12.



back onto a sounder financial footing, during which he pursued his personal enthusiasms: ‘fads’, as she calls them.<sup>110</sup> But the thesis refutes this and argues that the Board’s legacy would likely have been different had Somerville been allowed longer in charge. His policies, rather than ‘fads’, were short-term measures designed to aid the country during the ongoing wars with France. It further argues that Somerville achieved far more than he is given credit for during his short time in charge and reveals that political machinations removed him from office and not ill health, as Mitchison suggests.<sup>111</sup>

The Smithfield Club was at the heart of this group of farming enthusiasts; 81% belonged to it. However, although there have been four biographies on the Club, they have all been compiled using the Club’s minutes, which in the early years, when Arthur Young was secretary, were confusing and haphazard.<sup>112</sup> This has meant the fifth Duke of Bedford’s radical decision to disband the club and reform it under a different management regime in 1800 hardly merits any interest from the earlier biographers. Robert Trow-Smith, who produced the last biography for the Club, misinterprets the minutes and fails to realise the significance of the problems at the Club’s second show that led to the Duke’s decision. In understanding agricultural friendship, the change in managing the Club is important because it led to more significant interaction between the sixth Duke and club members, all core men within the Group. As Chapter Three will discuss, a smaller number of members, including the Duke, now managed the club, dining together regularly after their meetings.

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<sup>110</sup> Mitchison, 57.

<sup>111</sup> Mitchison, 57.

<sup>112</sup> All but the first book were published by The Smithfield Club, (the last published after it became The Royal Smithfield Club). The first three were written by men employed as the Club’s secretary. The first book, by Ben Thomas Brandreth Gibbs ran to three editions. B.T. Brandreth Gibbs, *The Smithfield Club: A Condensed History of its Origins and Progress from its Formation in 1798 up until the Present Time* (James Ridgway, 1857); E.J. Powell, *History of the Smithfield Club from 1798-1900* (1902); Leonard Bull, *History of the Smithfield Club from 1798-1925* (1926); Robert Trow-Smith, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club* (1980).

In her book, *The Animal Estate*, the animal historian Harriet Ritvo, whose research includes animal-human relations, has taken issue with what she sees as the exploitation of English farm livestock in the Victorian period through excessive feeding to satisfy landed aristocratic fanciers.<sup>113</sup> This thesis does not contribute to the ongoing debate, especially among American animal historians, about the exploitation of farm animals during the nineteenth century because it has no bearing on its objectives. Nevertheless, the type of men whom Ritvo believes were involved in breeding and owning excessively fat livestock is of interest. Ritvo is scathing of the role of the Smithfield Club in this practice, considering that during the Victorian period, the British aristocracy, whom she sees as controlling the Club, dominated the agricultural shows and had a penchant for breeding obese animals. She contends that aristocrats and gentry fanciers monopolised the major prizes at national competitions and proliferated the Smithfield Club, disdainful of ordinary farmers.<sup>114</sup> Had Ritvo stayed within the Victorian period, her argument would have been persuasive. However, because she frequently delves back into the Georgian period forty years earlier to support her argument, she is incorrect about the type of men who were closely involved in the Club in its early years.<sup>115</sup> As Somerville, a founder member said in 1800; it was ‘the farmers themselves’ who established it, and this thesis will argue that Ritvo fails to recognise that the pioneering agriculturalists at the turn of the nineteenth century and their high farming Victorian counterparts half a century later were very different beasts.<sup>116</sup> These Georgian agriculturalists grew up during a period of rigorous scientific, political and philosophical

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<sup>113</sup> Throughout Chapter One: ‘Barons of Beef’ in *The Animal Estate*, Ritvo is very critical of the English aristocracy and gentry who were interested in livestock development in the nineteenth century. Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Penguin Books, 1990), 45-81.

<sup>114</sup> Ritvo, 51-2.

<sup>115</sup> Ritvo, 4.

<sup>116</sup> In 1800 Lord Somerville refers to the organisation as The Smithfield Society. Somerville, *The system followed*, 22, fn.

discourse that produced considerable changes in thought and reason.<sup>117</sup> In the early days of scientific agriculture, learning was more important than glorifying their achievements; or, as Curwen put it, his annual visits to the very best farms in the country avoided him making errors on his farm.<sup>118</sup> After attending a successful livestock meeting in 1797, Young expanded upon this idea of how important learning from one another was, saying,

Men philosophically inquisitive, men of theory and men of practice, assembled at the same table; the breeders of one sort of stock contending with the breeders of other sorts, meditating on old facts, strenuous to ascertain new ones; reflecting on the trials that may best support them; deprecating others which alarm them; this collision of interests, this contrast of opinions this struggle in a path amidst competitors all aiming at improvement, tend strongly to excite emulation, to awake the torpid, to inspire the active, and to infuse new energies into the minds of all.<sup>119</sup>

Naturally, they liked winning, but improvement was the key for these enthusiasts. Curwen neatly summed it up in his down-to-earth manner, saying that meeting up with fellow agriculturalists produced numerous advantages and created a general spirit of improvement among them. The awarding of prizes at shows and meetings was essential to stimulate emulation in others.<sup>120</sup>

### **Broader implications of agricultural friendship**

Studying agricultural friendship sheds light on broader class, political and gender issues. With respect to class, on occasions, the camaraderie among this group of agricultural improvers could transcend the social divide. Although a detailed investigation into Georgian class structure is beyond the thesis's remit, it is evident that it operated within a tight hierarchical framework. As Penelope Corfield points out, 'The hierarchical model was a

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<sup>117</sup> For a synopsis of The Enlightenment, see the article by Matthew White, 'The Enlightenment', *British Library*, [website], <https://www.bl.uk/restoration-18th-century-literature/articles/the-enlightenment>, (accessed 30 January 2022).

<sup>118</sup> [Curwen], *The President's Report* (1808), 81.

<sup>119</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXIX, 519.

<sup>120</sup> John Christian Curwen, *Hints on Agricultural Subjects and the best means of Improving the Conditions of the Labouring Classes* (1809 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), 258.

persistent one, imbued with history. It could be understood if not approved by all.’<sup>121</sup> With men from across the farming sector, the Woburn Group can be considered a microcosm of the landed interest, but it also mirrored it in social structure, the great landowners at its head. Within this group, each man understood and accepted that the aristocracy spearheaded it, each accepting his place within it and where he stood in relation to others: as Sir Bernard Burke succinctly put it, ‘The Law of Precedence, when strictly adhered to, regulates to general satisfaction everyone’s proper position in society.’<sup>122</sup>

But during the wars with France, the vast disparity in wealth led to endemic class conflict and social unrest during specific periods. The early years of the wars and 1815, when the Corn Laws were introduced, until around 1819 were particularly bad. However, as Tom Williamson has pointed out, it does not necessarily follow that although historians have been deeply concerned about this, the same was true of the people who created the landscape.<sup>123</sup> Certainly, there were instances when some of these agriculturalists experienced this dissent first-hand, for instance, when Coke was attacked with stones by an unruly mob at Norwich cattle market in 1815, angry at the introduction of the Corn Laws.<sup>124</sup> But there is little evidence in the correspondence and other writings of the Group showing a concern for social unrest, barring Somerville’s letter to his agent in Somerset in 1815 in which he explained that he had cancelled his show because of the fear of rioting.<sup>125</sup> However, although some of the landed elite reacted to this differently, it does not appear that the threat of sedition was a

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<sup>121</sup> Penelope J. Corfield, ‘London Electoral History, 1700-1850: Lords & Ladies - Titles, Status and Precedence’ (2013), 3, *Penelope J. Corfield* [website], <https://www.penelopejcorfield.com/british-history/electoral-history/>, (accessed 19 December 2021).

<sup>122</sup> B. Burke, *The Book of Precedence* (Harrison, 1881), i, cited in Corfield, 3.

<sup>123</sup> Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Landscapes in Eighteenth-century England* (The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>124</sup> Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 139-140.

<sup>125</sup> John, Lord Somerville to William Kinglake, 25 February 1815 in ‘Letters from Lord Somerville to William Kinglake 1805-1818’, Ref. No. DD/X/HFD/2, Somerset Heritage Centre, South West Heritage Centre.

major factor in bringing those within the Group together. Alliances formed between the old elite and new monied landowners such as between the Dukes of Bedford and Samuel Whitbread II were not because they felt threatened by the fear of revolt among the lower classes, but because, as neighbours, they shared a keen interest in Whig politics, agricultural improvement, and fox hunting. Nor does it appear that this concern with social unrest had any discernible influence on the sociability and friendships formed within the Group.

However, one factor that did play a part in allowing these agriculturalists to socialise together was the rise of the middle class. E P Thompson rightly says that class cannot be understood unless viewed as a social and cultural formation arising from processes that can only be studied as they work themselves out over a considerable historical period.<sup>126</sup> Although this thesis only focuses on a short 30-year period, one process beginning to have an impact was the emergence of the ‘middling class’. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, when the social order in France had become polarised into two irreconcilable groups, the middle class in England was seen as a harmonising influence, diluting the ‘us and them’ effect.<sup>127</sup> But, although David Cannadine argues that the originality and importance of the middle class between 1780-1820 have been exaggerated, it did play a part within this group, with those in the ancillary industries entering into or progressing up the middle-class order.<sup>128</sup> At the great farming dinners, in opulent surroundings, tradesmen were not only invited but welcomed as guests of those far above them socially, and, on occasions, such as when the sixth Duke of Bedford and Somerville were dinner guests of the butcher Paul Giblett, they entertained aristocracy in their homes. Although this thesis argues that respect and skill

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<sup>126</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin Classics, 2013), 10-11.

<sup>127</sup> David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (Penguin Books, 2000), 68. In 1799 George Canning, discussing the problems of Ireland, bemoaned the absence of the stabilising effect of the middle class. He called them ‘that middle class of men’, describing them as those ‘who connect the upper and lower social orders’, ‘who thereby blend together, and harmonise the whole...’ George Canning cited in Cannadine, 67.

<sup>128</sup> Cannadine, 72.

helped level the social playing field between these socially diverse agriculturalists, the rise of the middle classes in the social hierarchy undoubtedly helped facilitate it.

Another broader issue was Whiggism, and the influence of the leading Whigs within this group is apparent throughout this thesis. Agriculture was of fundamental importance to many Whigs. ‘The scaffolding of turn-of-the-century Whiggery was the dynastic structure of great agrarian clans holding estates across Great Britain and Ireland.’<sup>129</sup> But it was agricultural progress that was vital to the leading agrarian-minded Whigs who headed the Group. They believed that bringing the cream of British agriculturalists together was imperative in their endeavours to promote agricultural improvement, thereby aiding their country during a prolonged period of warfare.<sup>130</sup> In his reassessment of the influence of the aristocratic improvers, Brown points out that in achieving his two objectives of promoting agricultural improvement and changing society, the fifth Duke of Bedford was ‘motivated not by financial return but by his physiocratic beliefs as an enlightened Whig.’<sup>131</sup> The Duke’s Whiggism, like his estate, was a family inheritance.<sup>132</sup> It was a mantle not easily cast aside, and his great interest in agricultural improvement was very much attributable to his Whig heritage, just as it was with others, such as his brother, the sixth Duke, and Coke. The fifth Duke is the least known of all the Dukes of Bedford, but although informative, Brown’s article sheds no light on his relationship with his fellow agriculturalists, particularly the

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<sup>129</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 218, cited in Bord, 103.

<sup>130</sup> In his eulogy to the fifth Duke of Bedford in the House of Commons, Charles James Fox specifically mentioned that the fifth Duke of Bedford’s preoccupation with promoting agricultural improvement to support his country during the wars with France had been his consuming passion, more important than anything else to him. Fox considered that had he not died but continued at the pace he was going he would have run into financial embarrassment. *Eulogium on the Late Duke of Bedford. Delivered by Mr Fox in the House of Commons* (Robert Laurie and James Whittle, 22 March 1802), Letterpress Broadside with Hand-coloured Etching, Coloured Portrait of the fifth Duke of Bedford by Robert Laurie from a sketch by Eckstein; Sheet 510 mm x 380mm (1802).

<sup>131</sup> Brown, 191, 183.

<sup>132</sup> In his comments about Whiggism David Spring is discussing Francis Russell, seventh Duke of Bedford. But his comments on the seventh Duke’s Whig heritage are equally applicable to both Francis Russell, the fifth Duke and John Russell, the sixth Duke, the seventh Duke of Bedford’s uncle and father respectively. David Spring, *The English Landed Estate in the Nineteenth Century: Its Administration* (The John Hopkins Press, 1963), 21.

Smithfield Club members, whom this thesis argues, viewed him as not only their natural leader but their friend. In exploring how, during December 1800, the Duke balanced his very demanding but different roles, including his commitments as a peer in the House of Lords and his role as the Club's President, the thesis reveals not only the importance of his country's welfare to him but his desire to retain his friendship with the Smithfield Club members, men who shared the same objectives as him.

Whigs like the fifth Duke and Coke belonged to a group of Foxites who saw themselves as the trustees of a democratic, commercial society. These 'trustees of popular sovereignty' hailed from the Whig aristocracy and were men of great wealth and leisure which they believed allowed them to act disinterestedly on the country's behalf. Parliament was the means by which these Whig 'trustees' were to govern in the people's interest, keeping the King in his place.<sup>133</sup> Their common goals and aspirations, which included liberty and catholic emancipation, were personified in the beliefs of their leader Charles James Fox.<sup>134</sup> Although this brand of Whiggism was often condemned for its social condescension and was not as liberal and forward-thinking as Whig ideology during the 1830s and 40s, it was capacious enough to accommodate like-minded people even when they were of relatively humble status when it suited, as the thesis will illustrate in its discussions on Whig landowners' friendships with socially inferior agriculturalists such as John Ellman and Thomas Walton.

Whigs saw science as being important in agricultural improvement. Joe Bord is interested in this Whig preoccupation with science, but although he takes no account of

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<sup>133</sup> Peter Mandler, 'Whiggism and Liberalism, 1780-1850', *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals 1830-1852* (1990), Oxford Scholarship Online, DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198217817.001.0001, 17-18. Peter Mandler provides a comprehensive account of the rise and decline of Foxite Whiggism in Chapter Two of his book *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform*.

<sup>134</sup> Wade-Martins, 186-7.

whether friendship played any part among those who shared an interest in scientific agriculture; nevertheless, his research into how some manifestations of scientific engagement could be employed to express Whig statesmen's political identity is compelling. To support his argument, Bord introduces the concept of Whig manners or values, which he considers prominent Whigs adopted as a means of identifying themselves in public.<sup>135</sup> This thesis not only supports Bord's argument but builds upon it. Focusing on the sixth Duke of Bedford's interest and promotion of a new type of cultivation technique developed by the Hertfordshire farmer, Thomas Greg, it not only reveals that in promoting Greg's cultivation methods, the Duke employed all four of Bord's manners, but in the process, the two became friends.

The final wider implication the thesis touches upon is the role of Georgian women in an agricultural society. Surprisingly, although *Wobourn Sheepshearing* is a male-dominated image, Garrard depicted a handful of women at the rear of the picture plane. Only a handful of reports mention women attending these agricultural meetings. For instance, in 1801, 'a number of ladies of distinction in their carriages and on horseback, were spectators of the scene [the tup letting]' at Woburn, whilst at the 1804 Smithfield Club Show, 'several ladies took the opportunity of viewing the cattle'.<sup>136</sup> But these reports are rare.

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<sup>135</sup> Bord, 1.

<sup>136</sup> 'Woburn Sheep-shearing', 20 June 1801, *Northampton Mercury*, 3; 'Smithfield Cattle Shew', 19 December 1804, *Morning Post*, 3, both in BNA.





Figure 4 <sup>137</sup>

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*Detail from Wobourn Sheepshearing*

George Garrard (1810)

There are women in the carriage and on the platform under the clock

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These women rarely dined with the men at these farming events because, as Clark says, this was ‘a male-dominated associational world’ and meetings such as these were primarily male-only affairs during this period, especially the accompanying dinners.<sup>138</sup> Homosociality allowed hegemonic masculinity to be maintained, men bonding together to defend their privileges and positions, thereby upholding and maintaining patriarchy; it was not a world into which women were welcomed.

This thesis, therefore, is heavily male-orientated. However, like *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, the study does feature a handful of women. The contribution of women in agriculture at the turn of the nineteenth century is an area that has received scant scholarly attention, although it is now beginning to interest some women historians such as Briony

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<sup>137</sup> Garrard, *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810).

<sup>138</sup> Clark, 3.

McDonagh.<sup>139</sup> The last section in Chapter One adds its voice to this debate, providing a brief investigation into the wives of some of the Group. It focuses on their relationship with their husbands and explores whether these women played any part in their husbands' friendships with other agriculturalists.

## **Methodology, Primary Sources and Chapter Structure**

### **Methodology**

The central aims of this thesis are to rehabilitate the agricultural improvers at the forefront of agricultural improvement at the turn of the nineteenth century and explore their friendship and what part it may have played in late Georgian social relations. As this thesis claims this group were of a heterogeneous make-up, disagreeing with other historians, who see them as far more elite, an unequivocal method of establishing a historically substantiated picture of them was required. Prosopography (also known as a collective biography) was deemed the most suitable methodology for this purpose.

As a historical research method, prosopography was developed in the late nineteenth century and is a valuable means of studying the social milieu and the contacts of people. It describes the external features of a population group that a researcher considers has something in common. It can be effective in researching a large or small group of people and what it looks for is the general and the commonness in the life histories of a pre-defined population. It is interested in the average and not the individual and exceptional, which only become important if they provide information on the collective and the 'normal'.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Briony McDonagh, *Elite Women and the Agricultural Landscape 1700-1830* (Routledge, 2019).

<sup>140</sup> The information relating to prosopography is taken from Koenraad Verboven, Myriam Carlier and Jan Dumolyn, 'A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography', in *Prosopography, Approaches and Applications. A Handbook*, 35-69, <https://prosopography.history.ox.ac.uk/images/01%20Verboven%20pdf.pdf>, (accessed 20 December 2021). This manual is part of the Prosopography Research website of the *Modern History Research Unit*, University of Oxford, [website], [https://prosopography.history.ox.ac.uk/course\\_syllabuses.htm](https://prosopography.history.ox.ac.uk/course_syllabuses.htm), (accessed 20 December 2021). This website gives an excellent overview of prosopography.

Morris Berman has employed prosopography within his research into the institutional interactions between the Board and the Royal Institution (RI).<sup>141</sup> Berman's interest is primarily the RI, clarifying its role in creating a modern scientific society and exploring the objective conditions that made this role possible. As part of his research, he has compiled a statistical profile on the RI's members.<sup>142</sup> His study reveals that many of the RI's 57 founder members were official or honorary Board members, with over 50% of them being 'improving landlords' at the forefront of agricultural development, many of whom were also part of the Woburn Group. Sarah Wilmot also sees the value of prosopography, considering a detailed prosopographical study would be the best way of understanding the links between agriculture, scientific culture, and society.<sup>143</sup> Although she considers that agricultural society members would provide an ideal population for such a study, unfortunately, neither she nor other agricultural historians have explored this further. So, in light of her suggestion and Berman's successful use of prosopography to analyse the RI's founder members, this thesis has adopted a similar methodology to explore the Woburn Group.

As this thesis is primarily concerned with the friendship between a small group of men, Carolyn Dougherty's use of prosopography within her research highlights how beneficial this methodology can be in gaining a better understanding of the importance of networking and interaction within a specific group. Dougherty focuses on the small group of English engineers who designed and built most of Britain's engineering infrastructure between 1760 and 1830. Her article, *George Stephenson and Nineteenth Century Engineering Networks*, not only provides an excellent example to demonstrate the usefulness of prosopography as a research tool for the historian, but it also shows the importance of

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<sup>141</sup> Morris Berman, *Social Change and Scientific Organization: The Royal Institution, 1799-1844* (Heinemann Educational Books, 1978).

<sup>142</sup> Berman, xii.

<sup>143</sup> Wilmot, 3.

interaction to these men.<sup>144</sup> Dougherty ascertained that this group of engineers were related to each other by blood, marriage, and apprenticeship and that they typically collaborated with and reviewed each other's work.<sup>145</sup> After briefly looking at each of the engineers and their involvement with one another, Dougherty focuses on them as a group, drawing conclusions about their interaction with one another and how this affected how the group functioned.

Within a collective biography, the unique or extraordinary person has little appeal, being more interested in the 'commonness' in the life histories of a group of people. For Dougherty, George Stephenson is this exceptional individual. Because of his location and social position, Stephenson was isolated from this close-knit group of engineers.<sup>146</sup>

Dougherty considers that Stephenson's reputation went on to eclipse all other engineers and concludes that because biographers have been more interested in Stephenson, seeing him as a self-made man, from 'heroic stock', they have been less interested in studying how the engineers interacted with one another. She believes this has coloured history's understanding of engineering at that time, arguing that it was their interactions that ultimately 'affected the development and dissemination of engineering knowledge'.<sup>147</sup>

Dougherty's exploration into this group of engineers has parallels with this thesis. Indeed, Stephenson's position as a famous engineer mirrors the prominent position of several of those within this study, but unlike Stephenson's external position to the engineers, these agriculturalists considered themselves very much part of the Group. The following chapters will reveal the role leading lights such as Coke played within the Group, the encouragement they gave to other agriculturalists and the fellowship this created. It argues that the interaction

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<sup>144</sup> Carolyn Dougherty, 'George Stephenson and Nineteenth Century Engineering Networks', in: K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (ed.), *Prosopography Approaches and Applications A Handbook* (Prosopographica et Genealogica, 2007), 555-65.

<sup>145</sup> Dougherty, 555.

<sup>146</sup> Dougherty, 560.

<sup>147</sup> Dougherty, 565.

and friendship among the Group was a crucial factor in the development of agricultural knowledge during this period.

### **Primary Sources**

This thesis has extensively utilised primary sources to understand better the agriculturalists, their objectives, and their agricultural friendship. These include monthly journals, county reviews, books; newspapers; minutes; letters, manuscripts, images, ephemera, medals and trophies. Chief among the books and publications have been those written by Young and William Marshall, two of the most significant agricultural commentators of the period and included in the Group. However, during the last 70 years, Young's reputation has suffered, and today, historians consider Marshall a more faithful chronicler of the period. One of Young's leading detractors is Kerridge, who calls him 'a mountebank, a charlatan and a scribbler', arguing Marshall was a far more reliable witness.<sup>148</sup> Although Liam Brunt has subsequently sought to rehabilitate Young's reputation, and more recently, Peter Jones has argued the case both for and against him, Mingay's guarded appreciation of him is closest to this thesis's view of him.<sup>149</sup> Mingay praises him for his books, *Annals*, knowledge of the progressive agriculturalists and their practices, personal acquaintance with the leading men of the age, enduring belief in the importance of agriculture, and unflagging efforts to promote agricultural improvement.<sup>150</sup>

Although Mingay correctly identifies that Marshall described the general practices and Young the latest innovations and whether they were profitable, Young also often provided a personal insight of these men and their interaction, a trait not always observed in

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<sup>148</sup> Kerridge, 466.

<sup>149</sup> Liam Brunt, 'Rehabilitating Arthur Young', *Economic History Review*, Vol. LVI, No. 2 (2003), 265-99, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3698837>, (accessed 28 November 2021); P.M. Jones, 'Arthur Young (1741-1820): For and Against', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXVII, No. 528 (2012), 1100-120, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23272740>, (accessed 28 November 2021); G.E. Mingay (ed.), *Arthur Young and his Times* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975).

<sup>150</sup> Mingay, *Arthur Young*, 23.

Marshall's writing.<sup>151</sup> Focusing momentarily on the New Leicester sheep breeders will illustrate this. Marshall spent more than two years living in the Midlands, and his factual no-frills reporting of tup letting and the working practices of the breeders involved is enlightening, shedding light on this very lucrative business.<sup>152</sup> However, Young's report on these men, gained primarily from his visit to the Midlands with Bakewell, provides different insights. From Young, we also learn about the intrigue and mystery surrounding tup letting and snippets about the men themselves.<sup>153</sup> Jones rightly says that Young's use of irony and sarcasm is reminiscent of William Cobbett and that Young would use superlatives and invectives when answering critics or challenging perceived wisdom.<sup>154</sup> He certainly did! Young was also a gossip. He never held back from reproducing anything in *Annals* he thought the public would benefit from, controversial or otherwise. His publishing of all the acrimonious letters between Bakewell and Charles Chaplin illustrates this well.<sup>155</sup>

Although Young's style is often haphazard, clearly evident in his reproduction of the Smithfield Club's minutes, picking through *Annals* and reports of his tours reveals much about individual improvers. From Young's meticulous cataloguing of attendees at shows and meetings and his detailed accounts of them, a picture of this coterie of improvers emerges. His diary is also essential; personal snippets abound, not only about him but those with whom he associated. Moreover, he was also closer to those at the top of the Group than Marshall, especially the fifth Duke of Bedford. So, although Kerridge deplores Young as an agricultural commentator, this thesis embraces him.

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<sup>151</sup> Mingay, *Arthur Young*, 16.

<sup>152</sup> Marshall resided in the Midlands between March 1784 to April 1786, William Marshall, *The Rural Economy of the Midland Counties*, Vol. I (1790), A2; on the Midlands sheep 375-451; on the breeding practices of the New Leicester breeders 414-40.

<sup>153</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 480-607.

<sup>154</sup> P.M. Jones, 'Arthur Young: For and Against', 1103.

<sup>155</sup> *Annals*, Vol. X, 560-77.

By publishing their letters and articles in *Annals*, Young allows many of the Group a voice. For the same reason, the Board's County Reviews, so derided when produced but of more value to scholars today, have also been helpful within this study. The authors' reporting of the farmers and their practices are insightful, often shedding light on the men's characters. For instance, in his county review of Leicestershire, William Pitt mentions the protracted dealings between Richard Astley and Nathaniel Stubbins over hiring a tup. Pitt reveals that their negotiations were conducted through Astley's bailiff because neither Astley nor Stubbins were on speaking terms.<sup>156</sup> Exploring how they rebuilt their relationship sheds light on the strong bond among the Dishley men and how it threatened the stability of the Smithfield Club.

Many personal letters are no longer extant, either not having survived or destroyed by choice. But amongst those that do survive are Young's, Banks' extensive collection on sheep and wool matters and some of Coke's correspondence on farming matters. All have been invaluable, as have the minutes of the Smithfield Club, the Board, the Bath and West Society, the Workington Agricultural Society, the Dishley Tup Society and others.<sup>157</sup>

In exploring the reports on the agricultural shows and meetings in newspapers and magazines, a cautious approach has been adopted because Georgian newspapers were notorious for accepting money for puffing up and suppressing stories. However, influencing newspaper content through bribery was generally confined to the government, the opposition, royalty or private individuals, and the agricultural reports tend to be more reliable, often written by men within the farming world. Indeed, for many years Bate Dudley provided the

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<sup>156</sup> William Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Leicester* (1809), 257-9. Page 257 is wrongly numbered as 527.

<sup>157</sup> The Bath and West Society is referred to throughout by this name. At the turn of the nineteenth century the society was also called the Bath Society and the Bath Agricultural Society. Today it is known as the Royal Bath and West Society.

*Morning Herald's* agricultural information whilst Marshall provided the agricultural content for *The Monthly Magazine*.<sup>158</sup> Other newspapers drew on and circulated this information.

Like agricultural improvement, publishing farming books and pamphlets during this period was very fashionable, and not only did farmers publish books on livestock production, but ancillary tradesmen such as implement makers and wool staplers also wrote books. Where letters are scarce, these books, many written by those within the Group, have been a valuable source, notably those by Somerville and Curwen; their writing revealing their thoughts and motivation.

Finally, the importance to this thesis of Garrard's *Wobourn Sheepshearing* and its associated ephemera has already been stressed. The study includes many of Garrard's preparatory oil on paper sketches of the celebrated agriculturalists and, where relevant, images of their animals, many also by Garrard. The pastoral vignette that demarcates each chapter's conclusion is from a *Tribute of Gratitude* to the late fifth Duke of Bedford, a collaboration between Garrard and John White Parsons, a keen livestock breeder in the Group.<sup>159</sup> Although his name is synonymous with agricultural improvement, the fifth Duke is challenging to understand, primarily because he left few personal papers. Therefore, primary sources are essential in shedding light on his relationship with the Group. Tributes such as this and the written thoughts and reminiscences on him from the agricultural improvers he informally headed reveal his importance to them. Indeed, nearly six years after his death, Tollet still referred to him as 'the immortal Duke of Bedford'.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> *The Ipswich Journal* recorded that its agricultural news was always taken from the *Morning Herald*, which was written by The Revd Henry Bate Dudley. 'Ipswich August 13', 13 August 1796, *Ipswich Journal*, 3, in BNA; Pamela Horn, *William Marshall (1745-1818) and the Georgian Countryside* (Beacon Publications, 1982), 31.

<sup>159</sup> John White Parsons, *A Tribute of Gratitude to the Memory of the late most noble Francis Duke of Bedford*, illustrated and published by George Garrard (1802).

<sup>160</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 30 November 1807, F/TWC2, Holkham.



## Chapter Structure

This study is divided into four chapters to address its two primary objectives: providing a more transparent and historically substantiated account of these agricultural improvers and shedding light on their agricultural friendship and how it worked in practice. The prosopographical study has identified specific factors that linked those within the Group, such as membership of the Smithfield Club, a shared enthusiasm for selective sheep breeding, marriage and political affiliation. The first three chapters explore agricultural friendship within these specific contexts.

Chapter One begins by discussing the results obtained from the statistical analysis of the Group. Its two remaining sections focus on agricultural friendship from a more personal perspective than the other chapters, focusing on political affiliation and marriage. The collective biography identified that the Group contained a number of Whigs and the first section investigates the part Whig affiliation played within the Group. The final section turns its attention to a few of the married men within the Group. It focuses on their wives, seeking to understand what kind of relationships these women had with their husbands and what part it might have played within their husbands' friendships with like-minded farming enthusiasts.

Chapter Two is set within an agricultural context. Both sections focus on the importance of interaction between small numbers of men, the first through personal contact, the second through correspondence. It argues that agricultural friendship displayed aspects of Aristotle's Kant's and Lewis' ideas of friendship but was underpinned by respect for skill and ingenuity, accommodating men of different status. As the French wars impacted in various ways throughout the period covered by this thesis, both sections are set within the context of a patriotic initiative that arose to help the country: the Board and the attempt to establish Merino sheep into the country.

Chapter Three explores agricultural friendship under tension and is centred on the Smithfield Club's second show in 1800. It focuses on the schism within the Club, which put the agricultural friendship between club members under pressure. It reveals the relationship between the members and their president, the fifth Duke of Bedford, and the pressure the Duke was put under, forcing him to make a radical decision that drastically affected the Club's future. Some of the Dishley Twp Society's members were among those who pushed the Duke into this drastic action. These hard-head men were not as altruistic or patriotic as other agriculturalists, particularly the Foxites at the Group's head. Shedding light on the Dishley men's business practices reveals men whom the fifth Duke did not want to fall out with and adds another layer of understanding to how the agricultural friendship between these agriculturalists worked in practice.

Chapter Four focuses on the post-show dinners provided after the most significant agricultural shows, exploring the tactics employed by hosts to encourage sociable interaction among their heterogeneous guests. It investigates the importance eating and drinking played in creating fellowship among the Group, arguing that even prestigious dinners when royalty and aristocracy were present could be convivial events designed to encourage camaraderie and conversation among the diners. It concludes by investigating why the great farming events came to an end and, with them, the demise of the Group. It suggests several reasons for this.

This thesis is an opportunity to reappraise a group of agricultural improvers active in England during the late Georgian period. Set against the backdrop of the long-running wars with France, the thesis sheds light on the heterogeneity of this group and their agricultural friendship, areas little understood until now. Delving deep into primary sources reveals statistical and personal information, much of which has never previously been available. Focusing on these men's motivation and interaction with one another reveals a fascinating

insight into camaraderie, respect, anger, tension, and disillusionment, but above all, friendship among a group of men ranging from Dukes to mechanics. It reveals how vital the Whig influence was, especially in facilitating the egalitarian air at the shows and dinners, allowing their friendship to breach the class divide, thereby providing a different appraisal of how Georgian social relations could be managed. Finally, in its emphasis on the concept of agricultural friendship, the thesis rectifies what it perceives as a longstanding gap in the agricultural history of the period.

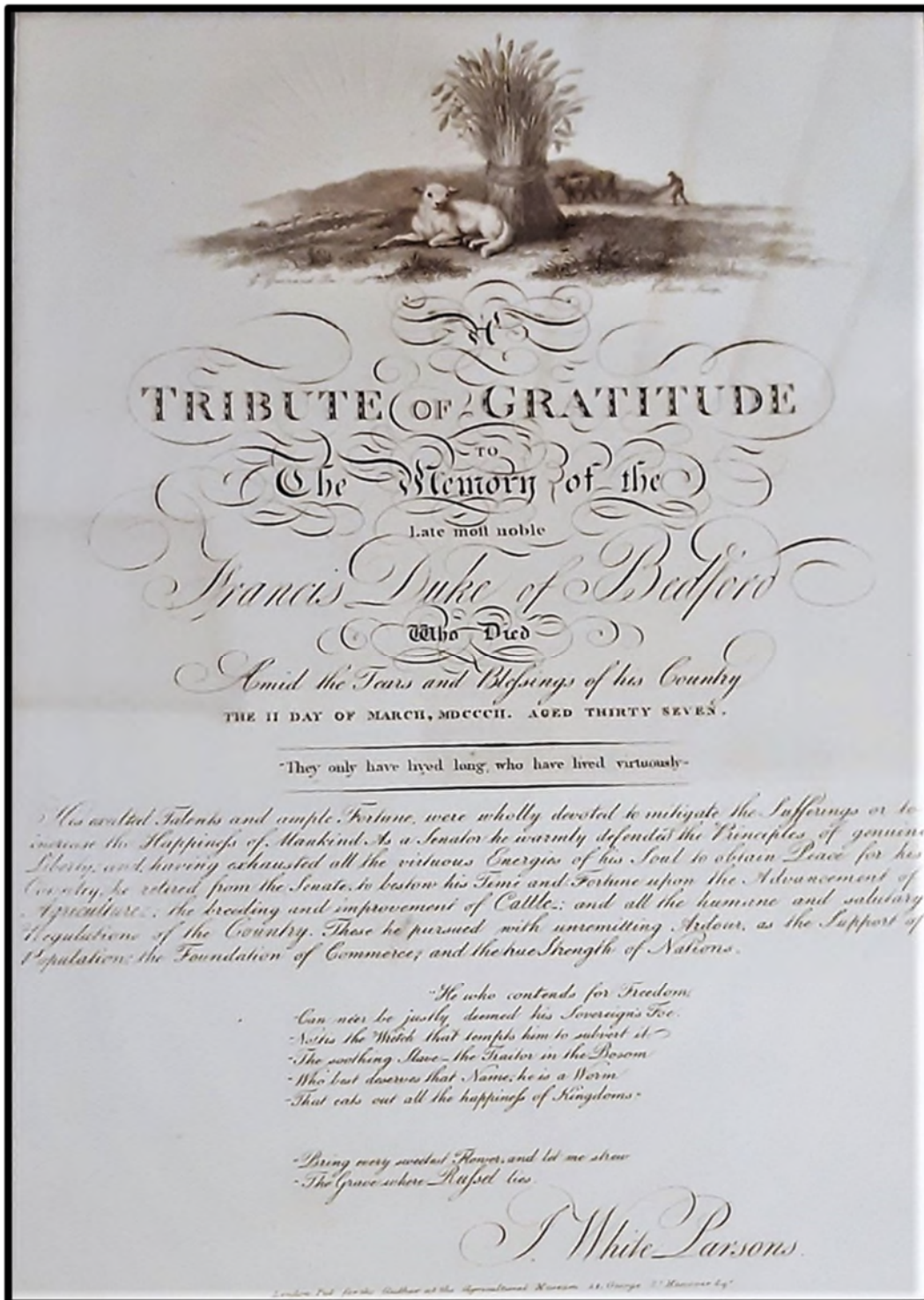


Figure 5

**A Tribute of Gratitude to the Memory of the late most noble Francis Duke of Bedford**

John White Parsons and George Garrard (1802)

## Chapter One

### EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

‘The Portraits of the Nobility, Gentry and Celebrated Agriculturalists, who usually attend the meeting will be introduced.’<sup>1</sup>

The Introduction pointed out that the men depicted by George Garrard in *Woburn Sheepshearing* were regulars at events such as this, and 74 of those he portrayed (the Woburn Group or the Group) form the defined population for this thesis’s exploration into agricultural friendship. Although Garrard identified many of those he portrayed, he provided little other information about them frustratingly. Nevertheless, it is evident from his introductory words within the pamphlet he published alongside his print that the celebrated agriculturalists were the men at the forefront of agricultural improvement at the turn of the nineteenth century.

This chapter is divided into three sections to understand precisely who Garrard’s celebrated agriculturalists were and to begin to explore how the agricultural friendship between them functioned. The first section introduces those within the Group. It explains the thesis’s methodology to investigate these men in more detail, whilst the remaining two sections focus on their friendship. However, rather than exploring this friendship within an agricultural context, as other chapters do, these two sections investigate their interaction from a non-farming perspective and a more personal viewpoint, focusing on their political affiliation and marriages.

One of the thesis’s main arguments is that the agricultural friendship between those within the Group could function despite coming from different sectors of the agricultural industry and from across the social divide. It was evident that the provision of personal and professional data was necessary to support this claim. This information has been provided in

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<sup>1</sup> George Garrard, *Proposals for Publishing a Print of the Woburn Sheep Shearing, from a Picture by Mr. Garrard, Associate of the Royal Academy* (Garrard, 1811), title page.

two inter-related forms, a prosopographical study and a series of biographical sketches. Prosopography includes information on the Group's demographic characteristics, targeting the common aspects of their lives, and the biographies provide individual life stories. Appendix I contains the prosopographical study, and Appendix II contains the biographical sketches. These two Appendices provide the framework around which this thesis is structured.

The second section is concerned with political affiliation. The collective biographies identify a strong Whig presence within the Group, with several keen Foxite agriculturalists at its head. It was primarily their influence that this thesis argues gave the agricultural dinners an egalitarian air. To better understand the Whigs within the Group, this section focuses on Joe Bord's concept of Whig manners, exploring how these functioned within an agricultural context.<sup>2</sup> Although agreeing with Bord that manners helped forge Whig identity, this section questions whether these manners played any part in the agricultural fellowship within the Group.

The final section focuses on a few of the 77% within the Group who were married. It explores a handful of marriages of those who hosted agricultural shows and asks whether the wives of these men played any part in the agricultural friendships their husbands enjoyed with others within the Group. This section is subdivided to reflect those marriages that seem to have functioned well and those that appear not to have done. It sheds light on these relationships and the women's role in supporting their husbands' farming activities: both areas that have previously been little researched.

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<sup>2</sup> Joe Bord, *Science and Whig Manners: Science and Political Style in Britain, c. 1790-1850* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

## 1. The Woburn Group

So widely collected a group of agriculturalists and other ingenious men, [all] engaged in the same pursuits.<sup>3</sup>

The central argument of this thesis is that an agricultural friendship existed between a group of farming improvers who, although from different backgrounds, shared a keen enthusiasm for scientific farming. Although these men were at the forefront of agricultural improvement, and their endeavours were regularly reported in the agricultural and national press, there is very little information about 90% of them today. However, there has been more interest recently among those interested in animal studies. As Alison Wright has pointed out, the role of many animal historians has been to restore the concept of animality into scholarship, reconsidering and reinserting real animals' presence, contribution, and experience into historical accounts of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> One of the most eminent is Harriet Ritvo, whose research has been persuasive in reassessing the role of animals in science and society during this period. One of Ritvo's concerns has been with the preoccupation by English aristocratic fanciers, as she calls them, with owning and breeding overfat livestock during the Victorian era. She discusses this at length in *The Animal Estate*.<sup>5</sup> This book has been influential within current animal historical thinking. In it, Ritvo argues that if the possession of 'enormous animals' in the Victorian era in England

...symbolized leadership and social prestige, then prize cattle did more than enhance the position of their owners. They implicitly excluded those who could not afford them, drawing a single social division between wealthy amateur agriculturalists and all others.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 'Holkham Sheep Shearing.', *The Agricultural Magazine for 1806*, Vol. XIV (1806), 420.

<sup>4</sup> Alison Elizabeth Wright, 'Animal and sporting painting in Britain, 1760-c.1850: its artistic practices, patronage and public display', PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018, 30-1.

<sup>5</sup> Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Penguin Books, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Ritvo, 81.

Ritvo takes ‘excursions backwards where appropriate’ to support her argument.<sup>7</sup> These excursions include the period focused upon within this thesis. For instance, she states that the Woburn Sheep Shearing (1797-1813) was a private agricultural show for elite breeders and elite animals.<sup>8</sup> This thesis disagrees. It argues that it was one of the great highlights in the English farming calendar, bringing together hundreds of men from all walks of agricultural life ‘who vie together only in public spirit’.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, Ritvo sees the Smithfield Club (the Club) as heavily represented by the nobility and gentry. She argues that their annual shows

functioned as ceremonial re-enactments of the traditional rural order. They celebrated and reaffirmed the position of the wealthy and powerful magnates who headed it by parading the symbols of their magnificence in the form of extraordinarily large beasts.<sup>10</sup>

As Chapter Three discusses, this was never the case in the Club’s early years.

As this thesis made clear in its introduction, it does not take an ethical animal studies approach. Its objective is to understand the agriculturalists and their friendship, not whether breeding practices were moral or ethical during this period. So, although this author agrees with Ritvo that farming events attracted a predominance of aristocracy and gentry who favoured excessively fat livestock during the Victorian era, this thesis challenges her belief that these men were the same as those at the forefront of agricultural improvement at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> They were not. The pioneering agricultural improver of 1800 was different to the high farming Victorian aristocratic agriculturalist of the 1850s. Undoubtedly, the Georgian livestock breeders wanted to produce heavier fleshed animals, greater milk yields and finer quality fleeces meaning they had to breed more and more closely and

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<sup>7</sup> Ritvo, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ritvo, 70-1.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Proceedings of Agricultural Societies’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XI (1804), 304.

<sup>10</sup> Ritvo, 52.

<sup>11</sup> Ritvo argues this point throughout her chapter entitled ‘Barons of Beef’. Ritvo 45-81.



incorporate scientific feeding methods into their husbandry practices. However, it was the dawn of pedigree livestock breeding and a period of trial and error when animal husbandry and crop experiments could result in failure as well as success. By meeting up at shows and talking together, these men learned from one another's experiences, good and bad. They saw it as their patriotic duty to disseminate their results and ideas, the shows and meetings being the perfect platform to achieve this. For these reasons, the aristocratic landowners interested in scientific farming embraced skilful and ingenious men from across the agricultural sector, wanting to learn from them and work with them rather than, as Ritvo asserts, employ them.<sup>12</sup>

This thesis needed to rectify such misconceptions and decided a prosopographical study and biographical sketches would best provide a historically substantiated picture of these agriculturalists.<sup>13</sup> Statistical and personal data on a group of agriculturalists during this era has never been available, so the information these studies provide is essential within this thesis but also important to the agricultural history of the period. The collective biography provides a rare statistical analysis of a particular group of men at one specific moment in time (1804). The individual biographical sketches offer a window into their professional and personal lives. Each study complements the other and supports this thesis's claim that although the livelihoods of those within the Group were to a greater or lesser degree dependent upon agriculture, their professional and personal lives were often very different.

Both studies provide a far better insight into those within the Group. Focusing on specific factors that linked them has allowed the investigation into the interaction between these men to be explored from different angles. For instance, the prosopographical study

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<sup>12</sup> Ritvo, 64.

<sup>13</sup> For a good overview of prosopography see the Prosopography Research website of the Modern History Research Unit, University of Oxford, [website], [https://prosopography.history.ox.ac.uk/course\\_syllabuses.htm](https://prosopography.history.ox.ac.uk/course_syllabuses.htm), (accessed 20 December 2021). Within this website is the link to Koenraad Verboven, Myriam Carlier and Jan Dumolyn, 'A Short Manuel to the Art of Prosopography', in *Prosopography, Approaches and Applications. A Handbook*, 35-69, <https://prosopography.history.ox.ac.uk/images/01%20Verboven%20pdf.pdf>, (accessed 20 December 2021).

asked how many of the Group were members of the Smithfield Club. The answer revealed that during the first few years of the Club's existence, over 81% of the Group were members. Chapter Three focuses on the Smithfield Club connection more closely, exploring how the agricultural friendship within the membership came under pressure around the time of the Club's second show in 1800.

Prosopography was chosen to investigate the Woburn Group because it identifies the common characteristics where there is a scarcity of biographical information available about individuals within it. Providing the same questions are asked, prosopography can reveal the particular characteristics of the whole population.<sup>14</sup> As prosopography is more interested in the typical than the atypical, only interested in the exceptional when it provides information on 'the collective and the normal', it gives a more balanced overview of the whole Group.<sup>15</sup> Focusing on an entire group avoids the danger of drawing conclusions from individual cases or generalising from just a few examples, for example, in this Group, where only 10% are relatively well known.<sup>16</sup>

As the Introduction pointed out, the defined population for the prosopographical study were 74 of the men Garrard identified in *Wobourn Sheepshearing*; those at the heart of the Group, among which were the celebrated agriculturalists, as Garrard called them.<sup>17</sup> The date

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<sup>14</sup> Verboven, et al., 36.

<sup>15</sup> Verboven, et al., 37.

<sup>16</sup> Verboven, et al., 36.

<sup>17</sup> Although Garrard identified 89 men, not all were considered suitable for inclusion. The criteria for selecting the 74 men were that they must all have been included in *Wobourn Sheepshearing* and either be a member of the Smithfield Club or have had some affiliation to the Board of Agriculture. Seventy-two men fulfilled these requirements, but an exception was made for two individuals whom Garrard not only included within the print but took preparatory sketches of and classified as celebrated agriculturalists. Although these men were regulars at many farming events, they lived some distance from London, so they were neither Smithfield Club members nor affiliated to the Board. These were George Tollet from Staffordshire and Richard Reynell from Ireland. Garrard called these men the celebrated agriculturalists in his pamphlet which he produced to accompany the print. George Garrard, *Proposals*, title page. Those whom the study has declined to include but whom Garrard identified were in most cases Whig friends of the sixth Duke of Bedford. Although they annually attended his sheep shearing and had some interest in scientific farming, they were not regulars at other agricultural events. Those omitted from the study of the defined population are listed at the start of Appendix II.

for the study was 1804, the year Garrard set his depiction of the Woburn Sheep Shearing in. Following standard procedure for a survey of this type, the questions asked were divided into personal and family life, career, material position and culture.<sup>18</sup> One difficulty the study encountered was a lack of data for some questions. In prosopography, this is referred to as 'dark numbers' and is a problem historians frequently face when studying less privileged or documented areas of society.<sup>19</sup> But the questions essential for supporting the thesis's assertion that the Woburn Group was heterogeneous, such as name, age, title, occupation, and location, provided meaningful data. So too did the questions on marital status, political affiliation, and membership of the Smithfield Club. The answers to political affiliation and marital status gave the thesis scope to investigate the concept of agricultural friendship from a more personal perspective. 'Dark numbers' were an issue with material position and culture. For instance, data was difficult to obtain on acreage, favoured livestock breeds, religion and hobbies. Although these questions did not provide as comprehensive answers as other questions, they did afford an overview. Reliable assumptions could be made, such as that the majority were interested in selective sheep breeding centred upon four specific breeds, that there was considerable diversity in the amount of land farmed, and that they were all predominantly Anglicans. Surprisingly, it was not always the less privileged men where data was difficult to obtain. For instance, obtaining information about Augustus, second Earl Ludlow (Lord Ludlow), was more challenging than for the wool stapler William Oakley.

Although the data from the collective biography has been essential in better understanding those within the Group, it will also be important for anyone researching the period's agricultural and social history. However, like any study involving prosopography, it does have its limitations, primarily because it is only interested in external characteristics and

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<sup>18</sup> Verboven, et al., 55-6.

<sup>19</sup> Verboven, et al., 58-9.

recording facts, so psychological traits, such as feelings and beliefs, can be neglected.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, although this study dramatically assists in understanding the make-up of the Woburn Group, it does not allow a personal insight into the thoughts of the men and so is limited in throwing light on the concept of their agricultural friendship. A biographical sketch of each man and extensive research into primary sources has helped to rectify this problem. Experiential research has included visits to these men's farms, homes, estates, and final resting places.<sup>21</sup> Subjecting the Group to a prosopographical questionnaire, analysing the answers, viewing this data in conjunction with the biographical sketches and primary source material, and then adopting a case study approach has allowed the thesis to delve deeper into the men and the interaction between them. Adopting this approach has meant that the 'grey areas' that prosopography is often unable to identify have become more visible and provided the thesis with a much broader platform to embark upon its exploration into the concept of their agricultural friendship.

The collective biography and biographical sketches were essential in the author's preliminary research to gain a far greater understanding of those who made up this group of agricultural improvers.<sup>22</sup> Although not crucial to the thesis's exploration into their agricultural friendship, the information provided in these appendices will be helpful for readers as it gives a fuller picture of these men and the times in which they lived. The summarised data, listed below in table form, supports the argument that this group was of a

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<sup>20</sup> Verboven, et al., 66.

<sup>21</sup> The Biographical Sketches are in Appendix II. Primary source information has been obtained from many different locations. These include letters, diaries, agricultural and national publications, agricultural books, biographies, the Board of Agriculture, the Smithfield Club, the Bath and West Society, the Workington Agricultural Society, the Sussex Agricultural Society, and other farming club minutes. Also, archive material from the Royal Academy, the Royal Agricultural Society of England, the Sir John Soane's Museum, the Woburn Estate, Holkham Hall, Southill Park, the National Trust at Petworth House, the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, the Museum of English Rural Life, and a number of Public Records Offices from different areas of the country including Cumbria, Shropshire, Bedford, Nottinghamshire, Somerset, Sussex and Essex. Visits to agriculturalists' homes and final resting places have resulted in visiting all four UK countries and Eire.

<sup>22</sup> Appendix I contains the Prosopographical Study and Appendix II the Biographical Sketches.

heterogeneous make-up. After summarising these results, a slightly longer discussion follows on questions such as hobbies, where comprehensive answers were harder to obtain.

### **Results from the statistical profile and what they reveal**

**Table 1 - AGE (74 men)**

<b>No. Of Men</b>	<b>Age Range</b>
5	20-29
20	30-39
19	40-49
23	50-59
7	60-69

The average age of the 74 men within the Woburn Group was 45.65 years, with the majority aged between 30 and 60. The youngest was 25 years old, and the oldest was 69.

**Table 2 - TITLE**

<b>No. Of Men</b>	<b>Title</b>
2	Dukes
8	Earls
4	Lords
7	Baronets
22	Esq
29	Mr
2	Revd

**Table 3 - LOCATION**

No. Of Men From Each County	Primary Location
12	Bedfordshire
7	London
5	Essex
5	Sussex
4	Leicestershire
4	Norfolk
3	Buckinghamshire
3	Hertfordshire
3	Surrey
2	Kent
2	Northumberland
2	Nottinghamshire
2	Somerset
2	Staffordshire
2	Wiltshire
2	Ireland <sup>23</sup>
2	Scotland <sup>24</sup>
1	Wales <sup>25</sup>
11	Other English Counties <sup>26</sup>

The data revealed that those within the Group came from a wide geographical area encompassing London, 25 English counties, 2 Irish and Scottish counties and 1 Welsh county. The study determined that the country estates and farms were the primary residences for those in the study directly connected with the land. This was despite many aristocrats owning London townhouses where they spent much of the winter. A few of the landed gentry also had townhouses, but, as F M L Thompson rightly points out, they spent most of their

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<sup>23</sup> Counties Louth and Meath.

<sup>24</sup> Caithness and Kincardineshire.

<sup>25</sup> Denbighshire.

<sup>26</sup> The English counties with only one representatives were Cambridgeshire; Cumberland; Derbyshire; Lincolnshire; Middlesex; Northamptonshire; Rutland; Shropshire, Suffolk; Worcestershire and Yorkshire.

time in the country, providing the solid core of county society.<sup>27</sup> Most farmers did not own townhouses and generally stayed in hotels when in London on business; the York Hotel was popular with those attending the two London agricultural shows.<sup>28</sup> The primary residence of all the ancillary tradesmen within the Group was the London area.

**Table 4 - OCCUPATION**

No. Of Men	Primary Occupation
26	Landowner
16	Farm Owner-Occupier
16	Tenant Farmer
2	Agricultural Writer
2	Clergyman
1	Bailiff
1	Banker
1	Solicitor/Land Agent
1	Surveyor
1	Chemist
1	Drainage Specialist
2	Implement Maker
1	Livestock Artist
1	Livestock Expert
1	Seedsman
1	Wool Stapler
Occupation By Percentage	
35%	Landowners
43%	Total Farmers
22%	Other Agriculturally Related Occupations

<sup>27</sup> For a good overview of the landed gentry, see F.M.L. Thompson, 'The Landed Gentry and County Society', *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971 edn.). In 1873 Thompson considers it reasonable to assume that the gentry required a lower income of £1,000/annum with an upper limit of £10,000; lower gentry owning 1,000-3,000 acres, greater gentry owning estates over 3,000 acres up to 10,000 acres. Thompson, 112.

<sup>28</sup> The two agricultural shows held annually in London were the Smithfield Club's show, held over four days in December and Lord Somerville's Spring Cattle Show, which ran for two days in early March. The York Hotel was perennially popular with many within the Group. The letter of protest to the fifth Duke of Bedford by members of the Smithfield Club was written from there. 'York Hotel, December 12', *Annals of Agriculture and other Useful Arts (Annals)*, Vol. XXXVI, 241-2. In February 1808 William Money Hill asked Thomas Weaver to reply to him at the York Hotel, as he would be there attending Lord Somerville's show. William Money Hill to Thomas Weaver, 23 January 1808, in Thomas Weaver's letters, in private ownership (Weaver's letters). The Farmers' Club was established in 1842 at the York Hotel, New Bridge Street, Blackfriars, London. For more information on the Farmers' Club see the 'History and Heritage', *The Farmers' Club*, [website], <https://www.thefarmersclub.com/about-the-club/history-and-heritage>, (accessed 3 July 2020).

It was very difficult to establish occupation as many earned their money from different areas, such as banking, shipping and so forth, and some men who tenanted also owned land or worked as agents. But it did provide some valuable information. The landowners accounted for 35% of the Group. Those who owned farms or tenanted them accounted for 43%, split equally between owner/occupiers and tenants, and the remaining 22% came from the ancillary agricultural sector. What the figures do substantiate is that the 'regulars' at events such as the Woburn Sheep Shearings were not only aristocrats, as Ritvo believes, but were far more heterogeneous. The biographical sketches revealed that almost two-thirds of the Group were not aristocrats or landed gentry but men whose livelihoods came from farms or the ancillary industries. Of the 22% from the ancillary agricultural trades, the study identified only one or two men from each trade. This does not imply that they were the only representatives present; rather, they were the most important. For instance, William Oakley is the only wool stapler portrayed and identified within *Wobourn Sheepshearing*. He was not the only stapler present, but Garrard considered him the most important.<sup>29</sup> The mixture of aristocrats, farmers, and tradesmen gave these events they attended an eclectic air.

Although the study identified each man's location, scarcity of information meant it was impossible to determine how many acres each farmed. Still, what was evident was the tremendous diversity within their acreages. For instance, the Earl of Egremont owned over 110,000 acres spread across different locations, Thomas William Coke was the owner of the largest estate in Norfolk, his home farm alone extended to about 2,000 acres, Francis (Frank) Sitwell owned 3,766 acres in Northumberland, whilst John White Parsons farmed 500 acres in Somerset.<sup>30</sup> The acreage farmed by tenants also varied enormously; Edward Wakefield

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<sup>29</sup> At least 3 wool staplers were included in the 125 men listed as attending the dinner after Lord Somerville's Spring Cattle Show in 1804. *Annals*, Vol. XLII, 75-7.

<sup>30</sup> Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 152; R.A.C. Parker considered that by 1816 the home farm at Holkham Park, contained 2,000 acres and 200 acres of woodland. R.A.C. Parker, *Coke of Norfolk: A Financial and Agricultural Study 1707-1842* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1975), 114.



farmed over 2,000 acres on Essex's Dengie Peninsula, whilst Robert Honeyborn's Leicestershire farm was around 500 acres.

Religion was another area where it was difficult to categorise the men. Although most appeared to have been Anglican, there were a few exceptions, most notably the New Leicester sheep breeders who were predominantly Unitarian (Protestant Dissenters).<sup>31</sup> Although many Unitarians were buried in Church of England graveyards, their graves usually in one area, some had small churches on their land, such as at Dishley Grange, where Robert Bakewell and his nephew Robert Honeyborn are buried.<sup>32</sup> Sir John Sinclair was Church of Scotland whilst the Essex tenant farmer Edward Wakefield was a Quaker.

Although it is difficult to ascertain how many were members of their local agricultural societies, most likely were. By 1800 most agricultural societies were in areas where there was a keen presence by agricultural improvers, who were often involved in running them or, in the case of many aristocrats, officiating as president.<sup>33</sup> Over 81% of the Group belonged to the Smithfield Club, and many were instrumental in its formation in 1798. Of the Club's original 12-man committee, 7, plus the late fifth Duke of Bedford, elected as president, were from the Group, whilst the other 4 were from the Wider Woburn Circle.<sup>34</sup> The Board of Agriculture (the Board), established in 1793 at the beginning of the wars with France, was also well supported within the Group. Those involved with it included the President, the 3 former presidents, the secretary, 1 official member, 12 ordinary members and 15 honorary members. Members of the Royal Institution (RI) were also well represented among the

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<sup>31</sup> George Culley called Robert Bakewell a 'Protestant Dissenter' in a letter to Arthur Young. George Culley to Arthur Young, 18 February 1811, in H. Cecil Pawson, *Robert Bakewell: Pioneer Livestock Breeder* (London: Crosby Lockwood & Son, Ltd., 1957), 185.

<sup>32</sup> The small Unitarian church at Dishley Grange is now in ruins. The graves of the Bakewell family members, including Robert Bakewell and his nephew Robert Honeyborn are visible within the church ruins.

<sup>33</sup> For instance, the Essex, Norfolk, Sussex, and Bedfordshire agricultural societies each had several members of the Group involved with them. By 1800 there were around 35 agricultural societies in existence. Susanna Wade-Martins, *The English Model Farm: Building the Agricultural Ideal, 1700-1914* (Windgather Press, 2010 rep.), 15.

<sup>34</sup> For more information on the Smithfield Club and its formation, see Chapter Three of this thesis.

Group, some of whom were instrumental in establishing it in 1799. George Finch, eighth Earl of Winchilsea, one of the Smithfield Club's first committee members, became the RI's first president.<sup>35</sup> At the RI, Humphry Davy presented his regular lectures for the Board on agricultural chemistry between 1803-1812, when he was active within the Group.<sup>36</sup> A few also belonged to the Royal Society (RS), where Sir Joseph Banks was the longstanding President. But there is a scarcity of information about the membership of other societies. A handful of the Group, including Banks, Henry Hugh Hoare, and The Revd Henry Bate Dudley, were Freemasons. Many of the leading Whigs in the Group belonged to the Whig Club, but little information exists about other clubs these men might have attended.<sup>37</sup>

Although it has proved difficult to ascertain what hobbies these men might have shared, hunting, both on horseback and foot, was popular with many. As Thompson says, hunting was not only suited to the leisured aristocracy and gentry but embraced men from a great many stations of life.<sup>38</sup> Although Thompson sees hunting as uniting the rural community, bringing together men from across the landed interest, bar the labouring class, this thesis suggests he might have overplayed this. Certainly, men who shared an agricultural friendship could also share pleasurable friendships, such as hunting. For instance, the Bedfordshire landowners, including the Dukes of Bedford, the Marquis of Tavistock, Lord Ludlow, William Lee Antonie and Samuel Whitbread II, were involved with the Oakley Hunt for many years.<sup>39</sup> But although those who took part shared a great passion for it, it was still

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<sup>35</sup> The eighth Earl of Winchilsea was President of the RI from 1799-1813. For more information on his involvement in the organisation, see 'George Finch, eighth Earl of Winchilsea', *The Royal Institution*, [website], <https://www.rigb.org/our-history/people/f/george-finch>, (accessed 18/7/2020). For more information on the RI, see Morris Berman, *Social Change and Scientific Organization: The Royal Institution, 1799-1844* (Heinemann Educational Books, 1978).

<sup>36</sup> For more information on Humphry Davy's lectures for the Board of Agriculture, see Berman, 32-74.

<sup>37</sup> For a list of Whig Club members, see John Bellamy, *Whig Club, Instituted in May 1784*, (1792).

<sup>38</sup> Thompson, 144.

<sup>39</sup> 'The Beginnings of the Oakley Hunt', *Bedfordshire Archives*, [website], <https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/Oakley/TheBeginningsOfTheOakleyHunt.aspx>, (accessed 11 November 2021).

very much an ‘us and them’ sport, the men on horseback separated from the hunt foot followers by wealth, status, and their elevated position on horseback.

In the Introduction, it was pointed out that aspects of Aristotle’s friendship of utility could be identified within these men’s agricultural friendship because they gained something valuable from it. Aristotle also identified two other forms of friendship: virtue, his ideal form of friendship, and pleasure. In Aristotelian thinking, a friendship brought about through hunting would be centred on pleasure: an enjoyable recreation.<sup>40</sup> As James Grunebaum says, this is when friends engage in activities that depend upon emotion and aim at pleasure.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, hunting and following the hunt is an activity that has long provided a source of pleasurable emotion for those involved. But not everyone agreed. For men like John Christian Curwen and George Tollet, hunting was a fashion and a folly given too much prominence.<sup>42</sup> Far more important to Curwen were agricultural meetings where men shared the same interest, creating a spirit of improvement, generating a desire to participate and emulate others.<sup>43</sup> Not only did agricultural friendship depend upon such factors, but on working together to achieve some common goal that was beneficial and rewarding to those involved.

Some, such as Bate Dudley and Edward Wakefield, raced their coursing dogs against one another and shooting and fishing were other popular pastimes some of them shared.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Aristotle’s friendship model involved three types: virtue, utility, and pleasure. Lesley Brown (ed.), Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. David Ross (Oxford University Press, 2009 edn.), 144-6.

<sup>41</sup> James O. Grunebaum, *Friendship: Liberty, Equality, and Utility* (State University of New York Press, 2003), 70.

<sup>42</sup> John Christian Curwen, *Hints on Agricultural Subjects and the best means of Improving the Conditions of the Labouring Classes* (1809 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), 258; George Tollet to Charles Wickstead, 28 March 1825, cited in Mavis E. Smith, *The Tollet Family of Betley Hall*, Occasional Publication No. 8 (Betley Local History Society, 2005), 17.

<sup>43</sup> Curwen, *Hints on Agricultural Subjects*, 258.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, both raced against one another at the Bradwell and Tillingham Hare Coursing Club’s meeting in January 1801. ‘Sporting Intelligence’, 19 January 1801, *Porcupine*, 4 in The British Newspaper Archive (BNA). There is a portrait of *Miller*, Bate Dudley’s best dog, and a write up about him in *The Sporting Magazine*, Vol. XIV (1799), A2-A3. Lord Somerville had had to give up hunting following a serious hunting accident at the end of the eighteenth century, so became a keen angler and shot. Humphry Davy enjoyed these activities with Somerville on his estates on several occasions. John Davy (ed.), ‘Salmonia and Consolation in Travel’, *The Collected Works of Sir Humphry Davy*, Vol. IX (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1840), 115.

Another sport that interested some was cricket. The Earls of Darnley, Thanet and Winchilsea were all keen cricketers, Winchilsea instrumental in founding the Marylebone Cricket Club (the MCC).<sup>45</sup> But tenants such as John Ellman also liked a game. His enthusiasm for experimenting in sheep breeding seems to have extended to his cricketing technique as he

**Figure 6** <sup>46</sup>



**Miller**

J Scott after H B Chalton (1799)

‘The property of the Revd. H B Dudley of Essex, he has run 74 Matches and never was beat’

learned to play the game ‘scientifically’.<sup>47</sup> He played successfully for many years. Cricket had once been popular at Woburn Abbey as John Russell, fourth Duke of Bedford, was a

<sup>45</sup> Pradip Dhole, ‘George Finch, 9th [sic] Earl of Winchilsea: A Founding father of MCC’, *Cricket Country*, [website], <https://www.cricketcountry.com/articles/george-finch-9th-earl-of-winchilsea-a-founding-father-of-mcc-623125>, (accessed 11 November 2021). This article, along with most references to George Finch, eighth Earl of Winchilsea, refer to him as the ninth Earl. The Royal Institution correctly title him as the eighth Earl.

<sup>46</sup> J. Scott after Henry Bernard Chalton, *Miller*, Etching (1799). Illustration accompanying article on Miller in *The Sporting Magazine* (April 1799), A2.

<sup>47</sup> Through his association with the Southdown Sheep Society E. Walford Lloyd visited Glynde and met members of John Ellman’s family and was given access to farm and account books, private letters and original documents belonging to Ellman. One book he saw on this visit was William Wisdom of Glynde’s *The Book of*

keen enthusiast.<sup>48</sup> But although J V Beckett says that cricket matches brought landlord and community together, there is no record of cricket taking place during the Woburn sheep shearings; it appears none of the fourth Duke's grandsons inherited their grandfather's interest.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, there is no record at the Holkham shearings, although Coke's son became a keen cricketer.<sup>50</sup>

Despite a scarcity of information in some areas, the study has provided a far more precise picture of these men. Two-thirds were professional men who excelled in their specialist fields, whether breeding pedigree tups, fattening cattle, inventing machinery, or specialising in seed production. Primary sources reveal that aristocratic and landed proprietors, such as the Dukes of Bedford, Somerville and Coke, also excelled in these areas and earned the right to be called celebrated agriculturalists. Over four-fifths were members of the Smithfield Club, and many were affiliated with the Board. Although there are no figures to substantiate the make-up of the Wider Woburn Circle, as the Introduction pointed out, their make-up was likely similar to that of the Woburn Group.<sup>51</sup>

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*Wisdom*. In this book, Ellman's cricketing prowess was discussed. Wisdom said Ellman learned to play the game scientifically: 'that is, to guard his wicket by holding the bat upright, and by bowling what is called a 'length ball.' E. Walford Lloyd, 'John Ellman of Glynde', *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Vol. LXXXIX (London: John Murray, 1928), 32, 45.

<sup>48</sup> John Russell, the fourth Duke of Bedford was a keen cricketer. Georgiana Blakiston, *Woburn and the Russells* (London: Constable, 1980), 109, 113; Apart from first-class cricket matches being played at Woburn Park, under his patronage Woburn Cricket Club played several games there between 1741-1742. John Leach, 'From Lads to Lords: The History of Cricket, 1741-1745', *Stumpsite: Cricket Histories and Chronologies*, [website], <https://web.archive.org/web/20121010153248/http://www.jl.sl.btinternet.co.uk/stumpsite/cricket/ladstolords/1741.html>, (accessed 3 August 2021).

<sup>49</sup> The three grandsons were the fifth and sixth Dukes of Bedford and Lord William Russell. J.V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England 1660-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989 rev. & rep.), 9. Further research is needed to ascertain whether cricket was played by those not interested in the tup letting sessions that usually followed dinner at the Woburn or Holkham sheep shearings in the early evening, possibly including some of the stockmen and staff.

<sup>50</sup> After Coke's death cricket was played regularly at Holkham. His son, the second Earl of Leicester, was a keen cricketer who played for Norfolk. Christine Hiskey, *Holkham: The social, architectural and landscape history of a great English country house* (Unicorn Press, 2016), 320, 341; A game of cricket was played on the cricket pitch at Holkham after the unveiling of the monument erected in Coke's memory after people had eaten. See 'Ceremony of laying the first stone of the Leicester Memorial in Holkham Park'. Newspaper cutting in Holkham Archives.

<sup>51</sup> Garrard did not identify any butchers or salesmen in his painting, but they were certainly in attendance at the meetings and the dinners, for instance, Paul and William Giblett and Henry King, Snr and Jnr at Woburn and Mr Kett at Holkham. The Giblett and Kings were regulars at the two London shows.

Ritvo is correct in that professionals and aristocratic and landed proprietors were interested in agricultural improvement. She believes that although the aristocracy employed many of the livestock professionals, ‘the rhetoric of the animal husbandry specialists was ultimately anti-traditional, and thus inevitably at odds with that of the landed proprietors.’<sup>52</sup> However, the data reveals that landed proprietors only directly employed a small number of men from the ancillary agricultural sector within the Group.<sup>53</sup> One man whom many employed was Thomas Walton, the sheep expert. As Chapter Two reveals, not only did aristocrats and major landowners want Walton’s expertise, but they also enjoyed his company. Ritvo appears unaware that agricultural friendships existed between men such as Walton and the aristocracy, nor that those who regularly attended the sheep shearings, the Smithfield Club, and other big farming meetings were a mixture of aristocratic landowners, professional farmers, and men from the ancillary agricultural sector.

### **The social landscape and managing the class differential**

Having established that the Group consisted of a similar number of nobles, esquires and misters, this section concludes by discussing how these different social groups managed the class differential. A brief overview of the social landscape during this period will better illuminate the class structure within the Group. As they had always traditionally been, the aristocracy was still at the head of the British class system in the eighteenth century. As Thompson says, these were the men who made up most of the political elite and who wielded power and made the decisions in government.<sup>54</sup> A tight hierarchical framework bound them. Leading the aristocracy after the royal family were the dukes, followed in rank order by the

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<sup>52</sup> Ritvo, 64.

<sup>53</sup> These included John Farey, the land agent and amateur geologist who oversaw the Woburn estate for the fifth Duke of Bedford, and The Revd Edmond Cartwright, employed by both Dukes as an agricultural inventor; David Hunt states that Cartwright was also employed by the sixth Duke as his chaplain. David Hunt, ‘Edmund Cartwright (1743-1823)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4813>, (accessed 3 August 2021).

<sup>54</sup> Thompson, 45.

marquesses, earls, viscounts, lords, or barons and, finally, the baronets. There were two dukes within the Woburn Group, eight earls, four lords, and seven baronets and knights.<sup>55</sup>

Thompson says aristocrats such as these had much in common. They formed a loosely-knit club, and their upbringing, way of life, family setting, hobbies, social outlook and political beliefs, although not stereotypical, were all shaped by a readily identifiable mould.

Thompson points out that collectively the landed aristocrats formed a series of families or tribes.<sup>56</sup> This family connection is evident within the Woburn Group: the Dukes of Bedford and Manchester were brothers-in-law, whilst the Earl of Upper Ossory was the second cousin of the Dukes of Bedford.

By 1800, the position of the landed elite was gradually changing. Although nobles were often great landowners, not all great landowners were aristocrats, and by 1870, Thompson considers that about a quarter of those with landed incomes over £30,000 were commoners. Although many of these untitled men strove to enter the ranks of the nobility, ‘the greatest commoner’, who stoutly resisted ennoblement until the latter years of his life, was Coke, one of the Group’s figureheads.<sup>57</sup> Alongside long-established landowning families like Coke’s were the new monied families. As Penelope Corfield says, eighteenth-century England was a mobile and urbanising society in a commercial and industrialising economy.<sup>58</sup> This enabled some from the middle classes to become very rich. As she says, ‘Power was resynthesised into active terms, of acquisition, production, and display, rather than

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<sup>55</sup> Both the title of baronet and knight were conferred by the monarch. But because a baronetcy was hereditary, it outranked a knighthood. Penelope J Corfield, ‘7.13 Lords and Ladies: Titles, Status and Precedence’, London Electoral History: 1700-1850: Steps Towards Democracy, London Election History, 7, *Penelope J. Corfield*, [website], <https://www.penelopejcorfield.com/PDFs/3.4.5-CorfieldPdf35-Lords-&-Ladies-Titles-Status-and-Precedence.pdf>, (accessed 3 August 2021), 7. Although Corfield classifies baronets and knights as ‘Titled Commoners’, J.V. Beckett considers they were another channel into the aristocracy and that although decried by some, almost inevitably baronetcies went to recipients with a substantial landed income. Corfield, 6-7; Beckett, 113-17. A good example would be Sir Joseph Banks. This thesis places baronets and knights with the aristocracy.

<sup>56</sup> Thompson, 15, 17.

<sup>57</sup> Thompson, 14.

<sup>58</sup> Corfield, ‘Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *History*, Vol. LXXII, No. 234 (1987), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24415601>, (accessed 3 August 2021), 45.

inheritance, formal title, and ancient lineage'.<sup>59</sup> One of the major ways these new monied men acquired social position was through land purchases. As Beckett has pointed out, those who had made their fortunes through their industrial enterprises tended to bring the same business mentality to the land that had brought them success in industry.<sup>60</sup> Some within the Group had earned their fortunes through industry, including Samuel Whitbread II. His father's acquisition of Southill Park illustrates well Robert Southey's view that 'The commercial system has long been undermining the distinction of ranks in society...Mushrooms are every day starting up from the dunghill of trade.'<sup>61</sup> Whitbread's father had amassed his fortune from the brewing industry and purchased the Bedfordshire estate from the indebted fourth Viscount Torrence in 1795 for £95,000. When Whitbread senior died the following year, along with the brewing empire, his son inherited an estate of 12,300 acres, of which 80% was in Bedfordshire. The land alone brought in rents totalling almost £22,000 per annum.<sup>62</sup>

As the study has shown, there were 22 esquires (Esq) and 29 misters (Mr) in the Group. Determining whether a man was entitled to the suffix of Esq or the prefix of Mr was not solely dependent upon how much land he farmed or whether he owned it but upon 'education and intercourse of life'.<sup>63</sup> For instance, John White Parsons and Richard Astley farmed about 500 acres, White Parsons as owner, Astley as a tenant. Farming this amount of land around 1800 would have classified each as 'properly styled yeomen', but even though Astley's brother owned Odstone Hall, Astley was 'better bred', therefore, entitled to the

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<sup>59</sup> Corfield, 'Class by Name', 61.

<sup>60</sup> Beckett, 164.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Southey, *Letters from England*, J. Simmons (ed.) (London, 1951), 37, cited in Corfield, 'Class by Name', 60-1.

<sup>62</sup> Sam Whitbread, "*Plain Mr Whitbread*": *Seven Centuries of a Bedfordshire Family* (Dunstable: The Book Castle, 2007), 19-20.

<sup>63</sup> A. Aspinall and E. Anthony Smith (eds.), 'The State of the Yeomanry, 1797-1833', No. 356, *English Historical Documents 1783-1832* (London: Routledge, 1996 edn.), 576.



suffix esquire, White Parsons only to mister.<sup>64</sup> However, esquire was a nebulous title, and Corfield is right in considering that traditionally it indicated someone who had the right to bear a coat of arms. She believes that what was more attractive at this time was ‘the amorphous but distinguished accolade of being a ‘gentleman’’<sup>65</sup> John White, as he was named at birth, had inherited his farm but had had to add the suffix ‘Parsons’ to his surname to satisfy the terms of the will. This was not unusual, and others within the Group, including aristocrats, who had inherited under similar terms, bore two surnames.<sup>66</sup> The terms of some wills specified that the beneficiary had to change their surname to that of the benefactor, as in George Tollet’s case (christened George Embury). Still, an inheritance did not necessarily elevate the benefactor to the Esq. suffix, whilst almost all tenants were known as Mr.<sup>67</sup> Every show or meeting that listed attendees always did so in rank order, and despite this thesis classifying many of these men as Mr, they were often only recorded by name only. However, there is no doubt that each was above the rank of a lowly commoner, all at least lower middle class; even livestock artists, such as Garrard, expected to be referred to as Mr.

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<sup>64</sup> William Marshall cites from ‘Brown’s Derbyshire’ in describing a ‘properly styled yeoman’. William Marshall, *A Review and Complete Abstract of the Reports to the Board of Agriculture; from the Midland Department of England* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1815), 65-66; Mingay considers during the eighteenth century the term ‘yeomen’ could mean ‘gentleman farmers’; men who were ‘very properly styled yeomen’. But he goes on to say the term was also appropriated by others to mean a smallholder or statesmen, as they were called in Westmorland. He rightly says the term yeoman is archaic and he prefers to use the clumsier, but more precise, ‘owner-occupier’. For a more detailed discussion on this see G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 88-9.

<sup>65</sup> Corfield, ‘7.13 Lords and Ladies’, 7-8.

<sup>66</sup> Wills during this period often stipulated the major beneficiary had to suffix the testator’s surname to their own before they could inherit. These names were not usually hyphenated, for example, White Parsons, Bate Dudley and Gordon Gray. In some cases, legacies to aristocrats were also subject to the addition of a surname, such as George O’Brien Wyndham, third Earl of Egremont. The name of O’Brien had been added in 1741 before a very substantial bequest, involving properties in Ireland, three English Counties and a London townhouse, could be received. The third Earl included the name O’Brien on the death of his uncle, Percy Wyndham O’Brien, Earl of Thomond, in 1774 on inheriting the Irish estates. H.A. Wyndham, *A Family History 1688-1837: The Wyndhams of Somerset, Sussex, and Wiltshire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 108; Sarah Webster, ‘Estate Improvement and the Professionalisation of Land Agents on the Egremont Estates in Sussex and Yorkshire, 1770–1835’, *Rural History*, Vol. XVIII, Iss. 1 (2007), 51, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956793306002019>, (accessed 28 December 2021).

<sup>67</sup> One notable exception was Lord Ludlow who was a tenant of the Dukes of Bedford at Cople.

How then did this heterogeneous group manage the class differential between them? Although a detailed study of the class structure of Georgian society is beyond this study's remit, from the research undertaken, it is evident that the Group was hierarchical in structure and mirrored the landed interest. With agriculture still the largest employer in 1800, at the head of the landed interest were the wealthiest landowners; generally, the richest men in society, the country's political structure, weighed in favour of them.<sup>68</sup> Within the Group, its natural leaders were the aristocratic agriculturalists, below which each man knew their place. This hierarchical model was a persistent one, and for Edmund Burke, it was divinely sanctioned. An aristocracy-dominated social and political hierarchy was what Providence ordained, the social ties between different levels of society kept firmly in place, the 'principles of natural subordination' correctly observed.<sup>69</sup> Or, as one nineteenth-century observer pointed out, the space between the ploughman and the peer was crammed with circle after circle, each fitted to sit upon another, connecting them and making the whole a cohesive element.<sup>70</sup> But for A H Halsey, this historical view whereby each level of society was interlinked into a finely layered and elaborately graded procession was 'the vulgar liberal conception of a continuous hierarchy of prestige or status.'<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, each man clearly understood his place within this 'elaborate graded procession', whatever Halsey's views. But their shared enthusiasm for promoting and furthering agricultural improvement allowed them to interact with one another and regularly spend some hours sociably in each other's company. This point is argued throughout this thesis. Their objective was not solely because it was financially advantageous for them to do so, nor that it was also a patriotic initiative that helped support their country during a

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<sup>68</sup> Thompson, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Edmund Burke cited in David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (Penguin Books, 2000), 61.

<sup>70</sup> H.J. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society: 1780-1880* (London, 1969), 23, cited in Cannadine, 62.

<sup>71</sup> A.H. Halsey, *Change in British Society* (Oxford, 1995, 4<sup>th</sup> edn.), 144, cited in Cannadine, 164; This hierarchical view of society was only one of three social models that Cannadine argues were visible during this period. Cannadine, 164.

prolonged war period, but also because it interested them. These men regarded their agricultural successes and failures as a challenge. They saw the agricultural friendship between them as symbiotic, and this concept of a beneficial relationship to all parties is explored further in Chapter Two. Although this explains how these men managed the class differential between them, it does not explain what made it possible in the first place. This thesis contends that a strong Whig presence within the Group, particularly the Foxite contingent, allowed an egalitarian air to permeate their meetings and shows. The following section supports this claim.

## **2. Whigs, Manners and Agricultural Friendship**

‘My presence was evidently a political restraint to them, and I experienced a great drawback even in their agricultural friendship...’<sup>72</sup>

*Wobourn Sheepshearing* has been referred to as a study of agrarian Whiggery at work because, as Joe Bord points out, George Garrard portrayed ‘a number of Whig worthies in pastoral poses’.<sup>73</sup> This study has identified 19 Whigs, many of whom staunchly advocated the Whig party's political ideologies and were leading figures within the field of agricultural improvement.<sup>74</sup> Garrard also portrayed at least 15 Tories, but these were not such a close-knit group as the opposition Whigs, who were forged together through long years out of power. Of the Whigs identified, many were loyal Foxites. These men held a deep affection for their leader Charles James Fox. Bate Dudley had also been one of Fox’s friends and was one of Garrard's influential Whig agricultural improvers. He wrote the words above when his agricultural friendship came under pressure whilst staying in Hertfordshire with a group of

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<sup>72</sup> Henry Bate Dudley to Col. McMahon, 9 June 1812, letter 114, A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Letters of King George IV 1812-1830*, Vol. I, February 1812-January 1815 (Cambridge University Press, 1938), 112-3.

<sup>73</sup> Bord, 108.

<sup>74</sup> The Whigs Garrard portrayed included the sixth Duke of Bedford, the Earls of Darnley, Ludlow, Thanet and Upper Ossory, the radically minded brewer, Samuel Whitbread II, whom Garrard depicts talking to William Adam, the ‘fixer’ for the Whig party and the Prince Regent. Others include Sir John Saunders Sebright, and three of the most active and influential Whig country MPs, Thomas William Coke, John Christian Curwen and Charles Callis Western.

eminent Foxite agriculturalists. Before investigating why he had upset his fellow farming enthusiasts, the section focuses on Whig ideology. It looks at the influence of the keen Foxite agriculturalists on the camaraderie within the Group. Then, focusing on John Ellman demonstrates how Foxite egalitarianism worked in practice and explains why Ellman's friendship was sought by many of the Group's aristocrats. After establishing the part Whig values played in agricultural friendship, the section closes by exploring what caused the tension between Bate Dudley and his fellow Whig agriculturalists.

### **Friends of Liberty and Equality**

'He who contends for Freedom, Can neer be justly deemed his Sovereign's Foe.'<sup>75</sup>

Liberty, reform and belief in the supremacy of parliament over the crown had become central to Whig political ideology after the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 had ceded power from the crown into the hands of the government.<sup>76</sup> This bloodless revolution had provided the English with a national identity, antithetical to France, where its absolutist regime eventually led to the French Revolution. For all Whigs, the Glorious Revolution had been a significant turning point in English history. In line with many staunch Whigs, Curwen, a Whig MP and keen agriculturalist believed most Britons looked back upon it with pride and gratitude.<sup>77</sup> In his presidential speech to the Workington Agricultural Society in 1810, he

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<sup>75</sup> John White Parsons, *A Tribute of Gratitude to the Memory of the late most noble Francis Duke of Bedford* (1802).

<sup>76</sup> During the Glorious Revolution, the Catholic King James II was overthrown by his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange. This act heralded the beginning of political democracy as in return for parliament's support for Holland in its war against France, William and Mary accepted constraints on their authority. For more on the Glorious Revolution see Stephen Quinn, 'The Glorious Revolution of 1688', *The Economic History Association, EHnet*, [website], <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-glorious-revolution-of-1688/>, (accessed 21 July 2021).

<sup>77</sup> [Curwen], 'The Report of the President', *The Rules and the Proceedings of the Anniversary of the Workington Agricultural Society and the Reports to that Society by the President for the year 1810* (1810), 35.

Figure 7<sup>78</sup>



*Charles James Fox*

Richard Westmacott (1822)

Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster

Fox is supported by a figure representing Liberty, leaning over him is a figure representing Peace and at his feet kneels a mourning slave

congratulated fellow members on the agricultural progress they had all made that year. He reminded them that it had been ‘the patriotic restorer of the British Constitution [William of Orange]’ who, having united the country, had made agricultural improvement one of his first objectives.<sup>79</sup> The importance of agriculture to the country remained a key component of Whiggism. At the turn of the nineteenth century, most of the great agrarian aristocratic estates across the country were in the hands of

longstanding Whig dynasties. This Whig influence from that period is still evident in many stately homes today.

However, when George III came to the throne in 1760, he was an assertive and politically minded monarch. His government was founded upon a doctrine of rule by crown and church, antithetical to the Whigs’ idea of government. As James MacIntosh said, a love of loyalty influenced Tories, whilst for Whigs, it was a love of liberty.<sup>80</sup> The end of the American War of Independence (1783) saw the Whigs fragment into different factions. The

<sup>78</sup> Richard Westmacott, *Charles James Fox*, Marble Statue (1822), London: Westminster Abbey. Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

<sup>79</sup> *The Rules of the Workington Agricultural Society* (1810), 36.

<sup>80</sup> Kriegel considers James McIntosh was Edmund Burke’s erstwhile adversary and subsequent acolyte. Abraham D. Kriegel, ‘Liberty and Whiggery in Early Nineteenth-Century England’, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. LII, No. 2 (June 1980), 254, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1878230>, (accessed 18 July 2021).

most vociferous of these were the Foxites, who had opposed the American war. They were staunchly loyal followers of Fox, and central to their political ideology was liberty.<sup>81</sup> Foxites disagreed with George III over his handling of the war with America, and in their support for freedom, they were sympathetic to the republican principles that underpinned the French Revolution, supported Catholic Emancipation, and promoted anti-slavery. Fox himself proposed abolishing the slave trade, which parliament passed in 1807.<sup>82</sup> His memorial in Westminster Abbey prominently depicts a slave mourning at his feet.

The leading Foxites' affection for Fox, both during his life and after his death, created a strong affinity. As N B Penny says, this intense affection for Fox possibly played a more important part in his political following than any English politician of comparable standing has experienced before or since.<sup>83</sup> There is no better illustration of this than the Temple of Liberty at Woburn Abbey. It was begun by the fifth Duke of Bedford and completed after his brother's death by the sixth Duke. Unusually the temple was not dedicated to liberty but Fox, 'the high-priest of liberty', as Penny calls the man who had devoted his life to preserving it.<sup>84</sup> Penny goes on to say that after Fox's death, with his supporters still in political exile and with no decisive leadership, it was the memory of his leadership that held his old friends together.<sup>85</sup> Fox not only engendered loyalty from the men but also the Whig wives. Among the most vociferous Whig ladies in their support for Fox at the 1784 election was Georgiana

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<sup>81</sup> For a good overview of the Foxite Whigs see Duncan Watts, *Whigs, Radicals and Liberals, 1815-1914* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2004 imp. 10), 14-16.

<sup>82</sup> 'Past Foreign Secretaries: Charles James Fox', *History of the British Government*, GOV.UK, [website], <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-foreign-secretaries/charles-fox>, (accessed 21 July 2021).

<sup>83</sup> N.B. Penny, 'The Whig Cult of Fox in Early Nineteenth-Century Sculpture', *Past & Present*, No. 70 (1976), 94, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/650347>, (accessed 16 June 2021).

<sup>84</sup> '[Fox's] bust was placed in the square *cella*, dramatically top-lit so that when the doors were opened the visitor's eye was "immediately attracted by his expressive features, and by the mildness and benignity which beamed from his countenance."' H. Corbould and H. Moses, *Outline Engravings and Descriptions of the Woburn Abbey Marbles* (London, 1822), cited in Penny, 96.

<sup>85</sup> Penny, 94.

Duchess of Devonshire.<sup>86</sup> She composed the poem inscribed on the pedestal below Fox's bust that stood in the centre of the Temple of Liberty at Woburn.<sup>87</sup>

Although many Foxites were metropolis based and, like Fox, were not interested in scientific agriculture, they were not, as Peter Mandler believes, solely a party of fashion.<sup>88</sup> Some of Fox's staunchest allies were leading agricultural improvers, including the Dukes of Bedford and Coke. The political print below satirically depicts the fifth Duke of Bedford sowing guineas which germinate into tiny revolutionary figures wielding daggers, whilst Fox smiles down upon him in a fatherly and benevolent fashion. There was a strong bond between these Whig agriculturalists, the sixth Duke moving his seat at non-farming events to sit beside Coke, his great agrarian Whig friend.<sup>89</sup> As Susanna Wade-Martins says, the Whigs formed a close circle that could also include smaller players.<sup>90</sup> One of these was the Staffordshire farmer Tollet. Before Coke knew Tollet but wanted to buy sheep from him, he asked another keen 'buff and blue' man, John Crewe, to give him an appraisal of Tollet and his farming methods. Crewe was a mutual friend of both, and there is little doubt that a central part of his favourable report on Tollet to Coke was that Tollet's political affiliation was given, like theirs, to the Whig party.<sup>91</sup> The Hertfordshire gentleman farmer and Lloyds insurance broker, Thomas Greg, was also actively welcomed into this coterie of enthusiastic

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<sup>86</sup> The notable ladies who supported Fox at the Westminster election of 1784, dressed in party colours of buff and blue and wearing foxtails in their hats, were Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire; Harriet, Lady Duncannon; Anne Seymour Damer; the Duchess of Portland; Lady Jersey; Lady Carlisle; Mrs Bouverie; Mary Robinson; Mrs Crewe and others. The Duchess of Devonshire famously exchanged kisses for votes for Fox. Rachel Knowles, 'The Ladies of the Election: The General Election of 1784', *Regency History*, [website], <https://www.regencyhistory.net/2015/05/the-general-election-of-1784.html>, (accessed 29 June 2021).

<sup>87</sup> Penny, 97.

<sup>88</sup> Peter Mandler, 'Whiggism and Liberalism, 1780-1850', *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals 1830-1852* (1990), Oxford Scholarship Online, 18, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198217817.003.0002, (accessed 21 July 2021).

<sup>89</sup> Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (eds.), *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. VI, April 1803-December 1804 (Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1979), 2310-11. In 1807, the year after Fox's death, the sixth Duke of Bedford named his new son Charles James Fox Russell.

<sup>90</sup> Susanna Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk 1754-1842* (The Boydell Press, 2010 rep.), 187.

<sup>91</sup> George Tollet to John Crewe, 21 April 1805, F/TWC 2 (uncatalogued), Holkham Manuscripts (F/TWC 2, Holkham). Tollet recounted to Coke that he knew Crewe had given Coke both information about him and a flock appraisal. George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 21 April 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham. See Chapter Two of this thesis for more information on the friendship between Tollet and Coke.

Whig hierarchy, as much for his Whig affiliation as his enthusiasm for advanced cultivation techniques.

Figure 8 <sup>92</sup>



*The GENERAE of PATRIOTISM – or-the Bloomsbury farmer, planting BEDFORDSHIRE wheat*

James Gillray (1796) © National Portrait Gallery, London

As discussed, the scaffolding of turn-of-the-century Whiggery was a dynastic structure of great agrarian clans who held estates across Great Britain and Ireland.<sup>93</sup> Many of the Whigs portrayed within *Wobourn Sheepshearing* came from just such families. Joe Bord firmly believes that agricultural improvement was a vital preoccupation of leading Whigs

<sup>92</sup> James Gillray, *The GENERAE of PATRIOTISM – or - the Bloomsbury farmer planting BEDFORDSHIRE wheat*, Hand-coloured Engraving, 248 mm x 350mm (1796), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D12407. Charles James Fox smiles benevolently as the sun on the scene below which depicts the fifth Duke of Bedford sowing gold coins accompanied by two other ardent Whigs, his friend James Maitland, eighth Earl of Lauderdale, and Fox's friend, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who wears a bonnet-rouge. The old weary bull represents John Bull. The print relates to the fifth Duke's keen interest in farming and his lavish spending for Whig party purposes. For more information on these political satires see Frederic George Stephens and Mary Dorothy George, *BM Satires/Catalogue of Political and Personal Satire in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (1870-1954), [website], <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIB294>, (accessed 3 March 2022).

<sup>93</sup> Bord, 103, 109.



such as these.<sup>94</sup> As great landowners, they saw the benefits of agricultural chemistry when incorporated into their empirical farming methods.

Bord believes that although Whigs were often condemned for their social condescension, their concept of statesmanship was egalitarian at its root, so able to accommodate persons of relatively humble status. He sees it as having a universal aspect that implies a form of social mobility through such things as comprehensive knowledge and patriotism.<sup>95</sup> This thesis supports Bord and argues that the leading Foxites who embraced scientific farming actively sought to make their shows and meetings egalitarian. In their role as statesmen, they embraced the highly political understanding of the aristocrat's responsibility and saw themselves as the trustees of popular sovereignty.<sup>96</sup> With the Tories in power, Whigs considered the best ways of aiding their country was by improving their estates, disseminating their ideas, and increasing agricultural production for their country's benefit. The fifth Duke of Bedford epitomises this patriotic Foxite brand of politics.<sup>97</sup> After his death, Fox said the Duke's keen interest in promoting agrarian improvement had been for the 'solid obligation of the country.' He went on to say that the Duke had believed 'that at this particular moment [during the wars with France] that it was the most useful pursuit in which he could be engaged.'<sup>98</sup>

There was no better way of promoting agricultural improvement for Foxites, such as the Dukes of Bedford and Coke, than hosting a farming show. But for these events to be truly effective, they needed to attract the very best farming minds, regardless of status or political

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<sup>94</sup> Jan Golinski, 'Review of Joe Bord, Science and Whig Manners', in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. LIII, No. 1 (2010), 144, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/423333/pdf>, (accessed 28 June 2021).

<sup>95</sup> Bord, 12-13.

<sup>96</sup> Mandler, 19.

<sup>97</sup> Using the example of Thomas William Coke Wade-Martins gives an excellent overview of what patriotism meant to these Foxite Whigs. Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 7-8.

<sup>98</sup> *Eulogium on the Late Duke of Bedford. Delivered by Mr Fox in the House of Commons* (Robert Laurie and James Whittle, 22 March 1802).

affiliation. As the following chapter discusses, Lord Somerville thought the same. Although not a Whig, Somerville was egalitarian by nature. As the Board of Agriculture's president (1798-1800), he realised that it also needed to attract the same top agriculturalists if ordinary farmers were to take the organisation seriously.<sup>99</sup> The Dukes of Bedford, Coke and Somerville all understood that the interaction between these celebrated agriculturalists, as Garrard called them, and the landowners and farmers was imperative to move agricultural production forward. As men all schooled in social etiquette, they knew that for men from different social classes to interact successfully, their events had to be as convivial as possible. Chapter Four explores how they actively organised their post-show dinners to achieve this.

### **Egalitarianism in Practice**

How then did Foxite egalitarianism work in practice? Focusing on John Ellman's friendship with both Dukes of Bedford will shed light on this. A few minutes spent exploring Ellman's position within the Group will also introduce another recurring theme within this thesis: how ingenuity and skill could level the playing field between agriculturalists. Garrard's placement of those he depicted within *Wobourn Sheepshearing* illustrates how eclectic the Group was with nobles, breeders and tenant farmers mingling together. In some cases, noblemen, such as John Montagu, the fifth Duke of Manchester and brother-in-law to the sixth Duke of Bedford, are not even identifiable within the print, whilst tenant farmers are portrayed in more conspicuous positions than their aristocratic landlords and landed proprietors. One of these is Ellman, whom Garrard prominently portrayed talking with the Duke of Clarence, the future King William IV. Ellman points out one of the Woburn Southdown sheep to the Prince; doubtless, one descended from his breeding.

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<sup>99</sup> The first section of Chapter Two discusses this in more depth.

Figure 9 <sup>100</sup>



John Ellman (left) and the Duke of Clarence  
Detail from *Woburn Sheepshearing* (1810)

The successful Southdown flock at Woburn was in no small part due to the assistance that the older and far more experienced Ellman gave to the fifth Duke of Bedford and his brother, the sixth Duke, after his untimely death. Both Dukes were not only visitors to Ellman's farm over the years, but they also became his friends.<sup>101</sup> The fifth Duke told Ellman he 'ever considered himself indebted to your judgement and assistance' in the management and selection of his flock.<sup>102</sup> On one occasion, when asked where he had been after one of his visits to Ellman, the Duke

replied, 'I have been farming with my friend Ellman'.<sup>103</sup> The sixth Duke was also grateful to Ellman's help and, in recognition of this, presented him with a trophy, the inscription thanking him not only for the liberal assistance he had personally given him with the Woburn Southdowns but for his meritorious and successful exertions generally with the breed.<sup>104</sup> As Foxites the sixth Duke believed that it should be his and Coke's primary objective 'to

<sup>100</sup> George Garrard, *Woburn Sheepshearing*, Proof, Hand-coloured Engraving (1810).

<sup>101</sup> [F.P. Walesby], 'Memoir of Mr. Ellman', *Baxter's Library of Agricultural and Horticultural Knowledge* (J. Baxter, 1834 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), xxxv-xxxvi.

<sup>102</sup> [Walesby], xxxv-xxxvi.

<sup>103</sup> [Walesby], xxxv.

<sup>104</sup> [Walesby], liii.

promote every improvement in the management of farms at the least expense to the cultivator, otherwise we have no business to be farmers', but he believed Ellman's improvements to the Southdown, which he saw as benefitting the whole country, should receive some remuneration. He told Ellman, 'you have a fair right and ought to look for a full remuneration for all the trouble and expense you have been at in the improvement of the breed of sheep in question.'<sup>105</sup>

Unlike most farmers and ancillary tradesmen within the Group, some of Ellman's correspondence is still extant. At his death in 1832, more existed, and together with the many conversations Ellman had with F P Walesby, informed the latter's biography of him.<sup>106</sup> These reveal that another good friend was Somerville, and his many letters to Ellman show how the aristocrat solicited the older man's assistance in his objective to make the country self-sufficient in fine wool production, considering Ellman's help was essential.<sup>107</sup> Another of Ellman's noble friends was the Earl of Bridgewater, and he and Ellman corresponded and visited each other for many years, the Earl often asking Ellman to judge at his farming shows.<sup>108</sup>

Ellman's status within the agricultural world was such that he frequently entertained aristocracy. But to best understand Ellman's vast difference in status to the noblemen who visited and stayed with him, it is necessary to visit their homes. Whilst many of the great stately houses, such as Woburn Abbey and Holkham Hall, are much as they were at the turn of the nineteenth century, so too are the small, slightly dark rooms of Ellman's tenanted farmhouse at Place Farm, Glynde, in which he entertained Dukes and Earls. Still, there is no record that Ellman stayed as one of the Dukes' guests in the Abbey during the sheep shearing

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<sup>105</sup> [Walesby], xxxv.

<sup>106</sup> Ellman's memoir was published in 1834. Ellman died in 1832 and initially Baxter published this anonymously. Later editions bear Walesby's name.

<sup>107</sup> [Walesby], xxxvii-xxxviii.

<sup>108</sup> [Walesby], xviii, liii.

meeting. Although most likely invited, the Dukes and many aristocrats staying as Ellman's guests over the years, he doubtless refused the invitation. Ellman understood the proprieties of his relationship with these landed gentry. As the sixth Duke of Bedford said, 'he never forgot he was a farmer.'<sup>109</sup>

Thompson points out men of humble birth who had some wits and gentility could gain acceptance and, in some cases adulation, from the upper classes.<sup>110</sup> However, what Thompson describes is more akin to meritocracy, where a person progresses in life through talent and ability, not by class, wealth or privilege. Agricultural friendship was not meritocratic; it was more egalitarian with commercial undertones. It was a friendship that came about through a shared interest that involved respect and admiration and was beneficial to those concerned. It was more on the lines of Trusler's view that 'A poor man is equally respectable in society also, if he is a useful member of it; and his equality with the rich is shown and seen by his usefulness.'<sup>111</sup> Although not a poor man, Ellman could not be considered wealthy compared to the aristocracy, some of whom were among the richest in the country, the gentry and some larger gentlemen farmers. Still, he was more than equal to all of them in sheep husbandry, and they revered his ingenuity as they referred to his skill in selective sheep breeding. Although this respect and admiration could not remove the social difference, it could level it to a certain degree. For Ellman, his friendship with the nobility was doubtless satisfying to him personally, but, importantly, it benefitted him financially. Although imparting his knowledge and expertise helped progress agricultural improvement, Ellman was a professional farmer, and selling his livestock to these aristocrats was financially

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<sup>109</sup> [Walesby], xxviii.

<sup>110</sup> Thompson, 8.

<sup>111</sup> Although Trusler wrote this in response to events in France, counselling against radicalism and discontent, his comment has relevance in this instance. J. Trusler, *Three Short Letters to the People of England* (London 1790), 6, cited in Corfield, 'Class by Name and Number', 40.

rewarding. His flock book, where he recorded his yearly sales of sheep, reads like the who's who of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century landed aristocracy.<sup>112</sup>

### **Whig Manners in Practice**

A strong Foxite influence helped give the Group an egalitarian air, where men of lower status, such as Ellman, were actively welcomed. But this thesis argues that the Foxite Whigs' interest in scientific agriculture also played a part in the agricultural friendship within the Group. The thesis supports this claim by drawing on Joe Bord's recent research into Whig manners or values that he considers were an important way for Whigs to express group identity. After explaining Bord's concept of Whig manners, a short case study on Thomas Greg's innovative cultivation methods will demonstrate how these manners worked in practice and the part they played in the agricultural friendship within the Group.

Bord argues that for Whigs, such as the Dukes of Bedford and Coke, science functioned not as an ideology or policy but as a style or value and had a place within the spectrum of Whig manners.<sup>113</sup> He defines manners as ways Whigs identified attractive values in shared public behaviour and existed to convey an impression.<sup>114</sup> Although he acknowledges manners were not such important driving forces as ideology, policy and class, he believes they have been underestimated in the current understanding of Whiggish identity.<sup>115</sup> The four primary manners which Bord believes Whigs adopted to express group identity in public were liberality, statesmanship, cultivation and rational sociability.<sup>116</sup> He defines liberality as public generosity on a grand scale, statesmanship as possessing comprehensive knowledge that transcends individual self-interest, cultivation as the

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<sup>112</sup> 'John Ellman Sheep Farmer of Glynde: account books and various', PIC/SAS/-HC, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office.

<sup>113</sup> Bord, 2.

<sup>114</sup> Bord, 3.

<sup>115</sup> Bord, 5.

<sup>116</sup> Bord, 3; Golinski, 144.

participation in the georgic tradition of land ownership (agricultural improvement) and rational sociability as the practice of sociability centred upon shared intellectual pursuits.<sup>117</sup>

Bord argues that Whigs expressed these four dominant manners via distinctive modes of engagement with science. He argues that from 1790-1850 science was important within Whig circles and that although during this period there was a great diversity of political objectives, alliances and ideologies among Whigs, there was a recognisable cohesion of political manners in which science played a discernible part in the cultivation of Whig identity.<sup>118</sup> By adopting different manifestations of scientific engagement within his four primary manners, Bord illustrates how Whig manners worked in practice.<sup>119</sup> For instance, the sixth Duke of Bedford's patronage in hosting the Woburn Sheep Shearings epitomises liberality.<sup>120</sup>

However, it would be wrong to suggest that hosting an agricultural meeting was exclusively the province of this 'tight-knit group of agricultural improvers' as Bord calls Foxites such as the Dukes of Bedford and Coke.<sup>121</sup> Tory MPs within the Group, including the Earl of Bridgewater, Sir Watkin Williams Wynne and Frank Sitwell, and the non-political Lord Somerville, all liberally hosted farming meetings. But in their interest in agricultural improvement and hosting shows, these men were undoubtedly influenced by the leading Foxite agriculturalists. Williams Wynn made this very clear when he announced to the guests at his post-show dinner in 1809 that 'he was ambitious to follow the example of two of his friends', the sixth Duke of Bedford and Coke, in their 'unwearied attention to the

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<sup>117</sup> The georgic tradition relates to Virgil's *Georgics* which during the eighteenth century was freely drawn upon in poetic circles as well as by the landed interest, who were interested in its application in relation to farm management. Bord describes the georgic tradition as being drawn upon in influential poses of cultivation which comprised a lineage of harmonious pastoral ideas that were inherited by Whig politicians. Bord, 135; For more on this see Chapter 5, 'The Georgic Tradition' in Bord, 102-34.

<sup>118</sup> Bord, 2.

<sup>119</sup> Bord, 7.

<sup>120</sup> Bord, 108.

<sup>121</sup> Bord, 107.

improvement of agriculture’, whilst in 1811 said that it had been ‘his greatest pride to tread in their steps’ in establishing his show at Wynnstay.<sup>122</sup>

Figure 10<sup>123</sup>



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Sir Watkin Williams Wynn talking to George Finch, eighth  
Earl of Winchilsea (mounted)  
Detail from *Woburn Sheepshearing* (1810)

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Although these Foxites were leading lights within the Group, they did not discuss politics at their meetings and dinners. When the Lunar Society met up, Jenny Uglow points out that all political divisions were forgotten. This was also true with the Woburn Group.<sup>124</sup>

The first Woburn Sheep Shearing report in 1797 stated ‘there was not one word of *politics*’

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<sup>122</sup> ‘Wales’, 1 January 1810, *Monthly Magazine*, 94, in NewspaperArchive (NA). ‘Woburn Sheep Shearing: Second Day’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VIII (1811), 382.

<sup>123</sup> Garrard (1810).

<sup>124</sup> Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men: The Friends who made the Future 1730-1810* (Faber and Faber, 2003 edn.), 265.



whilst Young reiterated in 1800 that the conversation at the sheep shearings had always been entirely agricultural.<sup>125</sup> At the last Holkham Sheep Shearing in 1821, Coke said that regular attendees knew that he had always cautioned his friends and been exceedingly guarded on his part to avoid mixing politics with agriculture at any of his farming meetings.<sup>126</sup> Agricultural improvement was much more important than political point scoring!

*Figure 11* <sup>127</sup>



The trophy awarded by Sir Watkin Williams Wynn in 1813 for the Best Pen of Ewes at Wynnstay Agricultural Meeting, 1813

That Coke did not let political allegiance encroach upon his great interest in agricultural improvement is evident in his support for Williams Wynn, the young agriculturalist and Tory MP. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the unmarried Williams Wynn hosted his annual agricultural show at Wynnstay in Denbighshire. His regular attendees included many partisan Whigs, including Coke and the sixth Duke of Bedford. Coke's enthusiasm to support their friend's efforts to improve the local Welsh livestock, regardless of

their opposing political views, meant that he judged for him on occasions. In 1813, he and Orlando Bridgeman, first Earl of Bradford (1762-1825), another Whig stalwart from the Wider Woburn Circle, judged the sheep class, for which they awarded this trophy (above).<sup>128</sup>

<sup>125</sup> 'Woburn Abbey Sheep-Shearing', 24 June 1797, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 3 in BNA; *Annals*, Vol. XXXV, 257.

<sup>126</sup> Coke said this twice, at the first and last dinners at the final 1821 Holkham Sheep Shearing. R.N. Bacon, *A Report on the Transactions of The Holkham Sheep-Shearing* (1821), 6, 74. The 1821 meeting was the only one when politics were discussed. Wade-Martins says that these events were claimed to be non-political, this being the only meeting when politics were mentioned in the speeches. Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 116.

<sup>127</sup> *Wynnstay Agricultural Meeting, 1813, for the Best Pen of Ewes, Silver Trophy*.

<sup>128</sup> For more on the first Earl of Bradford's involvement with George Tollet and Thomas Walton, see the second part of Chapter Two. The sheep were judged by Thomas William Coke, the first Earl of Bradford and Mr

Having established that even when a close cohort of keen Whig agriculturalists was present discussing politics rather than agriculture was frowned upon, did the manners these leading Whigs displayed play any part in the agricultural friendship that existed within the Group? Although Bord says that manners did help to create a group identity, he does not expand on whether they had any effect on friendship or interaction formed through a shared identity.<sup>129</sup> Chapter Four looks at this aspect of shared identity during its investigation into the major agricultural dinners, which argues that these dinners were structured to create a shared identity and sociability between the Group. But what about on an individual basis? What part might Whig manners have played within the agricultural friendships that leading Whigs enjoyed with others within the Group on a one-to-one basis? In his patronage of Humphry Davy, the Board's Professor of Chemistry, Bord rightly says the sixth Duke of Bedford's endeavours in promoting scientific improvement was continuing an agrarian Whig tradition, a policy that many within the Whig aristocracy found agreeable.<sup>130</sup> Although Bord does not discuss any form of friendship developing between the two, this thesis argues that Bord's manners did play a part. Although Davy was a high Tory and the sixth Duke a passionate Whig, the two were friends and shared an interest in scientific farming.<sup>131</sup> Garrard depicted Davy standing just behind his 'great leaders of Agricultural enquiry', and, as June Fullmer rightly points out, in striving to make agricultural science both fashionable and accessible, Davy's friends came increasingly from the landed aristocracy.<sup>132</sup>

Focusing on the sixth Duke of Bedford's interest in the cultivation methods of Thomas Greg illustrates how Whig manners did help agriculturalists from different backgrounds to become friends. Greg farmed at Coles Park in Hertfordshire, and his

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Ashdown. They awarded the prize to Mr. Edwards from Baschurch. 'Wynnstay Agricultural Meeting', 17 September 1813, *Chester Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>129</sup> Bord, 3; Golinski, 143.

<sup>130</sup> Golinski, 144.

<sup>131</sup> Bord, 107.

<sup>132</sup> J.Z. Fullmer, 'Humphry Davy's Adversaries', *Chymia*, Vol. VIII (1962), 147, cited in Berman, 68.

innovative cultivation methods interested many within the Group, including staunch Whigs, such as the sixth Duke and Coke. Greg was a self-made man who came to London from Belfast around 1768 when he was about 16. Although Greg said ‘he owed nothing to his family but an indifferent education’, his father seems to have got him into marine insurance broking.<sup>133</sup> Fortuitously, Greg set up on his own as an insurance broker and underwriter in 1772, the year after Lloyds became a society of subscribing members and his business prospered.<sup>134</sup> In 1783 he bought Coles Park for £3,137 and bought additional land over the next 42 years so that by 1825 he was farming 1,481 acres.<sup>135</sup> Greg typifies the concept of an amateur farmer as it was understood then: a keen farming man whose main living came from a profession other than land. Although Greg did not retire from his brokering business until 1811, from the time he bought Coles, he took on the role of a gentleman farmer and began to take a keen and active interest in the cultivation of his farm.<sup>136</sup> His enthusiastic interest and involvement in arable farming brought a request from the Board in 1809 to publish a pamphlet detailing his unique cultivation techniques.<sup>137</sup> By 1813 this had run to three editions and was still in print in 1841.<sup>138</sup> Greg is not included within the Group simply because he did not come to prominence as an agriculturalist until 1809. By this time, Garrard had completed the preparatory work on his portraits for *Wobourn Sheepshearing*.

By 1809 the sixth Duke had become a frequent visitor to Coles. In this, he was no doubt influenced by Coke. Greg said he owed his first enthusiasm for studying agriculture and his ‘best lessons’ in it to Coke, his ‘invaluable friend’.<sup>139</sup> Greg was at Wynnstay in 1813

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<sup>133</sup> Michael Janes, *From Smuggling to Cotton Kings: The Greg Story* (Memoirs, 2010), 32.

<sup>134</sup> Janes, 33.

<sup>135</sup> For details on his land purchases between 1783 and 1825 see Janes, 46-7.

<sup>136</sup> Janes, 46-50.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas Greg, *A system for managing heavy and wet lands without summer fallows; under which a considerable farm in Hertfordshire is kept perfectly clean and made productive* (J. Ridgway, 1813 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), 5.

<sup>138</sup> Greg, *A system of managing* (London, 1841 edn.).

<sup>139</sup> Greg, *A system for managing* (J. Ridgway, 1813 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), 6.

when Coke judged for Williams Wynn, and he had long attended Coke's sheep shearings.<sup>140</sup> At Coke's last show in 1821, the familiarity and friendship between Coke, Greg and William Keppel, fourth Earl of Albermarle, another staunch Foxite, is evident as Coke jokingly asked 'his friend Mr Gregg [sic]' for his appraisal of the Earl's farm. So too is the solid egalitarian ethos of these meetings, as after being toasted by Coke, Greg told the 700 attendees that he would be happy for any of them to visit him at Coles, where they would always find bed and board.<sup>141</sup>

The sixth Duke was very impressed with Greg's excellent results on his heavy Hertfordshire land, as the soil conditions were similar to those experienced by many Bedfordshire farmers. The Duke continually criticised many of his fellow Bedfordshire farmers for their backwardness in embracing scientific farming.<sup>142</sup> In this, Coke supported him and lamented their lack of progress.<sup>143</sup> At the Duke's behest, Greg had offered the management of his farm to the notice and inspection of Bedfordshire farmers.<sup>144</sup> The Duke further emphasised his desire for his fellow county farmers to adopt Greg's cultivation methods by arranging for three well-respected Bedfordshire farmers, including John Higgins, one of the Woburn Group, to visit Greg's farm. They did this on several occasions during the winter of 1809 and the spring of 1810.<sup>145</sup> They then compiled a report on their findings for the Duke. At the Woburn Sheepshearing of 1811, the Duke, after welcoming Thomas Greg, proceeded to hand out the printed report of Greg's farming practices to those present, saying

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<sup>140</sup> 'Wynnstay Agricultural Meeting', 17 September 1813, *Chester Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>141</sup> Bacon, 20-1.

<sup>142</sup> The sixth Duke gave his main reason for ending the Woburn Sheep Shearings in 1813 as his failure to stimulate the Bedfordshire farmers to improve their farms, along with his ill health in preventing him from following these improvements up. 'Woburn Sheep Shearing; Third Day', 17 June 1813, *London St James Chronicle and Evening Post*, 1, in NA.

<sup>143</sup> At the 1811 Woburn Sheep Shearing the sixth Duke of Bedford had to apologise for the offence his and Coke's comments had given to some at the 1810 meeting when they criticised the Bedfordshire farmers for their 'lamentable backwardness in agricultural improvements'. 'Woburn Sheep-Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VIII (1811), 385.

<sup>144</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 377.

<sup>145</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 372, 377.

he could verify everything in the account after his own repeated visits. He proposed the health of Greg, who replied to his toast.<sup>146</sup>

In his enthusiasm to promote what he called Greg's 'novel practices', there is no doubt that all four of Bord's manners are evident in the Duke's actions. By being interested in agricultural improvement, in this case, cultivation, the Duke exemplifies what Bord calls the georgic tradition of land ownership. Bord's concept of statesmanship is evident in the Duke's comprehensive knowledge of the subject and his active promotion of agricultural advancement among the Bedfordshire farmers, whereby his desire to improve their farming practices transcended his own self-interest. He displayed liberality by generously hosting the Woburn Sheep Shearing each year, sponsoring the visits to Greg's farms, and printing the report of these visits. Finally, in his display of what Bord calls rational sociability. After dinner at the 1811 Woburn Sheep Shearing, the Duke distributed the report to his guests, including many Bedfordshire farmers, then discussed it.

### **Agricultural Friendship under Pressure**

The sixth Duke and Greg had become friends. On 8 June 1812, the Duke stayed at Coles with a small group of agriculturalists, including Coke.<sup>147</sup> As Greg's guests were primarily eminent Foxites, and he thought Coke 'a conspicuous example of political integrity', it is evident Greg was also a Whig.<sup>148</sup> At this house party of keen farming enthusiasts was another Whig, and leading agriculturalist, Henry Bate Dudley. Bate Dudley was an influential force within the Group, and all those present would have known him well.

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<sup>146</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 377.

<sup>147</sup> Henry Bate Dudley to Col. McMahon, Aspinall, *The Letters of George IV*, 112-3.

<sup>148</sup> Thomas Greg cited in 'Letter to Sir John Sinclair' in 'Biography of T.W. Coke Esq.', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IX (1811), 139.

Nevertheless, that night, his presence within the party reveals that political affiliation could occasionally override agricultural friendship. Like Greg, Bate Dudley was another from a relatively humble background. He was a man with his finger in many pies. As John Matthews says, his exploits as the colourful and controversial editor of the leading London newspapers, *Morning Post* and *Morning Herald*, were enough to earn him a rightful place in history.<sup>149</sup> For many years, Bate Dudley provided the text on agricultural matters in the newspapers.<sup>150</sup> Latterly, he had also become ‘press agent’ to the Prince Regent. But close to Bate Dudley’s heart was a love of agriculture. Even as a young man with minimal farming experience, his friend, the great thespian David Garrick, would affectionately address his letters to him as ‘Dear Farmer’.<sup>151</sup> Bate Dudley was a keen member of the Group, having gained renown for transforming the marshy wilderness of Essex’s Dengie Peninsula into top-quality farming land. Garrard considered him one of the celebrated agriculturalists, and he often judged stock and implement competitions at the major farming events.<sup>152</sup> In 1808 he was one of the committee from the Group chosen to oversee the presentation to the sixth Duke of a magnificent salver as a token of their gratitude for hosting the Woburn Sheep Shearings.<sup>153</sup> Bate Dudley was an enthusiastic Whig, and one of the founders of the Whig Club instituted in 1784. His name appears nearer the top of this list than Fox’s.<sup>154</sup> But recently, he was seen as the Prince Regent’s man. This association made him persona non

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<sup>149</sup> John G. Matthews, ‘Wonders Will Never Cease: The Life and Times of The Reverend Sir Henry Bate Dudley 1745-1824’, unpublished, 2022.

<sup>150</sup> *The Ipswich Journal* recorded that its agricultural news was always taken from the *Morning Herald*, which was written by The Revd Henry Bate Dudley. ‘Ipswich August 13’, 13 August 1796, *Ipswich Journal*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>151</sup> David Garrick to Henry Bate, 8 July 1774, Philbrick Library Collection of Theater Letters, ph100537, *Claremont Colleges Digital Library*, [website], <https://ccdlib.claremont.edu/digital/collection/ph1/id/3022>, (accessed 29 December 2021).

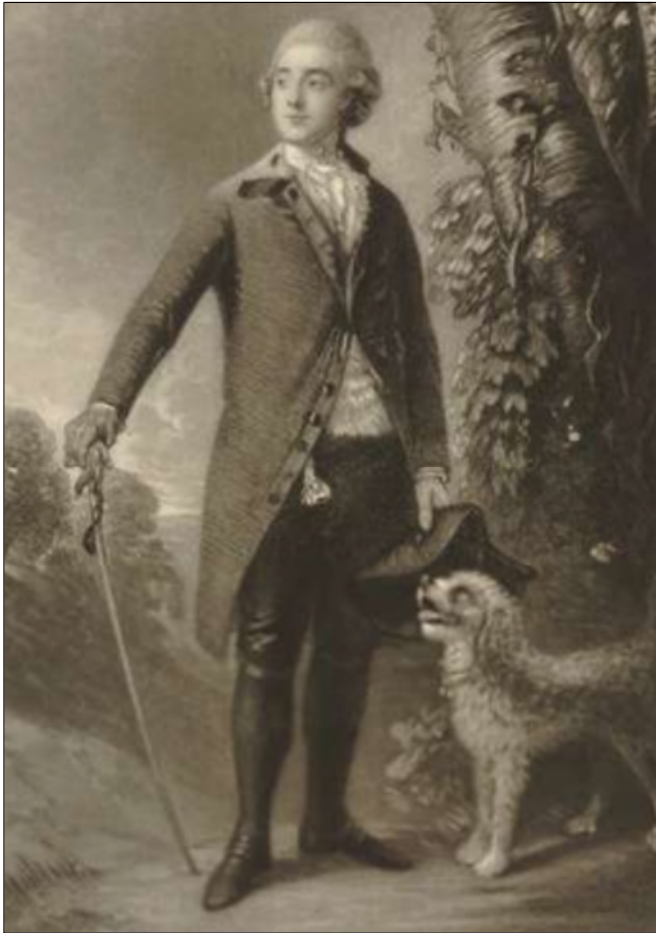
<sup>152</sup> For instance, Bate Dudley judged the ploughing competition with Lord Somerville at the 1805 Woburn Sheep Shearing. ‘Woburn Sheep Shearing: Third Day’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 442.

<sup>153</sup> ‘Recommencement of the Woburn Sheep Shearing, Bedfordshire’, 23 June 1808, *Dublin Evening Post*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>154</sup> *Bellamy, Whig Club*. Bate Dudley’s name appears second on page 17, whilst Fox’s is thirtieth on page 19. Several other Whigs within the Group were also members.

grata among this select group of Whig agriculturalists entertained by Greg at Coles in June 1812.

Figure 12<sup>155</sup>



*Revd Sir Henry Bate Dudley, Bart*  
James Scott after Thomas Gainsborough  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Bate Dudley had become acquainted with the Prince of Wales during the Westminster elections of 1784. With the Prince and leading Whig ladies, he had promoted Fox around the hustings.<sup>156</sup> In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a large percentage of newspaper revenue came from private individuals and political parties who promoted news about themselves or suppressed it. Bate Dudley was a master at obtaining money for puffs or hiding news, and the Prince found him a useful ally in suppressing stories about his mistresses. As the Prince moved

away from his Whig friends, Bate Dudley became his unofficial publicist. For this, his reward was not only a knighthood but the promise of a pension. In 1810, after George III's mental health deteriorated to such an extent that he was considered unfit to govern, the Prince

<sup>155</sup> James Scott after Thomas Gainsborough, *Revd Sir Henry Bate Dudley, Bart*, Mezzotint, 292 mm x 188 mm (c. 1868), London: The British Museum, No. 1837,0513.205. Licenced under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

<sup>156</sup> A letter in *New Spectator* signed by 'John Bull', which satirised the procession of Whigs who supported Charles James Fox during the 1784 Westminster election, stated that Bate Dudley, the Prince of Wales, and three of the leading Whig ladies were conspicuous among the procession. 'Political Theatre', 18 May 1784, *New Spectator*, 7-8 in NA.

took over his father's role. The Regency was formally ratified in February 1811. However, any hopes the Whigs had of future advancement were dashed when, to their great disappointment, the Prince decided that the Tory regime should remain, with Spencer Percival continuing as Prime Minister.<sup>157</sup> After Percival's assassination on 11 May 1812, the Prince asked his friend Francis Rawdon-Hastings, first Earl of Moira, to approach the Whigs to form a coalition government.<sup>158</sup> Although Moira was an independent Whig, he failed to win over the Whigs.<sup>159</sup> During their visit to Coles on 8 June, the Foxite Whigs, already concerned with the failure of the Prince Regent to appoint a Whig administration, were further agitated by a rumour that the Prince had now asked Moira to be Prime Minister at the head of a Tory government.<sup>160</sup> Although the Whigs would have found Bate Dudley a valuable conduit to convey their feelings to their erstwhile royal friend, on this occasion, his relationship with the Prince and his private secretary Col McMahon caused political tension between them over the Moira situation. Understanding this puts Bate Dudley's letter the following morning to McMahon into perspective.

Coles, Tuesday [9 June 1812]

I am in the midst of a clik of the most indignant oppositionists, the Duke of Bedford, L<sup>d</sup> Albermarle, Coke, Edw Coke &c. They came down to dinner much depressed under an idea that Lord Moira had accepted the Premiership. My presence was evidently a political restraint to them, and I experienced a great drawback even in their agricultural friendship, and experienced a coolness from them all, evidently for my own political offences,...Though this is a sacrifice which I own hurts me, you may be assured that I did not demean myself on this occasion for want of a proper portion of pride, and equal reserve with their own, which I had satisfaction to find they felt: for this morning they were more communicative...<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> The Prince Regent's thought process was that the Whigs' liberal and anti-monarchical sentiments were unfavourable to good government. He wanted the war with France energetically pursued and at this stage did not want to experiment with Catholic emancipation. His thinking was very much influenced by the Hartford family, all staunchly Tories, and particularly by his mistress Isabella Marchioness of Hertford. Christopher Hibbert, *George IV: Regent and King 1811-1830* (Allen Lane, 1974 rep.), 16.

<sup>158</sup> Francis Rawdon-Hastings, first Earl of Moira (1754-1826).

<sup>159</sup> The Whigs refused Moira's invitation after their request for the resignation of the Regent's entire Household, including the Hertfords, was refused by the Prince Regent. Hibbert, *George IV*, 20.

<sup>160</sup> After the Whigs refused Moira's invitation, the Prince Regent then asked Moira to put together a government with the help of the Tories. Hibbert, *George IV*, 20.

<sup>161</sup> Aspinall, *The Letters of George IV*, 112-3.



As Bate Dudley's letter reveals, relations were far more cordial the following morning between him and the 'indignant oppositionists' after they learned Moira had turned down the Prince's invitation. As he told McMahon, 'their joy was boundless *on learning* that Lord Moira had "got out of the d--d scrape as they termed it".<sup>162</sup> Although Bate Dudley's loyalty to the Prince was rewarded with a baronetcy six months later, it is more difficult to ascertain how well his agricultural friendship fared with the staunch Foxites.<sup>163</sup> He was getting older, and, as he was no longer farming, he became more involved in church business than agricultural improvement. His financial affairs, which had always been problematical, became more pressing. Like many within the Group, he began to step back from his farming involvement from around this time. The reasons why the Woburn Group came to an end are returned to in Chapter Four.

### 3. Wives and Friendship

'Calm and unassuming in the ordinary offices of social life'<sup>164</sup>

These words are part of a long and touching tribute Coke had inscribed on the beautiful and expensive monument he had erected in St Mary's Church, Tittleshall, in memory of his wife Jane, after her death in 1800.<sup>165</sup> This memorial is the antithesis of the insignificant plaque Young had installed on Bradfield Combust's church's vestry wall in memory of his wife Martha, who died in 1815.<sup>166</sup> Although they had been married for over 50 years and had 4 children, there is no mention of this in the dedication. In a curt inscription,

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<sup>162</sup> Aspinall, *The Letters of George IV*, 113. Quote reproduced as written. In the end, Moira, an independent Whig, must have felt he could not form a government with the Tories without the aid of the Whigs. Knowing this the Foxite Whigs at Coles believed Moira had got himself out of a scrape. After Moira had turned down the position the Prince had no alternative but to resort to the administration as it had been before the crisis caused by Percival's death, appointing Robert Jenkinson, second Earl of Liverpool to the position of Prime Minister. Hibbert, 20-1.

<sup>163</sup> 'Whitehall Nov. 3.', 4 November 1812, *London Statesman*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>164</sup> This is line 11 in the 23-line tribute on the memorial to Jane Coke by her husband. It is reprinted in full in A.M.W. Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk and his Friends* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1912 edn.), 285-6.

<sup>165</sup> Since the mid-Victorian period the Earls of Leicester and their families have been buried in St Withburga's Church, in the grounds of Holkham Hall. But the earlier Earls of Leicester, including Thomas William Coke, and their families, are buried in St Mary's Church, Tittleshall, Norfolk; Joseph Nollekens sculpted the monument to Jane Coke at a cost of £3,000. Stirling, 286.

<sup>166</sup> Martha Young's memorial plaque is in All Saints Church, Bradfield Combust, Suffolk.

Young stated that her great-grandfather had been the first man in Norfolk, ‘who there used marl’.<sup>167</sup> As John Gazley says, there has seldom been a less affectionate tribute.<sup>168</sup>

## Two very different memorials

Figure 13<sup>169</sup>

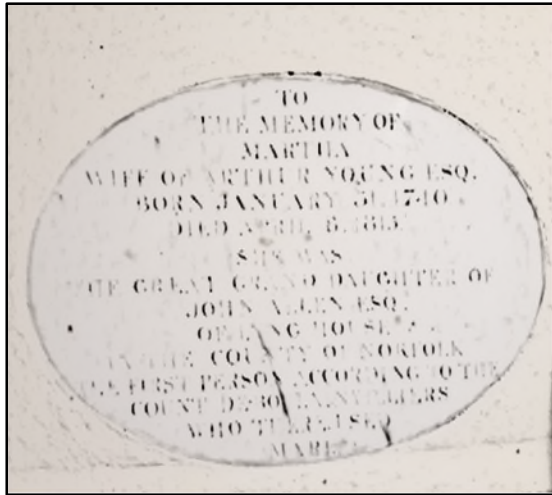


Figure 14<sup>170</sup>



Martha Young's memorial

Jane Coke's memorial

<sup>167</sup> The plaque reads ‘To the memory of Martha, wife of Arthur Young Esq. Born January 31<sup>st</sup> 1740 died April 8 1815. She was the great grand daughter of John Allen Esq. of Lyng House in the County of Norfolk, the first person, according to the Comte de Boulainvilliers, who there used marl.’ Marl is a mixture of clay and calcium carbonate that is dug out of the ground and used to add substance to light land. It was used extensively across much of the sandy farmland of Norfolk.

<sup>168</sup> John G. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young 1741-1820* (American Philosophical Society, 1973), 635.

<sup>169</sup> Marble plaque dedicated to Martha Young, All Saints Church, Bradfield Combust, Suffolk. The inscription on her plaque is the antithesis of the inscription on Arthur Young's sarcophagus in the church yard which reads, ‘Let every real patriot shed a tear, For genius, talent, worth, lie buried here.’

<sup>170</sup> Joseph Nollekens, *Memorial to Jane Coke*, Marble (1809), St Mary's Church, Tittleshall, Norfolk.

This section concludes by exploring the relationships wives like Jane Coke and Martha Young had with their husbands and asks if they played any part in their spouses' agricultural friendship with others within the Group. Because the fellowship enjoyed between men like Coke and Young flourished at farming events, it focuses primarily on wives whose husbands laid on farming events that attracted attendees from well outside of their local area. If the shows run by agricultural societies and national shows hosted by bachelors, such as the fifth Duke of Bedford, Lord Somerville, and Sir Watkins Williams Wynn, are discounted, only a handful of men fulfil this prerequisite. Nevertheless, this short exploration into their wives is illuminating. It reveals how helpful or otherwise these wives could be in helping their husbands' shows to be successful. It also sheds light on a very under-researched area: the role of women in Georgian agricultural society at the turn of the nineteenth century. Briony McDonagh's recent research into the role of elite women in the agrarian landscape has provided a welcome addition to this field.<sup>171</sup> She has also contributed to a study on land ownership and women where the focus is on how gender shaped opportunities for, and experiences of, owning land.<sup>172</sup> However, neither publication addresses the role of women, elite or otherwise, whose husbands were at the forefront of agricultural improvement. Primarily this is because there is even less information about these women than their husbands. This short section, therefore, fulfils two briefs: firstly, it supports the thesis's objective of better understanding agricultural friendship between their husbands and, secondly, by shedding light on these women and their marriages, it adds its voice to those of McDonagh and others who seek to understand the role of Georgian women in agriculture. As Coke's epitaph to his wife is the antithesis of Young's, it suggests their relationships with their spouses were very different, and the section is sub-divided to reflect this. The first part

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<sup>171</sup> Briony McDonagh, *Elite Women and the Agricultural Landscape, 1700-1830* (Routledge, 2019).

<sup>172</sup> Amanda L. Capern, Briony McDonagh and Jennifer Aston (eds.), *Women and the Land 1500-1900* (Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2019).

focuses on women, such as Martha Young, whose relationships with their husbands were unhappy, the second on marriages, like Jane Coke's, which were far more harmonious. It concludes by considering the role of the Dishley Twp Society members' wives in supporting their husbands, which was on a different footing to that of the other wives discussed.

### **Marital Discord**

'The most unlucky lottery I ever took a ticket in'.<sup>173</sup>

The young agriculturalist and landowner Frank Sitwell used these words to describe his unhappy marriage. His family came into wealth when his father inherited a fortune and properties when Sitwell was 17.<sup>174</sup> After his father died two years later, Sitwell inherited Barmoor Castle in Northumberland and over three and half thousand acres.<sup>175</sup> He began to take a keen interest in farming and, by 1806, was described as having 'lately addicted himself to agricultural pursuits.'<sup>176</sup> Although he lived in Northumberland, he was a keen member of the Group, and he attended agricultural shows and meetings across England and Scotland. For five years, he held farming shows at Barmoor, but he was also a keen exhibitor, exhibiting his stock widely and once sending sheep 360 miles to Lord Somerville's London livestock show.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> 'Letter from Francis Sitwell to his son Frank', 30 July 1810, 'Will of Francis Sitwell of Barmoor Castle, Northumberland', 6 March 1813, The National Archives, PROB 11/1543/27, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D894502>, (accessed 5 August 2018). Hereafter 'Will of Francis Sitwell'.

<sup>174</sup> His father was born Francis Hurt and inherited the Renishaw Hall estates in Derbyshire from his wife's cousin and Barmoor Castle in Northumberland from a Phipps relative. Inheriting the Derbyshire estates necessitated changing the family's name to Sitwell. For more information on the Sitwell family see the archives in the Sitwell Museum at Renishaw Hall, Derbyshire.

<sup>175</sup> Sitwell's elder brother Sitwell Sitwell inherited the Renishaw Hall estate.

<sup>176</sup> J.M. Collinge, 'SITWELL, Francis (?1776-1813) of Barmoor Castle, Northumb.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, [website], <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/sitwell-francis-1776-1813>, (accessed 20 September 2018).

<sup>177</sup> Sitwell was regularly mentioned for the quality of the stock he exhibited at the Workington Agricultural Society's show. For a good report on a pig he exhibited at this show and how good his stock was, see 5 December 1807, *York Herald*, 2, in BNA.

Although Sitwell was very keen on agricultural improvement, he does not appear to have been so enthusiastic about his marriage.<sup>178</sup> At 21, he had married Anne Campbell from Glasgow. They had only known each other for six weeks, which Sitwell later said meant he was unaware of her character and short temper. It did not help that he was also on the rebound. He called it ‘an inconsiderate matrimonial alliance without affection’. He complained that it was always ‘jaw jaw jaw, always wrangling always discontented’ and it wore him down and spoilt his temper. From Sitwell’s advice to his son about marriage, he obviously did not love her. He told him that he did not care if he married an heiress, or one of the family’s domestics, providing he loved her and that she was not Scottish!<sup>179</sup>

Nevertheless, despite being an acrimonious marriage, they produced 5 children in just over 13 years. In Anne Sitwell’s defence, living a long way from Glasgow, she had no family network to support her, especially during Sitwell’s frequent absences, often for agricultural purposes. Money was also a constant source of tension between them, which Sitwell blamed upon his wife’s family, particularly her brother, whom he detested, warning his son to ‘shun him as you would a viper’.<sup>180</sup> On top of his financial problems, Sitwell also suffered from failing health, and in 1808, he moved south, ostensibly for his health but also to avoid his creditors. He never returned home, dying in 1813 at only 39 years.

Although Sitwell’s marriage was unhappy, his shows were popular, and he was well-liked by the local Northumberland landowners and farmers.<sup>181</sup> Holding an annual show would have been a significant financial outlay, but it would also have been a considerable

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<sup>178</sup> For more information on Sitwell see Appendix II of this thesis and Hilary Matthews, ‘‘As you love your father so love her’’: Remembering the Marriage of Francis Sitwell and Harriet Augusta Manners, 26 September 2018’, in *Reading History*, University of Reading, [website], [https://unireadinghistory.com/2018/09/25/as-you-love-your-father-so-love-her-remembering-the-marriage-of-francis-sitwell-and-harriet-aug\(usta-manners-26-september-2018/](https://unireadinghistory.com/2018/09/25/as-you-love-your-father-so-love-her-remembering-the-marriage-of-francis-sitwell-and-harriet-aug(usta-manners-26-september-2018/), (accessed 2 August 2021).

<sup>179</sup> ‘Will of Francis Sitwell’.

<sup>180</sup> ‘Will of Francis Sitwell’.

<sup>181</sup> ‘Lord Somerville’s Spring Cattle Shew’, *The Universal Magazine, New Series*, Vol. XI (1809), 273.

inconvenience for Anne Sitwell with five young children. Their home would have been full of Sitwell's guests during the show, including his close friends, local gentry, and those from the Woburn Group who had made the long journey.<sup>182</sup> Sitwell also had to wine and dine all the attendees at the show, which could run into hundreds. He would have had to provide a public breakfast and a dinner during the day. Depending on numbers, meals could have been held in the house, a marquee or a purpose-built or converted farm building. Sitwell would also have had the added expense of buying plate and providing premiums for the show

Figure 15 <sup>183</sup>



*Francis (Frank) Sitwell*  
Detail from *Woburn Sheepshearing* (1810)

Sitwell's first show was more of a lavish party when he invited a large contingent to view his New Leicester tups.<sup>184</sup> Anne Sitwell probably enjoyed this novelty, but after that, the high costs involved and the enormous amount of upheaval to the household must have been very disruptive. It would have been challenging for the most even-tempered and mild-mannered wife. With five young children and stuck in a loveless marriage with financial worries, Anne Sitwell must have been far from enamoured with the yearly disruption to the household and the costs involved in hosting the show. She probably returned to Glasgow during

<sup>182</sup> In 1806, after the Holkham Sheep Shearing some of the attendees went off 'on tour' to visit other agriculturalists in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland. Their ultimate destination was Sitwell's show, held a fortnight after the Holkham event. 'Holkham Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XIV (1806), 423.

<sup>183</sup> George Garrard (1810).

<sup>184</sup> Chris Green, 'Aspects of Berwick's Cultural History: Battle of the Sheep', *Friends of Berwick & District Museum and Archives Newsletter*, No. 42 (March 2004), 15, <http://www.berwickfriends.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Newsletter-2004-March.pdf>, (accessed 2 August 2021).

the event, which most likely suited both husband and wife. After his last show in 1808, when he sold all his livestock, Sitwell moved south.<sup>185</sup> However, it was not his wife and children who accompanied him, but his mistress, the children's governess. Having been deserted and lost her home, the final ignominy for Anne Sitwell must have come four years after Sitwell's death. Their eldest son married his father's mistress in Paris upon coming of age. Their marriage would last over 40 years.<sup>186</sup>

Susannah (Susan) Wakefield was another young wife with a large family whose husband nearly went bankrupt because he was determined to host an agricultural show. At 24, she was 7 years older than Edward Wakefield when they married. They must have made a handsome couple; he was tall and good looking, she was beautiful 'with a cascade of golden hair'.<sup>187</sup> Wakefield's parents had a £3,000 per year annuity and, as his new wife was the illegitimate daughter of an Essex yeomen farmer with no dowry, he persuaded his parents to invest in a farm in Romford, Essex. It was here that the first two of their ten children were born.<sup>188</sup>

In 1799, Wakefield shocked his family when he announced he had taken on the lease of a far larger farm and intended moving the family to Burnham on Crouch. The move upset his wife, who was six months pregnant with their third child. His mother, Priscilla, who thought her daughter-in-law sensible but short-tempered, reported Susan was emotionally very low about the prospect of moving.<sup>189</sup> She knew that Burnham was in Essex's

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<sup>185</sup> 'Barmoor Sheep Show, 1808', 25 June 1808, *York Herald*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>186</sup> In his letter to his son, Sitwell said Harriet Augusta Manners had been like a second mother to his son and, although illegitimate, she was better bred than they were. Therefore, it is likely that she was the Sitwell children's governess or possibly nanny. For more information on Harriet Augusta Manners, see 'Will of Francis Sitwell'; Hilary Matthews, 'As you love your father', *Reading History*.

<sup>187</sup> Philip Temple, *A Sort of Conscience: The Wakefields* (Auckland University Press, 2003 edn.), 8.

<sup>188</sup> Temple, 8-9.

<sup>189</sup> Not only were there health implications in moving to the Dengie Peninsula but it also moved the family further away from Priscilla Wakefield. Her diary reports that she regularly had the children, helping Susan out. 'Papers relating to Priscilla Wakefield, 1798-1817', Series-4779, Wakefield Family Papers, MS-Group-1801, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Wakefield's parents were also dismayed as they had invested in his farm expecting to get a steady annuity from their investment. Temple, 15.

inhospitable malaria-infested Dengie Peninsula and not a healthy place to raise a family. What inspired Wakefield to try his luck there were the successful endeavours of Bate Dudley, who, over 20 years, had transformed much of the northern part of the peninsula from a marshy wilderness into a profitable farming enterprise.<sup>190</sup> Like Bate Dudley, Wakefield was a good farmer, and during the nine years he farmed at Burnham, he significantly improved the land.<sup>191</sup> Not only was he well-liked within the local farming community, but he quickly gained the respect and friendship of those within the Group, being invited as one of the select few to stay in the Abbey as a guest of the sixth Duke of Bedford during the Woburn Sheep Shearings.<sup>192</sup>

In 1803, four years after they moved to Burnham, Wakefield decided to host a two-day show.<sup>193</sup> Although the show was a personal success for Wakefield, it was nearly the ruin of his family and caused a schism between his mother and her brother-in-law.<sup>194</sup> As the farmhouse at Burnham was far more modest than Barmoor Castle, Wakefield had to erect a new building to entertain and feed his 150 guests, many of whom were from the Group.<sup>195</sup> But Susan Wakefield cannot have been much help preparing for the show as she was heavily pregnant again and in Woodbridge at Wakefield's sister's house.<sup>196</sup> Here she gave birth to their sixth child eight days after his show.<sup>197</sup> She probably stayed for some weeks because

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<sup>190</sup> For information on Bate Dudley's farming improvements in the Dengie see John Matthews, 'Wonders Will Never Cease'.

<sup>191</sup> As early as 1800 Young was calling Wakefield 'a very noted cultivator'. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVII, 213.

<sup>192</sup> Wakefield stayed in Woburn Abbey in 1803 (with his brother Daniel) and 1805. *Annals*, Vol. XL, 482; *Annals*, Vol. XLIV, 202.

<sup>193</sup> 'Mr. Wakefield's Sheep Shearing at Burnham in Essex', *Annals*, Vol. XL, 639-45.

<sup>194</sup> Priscilla Wakefield's sister Catherine was married to John Gurney of the Norwich banking family. Gurney appears to have lent Wakefield money for his show. Priscilla Wakefield had to help her son avert bankruptcy in 1804 which resulted in an estrangement between the Gurneys and Wakefields. Previously Wakefield had entered into a partnership with his mother's brother Jonathan in 1801. This also ended badly in 1806, with the farm having to be sold in 1807. Temple, 18-20.

<sup>195</sup> The building is still extant today.

<sup>196</sup> Wakefield's sister Isabella (Bell) had married Joshua Head, a Quaker brewer, in 1794. They lived at Woodbridge, near Ipswich. 'Family' *Priscilla Wakefield: Tottenham activist*, [website],

<https://www.priscillawakefield.uk/family.html>, (accessed 16 February 2022).

<sup>197</sup> Temple, 22.



Wakefield was in Chelmsford the day after his show at the Essex Agricultural Society's show and dinner. He was at the Woburn Sheep Shearing for the week just weeks later.<sup>198</sup>

Susan Wakefield was either nursing or pregnant throughout their marriage's early years. For much of this time, Wakefield was away on farming business and attending shows and meetings. The long absences depressed her, the pregnancies wore her down, but even worse, she, the children and the servants regularly suffered from the Essex Ague.<sup>199</sup> The Ague was a form of malaria, which caused recurring and debilitating fevers. By the time she had produced their tenth child, Susan was mentally and physically low, and Wakefield was now unfaithful to her. She probably no longer resembled the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, whose soft angelic beauty he thought would make her the perfect sculptor's model.<sup>200</sup> As Wakefield's old nurse and his eldest daughter knew about his womanising, Susan Wakefield very likely was also aware. Knowing about his affairs surely depressed her even more. His nurse thought he was 'born to make the women's heart ache', and Wakefield himself later said, 'and to bring about their ruin.'<sup>201</sup> Garrard, a keen observer of human nature, depicted Wakefield in *Wobourn Sheepshearing* in profile alongside the sixth Duke of Bedford's prize Hereford bull: two prime stud males stood together.

Through poor timing and bad luck, Wakefield had lost the farm in 1807 and with help from men within the Group, he went to Ireland to write up a political and statistical account of the country.<sup>202</sup> When he returned in 1810, his wife was ailing, exhausted and very thin.

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<sup>198</sup> 'Essex Sheep Shearing', 31 May 1803, *General Evening Post*, 2 in BNA; *Annals*, Vol. XL, 478, 644.

<sup>199</sup> Temple, 22-3; Joseph Farington noted in his diary that Edward Wakefield [Snr] had called. He told Farington that his son Edward Wakefield spoke of the bad effect of residing in the lower parts of Essex near the Sea and that Edward, his wife and several children had suffered from the *Ague*. *He considered* the inhabitants of that county, even those born there, almost always looked sickly and higher wages had to be paid to induce servants to work there. James Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary by Joseph Farington*, Vol. III, 1804-1806 (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1924), 137.

<sup>200</sup> Temple, 8.

<sup>201</sup> Temple, 22.

<sup>202</sup> There is a full report of Wakefield's two-dale sale in *The Agricultural Magazine*, R.W. Dickson (ed.), Vol. I, 1807 (1808), 238-9. Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, Vols. I & II (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1812).

Nevertheless, shortly after his return, she was pregnant again. By 1815 she was rapidly sinking into a state of insanity, incapable of doing anything beyond crying and complaining.<sup>203</sup> Although he was no longer farming, Wakefield was still friendly with many from the Group. These included Young, who had initially encouraged him to establish his land agency business. Although close family and friends knew of her condition, Wakefield was anxious that his ‘noble friends’ within the Group did not learn of it.<sup>204</sup> By February 1816, it did not matter, as by then, she was dead.

Figure 16 <sup>205</sup>



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Edward Wakefield (with arms folded) ‘a great lover of women’ and the Oakley Hereford Bull, ‘allowed to be the handsomest that has been produced’  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810)

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The final marriage to consider in this section is Young’s. Although Young never hosted a show, his fascination for agricultural experiments meant he would have liked to show these off on a large scale to fellow farming enthusiasts. What stopped Young from

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<sup>203</sup> Temple, 42.

<sup>204</sup> Francis Place to James Mill, 16 August 1815, BL, Place Papers 35, 152, f.148, cited in Temple, 42-3.

<sup>205</sup> George Garrard (1810). The first quote is from Edward Wakefield to Frances Davies, October 1823, Mitchell (Wakefield Family) Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, MS-Papers-9512-03, cited in Temple, 22. Note: when Philip Temple referenced these manuscripts they were housed in Devon, England. They were transferred to New Zealand in 2009. The second quote is from Garrard, *Proposals*, 7.

doing this was his wife's antipathy, not only to his farming friends but any friends in general. Young documented much of his life and often mentioned his wife and home life.<sup>206</sup> He married Martha Allen in 1765, tellingly writing in his diary, 'In 1765 the colour of my life was decided. I married.'<sup>207</sup> It was not a happy marriage; 'marital wretchedness' is how David Spring refers to their union; B A Holderness calls her horrifying whilst Gordon Mingay says she was an erratic ill-natured spouse who plagued her husband.<sup>208</sup> Young does not attempt to hide his antipathy towards her in his letters and papers.<sup>209</sup> Today an old cupboard stands in front of Young's cold and heartless epitaph to his wife, obscuring it from view. He must frequently have wished that she was hidden from view during their long marriage.

A chronicler of all things farming-related, Young was a prodigious traveller. His travelling kept him away from home for weeks and sometimes months at a time, and he often stayed as a guest in the opulent homes of aristocratic landowners and more modest farmhouses on his visits. He became friends with men from across the spectrum of the agricultural industry, including George III, and often their wives and families. But Young habitually had money worries, and being absent for such long periods meant Martha Young was frequently left alone to look after their four children and supervise the house, with less money than she would have liked. These factors, and more besides, meant there was always conflict within the Youngs' marriage.

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<sup>206</sup> For a comprehensive view of Arthur Young's life see M. Betham-Edwards (ed.), *The Autobiography of Arthur Young* (London, 1898, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967 rep.) and Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young*.

<sup>207</sup> Arthur and Martha Young were married on 1 July 1765. Betham-Edwards, 32.

<sup>208</sup> David Spring, 'Review of The Life of Arthur Young, 1741-1820, John G. Gazley', in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. LXXX, No. 1 (1975), 110, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1859111>, (accessed 26 April 2020); B.A. Holderness, 'Review of The Life of Arthur Young, 1741-1820, John G. Gazley', in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. XC, No. 357 (1975), 906, [www.jstor.org/stable/567364](http://www.jstor.org/stable/567364), (accessed 26 April 2020); G.E. Mingay, 'Review of The Life of Arthur Young, 1741-1820, John G. Gazley', in *Agricultural History*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 4 (1974), 586, [www.jstor.org/stable/3741392](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3741392), (accessed 28 April 2020).

<sup>209</sup> Both Betham-Edwards and Gazley provide several examples from Young's diary which reveal that the marriage was not a happy one.

Figure 17 <sup>210</sup>



**Arthur Young**

William Daniell after George Dance (1802-1814)  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Although Young was friends with many of the leading aristocratic landowners through their shared agricultural interests, Holderness considers his wife held him back socially.<sup>211</sup> She was the reason visitors did not relish meeting him at their home at Bradfield Hall, preferring to meet him elsewhere.<sup>212</sup> One of the Duc de Liancourt's sons, who shared Young's passion for agriculture and enjoyed his company, gives an insight into Young's domestic life at Bradfield Hall. He said he disliked visiting Young for two reasons: firstly, his table was the worst

and dirtiest possible, and, secondly, on account of his wife. He described her as a hideously swarthy and evil-looking woman who resembled a devil, continually tormented her children and servants, was frequently ill-tempered towards visitors, and rumoured to beat Young.<sup>213</sup>

A keen interest in agricultural experiments underpinned the Group. Over the three decades, Young produced *Annals of Agriculture (Annals)*, he devoted hundreds of pages to

<sup>210</sup> William Daniell after George Dance, *Arthur Young*, Etching, 275 mm x 203 mm, original portrait dated 30 May 1794 (c. 1802-1814), London: The British Museum, No. 1924,0125.4. Licenced under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

<sup>211</sup> Holderness, 906.

<sup>212</sup> Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young*, 174-5.

<sup>213</sup> Francois de la Rochefoucauld (1933), 38, cited in Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young*, 175.

documenting results from farming trials. But he was frustrated in his own endeavours, never able to demonstrate his experiments and trials to more than a handful of visitors because of his wife's antipathy towards them. Martha Young detested his experiments and told visitors of her hatred for them, and that Young had ruined himself by them. When he learned of yet another instance when she had criticised him over his experimental work, he despairingly wrote that he had heard of her maligning him from every part of the world. He said it was lamentable that 'no enemy ever did me the mischief that I received from the wife of my bosom by the grossest falsehoods and the blackest malignity'.<sup>214</sup>

It is evident that Martha Young held her husband back socially and was never an asset in any friendships he made through his great enthusiasm for all things agricultural. In Sitwell and Wakefield's marriages, the disharmony suggests that neither of their wives played any part in the friendships these two made in their agricultural endeavours. Not only were they likely to have begrudged the time and money their husbands expended on their farming activities and the friends they made through them, but they also had to contend with their husbands' philandering. As Amanda Foreman says, Georgians not only enjoyed a robust attitude towards sex but positively relished breaking the rules.<sup>215</sup> Whilst Wakefield was a womaniser, Sitwell genuinely fell in love with a woman he considered his closest friend. That their eldest son should later marry her husband's mistress must not only have angered Anne Sitwell but deeply hurt her. Still, such was their keen interest in agricultural improvement that men like Young, Sitwell and Wakefield were not unduly troubled whether their wives approved or not. In Young's case, Gazley thought that their marriage survived only because of mutual forbearance in later years.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> 'Betham-Edwards, 429.

<sup>215</sup> Amanda Foreman, 'The Georgians: a true age of sexual discovery', *Amanda Foreman*, [website], <https://www.dramandaforeman.com/articles-by-amanda-foreman/the-georgians-a-true-age-of-sexual-discovery/>, (accessed 29 May 2020).

<sup>216</sup> Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young*, 635.

## Marital Harmony

‘All you need for happiness is a good gun, a good horse and a good wife’.<sup>217</sup>

The following three agriculturalists would probably all have agreed with Daniel Boone’s assessment of the three factors he considered made for a happy life. As the previous section on marriages has revealed, an unhappy wife could lead to arguments and unhappiness, and it is likely that not one of those just discussed would consider they had made a good choice of a wife. Sitwell disparagingly told his son that he met his wife ‘At Narrowgate, the common Smithfield for Scotch misses without fortunes who have passed their teens yet pretend they are only escaped from the nursery.’<sup>218</sup> Although Sitwell likens choosing his wife to selecting a beast at Smithfield Market, he hardly conforms to Lawrence Stone’s belief that ‘a sense of control over the environment, and particularly over animal breeding, led men to choose their wives as one would choose a brood mare, with a great deal of care for their personal genetic inheritance.’<sup>219</sup> George O’Brien Wyndham, the third Earl of Egremont, better supports Stone's theory. He chose well when he installed his principal mistress, the 15-year-old Elizabeth Ilive, at Petworth House. Not only was she beautiful, but she had a bright and enquiring mind and went on to develop an interest in agricultural improvement. Under the name of Mrs Wyndham, she bore the Earl seven children, including his heir, and they raised them together as a family.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> John Bakeless, *Daniel Boone: Master of the Wilderness* (Stackpole Books, 1965 rep.), 30.

<sup>218</sup> ‘Will of Francis Sitwell’.

<sup>219</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), cited in Michael J. Stasio and Kathryn Duncan, ‘An Evolutionary Approach to Jane Austin: Prehistoric Preferences in “Pride and Prejudice”’, *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2 (2007), 137, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20831911>, (accessed 4 August 2021).

<sup>220</sup> Being illegitimate meant their eldest son inherited the vast Egremont estates, but not the title. For a good overview of Elizabeth Ilive and her time at Petworth House see Sheila Haines, Leigh Lawson & Alison McCann, *Elizabeth Ilive, Egremont’s Countess c. 1769-1822* (Bakehouse Press, 2017).

Figure 18 <sup>221</sup>



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*George O'Brien Wyndham, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Egremont*  
John Lucas (1834)  
Petworth House, The Egremont Collection  
Petworth © National Trust

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Although the Earl ran an annual cattle fair at Petworth, there is no mention of Ilive having any dealings with this, but she certainly played a part in his agricultural friendships, most notably with Young. She was 23 when Young first met her in 1792, and he must have quickly realised she was an intelligent woman interested in science. An ‘ingenious lady’ was how he described her.<sup>222</sup> The Earl and Young had been close friends since 1792, and the aristocrat was a keen member of the Group. As Young said, ‘no man wishes more cordially for the improvement of the

agriculture of his country, nor would more readily contribute, in any way, to further and promote it, that appeared practicable and useful.’<sup>223</sup> At Petworth House, the Earl had an extensive library of agricultural literature, an agricultural museum, and a philosophers’ room, all of which would have been at Ilive’s disposal. With such a wealth of information, and many agriculturally minded visitors, such as Young, unsurprisingly Ilive developed an interest in scientific farming.<sup>224</sup> She might also have felt that it consolidated her position as

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<sup>221</sup> John Lucas, *George O'Brien Wyndham, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Egremont*, Oil on Canvas, 750 mm x 640 mm (1834), Sussex: Petworth House, on loan to the National Trust from the Egremont Private Collection, No. 485152.

<sup>222</sup> Haines, et al., 49.

<sup>223</sup> Young, *Annals*, XX, 291, cited in Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young*, 304.

<sup>224</sup> McDonagh, 89.

his primary mistress by sharing the Earl's keen interest.<sup>225</sup> With his agreement, Ilive began buying scientific equipment in October 1797, and by early 1798, the Earl had sanctioned a laboratory at Petworth which she could use. Young actively encouraged her work and acted as her agent, dealing with the laboratory equipment suppliers in London on her behalf.<sup>226</sup> He promised to teach her how to weigh hydrostatically, and in one letter to the Earl, Young expressed how pleased he would be to assist her in her trials. He told the Earl he proposed that she erect a small stage on which to keep a few pots and feed plants with inflammable [sic] air.<sup>227</sup>

Ilive invented a system for using levers to raise heavy weights, which she submitted to the Royal Society of Arts in 1795.<sup>228</sup> Along with her essay, she included a diagram and model of her design, explaining that the workmen had trialled it at Petworth and found it worked well, adding that initially, her invention had caused some amusement.<sup>229</sup> The Society's Mechanics Committee awarded her a silver medal, but she could not collect it personally as she was heavily pregnant with their seventh child.<sup>230</sup>

Her next interest was in potato growing. The wars with France meant wheat was both scarce and expensive, so there was a need to provide alternative feedstuffs, such as potatoes, for fattening livestock and feeding them through the winter.<sup>231</sup> In 1795 Young published

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<sup>225</sup> The third Earl of Egremont had many mistresses and illegitimate children. His mistresses included Lady Melbourne and he is alleged to have fathered two of her children. He shared another mistress, Elizabeth Fox, with the Prince Regent. But Elizabeth Ilive was the Earl's only live-in mistress and his only wife, and they were together for 14 years. See Haines, et al., 14, 28-9.

<sup>226</sup> Haines, et al., 54-6.

<sup>227</sup> Haines, et al., 40, 57.

<sup>228</sup> The full title of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) is the Royal Society of Arts for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. It is more usually known as the RSA. It has been in existence since 1754. For more information on the society, see *RSA*, [website], <https://www.thersa.org/about-us>, (accessed 5 January 2022).

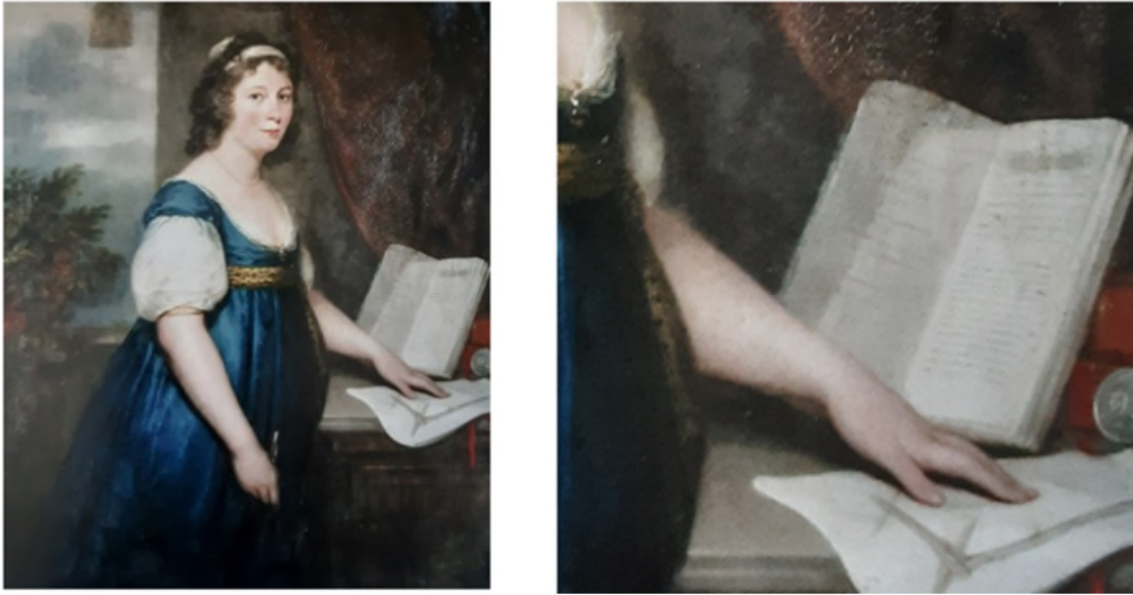
<sup>229</sup> Haines, et al., 38.

<sup>230</sup> Haines, et al., 43-5.

<sup>231</sup> Haines, et al., 45-6.



Figure 19 <sup>232</sup>



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*Elizabeth Ilive 'Mrs Wyndham'*

Thomas Phillips (1799)

With her essay, diagram and the medal awarded to her by the RSA in 1797

Private collection, courtesy of Lord Egremont

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the Board's article on potato growing in *Annals*, and this may have been the impetus for Ilive to commence her experiments in potato growing later that year.<sup>233</sup> The following year, after dispatching her research on the lever to the RSA, she embarked on an organised trial, renting land to set up her potato growing experiments, which she meticulously documented.<sup>234</sup> In 1797, she wrote an article on her trial that Young printed in *Annals* but he had to publish it anonymously because the Earl refused to have her name appear alongside it.<sup>235</sup> As McDonagh says, it is unclear whether this was because of her gender or her unusual position

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<sup>232</sup> Thomas Phillips, *Elizabeth Ilive, 'Mrs Wyndham'*, Oil on Canvas, 1255 mm x 1000 mm (1799). Private Collection, courtesy of Lord Egremont.

<sup>233</sup> The Board of Agriculture 'Hints Respecting the Cultivation and the Use of Potatoes', *Annals*, Vol. XXIV, 64-72.

<sup>234</sup> Haines, et al., 46-8.

<sup>235</sup> Elizabeth Ilive's article appears in *Annals*, Vol. XXIX; Haines, et al., 48-9.

as a live-in mistress at Petworth.<sup>236</sup> Young was annoyed, telling the Earl he was far from convinced by his reasoning; ‘Of what consequence to a careful reader, the age, sex or beauty of a writer, provided he or she writes good Sense?’<sup>237</sup> Ilive’s biographers point out that Young openly admired Ilive, and the Earl may have been resentful of ‘his encouragement of her scientific interests, his tenderness towards her and his admiration for her intelligent common sense.’<sup>238</sup> Young most likely made Sir John Sinclair, the Board’s President and another close friend of the Earl’s, aware of her article when he and Sinclair stayed at Petworth House for the Earl’s show in 1797.<sup>239</sup> Sinclair likely discussed it with her and Young, having been involved in the Board’s original article.<sup>240</sup>

The Earl eventually married Ilive, and although she produced him a legitimate heir, the child died almost immediately, and the couple separated shortly afterwards. Her move from Petworth appears to have brought her agricultural experiments to an end and possibly also her friendship with Young.

During the Georgian period, farming clubs and societies, and their attendant shows, were almost invariably male-only affairs.<sup>241</sup> So, given the Earl’s refusal to allow Ilive’s name to appear beneath her article, it is unsurprising to learn that when the Sussex Agricultural Society came into existence in 1797, with the Earl elected as president, there is no mention of

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<sup>236</sup> McDonagh, 89.

<sup>237</sup> Haines, et al., 48.

<sup>238</sup> Haines, et al., 49.

<sup>239</sup> Arthur Young and Sir John Sinclair were part of the five-man judging team appointed by the third Earl of Egremont to judge the stock at the Petworth Fair held on 20-22 November 1797. The Earl sponsored the prize money. Sinclair was also chairman of the adjudication team for the ploughing match held on the final day. *Annals*, Vol. XXIX, 508-9.

<sup>240</sup> It is Sir John Sinclair, in his capacity as President of the Board, whose name appears at the bottom of the Board’s article on potato cultivation. *Annals*, Vol. XXIV, 72.

<sup>241</sup> The Countess of Orkney was a member of the Bath and West Society of England, but she appears to have made no material contribution. *Rules, Orders, and Premiums, of the Bath and West Society of England, 1810* (1811), Bath and West Archives, 61; In his book, published to celebrate the Club’s bicentenary, Kenneth Hudson makes no mention of her, and there is no mention in any Club reports of her attending any shows or meetings. Kenneth Hudson, *The Bath & West: A Bicentenary History* (Moonraker Press, 1976).

her name on the membership list.<sup>242</sup> However, eight years later, in 1805, when John Christian Curwen formed the Workington Agricultural Society, his wife Isabella, plus all their children, including their daughters, became members. The membership lists also record a few other women members, but frustratingly very little else about them.<sup>243</sup>

John Christian eloped when he was 28 with his 17-year-old cousin Isabella Curwen. His young bride had inherited a fortune, including Workington Hall, where the couple set up home. As he added his wife's surname to his, becoming John Christian Curwen, this is likely to have been a condition of her father's will. It was Curwen's second marriage as his first wife had died shortly after their only child's birth. He and Isabella had eight children, and despite his frequent unfaithfulness, it appears to have been a happy marriage. His wife seems to have been either unaware or, more likely, tolerant of his affairs.<sup>244</sup> She would certainly have known of his seduction of the daughter of their friend, Bishop Watson of Llandaff. Local unpopularity over this contributed to Curwen losing his Workington parliamentary seat at the 1810 election.<sup>245</sup>

From 1800 Curwen became very interested in agricultural improvements and carried out a prodigious number of experiments. He received many medals for his endeavours, including an unprecedented 11 gold medals from the RSA.<sup>246</sup> He first attended the Woburn

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<sup>242</sup> Edmund Scott, *Proceedings of the Sussex Agricultural Society from its Institution to 1798* (1800), 1-16.

<sup>243</sup> In 1806, discounting Mrs Curwen, her daughter and another female member of the Christian family, five female members paid 10/6d each as membership. Membership subscriptions were set on five levels: £1/1/- (a guinea), 10/6 (half a guinea), 7/6, 7/- and 5/-. It was a rule that no subscriptions exceeded £1/1/- or were below 5/-. [Curwen], *The President's Report and the Rules of the Workington Agricultural Society 1806* (1807), 10-19.

<sup>244</sup> Admiral Sir Hugh Clobury Christian's daughter Ann noted in a letter, 'Mr C. [John Christian Curwen] and Mrs. P.'s [Paunceford] flirtation is really Troppo. I am more amazed than I thought I could now be at anything that Mrs. C. [Isabella Curwen] does not observe it. It is most fortunate she does not for I really believe he cannot help himself and is really infatuated.' Christopher Hugh Maycock, *A Passionate Poet: Susanna Blamire*. (The Pattern Press for the Hypatia Trust, 2003), 72.

<sup>245</sup> *Farington Diary* (Yale edn.), xii. 4359, cited in J.M Collinge and R.G. Thorne, 'CURWEN (formerly CHRISTIAN), John Christian (1756-1828), of Ewanrigg and Workington Hall, Cumb.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, [website], [https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/curwen-%28formerly-christian-%29-john-christian-1756-1828#footnoteref12\\_bd](https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/curwen-%28formerly-christian-%29-john-christian-1756-1828#footnoteref12_bd), (accessed 24 June 2020).

<sup>246</sup> Sir Henry Trueman Wood, 'I.X. The Society and Forestry (1758-1835)', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. LX, No. 3112 (1912), 817, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41340221>, (accessed 3 January 2022).

Sheep Shearings in 1805 and was a regular thereafter, as he was at Coke's Holkham Sheep Shearings.<sup>247</sup> More than likely, his visit to Woburn inspired him to establish the Workington Agricultural Society later that year.<sup>248</sup>

The Society held an annual show and meeting (1805-1821) at Curwen's Schoose Farm. Two stewards oversaw the event, but both Curwen and his wife were heavily involved in its arrangements and the cost of running it. Although officially the meeting started on Wednesday and ended on Friday, it began the day before when around 50 men and their wives descended upon Workington Hall from different areas of Cumberland and Westmorland. It concluded on Saturday morning after a public breakfast. The 50 couples stayed as guests of the Curwens for the duration of the event.<sup>249</sup>

If the Woburn Sheep Shearing is generally considered the forerunner of today's agricultural show, this thesis argues that the Workington Agricultural Society's event was the forerunner of today's agricultural conference. Although the agricultural format was similar to Woburn, including livestock classes and ploughing competitions, the make-up of the attendees and the evening entertainment made it a very different affair. Firstly, there were women members present, and secondly, it resembled a conference rather than a show because Curwen and his wife laid on non-agricultural activities for members' wives and the wives of their house guests. On the first morning of the show, those men staying at the hall would

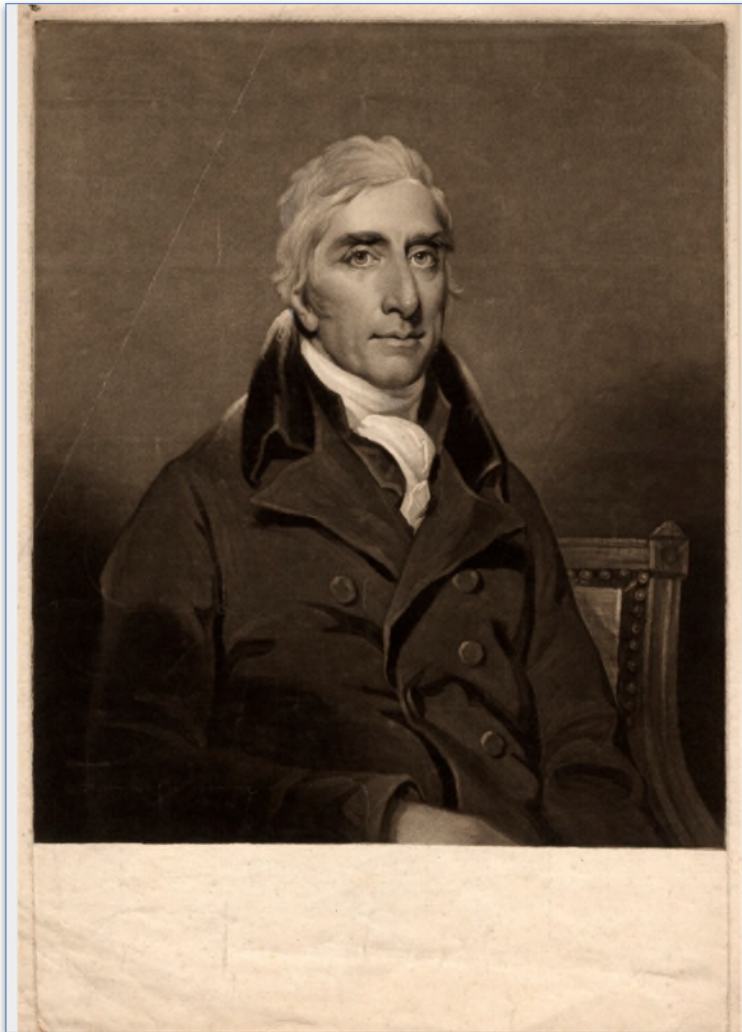
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<sup>247</sup> Arthur Young's lists of those who attended the Woburn Sheep Shearing each year does not include Curwen's name until 1805. If Curwen had been in attendance, it is highly unlikely that Young would not have included him. He would also have likely stayed in the Abbey.

<sup>248</sup> For a report on the Workington Agricultural Society's first show see 'Workington Agricultural Society', 2 November 1805, *Carlisle Journal*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>249</sup> For more information on John Christian Curwen see Appendix II of this thesis; Henry Lonsdale, *The Worthies of Cumberland: John Christian Curwen. William Blamire*. (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1867) and Edward Hughes, *North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. II, Cumberland and Westmorland 1700-1830 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). Hughes states that his central figure is John Christian Curwen.

Figure 20 <sup>250</sup>



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*John Christian Curwen*  
Charles Turner after John James Halls (1809)  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

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adjourn to Schoose Farm, where day attendees joined them.<sup>251</sup>

With the help of his stewards, Curwen laid on a programme of agricultural activities for them whilst Isabella Curwen entertained the wives during the day. She hosted a dinner for them at Workington Hall whilst her husband and the men dined at the farm in a marquee erected for the occasion. After dinner, the men and women met up at the nearby Assembly Rooms in Workington, where Curwen led the prize giving and speeches, concluding with his yearly presidential report. After the formalities had

ended, everyone stayed in the Assembly Rooms for a grand ball. The next day followed the

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<sup>250</sup> Charles Turner after John James Halls, *John Christian Curwen*, Mezzotint Engraving, 360 mm x 252 mm (pub. 1809). London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D1601.

<sup>251</sup> Schoose Farm was Curwen's main farm and is situated very close to Workington Hall. The farm buildings are castellated, and it is still a working farm, and many of the buildings that Curwen erected are still there, although the current occupants consider them unsuitable for farming in the twenty-first century. Personal communication and visit. The pens around the stackyard where the animals were held for shows are still visible. Workington Hall is now derelict. For more information on Schoose Farm see 'Historic England Research Records: Schoose Farm', *Heritage Gateway*, [website], [https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results\\_Single.aspx?uid=d6412685-41a4-4e44-bc9f-0d9273ddef06&resourceID=19191](https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=d6412685-41a4-4e44-bc9f-0d9273ddef06&resourceID=19191), (accessed 3 January 2022).

Figure 21 <sup>252</sup>



*Isabella Curwen*

William George Tennick after George Romney  
Reproduced by kind permission of Kendal Town  
Council

same format until the evening when the ‘ordinaries’ (members) had their dinner in the marquee. Unfortunately, there is no information on whether the small number of women members were also present at this meal. Still, it is not improbable given the egalitarian nature of the event. After dinner, everyone congregated at Workington Hall for Mrs Curwen’s annual ‘Rout’. The cattle sale was on Friday, and in the evening, another ball took place in the Assembly Rooms. The meeting ended on Saturday morning with a public breakfast.<sup>253</sup> As the show was in a remote area, it was a popular event in the local agricultural calendar.

The Curwen’s marriage lasted until Isabella died in 1819. Over many years she helped him with the Workington Agricultural Show and was praised for her politeness and hospitality.<sup>254</sup> She was a great asset in her

<sup>252</sup> William George Tennick after George Romney, *Isabella Curwen*, Oil on Canvas, 1930 mm x 1180 mm (no date), Kendal Town Hall, No. KTH73.

<sup>253</sup> To know more about the annual Workington Agricultural Society’s show and how it functioned see the following newspaper reports: ‘Agricultural Meeting’, 30 September 1809, *Lancaster Gazette*, 3; ‘Workington Agricultural Meeting’, 9 October 1810, *British Press*, 4, both in BNA; ‘Workington Agricultural Meeting’, 13 October 1810, *Evans and Ruffy’s Farmers’ Journal*, 2-3; ‘Workington Agricultural Meeting’, 14 October 1811, *Evans and Ruffy’s Farmers’ Journal*, 2, both in NA. These are only a sample of the reports on the show over the years it ran between 1805-1821.

<sup>254</sup> ‘Workington Agricultural Meeting’, 9 October 1810, *British Press*, 4, in BNA.

husband's agricultural friendships established among this group and the local farming community. Although the shows continued after her death, they were never the same. 'The loss of Mrs Curwen produced an altered feeling, an hiatus in the order of things that could not be counterbalanced by the ready amiabilities of the younger representatives of the family.'<sup>255</sup> Over the years, her input had been an integral part of the event's success.

The last wife to consider is Jane Coke. Coke married Jane Dutton in 1775 when they were both about 21, and they had three daughters but no heir. Surprisingly, although Coke's life is well documented, there is little information about Jane Coke.<sup>256</sup> She was the sister of his brother-in-law, and they had been teenage sweethearts. They were clearly in love as Coke went against his father's wishes to marry her, prepared to lose his inheritance over it.<sup>257</sup>

Although Coke immediately cancelled his sheep shearing after her death in June 1800, her involvement in previous meetings is unclear.<sup>258</sup> She certainly had an input and an interest in his other farming activities. When Ellman and John Boys, who was from the Wider Woburn Circle, were on a farming tour in 1792, they spent a couple of days at Holkham as Coke's guests.<sup>259</sup> Boys provided Young with a detailed report of their trip for *Annals*, and in this, he recounts that they thought Holkham Hall 'a palace of the first rate' and the farm 'a perfect paradise!' Neither he nor Ellman had met the Cokes until this visit and to their 'great mortification' found that Young could not meet them there as they had expected, although he had written to introduce them.<sup>260</sup> Unfortunately, their stay coincided with audit day. Coke, who managed Holkham himself, was tied up taking rents the following morning, so Jane

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<sup>255</sup> Lonsdale, 163.

<sup>256</sup> For what information there is on Jane Coke in print, see Stirling; Hiskey and Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*.

<sup>257</sup> Coke inherited the Holkham estate from his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, and his father eventually accepted his choice of bride. Stirling, 81-2, 89-91.

<sup>258</sup> 'Holkham Sheep Shew', 14 June 1800, *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>259</sup> This tour lasted 25 days in July 1792 and they visited 14 counties, going as far as Bakewell's home at Dishley and returning through Surrey to their homes in Kent and Sussex. *Annals*, Vol. XIX, 72-145.

<sup>260</sup> 'Agricultural Minutes. Taken during a ride through the counties of Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge, Rutland, Leicester, Northampton, Buckingham, Bedford, Hertford, Middlesex, Berkshire, and Surrey in 1792', *Annals*, Vol. XIX, 114-19.

Coke took them out on horseback to see the estate farms. During the morning, the 3 of them covered over 30 miles. Boys report of the morning spent with her shows that both men were delighted with this arrangement:

It is impossible to describe either the pleasure we enjoy in this morning's ride, or the agreeable surprize in meeting with an amiable lady in high life, so well acquainted with agriculture, and so condescending at to attend two farmers out of Kent and Sussex a whole morning to shew them some Norfolk farmeries!<sup>261</sup>

A wife showing visitors around the farm when her husband was absent was not unusual. Young recounts that when he visited Thomas Crook, one of the top stock breeders within the Group, Crook was not at home. His wife, Susannah Crook, 'in the most obliging manner' took Young out to view the farm in his absence.<sup>262</sup> The Crooks' granddaughter recalled that her grandmother was 'possessed of great beauty and rare talents and remarkable learning' so unsurprisingly, Young enjoyed his ride around the farm with her. But reminiscent of other wives already discussed, she 'had not the sweetness of temper and softness of manners that gain attention'. Her granddaughter wrote that Susannah Crook wished to be a good wife, but she struggled because Crook was a 'high spirited, talented but most eccentric husband'.<sup>263</sup> Yet despite their differences, Susannah Crook was still clearly proud of her husband's achievements with the farm and prepared to put herself out to show it off to one of his friends.

Jane Coke did more than show visitors around the farm in her husband's absence because, as Boys pointed out, she was 'well acquainted with agriculture'. As her letters to Sir Joseph Banks reveal, she seems to have had a genuine interest. The Coke family were friends

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<sup>261</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XIX, 118. The letter from John Boys thanking Thomas William Coke for their visit is in F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>262</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXI, 81.

<sup>263</sup> Ellen Mary Bethell, 'History of the Wood Family', cited in Bryant G. Bayliffe, *George Searle Bayliffe*, [website], <http://www.rawes.co.uk/bryant/georgesearlebayliffe.htm>, (accessed 17 July 2018).





**Figure 22** <sup>264</sup>

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*Jane Coke*

Thomas Barber

By permission of the Earl of Leicester and the Trustees of the  
Holkham Estate

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with Banks and his wife and sister, the two families generally staying with one another each summer and socialising together when they were all in London. The letters between Jane

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<sup>264</sup> Thomas Barber, *Jane Coke*, Oil on Canvas, 750 cm x 620 cm (no date), Norfolk: Holkham Hall.

Coke and Banks show that she was involved in Banks and Coke's sheep breeding trial. She sent Banks a wool sample from a Lincolnshire sheep in one letter, telling him the animal had not been sheared for two years.<sup>265</sup> In another, she reported that the sheep Banks had sent two months earlier, presumably for their trial, had finally arrived. Unfortunately, they were not in very good condition, being 'much fatigued with their journey'. She went on to say she had not written immediately but waited two days to see if they had recovered. Unfortunately, they were still ailing, so she told Banks, 'I am sorry to say they do not recover so fast as we would wish & their appetites rather fail them at present'.<sup>266</sup> What is interesting is her use of 'we'; she was equally as concerned about the condition of the sheep as her husband and shepherds, all of them worried that the sheep were not eating. In another letter, she told Banks she had sent by coach a few ounces of long wool he wanted from a particular sheep and had enclosed a letter from the wool stapler that provided Banks with information about its fleece.<sup>267</sup> That she contributed to Coke's farming endeavours is evident when Boys pondered, 'What improvements would be made in this country, if one half of the gentlemen of landed property understood and delighted in agriculture like this worthy family.'<sup>268</sup> Boys made it very clear that 'this worthy family' included Jane Coke, not just her husband.

Undoubtedly, Wade-Martins is correct when she says Coke was genuinely devastated when his wife died.<sup>269</sup> 'She was the one who provided the well-run household that allowed him to shine.'<sup>270</sup> As Stirling says, she understood his temperament, furthered his schemes, and promoted his interests, both socially and in the farming world.<sup>271</sup> His acknowledgement

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<sup>265</sup> Jane Coke to Sir Joseph Banks, 15 November 1789, letter 328 in Harold B. Carter (ed.), *The sheep and wool correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks 1781-1820* (The Library Council of New South Wales in association with the British Museum (Natural History), 1979), 176-7.

<sup>266</sup> Jane Coke to Sir Joseph Banks, 29 November 1789, letter 331, Carter, 177.

<sup>267</sup> Jane Coke to Sir Joseph Banks, 10 December 1789, letter 333, Carter, 178.

<sup>268</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XIX, 118.

<sup>269</sup> Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 68.

<sup>270</sup> Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 71.

<sup>271</sup> Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk and his friends*, 284.

of her assistance and the high esteem he held her in is evident in one line towards the end of his long and moving tribute on her memorial. This line reads, 'He by whom this monument is erected, will never cease to revere her memory...' It would be 22 years before he married again.

Finally, there is another group of spouses to consider briefly. These were the wives of the Dishley Tup Society's members, four of whose husbands were in the Woburn Group, others in the Wider Woburn Circle. Their husbands held open houses each June and September, showing their prize New Leicester tups to visitors. These shows attracted men from across the country, including from the Woburn Group. Visitors selected and then arranged the hire of these breeders' top sires for the forthcoming breeding season. Although this group of leading New Leicester breeders, all disciples of Robert Bakewell, are known, there is little information about them individually. Chapter Three of this thesis reveals more about them when it focuses on those Dishley Tup Society members involved with the Smithfield Club.

Although there is even less information about these men's wives, they likely played a significant role on the domestic side of the family's tup letting business and were integral in their husbands' relationships with other agriculturalists. All potential clients were wined and dined whilst those who had travelled long distances stayed in their farmhouses. As Nicholas Buckley, one of the founder members of the Society, told Thomas Weaver when they were trying to arrange a date for the livestock artist to visit him during the sheep shows, 'this week we have no beds of any description [available]'.<sup>272</sup> Good catering for potential clients was essential. Supervising the domestic arrangements was the wives' domain, and it was their responsibility to ensure arrangements ran without a hitch during the open house period of the

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<sup>272</sup> Nicholas Buckley to Thomas Weaver, 9 June 1802, Weaver's letters.

sheep shows. Each tup could command a hire charge of hundreds of pounds, and much of the family's income came from them.

Unlike the other wives discussed, many of the Dishley Society members' wives were related, either through blood or marriage, and many were Unitarians, some attending the same chapel. Living relatively close to one another, they would have known each other well and often visited one another. The competition was intense between the Dishley Tup Society members over who could produce the best tups each season, thereby earning the highest fees. The first week of viewings in June was restricted to fellow members so that each could see what tups the others had to offer for the forthcoming season. The keen rivalry between these top breeders most likely extended to their wives, as each tried to outdo the others over the standard of catering and hospitality they could offer.

It can be concluded that in happier marriages, these wives played their part in enabling their husbands to enjoy the fellowship and company of other keen agricultural improvers. However, each provided this in slightly different ways. Isabella Curwen was a great hostess, ensuring everyone enjoyed the annual Workington Show, whilst Jane Coke not only entertained visitors but was also interested in the farming side, understanding her husband's great interest, particularly in selective sheep breeding. Whilst Elizabeth Ilive also responded to the Earl of Egremont's fascination with all things agricultural, her involvement was more practical and scientific. However, all three women had a plentiful supply of money in common. Jane Coke and Isabella Curwen had rich husbands. Although Elizabeth Ilive was in a different position as the live-in mistress for most of her relationship with the Earl of Egremont, she would have wanted for little. However, the position of the Dishley Tup Society members' wives was very different. Although not poor, and their husbands classed as gentleman farmers, they were often tenants. Whilst they worked a few hundred acres, the Earl of Egremont owned over a hundred and ten thousand. The money tup letting brought in each

season was a significant part of the farm income, and wives had an integral role in supporting their husbands in these enterprises. Regardless of how harmonious or otherwise their marriages were: the family finances depended upon their cooperation.

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Sarah Wilmot has said that studying a group of agriculturalists is the best way to understand the link between agriculture, scientific culture, and society.<sup>273</sup> This thesis agreed and selected prosopography as its methodology, choosing those at the heart of the Woburn Sheep Shearing for its defined population. In shedding light on those within the Woburn Group, prosopography allowed a far greater in-depth exploration into their agricultural friendship than would have been possible without it. Moreover, apart from being essential to this thesis, the statistical data and the biographical sketches will also be valuable for agricultural and social historians researching this field.

One of the most significant factors the data revealed was how heterogeneous this group was, confirming contemporary reports. Understanding this means that within current agricultural social thinking, particularly animal history, a reappraisal of the type of men who attended these events is required. As the study has verified, aristocrats were undoubtedly present, but not in the large numbers that historians have previously thought. Within this group, who made up the inner core of regulars at events like the Woburn Sheep Shearing, the

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<sup>273</sup> Sarah Wilmot, ‘‘The Business of Improvement’’: Agriculture and Scientific Culture in Britain, c.1700-c.1870’, in *Historical Geography Research Series*, Number 24 (1990), 3.

nobility accounted for only 28%. During the Smithfield Club's early years, the percentage of aristocratic members was even less. Owner-occupiers and tenant farmers made up the most significant percentage of attendees. The remaining 22% of the Group were from the ancillary agricultural industries. Although the study only identified one of two men from each ancillary trade, this did not infer that they were the only representatives from their profession, just that in Garrard's eyes, they were the most important.

Adopting prosopography as its methodology has also allowed this thesis to expand its research into areas, such as political affiliation, an area not initially considered relevant to its investigation into agricultural friendship. The study identified both Whig and Tories within the Group, many of whom were MPs. However, further investigation revealed that although men of opposing political beliefs were present at farming meetings, an unwritten rule meant politics were not discussed, thus avoiding political antagonism. Like many of the Whigs, the Dukes of Bedford and Coke were from long-established land-owning dynasties. These men were also leading lights within the Woburn Group. Closer analysis of these Whigs revealed their unwavering support and friendship for their leader Fox. As Wade-Martins says, their brand of Whiggism was personified in Fox, and they continued to revere his memory throughout the years the Tories were in power, creating a close bond between them.<sup>274</sup> This thesis argued that the egalitarian aspect of the Group, which was evident at the farming meetings and shows, but particularly the dinners, emanated from the leading Foxites within the Group. These men encouraged top agriculturalists to their shows, regardless of their social rank or political affiliation. They also actively sought to make their events as convivial as possible. Their objective was to encourage friendly interaction among their guests, whereby they learned from one another.

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<sup>274</sup> Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 186.

Focusing on John Ellman's position within the Group clearly showed that skilful men from humble origins were welcomed by the very elite of society. Although from very different backgrounds, these men could become agricultural friends. The analysed data also provided a breakdown of the Group by class, which revealed a reasonably even split between aristocrats, esquires and misters. This information supported this thesis's in-depth research, which continually suggested that the Group was hierarchical in structure, with each man understanding his place within it. But although these men observed the proprieties, closer observation revealed that the skill and respect many were held in levelled the playing field between them. Ellman undoubtedly knew his own worth to the noblest of the agricultural improvers, but he never forgot he was a farmer.

The thesis supported Bord's argument that leading Whigs exhibited different manners in public as a way of expressing Whig identity, discussing how the sixth Duke of Bedford adopted all four of Bord's manners in his support for Thomas Greg's innovative cultivation techniques. Although Bord makes no mention of friendship playing any part in how Whig manners functioned, this thesis argues that they did play a part, at least within the agricultural fellowship among those within the Group. What was also evident was that a close affiliation between leading Whigs, particularly the Foxites, could, on occasions, put pressure on their agricultural friendship with others within the Group. The cold-shouldering of Bate Dudley provided a good illustration of this.

A further aspect identified by prosopography was that 77% of the Group were married. From the exploration into the small number of wives of those who hosted agricultural shows, it was apparent that some of these women were a great help, supporting their husbands in different ways helping their friendships to flourish with other agrarian enthusiasts. In the marriages where there was discord, it was evident that lack of money was a significant factor in why these marriages were not harmonious. It appears that these wives

had no say in how much money their husbands spent on hosting their farming shows. It can be no coincidence that the happier unions were those where significant wealth could support a husband's penchant for hosting expensive shows. Martha Young cannot have been alone in despising her husband's keen interest in agricultural experiments, nor in her antipathy towards his farming friends and visitors. With little information available on the Dishley wives, it is not easy to ascertain whether their marriages were happy or not. But as each family's financial stability was heavily dependent on their sheep shows' success, they undoubtedly needed to assist their husbands with these, regardless of whether they gave this support graciously or not.

It was evident that many of the relationships suffered from infidelity, even the Curwen's marriage, which outwardly appeared happy. Still, although aware of his philandering, Isabella Curwen was a supportive wife and an asset to Curwen in his professional and social life. Not all the wives focused on had to contend with infidelity, but they all had to contend with their husbands' long periods of absence. They were often pregnant or nursing during these periods alone, many with older children to look after. Some also had to oversee the running of their farms. Again, wealth would have been a factor, the more affluent wives having more help during the periods their husbands were absent. In Susan Wakefield's case, not only did she have all these factors to contend with but ill health. The Essex Ague affected not only her and the children but also the servants. The Wakefields were recent newcomers to the Dengie Peninsula, and Susan Wakefield had no close family nearby to support her during her husband's frequent absences. In the case of the Dishley wives, they were often related and lived nearby, so they would have been able to offer support to one another if needed.

In the happier marriages, it was evident that the more harmonious the relationship between husband and wife, the more significant the part played by their wives in the



friendships these men shared with other keen agricultural enthusiasts. For instance, Isabella Curwen not only provided an excellent example to illustrate this, but her part in the Workington Agricultural Society's meeting revealed that the show's format was the prototype of a modern-day conference. Her efforts in entertaining the wives of those attending her husband's agricultural show and her annual 'rout' helped make the meeting hospitable and memorable for both sexes and greatly assisted her husband's friendship with other keen agriculturalists. But in Jane Coke's case, her husband loved and depended upon her. She had entered into his enthusiasm for agricultural improvement and had assisted him in it. She was a great asset in his friendships with other farming enthusiasts, knowledgeably entertaining them when Coke was otherwise occupied, interested in the Holkham livestock and was happy to assist in his trials, sending wool and information to other agriculturalists.

The brief investigation into some of the agriculturalists' wives has fulfilled the thesis's objective of understanding if they contributed in any way to their husband's agricultural friendships. However, it has been beyond its remit to delve into why women did not appear to crave single-sex interaction to the same extent that their husbands did. As will become apparent agricultural friendship thrived in a male-orientated farming environment, where, as Tollet succinctly put it, they were all brethren.<sup>275</sup> Chapter Four explores the importance of brotherhood to the Group and its part within their agricultural friendship. Whilst their husbands enjoyed this camaraderie at farming shows and meetings, their wives would generally have had very little interaction with each other. The few exceptions were the Dishley wives, most of whom knew each other or were related, and Jane Coke. She most likely had dealings with Coke's tenants' wives, given her husband's close relationship with his tenants, three of whom were active members of the Woburn Group. What all the wives under discussion do share is a lack of any meaningful information about them today. Recent

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<sup>275</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 1 May 1805, in F/TWC2, Holkham.

publications, such as *Women and the Land*, which has an explicitly feminist agenda that holds women's lives at its centre and challenges long-held beliefs over land ownership, have begun to provide a re-interpretation of Georgian agricultural social history, but they only scrape the surface.<sup>276</sup> Far more research is necessary into all aspects of women's role in agriculture during this period.

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<sup>276</sup> Capern, et al.

## Chapter Two

### CULTIVATING INGENUITY: AGRICULTURAL FRIENDSHIP IN PRACTICE

‘If you can better these principles, tell me; if not join me in following them.’<sup>1</sup>

John, Lord Somerville’s first presidential address to the members of the Board of Agriculture (the Board) on 8 May 1798 outlined his proposals for its short and long-term future.<sup>2</sup> He concluded by quoting in Latin from Horace (above). These words can also be ascribed to the ethos of those within the Woburn Group (the Group). What united this disparate collection of farming men was their desire to further agricultural improvement, which they did through disseminating their views on improved husbandry techniques and listening to the ideas of others. Relationships like this, based on a mutual appreciation of one another’s values, are considered in Aristotelian terms to be utility friendships: referred to as useful or advantageous friendships throughout this study.<sup>3</sup> This thesis argues that it was this type of relationship that these men understood as agricultural friendship: beneficial to all parties. It maintains that goodwill existed between the Group because, ultimately, their agricultural friendship produced more benefits for them than they would have received without it. Kant calls this type of friendship one of taste, saying it functions best between men from different occupations and social classes because they are bound together by what one can contribute to the other’s needs. So, in Kantian ethics, a scholar and a merchant can be friendly, entertaining one another on their subject, providing the scholar is no pedant and the merchant no blockhead.<sup>4</sup> As James Grunebaum says, this allows for different points of view

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<sup>1</sup> ‘-Si quid novisti rectius istis Candidus imperti, si non his utere mecum. Horace,’ ‘Epistles’, 1:6 67-68 cited in John, Lord Somerville, *The system followed during the two last years by the Board of Agriculture* (W. Miller, 1800 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 1-19.

<sup>3</sup> Lesley Brown (ed.), Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. David Ross (Oxford University Press, 2009 edn.), 144.

<sup>4</sup> ‘men are bound together only by what the one can contribute to the other's needs; not by what the other already has, but when the one possesses what supplies a want in the other; not, therefore, by similarity, but by difference.’ Peter Heath and J.B. Schneewind (eds.), Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, tr. Peter Heath

and a variety of experiences, each man bringing to the table something that others found helpful.<sup>5</sup>

This thesis also argues that it was not only a useful relationship that made agricultural friendship possible between these men but respect for the skill and ingenuity of each other. As the following two chapters are more broad-based in their investigation into how agricultural friendship functioned across the Group, this chapter takes a more personal approach, focusing on the relationship between individual agriculturalists to support both arguments. Divided into two sections, the first focuses on how agricultural friendship functioned through personal contact, the second through correspondence.

A significant problem in researching social interaction between agriculturalists during this period is the lack of personal documentary evidence. There are two primary reasons for this. Firstly, major influences within the Group, including Somerville, the fifth Duke of Bedford and Thomas William Coke, left instructions that their private papers be destroyed at their deaths. Secondly, letters and documents belonging to much less affluent men rarely survive.<sup>6</sup> But Sir Joseph Banks was a prodigious letter writer on many subjects for over 52 years. Much of his correspondence is intact, as is George III's, whilst the Holkham archives hold some of Coke's letters from farming correspondents. Exploring these primary sources has made it possible to tease out what brought these agricultural improvers together and

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(Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27:426, 187, <https://cdchester.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Lectures-on-ethics-Immanuel-Kant-Peter-Heath-Jerome-B.-Schneewind-eds.-Peter-Heath-trans..pdf>, (accessed 24 March 2021).

<sup>5</sup> James O. Grunebaum, 'Fair-Weather Friendships', *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. XXXIX, Iss. 2 (2005), 213, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10790-006-5763-y>, (accessed 21 June 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Georgiana Blakiston, *Woburn and the Russells* (London: Constable, 1980), 149; Mark Rothery, 'Coke of Norfolk, 1754-1842: A Biography, by Susanna Wade-Martins', *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. LVIII, No. 1 (2010), 136-7, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25684243>, (accessed 25 October 2021); L G Mitchell, 'Coke of Norfolk, 1754-1842: A Biography, by Susanna Wade-Martins', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXVIII, Issue 533 (2013), 983-4, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/cet130>, (accessed 24 March 2021). No source confirms Somerville ordered his papers to be destroyed. But as very few of Somerville's private papers are extant, it is likely that when he knew he was dying, he instructed his half-sister, with him when he died in Vevey, that she and his family destroy his private papers upon her return to England.

explore how their friendships blossomed. Underpinning many of the letters is a strong sense of patriotism. Undoubtedly adopting scientific methods into their farming practices needed to be financially rewarding for these agriculturalists, but they also thought it essential that their endeavours assisted their country, especially during a prolonged period of warfare.

This sense of patriotism is reflected in both sections. Each investigates how agricultural friendship functioned on a one-to-one basis within the context of an agriculturally inspired initiative that arose as a direct response to the wars with France (1793-1815). Firstly, the formation of the Board, and, secondly, the attempt to establish the Spanish Merino sheep breed into the country. In *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, George Garrard reflected the importance of both. In the Board's case, he portrayed three past presidents and several ordinary, ex-officio and honorary members. Within the small group Garrard termed 'the great leaders of Agricultural Enquiry', he prominently positioned its current president, secretary and 'Professor of Chymistry [sic]',<sup>7</sup> Garrard saw himself as part of these agricultural improvers and knew the interest the Merino was generating. To reflect this and 'pay proper attention to the Woollen Staple of the Country', he placed the Merino breeders in the centre of *Wobourn Sheepshearing*. John, sixth Duke of Bedford, is being shown a specimen of 'Broad Cloth' by George Tollet, manufactured from the fleece of his best Merino, which originated from George III's royal flock, managed by Banks.<sup>8</sup> On the Duke's other side, hat in hand, stands

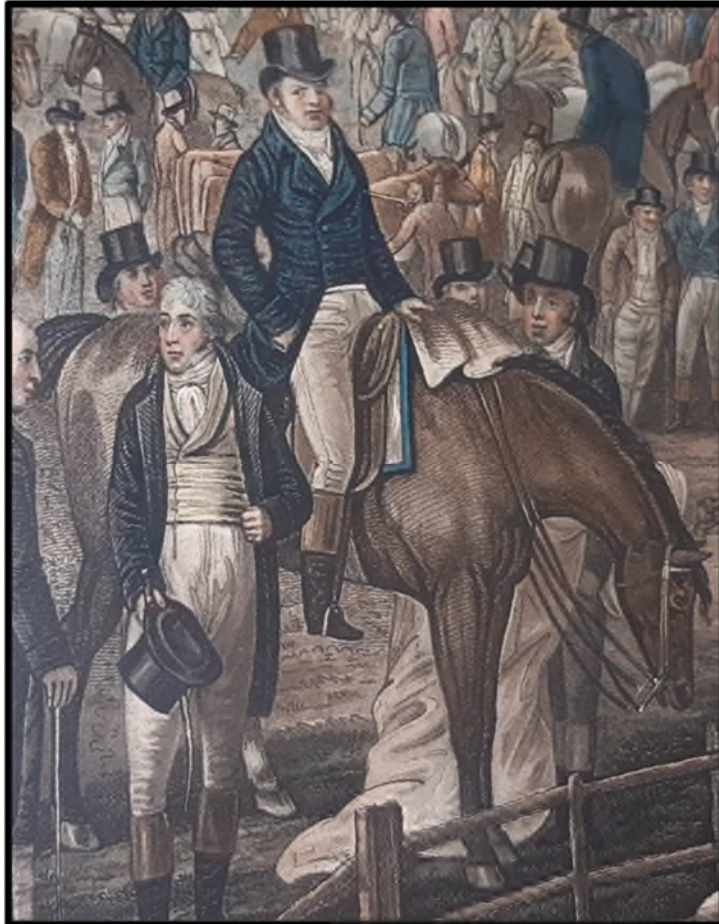
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<sup>7</sup> Those whom George Garrard called 'the great leaders of Agricultural Enquiry' are in the bottom right of *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, situated behind the sheep shearers. George Garrard, *Proposals for Publishing a Print of the Woburn Sheep Shearing from a Picture by Mr. Garrard, Associate of the Royal Academy* (1811), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Garrard, *Proposals*, 8; Although Tollet showed samples of his Merino fleeces at the 1805 Woburn Sheep Shearing, the fleece he is showing to the sixth Duke of Bedford in Garrard's print is likely to be the fleece from Tollet's young home-bred Merino tup, that was just under 13 months old when it was clipped in July 1803. Tollet recounted to Banks that 'his fleece...was so thickly set upon him that it opened from the shears and had the appearance of spreading almost over the Barn floor. It weighted in the grease 11lbs: 12oz'. Banks included the results that Tollet obtained from his flock in 1803, (including the weight of fleece and estimated carcass weight of this tup), in his report of the King's flock, which was published in 1804. George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, July 1803, letter 995, in Harold B. Carter (ed.), *The sheep and wool correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks 1781-1820* (The Library Council of New South Wales in association with the British Museum (Natural History), 1979), 385-6.

Somerville, the great Merino champion. Garrard called these men his ‘principal group of the Picture’.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 23<sup>10</sup>



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From left to right, Lord Somerville, the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford  
and George Tollet  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810)

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The chapter covers the period from 1798, when the war with France was in its sixth year, until 1813 when hostilities were still ongoing.<sup>11</sup> The first section is a case study of Lord Somerville, which sheds light on the little-known period when he was President of the Board (1798-1800). It explores his friendship with George III, the noblest of all the agricultural improvers and argues that agricultural friendships could extend to even those at the head of British society. Somerville and the King were both admirers

and friends of the older tenant farmer William Ducket. It further argues that together, they honoured Ducket and then assisted two of his sons. It concludes by disclosing what led to

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<sup>9</sup> Garrard, *Proposals*, 8.

<sup>10</sup> Garrard, *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, Proof, Hand-coloured Engraving (1810).

<sup>11</sup> There was a brief period of peace between 1802-1803. ‘The Treaty of Amiens’ signed between France and the United Kingdom in March 1802 temporarily ended hostilities until May 1803 when war resumed between the two countries. Mike Rapport, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 37-41.

Somerville losing the presidency of the Board and suggests this created a temporary hiatus in his friendship with George III.

The second section focuses on four men within the Group interested in selective sheep breeding, particularly Merinos, but were not in day-to-day contact with one another. Two of these men were wealthy and influential landowners, the third was a sheep advisor who worked for both landowners, whilst the fourth was a young farmer who bred Merinos. Focusing on their correspondence and understanding the context in which the letters were written reveals that the farmer and the sheep expert negotiated their relationship with the landowners differently. What also emerges is how the relationship between one of the landowners and the farmer changed over time, progressing from a beneficial friendship to a deeper relationship. Focusing on the interaction generated through these sheep enthusiasts' letters further illustrates how agricultural friendship worked in practice.

## **1. For King and Country**

'The senseless rabble may praise the military hero; it belongs to *the few* to venerate the spirited cultivator.'<sup>12</sup>

### **John, Lord Somerville and George III**

Somerville is a significant and frequent presence within this thesis. His agricultural activities and endeavours were well publicised during his lifetime, meaning he was often in the public eye. Sir John Sinclair said after his death, 'his name must ever be remembered with respect while agriculture continues to hold its proper station as the grand foundation of our national prosperity.'<sup>13</sup> Today, just as agricultural importance within the country has diminished, Somerville's name has all but been forgotten.

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur Young, 'An Improving Landlord', from 'Northern Tour', Vol. I, 307-17, cited in J.F.C. Harrison (ed.), *Society and Politics in England, 1780-1960* (Harper & Row, 1965), 27.

<sup>13</sup> Sir John Sinclair quoted in Rev. John Sinclair, *Memoir of the Life and Works of the Late Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair, BART*, Vol. I (Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1837), 136-7.

Somerville was 27 in 1793 when he applied to Sinclair to become a founder member of the Board. Although Sinclair, the Board's first president, initially had doubts about his suitability, worried about his young age, Somerville's enthusiasm, and prowess with livestock, which even included butchery training, won him over.<sup>14</sup> John Southey Somerville, as he was then known, was running the family farm in Somerset, but in less than six years, he rose from commoner to one of George III's 12 Lords of the Bedchamber. After joining the Board in 1793, he succeeded his bachelor uncle in 1796 to become the fifteenth Lord Somerville, the senior barony in Scotland and elected as a Scottish Representative Peer in the House of Lords. His inheritance included substantial estates in Scotland and the Midlands, together with land and properties inherited in the West Country after his father's death the previous year.<sup>15</sup> Two years later, Somerville was elected as President of the Board, becoming only its second president. He completed his meteoric rise through the higher echelons of society the following year, when, in 1799, he kissed the hand of George III to accept the honour of becoming a Lord of the Bedchamber and companion to the King, a position he held for the remaining 20 years of his life.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Sir John Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair, Bart*, Vol. I (London: Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1831), 352-3.

<sup>15</sup> The West Country land descended from Somerville's mother's side of the family. See 'Somerville, John Southey, 15th Lord' in Appendix II.

<sup>16</sup> For more information on Lord Somerville during his life see 'Lord Somerville', *Public Characters of 1807* (Richard Phillips, 1807), 198-226; 'Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Right Honourable John, Lord Somerville', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IX, No. XLIX (1811), 5-12. For his obituary see 'Lord Somerville', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, Vol. LXXXIX (1819), 370-1; Sir Walter Scott, 'Character of the late Lord Somerville', *The Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Walter Scott: Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. I (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1837), 243-9. For articles written on him in the late nineteenth century see Robert Arthur Kinglake, *Lord Somerville: A Forgotten President of Agriculture* (London: William Rider, 1883); Ernest Clarke, 'John Fifteenth Lord Somerville', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Vol. VIII, Third Series (1897), 1-19. Based upon this article, Clarke wrote Somerville's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* in 1904. This was updated in 2004 when Pimlott Baker made some minor additions to it. Ernest Clarke, rev. by Anne Pimlott Baker, 'Somerville, John Southey, fifteenth Lord Somerville', *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26023>, (accessed 7 January 2022). In 2000, Adrian Cross self-published a book on the village of Fitzhead, Somerville's home village. This book provides an in-depth look at Somerville, mostly gleaned from the writers quoted above. Adrian Cross, *Ten Hides: A Millennial History of Fitzhead, Somerset* (Adrian Cross in conjunction with the Fitzhead Community Group, 2000).



Figure 24 <sup>17</sup>



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*The Right Hon. John Lord Somerville*  
R Rhodes after S Woodforde (1815)

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Somerville grew up interested in agriculture, saying, ‘The practical part of Farming, from my infancy, I have made my pride and study’.<sup>18</sup>

This interest stayed with him until his death in September 1819, at 54.

Somerville intended to hold his fifteenth London Spring Cattle

Show the following March had his health not deteriorated. Somerville

was a significant presence among the agricultural improvers. He was

always a staunch instigator of

agricultural progress and actively advocated improvement, devising and supporting innovative ideas: ingenuity as the Georgians usually referred to ideas of original thinking.<sup>19</sup>

Notably, within the context of this thesis, concerned with understanding agricultural friendship and how it functioned, he could also interact with those from different social classes.<sup>20</sup> Sir Walter Scott, his friend and fishing crony, thought ‘he endeavoured, on many occasions, and with eminent success, to unite the different ranks of society, without hurting

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<sup>17</sup> R. Rhodes after S. Woodforde, *The Right Hon. John Lord Somerville*, Engraving, 952 mm x 795 mm, image taken from James, eleventh Lord Somerville, *Memorie of the Somervilles*, Sir Walter Scott (ed.), Vol. I (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Company, 1815), opp. title page.

<sup>18</sup> John Somerville, *A Short Address to the Yeomanry of England, and Others* (1795), 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Public Characters*, ‘Lord Somerville’, 225.

<sup>20</sup> Kinglake, 5.

the feelings of the lower, or compromising the dignity of the higher orders; and it was the usual consequence, that the latter departed instructed, the former honoured, and both gratified, from their mutual intercourse.’<sup>21</sup> This is well illustrated in the report of Somerville’s post-show dinner in 1805, a description of which appears within the Introduction.<sup>22</sup> Somerville’s ability to interact with men across the social divide was essential in creating a sense of camaraderie among the Group, allowing an egalitarian air to pervade his shows and other significant farming events. Reflecting on him years later, Sinclair considered Somerville as one ‘who did equal honour to the peerage and to the plough; for with the manners and the high spirit of his rank, he united all the solid and useful knowledge of a practical farmer.’<sup>23</sup> Scott put it more simply, saying like Virgil, in *Georgics*, Somerville could discuss ‘even the lowest agricultural topic without losing his dignity of character or situation.’<sup>24</sup>

When Somerville was elected as President in March 1798, the Board had been fully operational for four years. Although an organisation of this sort had been suggested in the past, Sinclair succeeded in bringing the idea to fruition, the Board coming into operation in 1793, at the onset of the wars with France.<sup>25</sup> Although it was not an official government body, rather a hybrid between a state department and a voluntary society, it did receive an annual government grant of £3,000, albeit much less than Sinclair had initially wanted. Its charter allowed for 16 ex-officio members and 30 elected ordinary members (the

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<sup>21</sup> Scott, 247.

<sup>22</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 215.

<sup>23</sup> Sir John Sinclair quoted in Rev. John Sinclair, 136.

<sup>24</sup> Scott, 248.

<sup>25</sup> For a thorough insight into how the Board functioned and the part Sinclair played within it, as well as a biography of Sinclair’s life the following two publications from Rosalind Mitchison are recommended: Rosalind Mitchison, ‘The Old Board of Agriculture, (1793-1822)’, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXIV, Iss. 290 (1959), 41-69, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/LXXIV.290.41>, (accessed 10 June 2017); *Agricultural Sir John: The Life of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster 1754-1835* (Geoffrey Bles, 1962).

Executive).<sup>26</sup> Although day-to-day control was in the hands of the Executive, the presence of the ex-officio members gave the government some control which occasionally it used. For instance, at the Board's 1798 AGM, Prime Minister William Pitt wanted to oust Sinclair from the presidency and instructed them to vote in Somerville's favour.<sup>27</sup> Arthur Young, the secretary, oversaw a small clerical team and, to save money during the early years, the Board met in a small room in Sinclair's Whitehall house.<sup>28</sup> Lack of funds would plague the Board throughout its 29 years, and when Somerville took over, it was financially on its knees.

J D Chambers and G E Mingay are scathing of the Board and consider it a disappointment. They believe that its county reports, instigated by Sinclair, were ill-planned and often ill-executed. Its support for the General Agricultural Bill ended up as a half-measure emasculated by the combined opposition of the Church and lawyers over tithes and fees.<sup>29</sup> Ernest Clarke and Rosemary Mitchison, both with a better understanding of the constraints it had to work within, thought that the Board did a good job despite its mistakes and failures. Mitchison considers that despite the Board's shortcomings, the improving landowner gained confidence, enthusiasm and pride in its existence.<sup>30</sup> Whilst for Clarke, the Board was 'the embodiment of a passion for agricultural improvement which dominated all classes, equally creditable to the King, the aristocracy, and the humblest Yeomen.'<sup>31</sup> This

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<sup>26</sup> The Board's Charter allowed for the election of an unlimited number of honorary members, and it was from them that ordinary members were elected when required. For a report on the first three years the Board was in operation see [Sir John Sinclair], *Account of the origin on the Board of Agriculture, and its progress for three years after its establishment* (1796).

<sup>27</sup> William Pitt (1759-1806). For more information on Lord Somerville defeating Sir John Sinclair to become President of the Board of Agriculture in 1798 see M. Betham-Edwards (ed.), *The Autobiography of Arthur Young* (London, 1898, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967 rep.), 315-16; Ernest Clarke, 'The Board of Agriculture', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Third Series, Vol. IX (London: John Murray, 1898), 1-41; Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John*, 173-4.

<sup>28</sup> The main committee met every Tuesday between November and June, the sub-committees convened regularly, and an AGM was held at the end of March.

<sup>29</sup> J.D. Chambers and G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1984 rep.), 121.

<sup>30</sup> Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture', 69.

<sup>31</sup> Clarke, *History of the Board of Agriculture*, 43.

shared passion could also span the social divide, as the friendship between the King, Somerville, and William Ducket illustrates.

Figure 25 <sup>32</sup>



**George III**

Anthony Cardon after Henry Edridge  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

George III believed that ‘an honest Englishman should love his country and his family always speak the truth and lead a life of orthodox morality’: all traits he adhered to.<sup>33</sup> He was a keen agriculturalist, saying of himself, ‘I owne I rather encline too much to John Bull’.<sup>34</sup> Somerville’s enthusiasm for farming brought him to the King’s attention and gained his admiration. George III said of him, ‘The pursuits of Agriculture particularly become an English gentleman, and I wish more of the British nobility displayed the same zeal for improvement.’<sup>35</sup> This

praise for Somerville was antithetical to the King’s condemnation of his sons: hard-drinking, gambling, and whoring men. When Pitt wanted to oust Sinclair as President, it was George

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Cardon after Henry Edridge, *George III*, Stipple Engraving, 434 mm x 314 mm (1803, pub. 1812). London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D19278.

<sup>33</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *George III: A Personal History* (Viking, 1998), 374.

<sup>34</sup> Hibbert, 374.

<sup>35</sup> Scott, 244.

III, not him, who wanted Somerville to take over, Pitt disparagingly saying, ‘he is not quite the thing, but I doubt we must have him [Somerville].’<sup>36</sup>

Figure 26<sup>37</sup>



*John, Fifteenth Lord Somerville*  
President of the Board of Agriculture  
Samuel Woodforde (c. 1800)

It was not just Somerville’s keen interest in farming that impressed George III but also his patriotic endeavours. In 1794 shortly after the wars with France began, Somerville took charge of a Somerset regiment of 100 of what he termed his ‘brother farmers’.<sup>38</sup> Somerville was involved with his West Somerset Regiment until a severe carriage accident forced him to retire in 1802.<sup>39</sup> Eager to show both his King and country what farmers could do to aid the war effort, Somerville produced a 41-page publication addressed to the Yeomanry of England.<sup>40</sup> In this, he passionately beseeched his ‘brother farmers’ to come forward in defence of their country.

Somerville told them ‘we should be proud of our profession as Farmers’, especially as many people

<sup>36</sup> In a letter to George III Somerville said, ‘a slight has most undeservedly been put on me by the manner in which I was removed from that office to which it was your Majesty’s pleasure that I should be called.’ Lord Somerville to George III, 26 November 1800, letter 2286, A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Later Correspondence of George III*, Vol. III, January 1798 to December 1801 (Cambridge University Press, 1967), 442; Betham-Edwards, 315-16.

<sup>37</sup> Samuel Woodforde, *John, Fifteenth Lord Somerville*, Oil on Canvas, Life-size (c. 1800). Private collection.

<sup>38</sup> Although Pitt’s major initiative for home defence did not begin in earnest until 1798, in 1794 some counties had mobilised their militia as a precaution against possible invasion. Scotland and Somerset raised county units of Fencible Cavalry. J.R. Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 219; Somerville, *A Short Address*, B.

<sup>39</sup> In June 1802 Somerville was driving a curricie, accompanied by his servant, and was distracted and hit a post. Both men were thrown from the curricie and the carriage fell on Somerville and fractured his scapula and badly injured his ribs. ‘London, Friday, July 16’, 19 July 1802, *Hampshire Chronicle*, 3, in The British Newspaper Archive (BNA).

<sup>40</sup> Somerville, *A Short Address*.

now wanted to learn the trade. He praised the King, saying he gave much attention to farming, applying every leisure moment to it.<sup>41</sup> Somerville was also involved in providing financial support to the country, both through his regiment and in a personal capacity.<sup>42</sup> In December 1797, after the introduction of Henry Addington's voluntary contributions scheme, Somerville patriotically pledged a fifth of his annual cleared income for the duration of the war.<sup>43</sup>

In his first address to the Board, Somerville declared that his primary objective was to reduce the Board's costs and liquidate the debts.<sup>44</sup> After relocating the office to Sackville Street, he cancelled all printing of the Board's county reports that Sinclair had been so preoccupied with and took so much of the annual grant.<sup>45</sup> However, as Young pointed out, during Sinclair's reign, not only the reports 'created much disgust' but 'a multitude of other expenses, equally useless'. Young was surprised that the Board had been able to carry on, saying it was only down to the ordinary and honorary members' liberality in subscribing 10 guineas each, 'which kept them for some time on their legs'.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Somerville, *A Short Address*, 40.

<sup>42</sup> On 20 May 1800, three days after Somerville arrived in England from Lisbon, in his capacity as Colonel of the Western regiment of Somerset Yeomanry, he gave orders that £120 should be taken out of the Regiment Funds for the best bread-corn and this to be made available to the poor who could apply to buy it at 10 shillings per bushel, the same price also to be applied to barley. He instructed that the fund be administered by the resident officers in command of each troop. 'Sherborne 26 May', 26 May 1800, *Sherborne Mercury*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>43</sup> Henry Addington (1757-1844), later first Viscount Sidmouth and Prime Minister between 1801-1804. After Pitt's new Triple Assessment tax had only raised £5 million, rather than £8 million that he had budgeted for, Addington proposed the introduction of a voluntary contributions scheme. The fund was an unexpected success and raised over £2 million. William Haigh, *William Pitt The Younger* (Harper Perennial, 2005 edn.), 417-18. Somerville's long-term pledge was slightly unusual as most of the other pledges were in the form of one-off contributions. *The Staffordshire Advertiser* thought his action 'so highly creditable to him', that they transcribed it from the bank contributions book verbatim: 'Lord Somerville gives annually, until the end of the War, the Fifth of his clear income, in full confidence that when such a period shall arrive, the people of England will see the good policy of having applied the fifth of all ascertained income to the relief of the Assessed Taxes, partial in their operation, because they touch not the niggardly or disaffected.' 'Tuesday's Mail', 24 February 1798, *The Staffordshire Advertiser*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>44</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 6-10.

<sup>45</sup> John G. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young 1741-1820* (American Philosophical Society, 1973), 397-8.

<sup>46</sup> Betham-Edwards, 314-16.



Figure 27 <sup>47</sup>

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*Society of Agriculture*

Joseph Constantine Stadler after Thomas Rowlandson and James Augustus Pugin  
A meeting of the Board of Agriculture in Sackville Street in 1809

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Although Mitchison acknowledges Somerville's period in office was, by necessity, one of marking time whilst sorting out the finances, she disparagingly considers that he also wanted to adopt his own enthusiasms during this time. She calls these fads, saying they did not stand the test of time.<sup>48</sup> Although Mitchison concedes that Somerville was the striking exception to most ordinary members who were generally not practising farmers, she fails to appreciate that the Board had lost the farming interest.<sup>49</sup> Somerville's only way to restore this

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<sup>47</sup> Joseph Constantine Stadler after Thomas Rowlandson and James Augustus Pugin, *Society of Agriculture*, Aquatint Engraving, 275 mm x 235 mm (originally published by Rudolph Ackermann in *Microcosm of London*, 1809). Rowlandson did the figures and Pugin the architecture.

<sup>48</sup> Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture', 57.

<sup>49</sup> Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture', 52.

was by communicating with farmers on their level. As a practical man, Somerville was able to do this more easily than most of his peers, but he was worried that from its formation, men had viewed the Board's progress expectant of great practical exertion, but none had been forthcoming.<sup>50</sup> Although he knew he had to cut costs, Somerville also realised he had to restore the farmers' confidence in the Board. To achieve this, he had to shift the Board's emphasis from its lofty ideals of county reports and reform back to grassroots level: practical farming, which he excelled in.<sup>51</sup> Somerville firmly believed that a significant part of the Board's work was to enlighten, but this was something it had so far failed to do. He wanted the Board to balance empirical methods with new techniques: to unite 'well-grounded practice and theory' was what he wanted; the motto the Royal Agricultural Society of England would adopt over 40 years later.<sup>52</sup> However, although Somerville wanted the Board to have much broader appeal, those he was keenest to attract were the best practical farming men, whom he considered currently shunned the Board.<sup>53</sup> These were 'the Celebrated Agriculturalists', whom Garrard portrayed in *Wobourn Sheepshearing*.<sup>54</sup> These men made up the inner core of the Woburn Group.

Somerville thought that although it might not be what the learned men on the Board wanted to hear, they had to remember 'that men's prejudices must be considered; that to work any reformation, men must be taken as they are, not as they ought to be'.<sup>55</sup> His thoughts on

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<sup>50</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 4. Somerville bemoaned the schooling system with a lack of good translations of the classical authors, such as Varro and Columella, who wrote on agriculture. He complained about a lack of agricultural husbandry on the school curriculum and no professors of agriculture at university level, but said it was ever so because Columella had complained in the first century AD that every trade was taught but husbandry. Somerville also bemoaned poetry being taught rather than agriculture, which he thought would be more beneficial to a third of young men who would go home to manage their estates and farms, whilst another third would be employed in businesses where knowledge of farming would be of far more use to them than poetry. Somerville, *The system followed*, 229-33.

<sup>52</sup> The RASE's actual motto is 'Practice with Science'. Writing in the RASE's Journal in 1797 Ernest Clarke noted this link. Clarke, 'John Fifteenth Lord Somerville', 8.

<sup>53</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 19, 4, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Garrard, *Proposals*, title page.

<sup>55</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 17.



this are important because it was this ability to accept men as they were that helped create an egalitarian air at the meetings of the Group, allowing men from different social classes to work together, each bringing something different to the table. Somerville fully understood that ‘Nothing tends so much to diffuse good practices among farmers, as the success of experiments made by those of their own order’ and one of his solutions to enlist the best practical agricultural minds was for the Board to recognise and reward agricultural achievement with medals and premiums at a national level.<sup>56</sup> On a local level, he wanted to promote farm improvement and thought forming agricultural societies was the best way of achieving this. Somerville envisaged these societies organising shows and rewarding endeavour with premiums, thus stimulating local interest. He identified landowners he thought would initiate such organisations and wrote to them all.<sup>57</sup> Somerville also practised what he preached and was closely involved in several clubs during this period.<sup>58</sup> Another practical plan was to establish an experimental farm on land rented for the purpose: an idea many experienced men agreed was the right course of action for the Board to take. As the Board’s finances were stretched, Somerville offered to pay the annual rent himself to get it off the ground.<sup>59</sup>

Somerville firmly believed improved farm equipment reduced the man-hours needed for cultivation, allowing more land to be worked in a day. This subject formed a significant part of his second address to the Board on 27 November 1798.<sup>60</sup> Somerville was interested in farm machinery, inventing and improving farm implements, including a double furrow

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<sup>56</sup> ‘Agricultural Report for September’, 4 October 1810, *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 4, in BNA; Somerville, *The system followed*, 11-13.

<sup>57</sup> Board of Agriculture, ‘On Provincial Farming Societies’, *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, Vol. II (G. & W. Nicol, 1800), 456-8.

<sup>58</sup> Somerville accepted the presidency of the Bath and West Society in 1798 and became a founder member of the Smithfield Club (1798-). He was one of the Club’s initial committee along with two other Board members, the fifth Duke of Bedford and the eighth Earl of Winchelsea, and an eclectic mix of graziers, butchers, and breeders.

<sup>59</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 25-37.

plough and a drag cart, and initiated different trials with various farm implements during his first year in office.<sup>61</sup> He was particularly proud of his plough, which he patented and sold through the Board during his presidency.<sup>62</sup> Another of Somerville's initiatives was the promotion of oxen, rather than horses, for fieldwork. He rightly pointed out that oxen were able to subsist on grass whilst horses required grain which, he argued, was better utilised for human consumption.<sup>63</sup> He also believed that working oxen freed up horses to aid the war effort, and, at the end of their lives, their meat was more acceptable to the British palate than horse meat.<sup>64</sup> Although Mitchison was correct that these 'fads', for various reasons, did not stand the test of time, she fails to appreciate that many were war-related and were necessary short term measures Somerville adopted to aid the country during wartime.<sup>65</sup> However, today, double furrow ploughs still have a place in British agriculture, whilst E J T Collins argues that the ox's role in farming is still essential in some world areas.<sup>66</sup> Even after he lost the presidency, Somerville eagerly pursued the policies he had advocated for the Board and promoted them in various ways, including establishing and funding an annual livestock show.

In November 1798, the King granted Somerville permission to trial his plough in Windsor Great Park, sending three of his plough teams for comparison purposes.<sup>67</sup> Four

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<sup>61</sup> For more details, including diagrams, on the experiments carried out on different shaped wheels for carriages, Lord Somerville's Drag Cart and his Two Furrow Swing and Wheel Ploughs see *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, 351-414, 415-17, 418-23.

<sup>62</sup> *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, 423.

<sup>63</sup> Somerville strongly believed that oxen had many advantages over horses. He argued that 300,000 horses ate as much corn as a fifth of the human population in the country. John Lord Somerville, *Facts and Observations relative to Sheep, Wool, Ploughs and Oxen* (John Harding, 1809, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), 119, 107-128,

<sup>64</sup> Somerville, *Facts and Observations*, 120-1. The British have never been, and are still not, lovers of horse meat. In earlier periods most horse meat was barrelled round the streets and sold as cat meat. Stuart Orr, 'John Atcheler – Horse Slaughterer to Queen Victoria?' from a transcript of a Zoom presentation given to the Friends of the Highgate Cemetery on 10 December 2020.

<sup>65</sup> Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture', 57.

<sup>66</sup> Jos Jones, 'Two Furrow Ploughs Still in Demand', *Farmers Weekly* (1 June 2016), <https://www.fwi.co.uk/machinery/cultivation-drilling/cultivators-drills-ploughs/two-furrow-ploughs-still-demand>, (accessed 27 March 2021). E.J.T. Collins, 'The latter-day history of the draught ox in England, 1770-1964', *Agricultural History Review*, Vol. LVIII, No. 2 (2010), 191-216, [https://www.bahs.org.uk/AGHR/ARTICLES/58\\_2\\_3\\_Collins.pdf](https://www.bahs.org.uk/AGHR/ARTICLES/58_2_3_Collins.pdf), (accessed 8 January 2022).

<sup>67</sup> The demonstration took place at Norfolk Farm, Windsor Great Park on Thursday 15 November 1798. 'Ploughing on his Majesty's Farm and at the Earl of Egremont at Petworth', *Annals of Agriculture and other Useful Arts (Annals)*, Vol. XXXII, 154-7.

months later, in response to a challenge, Somerville demonstrated his plough again at Windsor, although his challenger failed to appear.<sup>68</sup> Four days earlier, after one of George III's levees at St James Palace, Somerville had attended a meeting with the King.<sup>69</sup> Although this was in his capacity as the Board's president, Somerville likely broached this challenge, asking the King if it might again take place at Windsor. Many of George III's sons gambled heavily, which antagonised their father. Although the ploughing match was likely a monetary challenge, Somerville would have been careful to promote its merit in furthering agricultural knowledge rather than financial gain. Somerville exhibited his plough again a month later, this time at Kew. Watching, along with 'a great number of persons who delight in improvement in husbandry', was the King. He, and all those present, were 'highly pleased' with how well Somerville's plough performed. The consensus was that 'no work could be done better', and there was little doubt among them that it would come into general use, thereby significantly reducing cultivation costs.<sup>70</sup> Somerville must have been personally delighted as this capped a gratifying month for him: on 19 March, he had been unanimously re-elected for a second term as the Board's President and, on 3 April, following another levee at St James Palace, the King had appointed him as one of his Lords of the Bedchamber.<sup>71</sup>

To be appointed as a Lord, or Gentleman, of the Bedchamber was highly prestigious, and, during his 60-year reign (1760-1820), George III only appointed 42 men to this position.<sup>72</sup> Somerville's duties included 'assisting the King at his dressing, waiting on him

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<sup>68</sup> The demonstration took place on 10 March 1799. *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, 421.

<sup>69</sup> This meeting was on 6 March 1799. 'London', 8 March 1799, *Kentish Gazette*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>70</sup> 'Glocester, April 22', 22 April 1799, *Gloucester Journal*, 3; 'Agriculture', 19 April 1799, *Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, 3, both in BNA.

<sup>71</sup> The position had become vacant after the death of William Anne Holles Capell, fourth Earl of Essex (1732-1799) who had died on 4 March 1799 at St James' Palace, London. Essex had been a Lord of the Bedchamber since 23 May 1782. R.O. Bucholz (ed.), 'The bedchamber: Gentlemen of the Bedchamber', 'Court Officers, 1660-1837', *Office-Holders in Modern Britain*, Vol. XI rev. (London, 2006), 14-19, *British History Online*, [website], <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/office-holders/vol11/pp14-19>, (accessed 9 January 2022). Somerville kissed the hand of George III to accept the position on 5 April 1799. 'London', 5 April 1799, *Kentish Gazette*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>72</sup> It should be noted that in what otherwise appears to be a comprehensive listing of the Court Officers to George III, both Lord Somerville and the Earl of Winchelsea's titles are wrong, Somerville is listed as the

when he ate in private, guarding access to him in his bedchamber and closet and providing noble companionship'.<sup>73</sup> For this, he received £1,000 a year, together with board and lodging when the court was in progress.<sup>74</sup> Although his appointment must have been highly prestigious for him, he was not the only member of the Board, nor the Group, to be afforded this honour. In December 1777, 21 years earlier, the Earl of Winchilsea had also been appointed to this position.<sup>75</sup> Having been in close contact with the King for many years, Winchilsea must have been on good terms with him. He was certainly friendly with Somerville, the pair closely involved in forming the Smithfield Club (1798-) and, the following year, the Royal Institution (1799-). How much input Winchilsea might have had in Somerville's appointment is not known, but the King must have enjoyed the company of both men, as all three shared a keen interest in farming.<sup>76</sup>

Somerville became closer to the King throughout the spring and summer of 1799. In his third address to the Board in May 1799, he focused on the sheep industry and the importance of making the country self-sufficient in fine wool, a subject he knew interested

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fourteenth Lord Somerville rather than the fifteenth and Winchilsea as the ninth Earl of Winchilsea rather than the eighth. Both are common mistakes. Bucholz, 'The bedchamber: Gentlemen of the Bedchamber', 14-19.

<sup>73</sup> 'At any one time, there were 12 Lords who were supported in their duties by 12 Grooms. Bucholz, 'The bedchamber: Gentlemen of the Bedchamber', 14-19.

<sup>74</sup> Presumably Somerville's room at St James Palace was the one occupied by his predecessor, the Earl of Essex, this being the room where George III appointed him. 'London' 5 April 1799, *Kentish Gazette*, 2, in BNA. When the King moved to Windsor in 1812, only 4 of the 12 Lords of the Bedchamber accompanied him. One of these was Somerville. His annual salary was reduced from £1,000 to £792-10 shillings. 'King's Establishment at Windsor 1812-1820', 'Council', *The Data Base of Court Officers, 1660-1837*, Loyola University, Chicago, [website],

<https://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/lists/List%2029a%20Kings%20Establishment%20at%20Windsor%201812.pdf>, (accessed 10 January 2022).

<sup>75</sup> In 1804 the Earl of Winchilsea took over the premier position among the Lords of the Bedchamber becoming 'Lord of the Stole', a position he held until 1812. For his duties in this capacity, he received £2000/annum as opposed to £1000 which he had received as a Lord of the Bedchamber. After the move to Windsor Winchilsea received £2,149-10 shillings per annum. 'King's Establishment at Windsor 1812-1820'.

<sup>76</sup> The Earl of Winchilsea was behind what was often called 'The Winchilsea System'. To try and take pressure off the Poor Law Rate he advocated that cottagers should be given a piece of land for cultivation and between one and four cows. Morris Berman, *Social Change and Scientific Organisation: The Royal Institution, 1799-1844* (Heinemann Educational Books, 1978), 5, fn. 16.

the King.<sup>77</sup> Farming sheep in England had been an important industry for centuries. Not only did sheep produce wool and meat, and in some cases milk, but they added to soil fertility by fertilising the land with their droppings and by not poaching the ground they were grazed or folded on in bad weather, their small feet earning them the title of the ‘animal with the golden hoof’. The diploma presented to the Board's ordinary members emphasised George III's stance on the importance of sheep to the national economy. Prominent in an agricultural landscape is a sheep with the letters ‘GR’ emblazoned on its side to denote George III's ‘particular attention...to that important branch of rural economy, the improvement of wool.’<sup>78</sup> In 1799 the manufacture of high-quality British clothing was reliant on imported Merino wool from Spain, being of a superior quality to that produced by its closest rivals, the Southdown and Ryeland breeds. The ongoing war had brought the threat of embargos and blockades of shipments of Merino wool by the French, which had placed pressure on the manufacturing industry. In his address, Somerville stressed that it was essential to establish an English supply of wool of equivalent quality if the manufacture of high-end woollen goods was to be maintained.<sup>79</sup>

There was currently only one small flock of Merinos in the country, and these belonged to George III. Spain prohibited the export of Merino sheep; the penalty if caught was death. Banks, an ex-officio member of the Board and a significant presence within the Group, had been one of those instrumental in smuggling Merinos into Britain for the King.

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<sup>77</sup> Somerville gave his address to the Board on 14 May 1799. Somerville, *The system followed*, 42-58; ‘Lord Somerville's address to the Board of Agriculture on the subject of sheep and wool’, *Annals*, Vol. XXXIII, 154-68.

<sup>78</sup> An explanation of the iconography of the diploma is pasted to the back of Arthur Young's diploma. Clarke, *History of the Board of Agriculture*, 11.

<sup>79</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 42-58.



Figure 28<sup>80</sup>

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**Board of Agriculture Diploma**

Note the letters 'G R' on the flank of the sheep on the left-hand side.

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Banks and the King had become good friends over many years, and Banks unofficially managed the royal flock for almost 14 years.<sup>81</sup> Writing to the Earl of Egremont in 1797, Banks makes it clear that the King was not only interested in his Merinos but, on occasions, was 'hands-on' with his flock, Banks reporting that the King had personally assisted in selecting the sheep he was sending to the Earl as a gift.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Board of Agriculture Diploma given to Arthur Young. Clarke, *History of the Board of Agriculture*, image between 10-11.

<sup>81</sup> For an excellent in-depth study of George III's Merinos and more information on Banks' involvement in acquiring the Merinos for the King, as well as his management of the royal flock, see Harold B. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock* (Angus & Robertson, 1964).

<sup>82</sup> Sir Joseph Banks to George O'Brien Wyndham, third Earl of Egremont, 29 July 1797, letter 667, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 295.

During his address to the Board, Somerville announced his own commitment to support the British wool industry, declaring that he would only ever wear garments made entirely from English wool from midsummer onwards.<sup>83</sup> What he did not announce, but was indeed on his mind, was the idea of importing his own Merinos. With the wool industry threatened with the loss of its imported Spanish Merino wool supply, Somerville's idea was to import his own top-quality Spanish Merinos, cross them with Southdowns and Ryelands, and then cross their offspring back to the Merino. He believed that enough of these crosses with superior quality fleeces would satisfy the high-end clothing manufacturers.

Having declared that he would only wear English woollen garments in future, he presented George III with a corbeau suit made entirely from English wool for his birthday. On his birthday, the King wore his new suit and declared himself 'highly satisfied' with his present from the latest member of his close ensemble of courtiers. In solidarity with the King, Somerville, Banks, and one or two others also wore pure English woollen suits.<sup>84</sup> By July, Somerville was accompanying the King to the House of Lords in the State Coach and the following month was in Weymouth with the royal family on their annual summer holiday.<sup>85</sup>

### **William Ducket and his sons**

Just three weeks after becoming one of the King's companions, Somerville proposed that the Board's first-ever gold medal be presented to William Ducket (1728-1801), 'as a

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<sup>83</sup> After Somerville announced his intention of only wearing garments made from English wool, he got others interested in this idea. He wrote circular letters to attendees of the Lewes Wool Fair stating that he and other noblemen had decided in future to only wear cloth that had been manufactured from English wool. Somerville, *The system followed*, 43; 6 July 1799, *Northampton Mercury*, 2; 10 July 1799, *Hereford Journal*, 2, both in BNA.

<sup>84</sup> Corbeau is a dark green almost black colour. Somerville, Sir Joseph Banks, the Duke of Roxburgh, and others were similarly attired in suits made solely from English wool. 8 June 1799, *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 4, in BNA. In March 1808 Somerville presented Her Majesty, Queen Charlotte with 'a Merino dress of exquisite quality' manufactured in Norwich from wool from his Merino flock. 'London March 21', 28 March 1808, *Hampshire Chronicle*, title page, in BNA.

<sup>85</sup> The Earl of Chesterfield, 'Master of the Horse', was also in the coach with them. 'July 13', 18 July 1799, *Caledonian Mercury*, 2, in BNA.

mark of the Board's esteem for his general merit as a cultivator'.<sup>86</sup> Duckett was then 71 and farming as a tenant at Weylands Farm, Esher.<sup>87</sup> He was renowned for his ingenuity in inventing agricultural implements and his innovative cultivation techniques, including the trench-plough, which made very little tillage necessary on sandy soils.<sup>88</sup> During the 1780s, when Duckett tenanted a farm at Petersham, the King became a frequent visitor and friend.<sup>89</sup> Somerville became Duckett's near neighbour after he bought Fairmile Farm in 1799, their farms being three miles apart. Duckett had previously tenanted land on Fairmile Common, and the eager Somerville must have quizzed the older man not only on his cultivation techniques but also on the type of land he had purchased, keen to know what crops and livestock it would best support.<sup>90</sup> Not only did Somerville learn from Duckett, but he also sent his farm staff to Duckett to learn the family's innovative cultivation methods.<sup>91</sup>

The King was so enamoured with how Duckett had transformed his Petersham farm he wrote to him in 1786 asking him to send two reports to *Annals of Agriculture (Annals)*, the

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<sup>86</sup> The meeting was held on 23 April 1799. 'Gold Medal of the Board of Agriculture', *Annals*, Vol. XXXIII, 59-61; Somerville, *The system followed*, 23-4. Duckett travelled to London shortly before he died to be presented with this medal on 28 January 1800.

<sup>87</sup> Duckett had tenanted farms at Petersham and Sandown, and on the expiry of the Petersham lease took over a farm at Esher. The farm was then called Weylands Farm, then Weylands South Farm. The original name of Weylands Farm is the one the thesis has chosen to adopt. Francis Pelham owned both the Sandown and Esher Farms. Penny Rainbow, 'Henry Pelham', *Waynelete Tower: the tower of Esher*, [website], <https://wayneletetower.co.uk/henry-pelham-esher-gothic/>, (accessed 27 October 2021).

<sup>88</sup> Duckett's trench plough was a skim-coulter plough. It had two shares, one above the other. The top narrow superficial share broke the surface of the ground. The lower share worked at a moderate depth below it. It was excellent for ploughing in green crops or long-stemmed straw-based manure. William Youatt (ed.), *The Complete Grazier* (London: Cradock and Co., 1846), 389. For more information on Duckett's farming techniques see Young's lecture to the Board of Agriculture. Arthur Young, *On the Husbandry of Three Celebrated British Farmers* (McMillan, 1811). 31-2.

<sup>89</sup> John Gazely suggests that Duckett had been a bailiff for George III, but this is difficult to verify. Gazley, 'Arthur Young and the Society of Arts', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. I, No. 2 (1941), 138, fn. 49, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2113469>, (accessed 19 September 2019). Initially, Duckett worked for the Duke of Newcastle at Claremont Gardens, Esher, Surrey. Irene Codd, 'A History of West End', Part 2, *A.F.C. Westend*, [website], <https://www.afcwestend.co.uk/scanvnhist2.pdf>, (accessed 27 October 2021).

<sup>90</sup> Tax records reveal Duckett had previously tenanted land on Fairmile Common. David Taylor, 'The Age of Improvement', *Cobham: A History* (Phillimore, 2003), 60.

<sup>91</sup> William Napton, who worked for Lord Somerville, was at the Ducketts' farm in mid-June 1799 to learn how to use the hand hoe invented by Mark Duckett [Duckitt] (Duckett's eldest son). 'Account of Mr. Duckett's Hand-Hoe', *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, 425.



first on his implements and cultivation methods, the second on his cropping regime.<sup>92</sup> He told Ducket that he understood that his modesty and limited time had prevented him from doing this before. Still, the King considered Ducket's 'unremitted energy and spirited exertion' adopted into a new cultivation style meant Ducket should enlighten the public about it.<sup>93</sup> But even a royal request could not persuade the shy Ducket. So, the King took matters into his own hands and, writing under the nom-de-plume of Ralph Robinson from Windsor, he compiled a detailed report on his friend's cultivation methods and sent it to *Annals* on 1 January 1787.<sup>94</sup> His draft letter, with numerous corrections, suggests the King spent some time composing it. Throughout both this and the final version, he respectfully refers to the tenant farmer as Mr Ducket. Two months later, in a further edition of *Annals*, the King answered questions raised in response to his earlier report on Ducket's system.<sup>95</sup>

James Fisher suggests George III was one of those readers 'with a clear sense of their own particular interests'. One of these was farming, and the King often made detailed notes whilst reading agricultural periodicals: for instance, making observations about sanfoin and cabbage production.<sup>96</sup> He chose *Annals* to send his report to as he respected Young's

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<sup>92</sup> This letter is not dated. Although the Royal Trust Collection date the letter as ?1787-1805 it must have been written in 1786 as George III's letter to Arthur Young for *Annals* is dated 1 January 1787 and was written after his letter to Ducket. 'Letter to Mr Ducket', RA GEO/ADD/32/2016, 'George III essays', *Georgian Papers Online*, Royal Trust Collection, [website], [https://gpp.rct.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=GIII\\_ESSAYS%2f5%2f2&pos=2](https://gpp.rct.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=GIII_ESSAYS%2f5%2f2&pos=2), (accessed 2 December 2020).

<sup>93</sup> 'Letter to Mr Ducket', *Georgian Papers Online*, 1-2.

<sup>94</sup> Letters from 'Ralph Robinson' to *Annals*, RA GEO/ADD/32/2012-2015, *Georgian Papers Online*, [https://gpp.rct.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=GIII\\_ESSAYS%2f5%2f3&pos=1](https://gpp.rct.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=GIII_ESSAYS%2f5%2f3&pos=1), (accessed 27 October 2021).

<sup>95</sup> Ralph Robinson [George III], 'On Mr Ducket's Mode of Cultivation', and 'Further Remarks on Mr Ducket's Mode of Cultivation', *Annals*, Vol. VII (1786) 65-71 & 332-6. Although the publication is dated mdccclxxxvi (1786) this is an error. It should read mdccclxxxvii (1787).

<sup>96</sup> George III made copious notes on many publications over the years. The extant notes, relevant to his agricultural interest, span the years 1762-71. His detailed notes on Arthur Young's observations on growing sanfoin and cabbages were taken when Young was touring northern farms. Arthur Young, *A Six Month Tour Through the North of England* (1771) cited in James Fisher, 'George III – Notes of Agriculture', *Georgian Papers Online*, <https://georgianpapers.com/2017/01/19/farmer-georges-notes-agriculture/>, (accessed 25 December 2020).

publication, being a regular reader over many years. That he was also a keen observer and listener is well illustrated in his detailed reporting of Ducket's manuring regime:

He dungs for turnips, unless the preceding crop was dinged; for wheat he had rather dung on the seeds, that is, on clover, &c. which the wheat is to follow, after the ground has been trench-ploughed. He regularly trench-ploughs the clover-leys, and throws the dung deep.<sup>97</sup>

Young too was a friend of Ducket and was pleased that although the King had failed to get Ducket to write the report, he had written it himself. Young reprinted the King's articles in 1799 after the Board awarded its first gold medal to Ducket.<sup>98</sup> Young commented that he had wanted to write about Ducket's farming methods himself but had held back, knowing from a previous visit that Ducket was shy about publicising them.<sup>99</sup> However, in 1811, Young did get his chance to promote Ducket when he gave a lecture to the Board on the three men he considered had most influenced British farming: Ducket was one of Young's agricultural holy trinity.<sup>100</sup>

Although Somerville said the decision to award the medal to Ducket was his suggestion, there is a compelling argument that the King was also closely involved.<sup>101</sup> Both were neighbours and friends of the Surrey tenant farmer, and they likely devised the award together. It is also highly probable that Young, the Board's secretary, who once referred to the cultivator in print as 'Ducket the Great', was also involved in the decision.<sup>102</sup> In awarding the medal to a tenant farmer of such esteem, and one held in great respect by the King,

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<sup>97</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXIII, 68-9.

<sup>98</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXIII, 61-9, 71-6.

<sup>99</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXIII, 70.

<sup>100</sup> The other two of Young's three most influential agriculturalists were John Arbuthnot and Robert Bakewell. Young published his lecture. Young, *On the Husbandry of*.

<sup>101</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 23-4.

<sup>102</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XVII, 164.

Somerville must have hoped that farmers would now view the Board’s objectives in a more positive light.



Figure 29 <sup>103</sup>

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*Board of Agriculture Medal*

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Somerville’s blossoming relationship with the King had a more significant and longer-lasting effect on the Duckett family than the award of the Board’s gold medal. Two initiatives by them changed the lives of two of Duckett’s three sons. Both illustrate how the agricultural friendship among these agriculturalists, even when spanning a vast social divide, were not mere words but a real and powerful force that could, as in this family’s case, transform a family’s fortunes. Mark, the eldest, had followed in his father’s footsteps inventing farm machinery, whilst the youngest, John, was the fifth Duke of Bedford’s bailiff at Park Farm, Woburn Abbey. Although William had inherited their father’s ‘ingenuity’ with farm equipment, he worked as an assistant in the office of the treasurer-general in London.<sup>104</sup> In late July 1799, Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, asked William Duckitt to go to the Cape of Good Hope (the Cape) to improve its agriculture by introducing his father’s

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<sup>103</sup> Board of Agriculture medal awarded to ‘Thomas Keld Esqr. May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1805, for an essay on Muston Drainage.’ Silver medal, modelled by C.H. Küchler, 48 mm (1805). Although this medal is silver it is the same design as the gold medal awarded to William Duckett in 1799.

<sup>104</sup> Although the spelling of their father’s surname is Duckett the surname of his sons is generally written as Duckitt, and it is this spelling of the family’s name that is adopted from hereon in when discussing the sons.

agricultural ideas and range of farming implements.<sup>105</sup> History records that George III was behind the appointment, but the evidence provided by this thesis reveals that Somerville had a significant part in it. It argues that the offer of employment to William Duckitt, and the decision to improve the agriculture of the Cape, were a direct result of the developing relationship between George III and Somerville.

The Cape was a Dutch colony, but in 1795 had been occupied by the French and, later that year, invaded and captured by Britain. Strategically situated at the African tip, it was valuable during the war and for sea trade generally. However, the current Boer farming methods were outdated and inadequate to provide for the growing population, the garrisoned troops and the merchant and naval ships that frequently stopped there.<sup>106</sup> Somerville, whose growing interest in the Cape's farming potential was such that there were rumours he intended to visit the area personally, believed that its agricultural resources could become an asset for Britain if managed correctly.<sup>107</sup> He had been corresponding with Jan Van Reenen. Van Reenen's family were major importers and an influential presence on the Cape. His farming enterprise included a flock of 1,000 sheep, of which 400 were pure-bred Spanish Merinos. Somerville had received a letter from Van Reenen that included facts and figures

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<sup>105</sup> Henry Dundas (1742-1811). C. Plug, 'Duckitt, Mr William, (agriculture)', *S2A3 Biographical Database of Southern African Science*, [website], [https://www.s2a3.org.za/bio/Biograph\\_final.php?serial=788](https://www.s2a3.org.za/bio/Biograph_final.php?serial=788), (accessed 27 September 2019); 'William Duckitt (the younger)', *The Elmbridge Hundred*, [website], <https://people.elmbridgehundred.org.uk/biographies/william-duckitt-the-younger/>, (accessed 7 April 2021). Recently Maura Capps' thesis which explores Britain's colonial agricultural developments, has become available online. This is an informative thesis that adds to the information provided by this thesis. However, there are some errors, such as Capps saying that Duckitt obtained horses from Robert Bakewell, who was a Board member. Bakewell died in 1795, five years before the expedition, and was never a member of the Board. Maura Capps, 'All Flesh is Grass: Agrarian Improvement and ecological imperialism in Britain's Settler Empire, 1780-1840', PhD Thesis, University of Chicago, 2016, 127, <http://dx.doi.org/10.6082/uchicago.1731>, (accessed 20 February 2022).

<sup>106</sup> Langham-Carter, R.R. 'The Duckitt Expedition: An Esher Story told from South African Sources', *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, Vol. LXV (1968, pub. online 2017), 97-104, Archaeology Data Service, <https://doi.org/10.5284/1068973>, (accessed 28 January 2022).

<sup>107</sup> Although there had been a rumour that Somerville's interest in the Cape was such that he might well visit it in person, this was considered highly improbable, and no evidence exists that he ever visited it. 'London, July 6', 11 July 1799, *Saunders's News-Letter*, 1, in BNA.

about his flock and wool samples.<sup>108</sup> Given the King's interest in Merinos, Somerville must surely have shown him the wool and discussed the letter's contents with him. It is very likely that the King and Somerville also discussed how best to maximise the Cape's farming potential. The opportunity to create a productive agricultural enterprise on land captured from the enemy, as well as influence local farming methods, the possibility of obtaining a supply of Merino wool and, in the longer term, the legal acquisition of Merino sheep were reasons enough to incite the Monarch's interest and for him to agree to the establishment of a department of agriculture there. Somerville had already discussed the idea of an agricultural establishment on the Cape with both Dundas and Pitt. Pitt 'highly approved' the idea, provided no cultivation was undertaken by slaves, as one of his cabinet had suggested.<sup>109</sup>

The initial idea of establishing an agricultural enterprise may have come from Lt. Colonel King (Col King) of the Ninety-First-Foot Regiment with whom Somerville had also been liaising. Col King was considered a distinguished and successful farmer responsible for some flourishing farming enterprises. He had been out in Africa on a fact-finding mission and had signed a treaty with locals to establish a military settlement at the Cape and was keen to set up a farming operation there.<sup>110</sup> Somerville and the Monarch evidently discussed the Cape's farming project and Col King's imminent arrival because after Col King arrived from the Cape, Somerville introduced him to George III at a levee at St James Palace on 17 July 1799.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> The ancestry of Van Reenen's Merinos could be traced back to the flock which had arrived in the Cape from Holland in 1782 and were directly descended from those given to Holland by the King of Spain. Somerville, *The system followed*, 92-3.

<sup>109</sup> 'London July 6', 11 July 1799, *Saunders's News-Letter*, 1; 13 July 1799, *Oxford Journal*, 1, both in BNA.

<sup>110</sup> 'London July 9', 16 July 1799, *Chester Courant*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>111</sup> 'July 12', 15 July 1799, *Caledonian Mercury*, 2, in BNA. The Levee was on Wednesday 17 July 1799. 19 July 1799, *Kentish Gazette*, 4, in BNA.

When Duckitt's name was suggested to manage the project Col King doubted his farming knowledge to run such an operation.<sup>112</sup> Whether Col King felt piqued that his proposed operation was not to become the official government one or that he genuinely thought Duckitt would struggle is unknown. But despite Col King's reservations, George III and Somerville had faith in Duckitt, considering their friend's son the best man to introduce his father's farming methods to the Cape. As George III told Ducket in 1786, what impressed him was how his innovative farming methods had not only transformed his Petersham farm, where his predecessors had failed but then brought it to the 'highest perfection'.<sup>113</sup> He and Somerville must have hoped Ducket's son could achieve similar results on the Cape because two days after the levee, Somerville met Duckitt to offer him the position. He then wrote to Dundas, telling him Duckitt 'had conducted himself with much good sense' and that he and Duckitt would come to Dundas's home to settle the terms of the appointment.<sup>114</sup> Dundas presented Duckitt with his contract nine days later, on 28 July 1799.<sup>115</sup> The decision to appoint Duckitt must have been discussed and agreed upon between George III and Somerville. There is no possibility that Somerville made the decision alone: the Board was not an official government department, and as a Gentleman of the Bed Chamber, Somerville did not have the power to appoint a government official himself.

Duckitt must have looked at the position as long term because not only did he take at least nine members of staff with him, but also his wife and children.<sup>116</sup> Duckitt's journal

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<sup>112</sup> Col. King doubted Duckitt's farming knowledge, which Duckitt contested. Sir George Yonge, the Governor-designate of the Cape wrote to Dundas saying 'Duckitt does by no means acquiesce in Col. King's judgement of him, at which he is most indignant and insists upon being put to the Tryal.' Cited in Langham-Carter, 97.

<sup>113</sup> 'Letter to Mr Ducket', *Georgian Papers Online*. 1-2.

<sup>114</sup> The letter from Somerville to Dundas, 19 July 1799, is held by the National Archives of South Africa (NASA) in the Cape Archives, Cape Town. The date of Somerville's meeting with Duckitt and the letter are cited in Langham-Carter, 100. Langham-Carter says that Somerville met Duckitt at his home in Sackville Street. This is an error as Somerville lived on Hill Street. He must have met him at the Board of Agriculture's office in Sackville Street.

<sup>115</sup> The terms of Duckitt's employment, dated 28 July 1799, are held by NASA.

<sup>116</sup> Duckitt's manuscript journal from December 1799 is held in the South African Public Library, Cape Town. For a comprehensive account of the Duckitt expedition from his appointment to his arrival on the Cape see Langham-Carter, 97-105.

records that he encountered many bureaucratic problems preparing for the trip, including the English law forbidding him to take sheep with him.<sup>117</sup> Although they were due to leave in January 1800, it was not until 23 May that they eventually sailed. It was Duckitt's misfortune that Somerville had left England for Portugal the autumn before because it is reasonable to assume that had Somerville been in the country, as both the Board's President and companion to the King, he would have been able to expedite aspects of Duckitt's preparations.<sup>118</sup> The journey took five months rather than the expected three and a half, so it was 11 September 1800 before the expedition finally arrived at Simonstown, the proposed site of the agricultural establishment.<sup>119</sup>

Unfortunately, George III's agricultural department on the Cape never fulfilled its potential. Various factors were responsible: Somerville's removal as President in 1800, the deterioration in the King's mental and physical health from 1801 onwards, and political upheaval, which firstly resulted in Britain handing over the Cape to the Batavian Republic in 1803 before recapturing it again in 1806. Although Duckitt continued to run the department, he also went into a private partnership with Van Reenen and his brother a couple of years after his arrival. He never returned to England, dying at the Cape 24 years later. Duckitt's descendants still farm there today.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Following Somerville's advice, Duckitt planned to take 3 Devon cattle and 22 Spanish x Ryeland sheep, but in the end, he was only able to take the cattle. Although Somerville recommended the Devons, he was out of the country when they were bought and so they were acquired from Somerville's friend, the fifth Duke of Bedford through William Duckitt's brother John, who worked for the Duke as his bailiff at Park Farm, Woburn. Where Duckitt sourced the sheep from is not known. But they must have come from the royal flock or possibly one of the flocks George III had presented Merinos to, there being no other Merinos in the country at that date. As Duckitt consulted Sir Joseph Banks before he left England it is likely that they came from the royal flock. Although the sheep were bought for the expedition the plan had to be abandoned because an act of parliament, passed in 1788 to protect the woollen industry, forbade the export of sheep. Duckitt also took several of his father's implements as well as different varieties of seed provided by Thomas Gibbs, another of the Group and a Smithfield Club member. Langham-Carter, 100-2.

<sup>118</sup> Somerville left England for the Iberian Peninsula in the autumn of 1799 and did not return until May 1800. For more information on Somerville's trip see later in this section.

<sup>119</sup> Langham-Carter, 102.

<sup>120</sup> For more information on William Duckitt's life in the Cape of Good Hope see Plug.

Figure 30 <sup>121</sup>



*William Duckitt*

Image courtesy of W. Duckitt of Blouberg  
© ADS Archive

There is a compelling argument that Somerville also persuaded the King to aid Duckitt's eldest son, Mark, financially. After his father died in 1801, Mark took over Weylands Farm, but even before this, he was actively inventing and marketing agricultural implements. The Board published a report on Duckitt's hand hoe in 1800, whilst Somerville included a picture of the hoe in his published account of his time as President, calling it an 'ingenious invention'.<sup>122</sup> Duckitt was in the Wider Woburn Circle, exhibiting

his implements and livestock. In 1804 his white sow won at Somerville's March show and his skim-coulter plough won at both Montague Burgoyne's show and the Woburn Sheep Shearing.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Anonymous, *William Duckitt*, Plate IX (b) in Langham-Carter. Image courtesy of W Duckitt of Blouberg, Cape, © ADS, <https://doi.org/10.5284/1068973>, (accessed 18 February 2022).

<sup>122</sup> Board of Agriculture, 'Account of Mr. Duckitt's Hand-Hoe', *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, 424-5; Somerville, 'Ducket's Hoe', *The system followed*, plate 3.II1 inserted between 238-9.

<sup>123</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew', 4 March 1804, *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 7, in BNA. 'Harlow Ploughing Competition' & 'Woburn Sheep-Shearing', *Annals*, Vol. XLII, 539-42 & 428-31.





**Figure 31**

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The medal awarded to Mark Duckitt by Montague Burgoyne as best cultivator at Mark Hall Farm on 15 June 1804

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The following June, the principal members of the Group were again at Burgoyne's farm. Burgoyne had now adopted Mark Duckitt's system and farmed his land under his direct supervision.<sup>124</sup> The company, including the sixth Duke of Bedford and Somerville and more far-flung members from the Group, including Frank Sitwell from Northumberland and John Christian Curwen from Cumberland, spent a long time inspecting Duckitt's different implements which Burgoyne had on display. Many placed orders for them.<sup>125</sup>

Despite these orders, Duckitt was in financial trouble. Just days later, after dinner at the Woburn Sheep Shearing, the conversation turned to how well the ploughs had all performed that day.<sup>126</sup> The sixth Duke stood up and reminded them of how impressed they

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<sup>124</sup> 'Harlow Agricultural Meeting', 22 June 1805, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>125</sup> 'Harlow Agricultural Society, (Essex.)', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 450. Thomas Seer, Montague Burgoyne's ploughman, won first price (£1-11-6d) for being the best ploughman at the Harlow Ploughing Competition, using Duckitt's skim-coulter plough. So impressive was the implement that a silver medal was given to Duckitt, as the manufacturer. 'Harlow Ploughing Competition', *Annals*, Vol. XLII, 540.

<sup>126</sup> This was on Wednesday, the third day of the show. 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine* Vol. XII (1805), 443.

had been with Duckitt's skim-coulter plough the year before and then asked them to listen to Somerville for a few minutes.

On which his Lordship rose, and with a zeal and energy highly creditable to himself, stated the unfortunate pecuniary embarrassments of Mark, one of the three sons of the 'late, worthy, ingenious, excellent, and well-known farmer, Mr. Duckitt, of Esher'; and he strongly recommended the measure, of a subscription for his relief, grounding his proposal principally on the advantage of shewing to the world, that ingenious and worthy men in this country, may rely on the public gratitude being extended not only to themselves, but to their children after them.

Somerville went on to say that their fellow dinner guest, the Duke of Clarence, had already put his name on the subscription list, pledging 10 guineas and that he, the sixth Duke, Burgoyne and the banker, Henry Hugh Hoare, had all subscribed the same amount. These four men agreed they would administer the fund, which they did through Hoare's family bank. Burgoyne told them that Duckitt was only in trouble because of 'unfavourable seasons, crops and markets...and not any neglect or intemperance of his own'.<sup>127</sup> The subscription list was hung up, and by the following day, there were over 80 names on it, with £195-10-0 pledged.<sup>128</sup> None of the subscriptions exceeded 10 guineas, and the lowest was 10/6d. The four landowners were as good as their word, administering the fund for 16 years until 1821. The Hoares Bank ledger records the £195 payment and then a further sum of £200, with the entry simply stating, 'Exch. Bond'. Regular yearly credits, in the form of Exch. Bonds, initially for £200 and then £100, were entered into the ledger. The last entry is dated June 1821.<sup>129</sup> Duckitt and his family received payments from the fund equalling the amount paid into the account each year. The source of these Exch. Bonds is unknown, but the thesis

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<sup>127</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII, 443.

<sup>128</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII, 444.

<sup>129</sup> Not everyone at Woburn signed and notable missing names were the Dishley men: Robert Honeyborn, Nathaniel Stubbins, Samuel Stone and Nicholas Buckley, although Buckley's brother Michael subscribed, as did Richard Astley. The list of subscribers and all information about Duckitt's account during the period it was in operation, are in *Bedford, Duke of; Somerville, Lord; Burgoyne, Montagu Esq; Hoare, Henry Hugh Esq, Mark Duckitt's Trustees Acct opened June 1805. Closed June 1821*. Customer ledger/folio nos: 89/237-239, 97/131, 7/39, 17/330, 29/317, 40/214, 52/224, 65/394, in Archives, Hoares Bank, London.

argues that Somerville discussed Duckitt's misfortune with George III. After telling him about the agriculturalists' fund to help Duckitt, the King, a great admirer and friend of his late father, heeded Somerville's words that neither worthy and ingenious men, nor their sons, should be forgotten and arranged a pension for Mark Duckitt, which only ceased after the Monarch's death.<sup>130</sup>

The friendship between the King and Somerville typifies how Aristotle thought a useful friendship functioned: reciprocal goodwill for a friend based on mutual advantage, each gaining something from the relationship. However, the Group's friendship with Mark Duckitt is not as straightforward. James Grunebaum considers that Aristotle saw 'utility friendship' as being 'fair-weather', often not as long-lasting or having the depth of goodwill that a friendship based on virtue had.<sup>131</sup> Grunebaum disagrees, saying goodwill can be manifest in both. He makes two pertinent points that are relevant to agricultural friendship. Firstly, he argues that 'the primary advantage of utility friendships over virtue friendships is the number of friends it is possible to have.'<sup>132</sup> His views on this are supported throughout this thesis, arguing that the Group's agricultural friendship was based on a shared interest that they could both add to and learn from. Grunebaum's second argument is that a 'utility friendship' was not only a relationship that was useful to those concerned but could go deeper. He argues that 'these men can rely on each other; they are there when you need them, willing to lend a helping hand and someone to be counted on.'<sup>133</sup> This study argues that by

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<sup>130</sup> It is improbable that this yearly sum came from anyone in the Group as there is no record in the ledgers of any further payments from any of them. None of the men, even the Duke of Clarence, subscribed more than 10 guineas to the fund and, as there were only 12 aristocrats listed on the subscription form, it is highly improbable that these regular sums came from any or all of them. If any of them had been responsible for these large amounts the most likely candidate would have been Somerville, Duckitt's neighbour, who shared his enthusiasm for inventing farm implements. But after Somerville's death in 1819 the money continued for another two years. Although the source of this money is currently unknown, it is highly likely it came from George III. Pensions from the government were not unusual and it is no coincidence that shortly after the King's death, the regular payments ceased, and the fund was closed. 'Mark Duckitt's Trustees Acct opened June 1805. Closed June 1821'. *Hoares Bank*.

<sup>131</sup> Grunebaum, 'Fair-Weather Friends', 203-14.

<sup>132</sup> Grunebaum, 'Fair-Weather Friends', 212.

<sup>133</sup> Grunebaum, 'Fair-Weather Friends', 204.

helping Mark Duckitt financially, many of the Group, in addition to the King and Somerville, conformed to Grunebaum's thinking. These men were not only willing to help Duckitt, as they knew him personally and admired his abilities, but because they also respected his 'ingenious' father.

### **An ignominious exit: the end of Somerville's presidency**

Somerville assiduously attended 28 full Board meetings during the first year of his presidency. Then his long absence in Portugal made it impossible for him to participate in any of the Board's meetings during his second term in office. He left England for Lisbon in the autumn of 1799 and did not return until May 1800.<sup>134</sup> The widely held belief is that Somerville went to Portugal for health reasons and studied Portuguese farming methods whilst convalescing there, but this is not the whole story.<sup>135</sup> His primary motives, which he revealed shortly after his return, was to purchase Merino breeding stock and learn about their management.<sup>136</sup> He brought the sheep back to England with him.<sup>137</sup>

Whilst Somerville was still in Portugal, Pitt's good friend, Lord Carrington, defeated him in the Board's presidential election.<sup>138</sup> Somerville firmly believed that Pitt was again

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<sup>134</sup> Somerville must have left England for Lisbon after the Weymouth trip with the Royal Family in late August 1799. He did not arrive back in England until 17 May 1800.

<sup>135</sup> From when Somerville became President of the Board in 1798, he was in the public eye enough for there to have been a report if he had had any serious health problems. But there is no record of Somerville suffering from any illness during 1799 which might have necessitated him taking a long trip abroad to convalesce.

<sup>136</sup> Mitchison, Clarke and others generally believe it was his poor health that forced him to leave England for almost 10 months and, whilst he was in Portugal, he busied himself with learning about the country's agriculture. Although these were both factors, his main intention was to purchase Merinos for himself and learn about their husbandry. He said his reason for not making his intentions public before he left England was that he believed prior knowledge of it could have jeopardised his mission. Although he said he was not concerned about his own life, he was worried about the lives of those who accompanied him, and who could have been in danger if his mission had been made public. He said it was always going to be a difficult endeavour, but the war had made it almost impossible. Not only had he experienced trouble procuring the sheep, but even getting the information he required had been difficult. Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture', 57; Clarke, 'John Fifteenth Lord Somerville', 9. Somerville, *The system followed*, 73-4.

<sup>137</sup> 'London, Friday, June 6', 9 June 1800, *Hampshire Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>138</sup> The election was on 25 March 1800 and Somerville did not arrive back until seven weeks later. He must have known about his defeat before he left Portugal as packet steamers went regularly between England and Lisbon,

involved in this election and, on his return, wrote to him intimating that he considered his removal as President had been orchestrated.<sup>139</sup> Pitt ignored his letter, so Somerville wrote to the King, telling him that his public reputation had been permanently stained. He believed that only some form of official recognition, such as an English peerage, could rectify this.<sup>140</sup> However, although the King had initially wanted Somerville as President, he seemingly decided not to intervene when Somerville failed to be re-elected and ignored his letter.

Although Somerville had left England on good terms with the King and, as one of his courtiers, must have had his permission to travel abroad, this thesis argues that he did not disclose the entire reason for his visit to him and that this appears to have piqued the King. Only upon his return did Somerville divulge his real motive, saying his primary objective had been to bring back Merinos. He went on to say that he had had to keep it a secret, fearing that if it had been made public, it could not only have jeopardised his mission and resulted in its failure but also risked the lives of all those involved.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the King was annoyed and possibly felt let down by Somerville. Not only had he had the wool pulled over his eyes about Somerville's prolonged absence, but the Board had had no clear leadership for nine months, as well as there being no input from Somerville into the Cape expedition. The King's flock of Merinos was important to him, but they had been obtained by men more skilful at smuggling than they were at selecting quality animals, and, consequently, they had poor conformation. One of his imported Merino tups was said to be 'surely the most hideous of his kind', and he probably harboured some resentment over the

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and usually took between 7 and 10 days. Carrington polled 11 votes, Somerville 5, and Sinclair 4. Clarke, *History of the Board of Agriculture*, 24.

<sup>139</sup> Lord Somerville to William Pitt, 5 August 1800, letter 2212 (copy), A. Aspinall, Vol. III, 391. Somerville considered it a slight by Pitt and still felt animosity toward him four years later saying in a letter to General Harcourt, 'Mr Pitt has treated me cruelly without a cause'. General William Harcourt to George III, 14 November 1804, enclosing a letter from Lord Somerville to General Harcourt, 10 November 1804, letter 2965, A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Later Correspondence of George III*, Vol. IV, January 1802 to December 1807 (Cambridge University Press, 1968), 247-8.

<sup>140</sup> Lord Somerville to George III, 26 November 1800, letter 2286, Aspinall, Vol. III, 442.

<sup>141</sup> Somerville, *The system followed*, 74.

quality of stock Somerville brought back with him.<sup>142</sup> Somerville was a skilled sheep breeder and personally selected high-quality Merinos, which he knew would best suit English tastes.<sup>143</sup>



Figure 32 <sup>144</sup>

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Merino Sheep  
'These outlandish  
creatures'

George III's Merinos  
probably looked like  
these.

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A central tenet of Aristotle's concept of 'useful friendship' is that it only worked if participants felt they gained something from it.<sup>145</sup> In this case, the King had gained nothing from Somerville's prolonged absence, only six months into their fledgeling relationship. So, it is argued that he chose to neither intervene in the Board's election nor reward Somerville with the peerage he so desperately craved.<sup>146</sup> However, the King's health may also have been a factor in the apparent decline in his relationship with Somerville. He suffered a second bout of debilitating psychiatric illness just months later. Possibly this had been building up in the months before, affecting the King's moods and making him ignore Somerville's plea. But by

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<sup>142</sup> Dr. Caleb Hillier Parry quoted in Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 252.

<sup>143</sup> Somerville himself said he was able to choose stock of 'undoubted high blood' and quality. Somerville, *The system followed*, 74. Carter agrees that Somerville's animals were superior to the King's flock and better suited to the English eye. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 252. Robert Trow-Smith considers that Somerville was an excellent sheep man. Robert Trow-Smith, *A History of British Livestock Husbandry 1700-1900* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), 133.

<sup>144</sup> Anonymous, *Merino Sheep*, Engraving. Image courtesy of John Wilson. George Tollet called them 'these outlandish animals' (Carter's use of italics), George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, July 1803, letter 995, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 385-6.

<sup>145</sup> Brown, Aristotle, 144, 146.

<sup>146</sup> That Somerville craved an English peerage is made very clear in a letter to the King in 1807. Lord Somerville to George III, 14 April 1807, letter 3442, Aspinall, Vol. IV, 563-4.

March 1802, with the King now recovered, their agricultural friendship seems to have been back on track. George III showed his support for Somerville's first livestock show by entering oxen in it, and his patronage continued over subsequent years.<sup>147</sup> Somerville took friends such as the tenant farmer and Southdown breeder John Ellman and the livestock artist James Ward to meet the King at his farm.<sup>148</sup> He accompanied the King and the Royal Family to state, public and private functions, visited the family at Windsor, rode out with the King and entertained the Queen and princesses at Fairmile Farm.<sup>149</sup> After George III's psychiatric illness returned permanently, he was declared insane in 1811. Somerville and Winchilsea were part of the much-reduced staff that accompanied the King to Windsor when the Regency was established. Both stayed as longstanding companions to the old, frail and mentally ill king. Somerville remained until 5 April 1819, dying six months later, Winchilsea until the King's death, four months after Somerville's death.<sup>150</sup>

Although this case study has shed light on Somerville's presidency, a little-known period in the Board's history, its primary aim has been to understand how agricultural friendship functioned through personal contact. Exploring the relationship between the King and Somerville has revealed that even those at the head of British society could enjoy agricultural friendships. Their relationship was based on mutual agricultural respect: a useful friendship in Aristotelian terms. From the time of Somerville's appointment as a courtier, it

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<sup>147</sup> Somerville, *Facts and Observations*, 173, 176, 196, 200, 218; 'Lord Somerville's Spring Cattle Shew', 10 March 1809, *Kentish Gazette*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>148</sup> [F.P. Walesby], 'Memoir of Mr Ellman', *Baxter's Library of Agricultural and Horticultural Knowledge* (Baxter, 1834 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), xxxvii; C. Reginald Grundy, *James Ward, RA: His Life and Works* (Otto Ltd., 1909), xxxv.

<sup>149</sup> John, Lord Somerville to Sir Walter Scott, 8 November 1805, The National Library of Scotland, MS3875/113-114, cited in Caroline Balfour, *The Early Days of the River Tweed Commissioners* (River Tweed Commission, 2007), 38-9; 15 April 1805, *Morning Post*, 3; 8 July 1809, *Morning Post*, 3, both in BNA.

<sup>150</sup> Along with most of George III's courtiers, Somerville was paid until 5 April 1819 and laid off the following day. Winchilsea was one of the handful of senior courtiers to remain on the payroll until George III's death on 29 January 1820. Somerville died on 5 October 1819. 'Somerville, John Southey (Somerville)', 'King's Establishment at Windsor 1812-1820', List of staff, <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/indices/Index%2029a%20Kings%20Establishment%20at%20Windsor%201812.pdf>, (accessed 3 April 2021).

was a friendship with its advantages for both men. They were both well-read, and although they surely talked about other things, they must have found their ‘agricultural conversations’, whereby they exchanged ideas about new cultivation methods, different livestock breeds and such like, not only stimulating and beneficial but also pleasurable. Moreover, each man undoubtedly benefitted from it. Somerville was an ideal companion for the King. He was personable and enthusiastic about farming and loved innovative and ingenious ideas, such as his double furrow plough, which impressed the King. As a keen agriculturalist and a practical farmer, Somerville was better placed than Winchilsea to update the Monarch on what the agricultural landowners were up to and, as importantly, what was happening at a grassroots level. He was patriotic but not politically motivated and, essential to the King, had no affiliation with the Whig party. For his part, Somerville gained a direct and personal route to the throne, the prestige of being a companion to the King, and an excellent salary for only four weeks of work a year. With the friendship only in its infancy, Somerville’s long absence abroad appears to have led to a slight hiatus in their relationship, caused by a lack of trust on Somerville’s part and a sense of having been deceived on the King’s side. However, they seem to have overcome this hurdle because their relationship went on to be long-lived. It was pleasurable and beneficial to both and well illustrates how agricultural friendship worked in practice, even at the highest level.

By focusing on the relationship between the King, Somerville and William Ducket, this section has supported Clarke’s belief that a passion for agricultural improvement dominated all classes during this period. It has also illustrated that a shared passion could unite men from different levels of society. It argued that provided mutual respect existed that benefitted all parties, friendships could develop between them, regardless of social standing differences. In George III’s respect for Ducket’s ingenuity, it became evident that even ruling monarchs looked up to men, irrespective of their rank. In their case, a friendship had grown



between them, with the King regularly visiting Duckett's farms. George III held Duckett in high regard, and the knowledge that he spent time on New Year's Day writing about Duckett's farming techniques supports this. Somerville also shared his Monarch's admiration for the tenant farmer's innovative cultivation methods. Between them, they collaborated to honour him and his family in three different ways. In their financial support for Mark Duckitt, they were motivated not only by their admiration for a fellow agriculturalist's ingenuity but as his father's friends.

## 2) A Corresponding Interest<sup>151</sup>

'Excuse Dear Sir the freedom of this scrawl...'<sup>152</sup>

The Georgians were prodigious letter writers, and Martin Kagel rightly points out that the eighteenth century's extensive and sophisticated epistolary culture played a decisive role in the development and expression of friendship.<sup>153</sup> Within her research into the artisan botanists in the early nineteenth century, Anne Secord has also identified corresponding networks as being a significant factor in creating and maintaining a sense of community in natural history with middle and upper-class naturalists writing to propose exchanges with one another as a means of entering correspondence networks.<sup>154</sup> Like the naturalists Secord discusses, the farming community also regularly corresponded among themselves. This section focuses on correspondence involving four of the most enthusiastic sheep men within the Group. It focuses on George Tollet, the young Staffordshire farmer, and Thomas Walton,

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<sup>151</sup> The choice of the title of this section is adapted from Anne Secord's article of the same name. Anne Secord, 'Corresponding Interests: Artisans and Gentlemen in Nineteenth-Century Natural History', in *The British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4 (1994), 383-408, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4027623>, (accessed 19 January 2018).

<sup>152</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 August 1804, letter 1148, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 424.

<sup>153</sup> Martin Kagel, 'Brothers or Others: Male Friendship in Eighteenth-Century Germany', *Colloquia Germanica*, Vol. XL, No. 3/4 (2007), 214, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23982101>, (accessed 21 December 2021).

<sup>154</sup> Secord, 394, 400.

the recognised sheep expert, and their relationships with two influential and monied landowners, Sir Joseph Banks and Thomas William Coke, during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Exploring their correspondence reveals that Banks and Coke both considered Tollet and Walton friends despite the difference in status. Exploring Walton's relationship with the two landowners further enforces the argument made in the previous section of how essential skill and ingenuity were within the agricultural friendships enjoyed by the top agriculturalists, regardless of class. Finally, focusing on Tollet and Coke's relationship provides an insight into how agricultural friendship could evolve into a deeper relationship over time.

### **Mentor and Protégé: Sir Joseph Banks and George Tollet**

After Somerville's return from Lisbon in May 1800, his name was synonymous with Merino sheep, and he never failed to publicise the breed at any event he organised or attended.<sup>155</sup> However, Banks was no less keen, saying his 'favourite hobby' was managing the King's Merino flock.<sup>156</sup> Today Banks' name is not automatically associated with farming, remembered primarily as a naturalist, botanist, patron of the natural sciences and President of the Royal Society (PRS), a position he held for over 40 years. But his influence in sheep and wool matters was immense, and, as a keen agriculturalist interested in progressive farming ideas, mainly sheep and wool, he was an essential member of the Woburn Group.<sup>157</sup> Very few of Somerville's letters survive, but Banks' extensive sheep and wool correspondence still exists.<sup>158</sup> The collection includes letters written by Banks and those received by him from

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<sup>155</sup> Carter considers Somerville tirelessly promoted the Merino whilst Trow-Smith thought him 'nearly inexhaustible' in his 'reports, commentaries and moralizings' about them. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 252; Trow-Smith, *A History of British Livestock Husbandry*, 153.

<sup>156</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 128, 412.

<sup>157</sup> Carter provides an excellent summary of Banks' immense contribution to agricultural improvement in Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 411-12.

<sup>158</sup> The collection of Banks' letters is held in various repositories around the world. The sheep and wool papers and other manuscripts are held in a collection of about 10,000 items relating to Banks in the Sutro Library, California State Library, San Francisco. Carter has transcribed 1,437 of Banks' correspondence concerning

Figure 33 <sup>159</sup>



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*Sir Joseph Banks*  
George Garrard (1805-9)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Tollet and Walton. Although there are letters from Tollet and Walton to Coke, many of Coke's letters are no longer extant. Still, there are a few to Banks, and from these, it is possible to discern the voice of 'Coke, the friend'. Banks' name was invariably toasted at farming dinners, whether he was present or not and in *Woburn*

*Sheepshearing*, Garrard placed him amid those he considered were the 'great leaders of Agricultural Enquiry': Banks, seated because

of his gout, with his good friend Coke stood beside him.<sup>160</sup>

Banks was considered a national treasure in the same way Sir David Attenborough is today.<sup>161</sup> In Lincolnshire, the seat of his primary estate, his influence was such that 'in his later years, with his fame and his growing imperiousness, he dominated the county, where no business could safely be undertaken without him.'<sup>162</sup> Through his intrepid sea journeys in his

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sheep and wool matters, which he wrote or received from other sheep enthusiasts between 1781-1820, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*.

<sup>159</sup> George Garrard, *Sir Joseph Banks*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>160</sup> Garrard, *Proposals*, 5.

<sup>161</sup> Banks' biographical sketch in Appendix II gives only a short appraisal of his long and varied life. In his review of Toby Musgrave's 2020 biography of Banks, John Carey considers that in 1771 Banks was the most famous man in England and that Musgrave's claim that Banks changed our world is not an exaggeration. John Carey, 'Review of Toby Musgrave, *The Multifarious Mr Banks: From Botany Bay to Kew, the Natural Historian Who Shaped the World*' (Yale, 2020) in 'Culture', *The Sunday Times*, 26 April 2020, 19.

<sup>162</sup> Sir Francis Hill, *Georgian Lincoln* (Cambridge University Press, 1966), 15.

youth with Captain James Cook, he had come to the notice of George III, who bestowed on him the prestigious honour of Knight of the Royal Garter (KG), and with their shared interest in many things, not least sheep breeding, a friendship had struck up between them. When the King expressed his desire to import a flock of Merinos, Banks was involved in the organisation to smuggle Merino sheep out of Spain. After the importation of the Merinos, he unofficially managed the royal flock for the King.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, it was Banks whom Tollet wrote to after Banks advertised there was surplus stock from the royal flock available to suitable applicants.<sup>164</sup>

**Figure 34** <sup>165</sup>



**George Tollet**  
With Merino tup behind him  
(c. 1805)

Tollet's first letter to Banks was written in 1800 when he was 33 years of age, some 24 years younger than the baronet. Christened George Embury, he had trained as a barrister at Lincoln's Inn. After he married in 1795, he worked on the Oxford circuit, and the family lived on a farm at Twyning in Gloucestershire. Therefore, it is likely that although a practising lawyer, Tollet was already

<sup>163</sup> Carter chronicles the complicated and often mysterious history of the royal flock and Banks' long involvement with it. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*.

<sup>164</sup> *Annals*, XXXV, 285-90.

<sup>165</sup> Anonymous, *George Tollet*, Oil (c. 1805), private collection.

interested in farming. He and his wife Frances had eight children.<sup>166</sup> In 1796 Tollet inherited Betley Hall in Staffordshire, changing his name to Tollet as the will decreed.<sup>167</sup> They moved from Twyning to Swinnerton Hall, 25 miles south of Betley, in August 1803 until they could move into Betley Hall.<sup>168</sup>

Tollet's initial interest in Merinos seems to have stemmed from Somerville, but unfortunately, there are no extant letters between them. They were both around 30, enthusiastic and practical when they developed a passion for Merinos. They had inherited about the same time, both bequests being subject to legal challenges, so it was not only Merinos and farming they had in common.<sup>169</sup> Undoubtedly, they corresponded with each other as friends. Tollet bought his first Merinos from Somerville, exhibited at his show, and, if Somerville was visiting his Scottish estate, they travelled north together from farming events.<sup>170</sup> In 1804, in recognition of Somerville's success with his Merinos, Tollet was one of the committee who voted to award him the Bath and West Society's premium, 'for a change of breed of sheep, with positive profit resulting therefrom'.<sup>171</sup> Tollet sent the Society a very spirited letter to support Somerville's application. Somerville, who never missed a chance to promote the Merino breed, published it.<sup>172</sup> At his 1807 Cattle Show, Somerville presented

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<sup>166</sup> For more information on George Tollet see Appendix II and Mavis E. Smith, *The Tollet Family of Betley Hall*, Occasional Publication No. 8 (Betley Local History Society, 2005), 12-20.

<sup>167</sup> Tollet inherited Betley Hall from Charles Tollet, a distant relative, in 1796, although he was unable to take possession until Charles Tollet's widow, Catherine had died. There were still legal problems about Betley Hall, and he only finally received the deeds in 1815. Smith, 12.

<sup>168</sup> Tollet always addressed his letter from Swinnerton, not Swynnerton as it is spelt today.

<sup>169</sup> Somerville's Somerset inheritance was disputed and remained in Chancery for six years until 1800, meaning he was only allowed to farm Dean Farm on the estate during this period. In the same year that Tollet inherited his Staffordshire estates, Somerville also inherited the Somerville estates in Scotland and Worcestershire from his father's side of the family, but unlike Tollet, this inheritance came with a title. However, this too was disputed and had to go through Chancery in 1800, albeit for a shorter period of a year.

<sup>170</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 31 July 1806, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>171</sup> Apart from Tollet, two other members of the Bath and West Society's committee who judged this award and were also in the Woburn Group were Richard Astley and John White Parsons. Somerville, *Facts and Observations*, 68.

<sup>172</sup> Letter from George Tollett [sic] to the Bath Agricultural Society, 9 Nov. 1804 in Somerville, *Facts and Observations*, 76-82.

Tollet with a cup, ‘as a small testimony of the sense entertained of his merit in promoting the Merino breed’.<sup>173</sup>

After seeing Banks’ advertisement, Tollet eagerly replied, telling Banks he was keen to add to his Merino tup. Although he would eventually become successful professionally, in 1800, despite his inheritance, money was not plentiful. The King’s Merinos were cheaper than Somerville’s, who understandably charged higher prices given the danger and effort it had taken to import them. From his first letter, Tollet struck the right note with Banks. He was enthusiastic, had a plan for the Merinos, and knew how he would make it succeed. His letter also reveals his respect for the older man’s knowledge of Merinos and wool production. After outlining how he wanted to proceed with his Merino breeding experiment, Tollet cleverly closed his letter by encompassing two of Banks’ primary interests, botany and sheep breeding, making a grassland management observation.<sup>174</sup>

Secord states that artisan botanists had to be familiar with the Linnaean nomenclature to exchange scientific information with their social superiors without class getting in the way.<sup>175</sup> Although Tollet freely admitted in a letter to the Earl of Egremont that his knowledge of botany was limited, he was educated, intelligent and his interest in grassland management enabled him to ask a botanical question on a subject of interest to Banks.<sup>176</sup> Tollet’s following letter, rather than ending with a botanical question, posed one designed to appeal to the PRS’s

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<sup>173</sup> Somerville, *Facts and Observations*, 218.

<sup>174</sup> ‘...P.S. I am persuaded that the *Dactylus glomerata* [Cocksfoot] may be cultivated with great success in a sheep pasture... This Sir I dare say has not escaped your notice & you will probably have cultivated it upon a large scale.’ George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 6 August 1800, letter 775, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 332.

<sup>175</sup> Secord, 397.

<sup>176</sup> Tollet had written to the third Earl of Egremont about his idea to employ the botanist, Mr Curtis, on a subscription basis, to carry out trials on the separate cultivation of the best British grasses. Tollet was trying to interest the Earl in conducting a survey on which seeds farmers should include when establishing a new grassland pasture. As his letter reveals, Tollet knew that the Earl and Curtis had already been in communication with one another. The Earl of Egremont gave the letter to Arthur Young to print in *Annals*. George Tollet to the Earl of Egremont, 25 October 1800, in *Annals*, XXXVI, 337-42.

scientific side, asking Banks whether adding salt to his sheep's diet could increase fleece fineness. Banks politely replied to both questions.<sup>177</sup>

As the relationship between Tollet and Banks progressed, Tollet's letters became bolder but no less respectful. In 1802 he sent Banks an unsolicited 20-guinea cheque to donate to the fifth Duke of Bedford's memorial fund, Banks being its treasurer.<sup>178</sup> In each of his letters, he kept the PRS informed of the progress he was making with the few pure-bred Merinos Banks had been able to let him have from the royal flock and provided him with the fleece weights from both his Southdown and Ryeland Merino crosses. In February 1803, Tollet was in London and very formally sent a note asking if Sir Joseph Banks might spare him ten minutes. He enclosed a pair of stockings made from lambs' wool from a Merino and Ryeland cross, along with a sample of his Merino wool for Banks to peruse.<sup>179</sup> In a further letter, Tollet told Banks his neighbours were eagerly waiting for him to supply them with stockings, and he thought there could be a good market for them. Tollet sent Banks a further five pairs of stockings and a dozen pairs for the King and told Banks he needed a regular wool supply and asked him if he might secure the lambs' wool from the King's Merinos for this.<sup>180</sup> Banks thought the stockings 'excellent and beautiful' but cautioned Tollet about overpricing them because they would only be classed as an undergarment, commanding a lesser price than a luxury outer garment. He agreed that Tollet could buy the lambs' wool and call them 'Royal Stockings' but again cautioned him, saying there must be no reference to their royal origin. However, Banks thought it was a good idea and that if Tollet got his pricing

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<sup>177</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 9 August 1800, letter 783; Sir Joseph Banks to George Tollet, 7 August 1800, letter 778 & 15 August 1800, letter 786, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 333-4, 333, 335.

<sup>178</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 22 January 1802, letter 884, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 358. The date of this letter is wrong because Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford did not die until 2 March 1802. Banks was treasurer of the committee appointed to erect a monument in memory of the late Duke. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 284.

<sup>179</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 1 February 1803, letter 960, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 376-7.

<sup>180</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 6 April 1803, letter 968, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 378-9.

right, then ‘we Shall Conspire to deal together for it.’<sup>181</sup> Tollet also sent Somerville a pair, who was delighted, telling Tollet, ‘I have just put on the pair of Stockings you were so good as to give me and find them delicious.’ Tollet reported to Banks that Somerville earnestly begged him to procure a supply for him.<sup>182</sup> Somerville wrote from Windsor, where he must have been on bedchamber duties. The image of the King and Somerville comparing their stockings must, unfortunately, be left to the imagination.

In his letters to Banks, Tollet adopted the etiquette of the period. *The complete young man’s companion* states that ‘regard must be had to the rank and character of the persons to whom they are addressed’. It advises that letters should be written with ‘humility, modesty, decency, and respect’ when writing to superiors.<sup>183</sup> Tollet followed this protocol because his letters to Banks reveal all these traits, particularly respect for the older man’s knowledge and experience. In his letter asking Banks if ‘Mr Tollet’ might visit him, his use of the prefix Mr to style himself, rather than the suffix Esq, is interesting. As discussed in Chapter One, within the Georgian hierarchical scale, Mr ranked below Esq, which, as a barrister, Tollet was entitled to use. Why he chose a lesser form of address is unclear. As he was no longer practising law, he possibly felt uncomfortable adopting the suffix, but this would be surprising given that many Georgians were keen to advance themselves socially. Still, although styling himself as Mr and adopting a persistently respectful tone throughout, his letters were in no way deferential because Tollet considered Banks his mentor and himself Banks’ protégé.

Tollet stayed for some months in London, during which he attended Somerville’s March Cattle Show. At the end of May, he set off home to Staffordshire and tentatively asked

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<sup>181</sup> Sir Joseph Banks to George Tollet, 13 April 1803, letter 973, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 379-80.

<sup>182</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 4 October 1803, letter 1082, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 407-8.

<sup>183</sup> Anonymous, *The complete young man’s companion* (Manchester, 1800 edn.), 32.



Banks if, en route, he could visit the royal flock.<sup>184</sup> Another stop was his first visit to the Woburn Sheep Shearing. When he finally arrived home, he wrote to Banks to report how well his sheep had just clipped out, saying [I am] flattering myself you will rejoice at the success of your protégé'.<sup>185</sup> It was the first time Tollet intimated that Banks was his mentor. Carter considers their relationship as one of mentor and pupil and that Banks was pleased to be thought of as the younger man's mentor.<sup>186</sup> This thesis cites an exchange of letters between them later that year that supports Carter's assertion. Banks had managed to secure an extra Merino tup for Tollet, but their letters reveal a mix up between them over the collection of this tup. Tollet told Banks, 'I am sure I must have been by far the most troublesome applicant that you have met with in the Spanish Sheep line, & I really am quite ashamed to have trespassed so much upon your condescending attentions' to which Banks quickly put his mind at rest saying, 'be assured that I am too well satisfied with the able assistance I meet with from you in promoting my favourite project of extending the breed of fine woold Sheep to be tird of your Correspondence...'.<sup>187</sup>

The developing friendship between master and pupil has many similarities with the findings of Young et al., whose exploration into the relationships between two female professors and their three female doctoral students has found that interdependency lessens the traditional mentor/mentee hierarchies. They have established this is reflected through their strong desire to support and learn from one another, which they conclude encourages individual growth, promotes care, connectedness, collegiality, and friendship.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 16 May 1803, letter 978, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 381.

<sup>185</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, July 1803, letter 995, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 385-6.

<sup>186</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 256-7.

<sup>187</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 4 October 1803, letter 1082; Sir Joseph Banks to George Tollet, 10 October 1803, letter 1088, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 407-8; 409.

<sup>188</sup> Josephine Peyton Young, Donna Alvermann, Janine Kaste, Susan Henderson and Joyce Many, 'Being a friend and a mentor at the same time: a pooled case comparison' in *Mentor and Tutoring*, Vol. XII, Iss. 1 (2004), 23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361126042000183066>, (accessed 30 October 2021).

With Banks' encouragement and support, Tollet's Merinos began to generate interest nationally, and this publicity benefitted the breed and the royal flock. In 1804 both Banks and Tollet were at the Woburn Sheep Shearing. Many of those present would have read Banks' recently published annual report on the King's flock in which he had proudly included his young protégé's excellent results with the Merinos.<sup>189</sup> The King, who approved Banks' reports before publication, must have been pleased as Tollet's stock was primarily descended from the royal flock. Garrard immortalised Tollet showing a piece of broadcloth from his best Merino to the sixth Duke of Bedford in the centre of *Wobourn Sheepshearing*.

The following year Tollet wrote to Banks that he was dismayed that neither he nor Somerville was at the Holkham Sheep Shearing, saying that had he known this, 'I shd: not have been bold enough to have encountered the unbelievers [those who disliked the Merino breed] *single-handed*.' He need not have worried because his Merinos were very well received at Holkham, and he went on to tell Banks, 'Mr: *Coke* appeared much satisfied with my Merinos.'<sup>190</sup> That Coke was impressed with Tollet's Merinos would have severe repercussions for Banks. By 1804, Banks, having listened to Tollet about the prices people were offering him for his Merinos, suggested to the King that rather than applicants applying for his stock, they should be auctioned, as was the custom at both the Woburn and Holkham sheep shearings.<sup>191</sup> However, just as Somerville felt many enlightened agriculturalists shunned the Board, their absence from the first royal sale in 1804 also worried Banks.<sup>192</sup> Of these, the most eminent was Coke, one of the country's most influential and distinguished sheep breeders.

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<sup>189</sup> Sir Joseph Banks, 'A Report on the State of His Majesty's Flock of Fine Wooled Spanish Sheep For the Year ending Michaelmas 1803', cited in Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 258.

<sup>190</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 21 July 1805, letter 1190, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 437-8.

<sup>191</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 285-6.

<sup>192</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 304.

From around 1790, Coke had developed a great interest in agricultural experiments, but selective sheep breeding interested him most.<sup>193</sup> Such was Coke's influence that many sheep breeders followed his example. After Coke changed from New Leicesters to Southdowns, John Ellman, the eminent Southdown breeder, wrote to Coke to express the thanks of his fellow breeders in Sussex, saying they would be forever grateful for Coke's efforts in establishing their breed in Norfolk.<sup>194</sup> From Tollet's letter, Banks knew that Coke was becoming interested in Merinos and that his support for the breed would win over many of the 'unbelievers', as Tollet called them. Banks also knew that Coke would not attend the royal sale because of the Whigs' political anti-war stance, so he sold him six Merinos before the auction: three ewes and three gimmer lambs.<sup>195</sup> The King was furious when he learned of this transaction outside the sale ring.<sup>196</sup> Ostensibly it was because he only wanted his animals bought by men who had bid fairly, but Susanna Wade-Martins rightly says he would not have wanted to sell to Coke, a fervent Whig, because of the strong support shown by the Whigs for the American colonists.<sup>197</sup> The King's declining health probably also exacerbated the situation. He had suffered a third debilitating attack of psychiatric illness the year before and may simply have over-reacted, believing his good friend Banks had gone behind his back. Somerville's transgression involving the Merinos had been early on in their relationship, but George III's friendship with Banks was far longer standing. Theirs had been a long and fruitful relationship, but sadly for both, it was never the same again.<sup>198</sup>

Secord has established that natural history correspondence networks were employed within artisan culture to transcend geographical space and social distance and developed

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<sup>193</sup> Susanna Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk 1754-1842: a biography* (The Boydell Press, 2010 rep.), 111.

<sup>194</sup> John Ellman to Thomas William Coke, 2 November 1803, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>195</sup> A gimmer is a young female sheep that has not lambed.

<sup>196</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 305.

<sup>197</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 305; Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 113.

<sup>198</sup> For a full account of the fallout between George III and Banks over the sale of the sheep to Coke see Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 305-10.

through personal contacts, introductions by friends, the establishment of paid natural history posts and so forth.<sup>199</sup> That personal contacts, both through letter writing and in person, were also necessary in the farming world is made clear from the letter from the Birmingham veterinary surgeon Richard Lawrence to Coke in June 1805. In his letter, Lawrence adopted the advised etiquette of the period, writing to Coke with humility, modesty, decency and respect.<sup>200</sup> He had written a veterinary livestock treatise but needed subscribers for it. Lawrence could not attend Coke's forthcoming sheep shearing, so he sent his book proposals to him, asking if Coke would kindly give them some exposure at his meeting. Lawrence told Coke he would have preferred to ask him in person at the Woburn Sheep Shearing, but, unfortunately, he had not had the honour of either being introduced or recommended to him.<sup>201</sup> Lawrence had dedicated his book to Banks, so he must have hoped that Banks would have introduced him to Coke, but Banks was neither at Woburn nor Holkham that year, so unable to do this.

Charles Blagden, the secretary of the Royal Society, was another who hoped his association with Banks would open doors for him. Hannah Wills' recent PhD focuses on the relationship between Banks and Blagden.<sup>202</sup> Wills states that Blagden published little and made few contributions to the scientific world but saw his association with his famous patron Banks as his chance to elevate his social status and increase his wealth.<sup>203</sup> When this failed to materialise, it led to a fallout with Banks from which their relationship never recovered.

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<sup>199</sup> Secord, 386, 389.

<sup>200</sup> Anonymous, *The Complete Young Man's Companion* (Manchester, 1811 edn.), 32, cited in Secord, 'Corresponding Interests', 384.

<sup>201</sup> Richard Lawrence to Thomas William Coke, 21 June 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>202</sup> Hannah Wills, 'The diary of Charles Blagden: information management and the gentleman of science in eighteenth-century Britain', PhD thesis, University College London (2019), cited in Simon Werrett, 'Introduction: Rethinking Joseph Banks', *Notes and Records: the Royal Society Journal of the History of Science*, Vol. LXXIII, No. 4 (2019), 428, <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/pdf/10.1098/rsnr.2018.0064>, (accessed 27 November 2019).

<sup>203</sup> There were other occasions when Banks fell out with people who felt their connection with him should aid their careers. The weaver George Caley's tirade against Banks whom he thought had let him down over potential employment is a notable example. Banks said that if Caley had been a gentleman he would have been shot in a duel. For more information on Banks' relationship with Caley see Secord, 401-3.

However, the correspondence between Banks and Tollet does not reveal any friction between them. Indeed, Tollet even called one of his best Merino tups ‘Sir Joseph’ in honour of his mentor.<sup>204</sup> Their relationship was successful because it was reciprocal; in his endeavours to establish the Merino breed, Banks found a valuable and enthusiastic ally in Tollet, whilst Tollet was keen to learn from the older and more experienced Merino expert, as well as obtain stock from him at a reasonable price. It was a useful and pleasant friendship for both men. Unlike Blagden, Tollet never asked more from Banks or their relationship.

### **Brothers in Breeding: George Tollet and Thomas William Coke**

C S Lewis believed that friendship concerned something exterior to friends, some object or interest they cared about and wished to achieve together, and in Tollet and Banks’s case, it was their shared endeavour to establish the Merino into the country.<sup>205</sup> Although their relationship illustrates well how agricultural friendship functioned between these keen farming enthusiasts, it appears to have gone no deeper. However, Tollet’s relationship with Coke did. It began as a business transaction, then progressed into an agricultural friendship before becoming a longstanding relationship. Focusing on Tollet’s early letters to Coke shows how letter-writing facilitated their initial agricultural friendship and how the relationship grew between them.

Although Secord considers ‘artisan naturalists frequently *initiated* correspondences’ with gentlemen collectors, it comes as no surprise that Tollet, the young Staffordshire farmer, felt unable to initiate an exchange of letters with the great landowner Coke.<sup>206</sup> The chance to buy stock had begun his correspondence with Banks, but Tollet had no such opening with Coke. Nor had he been introduced to him at any of the major events he had begun attending

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<sup>204</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 10 May 1808, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>205</sup> James O. Grunebaum, *Friendship: Liberty, Equality and Utility* (The University of New York Press, 2003), 22.

<sup>206</sup> Secord’s use of italics. Secord, 393.

over the previous two years.<sup>207</sup> So he must have been delighted when he learned that Coke not only wanted to invite him to his forthcoming sheep shearing but also wanted to purchase Merinos from him. It was Banks who indirectly brought Tollet and Coke together after Banks persuaded Coke to try the Merinos.<sup>208</sup> In 1804 Banks had attended both the Woburn and Holkham sheep shearings, making the journey from one to the other with Coke. It must have been then that Banks persuaded Coke to try the breed and extolled the results his young protégé had achieved because the following April, Coke approached Tollet to buy his first Merinos.<sup>209</sup>

As discussed in Chapter One, before Coke approached Tollet, he obtained an independent appraisal of Tollet, his flock, and management from one of his Whig allies, John Crewe. Undoubtedly knowing that Tollet shared their enthusiasm for the Whig party was also conveyed to Coke. Coke chose Crewe well: not only was he a staunch Whig, but he lived relatively close to Tollet; they knew each other, had mutual acquaintances and shared an interest in progressive farming. Happy with Crewe's appraisal, Coke asked him to invite Tollet to the forthcoming Holkham Sheep Shearing and enquire whether Tollet had any Merinos he could sell Coke.<sup>210</sup> Crewe's letter to Tollet was the catalyst that began what would turn into a longstanding friendship between Tollet and Coke. Tollet's first letter thanked Coke for the invitation and informed him that he could sell him a tup, although he had no ewes available. Tollet's inability to sell Coke any female stock indirectly caused the

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<sup>207</sup> Tollet's letter to John Crewe stated that 'he had not had the honor to be personally known to him [Coke]'. George Tollet to John Crewe, 21 April 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>208</sup> Coke stated in 1821 that it was Banks who persuaded him to try the Merino breed. R.N. Bacon, *A report of the transactions at The Holkham Sheep-Shearing 1821* (Norwich, 1821), 15.

<sup>209</sup> Although Tollet attended the Woburn Sheep Shearing in 1804, he did not go to the Holkham Sheep Shearing until 1805, so not in 1803 as Wade-Martins suggests, Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 112-13.

<sup>210</sup> Tollet told Coke that he knew Crewe has provided him with information about him and an appraisal about his flock. George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 21 April 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

breakdown in the close relationship between George III and Banks when, the following year, Banks sold Merino ewes to Coke outside of the salering.<sup>211</sup>

From his first letter, Tollet adopted a different tone to the one he used with Banks. Whilst Tollet respected and admired Banks; he revered Coke. He had visited Holkham in 1797 and had been shown around the two-thousand-acre home farm but had not met Coke. Tollet had jotted salient points in his notebook about what he saw, and Wade-Martins reports that what struck him was the ‘immense concern’ he witnessed everywhere on the farm. He was shown the feeding trials involving the New Leicester and Southdown sheep and was very impressed.<sup>212</sup> Undoubtedly, Coke’s sheep experiments inspired Tollet in his endeavours with his Merinos. The ideas he posited to Banks when he first applied to buy stock from the royal flock show that Coke’s thinking influenced these. In the discussion on Whig affiliation in the previous chapter, Thomas Greg said he owed his first enthusiasm for studying agriculture and his ‘best lessons’ in the subject to Coke, his ‘invaluable friend’.<sup>213</sup> Tollet was also heavily influenced by Coke. As Tollet later told Coke, before he visited Holkham in 1797, he only possessed ‘a spark of agricultural zeal’, but his visit to Holkham had ‘fanned it into a flame which has ever since been raging.’<sup>214</sup>

Secord considers that the role of deference in artisan’s letters with gentlemen naturalists was not so much indicative of artisans’ sense of scientific inferiority but as a complex functioning of moral obligations between social classes.<sup>215</sup> Undoubtedly Tollet was

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<sup>211</sup> It was George III and Banks’ policy to retain the best breeding stock, so what was offered at the annual sale were cull ewes and gimmers, and although Banks would doubtless have sold Coke the best animals he had available, they were not top quality. Having bought a good quality Merino tup from Tollet, Coke had to wait a further year to use him on his pure-breds as it transpired that the sheep Coke bought from Banks were all unknowingly in-lamb. Banks was unsurprisingly very annoyed when he found out about this, as his letter to Richard Snart, the Superintendent of the Royal parks, farms, and gardens reveals. Sir Joseph Banks to Richard Snart, 6 January 1806, letter 1233, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 453-4.

<sup>212</sup> Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 112.

<sup>213</sup> Thomas Greg, *A system for managing heavy and wet lands without summer fallows; under which a considerable farm in Hertfordshire is kept perfectly clean and made productive* (J Ridgway, 1813 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), 6.

<sup>214</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 12 May 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>215</sup> Secord, 400.

socially inferior to Coke, but it was reverence he felt rather than deference, being in awe of Coke's agricultural achievements. However, Tollet's first letter to Coke supports Secord's view that moral commitments between social classes could be complicated. Coke's close relationship with his tenants was well known. He was a benevolent landlord who awarded long leases, and, as he told Young, he had what he thought were the best tenants in the country due to the confidence that existed between him and them.<sup>216</sup> A letter to Coke from one of his best tenants, Robert Overman, another from the Group, exemplifies this philosophy. Overman's letter was about a fellow tenant's son. He concluded it by saying it had made him mindful of all the help Coke had given him over the years. He said he felt at a loss to adequately express his appreciation and make sufficient acknowledgement to Coke, his 'Good and great friend, and patron', 'for the many very many favours I have hitherto, and am 'day by day' receiving at your hands.'<sup>217</sup>

Tollet also realised the importance of Coke's help. He knew it would elevate the breed's status and improve his agricultural knowledge. He also appreciated that an association with Coke would assist him professionally and socially. Tollet had only recently moved to Staffordshire, and some of Coke's closest Whig allies lived locally. These included his son-in-law Lord Anson, the first Earl of Bradford and Crewe. So, after explaining to Coke what he was trying to achieve with his Merinos and that his results had so far exceeded his expectations, he then told Coke he would like his opinion on his flock. Using subtle but persuasive rhetoric, Tollet placed Coke under a moral obligation to respond, saying, 'I know I am addressing myself to the best judge of a sheep of any man in England and I can do no

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<sup>216</sup> Thomas William Coke to Arthur Young, 10 April 1812, British Library, Add. MSS 35131 cited in Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 107, fn. 94.

<sup>217</sup> Robert Overman to Thomas William Coke, 28 May 1804, F/TWC2, Holkham.



more than express my hope that he may have an opportunity of giving his judgement upon them.’<sup>218</sup>

Although it would be two years before Coke assessed Tollet’s flock, Tollet did accept Coke’s invitation to attend the 1805 Holkham Sheep Shearing. But, as Tollet told Banks, he would never have dared venture to Holkham if he had known he and Somerville were not attending. The visit was undoubtedly a professional success for him because, as he told Banks, he sold all his surplus live animals there, and on his arrival back in Staffordshire, agreed to the sale of all 800 fleeces. Tollet went on to say that he felt the Merinos were beginning to be accepted. To celebrate, Tollet felt they [himself, Banks, Somerville, and others] could finally adopt the French revolutionaries’ battle song. ‘We may now I think sing *Ça Ira*’.<sup>219</sup> As *Ça Ira* translates into English as ‘all will be fine’, Tollet’s use of the song title can be read two ways: acceptance finally of the Merino, or that ‘fine’ home-bred Merino fleeces would now lead the way in the British wool industry.<sup>220</sup>

Tollet’s Holkham trip was also a success for him personally, as it began his long friendship with Coke. On his return home, he wrote to Coke, and, with no hint of shyness, told him that as an agricultural enthusiast, he had now found a like-minded person, and it was going to be Coke’s ‘misfortune to be now and then bored with a letter from me on agricultural subjects.’ However, he was careful not to overstep the mark, adding a rider about postage, saying, ‘I shall not put you to the charge of postage or my letters wd: certainly be dear articles’.<sup>221</sup> Coke’s improvements with the Southdowns in the eight years since Tollet

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<sup>218</sup> Secord quotes a similar example between Willian Bentley, a blacksmith in Royston, and Sir William Hooker, Director of Kew Gardens, Secord, 400. George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 21 April 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>219</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 21 July 1805, letter 1190, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 437-8.

<sup>220</sup> The song, *Ça Ira*, emerged in France around 1790 and was recognised as the unofficial anthem of the French revolutionaries. It translates from French as ‘It’ll be fine’. Paul R. Hanson, *Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (Scarecrow Press, 2004), 53.

<sup>221</sup> In the period before the introduction of the penny post (1840), recipients usually paid the postage costs. George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 20 August 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

first visited Holkham had really impressed him on this visit. In the same letter, Tollet told Coke he would ‘pray to God that nothing will happen to prevent me from seeing the Holkham Merinos in an equally distant period in 1813’ to observe the great strides that he believed Coke would have made with the Merinos by then.<sup>222</sup> Garrard’s depiction below shows why Tollet was so impressed with Coke's improvements with his Southdowns. But Coke was also impressed with Tollet and, after his visit to Holkham, the Norfolk Agricultural Society presided over by Coke, made him an honorary member. Tollet joined a small select group of top agriculturalists who had received this honour. A delighted Tollet told Coke he was sure he was behind it, telling him, ‘It is the first compliment my poor agricultural efforts have ever received from any public body.’<sup>223</sup>

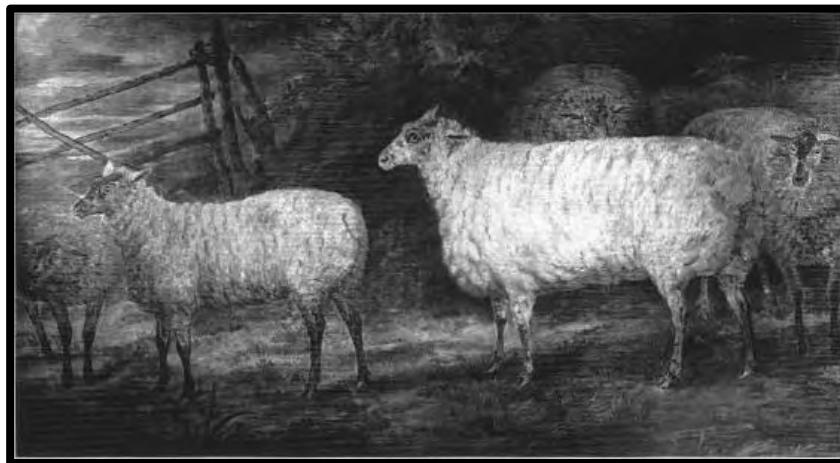


Figure 35 <sup>224</sup>

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*Southdown Sheep: Improvement of Southdown breed of sheep at Holkham in Norfolk, Southdown Wether 1793, Southdown Wether 1804* George Garrard  
By kind permission of the Earl of Leicester and the Trustees of the Holkham Estate

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<sup>222</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 20 August 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>223</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 27 January 1806, F/TWC2, Holkham. For a list of all honorary members, see ‘Honorary Members’, *Standing Orders of the Norfolk Agricultural Society* (1805), in F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>224</sup> George Garrard, *Southdown Sheep: improvement of the Southdown breed of sheep at Holkham in Norfolk*, Oil on Canvas, 1500 mm x 2720 mm (c. 1804), Norfolk: Holkham Hall.

It has been established how important it was for breeders to have Coke's approbation and support, and the Merino enthusiasts were no exception. Tollet told Coke how pleased he and Banks were when they learned that Coke wanted to put 'the Merino business to the test of experiment.'<sup>225</sup> Tollet never let Coke forget the obligation he was under to do this, nor how important it was to the country. Carter rightly sees Tollet as 'the staunch disciple of Sir Joseph Banks and the devoted servant of the King'.<sup>226</sup> Tollet did indeed consider his endeavours with the Merino as patriotic. He told Banks, 'I shall be proud to have you believe that his Majesty's patriotic views have not been retarded by my efforts'.<sup>227</sup> However, although Tollet's patriotism mirrored Lord Kames' view that 'Every gentleman farmer must of course be a patriot... in fact, if there be any remaining patriotism in the nation, it is to be found among that class of men', it was Coke whom the term 'patriot' was frequently applied to.<sup>228</sup> In 1803 it was said of Coke that he had 'the truest John Bull mind, the most of strong attachment to his Country, of any one'.<sup>229</sup> Tollet certainly felt that was the case. When Coke turned down a peerage, Tollet told him that he knew this was because Coke felt he could better serve his country as a Member of the House of Commons. He went on to say that in making this sacrifice, the independent English commoners felt pride that Coke had remained one of them.<sup>230</sup> From the point when Coke agreed to his Merino trials, Tollet's carefully worded letters cleverly placed Coke under a moral obligation to complete them, heaping the moral weight of the country onto the great patriot's shoulders. He told him, 'You have now resolved to put to the test of experiment a matter that my limited views have led me to

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<sup>225</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 20 August 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>226</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 257.

<sup>227</sup> George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, - July 1803, letter 995, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 386.

<sup>228</sup> Lord H.H. Kames, *The Gentleman Farmer* (Edinburgh: Creech, 1787), xviii, cited in Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 81.

<sup>229</sup> Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (eds.), *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. VI, April 1803-December 1804 (Yale University Press, 1979), 2044.

<sup>230</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 17 January 1807, F/TWC2, Holkham.

imagine will ultimately prove of considerable advantage to the Agriculturalists and of the most important benefit to our Country'.<sup>231</sup>

Coke and Tollet were both practical men, and they shared not only an interest in Merinos but scientific farming in general. Aristotle believed that men in positions of authority, 'in their desire for pleasure seek for ready-witted people', so it is hardly surprising that Coke wanted to encourage the agricultural friendship that had begun to evolve between them.<sup>232</sup> The following year (1806), Coke invited Tollet to arrive a few days before his shearing event started. Tollet, pleased to accept, informed him when he would be arriving, telling him, 'I have been a good Deal fatigued'. As he told Coke, he was exhausted because 'I began shearing on Monday last and finished on Friday night – yesterday I sorted, weighed and pack'd every lock of wool in my possession....'<sup>233</sup> Tollet employed one man and his ten-year-old son to attend to his sheep, and with 800 animals to shear, he helped to shear them. With his keen interest in fleece quality, it would appear from his letter that he also sorted all the wool himself.<sup>234</sup>

Although recently Rebecca Woods has written that the backers of agricultural improvement, whom she considers hailed mainly from among the wealthy and landed elite, 'rarely got their boots, much less their hands dirty', she is mistaken in this regarding many within the Woburn Group.<sup>235</sup> Tollet was a working farmer and a gentleman, but this thesis

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<sup>231</sup> Wade-Martins succinctly describes patriotism and its importance in Whig circles during this period. Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 7-8. George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 31 July 1806, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>232</sup> Brown, Aristotle, 149.

<sup>233</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 15 June 1806, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>234</sup> The year before Tollet wrote to Banks telling him that he had sold all 800 fleeces, so as he was still increasing his flock at this period, it can be reasonably assumed that at least this number of animals had been sheared and their fleeces sorted in 1806. George Tollet to Sir Joseph Banks, 21 July 1805, letter 1190, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 437-8. In his letter in support of Somerville's application for the Bath and West Society's premium, in November 1805, Tollet reported that he employed one man and his ten-year for his flock, which was almost the same size as Somerville's. Somerville, *Facts and Observations*, 80.

<sup>235</sup> Rebecca J.H. Woods, *The Herds Shot Round The World* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 35.

asserts he was not alone within the Group in being hands-on with his stock.<sup>236</sup> Although many of the Board's ordinary members were not overly practical, many of those within the Group were closely involved with their farms, particularly their livestock, including the highest bred aristocrats among them. Coke was taught to condition score sheep by Robert Bakewell, whilst Bakewell also likely taught the fifth Duke of Bedford when he was staying at Dishley.<sup>237</sup> Young said, 'I have seen him [Coke] and the late Duke of Bedford put on a shepherd's smock, work all day, and not quit the business till darkness forced them to dinner.'<sup>238</sup> The Norfolk farmer Mr Beck told Joseph Farington that Coke's judgement and selection of sheep were better than many of his tenants and that although he thought the fifth Duke 'understood Bullocks better than Mr. Coke, the latter understood Sheep better than his Grace.'<sup>239</sup> Somerville, trained in butchery, was very much a hands-on man and, in one letter, wrote that he was 'off to Somersetshire for a months hard work at wheat, Barley, Sheep and fat cattle'.<sup>240</sup> Doubtless, he was involved in field trialling the agricultural implements he invented, patented and sold, including his innovative double-furrow plough. Moreover, the King was not above helping Banks sort out his Merinos. Aristotle's utility friendship depends on there being a usefulness to each other, and a mutual appreciation of one another's values. Their skill, particularly with livestock, created this mutual appreciation between these men,

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<sup>236</sup> Malcolm Hislop, Shane Kelleher & Susanna Wade-Martins, "'Vernacular' or 'Polite'? George Tollet's Farm Buildings at Old Hall Farm, Betley, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire', *Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. XXXIX, Iss. 1 (2008), 58-9, <https://doi.org/10.1179/174962908X365037>, (accessed 5 December 2016).

<sup>237</sup> Coke and Bakewell visited one another. Pat Stanley, *Robert Bakewell and the Longhorn Breed of Cattle* (Farming Press, 1995), 33; Bakewell taught Coke to condition score when he visited Holkham for a week soon after Coke moved to Norfolk. A.M.W. Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk and his Friends* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1912 edn.), 159; B. Smith, 'The Leicester Sheep', *The Gardeners' Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette for 1871*, Vol. XXXI, Pt. 2 (1871), 1560, [online facsimile], <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=9I8SGsPI5JAC>, (accessed 8 February 2022).

<sup>238</sup> Arthur Young cited in 'Biography of T.W. Coke Esq.', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IX (1811), 144; Wade-Martins, who has written extensively about Coke's agricultural endeavours also records that Coke would don a smock and work with his sheep all day. Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 112.

<sup>239</sup> James Grieg (ed.), *The Farington Diary by Joseph Farington*, Vol. III, September 14 1804 to September 19 1806 (Hutchinson & Co. 1924), 116.

<sup>240</sup> John, Lord Somerville to Sir Walter Scott, 8 November 1805, The National Library of Scotland, MS3875/113-14, cited in Balfour, 38-9.

regardless of who they were. Respect and admiration for skill and ingenuity could allow the social barrier between them to be breached, allowing their agricultural friendships to flourish.

After his first Holkham visit, Tollet sent Coke a brace of black cocks to thank him.<sup>241</sup>

By 1806, Tollet's letters reveal their friendship was blossoming, and he was urging Coke to visit him. Shortly after returning from Holkham that year, he wrote,

A visit from Mr Coke to my humble roof will be the happiest day of my life. There is no person on earth that I should be so proud to have as my guest. My motives are selfish as I am confident I shall receive many useful hints that will help my future exertion.<sup>242</sup>

Tollet relished learning from Coke, but he also loved his visits to Holkham. As he told Coke, it was 'woeful' he lived so far away.<sup>243</sup> It was not only Coke's livestock but also the arable enterprise that impressed him, telling Coke it was his intention when he moved to Betley to make the 50 acres of arable land adjoining the house his miniature Norfolk farm.<sup>244</sup> By 1808 Tollet felt confident enough with their friendship to report that one of Coke's friends, the Earl of Talbot, a Merino 'unbeliever', had visited him and hired some Merinos for the following season. Tollet conspiratorially wrote, 'Who do you think I have at last brought to my sheep? That Infidel Lord Talbot...'<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 29 October 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>242</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 31 July 1806, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>243</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 30 November 1807, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>244</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 13 January 1808, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>245</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 10 June 1808, F/TWC2, Holkham.



Figure 36 <sup>246</sup>

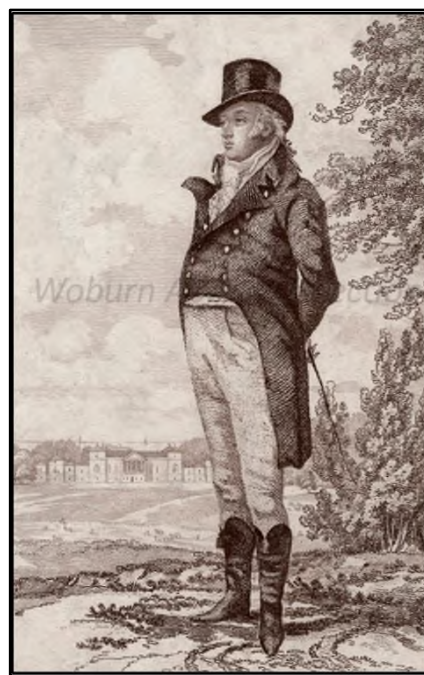


Figure 37 <sup>247</sup>

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*George Tollet and Thomas William Coke (rhs)*

George Garrard (1805-9)

From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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By 1807 Coke's Merino experiments were well underway, which pleased both Banks and Tollet. Banks even composed a song to be sung at Coke's sheep shearing that year. One of the verses was:

Taught by him [Coke] we the profit shall reap  
 Of his Majesties judgement profound  
 Who imported the true Spanish Sheep  
 Clad with Wool worth four Shillings a Pound.<sup>248</sup>

Banks' ditty is revealing for three reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates how important Banks felt Coke's interest was in promoting the Merinos. Secondly, it reveals Banks' respect for George

<sup>246</sup> George Garrard, *George Tollet*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>247</sup> George Garrard, *Thomas William Coke*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>248</sup> Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, xxv.

III. Thirdly, it clearly shows the camaraderie of these meetings, whereby the President of the Royal Society was motivated to compose a ditty for them to sing at Coke's sheep shearing.

By 1808 their friendship had developed sufficiently for Coke to invite Mrs Tollet to Holkham. Tollet told Coke she was very flattered by his invitation and hoped to visit when she was in better health.<sup>249</sup> Frances Tollet was ill for much of the period under discussion; her husband's letters to Banks and Coke often mentioned her ill health. The previous chapter revealed the profound loss Coke felt at the death of his wife. With no son, Coke probably did have actual paternal feelings towards the enthusiastic young Staffordshire farmer, with his growing family and ailing wife, whom Tollet clearly cared about. When Tollet first told Coke he had found a like-minded person to write to, there was almost an inevitability that a friendship would develop between them. It would continue to grow over many years.

**'Our friend Mr. Walton': 'The Properest Man with Sheep in England'.<sup>250</sup>**

Coke finally visited Tollet at Swinnerton in 1807. With him was Thomas Walton, the sheep advisor. Many within the Group employed Walton, and his input was integral in Coke's livestock enterprises, especially the sheep. Coke must have introduced Tollet to Walton on his first visit to Holkham in 1805. Like Banks and Coke, Walton likely warmed to Tollet's 'raging flame' of agricultural enthusiasm, and this was his second visit to Swinnerton that year. After Walton's first visit, Tollet wrote to Coke, telling him 'our friend Mr Walton' had been.<sup>251</sup> Tollet revered Coke, but he was also in awe of Walton's skill with sheep. As he told Coke, a day in the sheepfold at Swinnerton taught him more than he learned in a year in his previous life. What, he mused, might he learn from a day or two of lessons from Coke and

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<sup>249</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 18 May 1808, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>250</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 17 January 1807, F/TWC2, Holkham; Sir Joseph Banks to Richard Snart, 8 December 1807, letter 1298, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 475.

<sup>251</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 17 January 1807, F/TWC2, Holkham.



Walton?<sup>252</sup> Doubtless, Tollet was always pleased to see Walton, keen to learn from him and be updated on events at Holkham.

Walton mentioned that he and Coke had gone to Swinnerton together in a letter to Banks, telling Banks he had ‘had the pleasure of Mr. Coke’s company to Mr Tollets’.<sup>253</sup> Walton was 33 years older than Tollet, but whilst Tollet was a gentleman farmer, Walton was from far humbler stock and earned his living providing expertise on livestock and buying and selling farm stock for clients.<sup>254</sup> Neither man was anywhere near Coke’s social status, and for Coke to stay with both at Tollet’s house and travel with Walton on a journey that would have taken them around four days provides an excellent example of the fellowship that existed through their agricultural friendship.<sup>255</sup> Focusing on Walton will add another element in understanding how this friendship functioned between these agriculturalists.

Walton was born 10 miles from Bakewell’s farm at Dishley Grange and was initially Bakewell’s pupil before becoming his assistant. He married a local Derbyshire girl, and they settled in Repton. Like Tollet’s marriage, it would last over 50 years.<sup>256</sup> As Bakewell’s assistant Walton knew the New Leicester sheep breeders within the Group well, but he had left Bakewell’s employment before the Dishley Tup Society was established, so he was never a member.<sup>257</sup> But, with his close ties to Dishley and living nearby, he was naturally thought of as a ‘Dishley man’. Certainly, Garrard saw him as one of them, portraying him between

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<sup>252</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 30 November 1807, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>253</sup> Thomas Walton to Sir Joseph Banks, 23 October 1807, letter 1288, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 471.

<sup>254</sup> In 1804, which is the date the prosopographical study takes as its baseline, Walton was 58 years of age and Tollet was 37 years of age.

<sup>255</sup> It is 120 miles from Woburn to Holkham and took three days travelling at that time, although five days were allowed between the Woburn sheep shearing ending and the Holkham sheep shearing beginning. It is 157 miles from Holkham to Swinnerton Hall, Staffordshire and so would have taken another day. The journey times would be dependent upon how many turnpikes were involved.

<sup>256</sup> See ‘Walton, Thomas’, Appendix II of this thesis for more information on his life.

<sup>257</sup> Walton left Bakewell’s employment in 1786. The Dishley Tup Society was set up in 1789.

two other staunch Bakewell disciples in his print, whilst reports of attendees at shows and meetings invariably listed him with the Dishley breeders.

In 1786, around the time he married, Walton left Dishley and began working for Lord Sherborne in Gloucestershire.<sup>258</sup> By 1807 he was working for a widespread clientele of wealthy and influential men, providing advice, buying and selling livestock, and staying in their grand houses. One of the most important was Coke, who held him in the highest esteem. Walton was Coke's eyes and ears as he travelled around the country. He bought and sold sheep for Coke and was responsible for letting and selling his sheep at the Holkham Sheep Shearings.<sup>259</sup> Walton was still auctioning Coke's tups and collecting fees for him in 1819 when he was 73 years of age.<sup>260</sup> Tollet told Coke he was sure he was behind the Norfolk Agricultural Society's decision to grant him honorary membership, and it was doubtless Coke who was also responsible for Walton being granted the same honour in 1808.<sup>261</sup> Moreover, further public approbation by Coke followed. At the 1811 Holkham Sheep Shearing, Coke presented Walton with a piece of plate 'for his marked attention to the rearing of sheep'.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 11 April 1786, in H. Cecil Pawson, *Robert Bakewell: Pioneer Livestock Breeder* (London: Crosby Lockwood & Son Ltd., 1957), 103. Bakewell said that Walton had gone to work for Lord Lisbon [sic] in Gloucestershire. It was Lord Sherborne. Pawson wrongly transcribes Sherborn [sic] as Lisbon. John Dutton, first Earl of Sherborne from Gloucestershire was a keen New Leicester breeder. It was stated in 1802 that for nearly twenty years the Earl, who had constantly had the assistance 'of a pupil from the Bakewellian School', had paid 'unremitting attention to breeding New Leicesters'. This thesis argues this assistance was given by Thomas Walton. *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VII (1802), 210. Thomas William Coke and the first Earl of Sherborne were close, both through friendship and marriage: the Earl had married Coke's youngest sister, Coke the Earl's sister. Coke is likely to have become aware of Walton when he was working for the Earl, or possibly even earlier, when he stayed at Dishley Grange.

<sup>259</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 259.

<sup>260</sup> 'Holkham Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1809), 131; The Holkham Flock Book shows Walton's involvement, particularly in the later years. His involvement is documented until 1819. 'Holkham Sheep Shearing Years 1804, 1805, 1806, 1807', E/X3, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>261</sup> 'Norfolk Agricultural Society', *Annals*, Vol. XLV, 94.

<sup>262</sup> 'Monthly Register July 1811 – Holkham Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IX (1811), 63.

Bakewell was one of Young's agricultural holy trinity, and for him to keep Walton on as his assistant meant Bakewell must have valued Walton's stockmanship.<sup>263</sup> Having such a close association with Bakewell gave Walton great confidence in his abilities, and he knew

**Figure 38** <sup>264</sup>



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**Thomas Walton**  
George Garrard (1805-9)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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his own worth and the value others placed on his expertise. This meant that although respectful of those from the higher echelons of society, he was in no way deferential to them and his relationship with men such as Coke and Banks was as an employee and an agricultural friend. When Coke and Walton visited Tollet, Coke must have wanted his right-hand man's opinion of Tollet's Merinos. Although Tollet thought Coke was the best judge of sheep, Coke thought it was Walton, and in 1810 said, 'it was to Mr Walton's superior judgement to which he was greatly indebted for so much valuable information'.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Whether Walton left Bakewell's employment because Bakewell had brought in his nephew Robert Honeyborn as a partner, or Honeyborn arrived after Walton left is not known. The first mention of Robert Honeyborn being involved at Dishley is Bakewell's mention of him in November 1789 as treasurer of the Dishley Twp Society. Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 13 November 1789, in Pawson, 148-9.

<sup>264</sup> George Garrard, *Thomas Walton*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>265</sup> Coke gave Walton this approbation at the Norfolk Agricultural Meeting on 14 July 1809 when Walton was present. 'Monthly Register July 1809 – Norfolk Agricultural Society', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. V (1809), 66-7.

Wool stapling was an important long-established ancillary trade with its roots going back into the twelfth century and has been well researched.<sup>266</sup> Conversely, professional specialisation in livestock husbandry was in its infancy at the end of the eighteenth century and has received little scholarly attention. A few men travelled between farms providing specialist services, such as Richard Dovey, who castrated lambs in the Staffordshire area and William Bailey and his son, who speyed livestock in East Anglia, but there appears to have been few of Walton's calibre, who made their living as a livestock advisor.<sup>267</sup> Carter convincingly argues that the wool stapler Henry Laccocke, Banks' right-hand man with the King's Merinos, became a specialist with the breed, considering him one of the first practical experts in Spanish sheep and one of the first to classify them.<sup>268</sup> However, it was Walton who was recognised by his contemporaries as a livestock specialist, particularly with sheep.<sup>269</sup> Garrard classified him as one of the celebrated agriculturalists' in his pamphlet on *Wobourn Sheepshearing* and portrayed him prominently.

After Laccocke suffered a stroke, Banks employed Walton to help him with selection in the royal flock.<sup>270</sup> Banks considered Walton the best man in England with sheep and employed him as his assistant with the King's Merinos. Walton bought Merinos on Banks' behalf for his aristocrat friends, such as the second Earl Spencer in 1809.<sup>271</sup> Writing to the

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<sup>266</sup> For more information on the history of wool stapling in England see *Company of Merchants for the Staple of England*, [website], [www.merchantsofthestapleofengland.co.uk](http://www.merchantsofthestapleofengland.co.uk) (accessed 2 November 2021).

<sup>267</sup> 'Cutting' lambs is the term for castrating them. George Tollet to John Crewe, 21 April 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham. Speying cattle is a procedure no longer generally carried out in the United Kingdom. William Bailey and his son were based at Lakenheath, Suffolk. For more information on speying heifers see John Foote's letter dated 13 December 1796. *Annals*, Vol. XXVII, 636-9.

<sup>268</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 126, 429.

<sup>269</sup> Banks said anyone concerned with valuable sheep in the country knew Walton was the sheep expert. Sir Joseph Banks to Richard Snart, 8 December 1807, letter 1298, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 475.

<sup>270</sup> Flock selection is a term used to sort out sheep within the flock, for instance, to select cull ewes to leave the flock or decide upon which ewes should be mated to which tup. In July 1807 Banks summoned Walton from Lincolnshire, where he was probably working with Banks' flock at Revesby Abbey, to sort out another bout of scab in the royal flock. Sir Joseph Banks to Richard Snart, 22 July 1807, letter 1278, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 469.

<sup>271</sup> Banks refers to Walton as being his assistant in a letter written in December 1807. Sir Joseph Banks to Richard Snart, 8 December 1807, letter 1298, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 475.

Earl, Banks informed him that he had employed ‘Walton the famous tup man’ to select his sheep. Banks’ letter implies that not only had the Earl got the best sheep available but that the top man with sheep had selected them.<sup>272</sup> From his letter, it is evident that Banks held Walton in high esteem and that employing him enhanced his status with his aristocratic friends. Although Banks was far above Walton socially, their relationship was friendly. Walton’s letter to Banks in 1807 supports this. Walton was going to Kew on Banks’ instructions to sort out the King’s tups, but lack of time meant he had to forgo meeting Banks in London. Unlike Tollet’s letter in which he formerly asked Banks if ‘Mr Tollet might visit him’, Walton companionably concluded his letter to Banks telling him ‘tho’ this will deprive me of the pleasure of your company...’<sup>273</sup>

Aristotle considered, ‘A stable friendship demands trust, and trust comes only with time.’ and this is evident in Coke and Walton’s relationship.<sup>274</sup> Coke sent messages to Banks via Walton, whilst Walton used Coke the same way, asking the great Norfolk landowner to pass messages on from him to Coke’s tenants.<sup>275</sup> That Walton felt comfortable enough to ask Coke to convey his messages is evidence of the easy relationship between them and Coke’s close relationship with his tenants. From Walton’s comments, it is evident he kept Coke updated about who else he was working for and what stock he had seen. In 1811 Walton wrote to tell Coke about the Shrewsbury Agricultural Show, where he had recently judged and the landowners he had visited and stayed with in Shropshire.<sup>276</sup> With this letter, he also included one he had received from Sir William Childe of Kinlet Hall, one of the Wider Woburn Circle. Again, this reveals the esteem the livestock expert was held in by those both

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<sup>272</sup> Sir Joseph Banks to George John Spencer, second Earl Spencer, 31 July 1809, letter 1362, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 493-4.

<sup>273</sup> Thomas Walton to Sir Joseph Banks, 22 November 1807, letter 1291, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 472.

<sup>274</sup> Anthony Kenny (tr.), Aristotle, *The Eudemian Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 119.

<sup>275</sup> Thomas William Coke to Sir Joseph Banks, 12 May 1806, letter 1238, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 455-6; Thomas Walton to Thomas William Coke, 12 August 1811, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>276</sup> Thomas Walton to Thomas William Coke, 12 August 1811, F/TWC2, Holkham.

socially and financially above him, who wanted his services and companionship. The letter recounts that Childe, a prosperous landowner, was impressed by Walton's livestock prowess and had hoped to see him before he left Shropshire but unfortunately had missed him. Childe told Walton, 'I was mortified that I had not the pleasure of seeing you at Kinlet' before saying that he had wanted to introduce him to his friend Sir George Pigot. Childe was a keen Devon cattle breeder, and he asked Walton if he could spare the time to come to his livestock sale the following month, and if so, could he come the day before, saying 'I shall be very glad of your company.'<sup>277</sup> The letter implies that Walton would stay overnight at Kinlet Hall as Childe's guest. Coke was also a keen Devon man, and Walton forwarded Childe's letter to him, knowing Coke would be interested in hearing both about Childe's Devons and his forthcoming sale: an event Coke later attended.<sup>278</sup>

There is also visual proof of Coke's respect for Walton in Thomas Weaver's 1807 painting of *Coke among his Southdown sheep*. The painting with Holkham Hall visible in the background depicts the smartly attired Coke standing on the left holding a notebook, two shepherds, some Southdown sheep and another smartly dressed man. This is Walton, bending over a sheep, condition scoring it. He did this by using his hands to assess its bodily condition, giving Coke a score of between one and five, which Coke, almost acting as his assistant, recorded in his notebook.<sup>279</sup> Coke and Walton are smartly dressed, but this is artistic licence on Weaver's part because both men, like the shepherds, would have been

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<sup>277</sup> Sir William Childe to Thomas Walton, 6 August 1811, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>278</sup> 14 October 1811, *Evans and Ruffly's Farmers' Journal*, 2, in NewspaperArchive (NA).

<sup>279</sup> 'Condition scoring sheep is an easy and accurate method of estimating the condition or 'nutritional well-being' of a sheep flock. It requires an assessment of the amount of muscle and fat covering the backbone and the short ribs of each sheep. This gives a picture of the sheep's store of energy. It is the best method for monitoring pregnant and lactating ewes but is also useful for monitoring the growth of weaners.' It is done by feel on a scale of 1-5: A score of 1 indicates emaciation, whilst a score of 5 indicates an animal is obscenely overweight. A score of 3 is generally considered optimum. 'Condition Scoring of Sheep', *Agriculture and Food, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development*, [website], <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/management-reproduction/condition-scoring-sheep>, (accessed 14 May 2018).

wearing smocks.<sup>280</sup> Walton would never have asked Weaver to depict him in smart attire, and Weaver would never have made this decision himself. It must have been Coke who instructed the artist to portray them in similar attire, a testimony to his respect for Walton. Walton is named personally in the print Weaver had engraved of his painting, but even though both men are depicted in smart clothing, Weaver's naming of both, whereby Coke bears the suffix Esq and Walton the prefix of Mr, underlines the great social gulf between them.<sup>281</sup>

Walton is featured in another print, again by Weaver in 1812. In this one, he is condition scoring sheep at Weston Park for Orlando Bridgman, first Earl of Bradford, another from the Wider Woburn Circle. The Earl had asked Walton to judge at the Shropshire show the previous year, and Walton had then stayed with him at the end of the show.<sup>282</sup> The Earl must have asked Weaver to adopt the same 'agricultural conversation' format he had used for Coke's painting five years earlier because, compositionally, they are very similar. The later one portrays the Earl talking to Tollet, whilst in the centre, a shepherd holds a sheep for Walton, who points something out to a shepherd boy. Just as in Weaver's earlier painting, Walton is smartly dressed, his hand resting on the sheep's back, having just 'scored' it. Emily Pawley rightly says the livestock paintings from this period are repositories of codes and

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<sup>280</sup> That Walton wore a smock to work in is supported by another of the Woburn group, and one of Coke's best tenants, William Money Hill. Money Hill wrote to Weaver about the print that Weaver was having engraved of his painting of *Thomas William Coke and his Southdown sheep*. Money Hill wrote to Weaver at Shugborough Hall where Weaver was working for Edward Anson, Coke's son-in-law. Weaver had dedicated the print to Anson and Money Hill told Weaver that Walton had also been to Shugborough, where he had been selecting stock for Anson. Money Hill went on to say that Walton had been late arriving and Anson, having gone to look for him, had passed him twice on the road, failing to recognise him because Walton was not wearing smart clothes. Having delivered some Norman cows en route, Walton was in his working smock, or 'long slip' as Money Hill called it. Money Hill must have heard this direct from Coke. William Money Hill to Thomas Weaver, 23 January 1808, 'Thomas Weaver's letters', in private ownership (Weaver's letters).

<sup>281</sup> *Thomas William Coke and his Southdown sheep* after Thomas Weaver, engraved by William Ward (1808). Inscribed: 'Portrait of Thomas William Coke Esqr. M.P. for Norfolk, inspecting some of his South-down sheep, with Mr. Walton and the Holkham Shepherds. To the Right Honble. the Lord Viscount Anson, this plate is respectfully inscribed by his Lordship's much obliged and very obedient servant. Thos. Weaver.' The arms displayed are those of the second Viscount Anson. The original painting by Thomas Weaver is at Holkham Hall.

<sup>282</sup> Thomas Walton to Thomas William Coke, 12 August 1811, F/TWC2, Holkham.



Figure 39 <sup>283</sup>

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*Thomas William Coke and his Southdown sheep*

Thomas Weaver (1807)

By kind permission of the Earl of Leicester and the Trustees of the Holkham Estate

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Figure 40 <sup>284</sup>

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*George Tollet and Orlando Bridgeman inspecting Southdowns*

Thomas Weaver (c. 1812)

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<sup>283</sup> Thomas Weaver, *Thomas William Coke and his Southdown Sheep*, Oil on Canvas (1807). Norfolk: Holkham Hall.

<sup>284</sup> Thomas Weaver, *George Tollet and Orlando Bridgeman inspecting Southdowns* [sic], Oil on Canvas, 700 mm x 900 mm (c. 1812), in a private collection. No print appears to have been made from this painting.



symbols we can no longer decipher and understand today.<sup>285</sup> The Earl's painting illustrates her point well because its iconography was explicitly designed to portray the Earl as a progressive and enlightened agriculturalist, something not readily understood by looking at the painting today. By choosing Weaver, the Earl was commissioning not just a local Shropshire artist but one patronised by several eminent nobles, renowned livestock breeders including the Colling brothers, and Coke himself. In portraying Tollet beside him, with a Merino tup stood directly in front of Tollet, the Earl proclaimed his serious commitment to Merino breeding: he had bought a Merino tup and 30 ewes from Tollet in 1808, and by 1812 Tollet was at the top with the breed.<sup>286</sup> Tollet was a friend of Banks, the President of the newly established Merino Society, and Coke, who had publicly stated that if the Merino succeeded in the country, the merit would belong to Tollet.<sup>287</sup> Garrard had identified both Walton and Tollet within *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, published the previous year, and the Earl wanted to be associated with not only Tollet but also Walton, a man whom Bakewell himself had trained, and whose skills were in demand by men such as the Duke of Bedford, Coke and Banks.<sup>288</sup> Having himself depicted alongside Tollet and Walton, the Earl promoted his image as a progressive agriculturalist.

On Walton's visit to the Earl in 1812, he most likely broke his journey at Tollet's house, the men travelling together to Weston Park. Their friendship and the one they shared with Coke encapsulate the concept of agricultural friendship and illustrate well how a keen

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<sup>285</sup> Emily Pawley, 'The Point of Perfection: Cattle Portraiture, Bloodline and the Meaning of Breeding, 1760-1860', *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1 (2016), 40, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/610623>, (accessed 2 June 2016).

<sup>286</sup> George Tollet to the Earl of Bradford, 19 September 1808, ref 190/385 in *The Earl of Bradford Militia Papers*, X190, Shropshire Archives, cited in Smith, 14, fn. 28. The Earl of Bradford paid Tollet £97-7s-6d for a tup and 30 ewes. Tollet reported to Thomas William Coke that 'Lord Talbot' had visited his flock in June 1808 with 'Lord Bradford' and at that point the Earl of Bradford had enquired about hiring a tup for the following season. His interest had evidently grown in three months because he ended up buying over 30 sheep. George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 10 June 1808, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>287</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VII (1810), 55.

<sup>288</sup> Sir Joseph Banks to George John Spencer, second Earl Spencer, 31 July 1809, letter 1362, in Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*, 493-4.

shared interest and respect for one another's skill could transcend social barriers. By exploring their correspondence and letters with Banks, this section has revealed that agricultural friendship functioned on different levels. All four men had different lifestyles and upbringings, but what united them and made them friends was their enthusiasm for selective sheep breeding, supporting Lewis's argument that men who share some passionate interest will become friends.<sup>289</sup> As they lived in various parts of the country, correspondence played a significant part in their relationships, especially at the start of Tollet's relationships with Banks and Coke. Tollet's letters reveal that he structured these differently. However, Walton's letters show he was far more relaxed in his dealings with these landowners than Tollet had been at the onset of his relationships with both. There were two reasons for this: firstly, Walton was older and far more experienced with sheep than Tollet, and secondly, not only did many of the monied landowners and aristocrats within the Group employ him, but they also held him in high esteem and were pleased to share his company. This gave Walton a strong sense of his own worth, knowing his value to them. The easy manner he adopted within his letters to Coke and Banks, which, although respectful, was in no way deferential, supports this assertion. Banks employed Walton on several levels, and they had a friendly relationship, but Walton's relationship with Coke was long-standing, resulting in an easy familiarity between the two. The passing of messages between them is indicative of the friendliness and trust that had developed over the years.

Walton exemplifies the concept of agricultural friendship within the Woburn Group, whereby skill in agricultural matters could level the playing field between men from very different social classes. He was the recognised sheep expert for those at the forefront of agricultural improvement. In this capacity, he belonged to a little-understood group of specialist livestock tradesmen who travelled between farms, performing specific husbandry

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<sup>289</sup> Grunebaum, *Friendship*, 22.

tasks for landowners and farmers. These men provided a link between farmers, exchanging messages, and passing on information for them: Walton was Coke's eyes and ears, Laccocke kept Banks updated on anything sheep and wool related, whilst Dovey, who castrated lambs in the Staffordshire area, was a conduit of news for the likes of Tollet and Crewe.<sup>290</sup>

However, the part these journeymen specialists played within the agricultural world and their role as the promulgator of news and information within the farming community is an area that needs further research.

Both Tollet and Walton's letters are cheerful and friendly. But whilst Walton's have a more relaxed style, reflecting a man who was comfortable in his relationship with those above him socially, Tollet's are initially more carefully constructed, cautiously feeling his way with men he knew were not only socially above him but far more agriculturally experienced. Still, he was intelligent, a fast learner, and his law training meant he understood the art of persuasive rhetoric, all of which he used to good effect within his correspondence. Although his relationship with Banks and Coke brought different benefits, he gained the friendship of both. Banks saw him as a helpful ally in establishing the Merinos, whilst Coke enjoyed the company of a like-minded enthusiast who shared his passion for selective sheep breeding. Although Tollet's correspondence with Banks had been primarily to obtain Merinos more cheaply than from Somerville, he could see other benefits. These included learning about the breed from a Merino expert and an indirect route to the throne through Banks' friendship with the King. Although it was later in their friendship when Banks became Tollet's mentor and Tollet his protégé, there is a hint of this at the beginning of their relationship when Tollet asked Banks science and botany related questions.

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<sup>290</sup> Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish Flock*, 128. In his letter to Crewe, after Tollet thanked him for the introduction to Coke, he went on to mention that Dovey had said how well Crewe's flock was looking. George Tollet to John Crewe, 21 April 1805, in F/TWC2, Holkham.

Through their correspondence, a bond developed between them. Tollet was a quick learner and a skilful breeder, which impressed Banks, who was proud of the results achieved by his young protégé. Banks had whetted the appetite of his friend Coke to try the breed, but he needed Tollet to move Coke's interest forward. As the pair sought to enlist Coke into their endeavours, their letters reveal a growing camaraderie. Interdependency has been identified as lessening the traditional mentor/mentee hierarchies and leading to friendship.<sup>291</sup> And, so it proved with Banks and Tollet, whose desire to support and learn from one another made their friendship inevitable. Although some men took advantage of their association with those socially above them, there is no evidence of this with Tollet or Walton.

Tollet's relationship with Coke began on a different footing, the landowner being the one who initiated their correspondence, wanting to buy stock from Tollet. However, rather than this giving Tollet a sense of his own worth, which he might reasonably have felt on learning of Coke's interest, his letters were carefully constructed to achieve his aims: advice from Coke with his flock and help with his and Banks' endeavours to establish the Merino in the country. Tollet achieved this by subtly making Coke feel morally obliged to both help him and, in doing so, assist his country. As Tollet's boldness grew, so too did the friendship between the two men; Tollet's cheerful letters to the man he probably respected more than any other is evidence of the warmth that existed between them. Their friendship had begun as an agricultural one, but it evolved into a deeper and longstanding one. However, it was also evident that Coke and Tollet's friendship included 'our friend Mr Walton'. Not only did Tollet learn from Walton, but the sheep expert was a source of news for him.

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<sup>291</sup> Young, Alvermann, Kaste, Henderson and Many, 23.

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The central argument of this thesis is that agricultural friendship, as it was understood at the turn of the nineteenth century, was a friendship that functioned between men from different social levels and was possible because they shared a keen interest in agricultural improvement. This chapter argued it was based on the Aristotelian concept of a useful friendship, which was advantageous and beneficial to both parties. Kant thought this type of relationship functioned best between men with different occupations and from different social classes, each man contributing to the other's needs: a description that sums up well the make-up of the Woburn Group. In supporting this argument, the chapter focused on a small number of men from socially diverse backgrounds within two different contexts: personal contact and letter writing, exploring how they first formed and then maintained their friendships with one another. As the country was in the midst of a long, drawn-out war, each section was set within the context of an agriculturally inspired patriotic initiative to aid the war effort: the Board of Agriculture and the introduction of the Spanish Merino.

What became evident with all the relationships focused on was how important mutual appreciation of one another's values was in facilitating these friendships. In an age of enlightened thinking, agricultural improvers, like many Georgians, admired innovative ideas, and an appreciation of the ingenuity of others created respect. The more ingenious the idea,

the greater the admiration, and it was the respect this generated which, on occasions, allowed the social barrier between these agriculturalists to be breached. Focusing on William Duckett and Thomas Walton illustrated this well. The mutual admiration Somerville and George III held Duckitt in made them friends with the tenant farmer and helped cement their own fledgeling relationship after Somerville became one of the King's companions. Likewise, although from the lower echelons of society, Walton's skill with sheep meant that he was regarded as a friend by many aristocrats and landed gentry who employed him. However, there were limits to these cross-class friendships and whilst Coke and Banks' privileged positions allowed them to sit together at post-show dinners if they had so desired, this would never have extended to Walton joining them in their seats amidst the aristocracy and landowners. He would have sat with his peers; both sides clearly understood the social limitations of their friendship.

What also emerged was that for this type of friendship to work, both parties had to feel they were gaining something from it. George III's refusal to aid Somerville after losing the Board's presidency and his anger with Banks occurred when the Monarch felt let down by both men. In Somerville's case, it was the length of time he was away and his possible lack of honesty over the reason for his trip, whilst with Banks, it was the sale of his Merinos to Coke.

Aristotle believed utility friendships to be fair-weather and function only on a one-to-one basis, but this chapter supported Grunebaum's claim that this type of friendship could have more profound implications and involve more than two friends. The chapter revealed that these men could be relied upon to lend a helping hand on occasions, such as when Mark Duckitt had financial problems, and many of the Group subscribed to help him financially. That many came together to support Duckitt is a testament to the agricultural friendship they

shared, being able to be enjoyed by many more than Aristotle believed was possible for a friendship of this type to sustain.

That mutual admiration underpinned how agricultural friendship functioned, whereby these men benefited from one another, was very evident within the Merino enthusiasts' correspondence. Although there were some similarities with the way Secord's artisan botanists conducted their correspondence with gentlemen naturalists, there were also significant differences. Secord identified that deference was not a sense of scientific inferiority for artisan botanists, more a complex functioning of moral obligations between social classes. But with Walton, one of the poorest of the Group, his letters show that he did not need to adopt a deferential tone within his letters to men socially and financially above him. These men needed his expertise, and they respected and admired him, pleased to share his company. However, a complex functioning of moral obligations was identified within Tollet's correspondence with Coke. Using subtle rhetoric, Tollet cleverly placed the great landowner in a position where he had to respond to what Tollet wanted; help both with his flock and to establish the Merino breed in the country. In wanting Coke's assistance to establish the breed, Tollet evoked Coke's patriotic side, placing him under a moral obligation to aid their country during a long and difficult war. However, a crucial difference in the relationships Secord discusses was that friendships did not develop between the corresponding participants, as this chapter identified. Coke and Tollet shared mutual respect, which allowed a long-standing friendship to develop between them. Through their relationship, Tollet met Walton, another from the Group whose expertise he admired. Walton knew Coke liked and respected the young Staffordshire farmer and that helping Tollet would please Coke. The natural outcome of their association was that he and Tollet also became friends. This is a central tenet of this thesis which argues that the concept of agricultural

friendship was the natural consequence between like-minded people who appreciated each other's values and were helpful to one another.

However, these agricultural friendships between individuals had broader implications. Tollet told Coke that agriculture was like Freemasonry, and they were all brethren, and indeed, the endeavours of the Merino enthusiasts created a great deal of interaction when the Group came together.<sup>292</sup> Reflecting this interest, Garrard gave the Merino and its fleece centre billing within *Wobourn Sheepshearing*.

**Figure 41** <sup>293</sup>



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A Merino tup with two of the sixth Duke of Bedford's sons stood beside him.  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810)

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<sup>292</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 1 May 1805, F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>293</sup> George Garrard (1810). Lords William and John Russell stand beside the Merino tup belonging to their father. The future prime minister points his cane at his father's tup. Behind them to the right is Arthur Young (holding a notebook), with Sir John Sinclair, the Board's president, on his left. Next is Sir Joseph Banks (seated) with Thomas William Coke stood beside him. Behind Coke are two of his tenants, Robert Overman and William Money Hill.



Still, there were many ‘unbelievers’ as Tollet referred to those who were not enamoured with the Merino. Chief among these were the New Leicester sheep breeders, especially the Dishley Tup Society members. As Carter rightly points out, the Merino was the antagonist of the New Leicester.<sup>294</sup> The Dishley men were proud, hard-headed breeders who strove to maintain their breed’s supremacy. The next chapter focuses on the Smithfield Club dispute in which they were heavily involved.

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<sup>294</sup> Carter, *His Majesty’s Spanish flock*, 22.

## Chapter Three

### A CLUB IN CRISIS: THE SMITHFIELD CLUB IN 1800

‘A dissatisfaction appearing among the subscribers’<sup>1</sup>

George Garrard portrayed almost 100 animals in *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, demonstrating their importance to those attending the meeting. Chapter Two argued that this keen interest in livestock breeding, particularly selective sheep breeding, could bring together very different men, engendering respect between them and allowing them to become friends in the process. This chapter continues with the livestock theme in its investigation into the Smithfield Club (the Club). The Club’s primary interest was fatstock, and 81% of the Woburn Group were members. This chapter argues that membership of the Club brought together men from across the livestock industry, from dukes to butchers, and that their shared objective allowed a sense of fellowship to develop between them. But even good friendships experience difficulties occasionally, and tensions could surface, threatening to disrupt relationships between members. This chapter explores one such incident, shortly after the Club began when their shared objective was challenged, resulting in the Club changing its constitution.

The Smithfield Club was formed in 1798. Two years later, in December 1800, discontentment arose among some of the members and their president, Francis Russell, fifth Duke of Bedford (the Duke or fifth Duke), in the lead up to its second show: an episode that historians and those who have documented the Club’s history have largely ignored. This chapter has two objectives: to provide a more comprehensive and reliable account of this episode and explore the major protagonists’ relationship with the Duke and each other. It achieves these objectives by considering three specific questions: firstly, what caused the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII (1807), 90.

discontent, secondly, what factors contributed to the Duke's decision to change the Club's constitution, and thirdly, who were the men at the heart of the dispute and how did they respond to the Duke's new constitution? After placing the Smithfield Club in context, the chapter is sub-divided into three sections to answer each question.

The preceding chapter explored Aristotle's thoughts on his concept of a friendship of utility and its bearing upon the agricultural friendship between individuals within the Group. This chapter explores agricultural friendship on a group level. C S Lewis conceived friendship as sharing activities focused on common interests.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Aristotle believed what allowed larger numbers to become friends was a sense of community, which created common property between them.<sup>3</sup> In its formative years, the members of the Smithfield Club were a diverse mix of aristocratic landowners, breeders, graziers, and butchers, all sharing an interest in livestock production. The Club's objective was what united these different groups, creating common property between them, generating a focus of exchange, and allowing overlap into their different worlds. This objective was to encourage by premiums the rearing and fattening of animals more economically and expeditiously than had typically been practised.<sup>4</sup> As these men had different and sometimes conflicting interests, tensions could occasionally surface, for instance, during their show in 1800, which almost caused a schism within the Club. By examining this show in depth, the chapter reveals how actively involved men from various social levels were within the Club and how at ease they were in dealing with each other. However, although agricultural friendship created a bond between them, it could sometimes come under pressure, like all social relationships. This chapter explores one

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<sup>2</sup> James O. Grunebaum, *Friendship: Liberty Equality and Utility* (State University of New York Press, 2003), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Lesley Brown (ed.), Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. David Ross (Oxford University Press, 2009 edn.), VIII.9, 153.

<sup>4</sup> 'Account of the Smithfield Club and the Proceedings at last Christmas Shew', *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 189.

such episode where tension arose among the members, which required a radical solution to resolve the problem and restore their friendship.

### **The Smithfield Club in context**

By the time the Smithfield Club was formed, clubs and societies had penetrated almost every sphere of British social life. There was such a variety of them within communities that Peter Clark says they could almost be construed as an index to an urban area's identity and image. He considers they were as distinctive and important as churches and religious houses had been for medieval towns.<sup>5</sup> The farming world was no exception. Although only a few farming societies existed before the 1790s, the burst of agricultural activity at the turn of the nineteenth century led to the emergence of many more. By 1800 there were at least 35 in existence, and these varied in their size and aims.<sup>6</sup> The prestigious Bath and West Society (1777-) had over 500 members interested in agriculture and associated manufacturing industries.<sup>7</sup> The Essex Agricultural Society's members, many of whom were arable farmers, shared a keen interest in ploughing matches whilst breeding Southdown sheep and Sussex cattle united the Sussex Agricultural Society's members. There were also more specialist clubs, such as the Dishley Tup Society (the Dishley Society or the Society). Established by a small group of New Leicester sheep breeders, this society operated as a cartel, rigorously controlling the hiring and selling of their breeding stock.<sup>8</sup> As Robert Trow-Smith rightly points out, when looked at in this context, it was almost inevitable that a society

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 459.

<sup>6</sup> Susanna Wade-Martins, *The English Model Farm: Building the Agricultural Ideal, 1700-1914* (Windgather Press, 2010 rep.), 15.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the Bath & West Society, see Kenneth Hudson, *The Bath & West: A Bicentenary History* (Moonraker Press, 1976). For a good overview of the role of agricultural societies in the nineteenth century see Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit* (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> As well as the predominantly Leicestershire based Dishley Tup Society there were also tup societies in two adjoining counties: Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire. There was also the Northumberland Society of Tup Breeders. 'Northumberland Society of Tup Breeders', ZMD 169/11, Northumberland Records Office, cited in Clark, 112, fn. 42.

would be established whose aim was better breeding and feeding to improve the live-weight gain in cattle and sheep.<sup>9</sup> In December 1798, the Smithfield Club was born.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 42<sup>11</sup>

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**Smithfield Market**

Thomas Rowlandson (1811)

The Wellcome Collection. In copyright

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The Club held just one event a year, a livestock show in central London, which was organised to coincide with the great Christmas market at Smithfield in mid-December. The show spanned five days, and on its penultimate evening, the Club convened its Annual

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Trow-Smith, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club* (The Royal Smithfield Club, 1980), 7.

<sup>10</sup> The Club was originally called The Smithfield Cattle and Sheep Society. It did not become known as the Smithfield Club until 1802. In the contemporary press, it was called a mixture of both names during its first few years of existence. For continuity, it is referred to throughout this thesis as The Smithfield Club.

<sup>11</sup> John Bluck after Thomas Rowlandson and Auguste Charles Pugin, *A bird's eye view of Smithfield Market*, Engraving (1811), <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ccngd65r>, (accessed 31 October 2021). Credit: *Smithfield Market*, The Wellcome Collection. In copyright.

General Meeting (AGM) and dinner in the Crown and Anchor on the Strand, close to the show yard.<sup>12</sup> Some members did come from more remote regions, but most primarily came from the Midlands and Southern Britain during its formative years. The Club's initial meeting took place at Smithfield Market on the evening of 17 December 1798, when 29 men met by 'common agreement' and retired to a tavern to formulate a constitution.<sup>13</sup> They elected a committee of 12 members, including Arthur Young as the Club's honorary secretary and arranged to hold a livestock show at Smithfield a year hence.<sup>14</sup> Although Harriet Ritvo asserts that its membership was drawn from the nobility and gentry, only three aristocrats were members of the first committee: the fifth Duke of Bedford, Lord Somerville and the eighth Earl of Winchilsea.<sup>15</sup> These three and Young were all part of the Woburn Group, as were John Ellman, John Westcar, Nathaniel Stubbins and Robert Honeyborn, also elected that day.<sup>16</sup> These men made up two-thirds of the committee, emphasising just how influential this group of men were in the agricultural world at that time. Apart from the Duke, who died three

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<sup>12</sup> From 1806 the Smithfield Club moved its committee meetings, AGM and dinners from the Crown and Anchor to the newly refurbished Freemasons' Tavern in Great Queen Street.

<sup>13</sup> Reports of the Club's formation appear in *Annals of Agriculture and Other Useful Arts (Annals)*, Vol. XXXII, 208; *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 189. No name is credited for *The Farmers Magazine* report but as the magazine stated above this article that it had made arrangements to report on the Club and its Show, and John Farey had just taken over from Arthur Young as secretary the year before, it can be presumed the report is by Farey. Young would not have wished to provide a rival publication to *Annals* with details of the Club when he was secretary. A list of subscribers and reports of the early years of the Club was published in 1860 shortly after Brandreth Gibbs' first biography of the Club was published in 1857. This was compiled from Brandreth Gibbs' pamphlet, together with articles from various farming magazines, but not *Annals*. This report states that rather than meeting in a tavern as Farey said they did, the first meeting was in Paul Giblett's drawing-room. This is disputed here for three reasons: firstly, Giblett was not included in the group of 29 men who initially met to form the Club, secondly, had they met in his house then he would likely have been included as a committee member, as Joseph Wilkes was after suggesting the formation of the Club and, thirdly, the confusion is likely to have arisen because Giblett hosted a dinner for members for each of the years he stewarded for the Club (1804 and 1805). These were held at his Bond Street home. Giblett was treasurer for the Club between 1806-1815. *The Smithfield Club from 1798-1860, with a list of Subscribers, Honorary Officers and a Map* (1860), 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXII, 209.

<sup>15</sup> Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Penguin Books, 1990), 53.

<sup>16</sup> The original 12-man committee was made up of Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford (president), the Earl of Winchilsea, Lord Somerville, John Westcar, John Ellman, Robert Honeyborn, Nathaniel Stubbins, Arthur Young (secretary), John Bennet, Joseph Wilkes, Thomas Barker, and Joseph Bull. The first eight all being from the Woburn Group.

years later, and Young, who resigned as secretary after eight years, all these men would remain integral members for at least the next 15 years.

The three aristocrats were also founder members of the Board of Agriculture (the Board), and their time was ‘in great measure devoted to agricultural pursuits’.<sup>17</sup> They were all bachelors, never marrying, and possibly this freedom from familial responsibilities allowed them more time to indulge themselves in scientific agriculture, a pastime that keenly interested them. The fifth Duke was undoubtedly devoted to agricultural pursuits, and although Joseph Wilkes had initially proposed the idea of the Club, it was the Duke who took a close and personal interest in it from the start. The committee duly elected him as their President at its inaugural meeting.<sup>18</sup> After he died in 1802, his brother, the sixth Duke, accepted the Club’s offer to become president, a position he held for almost 20 years, although more actively involved for the first 12 years than he was for the last 8. The Club is still justly proud of the part played by the Russell family. Its president, T W Bonser, whose family have been butchers at Smithfield since 1798, wrote in the foreword of the Club’s fourth biography, *History of the Smithfield Club*, that the first President had clearly defined its original aims, which remained apposite today.<sup>19</sup> For its bicentenary, the Club elected Andrew, Lord Howland, the future seventeenth Duke of Bedford as its president, and he donated to the Club the *Armada Dish*.<sup>20</sup> This trophy is still presented annually in memory of

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<sup>17</sup> Winchelsea’s obituary considered his time was ‘in great measure devoted to agricultural pursuits’, but so too were the fifth Duke of Bedford and Lord Somerville. ‘Obituary Earl of Winchelsea and Nottingham’, *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Vol. XVCI, Part II (1826), 270.

<sup>18</sup> *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 189-90.

<sup>19</sup> Richard W. Waltham, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club 1998* (The Royal Smithfield Club, 1998), 32. T.W. Bonser, ‘Foreword’, in Trow-Smith, *History of the Royal Smithfield Club*.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew, Lord Howland was elected president to lead the Bicentennial Celebrations, which included a Historical Exhibition at the 1998 show. *The Royal Smithfield Club*, [website], <https://www.royalsmithfieldclub.co.uk/>, (accessed 21 September 2019).

his ancestor, Francis fifth Duke of Bedford, for the part he played in the Club's formation and hosting its first full meeting at the Woburn Sheep Shearing in 1799.<sup>21</sup>

Although the Club still celebrates the role of the fifth Duke in its establishment, that he and his committee almost brought about its downfall two years later is barely remembered today. The Club's future was in doubt after the Duke and his committee reneged on a key resolution agreed at the 1799 AGM to appease one group of members. But in doing this, they upset another group, creating a schism among members. To save the Club and avoid it happening again, the Duke devised the idea of dissolving it and forming a new one. The first three accounts of the Smithfield Club were by men employed by the Club in administrative roles.<sup>22</sup> However, all three barely mention the constitutional change, considering it of little significance. Although apparently of little interest to the Club, the constitutional change is important within the rationale of this thesis because it impacts upon its central argument: that this heterogeneous group of farming improvers became friends because they shared a keen interest in agricultural improvement. The chapter reveals how the Club's 'agricultural friendship', with its egalitarian ethos, gave its members the confidence to challenge the decisions taken by the Duke, despite his considerable social superiority: the changed constitution being proof of this. After the Club changed direction, it created a larger pool of men, still primarily breeders, graziers, and butchers, but including some aristocrats and tradesmen, to work alongside both Dukes, steering the Club forward to achieve its objective. Working together brought the men into close contact with the Dukes and each other, further increasing the sense of fellowship and camaraderie within the Club.

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<sup>21</sup> The *Armada Dish* is awarded annually. For more information on the award see *The Royal Smithfield Club*, <https://www.royalsmithfieldclub.co.uk/royal-smithfield-club-bicentenary-trophy>, (accessed 2 February 2022).

<sup>22</sup> The first book by Brandreth Gibbs ran for three editions, the third edition was published by H. Burnett in 1881. B.T. Brandreth Gibbs, *The Smithfield Club: A condensed history of its origins and progress from its formation in 1798 up until the present time* (James Ridgway, 1857); E.J. Powell, *History of the Smithfield Club from 1798-1900* (The Smithfield Club, 1902); Leonard Bull, *History of the Smithfield Club from 1798-1925* (The Smithfield Club, 1926); Each had been employed as the Club's secretary.



The Smithfield Club asked the agricultural historian Robert Trow-Smith, one of the most-respected farming commentators of the twentieth century, to write the fourth account of its history, published in 1980.<sup>23</sup> Although it provides an informative view of the Club over its long existence, unfortunately, in his chronicling of the Club's formative years, Trow-Smith's version of events is not entirely reliable, preferring to entertain his readers at the expense of factual accuracy.<sup>24</sup> Two issues pertinent to this thesis are either factually inaccurate or misleading: the first relating to the identity of the man whose idea it was to found the Society, the second concerning Trow-Smith's interpretation of events at the Club's second show. By providing a short biography of Joseph Wilkes, and a detailed account of the show, this thesis provides an historically accurate account of the Club's founder and, importantly, its second show, which resulted in the closure of the Club and the formation of a new one in its place.

### **'This spirited improver': Joseph Wilkes<sup>25</sup>**

Joseph Wilkes came up with the idea of establishing a club concerned with better livestock breeding and feeding. Although Young knew Wilkes well, he printed his name wrongly in the Club's minutes, calling him John rather than Joseph.<sup>26</sup> The last three biographers copied Young, writing Wilkes' name as recorded in his minutes.<sup>27</sup> Surprisingly,

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<sup>23</sup> 'Robert Trow-Smith', 26 March, 2001, *The Telegraph*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1327940/Robert-Trow-Smith.html>. (accessed 2 February 2018). Trow-Smith, *History of the Royal Smithfield Club*.

<sup>24</sup> Although this thesis has concerns over these issues and there are also several inaccuracies regarding names, dates and so forth, overall, Trow-Smith's *History of the Smithfield Club* is to be recommended for anyone wanting a general overview of the Smithfield Club during its long history (1798-1980), and the farming conditions prevailing at key points during this period.

<sup>25</sup> Young called Wilkes 'this spirited improver' after being impressed with his agricultural improvements following his visit in 1791. *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 566.

<sup>26</sup> Young generally printed the names of attendees at the Club's meetings in *Annals*, and as numbers of attendees at AGMs were often well over three figures, he doubtless provided an attendance book for the men to enter their names in. Wilkes probably wrote Josh. Wilkes, (Josh. is the common abbreviation for Joseph), which Young mistakenly read as John. Young clearly had trouble deciphering the handwriting of some of these men, because his mistake over Wilkes' name was by no means unique. *Annals*, Vol. XXXII, 208. Young knew Wilkes well. He had visited him at Measham in 1791, writing up his visit in a 16-page report in *Annals*. He was so impressed by Wilkes' 'Irish cars' that he ordered one himself from Wilkes. For details on Young's visit to Measham in August 1791 see *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 551-66.

<sup>27</sup> The Club's first biographer, Brandreth Gibbs, called him 'Mr. J Wilkes'. Gibbs, [7].

Trow-Smith did not realise who Wilkes was. Wilkes was a significant agricultural improver and New Leicester sheep breeder, whose name frequently appears among the literature from that period, much of which Trow-Smith must have researched copiously for his seminal book *A History of British Livestock Husbandry*.<sup>28</sup>

Trow-Smith postulates about who Wilkes might have been, saying he ‘would be a name unknown to history’ had he not formally proposed the formation of the Smithfield Club. He ponders ‘whether he was a man of an original turn of mind... or put up as the plebian mouthpiece of the aristocratic [sic] backers of the Society, may now never be known.’ He concludes that whoever he was, his name is all but forgotten in the annals of the Society, to which his idea gave birth.<sup>29</sup> However, although the Club may have forgotten Joseph Wilkes (1733-1805), history has not, remembering him as an innovative man: the notion of the Club being just one of his many entrepreneurial ideas.<sup>30</sup> He devised its objective of offering premiums to encourage the rearing and fattening of animals more quickly and cheaply than had been achieved before.<sup>31</sup> History remembers him as an influential agricultural improver, a wealthy and successful industrialist and an entrepreneur. He was a man with his finger in many pies, including farming, coal mining, textile manufacture and road and water transport. Young, Robert Bakewell and John Farey, all innovative men themselves, were in awe of Wilkes’ achievements. Young called Wilkes ‘a breeder and a farmer on no slight scale’, and he was well known to the Board for his farming endeavours.<sup>32</sup> William Pitt considered he was ‘possessed of a strong, intelligent, original and active mind,

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<sup>28</sup> Trow-Smith, *A History of British Livestock Husbandry 1700-1900* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959).

<sup>29</sup> Trow-Smith, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> The Measham Museum and History Group hold quite a body of information on Wilkes. Recently a website dedicated to Wilkes has been launched. *Joseph Wilkes of Measham: Hero of the Industrial Revolution*, [website], <https://josephwilkesofmeasham.wordpress.com/>, (accessed 2 February 2022).

<sup>31</sup> *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 189.

<sup>32</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 552.

and whatever he took in hand was conducted with a spirit which overtook all obstacles.’<sup>33</sup>

Farey also thought him a ‘spirited improver’, wistfully saying, ‘Would that every district in Britain had its Joseph Wilkes!’<sup>34</sup>

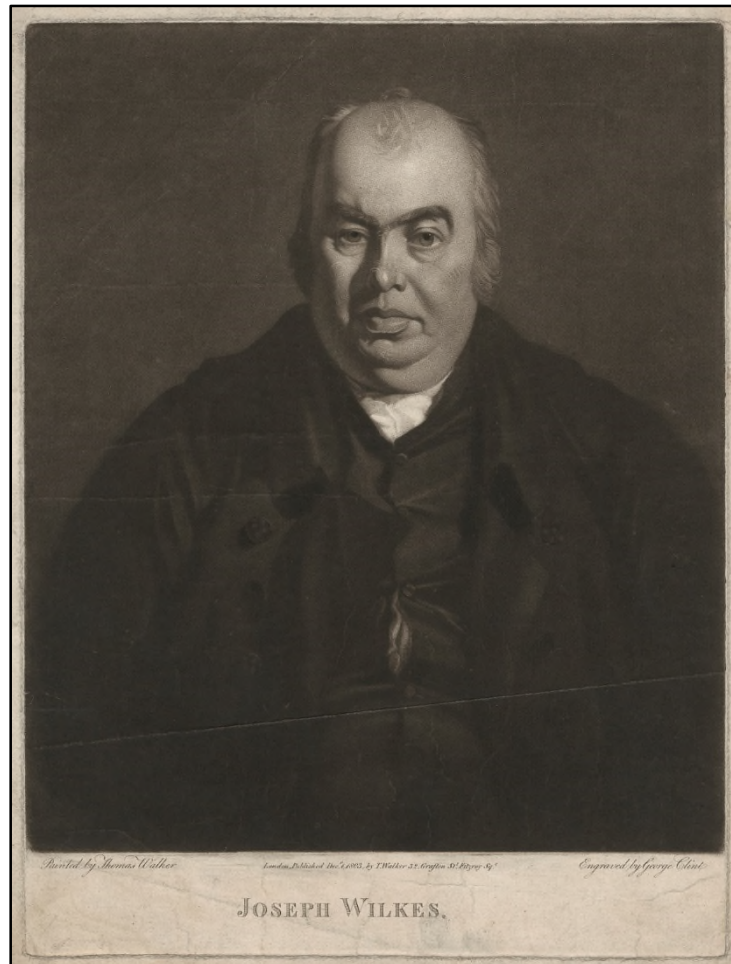


Figure 43 <sup>35</sup>

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*Joseph Wilkes*

George Clint after Thomas Walker (1803)

© National Portrait Gallery, London

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<sup>33</sup> Pitt quoted Wilkes 27 times in his report for the Board on Leicestershire. William Pitt, *A General View of the County of Leicester* (1809), 185.

<sup>34</sup> John Farey, quoted examples of what he called Wilkes’ ‘spirited improvements’ on a number of occasions in his Derbyshire review for the Board. John Farey, *A General View of the Agriculture of Derbyshire*, Vol. II (1813), 362, 474. His footnote on 362 also credits Wilkes for proposing the establishment of the Smithfield Club.

<sup>35</sup> George Clint after Thomas Walker, *Joseph Wilkes*, Mezzotint, 393 mm x 286 mm plate size (1803), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D37527.

In 1777 Wilkes moved to the Derbyshire village of Measham when he bought Measham Manor. He then developed the tiny mining village into a model settlement of the industrial revolution. When Young visited him there in 1791, the entrepreneur, having completed work on the manor house, had built two cotton mills, a corn mill, two steam engines, many weaving shops, and several brick cottages. Young, ever the agriculturalist, noted that Wilkes, a member of the Dishley Tup Society, was building a large and handsome inn in the village and intended to call it ‘the sign of the tup’.<sup>36</sup> Bakewell, a fellow New Leicester breeder, visited Wilkes at Measham a month earlier and said, ‘more improvements are going on than at any place I know.’<sup>37</sup> Wilkes would continue improving the village, adding a boatyard, bank, market house, vicarage, three steam engines, and constructing more model homes for his workers.<sup>38</sup> This then was the man whose idea gave birth to the Smithfield Club: still in existence today, nearly two and a quarter centuries later. Not only does this thesis consider that the Club should be aware of the man whose idea it was, but Wilkes also had a part to play in events at the Club’s second show when the discontent among the members surfaced.

#### 1) **The 1800 Show: ‘Some alterations in the conditions of the show’<sup>39</sup>**

Understanding the Club’s show schedule is key to unravelling the problems surrounding the 1800 show. Six classes were announced: four for cattle and two for sheep, with premiums amounting to 120 guineas. Animals had to arrive at the show’s venue in the Dolphin Yard on the Thursday preceding the Christmas market day. These animals had to be accompanied by a signed feeding certificate; otherwise, they would not be allowed into the yard and inadmissible for judging. This certificate had to include the following: breed, age,

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<sup>36</sup> Young listed Wilkes’ achievements at Measham in 1791 in *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 551-2.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 6 June 1791, in H. Cecil Pawson, *Robert Bakewell: Pioneer Livestock Breeder* (London: Crosby Lockwood & Son, Ltd., 1957), 155.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Wilkes’ Career’, *Joseph Wilkes of Measham*, [website].

<sup>39</sup> *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 190.

time of fattening, diet during fattening (whether corn or cake fed), and the breeder's name if it was known. Judging was to commence on Friday at 9 am. While the best two animals from each class were to remain on public view on Saturday, Monday and Tuesday, the unsuccessful animals had to leave the yard immediately after judging. After Tuesday, the successful exhibitors were at liberty to remove their animals and sell them to any butcher they wanted. The schedule specified that each purchaser had to agree to the judges attending the slaughter of their animals and having seen them killed; the judges would evaluate the hind, forequarters, tallow, hide, pelt and offal (including the blood) of each carcass.<sup>40</sup>

The Committee envisaged that by attending the slaughter, the judges (three graziers and two butchers) would correlate their live animal assessment with their visual appraisal of its slaughtered carcass. Only after they had completed their live and dead examination of the two selected animals from each class would the judges decide on their class placings, reporting these to the committee, who would announce the results.<sup>41</sup> This ambitious plan aimed to work out the animal's live-weight gain and killing out percentage. But the prominent London butchers refused to buy the show animals under this stipulation. Their refusal began a chain of events that forced the Duke and his committee to abort their ambitious slaughter plan and then drove the Duke to disband the Club and reform it.

Although Young's minutes relating to the Club's second show in 1800 are still extant, they are rambling and complicated.<sup>42</sup> After Farey became secretary in 1806, he also wrote a

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<sup>40</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 225-7.

<sup>41</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 226.

<sup>42</sup> Young's report on the 1800 show includes pages of information on the feeding certificates, prize winners, various committee meeting minutes, the AGM attendees, the protest letter, and the Duke's speech. Young published it all in *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 225-64. The uncatalogued archives of The Royal Smithfield Club, held at The Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading (Smithfield, MERL), contain a copy of all the minutes during Young's period as secretary (1798-1806), in 'Smithfield Club Records Box II', Smithfield, MERL. These have been cut out from different volumes of *Annals* and stuck in an album. Farey, Young's successor, then indexed them all at the start of Minute Book I, Smithfield, MERL. It should be noted that Young's minutes in Minute Book II carry a sequential page number for this book as well as the page number and volume in which they appeared in *Annals*. It is the sequential number in Minute Book II that corresponds to Farey's index in Minute Book I. This thesis uses Young's published minutes from *Annals*, using his page numbering system for the period when Young was secretary (1798-1806).

brief historical account of the Club, including explaining why the Duke had to reform it.<sup>43</sup>

Unfortunately, Trow-Smith did not utilise either Young or Farey's reports; otherwise, he would have fully understood why the Club experienced problems leading up to its show.



Figure 44 <sup>44</sup>



Figure 45

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*Arthur Young* (left) and *John Farey*  
George Garrard (1805-9)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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There were five main problems: firstly, the butchers' refusal to admit the judges; secondly, the graziers' threat to boycott the show; thirdly, the late selection of the judges, and the difficulties these judges faced with no clear instructions; fourthly, the inconsistent, and in some cases, non-existent feeding certificates and fifthly, the protest letter from members, complaining that the committee had unilaterally altered the terms of the schedule. Although Trow-Smith lays the blame at the butchers' door over their refusal to slaughter the prize beasts in front of the judges, he also considers the accuracy of the slaughter information and

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<sup>43</sup> In 1800 Farey was a Smithfield Club member and the Duke's agent on his Woburn Estate, so because he was not solely reliant on Young's minutes but able to recollect events himself, there are no obvious errors such as listing Wilkes' name wrongly. *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 189-91.

<sup>44</sup> George Garrard, *Arthur Young & John Farey*, Oil on Paper Sketches (1805-9), in Garrard's 'Folio of Engravings' from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

the validity of the exhibitors' feeding certificates were issues.<sup>45</sup> However, Trow-Smith's version of events is misleading because he fails to mention critical events, such as the graziers' threat to boycott the show and the letter of protest concerning the Club's decision to change the schedule terms. In ignoring these significant factors, he fails to appreciate the magnitude of the problems, including the division among its members, or mention that the Duke thought these could 'possibly lead to separations which might eventually overthrow it'.<sup>46</sup> He merely ponders, 'Apart from these teething troubles, the Club's second show seems to have been successful.'<sup>47</sup> However, the 'fall-out' from the show would have a far-reaching impact on the Club's management for the next 13 years, although paradoxically, it would also bring the members closer together.

**a. The butchers**

It is necessary to address the five problems in chronological order to understand how the discontent built up. The butchers' decision to refuse admittance to the show's judges was the start of the issues: the Duke stating the butchers would not buy the beasts under the terms of the schedule.<sup>48</sup> The Duke and his committee deliberated at length on this at their meeting on 2 December and decided to alter the terms of the schedule. They removed the stipulation that their judges had to attend the slaughter.<sup>49</sup> By doing this, they reneged on the resolution agreed at the AGM the year before. Trow-Smith believes that because the butchers 'held the whip hand – the committee had to give in' and change its schedule.<sup>50</sup> But he is wrong in this assumption. It was undoubtedly a problem, but it was not insurmountable. Although not as eminent as the butchers who had complained, other butchers would have allowed the judges into their shops had the Club insisted on the terms of its schedule. What made the butchers'

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<sup>45</sup> Trow-Smith, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club*, 12.

<sup>46</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 255.

<sup>47</sup> Trow-Smith, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club*, 12.

<sup>48</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 254-5.

<sup>49</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 228.

<sup>50</sup> Trow-Smith, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club*, 12.

refusal to admit the judges significant was that it acted as a catalyst, starting a chain reaction: the result, according to the Duke, could well have been the Club's demise.<sup>51</sup>

When the committee met on 2 December, some of these butchers attended the meeting, the Duke reporting 'some very considerable graziers and their butchers attended'. He went on to say that if the schedule remained as it was, these men all considered it 'would materially obstruct their sale.'<sup>52</sup> Their refusal to comply with the terms of the schedule ignited dissent among the members. Focusing firstly on these butchers, some of whom were members, will shed light on why they thought this.

Prominent butchers such as these were carcase butchers and were generally freemen of the Butchers' Company.<sup>53</sup> As Ian Maclachlan points out, these carcase butchers were a powerful force within Smithfield Market. They typically sold carcasses by the quarter or side to the cutting butchers, but on occasions, the cutting butchers bought and slaughtered live animals themselves. It might have been the cutting butchers that the committee hoped would accommodate their judges if the more elite carcase butchers refused to do so. Some of these carcase butchers also rented or owned land, purchasing cattle direct from graziers, adding value by fattening the beasts themselves.<sup>54</sup> Paul Giblett, the fashionable Bond Street butcher and one of the judges for this year's show, fattened stock in Hertfordshire, his son William, managing the fattening enterprise.<sup>55</sup> This fattening connection may have been what confused

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<sup>51</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 255.

<sup>52</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 254.

<sup>53</sup> Ian Maclachlan, 'A bloody offal nuisance: the persistence of private slaughter-houses in nineteenth-century London', in *Urban History*, Vol. XXXIV, Part 2 (2007), 236, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926807004622>, (accessed 20 July 2017). Although originally appearing in *Urban History* the article was also published in pamphlet form.

<sup>54</sup> Maclachlan, 236-7.

<sup>55</sup> The Giblett family went on to have a long association with the Smithfield Club. Paul Giblett was the Smithfield Club's treasurer between 1806-1815 and he judged for the Club in 1800 and then stewarded in 1805-6. Giblett's son William judged for the Club in 1813, 1820 and 1823. Bull, 193, 194 & 204. Giblett's youngest son John was a Member of Council for the Smithfield Club for many of the years between 1862 to 1892. When John Giblett died in 1893, he was, with one exception, the oldest member of the Club. It was through John Giblett's exertions that the Agricultural Hall was erected and became the Club's new home. Bull, 197, 88.



Trow-Smith when he mistakenly referred to Giblett as ‘a farmer of some education’.<sup>56</sup>

Another who rented land was the Leadenhall butcher, Henry King. With his son, Henry Jnr, they purchased stock from top breeders such as Ellman and Somerville and fattened them on Plaistow Marshes. Like the Gibletts, they would be keen supporters of the Club over the next decade. As he had the year before, King Snr exhibited two Ellman-bred Sussex oxen.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 46<sup>58</sup>

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*The Butcher's Shop*

M Dubourg after James Pollard (1822)

The sheep's carcass on the left has had its legs cut off at the hocks, and the one hanging on the left of the doorway has had them removed above the fetlocks. See footnote 64.

Image courtesy of The O'Shea Gallery

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<sup>56</sup> In comparing John Farey and Paul Giblett, Trow-Smith is wrong to suggest Farey was ‘a clerking man’ and that Giblett, as a farmer of some education, was better qualified as a show judge. Giblett was a butcher whilst Farey was the son of a tenant farmer on the Woburn Estate and had been the land-agent for the fifth Duke of Bedford until his death. He also wrote the well-informed two-volume County Report on Derbyshire for the Board. Trow-Smith, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club*, 17.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Practicus’, ‘On the Exhibition of Fat Cattle at Smithfield’, *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III, Part 2 (1800), 402; *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 234.

<sup>58</sup> M. Dubourg after James Pollard, *The Butcher's Shop*, Coloured Aquatint, 225 mm x 300 mm (1822). Image courtesy of The O'Shea Gallery.

Not only did these carcase butchers often have access to land, but they usually had stables attached to their London slaughterhouses. So, rather than slaughtering the beasts immediately, they could stable them for up to five days, killing them and cutting them up as required.<sup>59</sup> This delay in slaughtering the animals was the crux of the problem between the Club and the butchers. The Club wanted the selected animals killed as soon as they left the yard on Tuesday to determine the prize winners, but the butchers did not want to be dictated to about when the animals should be slaughtered. Buying prize beasts from top graziers such as Westcar, John Edmonds, Thomas Grace, and the Duke himself was prestigious for these butchers, and they paid a premium to obtain them. Having expended large sums on these animals, the butchers were often in no hurry to slaughter them. One of the reasons for this was weather-related. If it was a mild December, as it was in 1803, the carcasses did not stiffen, particularly the large oxen: the weather needed to be cool and dry to achieve this.<sup>60</sup> If an animal was considered extraordinary, they might choose to keep it alive, lodging it either in their stables but more likely in a yard adjoining a tavern or hotel, charging the public money to view it. Occasionally, they sent them off as ‘shows’: the animals travelling around the country, sometimes for years, as well as having prints made of them, as the butcher William Robinson did with *the White Heifer that Travelled*<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Maclachlan, 243.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Shew of Cattle in Smithfield’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IX (1803), 443.

<sup>61</sup> In 1811 William Robinson, a butcher from the Darlington area, together with Mr Spark, bought the white shorthorn heifer from Robert Colling. They sent her around the country in a purpose-built carriage as a travelling show animal. She became known as *The White Heifer that Travelled*. She appeared at Lord Somerville’s show in March 1812 and in his folio of engravings, under the ‘Tees Water Cattle’ section, Garrard recorded that after three years she was still on her travels in 1813. Garrard, ‘Tees Water Cattle’, *A description of the different varieties of oxen common in the British Isles* (1815 edn.), 2. For more information on the White Heifer and her travels see James Sinclair, *History of Shorthorn Cattle* (Vinton and Co. 1907, reprinted by Repressed Publishing, 2014), 76.



Figure 47<sup>62</sup>

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*The White Heifer that Travelled*  
William Ward after Thomas Weaver (1811)

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When they did slaughter them, their policy was often not to cut them up but rather to display them whole outside their shops. They proudly hung up these prize carcasses, attaching a note to them, which recorded the names of the breeder, owner and the prize it had won (Figures 46 and 48). George Watkinson, a New Leicester sheep breeder, sent Young his carcass results for his prize-winning sheep in 1801, the year following this show. He explained to Young that his butcher, Thomas Dell, had only estimated the weight of his wether's head.<sup>63</sup> As the Club requested, Dell should have weighed this separately, but he had only estimated it because he wanted it to remain attached to the body. Watkinson told Young, 'I presume for shewing him to more advantage'.<sup>64</sup> Watkinson's sheep would have been

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<sup>62</sup> William Ward after Thomas Weaver, *A Shorthorned Heifer, Seven Years old, (The White Heifer that Travelled)*, Engraving, 780 mm x 665 mm (1811).

<sup>63</sup> A wether is a male sheep that has been castrated before it reaches sexual maturity.

<sup>64</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 143-5.

displayed outside Dell's shop in the same manner as the carcass in Figure 48.<sup>65</sup> Both live and dead, these prize animals were promotional tools for the butchers, so they were prepared to pay the graziers high prices. They certainly did not want to be forced to slaughter them immediately after the show had ended to suit the judges and the Club.

**Figure 48**



Butchery was a skilled business, and as Maclachlan points out, the slaughterhouses of these carcass butchers functioned as a live-meat warehouse for them and as a craftsman's workshop.<sup>66</sup> So not only did they not want to slaughter the prize animals immediately, neither did they want to standardise their cutting procedure to suit the Club. Not only did this annoy the Club, but also some of its exhibitors. When Watkinson wrote to Young, complaining about the estimation of his New Leicester's head, he was more upset that Dell had insisted on cutting its legs off at the knees and hocks, rather than at its feet, as other butchers did. Watkinson

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***The Butcher's Show*** (detail of)

The notice placed on the sheep's back reads 'Duke of Bedford, Grass Fed'. The artist has included the fir tree sprigs to signify the winter and that the sheep was a prize winner at the Smithfield Club's show, always held just before Christmas.

Image courtesy of The O'Shea Gallery

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rightly pointed out that because of this discrepancy, his sheep's carcass was likely to weigh

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<sup>65</sup> Interestingly the carcasses in Figures 46 and 48 show the legs cut off in different places. The older sheep's carcass in Figure 48 (far left in Figure 46), has had its legs cut off at the hocks (Watkinson calls them houghs), in the manner advocated by Watkinson's butcher Thomas Dell, whilst the younger sheep on the left of the doorway in Figure 46, with its carcass, split open along its belly, has its feet removed above the fetlocks, more in the manner advocated by Paul Giblett. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 143-5.

<sup>66</sup> Maclachlan, 243.

less than his fellow sheep exhibitors if their sheep were weighted with their whole legs attached. He cited Giblett as one such butcher who cut off the legs at the feet when he slaughtered prize sheep. He dispiritedly told Young that although he disputed this cutting technique with Dell, the butcher insisted this was the policy at Whitechapel Market where he had his shop. Watkinson apologised for his anxiety over this, saying, ‘so much depends upon an accurate statement to the owners of the best sheep as well as the public at large.’<sup>67</sup> That he wrote to Young on Christmas Day shows the depth of Watkinson’s feelings over this.

At the AGM, when the Duke reported on the butchers’ refusal to aid the Club, he pointed out that the London butchers’ premises were not as freely accessible as those in Bath, which ‘were open to the most free inspection and every information given in the most liberal manner.’<sup>68</sup> Although the Duke may have held the Bath butchers up as an example of a more cooperative body of men, as provincial butchers, they did not wield the same power as their London counterparts. By the charter granted to them by James I in 1605, the Butchers’ Company controlled and had jurisdiction over the trade within the City of London and within a radius of a mile outside it.<sup>69</sup> Still, although these London butchers may have restricted access to their premises by the Club’s judges, the terms of the schedule were the primary factor in why they refused to buy the beasts. It was having to slaughter the beasts immediately and standardise their cutting techniques to suit the judges, which were at the root of the problem. Undoubtedly, their stance over this annoyed the Duke and his committee, but as will now be explained, the graziers, not the butchers, forced them to alter their schedule.

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<sup>67</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 143-5.

<sup>68</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 258.

<sup>69</sup> ‘History of the Company’, *The Worshipful Company of Butchers*, [website], <https://www.butchershall.com/wcb/the-company>, (accessed 3 February 2022).

## **b. The graziers**

Grazing cattle and sheep in England had been important for centuries, and Trow-Smith gives an excellent account of the fattening industry in the Home Counties and the Midlands at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>70</sup> With its rich pastures and relatively easy access to the lucrative London markets, farmers in these areas fattened not only their stock but animals that had been ‘driven’ down from Scotland, northern England and Wales. These graziers, sometimes called ‘feeders’, would purchase older oxen and cows, whose working life under the yoke and in the dairy, had come to an end, as well as ewes at the end of their productive lives and wether lambs. They fattened them on grass and turnips to supply the London table. In the Southern Midlands, and especially around the Vale of Aylesbury, grazing cattle and sheep was an extremely lucrative business, which prompted Daniel Defoe to write in the early eighteenth century, ‘all the gentlemen hereabouts [Aylesbury] are graziers.’<sup>71</sup>

Buying animals from the best graziers was prestigious for the butchers, but it was also crucial for the graziers, who received top prices for their stock. In some cases, these men had been dealing with each other for years. As Maclachlan says, this had led to accusations that some of the carcass butchers were in league with large-scale graziers and salesmen, using their market position to inflate prices.<sup>72</sup> So, to be threatened with the loss of their usual purchasers and forced to source new buyers would have inconvenienced the graziers and penalised them financially.<sup>73</sup> It was a paradox: the prize animals could be worth less than the

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<sup>70</sup> Trow-Smith, *A History of British Livestock Husbandry*, 12-18.

<sup>71</sup> P.N. Furbank, W.R. Owens and A.J. Coulson (eds.), *Daniel Defoe, ‘A Tour Through England and Wales’* (The Folio Society, 2006), 217.

<sup>72</sup> Maclachlan, 237.

<sup>73</sup> The graziers told the committee meeting that if they had to source new buyers it ‘would materially object their sale’. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 254.

beasts they had just beaten. If the Club insisted on adhering to its schedule terms, thereby losing them their purchasers, the graziers' solution was to refuse to enter their livestock. In essence, they threatened to boycott the Club's show. By threatening this, it is evident that the graziers rather than the butchers held 'the whip hand' because, faced with a potential boycott, the Duke and his committee had to back down. In explaining why they decided to do this, the Duke said, 'the graziers would not show for the prizes if the terms [of the schedule] were insisted on'. He went on to say, 'the refusal to show some of the most capital beasts expected would very essentially injure the exhibition of the Society, and possibly lead to a separation, which might eventually overthrow it.'<sup>74</sup>

So, who were these men who forced one of the wealthiest and most powerful aristocrats in the country into a corner with their threat? In answering this, it is necessary to return to the committee meeting of 2 December. It was not a full committee meeting, with only 11 members in attendance.<sup>75</sup> It was a very eclectic group. Alongside the Duke, from the Woburn Group were the Earl of Winchilsea, Young, one of the two show stewards that year, Westcar, and John Higgins, an amateur breeder and grazier from Bedfordshire. The remaining members were the other show steward, John Bennet, who farmed at Chiswick, Stephen Kent, a Southwark surgeon, Joseph Frost, the King's bailiff, George Munk, a gentleman farmer from Kent, and two London butchers, Thomas Dalby and Thomas Wace.<sup>76</sup> When he explained at the AGM why he and the committee changed the terms of the schedule, the Duke said 'that some very considerable graziers and their butchers appeared

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<sup>74</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 255.

<sup>75</sup> The committee consisted of 15 men. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 227-30.

<sup>76</sup> In his list of attendees, at the 2 December Committee Meeting, Young spells George Munk as Monke. At the Committee Meeting on 15 December, and in the list of the new members, he spells his name as Monk, but in the list of attendees at the AGM, he spells it correctly as George Munk, Appledore, near Tenterden, Kent. As discussed, Young most likely used an attendance book for larger meetings, such as the 1800 AGM, the men writing their own names, and sometimes addresses, in it. This would explain why it is correctly spelt at the AGM. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 228, 247, 261, 249.

and represented to the committee'.<sup>77</sup> As Young's minutes do not state that anyone, apart from the committee, was present, the graziers and butchers who made their presence felt that day must have been members of its committee: the two London butchers, Wace and Dalby, significant buyers of the best animals sent to Smithfield, and the two Midlands graziers: Westcar and Higgins.<sup>78</sup> From the Duke's remarks, it was the graziers who complained who intended to exhibit 'some of the most capital beasts' at the forthcoming show.<sup>79</sup> Mr Weston reported in *the Agricultural Magazine* three weeks earlier that the Midland's graziers, Westcar, Edmonds and Grace, were all intending to exhibit, and from what he had seen and heard in the grazing counties 'will even exceed the excellence of last year'.<sup>80</sup> Of the 17 exhibitors at the show that year, these three men and Higgins were the 'very considerable graziers'. Westcar, Edmonds and Grace had provided six out of the seven oxen at the show the year before, whilst Higgins had been one of the judges.<sup>81</sup>

Westcar was undoubtedly the most important of these graziers. Known as 'Prince Westcar, that Prince of Graziers and Exhibitors', he would go on to win 20 first prizes at Smithfield in as many years, taking two firsts at this show.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, the other three men were also notable graziers. Edmund's ox also won at the 1800 show, whilst Grace's was second, behind Westcar's ox.<sup>83</sup> Although Higgins' animals were not among the prize winners in 1800, he judged the following year again.<sup>84</sup> These men would be loyal supporters of the Club, exhibiting their stock at the show over the next few years. Analysing the number of animals entered that year proves that these four men were at the heart of the controversy.

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<sup>77</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 254.

<sup>78</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 227-8.

<sup>79</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 255.

<sup>80</sup> T. Weston, 18 November 1800, 'On the Exhibition of Fat Cattle', *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IV (1800), 346.

<sup>81</sup> *Bull*, 204.

<sup>82</sup> 'Remarks on the Late Cattle Show', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VIII (1811), 15. The page numbering is erratic, there are two pages numbered 15. This page number should read 29.

<sup>83</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 243-4.

<sup>84</sup> *Bull*, 204.



There were 46 cattle and sheep in total, of which over 50% (24) belonged to these 4 ‘very considerable graziers’.<sup>85</sup> It was no wonder the Duke thought their absence ‘would very essentially injure the exhibition of the Society’.<sup>86</sup>

Westcar, along with Ellman, would have been among the few men in the Club that the Duke would not have wanted to upset. Westcar was 51 in 1800 and farmed at Creslow, in the Vale of Aylesbury, a short ride from Woburn. His rich grazing land included ‘the Great Field’, widely considered the best pasture in the country.<sup>87</sup> He took over the tenancy from his new father-in-law when he married in 1780. Unfortunately, his young wife died shortly afterwards, leaving Westcar, a widower with a young daughter. He never remarried, and H G Robinson’s remark that Robert Bakewell was one of the farmer-bachelor stock-breeders who ‘succeed better in the sphere of breeding by being wedded to their stock’ could apply equally well to Westcar.<sup>88</sup> He was esteemed as a first-class grazier by the farming world, continually ‘finishing’ his cattle to the highest standard. In 1802, after Westcar had again won at Smithfield, Weston said of him, ‘He still retains his pre-eminence, and probably will long retain his station, as chief of English graziers’.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, Westcar was still ‘chief of English graziers’ in 1810, Thomas William Coke calling him ‘The First Grazier in Great Britain’ at the Holkham sheep shearing.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 234-41.

<sup>86</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 255.

<sup>87</sup> For information on ‘the Great Field’ see ‘Creslow Pastures’, *Local Drove Roads*, [website], <http://www.localdroveroads.co.uk/creslow-pastures/>, (accessed 23 February 2019).

<sup>88</sup> H.G. Robinson, cited in Pawson, 43.

<sup>89</sup> T. Weston, ‘On the Annual Shew of Fat Cattle at Smithfield’, *The [Commercial and] Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VII (1802), 399.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Holkham Sheep Shearing’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VII (1810), 61.



Figure 49 <sup>91</sup> (above) & Figure 50 <sup>92</sup> (below)

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**John Westcar's prize winning Hereford oxen at the Smithfield Club Show**

The ox above won in 1799 (George Garrard) and the ox below in 1800 (*The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine's* artist.) These images clearly show why Garrard was encouraged by the Board of Agriculture to provide accurate images of livestock, drawn and modelled to scale.

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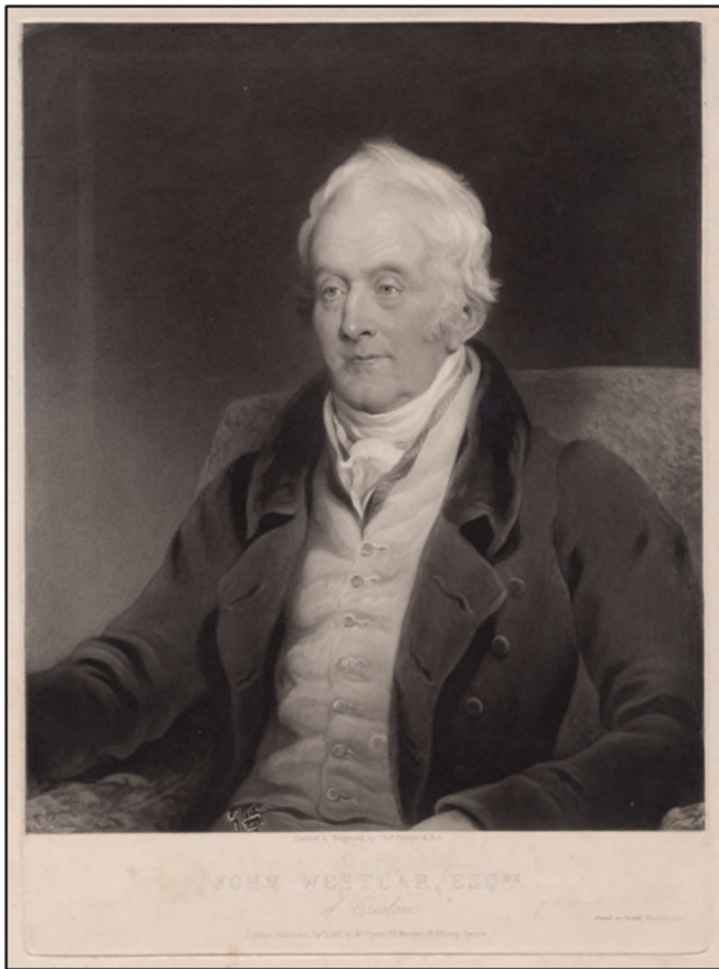


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<sup>91</sup> Garrard, 'A Fat Herefordshire Ox' (1799), *Description of the Different Varieties of Oxen*, n.p.n. The legend below the image states the ox was owned by John Westcar.

<sup>92</sup> *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine's* artist, 'John Westcar's Ox', *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1800), between 408-9. Mr Chapman of Fleet Market bought Westcar's ox for 140 guineas. For more details about the ox and its killing out weight see *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III, 401.

Figure 51 <sup>93</sup>



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*John Westcar*  
Charles Turner (1831)  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

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Westcar found the Hereford suited his requirements best, and it was he who introduced the Duke to the breed. Although he was interested in farming when he took up with Somerville on his ‘grand tour’ in 1785, the Duke’s ‘peculiar fondness for farming’ only began in earnest in 1793 when he took a serious interest in agricultural improvements and his estate.<sup>94</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, the Duke visited Ellman and looked upon him as a mentor, and there is a strong argument that he considered Westcar in a similar light. Thomas Duckham called him

the Duke’s ‘trusty adviser’, and when the Duke was establishing himself as both a Hereford breeder and grazier, Westcar introduced him to breeders in Herefordshire, such as Joseph Tully. Sometimes Westcar and the Duke went together into Herefordshire, such as when they visited Mr Jones, at Breinton, near Hereford, when the Duke was looking to purchase stock

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<sup>93</sup> Charles Turner, *John Westcar*, Mezzotint Engraving, 362 mm x 283 mm (published 1831), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D4738.

<sup>94</sup> Ernest Clarke, ‘John Fifteenth Lord Somerville’, *Journal of RASE*, Vol. VIII, Third Series (1897), 3. David Brown, ‘Reassessing the Influence of the Agricultural Improver: the Example of the Fifth Duke of Bedford (1765-1802)’, *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. XLII, No. 2 (1999), 185, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40275571>, (accessed 23 February 2019).

from him.<sup>95</sup> Westcar, a regular attendee at the Hereford October Fair, also encouraged the Duke to do likewise.<sup>96</sup> They competed against each other with their Hereford oxen at the Club's show the following year, with Westcar narrowly beating the Duke. The grazier commented that the Duke's beast had pressed him harder than had ever occurred before.<sup>97</sup> They evidently had a good relationship because a print of the fifth Duke was still hanging in Westcar's bedroom at his death.<sup>98</sup>

The other committee member was Higgins, a gentleman farmer who farmed in Turvey, 19 miles from Woburn and close to the village of Oakley. The Duke must have visited Oakley regularly because not only did he own most of the land, in and around it, but his brother John and his wife and three young sons resided there.<sup>99</sup> The Oakley pack, which the Duke jointly owned with other Whig MPs in the Group, was kennelled there.<sup>100</sup> As well as the hunt, the Duke also kept cattle at the farm, including the Oakley Hereford, which Garrard prominently displayed in *Woburn Sheepshearing*. Many of the men in the Woburn Group hunted, and Higgins probably hunted with the Oakley, his local hunt. Higgins was also one of the three respected Bedfordshire farmers whom the sixth Duke asked to visit and report on Thomas Greg's cultivation methods, discussed in Chapter One. As a near neighbour, a keen livestock breeder and an enthusiastic member, Higgins was another of these 'very considerable graziers' that the Duke would not have wanted to cross.

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<sup>95</sup> Thomas Duckham was the first editor of the Hereford Herd Book. He edited it for 20 years between 1858-1878. Thomas Duckham, 'The Rise and Progress of the Hereford Breed of Cattle', *Journal of the Bath and West Society*, Vol. VIII, Third Series (1876), 128-9.

<sup>96</sup> Westcar attended the Hereford October Fair between 1779-1819. Thomas Rowlandson, 'Farming of Herefordshire', *Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Vol. XIV, Part I, No. XXXI (1853), 450.

<sup>97</sup> 'The Two Prize Oxen, 1801', *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. V (1801), 381.

<sup>98</sup> 'Will of John Westcar of Creslow, Buckinghamshire', 15 July 1833, The National Archives, PROB 11/1819/312, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D252001>, (accessed 20 July 2019).

<sup>99</sup> Lord John Russell (1792-1878), the third son of the sixth Duke of Bedford recalls in his diary that he was about eight years old when they moved to Oakley, which would be 1800. Spencer Walpole, *The Life of Lord John Russell*, Vol. I (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1889), 3.

<sup>100</sup> 'The Beginnings of the Oakley Hunt', *Bedfordshire Archives*, [website], <https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/Oakley/TheBeginningsOfTheOakleyHunt.aspx>, (accessed 14 August 2021).

The thesis strongly argues that these four committee men broke rank in the meeting that day: Dalby and Wace, speaking out on behalf of their fellow butchers, Westcar and Higgins, for the graziers. Westcar was at the meeting in 1799 when the committee agreed to the ruling about carcase inspection.<sup>101</sup> Still, possibly after discussing it with other graziers, such as Edmonds and Grace, he changed his mind and threatened not to exhibit. Had committee members such as Ellman, Honeyborn and Samuel Stone been at the meeting, then the outcome over the schedule might have been quite different. But they were not, because as the Duke said at the Club's AGM, 'many of the most valuable [committee] members live in the country and attend but seldom'.<sup>102</sup>

The compromise reached on 2 December was that the butchers would provide the exhibitors with the slaughter data, who would then send it to Young. However, only three butchers, including Giblett and Wace, both members, provided these returns to their customers. Neither Grace nor Edmonds provided any returns to Young, but unsurprisingly Westcar, and Ellman's cousin, Thomas Ellman, provided one, as did Henry Kingsnorth.<sup>103</sup> According to Garrard, Kingsnorth's heifer, bred by Thomas Whittle, was 'in all respects to be the most handsomest Fat Beast that had ever trod the pavement of the market'.<sup>104</sup> Ironically, after forcing the Duke and his committee to alter the schedule, thereby allowing them to sell at a high price to their regular butchers, the exhibitors received lower prices than expected for their stock. The Club had nothing to do with this because, as *the Agricultural Magazine* reported, 'The prize cattle met with a very discouraging sale, owing principally, to the extreme fullness of the market'.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> This committee meeting took place on 13 December 1799, and Westcar is listed as being present. After agreeing that judges attend the slaughter the resolution was agreed by members at the AGM on 14 December 1799. *Annals*, Vol. XXXIV, 347-53, 356.

<sup>102</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 256.

<sup>103</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 228, 263-4.

<sup>104</sup> Garrard, 'Description of Sussex Cattle', *Description of the Different Varieties*.

<sup>105</sup> *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1800), 403.

Figure 52<sup>106</sup>



Figure 53<sup>107</sup>



Figure 54<sup>108</sup>



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*Mr Kingsnorth's Prize-Winning Heifer*

'In all respects to be the most handsomest Fat Beast that ever trod the pavement of the market.'

Three images of the heifer by different livestock artists.

Above top left is by George Garrard (drawn to scale), above top right by F Chesham, © Lawes Agricultural Trust / Rothamsted Research. The above centre is by Edmund Scott

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**c. The judges**

The third area which caused concern for the Club that year was its judging team.

Although in future years, a shortlist of potential judges was drawn up a year in advance, that year, the committee only started to think about who would be in the five-man judging team 10 days before the show.<sup>109</sup> The committee only met occasionally, and as the duke pointed

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<sup>106</sup> Garrard, *Description of the Different Varieties*.

<sup>107</sup> F. Chesham, *Prize Winning Heifer* (1800), John Bennet Lawes Collection, Rothamsted Research Institute. Licenced under CC BY 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

<sup>108</sup> Scott's painting of the heifer was done when she was two years old in 1798. The other two images of her are as a four-year-old at the Smithfield Club Show in 1800. The images are not only a good indication of how the accuracy of livestock portraits could vary but also how much weight fat stock could put on in two years. Edmund Scott, *Mr Kingsnorth's two-year-old Heifer, Proceedings of the Sussex Agricultural Society from its Institution to 1798* (1800), Plate IV.

<sup>109</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 228-9.

out at the AGM, it was one of the reasons for the problems that had arisen that year.<sup>110</sup> At their meeting on 2 December, the committee, more concerned with sorting out the problems with the graziers and butchers, formed a sub-committee to deal with the choice of judges.<sup>111</sup> Unsurprisingly the fifth Duke was part of this sub-committee, as were the show stewards, Young and Bennet, and the Earl of Winchilsea and Kent. Bennet, Young and Kent met with the Duke the following day at his home in Arlington Street, working through the short-list of names drawn up the day before, at the top of which was Somerville's name.<sup>112</sup>

Because Somerville had been in Portugal for about nine months, he was no longer on the committee. Nevertheless, he remained an enthusiastic member of the Club and although short notice, he agreed to judge. Ritvo is convinced that the nobility and gentry always ran the Club and chose judges from their ranks.<sup>113</sup> However, until 1980, when the last full history of the Club was published, Somerville was the only aristocrat ever to judge for the Smithfield Club.<sup>114</sup> Nor did the nobility and gentry ever make up more than a small part of the Club's members during its formative years. Still, they did judge at events like the sheep shearings, working alongside graziers and breeders, in teams of two and three. The fifth Duke himself judged, and at the Sussex Agricultural Society's show at Lewes in 1798, Ellman said he 'took considerable pains in examining the several lots of sheep and cattle shown'.<sup>115</sup> But it was Somerville who judged more often, judging for the Club again in 1806. He later publicly pledged his support to them, saying 'they might always continue to command his service in the good cause in which the Club was engaged.'<sup>116</sup> As part of this support, he paid for the

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<sup>110</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 256.

<sup>111</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 228-9.

<sup>112</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 230-2.

<sup>113</sup> At the first show in 1799, two of the five judges were chosen from the committee: Joseph Bull and Joseph Frost. The remaining three were a grazier, John Higgins, and two butchers, Thomas Wace and Thomas Dalby. *Annals*, Vol. XXXIV, 348; Ritvo, 56.

<sup>114</sup> The list of judges from 1799-1979 (inc.) is published in full in Trow-Smith, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club*, 110-25.

<sup>115</sup> John Ellman, 'Lewes Agricultural Meeting', *Annals*, Vol. XXXI, 390, 393-4.

<sup>116</sup> 'Christmas Cattle Shew', *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. X (1808), 557.

purchase of the Club's show hurdles.<sup>117</sup> Of the remaining four judges, selected by the sub-committee, another was Giblett, the Bond Street butcher, whilst a third was the Kent grazier, Stephen Amherst.<sup>118</sup> As Amherst failed to turn up on judging morning, Bennet, one of the stewards, had to step in and take his place.<sup>119</sup> Why Amherst chose not to judge will be returned to. When judging began, the judges experienced difficulties reaching their placings. Because the schedule had been altered, it left them reliant only on a visual appraisal of the live animals.<sup>120</sup> With no explicit instructions from the Club to guide them on what criteria they were assessing the live animals on, the judges had difficulties reaching their placings. It was another problem the fledgling club did not need.

#### **d. The feeding certificates**

The fourth area of contention concerned the feeding certificates. The schedule clearly stated that each animal had to arrive with its signed feeding certificate; otherwise, it could not enter the show yard and so unable to be judged.<sup>121</sup> The stewards gave these feeding certificates to the judges on the morning of the show to help them with their selection. However, this was problematic because there was no standardised form, so the exhibitors' interpretation of what was required varied considerably. The Leicestershire breeder, Watkinson, who would complain to Young the following year over the inconsistency in the

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<sup>117</sup> Robert Byng reported at the committee meeting on 15 December 1809 that the Club owned the hurdles which had been a gift from Somerville. Minute Book II, 110, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>118</sup> The judging team consisted of three graziers and two butchers. The Club wanted butchers involved not only because of their carcass knowledge but because they appraised live animals differently from the graziers. When judging, butchers placed more emphasis on handling the animal than on visual assessment. In his livestock treatise, Richard Parkinson quoted a London butcher who thought that no one could adequately assess 'the perfections which a butcher's sheep ought to possess' without handling a sheep very thoroughly. Parkinson went on to say that butchers understood what their consumers wanted, saying, 'the customer must have, and will have, what he wants best'. Richard Parkinson, *Treatise on the Breeding and Management of Livestock*, Vol. I (London: Cadell & Davis, 1810), 280. By selecting a team of graziers and butchers, the Club endeavoured to ensure the winning animals were the most suitable, visually and conformationally, to satisfy the consumer's taste. Somerville went even further, his judging team included a butcher and a meat salesman. In 1802 Somerville's judging team was made up of Lord Grimstone (landed proprietor), Richard Astley (farmer), William Oakley (wool stapler), Mr Wheeler (salesman) and Mr Bird (butcher). John, Lord Somerville, *Facts and Observations Relative to Sheep, Wool, Ploughs and Oxen* (John Harding, 1809 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), 172.

<sup>119</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 233.

<sup>120</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 255-6.

<sup>121</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 227.



way butchers cut up sheep carcasses, provided an epistle about his Longhorn ox, bred by Bakewell. In it, he documented everything it had consumed during the previous six months, down to the nearest half pound of hay. He even estimated the value of the land on which the ox had grazed.<sup>122</sup> The antithesis of this was Whittle's certificate, which merely stated: 'Mr Whittle of East Farleigh, Kent, a heifer, five years old, bred by himself, and fed on cake'.<sup>123</sup> Young despaired of these certificates and printed them in full in *Annals* that year, 'so that the whole society may understand the reason for a new subsequent regulation respecting certificates'.<sup>124</sup>

This diversity of information was a problem for the judges, but at least Watkinson and Whittle provided certificates. The appearance of stock with no certificates would be a constant headache for the Club for many years, and this show was no exception. With half an eye on a royal charter, the committee must have been delighted when George III 'honoured' its second show by sending Frost with two Hereford oxen to be exhibited.<sup>125</sup> However, Young and Bennet must have felt sick when they realised the royal oxen had arrived with no certificate. George III was friendly with Young, who had been delighted to receive a prized Merino tup from him as a gift.<sup>126</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two, the King had documented William Duckett's farming methods for Young to publish in *Annals*. Frost, the King's bailiff, was also one of the Club's committee members, so, although their strict schedule clearly stated that with no certificate, animals could not enter the show yard, the Club made an exception for the King's oxen. So again, the Duke and his committee reneged on the terms of

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<sup>122</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 235-7.

<sup>123</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 239. Whittle not only bred this heifer, but also the one that Mr Kingsnorth showed, and which Garrard had so much admired (see three images above). These two animals were sisters. 'Smithfield Shew of Cattle and Sheep', 16 December 1800, *Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, 4, in The British Newspaper Archive (BNA).

<sup>124</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 233.

<sup>125</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 403-4.

<sup>126</sup> Young received the Merino tup 'Don' in 1791, and his letter to Sir Joseph Banks, who brokered the deal, shows that he was delighted to receive it. Harold B. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish Flock* (Angus & Robertson, 1964), 192-3. Image of 'Don' op. 193.

their schedule. Not only were the King's oxen allowed to enter the yard, but they were also permitted to be judged. The year before, the King had awarded the newly established Royal Institution (1799-) a royal charter: in no small part through Winchilsea's endeavours.<sup>127</sup> If the Club hoped that admitting the oxen and exhibiting them might help it gain a royal charter, it was sadly disappointed; the Club had to wait 180 years before it finally received royal patronage.<sup>128</sup>

Although the King's animals were allowed into the show yard, Mr Creek's 'remarkably fat Oxfordshire heifer' was not so fortunate. The heifer had been sold before the show. When she arrived, she was 'not in the hands of her feeder' as the schedule specified, so was refused entry into the show yard.<sup>129</sup> Young later published in *Annals* the King's 'missing' feeding certificate, signed by Frost. Young explained that it was sent in a private letter, which had not arrived in time. He went on to say that as the Club paid 'much attention to an *extraordinary degree of fatness*', the King's beasts did not feature among the prize winners: 'His Majesty [being] too good a grazier to throw food away for mere show'. Although he added there had been much admiration for the royal oxen, and they had given 'great honour' to the King.<sup>130</sup> However, it was Mr Creek's fat heifer, lodged in a neighbouring yard, who was more admired: a large number of people paying to view her.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Winchilsea asked the King for patronage of the Royal Institution (RI) in June 1799, to which the King agreed, although it did not receive it officially until the beginning of 1800. The RI rewarded Winchilsea by appointing him president, a position he held from 1799 to 1813. 'George Finch, eighth Earl of Winchilsea (1752-1826)', Our History, People, Biographies, *Royal Institution*, [website], <http://www.rigb.org/our-history/people/f/george-finch>, (accessed 23 February 2019).

<sup>128</sup> The Smithfield Club became The Royal Smithfield Club in 1960 when H.R.H. Queen Elizabeth II awarded the Club a royal charter.

<sup>129</sup> Before the show Mr Weston reported that the fat heifer belonging to Mr Creek, of Rousham, Oxfordshire, was of the Leicestershire breed, [Longhorn], and was said to weigh over 18 score, and had been bought by men 'who intended to make a public show of her in London'. After the show 'Practicus' commented that she had been denied entrance to the show yard. 'On the Exhibition of Fat Cattle', *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1800), 346, 403.

<sup>130</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 404.

<sup>131</sup> Mr Creek managed to exhibit the heifer in a neighbouring yard, where she drew large crowds to see her and 'was exhibited to the much greater profit of the proprietor'. *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1800), 403.

**e. The protest letter**

The fifth problem was a direct result of the altered schedule. The day before the show, the Duke was presented with a letter of protest signed by 24 members, including 2 of the committee and 6 of the exhibitors. Stone and Honeyborn must have presented it when along with the Duke, the two show stewards and the butcher, Wace, they attended a small committee meeting the day before the show.<sup>132</sup> The letter stated:

We, the undersigned, subscribers to, and active promoters of, the Smithfield Society, feel ourselves much hurt at the alteration made in the instructions that we understand are given to the judges of the cattle and sheep from those *directed and published* by the Society, We are unanimously of opinion, that without a full and fair examination of the cattle and sheep when they are slaughtering, and afterwards weighed, &c. as determined at the last general meeting, the views of the Society cannot be answered, nor ourselves or the public gain that information so desirable and necessary, and which we conceive to be the only beneficial effect the Society can produce.<sup>133</sup>

As the letter arrived at the eleventh hour, the animals in the process of arriving at the show yard, and judging scheduled for the following morning, there was nothing the Duke could have done to counter it, other than telling Honeyborn and Stone that he would consider it. Amherst, one of the judges and a signatory on the protest letter, was evidently not satisfied with this and took his protest further, failing to turn up to judge.<sup>134</sup> Trow-Smith may have thought these difficulties at the show were only 'teething troubles', but they exasperated the Duke, forcing him to disband the Club and reform it.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 232-3.

<sup>133</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 241-2.

<sup>134</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 233.

<sup>135</sup> Trow-Smith, *History of The Royal Smithfield Club*, 12.



Figure 55 <sup>136</sup>

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*Mr Edmund's Prize Ox*

'First prize winner for grass-fed beasts at the 1800 Smithfield Cattle and Sheep Society, which was subsequently sold for 65 guineas.'

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**2) Exhausted, exasperated but enlightened: The fifth Duke of Bedford**

Despite all the setbacks, the show attracted 17 exhibitors from the Home Counties and the Midlands, either graziers or breeders, bar George III, the Duke and Henry King, the Leadenhall butcher. The public paid an admission fee of a shilling to view the exhibitors' 18 oxen, 4 heifers and 24 sheep.<sup>137</sup> On 15 December, the penultimate evening of the show, the Club held its AGM and dinner at the Crown and Anchor, a large venue conveniently situated on the Strand. Anyone could attend the dinner, provided they had paid for their meal, together with their membership subscription for the forthcoming year. However, the subscription fee had doubled from 10/6d to a guinea since the previous year.<sup>138</sup> So, when the Duke began his AGM address immediately after they had all eaten, each

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<sup>136</sup> *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine's* artist, *Mr Edmund's Prize Ox*, and 'Account of Mr. Edmond's Prize Ox', *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IV (1801). Image between 64-5; account n.p.n. [73].

<sup>137</sup> *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1800), 402.

<sup>138</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXIV, 348; Vol. XXXVI, 246.

member, having paid their significantly increased subscription fee, all thought they were paid-up members of the Club for the forthcoming year. They would soon realise this was not the case!

Figure 56 <sup>139</sup>



***The GORDON-KNOT – or – The Bonny Duchess hunting the Bedfordshire Bull***

James Gillray (1797)

© The Trustees of the British Museum

Still, before focusing on what the Duke proposed, it is necessary to establish what type of man he was. Born Francis Russell, he was the eldest of three sons whose parents died when they were infants. The Duke inherited the title and estates at just six years of age.<sup>140</sup> The estate extended over seven counties, and David Brown considers it possibly the

<sup>139</sup> James Gillray, *The Gordon-knot, - or - the bonny-duchess hunting the Bedfordshire bull*, Hand-coloured Etching, 264 mm x 365 mm (1797), London: British Museum, No. 1868,0808.6621. Licenced under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

The ribbon the Duchess clasps has matrimony inscribed upon it. The Duchess is pleading with the bull to stop and be caught, whilst her daughter urges her mother to keep running after him. Georgiana's three sisters dance in the background, the one in the centre with her back to the viewer is Susan Montagu, Duchess of Manchester. Gillray has raised her skirt to reveal her undergarment, made of the very fashionable Manchester velvet, signifying she is married to the Duke of Manchester. The Duke was also a member of the Woburn Group, and one of the 50 members elected to the new Smithfield Club. After the fifth Duke's death in 1802, Charles William produced a satirical print entitled *The Gord-ion knot untied, or the disappointed Dido still in despair*. It depicts the Duchess and her howling daughter beside the coffin of the late fifth Duke, Georgiana's hat and necklace lie on the coffin. The Duchess tells her daughter not to despair, and that she will still have one of the family, saying 'I'll take You down to the Abbey [Woburn] and try again.' The following year Georgiana was married to John, sixth Duke of Bedford. For more information on these satirical prints see George Frederic Stephens and Mary Dorothy George, *BM Satires/Catalogue of Political and Personal Satire in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (1870-1954), [website], <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIB294>, (accessed 8 March 2022).

<sup>140</sup> The fifth Duke inherited the title from his grandfather, John Russell, fourth Duke of Bedford, in 1771. His father, Francis Russell, Marquess of Tavistock had died 4 years earlier in 1767. See 'Francis, 5th Duke of Bedford', Appendix II. As the fifth Duke of Bedford died in 1802 this is the last entry in the Appendix.

wealthiest inheritance in the country. By the time he was 21, the Duke's yearly income was £74,000, clear of all encumbrances.<sup>141</sup> So, in 1800, at 35 years of age, the Duke was one of the richest and most powerful men in England. He was also one of the most eligible. Having married off two of her other daughters to dukes, the Duchess of Gordon had spent some years unsuccessfully pursuing him for her daughter, Georgiana.

The Duke was very much part of London's fashionable Whig society and a friend of the Prince of Wales. He was an inveterate spender who loved horse racing and gambling. Descended from one of the great Whig dynasties, he was active in politics. As a keen Foxite, the Duke supported his close personal friend, Charles James Fox and opposed the King's government and policies.<sup>142</sup> But Brown sees him as a frustrated politician whose political career had been emasculated by years in opposition as the Whigs remained in the wilderness with their political ambitions thwarted during the long war with France.<sup>143</sup> Although this thesis does not disagree, most of the opposition Whigs were similarly frustrated; it argues that rather he was uninfluential in his role as a politician. The Duke was not a naturally gifted speaker.<sup>144</sup> He could appear aloof and rarely put forward motions, but as will emerge, although passionate in his support for a particular amendment, he was also politically naïve.

Brown believes the Duke's passion for agricultural improvement, which he turned his mind to when he became disillusioned with politics, derived from a mixture of enlightened ideas such as economic liberalism, status gratification denied him in the political world, a sense of altruism and a strong desire to maintain and justify aristocratic authority, thereby

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<sup>141</sup> Brown, 'Reassessing the Influence of the Agricultural Improver', 184.

<sup>142</sup> Brown's article on the Duke's influence or otherwise on agricultural improvement is an excellent overview of the Duke's spending and his improvements during this period. Brown, 182-95.

<sup>143</sup> Brown, 183.

<sup>144</sup> A.S. Turberville, *The House of Lords in the age of reform, 1784–1837* (1958), cited in E.A. Smith, 'Russell, Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford (1765-1802)', *Ordinary Dictionary of National Biography*, (ODNB) (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24308>, (accessed 2 March 2022).

avoiding social conflict.<sup>145</sup> But Fox, the Whigs' champion, had a more philanthropic view saying his friend had two objectives: promoting agricultural improvement and changing society.<sup>146</sup> The Duke spent heavily on his agricultural interests, allegedly spending over £700,000 in ten years, with a large part of the £400,000, owing at his death, spent on his estates, particularly his farming improvements. Indeed, Fox conceded that if the Duke had kept spending on agriculture, his principal 'amusement and delight', he would undoubtedly have run into financial difficulties.<sup>147</sup> In certain respects, both Brown and Fox are likely to be right about the Duke's motivation. But as he died at only 36 and left no private papers, Georgiana Russell rightly says he is the most difficult to know of all the later Dukes of Bedford. Therefore, it is impossible to guess his thoughts and understand his ultimate plan.<sup>148</sup>

Nevertheless, it is for his agricultural endeavours that history remembers the Duke, and Brown concedes that on balance, the weight of contemporary evidence points to the impact the Duke and others like him had on agricultural improvement as more significant than historians have acknowledged. Indeed, the Duke was highly respected in the farming world, particularly for his experiments on different breeds and feeding regimes at Woburn. Through this keen interest, he became skilled in livestock production. Weston said he had been informed 'from the best authority' that the Duke 'had less prejudice, and almost as great judgement as any man, in livestock in general'.<sup>149</sup>

This thesis now sheds more light on the fifth Duke, focusing on his actions and mindset as the Club's president and a politician during December 1800. Not only does this provide a fascinating insight into the man, but how he tactfully and respectfully managed the

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<sup>145</sup> Brown, 185-6.

<sup>146</sup> *Eulogium of the Late Duke of Bedford, delivered by Mr Fox, to the House of Commons* (Laurie and Whittle, 1802), Letterpress Broadside.

<sup>147</sup> Brown, 184-5; *Eulogium*.

<sup>148</sup> Georgiana Blakiston, *Woburn and the Russells* (London: Constable, 1980), 149.

<sup>149</sup> T. Weston, 'On the Smithfield Prize Cattle', *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. V (1801), 385.

dissatisfied members, most of whom were well below him socially. Before trying to understand the Duke's frame of mind when he gave his AGM address to Club members, there are two factors to consider: firstly, the problems faced by the country in December 1800 and, secondly, what the Duke's movements were before, during and after the show. This background information will place the Duke's AGM speech in context and help to explain the reasoning behind his plan for the Club going forward. Outlining his movements over this period reveals that he was tired and preoccupied.



Figure 57 <sup>150</sup>

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*The Most Noble Francis Russell, late Duke of Bedford (1802)*

Rob. Laurie after Eckstein

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<sup>150</sup> Rob. Laurie after Eckstein, *The Most Noble Francis Russell, late Duke of Bedford*. The image appears above Fox's speech on the Duke after his death. *Eulogium of the Late Duke of Bedford*.



On 11 November 1800, George III's opening of parliament speech was primarily concerned with the high price of provisions.<sup>151</sup> The war with France was in its eighth year, and after the bad harvest of 1799, 1800 had been a year of unparalleled scarcity, resulting in high prices due to the shortage of grain.<sup>152</sup> The 1800 harvest had done nothing to alleviate the situation. There was considerable alarm over the consequences of this shortage, both in London and throughout the country. In response to the King's speech, Parliament immediately proposed several acts to tackle this scarcity, including restricting grain consumption and encouraging the importation of cereals.<sup>153</sup> One of these measures was how grassland might best be converted to arable and then converted back to grass without causing permanent damage to the land. A Lords Select Committee had instructed the Board to investigate this.<sup>154</sup>

So, it was not only the forthcoming show but the problem of the ongoing grain shortage that was occupying the Duke's mind in December 1800. As a Whig peer, he sat in the House of Lords, and on 1 December, he summoned the Lords to the Upper House for the following day to put forward a motion concerning parochial relief and the current grain shortage. A Select Committee had produced a report for the Committee of the House of Commons on this. The Duke wanted a paragraph inserted about finding suitable substitutes for bread corn for the use and consumption of the parish poor. The following day (2 December), he put his proposal before the Lords.<sup>155</sup> Unlike Fox, the Duke was not a naturally gifted or spontaneous speaker and, although he frequently spoke in the Upper House, his

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<sup>151</sup> John Aikin, *Annals of the reign of King George the Third*, Vol. II (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1820 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), 99.

<sup>152</sup> For more information on the problems the country was facing during 1800 see *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, which contains many articles that pertain to this subject and John G. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young 1741-1820* (American Philosophy Society, 1973), 416.

<sup>153</sup> Aikin, 99.

<sup>154</sup> Lord Carrington, the President of the Board in December 1800, sat on this Lords' committee. The committee referred the issue to him and the Board. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young*, 433.

<sup>155</sup> 'Journal of the Proceedings of the Fifth Session of the Eighteenth Parliament of Great Britain: House of Lords', *The European Magazine and London Review*, Vol. XXXIX (1801), 49, [online facsimile], <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=G7g8AAAAIAAJ>.

speeches were often laboured.<sup>156</sup> He hardly ever presented a bill to the House, saying himself that he was not in the habit of doing this, especially if they had no chance of success.<sup>157</sup> So the Duke must have felt strongly about it to have put forward this motion, and he spoke at length in support of it that day. Lord Grenville informed him he had submitted it too late because the report was already before the Select Committee, telling the Duke he should withdraw it because the Committee might adopt the same system he had suggested. The Duke reluctantly agreed.<sup>158</sup>

The bill passed through the Commons between 11 to 13 December. Although it now had several amendments, nothing had been added about the Duke's bread corn substitutes.<sup>159</sup> As the exhibitors and their stock arrived at the Dolphin Yard on 11 December and judging took place the following day, the Duke would have been unable to follow the bill's progress through the Lower House in person. Doubtless, his close Whig friends in the Commons, including Fox, kept him updated on its progress. By 17 December, the day after the Smithfield show had ended, the bill had reached the Lords for its first reading. The Duke was back in parliament, unhappy that it did not include his paragraph on bread corn substitutes and saying they should not pass it as a matter of course.<sup>160</sup> He was back again the following day on 18 December, still challenging it and making many amendments, which a sub-committee discussed, then rejected every amendment. The Duke then informed those Lords present that he would argue it again the following day when it had its third reading. He expressed the hope that there would not be so many empty seats, saying 'that if he was wrong in his ideas, he might be told in what respect; for on this night his objections had not met with any answer.'

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<sup>156</sup> For a full report of his speech on 2 December 1800 see 'British Parliament, House of Lords', 8 December 1800, *Hampshire Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>157</sup> 'Wednesday's Post, From Lon. Gaz. – Downing Street, December 23', 27 December 1800, *Ipswich Journal*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>158</sup> 'Journal of the Proceedings of the Fifth Session', 49.

<sup>159</sup> The bill had its first reading in the House of Commons on 11 December, its second on 12 December and its third reading on 13 December. 'Journal of the Proceedings of the Fifth Session', 55-6.

<sup>160</sup> 'Poor Relief Bill', 20 December 1800, *Northampton Mercury*, 2, in BNA.

Grenville, who was losing patience with him, told him his request was unparliamentary and that he had consistently answered all the Duke's objections. Grenville ordered the bill to be read for a third time the following day. After yet more words from the Duke, the house adjourned.<sup>161</sup> On both days, the Duke also attended the Board's meeting on converting grassland into arable as a means of producing more grain.<sup>162</sup> On 19 December, he was back in the Lords to support his friend, the Earl of Darnley, on another scarcity issue.<sup>163</sup> The Earl, a keen agriculturalist and Smithfield Club member, proposed forbidding the feeding of oats to horses used for pleasure.<sup>164</sup>

The Duke was back in the Lords the following day (20 December), still vehemently opposing the bill when it came back for its third reading. Even after the bill had passed, he would not let it drop, repeating most of his former arguments. The Duke then asked the House to implement some temporary regulations to the poor-rate. He said, 'the Bill had had, and would have, the effect of materially enhancing the price of those articles of sustenance substituted for Wheaten Bread'.<sup>165</sup> On this day (20 December), Thomas Griffin was committed for trial for stealing several sheep from him.<sup>166</sup> Rustling was a constant headache for livestock owners. As a deterrent stealing livestock could carry the death penalty: the man convicted for stealing a sheep belonging to Edward Platt, one of his Bedfordshire tenants, was

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<sup>161</sup> 'Poor Relief Bill', 23 December 1800, *Kentish Gazette*, 3, in BNA

<sup>162</sup> 'Minutes of the Board of Agriculture', BVI, in Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) papers, MERL, 134-5.

<sup>163</sup> 'House of Lords – Friday', 27 December 1800, *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>164</sup> Darnley would become one of the 50 members of the Duke's new Smithfield Club. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 262.

<sup>165</sup> The voting results were 13 for and 2 against. 'Journal of the Proceedings of the Fifth Session', 50-1.

<sup>166</sup> 'Winchester Saturday, December 20', 22 December 1800, *Hampshire Chronicle*, 4, in BNA.

hanged just three months later.<sup>167</sup> Aware of the hardship the grain scarcity was causing, the Duke may have given Griffin at least a passing thought.<sup>168</sup>

The Duke had been actively involved in new endeavours in Bedfordshire to alleviate the effects of grain shortage and aid the distress of the poor.<sup>169</sup> He had sent Young a report by Nevil Tomlinson for *Annals*. Tomlinson's described how the parish of Kimbolton had hired a mill from the Duke of Manchester. Using this mill had enabled the parish to supply the poor without the intervention of public millers.<sup>170</sup> Tomlinson's report was dated 1 January 1801, so when Young received it from the Duke, he was very aware that just weeks before, both Houses had ignored the Duke's repeated requests to include measures to curb the price of bread corn substitutes. Young dispiritedly added a postscript to Tomlinson's report:

These accounts are very curious, and seem to prove most substantially the absolute necessity of parochial mills and bakehouses. But of what use the publication, while every proposal to ameliorate the condition of the poor generally is treated as vain and theoretical?<sup>171</sup>

The Duke thought finding a bread corn substitute was crucial, and Grenville thought his interventions were 'good and humane'.<sup>172</sup> The thesis argues it was very much on his mind in the lead up to and during the show. He was also heavily involved with the Smithfield Club during December. On 2 December, the same day the Duke put forward his motion in the House of Lords, he also attended a meeting of the Board in the afternoon on the grassland

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<sup>167</sup> William Pepper stole a sheep from Edward Platt, one of the fifth Duke's tenants from Platt's land at Marston Moretaine three months afterwards. Platt was also a member of the Woburn Group. Pepper was executed in April 1801. 'William Pepper', *British Executions*, [website], <http://www.britishecutions.co.uk/execution-content.php?key=5071&termRef=William%20Pepper>, (accessed 7 February 2022).

<sup>168</sup> Griffin was on the calendar for trial on 28 February 1801, but no further information is available. But it is likely he escaped the death penalty, as a record would exist if he had been hanged. 'Winchester, Saturday February 28', *Hampshire Chronicle*, 2 March 1801, 4, in BNA.

<sup>169</sup> On 20 December 1800 in the House of Lords the Duke stated that in various parts of the county of Bedford they had provided substitutes, and they found the poor very willing to accept them. 'From London Gazette', 27 December 1800, *Ipswich Journal*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>170</sup> Nevil Tomlinson, 'Parochial Economy at Kimbolton', Communicated by His Grace the Duke of Bedford, *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 487-95.

<sup>171</sup> Tomlinson, *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 495.

<sup>172</sup> 'Journal of the Proceedings of the Fifth Session', 49.

issue. Remaining at the Board's office in Sackville Street, he then chaired the contentious meeting with the graziers and the butchers over the terms of the Club's schedule. The following day at his home in Arlington Street, the Duke chaired the sub-committee meeting about sourcing judges. Over the next day or so, he likely met up with Somerville to ask his friend to judge and update him on the committee meeting where he had been forced to renege on the decision made at the AGM the year before.

Days later, the Duke was on his way to Bath, where, as the Bath and West Society's newly elected president, he had to oversee its prestigious three-day show, held between 8 and 10 December. How he got to Bath is unknown, but before setting off, he would have considered two factors: the weather and safety. In early December, the roads were likely to have been muddy and rutted, and highwaymen were a threat, especially during the short daylight hours of mid-winter. It was 105 miles and 6 furlongs from London to Bath, and in 1800 147 coaches a week passed through Bath. Of these, John Palmer's mail coach took just 16 hours to make the journey because, as it carried mail, it was exempt from paying any tolls.<sup>173</sup> As Palmer's mail coach also carried passengers and was much faster, the Duke may have used this method; he had used a public coach before.<sup>174</sup> Alternatively, he may have undertaken it on horseback or by his own 'sociable' carriage, which he generally drove himself.<sup>175</sup> The Society's dinner was held on 9 December, the middle night of the show. As Clark rightly points out, society dinners were closely bound up with heavy drinking and toasting, and the Bath and West Society's AGM and dinner would have been no exception.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Catherine Pitt, 'Stand and Deliver', *The Bath Magazine*, July 2019, Issue 202 (2019), 46-7.

<sup>174</sup> [Francis Russell], A young ENGLISH PEER of the highest Rank, just returned from his travels, A *descriptive journey through the interior parts of Germany and France, including Paris: with Interesting and Amusing anecdotes* (G. Kearsley, 1786). The 20-year-old Duke gave a diarised report of his travels, much of which he made by public coach. Throughout the short publication, he provided information on different fellow passengers he travelled with. If the Duke did travel to Bath via Palmer's mail coach, given his status in England, he may well have hired the whole of the inside passenger space and possibly the outside space as well.

<sup>175</sup> The Duke's sociable was an open four-wheeled carriage which Blakiston says he used between Woburn and London. However, it would be unlikely he used this in winter. Blakiston, *Woburn and the Russells*, 165.

<sup>176</sup> Clark, 226-7.

With around 500 members and six large committees, it would have been a long, drawn-out affair.<sup>177</sup> The Duke superintended each stage of the business and the entertainment, which would have involved speeches, elections, presenting the awards, arranging the premiums for the forthcoming year and the obligatory toasts. The Duke was praised for his zeal in filling the chair through all the various elements of the AGM.<sup>178</sup> Without a doubt, a copious amount of alcohol would have been consumed at the dinner. Although there is no record of whether the Duke then returned to London the following morning (10 December), or stayed for the last day of the show, travelling back overnight, either way, he was back in London on 11 December for the start of the Club's show.

The Duke was both the Club's president and an exhibitor, and therefore closely involved with the show for the next six days from 11-16 December. On 11 December, he chaired another Club committee meeting in Sackville Street at 1 pm, where Stone and Honeyborn confronted him with the protest letter.<sup>179</sup> The Duke must have been dismayed, having thought he had averted the threatened boycott by the exhibitors over the carcass inspection. Now he was faced with another group of dissenters who were unhappy that the resolution, agreed upon at the 1799 AGM, had been overturned. Young brought the hotch-potch selection of feeding certificates with him to this meeting and must have informed the Duke that Frost had arrived with the King's oxen but without a certificate.<sup>180</sup>

Having just left him at the meeting, the Duke must have known that Stone had entered New Leicesters. The Duke had also entered two home-bred three-shear New Leicester ewes,

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<sup>177</sup> In 1805 the Bath and West Society had 533 members and several corresponding members. It operated with 6 committees, with an average of 20 committee members on each. These committees and the number of members were, Agriculture and Planting (27); Manufacture and Commerce (24); Mechanics and Useful Arts (24); Correspondence and Enquiry and the Choice of Books (27); Chemical Research (12); Superintendence (8); 'Bath & West Minutes Book 1805', Bath and West Agricultural Society archives, Bath University.

<sup>178</sup> 15 December 1800, *Sherborne Mercury*, 4; 'Bath and West of England Society', 22 December 1800, *Sherborne Mercury*, 3, both in BNA.

<sup>179</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 232-3.

<sup>180</sup> The Club meeting was presumably held in the Board's house in Sackville Street because Young was secretary of the Board at that time. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 232-3.

and after the meeting, he likely went to the Dolphin Yard to see if his bailiff and staff had arrived with them and cast his eye over the competition.<sup>181</sup> Not only was the Duke a committed cattle breeder, but he was also a keen sheep breeder, and in 1798 Ellman said that he sincerely wished the South-Down farmers possessed the Duke's knowledge on sheep and



Figure 58 <sup>182</sup>

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*Uncarting Sheep*  
at the Smithfield Club Show

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cattle.<sup>183</sup> He had won with his sheep the year before, and as a subsidiary member of the Dishley Society, the Duke had established his flock from the very best New Leicester breeders in the Society.<sup>184</sup> The Duke annually let and sold his New Leicester tups at his sheep

<sup>181</sup> A three-shear sheep will be four-years-old and will have been clipped three times, the first when it is in its second year, lambs generally never being shorn in their first year. In listing who were the exhibitors, and what animals they were exhibiting, 'Practicus' noted the Duke had two New Leicester ewes entered. 'Practicus', 'On the Exhibition of Fat Cattle', *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1800), 402; *The Kentish Gazette* noted that these were home-bred. 16 December 1800, *Kentish Gazette*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>182</sup> Anonymous, *Uncarting Sheep*, image taken from 'The Smithfield Cattle Show', *Illustrated London News*, 15 December 1849, 396, in BNA. Although this is a later image, the transporting of sheep fifty years earlier would have been very similar.

<sup>183</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXI, 393-4.

<sup>184</sup> The Duke had won the class for the best sheep fattened on grass and turnips only with his three-shear wether. He was second behind Westcar in the cattle section. *Annals*, Vol. XXXIV, 354. The Duke generally bought his

shearing event, bidding always keen for them. Therefore, he must have been hopeful that he would do well again with them this year. In his capacity as President, he probably wanted to speak with the exhibitors, six of whom he had just learned had signed the protest letter.<sup>185</sup> The Poor Law Bill had its first reading in the Commons that day, and it was surely on his mind. Although only in his mid-thirties, it would be surprising if he was not tired from his trip to Bath, including the two long journeys and the dinner. Then the following morning, one of his judges, hand-picked by himself, took his protest even further, failing to turn up to judge. After judging, the judges complained that because the schedule had been altered, they had no clear instructions to aid them, which had presented them with difficulties placing the animals. Not only that, but the Duke learned the bill he was so concerned about had passed through the Common without an amendment being added about bread corn substitutes. To cap it all, his New Leicesters were beaten by Stone's sheep.<sup>186</sup>

The Duke must have been exasperated with it all. In his endeavour to unite both sides of the Club whilst avoiding any possibility of it happening again, he devised the idea of forming a smaller, more select club. The Duke presented his idea to the committee, and after there were no objections, he announced his plan at the AGM. He chose to do this immediately after dinner, telling them, 'for as business is always unpleasant, the sooner it is over the better'.<sup>187</sup> The Duke began by referring to 'a dissatisfaction among the subscribers'. He said that he had concluded that as the subscribers held 'diversified views and interests' and no matter how hard the committee tried to avoid them, similar problems, such as had occurred this year, would more than likely arise again in the future.<sup>188</sup> Referring to the discontentment

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New Leicester sheep from members of the Dishley Twp Society, of which he was a subsidiary member. For more information on this see Section Three in this chapter.

<sup>185</sup> For the list of names who signed the Protest letter see *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 242.

<sup>186</sup> Stone's New Leicester sheep won the class and John Ellman's Southdowns were second. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 244.

<sup>187</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 254.

<sup>188</sup> *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII (1807), 190.



expressed by the graziers over the conditions in the schedule, he said, ‘the committee felt themselves very much embarrassed...and they deliberated long and anxiously upon the question’ and had full and frank discussions with the butchers and the exhibitors. He said that several of the problems that year were attributable to the infrequency of the committee meetings, the difficulty members faced in attending them, and those who did meet in London were often in a hurry. He concluded, ‘and thus some points have not received that due consideration which might, under a different constitution, have been given.’<sup>189</sup> His solution was the formation of a new club.

Farey reported that ‘his Grace himself formed and digested a plan for the establishment of a permanent club, consisting of fifty members, subscribing one guinea annually, and to be elected, and vacancies filled by ballot; who might meet, discuss and direct its affairs, without the intervention of a committee.’<sup>190</sup> With ‘open meetings’ and no committee, the Duke hoped to remove the threat of any further dissent from the members on the Club's future direction. He concluded by saying that the committee had agreed with his plan, although they all ‘felt great diffidence in constituting ourselves as members of this club’. However, the committee had felt it necessary to keep some continuity between the old and new clubs because otherwise, they felt ‘interminable difficulties would occur’.<sup>191</sup> The committee had earlier decided on a further 22 men they wanted to join them as members of this new club. These included Somerville, Banks, the Earl of Darnley, the Duke of Manchester, several graziers and a couple of butchers, including Giblett.<sup>192</sup> Nineteen further members were proposed, but these exceeded the remaining 14 places, so a secret ballot had to

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<sup>189</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 254-6.

<sup>190</sup> *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 190.

<sup>191</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 257.

<sup>192</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 260-2.

be arranged.<sup>193</sup> Young concluded his minutes with, ‘The proceedings of the committee were confirmed, their resolutions adopted, and the new club constituted’.<sup>194</sup>

The Duke was well-liked among the farming contingent and was a generous host at his annual sheep shearing event. Officiating at the Bath and West Show just four days earlier, the Duke had conducted each stage of the Society’s business and entertainment in his own inimitable manner, which pleased the company, infusing them with ‘ardour’ for the future prosperity of the organisation.<sup>195</sup> Young, too, thought him affable and well respected, saying ‘the firmness of his mind would have kept all in order...’<sup>196</sup> But part of his new plan meant the 50 ‘elite’ new members had to pay their subscriptions again, whilst the majority, now no longer members, would not receive a refund. It must have helped his cause that the Duke gave his speech at the end of the meal after they had all eaten and drunk well. The dinner tickets allowed for a bottle of port or sherry each, but many of them had likely begun drinking much earlier, imbibing in the Three Cups and other hostelries surrounding the show yard throughout the day.<sup>197</sup> When the Duke broke his ‘unpleasant’ news to them, many of them had likely consumed a large amount of alcohol. As the ‘riots’ during theatre productions at venues such as Drury Lane clearly show, Georgians aired their grievances rowdily and vociferously if they were displeased. As Heather McPherson points out, these riots took place against a backdrop of class tensions, where the cultural and political overlapped.<sup>198</sup> Young’s identification of the 144 attendees reveals these men came from different social classes, and when fuelled with

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<sup>193</sup> The results were announced on 30 March 1801. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 50-1.

<sup>194</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 260.

<sup>195</sup> 11 December 1800, *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>196</sup> Arthur Young, ‘Death of the Duke of Bedford’, *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 372.

<sup>197</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 227.

<sup>198</sup> Heather McPherson, ‘Theatrical Riots and Cultural Politics in Eighteenth-Century London,’ *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol. XLIII, No. 3 (2002), 236-52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41467906>, (accessed 27 February 2019).

alcohol, some of them could quickly have become belligerent. It is a testament to the respect they held the Duke in that his plan was ‘cordially embraced’.<sup>199</sup>

It was agreed that the new Smithfield Club would meet twice a year, in March and December.<sup>200</sup> It duly met in March 1801, and its first job was to announce the ballot results to fill the final 14 places.<sup>201</sup> The Duke’s younger brother, Lord John Russell, was one of those elected: this would turn out to be a prophetic choice for the Club’s future wellbeing. However, the Club did not change its name to the Smithfield Club until 1802.<sup>202</sup> In suggesting it became a club rather than a society, the Duke attempted to give it a more inclusive feel. Moreover, the men he and his existing committee wanted to join the new club were in no way elite; instead, they were the men they considered the best to take the infant club forward to pursue its objective.

In analysing these fifty members of the new club, only seven were aristocrats: 14% of the membership. If Sir Joseph Banks and Sir John Saunders Sebright are included, it rises to 18%. Although the Bath and West Society had 33 aristocrats as members, including Prince Frederick, Duke of York, its membership was over 530: the nobility only comprising 6.23% of its members. Conversely, although a far smaller membership, over 64% of the Board’s Official Members were aristocrats and knights of the realm.<sup>203</sup> The Smithfield Club and the Bath and West Society were influential societies at the turn of the nineteenth century. These figures definitively show that most of both clubs’ members did not come from the nobility

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<sup>199</sup> *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII (1807), 190.

<sup>200</sup> Apart from 1807, when the sixth Duke cancelled the Woburn Sheep Shearing, the Club continued to meet at Woburn in June each year, until the last Woburn Sheep Shearing in 1813. After Lord Somerville’s Spring Cattle and Sheep Show became an annual event, the Club moved its March meeting from the Monday before Easter to Somerville’s Show, convening it on the afternoon of the second day, before his dinner. Although it was agreed that the Club would consist of 50 members, including the new committee, plus Wilkes, the original proposer of the Club, they finally settled on 50 members, including Wilkes.

<sup>201</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 50-1.

<sup>202</sup> See footnote 10 of this chapter.

<sup>203</sup> The members of the Board of Agriculture for 1803-1804 consisted of 12 dukes and earls, 8 knights, the Prime Minister, 9 untitled men and 1 clergyman. Board of Agriculture Sub Committee Minutes 1798-1805, SR/RASE/B/VI, RASE, MERL.

and gentry as Ritvo believes.<sup>204</sup> There were 31 gentlemen farmers in the new club, of which 29 were specialist graziers or breeders. A further 7 were landowners, 3 were agriculturalists, and 4 were butchers. The remaining members were a breeder/merchant, a farm bailiff, a scientist, a surgeon, and an agricultural journalist as its secretary. Sixteen of these founding members of the new club (13 from the Woburn Group) were the most active and influential in managing the Club's affairs over the next 13 years.

In theory, the Duke's new constitution was a sound, workable system. With a small membership of fifty, working without a committee, everyone could have a say in the Club's management. Any disagreements could be sorted out well before the event, avoiding the problems that beset the 1800 show. A club running its business without a committee was not unusual then. As Clark points out, the management of clubs and societies was increasingly dominated by a powerful core of officers, with or without committee support. This was particularly important with the likes of public subscription associations, with their widely dispersed membership and infrequent general meetings. Here continuous and effective supervision was necessary, and so strong central direction was at a premium.<sup>205</sup> With the Club's widespread membership and a limited number of meetings each year, the fifth Duke intended to provide this solid direction himself. Young's minutes from the March meeting clearly state that as president, the Duke would decide who would assist him with the show or any other matter that required attention.<sup>206</sup> In future years, both Dukes' keen involvement meant that the show was referred to on occasions as 'His Grace the Duke of Bedford's Christmas Shew of Cattle'.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ritvo, 53.

<sup>205</sup> Clark, 256.

<sup>206</sup> Young reported that at the Club's first meeting it was resolved 'that the President be requested to call to his assistance the stewards and such other members as he shall think proper for carrying into effect the resolutions relative to the exhibition, and such other matters, as shall require attention.' *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 50.

<sup>207</sup> The editor of *The Agricultural Magazine* stated that it should be noted that although it had been profusely advertised and announced by posting handbills for some time as the 'Duke of Bedford's Christmas Shew of

Clark says that this trend towards official dominance and absolutist pretensions of a president was not always popular.<sup>208</sup> However, after the dissatisfaction over the 1800 show, the Club appears to have run relatively smoothly under the new constitution: the sixth Duke regularly dining with the men who attended the Club's management meetings. For instance, in 1804, he ate with the 'regulars' of these meetings four times throughout the show. But from the start of this new constitution, four men attended the Club meetings more frequently than almost anyone else. These men, all New Leicester breeders, were prominent signatories to the protest letter. All four men were Bakewell acolytes and had some affiliation with the close-knit Dishley Tup Society, interested in selective sheep breeding, primarily through in-and-in breeding.<sup>209</sup> Belonging to the Smithfield Club gave these men, and their tup society, a foothold in an organisation that, although not national attracted members from a large area and was reported on widely. They firmly believed the New Leicester superior to any other breed and considered the Club's resolution on carcass evaluation imperative in their endeavour to maintain their breed's superiority, especially as this had begun to be challenged by the Southdown breed. Changing the terms of the schedule annoyed them. As will become apparent, these men were not only strong-minded farmers with a great sense of their self-worth but also businessmen. As well as breeding New Leicester sheep, they also bred Longhorn cattle and lived close to one another in the East Midlands. To have seen the resolution over carcass evaluation overturned through pressure exerted on the Duke and his committee by graziers from the West Midlands and the Home Counties, almost all staunch

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Cattle', it had been started by a number of agriculturalists, including Lord Somerville, not just the Duke. The editor went on to point out that conversely Lord Somerville paid for everything for his Spring Cattle Show, not just patronised it, as had also been announced. No doubt it was Somerville who provided the editor with this information. 'Smithfield Club', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XIII (1805), 431, fn.

<sup>208</sup> Clark, 256.

<sup>209</sup> In-and-in breeding is the repeated mating of closely related animals, such as mother to son, and then daughter to father. For an excellent discussion on in-breeding in sheep during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries see, 'Sheep breeding policy in the eighteenth century: Robert Bakewell, his colleagues and rivals' in Nicholas Russell, *Like engend'ring like: Heredity and animal breeding in early modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 196-215 but particularly 210-13.

advocates of the Hereford breed, would not have pleased them either. Before focusing on why these four men, although annoyed with the Duke and his committee, stayed loyal to the Club, becoming among its most assiduous supporters, it is essential to understand what sort of men they were and what bound them together. Therefore, it is necessary to return to their letter of protest. Only by knowing who signed it can it be fully appreciated why this letter must have been the last straw for the Duke.



**Figure 59**<sup>210</sup>

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***A Fat Long Horned Ox***

George Garrard (1802)

Bred at Dishley Grange and exhibited by Robert Honeyborn  
at the 1799 Smithfield Club Show

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<sup>210</sup> Garrard, *A Fat Long Horned Ox* (1802), 'Long-Horned Cattle' in *Description of the Different Variety of Oxen*,

### 3) Refusing to have the wool pulled over their eyes: The New Leicester Breeders

Although 144 men attended the Club's AGM, only 24 signed the protest letter, mostly sheep breeders from the Midlands or Kent. However, six of the men who signed it were exhibitors at the show that year.<sup>211</sup> As previously pointed out, the Duke was tired and preoccupied when he received it and probably would have liked to ignore it. However, when the Duke saw whose names it contained, he must have realised he had to deal with it. Not only were two signatories committee members, but, along with eight others, they were New Leicester tup breeders. More importantly, almost all these tup breeders were connected to the Dishley Tup Society, a society the Duke also belonged to, albeit as a subsidiary member.<sup>212</sup>

The first name on the protest letter was Wilkes, the keen agricultural improver and wealthy and influential industrialist who impressed some of the most superior agricultural minds at the time and whose idea the Club was. Wilkes' stature within the Club was such that he chaired the only meeting the fifth Duke ever missed.<sup>213</sup> The second and fifth signatories were Stone and Honeyborn. Honeyborn was Bakewell's nephew and his successor at Dishley Grange. These two presented the letter to the Duke at the committee meeting on 11 December.<sup>214</sup> Young records no discord among the men at this meeting, although there clearly was. Stone had entered two New Leicester wethers, which subsequently won, but what bothered men like Stone and Honeyborn was that they learned nothing from winning by visual appraisal alone. They believed that only by evaluating the live animal and its carcass in

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<sup>211</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 242, 234-41.

<sup>212</sup> Rule 34, 'Minutes of Dishley Sheep Society', MS24A, in 'Papers of the Dishley Sheep Society', MS9, 'Manuscripts and Special Collections', Nottingham University Library, (UN MS9/24A), n.p.n. For ease of identification where page numbers are referenced in these footnotes, they are taken from the typed copy of the minutes rather than the hand-written minute notebook. These typed notes accompany the minute notebook.

<sup>213</sup> The meeting was held at the Crown and Anchor on 30 November 1801. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 51.

<sup>214</sup> Young and Bennet, the two show stewards and Wace, a London butcher, were also at this meeting in Sackville Street on 11 December 1801. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 232-3.

conjunction with its dead weight would they gain any meaningful information. Conclusive results, showing higher meat to offal ratio, would elevate the status of their elite sires even higher, thereby increasing demand for them.



Figure 60 <sup>215</sup>

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**Robert Honeyborn's Dishley Tup**  
George Garrard

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Two other prominent New Leicester breeders, who signed the letter, were also well known to the Duke. One was Nathaniel Stubbins, whose signature appears third on the petition, and the other was Richard Astley. Astley had judged with the Duke at the Sussex Agricultural Society's show in 1798.<sup>216</sup> They were closely involved with the Smithfield Club, all five among the 29 men, including the Duke, who met together in December 1798 to form it. A further signatory was Bakewell's friend, Mr Vickers, whom the Duke had met socially. Vickers was a Loughborough surgeon who used his medical skills to find a cure for sheep suffering from the complaint of 'overflowing of the Gall'. The Dishley Society awarded him a

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<sup>215</sup> Garrard, *Dishley Ram*, bred by Robert Honeyborn, drawn to a scale of 1.25 inches to 1 foot, in R.W. Dickson, *Practical Agriculture*, Vol. II (Richard Phillips, 1807), Plate XXVII, opp. 672.

<sup>216</sup> The Duke was one of the three cattle judges, Astley was one of the sheep judges. *Annals*, Vol. XXXI, 390.



silver cup for this achievement.<sup>217</sup> When the Duke stayed with Bakewell at Dishley Grange, Vickers had joined them for dinner.<sup>218</sup>

Watkinson, another exhibitor, had also signed. Farming just north of Leicester, he was a keen New Leicester man. As his detailed feeding certificate revealed, he was a pedantic man. Nevertheless, his complaint to Young the following year about the unfairness of the butchery technique, whereby his butcher had cut his sheep's legs off at its knees and hocks rather than at its feet, clearly shows why these men wrote their letter of protest. What they wanted, and thought had been agreed by the membership, was 'a full and fair examination of the cattle and sheep when they are slaughtering and afterwards weighed, ...' Had this happened, then anomalies such as Watkinson's complaint to Young over whether the legs were included or not in the total slaughter weight would never have arisen. Without this 'full and fair examination,' these men felt the Club had no beneficial use.<sup>219</sup>

On 13 December, the day following the judging, the Duke informed the committee of his radical solution: disband the Club and form a new one. Apart from outlining how the Club would run in future, Young's minutes provide no clue as to how much input the committee may, or may not, have had into the Duke's plan. They resolved to consider it for 48 hours, and those who agreed, and wished to remain as members, would then give their names to either the Duke or Young.<sup>220</sup> All of them must have agreed in principle because they all consented to become members when they met again on 15 December, before the AGM.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 22 October 1791, in Pawson, 159.

<sup>218</sup> B. Smith, whose father took over Dishley Grange after Honeyborn's death said Vickers 'was a constant guest at Bakewell's table'. B. Smith, 'The Leicester Sheep', *The Gardeners' Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette for 1871*, Vol. XXXI, Pt. 2 (1871), 1560, [online facsimile], <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=9I8SGsPI5JAC>, (accessed 8 February 2022).

<sup>219</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 241-2.

<sup>220</sup> The meeting was important and as Young did not list those attending it can be presumed the full contingent of committee members attended. The meeting was held on 13 December 1800 at the Crown and Anchor. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 245-6.

<sup>221</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 247-8.

Young also makes no mention of how much discussion took place over who should join them in this new endeavour. But if the names of the 50 men who made up the restructured Smithfield Club are analysed, it makes interesting reading as far as both factions are concerned.<sup>222</sup> Of ‘the considerable graziers’ who threatened to boycott the show, Westcar and Higgins remained as original committee members, being joined by Grace, although not Edmonds. Nine of those who signed the protest letter were included, almost a fifth of the new membership. Discounting the Duke, who was only a subsidiary member, seven were concerned with the Dishley Society. Also included were several breeders and graziers from Kent and Sussex, but with Ellman at their head, these men were not as radical or insular as the Dishley men.

Of the men associated with the Dishley Society, excluding Wilkes, who died in 1805, Astley, Honeyborn, Stone and Stubbins remained closely involved with the Smithfield Club during the 13 years it operated without a committee.<sup>223</sup> Indeed, apart from Ellman, and the Middlesex gentleman farmer, Robert Byng, these four attended the most meetings. Garrard made individual portraits of three of them, plus another Dishley member, Nicholas Buckley, and he placed all five prominently within *Wobourn Sheepshearing*.

### **The Dishley Tup Society**

The chapter now focuses on these New Leicester breeders and their society. Understanding the organisation’s aims and how it operated will explain why these four men felt they needed to retain a presence at the Club’s management meetings. It also sheds light on a breakdown in relations between Astley and the Dishley Tup Society between 1795 to 1798. Exploring how Astley returned to favour, reveals what an insular and self-opinionated

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<sup>222</sup> The new members are listed in full together with the names of the men proposed for balloting. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 260-2.

<sup>223</sup> The New Leicester breeders Watkinson and Knowles were also involved in the running of the Club, but not to the same extent as these four men.

group these Dishley tup breeders were. That such challenging men were accepted as friends at agricultural events by men far above them socially, such as the Dukes of Bedford, Somerville, and Coke, adds a further layer of understanding to the concept of agricultural friendship.

The Midlands had traditionally been important for sheep breeding, and this was still the case at the end of the eighteenth century. Hiring out of sheep sires was a significant part of the industry. In 1805 John Lawrence estimated over 10,000 men in that area were letting or hiring a tup for £10 for the season.<sup>224</sup> But Bakewell's pioneering work with the New Leicester took this practice of tup letting to a new level. Specialist New Leicester breeders, whose flocks were based on Bakewell's bloodlines, achieved far more than £10 a tup. After deducting expenses, these professional tup breeders could earn hundreds of guineas in hire fees for their tups during one season.<sup>225</sup> For this reason, these men controlled the market for their premium stock. Establishing the Dishley Tup Society enabled them to control the hiring out of members' tups and regulate the sale of their sheep, not only in their area but throughout the whole country. Although Bakewell's pioneering work had made the New Leicester the choice of many breeders at the end of the eighteenth century, its supremacy had begun to be challenged by the Southdown. Therefore, it was essential for these top professional tup breeders to tighten their hold on the New Leicester market.

In 1789 William Marshall listed the 17 principle New Leicester tup breeders, all of whom he considered were 'Bakewell disciples.' He itemised them according to 'the length of time, which each has been in what is termed the 'Dishley blood'.' Stubbins headed this list

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<sup>224</sup> John Lawrence, *A General Treatise on Cattle, the Ox, the Sheep, and the Swine* (H.D. Symonds, 1805), 390-1.

<sup>225</sup> For most breeds, (those that only lamb once a year), the mating season in England starts around early September and continues into February. It is initiated by shortening day lengths at the end of the summer. Although sheep might have a shorter cycle at the beginning and end of the breeding season, they generally remain in oestrus (heat) for around 3 days and cycle every three weeks.

which also included John Stone (Samuel's father), Buckley and Astley.<sup>226</sup> In the same year that Marshall compiled his list Bakewell and 11 of these 'disciples', all predominantly farming in the area between Leicester, Derby and Nottingham, formed the Dishley Tup Society.<sup>227</sup> Although Bakewell is generally credited with the idea of starting the Society, and he played a significant part in it until he died in 1795, he was never part of the Woburn Group, dying two years before the first Woburn Sheep Shearing.<sup>228</sup> But, four members of the Group were regulars within it: Buckley, Honeyborn, Stone and Stubbins. Stubbins appears to have been the Society's secretary, whilst Bakewell's nephew Honeyborn was its treasurer, although not a founder member.<sup>229</sup> Buckley, Stubbins, Stone senior and three other men formed the Dishley Society's first committee.<sup>230</sup> When the Society increased its membership to 16 in 1791, Wilkes was one of the 4 new members.<sup>231</sup> Although 'deep in Dishley blood', Astley was not a Dishley member at the time of the Smithfield Club's second show.

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<sup>226</sup> Nathaniel Stubbins headed the list, followed by Thomas Paget the Society's chairman, John Breedon, John Stone, Nicholas Buckley, and Richard Astley. William Marshall, *The Rural Economy of the Midland Counties*, Vol. I (1790), 385-6.

<sup>227</sup> For a list of original members see the 'Minutes of the Dishley Sheep Society', UN MS9/24A. These papers contain minutes, accounts, and the livestock catalogue from Thomas Paget's sale. 1789 is the date that most agricultural historians accept as the year the Society formally came into existence. The corner of the minutes in the manuscript pertaining to the first meeting of the Society has been torn off, with only the number '13' remaining. See UN MS 9/24A. Bakewell sent a copy of these minutes to George Culley on 18 November 1789, and this dates the meeting as 13 November 1789. However, Bakewell told Culley that for the past 12 months they have been holding meetings to try and get the Society officially started. Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 18 November 1789, in Pawson, 146-9.

<sup>228</sup> Bakewell was president at the Society's meeting on 13 November 1789, but by February 1790, with his legs and rheumatism causing him problems, Thomas Paget appears to have become the Club's president. Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 18 November 1789; 13 February 1790, in Pawson, 146-9, 150-2.

<sup>229</sup> It can be presumed that Stubbins was secretary, and the minute notebook has his name written on it. The Dishley Sheep Society manuscripts were donated to University College Nottingham in 1937 by Miss Sanday. They were handed down from Bakewell to Stubbins and then to Joseph Burgess who took over Holme Pierrepoint after the death of Stubbins (his uncle). After he sold up in 1834. Burgess' brother Robert, who farmed a mile away, must have taken the papers and they were handed by him to William Sanday, a keen New Leicester breeder, who bought Burgess' flock in 1847. Sanday showed Robert Smith these minutes in 1858, and Smith quoted from them in his RASE article. Robert Smith, 'Report on the Exhibition of Live Stock at Chester: Leicesters', *Journal of RASE*, Vol. XIX (London: John Murray, 1858), 378-80; For more information on William Sanday and his Leicester flock descended from Stubbins' flock, see James Donaldson, *British Agriculture* (London: Atchley & Co., 1860), 448-52; For Robert Honeyborn's appointment as treasurer see UN MS9/24A, 1.

<sup>230</sup> UN MS9/24A, 7.

<sup>231</sup> Young states that Wilkes was a member of the Dishley Tup Society during his visit to the Midlands in 1791. *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 565.



Figure 61 <sup>232</sup>

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***New Leicester Rams***

Thomas Fairbairn Wilson (c. 1810)  
Bred from Stubbins and Stone's stock  
Image courtesy of Blackbrook Gallery

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The Club aimed to promote the Dishley bloodlines and control the use of their best tups. They achieved this by operating the Society as a cartel, charging high fees for using their best sires, all bred from 'Dishley blood', and never disclosing their breeding policies.<sup>233</sup> In 1797, the year the fifth Duke hosted the first Woburn Sheep Shearing, the Society allowed him and 57 other men, all spread over a broad demographic, to become subsidiary members. Coke and the third Earl of Egremont were another two from the Group to have this 'honour' bestowed on them. Like the fifth Duke, Coke and the Earl were still breeding New Leicesters

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<sup>232</sup> Thomas Fairbairn Wilson, *New Leicester Rams*, Oil on Canvas, 533 mm x 660 mm (c. 1810), courtesy of Blackbrook Gallery.

<sup>233</sup> Marshall, 383-5.

at that time.<sup>234</sup> Being a subsidiary member meant these men could hire tups from society members, but at not less than 100 guineas. They were also entitled to hire a ‘wether-getter’ at 30 guineas. However, this ‘perk’ was removed if any of these subsidiary members ‘refuse to inform a member of the Society that enquires what business he has done and with whom, he shall not be dealt with at less than one hundred Guineas’.<sup>235</sup> The Duke regularly hired New Leicester tups and bought livestock from members of the Society. He was proud of his purchases and the condition he could present them in and commissioned James Ward to paint the Dishley ewe he bought from John Bennet, the Dishley Society vice-chairman (below).<sup>236</sup>



**Figure 62** <sup>237</sup>

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*6-year old Shorn New Leicester ewe*  
 James Ward (1800)  
 The ewe was presented at the  
 Smithfield Club Show in 1799. Bred by  
 John Bennett and fed by the fifth Duke  
 of Bedford

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Garrard painted the Longhorn heifer Bandy (below), which he purchased from Thomas Paget.

Paget was Bakewell’s close friend and the Society’s first chairman.

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<sup>234</sup> Names of all ‘subsidiary members’ listed under Rule 34, UN MS9/24A.

<sup>235</sup> Using a wether or wedder-getter meant the person hiring the tup was not permitted to keep entire sons from him. Any male lambs produced by a wether-getter had to be wethered (castrated). Rule 34, UN MS9/24A.

<sup>236</sup> Although Dishley Tup Society members predominantly came from around Leicester, Derby and Nottingham, John Bennett, the Society’s first vice president, farmed in Northamptonshire. John Bennett is not the same John Bennet who was show steward for the Smithfield Club in 1800. Bakewell calls Bennett, the New Leicester breeder, a ‘Breeder of Great Spirit and property, and very hearty in the cause’. Pawson, 147.

<sup>237</sup> James Ward, *A Portrait of a Shorn Ewe of the New Liecester* [sic] *Stock*, ‘Fed by his Grace the Duke of Bedford, & produced at the Grand Shew of Cattle in Smithfield on Saturday 14 December 1799’, Hand-coloured Engraving, drawn on a scale of 2.5 inches per foot (c. 1800).



Figure 63<sup>238</sup>

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*A fat Long Horned heifer, called Bandy, fed by the late Duke of Bedford bred,  
by Mr Padget of Ibstock*  
George Garrard (1806)

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Young's visit to the New Leicester breeders in the Midlands in 1791, when Bakewell acted as his guide, illustrates how secretive and hard-nosed 'the Bakewell family' was.<sup>239</sup> The Dishley Society not only let out and sold stock on occasions, but they also purchased top quality animals, such as when Mr Knowles bought stock at the Rollright sale on behalf of the Society.<sup>240</sup> When Bakewell took Young to visit Knowles, Young asked if he could see Brindled Beauty, the highest priced cow Knowles' Dishley consortium had bought from the Rollright sale for £273 earlier that year.<sup>241</sup> But his request was refused: Young reporting that

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<sup>238</sup> Garrard, *A fat Long Horned heifer, called Bandy, Description of the Different Varieties of Oxen*, n.p.n. in Longhorn section.

<sup>239</sup> Young referred to the New Leicester breeders as 'the Bakewell family'. *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 574.

<sup>240</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 574.

<sup>241</sup> The results for Robert Fowler's Rollright Herd sale are listed in full in *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 395-410.

‘Mr. Bakewell, laughingly, told me she was in a coal-pit; by which I was to understand that she was not to be seen, nor any person to know where she is.’<sup>242</sup> Although Young questioned



Figure 64 <sup>243</sup>

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*Brindled Beauty*

John Boulton

Shugborough © National Trust Images

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Bakewell and Knowles, on the propriety of this decision and how much it served their cause, he was still not shown the cow.<sup>244</sup> Young also asked why tup letting in that area induced ‘secrecy, mystery, and what some persons call humbugging’ but occurred nowhere else.<sup>245</sup> Bakewell replied that their conduct, or humbugging if Young preferred to call it that, was

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<sup>242</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 569.

<sup>243</sup> John Boulton, *Brindled Beauty*, Oil on Canvas, 725 mm x 925 mm (c. 1791-92), Staffordshire: National Trust, Shugborough Hall, No. 1010179.

<sup>244</sup> Young did get to see the cow, albeit only an image of her. He saw the painting, *Brindled Beauty*, on his visit to the livestock artist John Boulton. Young visited Boulton to view his paintings just before he left Leicestershire on his return to Suffolk. *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 605.

<sup>245</sup> In this context humbugging can be taken to mean boasting or bragging.



correct because, without high prices, there was ‘not an equal inducement to spirited exertions and unceasing attention.’ Bakewell went on to say that ‘if humbugging raises the price, it gives, at the same time, merit to deserve it.’<sup>246</sup>

Although some of the original rules of the Dishley Society are extant, there is little contemporary information about it because its secrecy rule bound its members.<sup>247</sup> This rule had to be honoured, even after members left the Society.<sup>248</sup> Although it appears never to have had any association with the Freemasons, Bakewell did think the secrecy element meant the Society could ‘be considered in some degree a kind of free Masons Club’.<sup>249</sup> Bakewell and Knowles’ refusal to show Young the cow reveals that the secrecy ruling extended beyond the confines of the Society’s meetings.

One of the most critical areas under the control of the Society, which was stringently adhered to, was the showing of members’ tups for the forthcoming season. The procedure of showing and hiring tups was a complicated business, the Society only allowing its members to showcase their tups to fellow members between 1-8 June. This rule even precluded their pupils or agents from attending these private viewings. From 8 June to 8 July, members were allowed to open their doors to the rest of the farming world, showing off their tups to other

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<sup>246</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 571-2.

<sup>247</sup> This paucity of information about the Club has resulted in almost everything written about it, and its members, being derived from these extant rules. Henry Hall Dixon, (aka The Druid), the ‘Robert Trow-Smith’ of his day, provided a good overview of the Club in his prize essay on New Leicester Sheep in 1868. Henry Hall Dixon, ‘Rise and Progress of the Leicester Breed of Sheep’, XXIV, *Journal of RASE*, Vol. IV, Second Series, Part II (London: John Murray, 1868), 340-58. Unfortunately, much of this is anecdotal, and some of it was contradicted by B. Smith whose father, William Smith, took over Dishley Grange, after Honeyborn’s death in 1816. Mrs Honeyborn handed over to William Smith, manuscripts, bones and several other items that had belonged to Honeyborn who had inherited them from Bakewell in 1795. Smith, 1560.

<sup>248</sup> Members were only allowed to discuss the business carried out at these meetings with fellow members not in attendance. Rule No. 4, UN MS9/24A.

<sup>249</sup> Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 13 February 1790, in Pawson, 150.

breeders who wanted to hire their elite sires for the whole, or just part, of the forthcoming breeding season.<sup>250</sup> Thomas Weaver's painting (below) of Thomas Marris's sheep show in



Figure 65 <sup>251</sup>

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*Thomas Morris' [Marris'] Sheep Show at Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire*

Thomas Weaver (1810)

© Tate Britain

John Richardson is sixth from the left of the door post with his whip resting on the tup's back

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<sup>250</sup> Rule 18 states that the private viewings lasted until 8 June, but Rule 45, which states that no pupil or agent could attend these private shows, contradicts this and states 7 June. Rules 18 & 45, UN MS9/24A.

<sup>251</sup> Thomas Weaver, *Thomas Morris' [Marris'] Sheep Show at Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire*, Oil on Canvas, 1028 mm x 1286 mm (1810), London: Tate Britain, No. T03438, Licenced under [Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND \(3.0 Unported\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/). Bequeathed by Mrs. F. Ambrose Clark through The British Sporting Art Trust, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/weaver-thomas-morriss-sheep-show-at-barton-on-humber-lincolnshire-t03438>, (accessed 2 November 2021).

1810 provides a window onto one of these events.<sup>252</sup> However, had Weaver been allowed to portray one of the Dishley Tup Society's member's shows, it would have depicted a single tup being shown to potential hirers. In 1791 William Marshall said that top Dishley breeders were adopting the policy of never showing their tups together, thereby ensuring no one could compare them.<sup>253</sup>

June was a busy time for the Dishley tup breeders. Not only was it open-house month, but they also attended the sheep shearing events at Woburn and Holkham, drumming up business for their tup-letting enterprises. In a letter to Thomas Weaver, Buckley gives a sense of how busy these men were during this period. He wanted Weaver to paint Blackfoot, a particularly good tup, but he could not fit Weaver in for three weeks because of showing his tups to customers and attending the sheep shearings. He wrote, 'this week we have no beds of any description...and next week the Dukes show I shall not be at Home, the week after Mr Cokes show [I] shall be in Norfolk...'<sup>254</sup> Tup letting shows were an integral part of Buckley's farming business. He followed his father's footsteps in letting tups, with his son and grandson also involved. Weaver's depiction of Marris' sheep show illustrates how popular these shows were. Hospitality, in the form of food and drink, would have been provided. Buckley's letter indicates that he also offered beds: probably for potential customers who had travelled a long distance. As Chapter One discussed, Dishley members' wives, such as Mrs Buckley, played

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<sup>252</sup> Mary E. Richardson's book on her grandfather John Maunsell Richardson, included this painting together with a detailed image from it of Richardson's grandfather, John Richardson with the tup which Mary Richardson stated he had leased for £1,000. Mary E. Richardson, *The Life of a Great Sportsman: John Maunsell Richardson* (Vinton & Co., 1919), op. 76. Despite Marris and Richardson being related through marriage, both part of the four-man syndicate who bought the bull Patriot in 1804, and close neighbours, (Richardson's premises are visible through the door on the left), Richardson apparently still had to pay Marris a colossal fee to acquire his favoured tup. For information on the family relationship see Richardson, 34. For information on the syndicate who bought Patriot and information on Marris' sheep show see Lawrence Trevelyan Weaver, *Painter of Pedigree: Thomas Weaver of Shrewsbury* (Unicorn, 2017), 96, 104-5; The information on the proximity of the two premises is by personal communication with Lawrence Weaver, who worked out the coordinates of the two premises after visiting the site of Marris' farm.

<sup>253</sup> Marshall, 421.

<sup>254</sup> Buckley wanted Weaver to produce three or four copies. These were probably for his best customers. Nicholas Buckley to Thomas Weaver, 9 June 1802, Weaver's letters', in private ownership. (Weaver's letters).

an essential role on the domestic front during private viewings and the open house shows. As a frequent visitor, Mrs Buckley would have known Weaver well, and he had become a family friend.<sup>255</sup>

The tups were not only presented in peak bodily condition at these shows but were also pristinely turned out. Before being shown to potential hirers, tups were washed and coated to keep them clean (see illustration below). After 8 July, the Dishley men closed their



Figure 66<sup>256</sup>

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Detail from *New Leicester Rams* showing a tup with rug on  
Thomas Fairbairn Wilson (c. 1810)  
Image courtesy of Blackbrook Gallery

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doors to the public for two months. During this period, the Society forbade them from showing their tups to anyone. The tups were ‘turned away’ to get them fit for the busy few months ahead of them. Viewing resumed from 8 September until the start of the breeding season for

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<sup>255</sup> There are extant letters from Nicholas Buckley, his son John, and his grandson John to Weaver over many years which are all of a friendly nature. Weaver’s letters; Lawrence Weaver, who has written a comprehensive biography of Thomas Weaver, is of the firm opinion that Weaver and the Buckley family were longstanding friends. Personal Communication with Lawrence Weaver.

<sup>256</sup> Fairbairn Wilson, detail from *New Leicester Rams*. Marshall stated the old tups were very easy to handle, ‘and even appear to take a pleasure in the respect which they have shown them’. Marshall, 421.

any remaining tups not already hired.<sup>257</sup> Before the start of the breeding season (around September), the tups were dispatched to their temporary homes in purpose-built two-wheeled carts, or ‘carriages’, each holding three to four tups. They could be transported 30 miles a day, occasionally travelling as far as 300 miles. The onus and expenditure of getting the tups to and from their temporary homes was the owner's responsibility, and expenses could be quite considerable.<sup>258</sup>

The Society's rules on hiring and letting tups were many and stringent, but its rules relating to its meetings were equally strict. These were held every couple of months in a different Leicestershire coaching inn or tavern.<sup>259</sup> With only around a dozen of them, members were expected to attend every meeting. To encourage attendance, each member who turned up received a guinea. Conversely, if they failed to attend, they were fined a guinea.<sup>260</sup> Fining members for non-attendance was not unusual. The Essex and Suffolk Agricultural Society, with a similar-sized membership which included Young, also penalised non-attendance, but its fine was only 2/6d.<sup>261</sup> However, this was only the amount the Dishley men had to pay for just being late: the amount rising to a guinea depending on how late they were.<sup>262</sup> There was also a fine if anyone left the room during a meeting without asking permission: each quarter of an hour's absence cost them a shilling.<sup>263</sup> Fines were not only monetary; the forfeit if anyone interrupted the secretary or another member while speaking

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<sup>257</sup> Rule 18 lists the dates when the tups could and could not be shown to the public. UN MS9/24A.

<sup>258</sup> For a full report on how the tup letting business operated with the New Leicester Breeders, see Marshall, 415-33. Within this section 382 & 389 specifically deal with transporting the tups.

<sup>259</sup> It is likely they met during the day, conducted their business, and then dined, together which was the usual custom. See Chapter Four for more information on dining. It is unlikely, unless during the summer months, that members met at night. Unlike the Lunar Society which met on nights when it was a full moon, the Dishley Society's meeting dates only occasionally coincide with a full moon.

<sup>260</sup> Rule 10, UN MS9/24A.

<sup>261</sup> ‘Sep. 11 1794’, *Essex and Suffolk Agricultural Society: Minutes and Correspondence 1791-1801*, n.p.n. Facsimile copy of the papers given to *The Friends of Historic Essex* by Sir John Ruggles-Brise, descendent of the society's first chairman, Thomas Ruggles. In private ownership.

<sup>262</sup> Even if a member missed just the start of a meeting, he was fined 2/6d, whilst being an hour late would cost him 5/-, 7/6d if he was delayed by two hours and a guinea for being three hours late: the same forfeit as missing the meeting altogether. Rules 10 & 11, UN MS9/24A.

<sup>263</sup> Rule 12, UN MS9/24A.

was a bottle of wine.<sup>264</sup> Settling these fines and forfeits was done at their AGM, but if a member could not attend and failed to nominate a fellow member in their place, this incurred a not insubstantial five-guinea fine.<sup>265</sup> Many of its members were practising Unitarians, and in 1795, they introduced a rule which forbade anyone letting a tup on Sundays.<sup>266</sup> Whether it was through their influence that the Smithfield Club closed the show yard to the public on Sundays from the second show in 1800 is unknown.<sup>267</sup>

That money was a factor in their motivation for setting up their society is apparent in Young's thoughts on the organisation. He considered its establishment, with its strict rules, was unpopular because it put up prices for hiring tups, saying 'the Tup Club' was condemned 'exactly in proportion to the rise in prices'.<sup>268</sup> A picture starts to form of the New Leicester men as strong-minded, disciplined and business-orientated. They were also very opinionated. The livestock author, Richard Parkinson, derided the New Leicester breed, which he perceived had numerous faults brought about by its breeders: men he disliked. He thought the Leicester men proud and opposed their conduct, stating they 'bred a sheep to please themselves', and that as far as they were concerned, 'No men are judges but us, and we will breed our sheep of such a form as *we* like.'<sup>269</sup> They were staunchly partisan towards the New Leicester, considering it the top breed, dismissing the Southdown and those who promoted it.

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<sup>264</sup> Rule 39, UN MS9/24A.

<sup>265</sup> No Rule No. Decision made at the meeting at the Lion & Lamb Leicester, 18 December 1792, UN MS9/24A, 6.

<sup>266</sup> Honeyborn, Stone and Stubbins were all Unitarians, as was Bakewell. Buckley was not a Unitarian and there is no information on what religion Wilkes was. The Dishley Tup Society members introduced their rule not to let tups on Sunday at their meeting at the Bulls Head, Loughborough on 4 June 1795. Rule 22, UN MS9/24A.

<sup>267</sup> Although the Smithfield Club allowed visitors to view the stock in the Dolphin Yard on Sunday at its first show in 1799, it stopped this practice in 1800. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 229. This was formalised in 1801 after the show stewards signed an agreement with Mr Wootton, the yard owner, not to admit visitors on Sundays. Smithfield Club management meeting on 30 November 1801. *Annals*, XXXVIII, 51-2.

<sup>268</sup> Young, *On the Husbandry of Three Celebrated British Farmers, Messrs. Bakewell, Arbuthnot and Duckett* (1811), 13.

<sup>269</sup> Parkinson, Vol. I, 280.

Figure 67 <sup>270</sup>



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*William Money Hill*  
George Garrard (1805-9)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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An example that illustrates this well is their refusal to subscribe to Weaver's print of *Thomas William Coke and his Southdown Sheep*.<sup>271</sup> Coke had been a staunch supporter of the New Leicester and a subsidiary member of the Dishley Tup Society. However, he had changed his allegiance to the Southdown breed, for whom he was an active and vociferous supporter. The Dishley men were annoyed about Coke's desertion from the New Leicester cause. A letter from William Money Hill, one of Coke's tenants and a member of the Woburn Group, not only supports this but gives a good insight into the mindset of these partisan New Leicester breeders. Money Hill was writing about the subscriptions he was collecting for Weaver's forthcoming print, which the artist was having engraved from his painting. He told Weaver that subscriptions were flooding in locally from Norfolk farmers 'who are eager to have constantly before their eyes a portrait of the Patron of Agriculture engaged in his favourite and hugely meritorious pursuit.' There was no 'grand

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<sup>270</sup> Garrard, *William Money Hill*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>271</sup> An image of Thomas Weaver's painting appears in Chapter Two of this thesis.

secret' in their success in getting subscribers, saying it 'is nothing more than this - the Name of Coke does all.'<sup>272</sup>

He went on to say that John Reeve, another Coke tenant in the Woburn Group, was also collecting subscribers for Weaver, as was Thomas Walton, the sheep expert. Walton had accumulated 20 or more signatures, and Money Hill told Weaver that these would 'balance the Exceptions taken by the Leicester Society men.'<sup>273</sup> It would appear the Dishley men were not 'eager to have constantly before their eyes' the consummate Southdown man, Coke. Neither it would seem were they eager to view Walton, Bakewell's former assistant, whom Weaver depicted alongside Coke, condition scoring Southdown sheep: the nemesis of the New Leicester men!

A letter to *the Agricultural Magazine* for 1805 reveals that the Dishley men were also not enamoured with the Merino breed and its supporters. 'Pastorius' wrote that Somerville had intentionally introduced his Merinos to his estate on the Scottish Borders because it was 'a part of the country enveloped by hills, and *hidden* from the eyes of the followers of Bakewell.' He went on to consider whether Somerville would be able to bring his sheep into Berwickshire and Northumberland and challenge the supremacy of the New Leicesters, many descended from Bakewell's stock. He thought that only time would tell if Somerville's Merinos would be good enough for him 'to face the keen arrows of the followers of the famous breeder of Dishley.'<sup>274</sup>

Shedding light on the New Leicester breeders reveals they had their own agenda about what they expected from the Smithfield Club. Whilst many of its members were happy

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<sup>272</sup> Money Hill's use of large letters for Name and Coke. William Money Hill to Thomas Weaver, 23 January 1808, Weaver's letters.

<sup>273</sup> William Money Hill to Thomas Weaver, Weaver's letters.

<sup>274</sup> 'Pastorius', 'On the Breed of Sheep, and on Tithes: In Answer to Mr. Bartley, 27 December 1804', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 15.



for the Duke to guide the Club in the direction he wanted it to go, the New Leicester members primarily wished to protect their own interests, keeping control of what they saw as a cornered market in tup letting. Integral to this were the results they could obtain through the Smithfield Club's initiative of bringing animals to market more quickly and cheaply. Carcase evaluation was important to them: hence their anger at the schedule change over slaughtering. These were men who controlled their destiny, not being in the habit of having control exerted over them, other than by their society.

### **Dishley Blood: thicker than water?**

Who then were the primary New Leicester protagonists behind the protest letter? Honeyborn, Stone and Stubbins were all friends, and as they lived near one another, they probably travelled down to the shows together on occasions. They were also quite close in age: in 1800, Stubbins was 40, Honeyborn, 38 and Stone, 33. Stubbins farmed on the edge of Nottingham at Holme Pierrepont as a tenant farmer, but he was also the agent for his landlord, Charles Pierrepont.<sup>275</sup> His sheep were particularly renowned, and in 1798 he received the accolade of being appointed Sheriff of Nottinghamshire.<sup>276</sup> As with all the Dishley men, there is little information about Stubbins. Like his mentor Bakewell, he was unmarried and epitomised the farmer-bachelor stock-breeder wedded to his stock.<sup>277</sup> He was the deepest of the men 'in Dishley blood', as Marshall termed it, and probably the most like Bakewell in his mindset.<sup>278</sup> Garrard would have known how important Stubbins was in the sheep breeding world and most likely would have wanted to portray him individually, as he had done with the other Dishley men. As there is no extant portrait of Stubbins and no

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<sup>275</sup> Charles Pierrepont (born Charles Medows) became Earl Manvers in 1806.

<sup>276</sup> 'Sheriffs appointed by his Majesty in Council for the year 1798', *Northampton Mercury*, 10 February 1798, 3, in BNA.

<sup>277</sup> H.G. Robinson, cited in Pawson, 43.

<sup>278</sup> In 1791 Marshall said that Bakewell and at least 'his faithful follower' had adopted the new system of not allowing customers to see more than one tup at a time. The faithful follower is most likely Nathaniel Stubbins. Marshall, Vol. I, 421.

mention of his name in the list of subscribers to the print, Stubbins likely refused to sit for Garrard or buy the print.

**Figure 68** <sup>279</sup>



**Robert Honeyborn**  
George Garrard (1805-9)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Honeyborn tenanted Dishley Grange, having inherited in 1795 the lease and stock from Bakewell, his maternal uncle.<sup>280</sup> He was married, but there were no children. He appears to have arrived at Dishley, working alongside his uncle after Walton left Bakewell's employment.<sup>281</sup> Initially, Honeyborn travelled around the country, almost as a salesman, drumming up business for the Dishley stock.<sup>282</sup> On settling at Dishley, he seems to have taken on responsibility for the arable side for Bakewell, showing a keen interest in Swedish Turnips.<sup>283</sup>

<sup>279</sup> Garrard, *Robert Honeyborn*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>280</sup> Honeyborn's mother Rebecca was one of Bakewell's sisters. See 'Honeyborn, Robert', in Appendix II.

<sup>281</sup> Thomas Walton, having been both a pupil and assistant left Bakewell's employment in early 1786. Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 11 April 1786, in Pawson, 101-3. The first mention of Honeyborn's involvement at Dishley is Bakewell's mention of him as treasurer for the proposed Dishley Tup Society. Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 13 November 1789, in Pawson, 148.

<sup>282</sup> For instance, Bakewell told George Culley he had sent a haunch of mutton to Alderman Curtis, who had shown it to other Aldermen. Honeyborn was in London and he and Alderman Curtis were going to dine on the New Leicester mutton with other Aldermen, the meal accompanied by a few bottles of wine. The aim was that Honeyborn and Alderman Curtis, who was a New Leicester supporter, would dispel any prejudices that diners may have harboured over the flavour and texture of New Leicester mutton. Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 15 December 1791, in Pawson, 162-3. When Arthur Young stayed at Dishley at the end of his Midland tour with Bakewell in August 1791 Honeyborn was well established, Young stated that Bakewell left the arable management of the farm to him. *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 579.

<sup>283</sup> Honeyborn talked to the Smithfield Club on turnip growing at the AGM dinner in 1803. *Annals*, Vol. XLI, 451. William Pitt visited Dishley Grange to observe Honeyborn's turnips and bought seed from him. William Pitt, 'On the Swedish Turnip', *Annals*, Vol. XLII, 103.

Figure 69 <sup>284</sup>



**Samuel Stone**  
George Garrard (1805-9)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Stone, who farmed on the southern outskirts of Leicester, was also married, but he had children. He came from a family of sheep breeders: his great uncle was the renowned sheep breeder, Nathaniel Stone of Goadby, whilst his father, John, and his two brothers, were also notable New Leicester breeders. Outliving Stubbins and Honeyborn, Stone worked as a land agent and valuer when farming was depressed after the Napoleonic Wars ended.<sup>285</sup>

The Introduction discussed how Carolyn Dougherty used prosopography in her investigation into a group of nineteenth-century engineers. It revealed that many of the engineers were related

by blood, marriage, and apprenticeship, allowing Dougherty to better understand their relationship to one another.<sup>286</sup> As the collective biography of the Woburn Group has revealed,

<sup>284</sup> Garrard, *Samuel Stone*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>285</sup> For further information on Stone see 'Stone, Samuel', in Appendix II.

<sup>286</sup> Carolyn Dougherty, 'George Stephenson and Nineteenth Century Engineering Networks', in K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (ed.), *Prosopography Approaches and Applications A Handbook* (Prosopographica et Genealogica, 2007), 555-65.

many of the Dishley men were Unitarians.<sup>287</sup> They, too, were related to one another, both by blood and marriage. Honeyborn was

**Figure 70** <sup>288</sup>



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*Nicholas Buckley*  
George Garrard (1805-9)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Bakewell's nephew, whilst Stone's mother was also a Bakewell. So too was the mother of Robert Burgess of Hugglescote, another leading breeder. His wife was Stubbins' sister.<sup>289</sup> However, Buckley was neither related to this group nor a Unitarian. At 48, he was older than Honeyborn, Stone and Stubbins.<sup>290</sup> Although he turned up regularly at the major farming events, including the Smithfield Show, he rarely attended the Club's management meetings.

In *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, Garrard portrays Stubbins, the consummate New Leicester man, leaning

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<sup>287</sup> For more information on the Dishley members and the Unitarian church see Janet Spavold, 'The Bakewell Family and the Local Unitarian Chapels', *The New Dishley Society*, [website], <https://www.le.ac.uk/elh/newdishley/BakewellsLocalUChapels.pdf>, (accessed 26 February 2019).

<sup>288</sup> Garrard, *Nicholas Buckley*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>289</sup> David Wykes mistakenly considers that Catherine Burgess was Nathaniel Stubbins' daughter. Stubbins never married. She was his sister, and their father was Joseph Stubbins. Beryl Cobbing provides a correct account of Stubbins' immediate family. David L. Wykes, 'Robert Bakewell (1725-1795) of Dishley: farmer and livestock improver', *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. LII, No. 1 (2004), 42-3, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40275903>, (accessed 5 January 2022); Beryl Cobbing, *Holme Pierrepont* (Ashbracken, n.d.), 218.

<sup>290</sup> For more information on Buckley see 'Buckley, Nicholas', in Appendix II.

Figure 71 <sup>291</sup>



over a Southdown tup, feeling its condition with his left hand: no doubt derisively passing judgment.

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**Nathaniel Stubbins**  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810)  
*Stubbins is wearing a blue coat with stick in hand.*

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Figure 72 <sup>292</sup>



To the right of him, standing together, are two more Dishley men, Buckley and Stone. Garrard placed Walton between them, the sheep expert, whom many considered also belonged to this group.<sup>293</sup>

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**Nathaniel Buckley (left), Thomas Walton (centre with hat) and Samuel Stone (right with hat)**  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810)

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<sup>291</sup> Garrard, detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, Proof, Hand-coloured Engraving (1810).

<sup>292</sup> Garrard (1810).

<sup>293</sup> It has been established in Chapter Two that Walton was firstly a pupil of Bakewell and then his assistant and Parkinson clearly thought of him as one of this group. Parkinson, Vol. I, 280.

Figure 73 <sup>294</sup>



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**Richard Astley**  
George Garrard (1805-9)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Richard Astley is the final member of the New Leicester breeders to consider. He became one of the Smithfield Club's most loyal supporters for many years, eventually becoming 'father of the Club'. Astley was married with children. At 53, he was older than Honeyborn, Stone and Stubbins. He was 'better bred' than most of the New Leicester men and his wider family owned estates in Staffordshire, Wiltshire, and Warwickshire. Astley lived at Odstone Hall, which his brother had inherited from a first cousin twice removed.<sup>295</sup> Over the

years, he made extensive renovations to the hall. On about 500 acres, he kept between 700-800 New Leicester sheep, 100 of which were tups for hiring out and 30 Longhorn milking cows. He was instrumental in founding the Berkshire breed of pig, and William Youatt considered he devoted much care to its improvement.<sup>296</sup> He was also much in demand at the

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<sup>294</sup> Garrard, *Richard Astley*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>295</sup> For more details on Astley and the Astley family see 'Astley, Richard' in Appendix II.

<sup>296</sup> William Youatt, 'Berkshire', *The Pig: A Treatise on the Breeds, Management, Feeding, and Medical Treatment, of Swine* (London: Craddock & Co., 1847), 60-1.

highest level as a livestock judge and a frequent visitor to Ireland. With Honeyborn and Stubbins, he regularly exported sheep and cattle there. But although Astley was an excellent stock breeder, he appears to have been a bit of a livestock dealer.<sup>297</sup>

In *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, Garrard portrayed Astley stood alone, hands clasped behind his back, staring thoughtfully into the distance with none of the New Leicester breeders near him. Although he was one of the men Marshall listed as deep in ‘Dishley blood’, he was not a member of the Society in its early years.<sup>298</sup> In 1796 Astley had been blacklisted by it, and members were fined if they dealt with him. However, five years earlier, on Young’s tour of the Midlands, Bakewell had taken him to Odstone to meet Astley and look at this stock.<sup>299</sup> Astley was clearly in favour then as Bakewell let him show Young ‘the knick’ (or ‘cracked-on-the-back’): the prized attribute possessed by the very best New Leicester tups.<sup>300</sup> Astley was also likely to have been among the breeders Bakewell introduced Young to at the Queen’s Head in Ashby de la Zouch, and one of those, his near neighbour, Thomas Paget, invited to his house at Ibstock when Young and Bakewell stayed with him.<sup>301</sup> The following summer, Astley hired a Longhorn bull from Bakewell, so he was still in favour then.<sup>302</sup> However, three years later, Astley had upset the Society to such an extent that in 1795, it ruled that any member who dealt with him would incur a fine of 150

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<sup>297</sup> For more on Astley’s judging and livestock dealing see ‘Astley, Richard’, in Appendix II.

<sup>298</sup> William Pitt thought that Astley had never been a Dishley Society member. Pitt, 38.

<sup>299</sup> Bakewell took Young to Odstone Hall to see Astley in August 1791. *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 566-8.

<sup>300</sup> Marshall called this trait ‘cracked-on-the-back’ whilst Young called it ‘the knick’. It was a conformational trait only found in the very best New Leicester (Dishley) sheep. Marshall said it was a furrow running along the chine, whilst Young thought it was slightly higher up over the shoulders, stopping before it reached the chine. Marshall, Vol I, 398-9; *Annals*, Vol. XVI, 567-8.

<sup>301</sup> Ashby de la Zouch is only 8 miles from Astley’s home at Odstone Hall whilst Paget lived under 3 miles away from Astley. In a letter to Culley, Bakewell referred to Astley as ‘neighbour to Mr. Paget’, Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 13 April 1792, in Pawson, 166.

<sup>302</sup> Hiring the bull from Bakewell cost Astley 152 guineas. The agreement between them specified that if Bakewell wanted to, he could send 10 of his own cows along with the bull for him to serve whilst at Odstone. Bakewell told Culley he was pleased to deal with Astley. Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 13 April 1792, in Pawson, 166.

guineas.<sup>303</sup> Even though it was a severe fine, it does not seem to have deterred some members from conducting business with him because less than a year later, the Society raised its penalty for dealing with him to a massive 200 guineas.<sup>304</sup>

What heinous crime Astley committed against the Society in 1795 to invoke a fine of this magnitude has never been disclosed. But there is a good argument that it was because Astley revealed that he had seen a black tup at Dishley Grange, which may have upset Bakewell and the other Dishley breeders.<sup>305</sup> Certainly Bakewell could be antagonistic, his

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<sup>303</sup> 'That any member hereafter letting a Ram to or taking in Ewes from Mr. Astley of Odstone, shall pay to the society One hundred & fifty Guineas, for every such dealing...' Meeting at Bull's Head, Loughborough, 24 April 1795, 9, UN MS9/24A. Astley was not the only New Leicester breeder to cross them. Dr Hill from Devon was blacklisted in 1795 'on the same footing as Mr. Astley.' But Hill was only fined 25 guineas and he was back in favour the following year, even being elevated to a subsidiary member. Members of the Society were also forbidden to deal with John Dutton, first Earl of Sherborne from Gloucestershire. But there was no fine for dealing with him. Rule 34, n.p.n., UN MS9/24A.

<sup>304</sup> The Society put up the fine for dealing with Astley after Mr Breedon dealt with him in 1795. The following year Astley hired the same tup, called 'Magnum bonum', from him. 28 March 1796, n.p.n., UN MS9/24A; Pitt, 527-58. Page 527 is wrongly numbered and should read 257.

<sup>305</sup> Although there is no conclusive evidence, there is a strong argument that the Dishley Tup Society ostracised Astley after he disclosed that he had seen a black tup at Dishley Grange. Black lambs appearing in flocks using top New Leicester sires, all closely bred to Bakewell's Dishley stock, could have had substantial financial implications for these men, who did not receive payment until lambs were on the ground. Although speculation about Bakewell's black tup has appeared fleetingly in agricultural publications throughout the centuries, there has never been a clear explanation. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the fine imposed against members who dealt with Astley makes it highly probable that the black tup could have been the reason for his ostracism by the Dishley Society. A Black lamb from a white ewe was seen as an impurity, there being a chance that a different breed had been used on the lamb's ancestors. The ancient writer Columella thought a black ram should never be used on a white flock for fear of black wool being produced. The primary reason black wool is less desirable than white is that it cannot easily be dyed. Lawrence also pointed out that black wool was less desirable than white because it was more prone to moth attack. In 1828 Valentine Barford (1786-1864), a New Leicester breeder, who operated a 'closed' flock, using only Bakewell's bloodlines, revealed that Astley had mentioned he had seen a black tup at Dishley Grange many years before. Barford disclosed this in a letter to Revd Henry Berry. As late as the mid-nineteenth century, Barford's New Leicester flock was still comprised exclusively of Bakewell's Dishley blood, the original breeding stock bought from Bakewell by Barford's father. Barford never outcrossed to any other line, continuing to in-breed back to his original Dishley stock. Barford stated his ewes occasionally produced a black lamb, which he never bred from. Barford considered this black trait had come down from the black tup that Bakewell had used in his own flock some years earlier, which Astley told him he had seen there. Barford was a keen Smithfield Club member for much of his adult life and was in his late thirties when he first exhibited at the Club's shows in 1823 and in 1825. Astley was then in his seventies, and 'the Father of the Club'. Pat Stanley, a renowned Longhorn breeder and the latest Bakewell biographer, does not believe Bakewell used the black tup in his New Leicester breeding programme, and that Astley possibly put the story about as a means of getting back at Bakewell after the Society first introduced a fine for any member dealing with him. But it is more likely to have been the other way round, Astley fined for disclosing having seen a black tup at Dishley. It is difficult to believe that Barford's story was not based on fact. Astley and Barford lived in neighbouring counties and apart from both being 'deep in Dishley blood' there was also the Smithfield connection, and so they must have known each other well. Barford would have been keen to learn from the far more experienced older man, and as most of the early Dishley men were no longer alive, Astley may have felt it prudent to warn the keen young breeder of the possibility of black lambs appearing in his flock, based entirely on Dishley blood. Lawrence, 292, 304; William Housman, 'Robert Bakewell', *Journal of RASE*, Vol. V, Third



very public dispute in 1788 with Charles Chaplin supports this assertion.<sup>306</sup> The row was over the relative merits of the New Leicester and Lincolnshire sheep breeds.<sup>307</sup> The dispute involved Coke and Banks as mediators. Although their intervention was unable to bring about a resolution, their contribution does show how closely involved men like Banks, Coke, Somerville, and the fifth Duke were with these breeders and graziers.<sup>308</sup> It also shows how committed top breeders were to maintain and protect their vested interests in their favoured breed, especially if there were financial implications.

There is one page of the Dishley Society's accounts still extant. It records that in 1798 when Stubbins settled his account with the Society, it included a fine of £210 'for the forfeit of dealing with Mr. Astley. October 1797'.<sup>309</sup> The transaction leading to this penalty concerned a particular tup owned by Stubbins that Astley 'had a little set his mind upon'. Stubbins wanted an exorbitant sum from Astley to hire him and, although initially Astley said he walked away from the deal, his bailiff negotiated with Stubbins on his behalf. An arrangement was finally agreed whereby Astley hired the tup for £400 but had to pay upfront, whilst Stubbins sent 50 ewes for mating whilst the tup was at Odstone.<sup>310</sup> This transaction is

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Series (London: John Murray, 1894.), 21-2. Barford's Foscoote flock records, 'Sainsbury Collection' in Special Collections, MERL; Pat Stanley, *Robert Bakewell and the Longhorn Breed of Cattle* (Farming Press, 1995), 33.

<sup>306</sup> As Bakewell was such a major force in the Society, and the timing of the first fine was five months before Bakewell died after a long illness, it may have involved him. Bakewell died on 1 October 1795.

<sup>307</sup> The Chaplins were a wealthy Lincolnshire family. Charles Chaplin (1759-1821) lived at Tathwell, near Louth and was a major agricultural improver and friend of Sir Joseph Banks. Young printed all the acrimonious letters between Bakewell and Chaplin in full. He was obviously delighted to have such controversy to print in the early years of *Annals*, saying that when he first heard about it, 'the news [of the dispute] gave me much satisfaction, because I saw at once, that *whoever lost* by the dispute, the public must inevitably gain'. *Annals*, Vol. X, 560-77.

<sup>308</sup> This 'pretty hot controversy' as Young termed it, drew in Banks and Coke to help settle the dispute; the two protagonists and the two landowners met at Banks' home at Revesby Abbey, Lincolnshire to try and find a resolution. *Annals*, Vol. X, 560; This meeting seems to have had little effect as the acrimonious correspondence between Bakewell and Chaplin continued. Some months later Banks wrote to Bakewell, under the nom de plume of 'the Middlesex Farmer', over the folly of it all. He told Bakewell that he would have received similar advice from 'your friend and Norfolk Farmer [Coke]'. The Middlesex Farmer to Robert Bakewell, November 1788, letter no. 296, H.B. Carter (ed.), *The Sheep and Wool Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks 1781-1820* (The Library Council of New South Wales in association with the British Museum (Natural History), 1979), 167-8.

<sup>309</sup> These accounts reveal that Stubbins was fined for dealing with three black-listed breeders, including Dr Hall for two years running. Rule 34 and 'Nath. Stubbins account with the Dishley Society', UN MS9/24A.

<sup>310</sup> William Pitt quoted Astley's bailiff about Astley's determination to hire the tup. Pitt, 527 [257]-259.

interesting for three reasons; firstly, Astley bid Stubbins to use the tup. Secondly, Stubbins unusually demanded money upfront. Thirdly, as Tomalin did all the negotiations between them, Astley was not on good enough terms with Stubbins to deal with him directly in 1797.<sup>311</sup>

After Bakewell's death, William Marshall thought the New Leicester men were 'playing a high game – running a hard race – for the pride and profit of being leader'.<sup>312</sup> Undoubtedly, Stubbins, the man 'deepest in Dishley blood', was a significant force within the Dishley Society by this stage.<sup>313</sup> Suppose the feud had been between Bakewell and Astley over the latter's revelation of a black tup at Dishley. With Bakewell now dead and no black lambs appearing within the top New Leicester flocks, there is a good argument that Stubbins' dealings with Astley were instrumental in bringing about Astley's reconciliation with the other New Leicester breeders. Indeed, in August 1798, some of the other Dishley members were on better terms with Astley. In his report of the Lewes Agricultural Show, Ellman wrote that attendees included 'Messrs. Ashley [sic], Buckley and Honeyburn [sic], gentlemen well known in Leicestershire, in the breeding line of cattle and sheep'.<sup>314</sup> This would suggest the three of them travelled down to Sussex together.<sup>315</sup> The formation of the Smithfield Club in December 1798 may also have been propitious timing in his further rehabilitation with these men; Astley, Honeyborn, Stone, and Stubbins were in the initial group of 29 members who met up in a tavern to form the Club. Signing the protest letter with them in 1800 may have

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<sup>311</sup> Bidding was just beginning to be used as a method of dealing between the tup breeders. It was normal practice for the hirer to receive their letting fee when lambs were on the ground. Marshall, Vol. I, 379-80, 386.

<sup>312</sup> Marshall, Vol. I, 431.

<sup>313</sup> Marshall, Vol. I, 385-6.

<sup>314</sup> John Ellman, 'Lewes Agricultural Meeting', *Annals*, Vol. XXXI, 389.

<sup>315</sup> Astley and Buckley both judged at this show, but they were only asked to judge on the day, as were the other judges, including the fifth Duke of Bedford. *Annals*, Vol. XXXI, 389-90.

been the final action needed to end Astley's exile with other New Leicester breeders, such as Watkinson.<sup>316</sup>

J D Chambers and Gordon Mingay rightly point out there was a great sense of solidarity among the country gentlemen and larger farmers during this period.<sup>317</sup> There was also a self-opinionated sense of their own worth about some of these men. Bakewell's Northumbrian friend Matthew Culley Jnr's thoughts about Stubbins' sheep illustrates this well. Both Culley and his brother George were New Leicester men and Bakewell 'disciples'. When Culley Jnr was visiting New Leicester breeders in June 1798, he stayed with Stubbins for a couple of days. Whilst there, Culley saw the tup that Astley had paid such a high price to use the autumn before. Culley recorded in his diary that although it had been ill and had a couple of good points, it was 'not a good goer behind, narrow shoulders, too much rump, bad twist, as they all are, head not fine'.<sup>318</sup> Bakewell's letter to George Culley reveals that disparaging remarks about another's stock among New Leicester breeders were hardly surprising. He told Culley that when these breeders formed the Society he was surprised that they had come together quicker than he expected because they held different opinions, had little confidence in each other, and were suspicious that each wanted to promote their private interests.<sup>319</sup> Matthew Culley's thoughts on Stubbins' tup, and the deal that saw Stubbins

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<sup>316</sup> Thereafter Astley attended many Smithfield Club meetings and dinners with Honeyborn, Stone and Stubbins. At the Leicestershire Agricultural Society meeting in 1805, the four of them were elected on to the newly formed Correspondence and Premiums Committee, along with Paget, Watkinson, and Stone's two brothers. In 1808 Astley judged at the Staffordshire Agricultural Society's show with Stone's brother Thomas. Later that year he judged horses and judged the sheep with Buckley and Honeyborn at Ballinasloe for the Farming Society of Ireland. By 1809 it is his name that appears at the top of the New Leicester breeders' announcement in the press that they would open their doors to the public to view their tups on the usual date of 8 June. 'Leicester Agricultural Society', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XIII (1805), 357; 'Staffordshire Agricultural Society' and 'Farming Society of Ireland', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1809), 129, 283-4; 'To Sheep-Breeders', 20 May 1809, *Northampton Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>317</sup> J. D. Chambers & G. E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution: 1750-1880* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1984 edn.), 121.

<sup>318</sup> Anne Orde (ed.), 'Matthew Culley jr: Journal 1798', *Matthew and George Culley: Travel Journals and Letters 1765-1798* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 246.

<sup>319</sup> Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 18 November 1789, in Pawson, 147.

break rank to deal with Astley, thereby incurring a substantial fine, supports Bakewell's view that these top New Leicester breeders promoted their private interests when it suited them.

Figure 74 <sup>320</sup>



John Reeve (left) and Robert Honeyborn  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810)

C S Lewis believed an essential part of a friend's character was this consuming enthusiasm for a shared interest and truth, even if it was only breeding white mice.<sup>321</sup> In this instance, it was the Club's shared objective. Agricultural friendship could embrace men with different views and lifestyles, including this challenging group of Dishley men. Nevertheless, they

were likely to have been good company with a full belly and a drink in their hand; the management group dinners would not have lasted as long otherwise. Certainly, Coke had enjoyed Bakewell's friendship and hospitality, calling Dishley Grange the best inn on the road, and he and George Tollet liked Thomas Walton, a man initiated in Dishley doctrine.<sup>322</sup> In *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, Garrard, a good observer who understood his subjects, portrayed Honeyborn talking with John Reeve, one of Coke's Norfolk tenants, aware that both men shared a keen interest in New Leicesters; an interest that brought them together.

<sup>320</sup> Garrard (1810).

<sup>321</sup> Grunebaum, *Friendship*, 22.

<sup>322</sup> Pawson, 41.

## The Club going forward

After the problems in 1800, the 1801 show was relatively trouble-free, although the voluntary carcass certificates remained a problem, with many exhibitors either not sending them or getting them to Young on time.<sup>323</sup> The problem ceased after 1804 when Somerville appointed himself and Henry King Jnr as Club Inspectors.<sup>324</sup> Although the Club had limited its membership to 50, it allowed non-members to attend its AGM and dinner, and in 1801 184 men attended its AGM, 40 more than the previous year.<sup>325</sup> In what would turn out to be the Duke's last address to them, he told them the Club had made much progress since last year's complaints. He went on to say that by keeping their eye fixed steadily on the objective, they would ultimately attain the information they sought, and he concluded by saying, 'I think we may entertain well-founded hopes of a beneficial advance'.<sup>326</sup> However, he would never see this advance, dying ten weeks later.

Having waited a respectful period after the death of the fifth Duke, the Club asked his brother to be its second president. The sixth Duke had promised his older sibling on his deathbed that he would fulfil all his agricultural obligations, but he was reluctant to accept this position. He firstly asked Coke in person if he would take it on, but after Coke refused, he wrote to Coke, asking him again, telling him he did not have his brother's 'knowledge, experience and judgement' in agriculture to take on the presidency. He concluded by telling him he would offer it to Somerville if Coke again refused.<sup>327</sup> One or other, or possibly both, must have persuaded the young Duke that he should take it on as he finally accepted the

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<sup>323</sup> 'Smithfield Prize Cattle, & Slaughtered', *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 142-8.

<sup>324</sup> It was agreed at the Smithfield Club meeting on 19 June 1804 that Somerville, Winchilsea and Young would look into getting an inspector to attend the killing and weighing of the prize stock. *Annals*, Vol. XLII, 535; Somerville announced at the Smithfield Club meeting on 18 December 1804 that he and Henry King Jnr had accepted the offer to attend the slaughtering of the prize animals. *Annals*, Vol. XLIII, 394.

<sup>325</sup> 'Smithfield Society General Meeting', *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 64-9.

<sup>326</sup> 'Smithfield Society General Meeting', *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 70-7.

<sup>327</sup> John, sixth Duke of Bedford to Thomas William Coke, October 1802, F/TWC2, Holkham.

Club's invitation, presiding over the 1802 annual dinner.<sup>328</sup> Although the sixth Duke was part of the Woburn Group, the men knew he was not as experienced in farming matters as his brother. So the thesis argues that the four New Leicester men became the Club's most regular attendees over the next 13 years to ensure that the young Duke heeded his late brother's words: to keep his eye fixed steadily on their common objective. Unlike other Club stalwarts, such as Ellman, Westcar, and Byng, none of these men judged, exhibited, or stewarded regularly. Yet, they habitually attended its management meetings, especially after the sixth Duke took over as president. They generally dined with him after their meetings. Not being constrained by a committee, their presence ensured that their new president did not renege on resolutions agreed by the members, as his brother had done.

An analysis of the number of times members attended management meetings between 1801 and 1813 supports this argument. Astley attended 39 times, the most of any member. Stubbins 25 times, Stone 20 times and Honeyborn 19 times. The only men who exceeded this were Robert Byng and John Ellman, who attended 27 and 26 meetings, respectively. Ellman and Byng were both show stewards on occasions, which necessitated both attending extra meetings.<sup>329</sup> Discounting these show meetings, the many meetings attended by the Dishley breeders become even more significant. To put their attendance, especially Astley's, into perspective, the two Dukes only attended on 26 occasions between them. During the sixth Duke's absence in Ireland, his brother William Russell made 5 appearances and whilst he was abroad in 1813, his son made 2, but even including these 7 deputy appearances only makes the Dukes' total 33, still some way behind Astley. Westcar also remained an integral supporter of the Club, attending 17 times and stewarding for two years (1803-4), continuing to underpin the show by exhibiting his stock each year. Higgins stayed as a strong presence

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<sup>328</sup> 'Smithfield Cattle and Sheep Society', 14 December 1802, *Morning Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>329</sup> John Ellman was show steward in 1801-1802 and 1815-1816 and Robert Byng in 1807-1808. Bull, 194-5.

within the Club until he died in 1812, whilst Grace and Edmonds continued to exhibit at the annual show. Although invited to join, Grace rarely attended meetings.



Figure 75 <sup>330</sup>

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*To the Society for Improving the breed of FAT CATTLE*

James Gillray (1802)

© The Trustees of the British Museum

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<sup>330</sup> James Gillray, *To the Society for Improving the breed of FAT CATTLE*, Hand-coloured Etching, 360 mm x 258 mm (1802), London: British Museum, No. 1851,0901.1076. Licenced under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>. This caricature of the fifth Duke of Bedford, checking on the condition of his stock before they went to the Smithfield Club Show, was published in January 1802, just weeks before he died

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This chapter has had two objectives: to provide a more comprehensive and reliable account of this episode and explore the relationship major protagonists had with the Duke and each other. After commencing with a short biographical sketch that correctly identified the Club's founder, Joseph Wilkes, it has addressed three specific questions to achieve the chapter's twin objectives. It began by focusing on what caused the discontent that almost led to the Smithfield Club's downfall, exploring the events leading up to, and during, the Club's second show in 1800: a subject overlooked by historians and the Club's biographers. The thesis argued that although a combination of factors led to the 'dissatisfaction among the subscribers', the primary factor that divided the members was carcass evaluation. After the 'very considerable' Midlands graziers threatened to boycott the show if the Club insisted on their judges attending the slaughter, the Duke and his committee backed down and changed the schedule. In doing this, they upset other members, primarily the New Leicester sheep breeders. These men considered carcass evaluation to be of significant importance if the Club was to achieve its objective of rearing and fattening animals more economically and expeditiously than had usually been practised. They considered the Club served little purpose if it was unable to evaluate the carcasses of the prize animals.



The second question addressed was why the Duke decided to restructure the Club radically. The answer was complex, revealing that the problems concerning the show were a major issue for him, but other indirect factors also came into play. The thesis argued that the Duke was exasperated but also mentally and physically exhausted through these unrelated issues. His close involvement as a politician in the grain scarcity problem supports this assertion. Although he was emotionally involved, his inexperience in presenting motions made him ineffectual in his endeavours to make a meaningful contribution to the Poor Law Bill: his addition about bread corn substitutes submitted far too late. He was also heavily involved in other areas. These included the Board, where he was involved in the grassland issue and the Bath and West Society. As the Society's president, he had to undertake two arduous journeys and participate in a heavy schedule in Bath. But although he was guilty of being slow to act over bread corn substitutes, he acted quickly and decisively to save the Club when he saw it fragmenting.

Finally, it has investigated the men at the heart of the dispute and asked how they responded to the Duke's new constitution. The thesis established that the Midlands graziers and the New Leicester sheep breeders made up the opposing factions and concluded that four New Leicester breeders became the Club's most assiduous members over the 13 years it operated without a committee. These were men the Duke dealt with professionally, all affiliated to the Dishley Society. It found these men were an insular group, who closed ranks when there was a challenge to their livelihood of New Leicester tup letting but would break ranks when it suited them financially. It argued that their strong presence at the management meetings ensured that the sixth Duke kept their objective firmly in sight.

In the broader context of this thesis, concerned with better understanding the friendship between agriculturalists, this chapter has focused on the interaction between the livestock enthusiasts. The previous chapter discussed how friendships, underpinned by

respect, developed between individual men of different social statuses, such as between George Tollet and Coke. This chapter revealed that whilst there was a solid agricultural friendship between the Smithfield Club members, this friendship could experience difficulties on occasions: for instance, through events at the Club's second show. It then delved more deeply into the men who wrote the letter of protest to the Duke, exploring the antipathy between Astley and the Dishley men, which shed light on these men's dealings with one another.

This chapter has clearly shown that the Club's egalitarian ethos gave its members the confidence to challenge decisions taken by the Duke, despite his considerable social superiority. The grazier's threatened boycott of the show and the Dishley men's protest letter illustrated this well. Faced with the likelihood of a permanent schism within the Club that emanated from within his committee, the Duke, respecting both points of view expressed by the opposing factions, took quick, decisive action to defuse the situation and remove any likelihood of it occurring again. For the members, the Duke was not only their president but their agricultural leader. Their protest letter to him was neither deferential nor antagonistic; instead, it expressed the hurt they felt, considering that he had let them down over something they thought he believed in. That he saw a way forward to solve the dilemma, unite both sides, and then acted upon it swiftly, gained their approbation, rather than their disapprobation at the AGM, diffusing what could have been an explosive situation. They were prepared to accept the compromise on the slaughter data because the new constitution gave them all a say in the running of the Club; a direct outcome of this was that Somerville and King Jnr became the Club's carcass inspectors.

It has also shown how actively involved men from various social levels were and how easily they interacted with one another. What helped respect flourish between them was that many of these men knew their value to the Duke: Westcar, as his mentor and friend, the New

Leicester men as breeders from whom he purchased stock. This sense of worth allowed them to stand up to him, unafraid to challenge him. They acknowledged the Duke's skill in livestock husbandry, as both a feeder and a breeder, appreciated his keen interest in agricultural science, and enjoyed his generous hospitality at his annual sheep shearing event. But most importantly, they shared the Club's common objective with him, epitomising Lewis's belief that friends absorbed in some common interest work side by side to achieve it.<sup>331</sup> This bond was strong enough to survive the Duke's change of constitution, even the most antagonistic of them accepting his decision, although it financially affected each member. This sense of community was particularly evident in the dinners they shared. The following chapter will argue that the conviviality of these dinners was an essential factor in constructing the agricultural friendship of the Group and allowing it to flourish.

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<sup>331</sup> Grunebaum, *Friendship*, 22.

## Chapter Four

### SOCIALISING TOGETHER AT THE AGRICULTURAL DINNERS

‘The grand theatre for farming news.’<sup>1</sup>

This thesis has established that what united the Woburn Group was a shared interest in progressive farming coupled with a pioneering spirit and a patriotic desire to aid the country during the prolonged French wars. The previous chapters have revealed that this shared interest, particularly in relation to selective sheep breeding and the Smithfield Club, gave a fraternal feel to their dealings with one another: ‘their agricultural friendship’ as The Revd Henry Bate Dudley called it.<sup>2</sup> This chapter is concerned with the social side of their farming meetings. It focuses on the Group's dinners, primarily at the Woburn and Holkham Sheep Shearings, Lord Somerville’s Cattle Shows and the Smithfield Club, between 1797 to 1813. These dinners aimed ‘to strengthen the general bond of union and give opportunity for such a free discussion of agricultural subjects as may prove of general service to the Institution.’<sup>3</sup> They were sociable affairs, with aristocrats and often royalty in attendance. For the sociologist Claude Grignon, formal and hierarchical dinners such as these were commensal and not convivial, commensal being the practice of eating at the same table, convivial the sociable interaction that ensues when close friends dine together.<sup>4</sup> But this chapter disagrees and argues that at the turn of the nineteenth century, although prestigious and ceremonial, these dinners were both commensal and convivial. Camaraderie was

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<sup>1</sup> This quote was made about Lord Somerville’s dinner in 1806. *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XIV (1806), 148.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Bate Dudley to Colonel McMahon, 9 June 1812, letter 114, A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Letters of King George IV 1812-1830*, Vol. I (Cambridge University Press, 1938), 112-13.

<sup>3</sup> This statement was made to support the motion to hold an annual dinner at the meeting of the Bath Society in December 1785. Kenneth Hudson, *The Bath & West: A Bicentenary History* (Moonraker Press, 1796), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Claude Grignon, ‘Commensality and social morphology : an essay of typology’, in P. Scholliers (ed.), *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 23–33, cited in Claude Fischler, ‘Commensality, society and culture’, in *Social Science Information*, 50, No. 3-4 (2011), 535, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018411413963>, (accessed 18 December 2021).

encouraged, so ‘there prevailed through the hall that entire fellowship which ought to subsist among men engaged in honorable emulation.’<sup>5</sup>

The chapter supports this argument by investigating policies adopted by landowners to make their dinners convivial. It reveals how various factors, sometimes working independently but often interactively, were necessary to achieve this. But this thesis further argues that although sometimes formal and hierarchical, these dinners were not only commensal and convivial but also fraternal: this sense of brotherhood in no small part down to the action of the agriculturalists themselves. Not only was there sociable interaction between this eclectic group as they chatted among themselves, but, as the chapter reveals, they also participated in the meals in a way that other diners were not able to do. The thesis explores the various ways in which these agriculturalists bonded at these dinners.

The chapter begins by placing the Woburn Group, and the Smithfield Club in particular, within the context of the associational world of George III, exploring the fraternal nature of clubs and societies during this period. It then turns its attention to commensality and conviviality and Grignon’s claim that they cannot exist together. The chapter then subdivides into five sections to explore how farming hosts actively sought to make their dinners convivial and encouraged their guests’ participation to provide a fraternal feel to these occasions. The first explores the arrangements concerned with hosting these dinners. It argues that these were designed to ensure the men had an enjoyable time. The second focuses on the actual dinners themselves, exploring how eating meat together bonded them, whilst drinking created camaraderie. The third turns its attention to the main business of the dinner: the presentation of awards, speeches, and toasts. The fourth is concerned with gambling, a central component of any farming dinner. As William Hutton observed, ‘the itch for gaming is

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Lord Somerville’s dinner’, *The Agricultural Magazine for 1805*, Vol. XII (1805), 215.

predominant in every rank’, and the agriculturalists were no exception.<sup>6</sup> The fifth explores the role subscriptions and donations played in bonding the Group. The chapter concludes with a discussion about why these great farming meetings and their prestigious dinners ended, and the Group came to an end.

## **Commensality and conviviality in a fraternal world**

In 1808 John Christian Curwen told the members of the Workington Agricultural Society that each year strengthened the bonds between them and ‘enlarged the sphere of our union.’<sup>7</sup> As Chapter One discussed, Curwen and his wife Isabella made sure these dinners and the entertainment that followed them were always great social occasions. The central theme of this chapter looks more closely at the agricultural dinners attended by the Woburn Group. It argues that these were arranged to ensure they were both convivial and fraternal. This sense of fraternity among a group of men who dined together was certainly not a new phenomenon. Gervase Rosser states that there were probably about 30,000 guilds in fifteenth-century England. These held fraternity masses in their guild chapels, followed by a communal feast.<sup>8</sup> By the reign of George III, religious feast days and other public events were not the only occasions groups of men dined together. As Peter Clark says, this was a time of mass social activity with clubs and societies established for almost every interest. He estimates that in 1800 one in three English townspeople probably belonged to a society.<sup>9</sup> Although primarily

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<sup>6</sup> William Hutton cited in Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800* (Oxford University Press, 2011 rep.), 228.

<sup>7</sup> In his president’s address in 1808, during which he spoke these words, Curwen also informed the members of the Workington Agricultural Society that with almost 600 members they were now the biggest agricultural society in Great Britain. [John Christian Curwen], ‘The President’s Report’, *The Rules and Proceedings of the Anniversary of the Workington Agricultural Society and the Reports to that Society by its President* (1808), 33-4.

<sup>8</sup> Gervase Rosser, ‘Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England’, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4 (1994), 430-1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/176054>, (accessed 13 March 2022).

<sup>9</sup> Clark stresses that it is very difficult to assess the number of men in towns who attended clubs but considers one in three to be realistic. He goes on to say that this figure would have dropped considerably in the country and in Scotland. Clark, 1-2, 431.

secular, these organisations borrowed ideas and practices from medieval fraternities and trade guilds, including eating and drinking together.<sup>10</sup> As Clark points out, Joseph Addison never spoke a truer word than when he said, ‘our modern celebrated clubs are founded upon eating and drinking’.<sup>11</sup> Clark calls this period a male-dominated associational world because although there were a handful of female-only clubs, they were a comparatively small minority.<sup>12</sup> At male-only meetings, there were no opportunities for competing interests, such as women, to disrupt the brotherhood that clubs engendered.

Mary Ann Clawson, who argues that fraternalism should be viewed as a cultural form, points out that fraternity could cross boundaries, uniting men from a broad social, economic, or religious spectrum.<sup>13</sup> This concept relates directly to one of the central issues that this thesis addresses; that fraternity existed among the Woburn Group, many of whom were integral to the Smithfield Club. But in discussing fraternity, it is crucial to differentiate between ‘a fraternity’ and ‘fraternity’. As Elwyn Brooks White points out, they are antithetical to one another: the first predicated on the notion of exclusion, the second on a feeling of total equality.<sup>14</sup> An excellent example of ‘a fraternity’ would be the Masonic Order which operates a policy of exclusion. Although entry into a Masonic Lodge requires physical repudiation of distinctions of rank and class, suggestive of an even playing field, it is an organisation that incorporates rituals and operates under an oath of secrecy. Still, Clawson considers these principles of ritual and exclusion gives the order what she calls ‘its fraternal character’ and derives much of its power from them.<sup>15</sup> This fraternal character was evident at the turn of the

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<sup>10</sup> Clark, 470.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Account of Various Clubs’, No. 9, Saturday March 10 1710-11, *The Works of Joseph Addison in Three Volumes embracing the whole of The Spectator*, Vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1842), 30, cited in Clark, 227.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender and Fraternalism* (Princeton Legacy Library, 1989), 11-13.

<sup>14</sup> E.B. White, *Great Thoughts Treasury: A database of quotes*, [website], <https://greatthoughtstreasury.com/author/e.-b.-white-fully-elwyn-brooks-white>, (accessed 21 August 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood*, 11.

nineteenth century, and both R J Morris and Clark agree that the Masonic Order, at that time, was underpinned by a need for improvement and enlightenment, with many lodges admitting members from the artisanal ranks. These lodges insisted on tolerance and the exclusion of contention, stressing merit as the measure of men, education, and the joys of fraternal association.<sup>16</sup> George Tollet thought this fraternal association within the Masonic Order was also evident among agriculturalists. He told Thomas William Coke, ‘like freemasonry, we are all brethren.’<sup>17</sup> However, Tollet, like most of the Woburn Group, was not a Freemason. They were never a fraternity as the Masonic Order was and still is.<sup>18</sup> Although Somerville and then the Smithfield Club from 1806 held meetings and dined in the Freemasons’ Tavern in London, this appears to have been the only link between the agriculturalists and Freemasonry.<sup>19</sup> There are three reasons to support this. Firstly, neither Somerville nor the Smithfield Club’s first two presidents, the fifth and sixth Dukes of Bedford, belonged to the Masonic Order, whilst Coke only became a member in his later years.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, the Freemasons’ Tavern was a large and popular meeting venue used by many organisations, clubs and societies with no masonic links. Thirdly, there appears to be no evidence of any

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<sup>16</sup> R.J. Morris, ‘Clubs, societies and associations’, F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950: Social Agencies and Institutions*, Vol. III (Cambridge University Press, 1993 edn.), 401; Clark, 336.

<sup>17</sup> George Tollet to Thomas William Coke, 1 May 1805, F/TWC 2, Holkham Archives (F/TWC 2, Holkham).

<sup>18</sup> Only a handful of the Woburn Group were Freemasons.

<sup>19</sup> Somerville first used the spacious facilities of the Freemasons’ Tavern in Great Queen Street, London to host his London Cattle Show dinner in 1803, the Smithfield Club moved there from the Crown and Anchor Tavern in 1806.

<sup>20</sup> Why Francis Russell, Marquess of Tavistock (1739-1767), and his three sons, the fifth and sixth Dukes of Bedford and Lord William Russell, were never Freemasons is puzzling, especially as John Russell, fourth Duke of Bedford, Tavistock’s father, and the boys’ grandfather, was a keen mason. Tavistock was 28 when he died, and married to a pregnant wife he adored, with two young sons under six, it is possible he may have become a mason when time permitted. His eldest son, the fifth Duke, possibly in memory of his grandfather, did allow the Freemasons in Tavistock to hold their inaugural meeting at Bedford House, Tavistock. Although the lodge never met at Bedford House again until 1849, in honour of that first meeting the lodge adopted the name of Bedford Lodge, still its name today. The fifth Duke was very friendly with Charles James Fox, and George, Prince of Wales, who were both Freemasons, therefore it is surprising that the Duke did not join the organisation, as his two friends and other companions had done. His younger brother, the sixth Duke, was also never a Freemason, although he too was a good friend of Fox. Thomas William Coke was not a Freemason when George Tollet wrote to him in 1805 but was installed as Provincial Grand Master in Norwich on 23 August 1819. Susanna Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk (1754-1842): A Biography* (The Boydell Press, 2010 rep.), 179.



rituals or ceremonies involved with the membership of agricultural organisations or at farming meetings, such as at Woburn and Holkham.

As the previous chapter has established, commercial concerns drove the different factions within the Smithfield Club to support the Club's shared objective, making it more akin to a guild than a club. Although guilds, such as the Worshipful Company of Butchers, like the Freemasons, included a secrecy element within their constitution, the Smithfield Club did not. Arthur Young reproduced the full minutes in *Annals of Agriculture (Annals)* whilst John Farey précised them for the agricultural press.<sup>21</sup> After the 1800 constitutional change, the Club never operated any exclusion policy, as fraternities and guilds did. Whilst guilds generally restricted membership to men working in specific trades, the membership list of the Smithfield Club clearly shows it embraced men from different sectors of the livestock industry.<sup>22</sup> For most guilds, formal processions and religious services were important events within their calendar, but the Smithfield club members never carried out either practice. So, although underpinned by commercial interests, the Club did not fully conform to the practices of a fraternity. It was undoubtedly fraternal, though, particularly within its social activities.

Over 80% of the Woburn Group belonged to the Smithfield Club and most attended its annual show and dinner. They also participated in various other farming-related meetings and shows throughout the year, organised by individuals and associations, all of which included at least one dinner. The men dined together each day at the more significant events, such as Woburn and Holkham. Set in opulent surroundings with aristocracy and often royalty, these dinners were more formal and hierarchical than those organised by smaller agricultural societies, whose dinners were generally held in taverns and coaching inns. For

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<sup>21</sup> For instance, see *Annals of Agriculture (Annals)*, from 1798 to 1805 for Young's minutes and *The Farmers Magazine*, Vol. VIII (Edinburgh, 1807) for Farey's synopsis of the meetings.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter Three for a more detailed discussion on the various men who belonged to the Smithfield Club.

the sociologist Grignon, commensal events such as at Woburn and Holkham would be suggestive of formal affairs that expressed hierarchy and dependence, which could result in social exclusion for those not part of commensal circles.<sup>23</sup> But it is argued that even when these dinners were grander and more ceremonial, they were still convivial, giving an air of camaraderie to the proceedings, allowing the men to converse and socialise together. This friendly interaction is what pleased Arthur Young. Commenting on the 1800 Woburn Sheep Shearing, he wrote how pleased he was to see so many great lords, farmers, and breeders, all enthused with the spirit of agricultural improvement, eat together, and discuss favourite topics such as ploughs. He hoped it would long continue.<sup>24</sup>

For this thesis to support this argument and back up Young's statement, it is necessary to define commensality and conviviality and understand their relationship. Commensality is the practice of eating together. Derived from *mensa*, it literally means eating at the same table. Naomi Leite has said that eating together and sharing food are powerful means to express and solidify mutual trust, intimacy, and kinship.<sup>25</sup> However, commensality can also create segregation and social division: how we eat and whom we eat with being symbolic of the way society divides itself through class, kinship, age, or occupation.<sup>26</sup> Grignon, who has created a typology of different types of commensality, including differentiating between everyday and exceptional types of commensality, argues that commensality cannot be equated with conviviality as it can be an expression of hierarchy and dependence.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it should not be confused with the euphoric ideals associated with convivial

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<sup>23</sup> Grignon cited in Fischler, 528.

<sup>24</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXV, 256.

<sup>25</sup> Naomi Leite, *Unorthodox Kin: Portuguese Marranos and the Global Search for Belonging* (University of California Press, 2017), 243.

<sup>26</sup> S. Kerner, C. Chou and M. Warmind, *Commensality: From Everyday Food to Feast* (USA: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), cited in Surinder Phull, Wendy Wills and Angela Dickinson, 'Is it a Pleasure to Eat Together? Theoretical Reflections on Conviviality in the Mediterranean Diet,' *Sociology Compass* 9/11 (2015), 979, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12307>, (accessed 18 December 2021).

<sup>27</sup> Grignon cited in Fischler, 535.

dining, which evokes images of a family meal or close friends' coming together.<sup>28</sup> As Fischler says, meals at the more formal end of the gradient can be manifestations of 'symmetrical reciprocity', where something is expected in return. Therefore, commensality cannot be equated with conviviality since it is, 'in its more formal manifestations, an expression of hierarchy and dependence.'<sup>29</sup>

Conviviality is often defined as 'the pleasure of eating together'. Although the concept of eating and dining together has received some scholarly research, particularly in respect to fraternity feasts, there is a lack of literature exploring the idea of conviviality. Jeanne Watson refers to interaction in a social setting as sociability or sociable interaction, but for Grignon, this can only occur among friends who are not at a formal gathering.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, whether a meal is convivial or not must be directly dependent on who eats together and whether there is sociable interaction between them. M Simmel defines an idealistic model of sociable interaction as a democratic, playful association whereby an individual's pleasure is reliant on the joy of others.<sup>31</sup> Whilst Surinder Phull, Wendy Wills and Angela Dickinson consider that for meals to be sociable or friendly, those present must be motivated by a collective desire for amicability and cordiality.

In other words, for a meal to be convivial, a group needs to 'play by the rules' of sociable interaction to construct a pleasant eating event. It is in this way that conviviality may differ from commensality, which in its more formal manifestations exhibits a form of hierarchy and dependence.<sup>32</sup>

It will become apparent that the Woburn Group, be they aristocrat, grazier, tenant farmer or tradesman, were motivated by a collective desire for amicability and cordiality, just as Phull

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<sup>28</sup> Grignon, cited in Phull, et al., 978.

<sup>29</sup> Fischler, 11; Grignon cited in Fischler, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Jeanne Watson, 'A Formal Analysis of Sociable Interaction' in *Sociometry*, Vol. XXI, No. 4 (1958), 272, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2785791>, (accessed 18 August 2019).

<sup>31</sup> M. Symons, 'Simmel's Gastronomic Sociology: An Overlooked Essay.' *Food and Foodways* 5(4) (1994), 333–51, cited in Phull et al., 979.

<sup>32</sup> Phull et al., 979.

et al. suggest groups of friends could be, making even the most formal of their dinners not only convivial but also fraternal affairs.

### **1. The dinner arrangements**

One of the first items discussed at the inaugural meeting of the Smithfield Club in 1798 was to arrange to hold a dinner for the committee and members.<sup>33</sup> This section explores how the Smithfield Club and other hosts of agricultural meetings planned and organised their dinners to create conviviality, aiding sociable interaction among the diners. The first point to consider was the timing of the dinner. It was important to schedule it to attract the largest number of attendees. So, at smaller farming events, dinner would follow the day's activities, which was Somerville's policy, hosting his dinner on the last night of his two-day show. If a meeting lasted more than two days, such as the Smithfield Club (four days) and the Bath and West Society (three days), then the annual dinner was held on a penultimate night because some men would start their journey home immediately after the show ended.<sup>34</sup> There were two daily meals at the Woburn Sheep Shearing: a public breakfast at 9 am, followed by a more formal dinner at 3 pm. The dinner lasted for three hours, after which the men returned to Park Farm for the tup letting and sale of livestock.<sup>35</sup> The fifth and sixth Duke would have hoped that three hours of drinking had loosened the men's wallets sufficiently. Coke also implemented this policy at the Holkham shearings. Auctions too adopted this tactic of plying bidders with copious amounts of drink, scheduling the dinner before the start of the sale. At both Woburn and Holkham, catering was in-house, as it was for the sheep shows organised by the Dishley tup men.<sup>36</sup> However, this was not always possible. For instance, at the last sale

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<sup>33</sup> This dinner was to be held on the Friday before the great Christmas Smithfield Market. 'Smithfield Cattle and Sheep Society', *Annals*, Vol. XXXII, 210.

<sup>34</sup> Although the Woburn Sheep Shearing, the Holkham Sheep Shearing and the Smithfield Club show had all begun as five-day events they cut these back to four days at different dates during the first decade of the nineteenth century.

<sup>35</sup> There are many reports in the Agricultural press (1797-1813) on the Woburn Sheep Shearings and the dinners.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Buckley's letter to Thomas Weaver suggests catering for the guests at the tup shows was done in house. Lawrence Trevelyan Weaver, *Painter of Pedigree: Thomas Weaver of Shrewsbury* (Unicorn, 2017), 59.

of the King's Merinos in Kew, the Blue Anchor public house provided the food. A marquee was erected close to the sale site, and inside tables were laden with a selection of cold food and drink. Amongst the fare was ham, veal and sandwiches and Porter, brown ale, and cider were freely available, doubtless to encourage bidding.<sup>37</sup>

These dinners were important social events in the calendar of agricultural improvers, so specific men were designated to oversee them at club level. The two Smithfield Club show stewards organised the livestock show, ran the show yard, made sure judging went smoothly and organised the Club's annual dinner, including booking and liaising with the venue.<sup>38</sup>

What made the yearly trip to the sheep shearings worthwhile and enjoyable was not only the range of farming-related activities laid on during the week but the chance for the men to get together at the dinners each day. The *Northampton Mercury* pointed out that the Woburn Sheep Shearing was where the amateur and practical farmer found instruction and entertainment.<sup>39</sup> As will emerge, conversing with their peers was undoubtedly an important factor, but it was also essential that these men were entertained, preferably in style.

Both Holkham Hall and Woburn Abbey sit within majestic settings. Their great halls, where the men ate, are opulent and 'magnificent' in the Aristotelian sense of the word. The *Norfolk Chronicle* referred to the Holkham attendees as 'These Patrons and Amateurs of Georgick employment', and many of them would have been familiar with the classical authors.<sup>40</sup> They would have been introduced to Virgil's *Georgics* at school, taught the importance of the twelve Aristotelian virtues, and so aware of Aristotle's concept of magnificence.<sup>41</sup> Many were probably familiar with William Rosco's well-received historical

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<sup>37</sup> 2 August 1810, *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 6-7, in The British Newspaper Archive (BNA).

<sup>38</sup> See Minutes of the Smithfield Club for the years between 1798 and 1813. 'Minutes Books I & II', Minutes of the Smithfield Club, held at the Museum of English Rural Life; University of Reading, (Smithfield, MERL).

<sup>39</sup> 'Agricultural News – Sheep-Shearing', 13 June 1801, *Northampton Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>40</sup> 'Holkham Sheep Shearing', 28 June 1806, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle's 12 virtues are: Courage, Temperance, Liberality, Magnificence, Magnanimity, Ambition, Patience, Friendliness, Truthfulness, Wit, Modesty, Justice. For an understanding of the concept of magnificence and how

book, *Life of Lorenzo de Medici, called the Magnificent*, the first of its many editions published in 1795.<sup>42</sup> Lorenzo (1449-1492) earned his title of ‘the Magnificent’ because he demonstrated Aristotle’s concept of magnificence in his unparalleled contribution to Florence’s artistic renaissance and his patronage of artists and musicians.

Chapter One has discussed the importance of liberality to the Whigs. Aristotle considered magnificence and liberality were linked, but they differed in one crucial aspect. For him, magnificence was explicitly associated with expenditure that demanded largeness of scale. To Aristotle, a magnificent man was like an artist because he knew precisely what was fitting and tasteful, but, importantly, he knew that to achieve it, he had to spend large sums of money. Aristotle thought he did this gladly because the result was worth the expense. Furthermore, he considered magnificence was an honourable expenditure and connected with public-spirited ambition.<sup>43</sup> Lorenzo exemplifies both traits in his extensive patronage of artists and sculptors and the commissioning of many significant Florentine buildings and churches, including updating the Medici library, which was open to the public. Chapter One revealed how important public-spirited ambition was to great Whig landowners, particularly Foxites such as the Dukes of Bedford and Coke, as it underpinned their desire to aid their country during a period of war. Although not of the same social standing as some of his fellow agrarian Whigs, Curwen’s inscription on each of the agricultural trophies he presented

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Aristotle perceived it working see Lesley Brown (ed.), Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. David Ross, Book IV.2 (Oxford University Press, 2009 edn.), 65-7.

<sup>42</sup> William Rosco was the son of a market gardener. Through self-improvement, he became a banker, lawyer and MP and is remembered for his work as an abolitionist. He was also a successful historian and art collector, writing books on the Renaissance. He bought an estate near Liverpool and became a keen agriculturalist. During the second decade of the nineteenth century, his friends within the Group included George Tollet and Thomas William Coke. He catalogued the library at Holkham Hall for Coke and presented him with a large paper copy of his *Life of Leo X* inscribed with a sonnet to Coke. (Pope Leo X was Lorenzo Medici’s son). William Rosco, *Life of Lorenzo de Medici, called the Magnificent* (Liverpool, 1795).

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle, 65-7.

at the Workington Agricultural Society's show epitomises this concept. Each reads: 'The Prosperity and Security of Great Britain.'<sup>44</sup>

Figure 76



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Trophy presented by John Christian Curwen at the Workington Society's Annual Show in 1811  
The inscription is clearly visible around the tree.

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Events like the sheep shearings at Woburn and Holkham made manifest this public-spirited endeavour. Men like the Dukes and Coke not only displayed magnificence through expending large amounts of money to host these meetings, it was also apparent throughout their estates, from their stately homes with their significant art collections to the construction of their model farms. The dinners these men laid on were no less magnificent in that they were sumptuous affairs, with no expense spared, and so exemplified Aristotle's concept of magnificence.

The Dukes of Bedford hosted their shearing dinners in the old hall in the east wing of the abbey,

whilst Coke entertained his dinner guests in his statue gallery, where 2 long tables seated 200 diners. In later years, as numbers increased at Holkham, tables were also laid in accompanying rooms to accommodate Coke's extra guests.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Curwen hosted the Workington Agricultural Society at Schoose Farm, Workington, annually from 1805 to 1821.

<sup>45</sup> When the Woburn Sheep Shearing first began the breakfast and dinners were eaten in what had been the great hall below the staterooms. Since Henry Holland's remodelling of the Abbey, this was no longer used as an entrance hall. Georgiana Blakiston, *Woburn and the Russells* (London: Constable, 1980), 161-2; 24 June 1800, *Kentish Gazette*, 2, in BNA. The extra rooms adjoining the statue gallery at Holkham were the dining room on the north and the southern suite of rooms consisting of the salon and drawing rooms. Christine Hiskey, *Holkham: The social, architectural and landscape history of a great English country house* (Unicorn Press, 2016), 263.



Figure 77 <sup>46</sup>

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***Woburn House (Bedfordshire) (c. 1800)***

The entrance to the old hall where the dinners were originally held was through the arched door in the centre on the ground level.

Image courtesy of Grosvenor Prints, London.

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Magnificence also demands wonder from those who experience it, and these farming men, be they aristocrats or tenants, wanted to be impressed when they dined in such august settings. As Young succinctly said about the sheep shearing dinner organised by Coke at Holkham Hall in 1802: ‘He does it handsomely.’<sup>47</sup> Other aristocratic members of the Group

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<sup>46</sup> Anonymous, *Woburn House, Bedfordshire*, Aquatint with Hand-colouring, 210 mm x 265 mm (c. 1800). Image courtesy of Grosvenor Prints, London.

<sup>47</sup> M. Betham-Edwards (ed.), *The Autobiography of Arthur Young* (London, 1898, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967 rep.) 385 and John Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young 1741-1820* (American Philosophical Society, 1973), 452.



also laid on grand sumptuous dinners that concluded their farming events. For instance, after the Earl of Bridgewater's ploughing competition in June 1806, he entertained about 150 nobles and agriculturalists, many from the Group, in the great hall of his Ashridge mansion. The hall must have looked splendid: 'tastefully decorated for the occasion, with ploughs, harrows, forks, rakes, &c. encircled with laurel wreaths.'<sup>48</sup> Two of the three judges for the Earl's ploughing competition were Somerville and the Sussex tenant farmer John Ellman. As Chapter One discussed, the Earl, like the two Dukes of Bedford and Somerville, was another of Ellman's longstanding friends.<sup>49</sup>

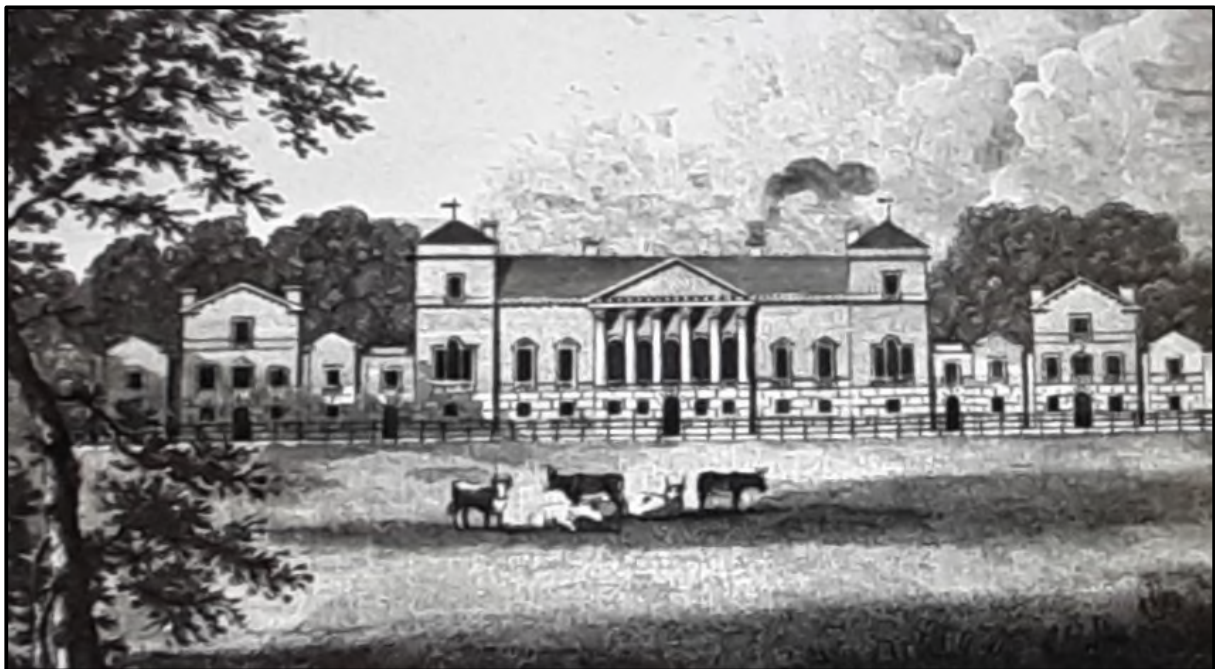


Figure 78 <sup>50</sup>

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*Holkham Hall*  
I. Lester (1826)

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<sup>48</sup> 'Ashridge Ploughing-Match', 29 June 1806, *London Recorder and Sunday Reformer*, 2, in NewspaperArchive (NA).

<sup>49</sup> [F.P. Walesby], 'Memoir of Mr. Ellman', *Baxter's Library of Agricultural and Horticultural Knowledge* (J. Baxter, 1834 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), xxvi.

<sup>50</sup> I. Lester, *South View of Holkham House in Norfolk, the Seat of T. W. Coke, Esq., MP*, Engraving (1826), image taken from *New Description of Holkham* (H. Neville, 1826), image on page before title.



Figure 79

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*The Statue Gallery at Holkham Hall*

The setting for the annual sheep shearing dinners

By kind permission of the Earl of Leicester and the Trustees of the Holkham Estate

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Another major factor that significantly affected sociable interaction was the number of dinner guests. At the dinners attended by the regulars within the Group, numbers were generally in the low hundreds. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, between 125 and 200 guests sat down to dinner each night at Woburn and Holkham, this number being about the same for the Smithfield Club dinners.<sup>51</sup> Somerville entertained 250 in the Crown and Anchor, but after he relocated his dinner to The Freemasons' Tavern, he accommodated over 350, albeit in very close proximity to one another. This limited number and the way the

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<sup>51</sup> For numbers who dined at Woburn each year at the sheep shearings see *Annals* from 1797. For the numbers attending the Smithfield Club meetings see Minutes of the Smithfield Club for the years between 1798 and 1813, Smithfield, MERL.

tables were arranged, bringing the men closer to one another and the top table, were crucial in allowing them to interact in a way that larger meetings would not have permitted. The thesis supports this claim by contrasting the dinners of these agricultural improvers at the turn of the nineteenth century with those attended by their high farming Victorian counterparts 40 years later. When the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) held its first show at Oxford in 1839, it had 2,000 members, and during the next decade, membership fluctuated between 5,000 and 7,000.<sup>52</sup> The dinners accompanying the shows were huge affairs. In 1839, 2,500 sat down for dinner at the RASE's inaugural show in the Queen's College Quadrangle. The quadrangle was covered with an awning to provide shelter.<sup>53</sup> The following year at Cambridge, the RASE erected a spacious pavilion (marquee) that seated 2500-2800.<sup>54</sup> The following two images show how massive, formal, and hierarchical these RASE dinners were.

Another factor to be considered in helping to create conviviality was the table arrangement. The image directly below depicts almost 2,500 diners at the first RASE show. It shows members primarily located on three sides of the roofed quadrangle, seated in rows facing the central platform. On this platform, the president, Earl Spencer, addresses the members. Members were assigned seats in alphabetical order, corresponding to members' surnames.<sup>55</sup> However, this system would not have applied to everyone. Accompanying the president on the dais are likely to be local Oxford dignitaries. Those occupying the centre tables below the platform were the vice presidents and council members, whilst the men seated in the front rows surrounding this central group are likely aristocrats. Although the men at the back of the quadrangle are prestigiously placed on one long table, they face the president's back, and so are probably the society's council members, responsible for running

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<sup>52</sup> The royal charter was not awarded to the Society until a few months after the show but for continuity within this thesis the society is always referred to as the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE).

<sup>53</sup> 22 July 1839, *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 10-11, in BNA.

<sup>54</sup> 'Royal Agricultural Society of England', *The British Farmer's Magazine*, New Series, Vol. IV (1840), 346.

<sup>55</sup> 22 July 1839, *Bells Weekly Messenger*, 11.

its show. The alphabetical seating arrangement would have applied to the rest of the members who sit in regimented rows facing the backs of those in front. Interaction between these rows would not have been easy. This formal and hierarchical seating arrangement supports Grignon's assertion of segregation at events of this type. However, if the image is studied closely, this segregation is even more marked because in each of the windows in the buildings surrounding the central covered area are fashionable women who stand and view the men dining below them.<sup>56</sup>

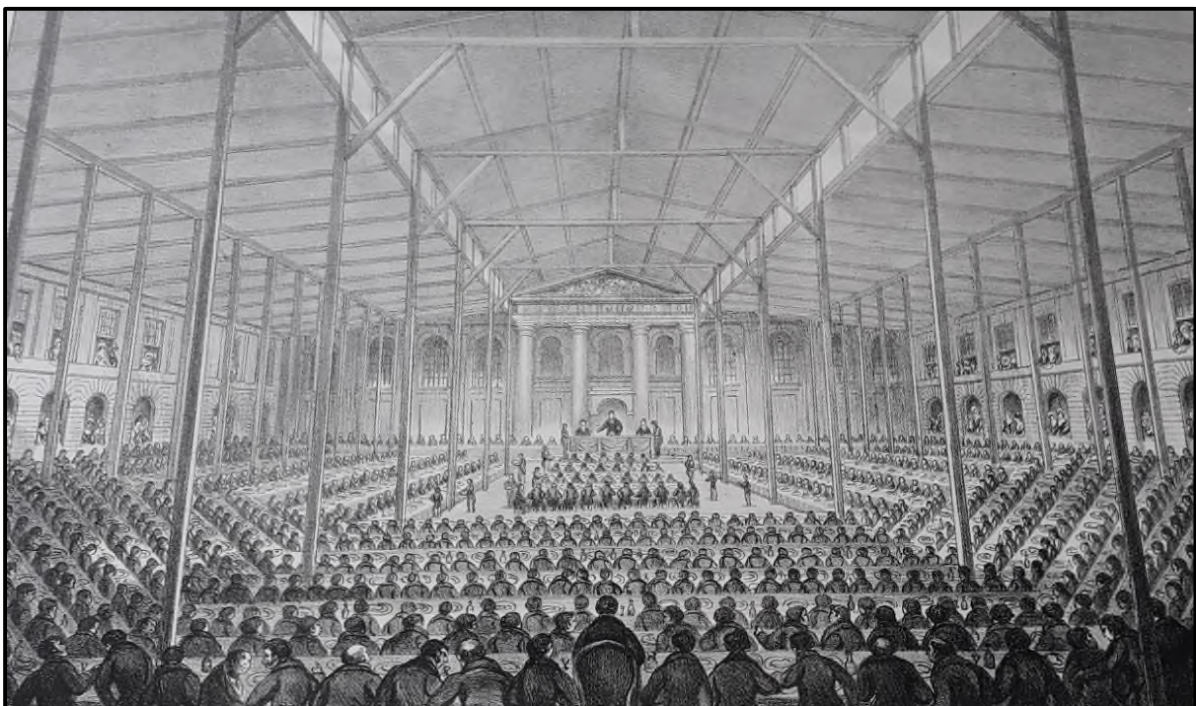


Figure 80<sup>57</sup>

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*English Agricultural Society's Dinner, in Queen's College Quadrangle  
July 17 1839*

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<sup>56</sup> The image clearly shows the women, and their presence was commented upon in *Bells Weekly Messenger*, 22 July 1839, 10.

<sup>57</sup> T. Picken and G. Scharf after W.A. Delamotte, *English Agricultural Society's Dinner, in Queen's College Quadrangle. July 17 1839*, Lithograph, 195 mm x 300 mm (Oxford: J. & R. Dewe, c. 1839).

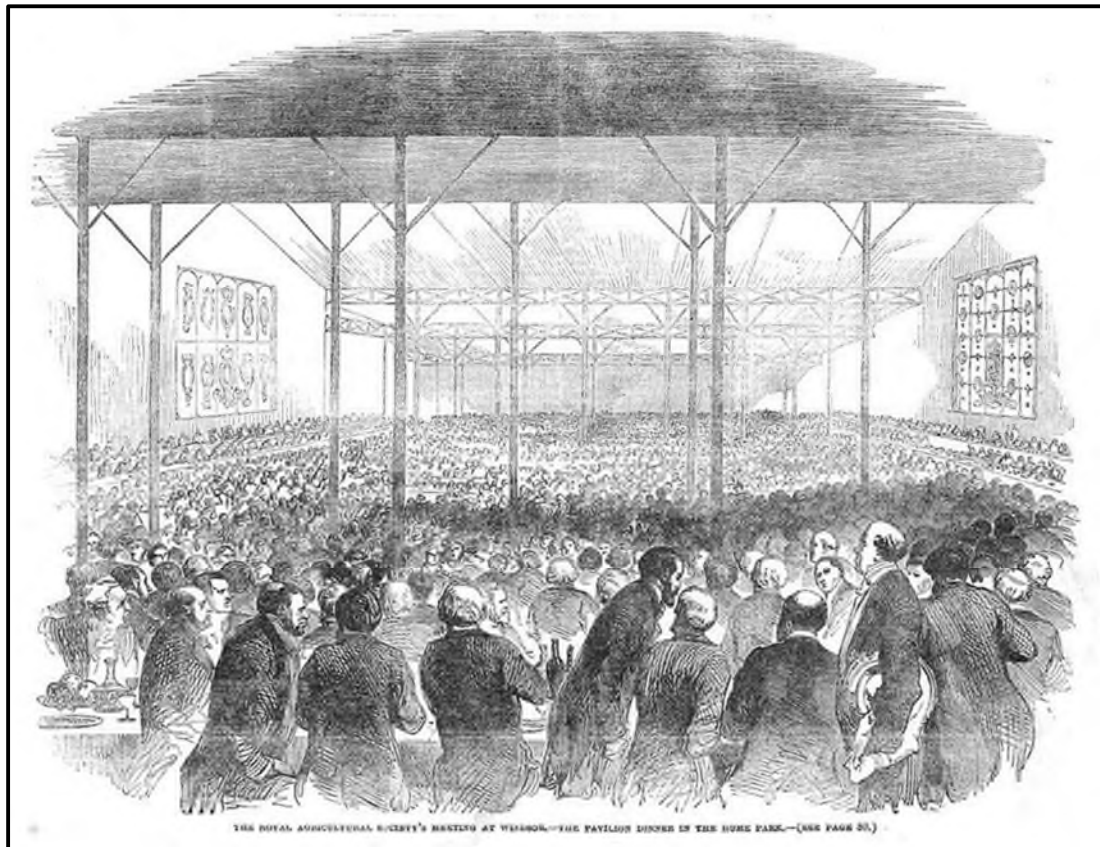


Figure 81 <sup>58</sup>

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*The Royal Agricultural Society's Meeting at Windsor.  
The Pavilion Dinner in the Home Park*

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In 1851 the show was held at Windsor as part of the Great Exhibition. A dining pavilion was erected at the Home Farm, within the grounds of Windsor Castle. The image above again shows thousands of men in attendance. Now, these men face each other, which allows for interaction between those at each table. However, as Grignon states, with commensality on this scale, social division will be in evidence, and here it again manifests itself through the seating layout. The hierarchy is now seated on the left and right of the hall, with heraldic stained-glass windows above them. The marquee was erected specifically for the occasion, and the insignia was likely chosen to promote the dignitaries present, including

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<sup>58</sup> Anonymous, *The Royal Agricultural Society's Meeting at Windsor. The Pavilion Dinner in the Home Park*, Engraving, 355mm x 280 mm, 9 July 1851, *Illustrated London News*, front cover.

Prince Albert, the society's guest of honour.<sup>59</sup> These stained-glass motifs add to the pomp and ceremony of the occasion.

As there are thousands in the pavilion, the chance of the royalty and aristocrats talking with the farmers and breeders that Young specifically commented on at the 1800 Woburn Sheep Shearing must have been virtually non-existent. Although the men who sit with their backs facing the viewer are closest to the picture plane, they are seated at the back of the pavilion, most likely reflecting their social status within the agricultural world. Contrast this to the dinners attended by the Woburn Group, such as the Smithfield Club's annual dinner in 1804, when there were 190 in attendance and William Money Hill, one of Coke's tenants, sat beside the sixth Duke as his vice-chairman.<sup>60</sup>

Unfortunately, there are no visual images of the dinners enjoyed by the Woburn Group. Although Garrard produced an oil sketch of the Woburn Sheep Shearing dinner in 1808, this is no longer extant.<sup>61</sup> However, a handful of first-hand reports describe the arrangement of the dinner tables. These reveal that the seating arrangements for dinners at the Woburn Sheep Shearings were the antithesis of the RASE dinners and, in 1800, were quite radical for the time.<sup>62</sup> At the first Woburn Sheep Shearing in 1797, the number of attendees was relatively modest, so everyone sat together on one long table. 'His Grace enlivened the upper part of the table, and Mr Stone [Thomas Stone, the Duke's surveyor, and never the most popular of men] did his best at the bottom end.'<sup>63</sup> At the 1800 dinner, when Young

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<sup>59</sup> 'Royal Agricultural Society of England', 19 July 1851, *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>60</sup> 'Smithfield Cattle Show, Saturday, December 14', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XI (1804), 454.

<sup>61</sup> Garrard displayed the oil sketch of the Woburn Sheep Shearing dinner in 1808 at his exhibition of paintings in his studio in 1813. Garrard chose to depict the 1808 event as this was the occasion when Lord Somerville, on behalf of those who regularly attended the Woburn Sheep Shearings, presented the sixth Duke of Bedford with a large silver salver for his hospitality in hosting the meeting. Garrard listed this work in his catalogue for this exhibition as 'A sketch in oil, of the Duke of Bedford's Sheepshearing dinner', No. 237, *Exhibition and Sale of Pictures and Models executed by Mr G. Garrard A.R.A., 1813*, 14, in The Research Library and Archive, the Sir John Soane Museum (Soane), No. 4995.

<sup>62</sup> 24 June 1800, *Kentish Gazette*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>63</sup> 'Woburn Abbey Sheep-Shearing', 24 June 1797, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

wrote about the royalty, lords and farmers sociably conversing together, between 120 and 175 men sat down for dinner on each of the four nights. Now, rather than sitting them at one long table, the fifth Duke seated them at three rows of tables which branched out in different directions but converged to a point. He sat at this point, where these tables met, with Prince William of Gloucester on his right and his brother, the future sixth Duke, on his left. This table arrangement was a new idea because the *Kentish Gazette* reported, ‘The superiority of this plan over separate tables will render it the fashionable one for all *rural fetes*.’<sup>64</sup> In 1800 the most seated for dinner was 175 on Tuesday, so each table that night must have seated about 60 men: 30 on each side.<sup>65</sup> So, although the aristocratic landowners would have sat nearest the end where the Duke was seated, they would still have been relatively close to their tenant farmers and ancillary tradesmen.

In 1806, when the sixth Duke became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he moved there for a year. Although the sheep shearing meeting went ahead, the dinner took place in a spacious booth erected near the farm in the park.<sup>66</sup> The Duke’s absence meant attendance was not as high as usual, but 100 or so men still dined on two tables in the booth each day where they were ‘entertained with cold viands, poultry and a plentiful supply of wine’. Presiding over the two tables were the sixth Duke’s eldest son, the Marquess of Tavistock; Lord Ludlow, a family friend who tenanted Cople from the sixth Duke; Henry Hugh Hoare, a London banker and neighbouring landowner; and William Adam MP, the ‘fixer’ for the Whig party, and the man brought in by the sixth Duke to oversee the Woburn Estate.<sup>67</sup> Relocating the dinner from the Abbey to the booth did not seem to have lessened the men’s enjoyment. The trophy

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<sup>64</sup> 24 June 1800, *Kentish Gazette*, 2, 4, in BNA.

<sup>65</sup> *Annals*, XXXV, 227.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Woburn Sheep-Shearing’, 21 June 1806, *Northampton Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>67</sup> 21 June 1806, *Northampton Mercury*, 3. David R. Fisher calls William Adam ‘the Foxite man of business’ in David R. Fisher, ‘Kincardineshire’, *The History of Parliament*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/constituencies/kincardineshire>, (accessed 15 August 2019).

presentations proceeded as usual, and ‘each day, many excellent and appropriate toasts were given and drank with great applause and conviviality’.<sup>68</sup>

At Somerville’s post-show dinner in the Freemasons’ Tavern in 1808, he and his most prestigious guests, ‘the gentefolk’ as the gentleman farmer George Harbottle called them, sat at a cross-table at the top of the room, furthest away from the entrance doors.<sup>69</sup> The rest of the men sat at four tables that extended down the room from this top table.

**Figure 82** <sup>70</sup>



**Plate in earthenware with blue transfer decoration of Freemasons’ Tavern, circa 1820**

© Museum of Freemasonry, London  
A dinnerplate of the type used at the dinners

As usual, Somerville's five judges were allocated seats as a mark of respect.<sup>71</sup> Although the judges' places were reserved, the rest of the seats were unreserved apart from Somerville's top table. It was typical for servants to be sent in advance to theatres to reserve seats for their employers, but at Somerville’s dinners, always popular events, the seats were on a first-come, first-served basis, even for aristocrats. This year, even though Somerville had announced he could not accommodate more than 250, far more turned up<sup>72</sup>. In the end, 337 men sat down for dinner, but only after a

free-for-all had ensued as most scabbled and jostled to get a seat. As one breeder observed,

<sup>68</sup> 21 June 1806, *Northampton Mercury*, 3.

<sup>69</sup> George Harbottle to Thomas Bates, 2 March 1808, Cadwallader John Bates, *Thomas Bates and the Kirklevington Shorthorns: A Contribution to the History of Pure Durham Cattle* (Robert Redpath, 1897, dig. rep.), 79.

<sup>70</sup> Plate in earthenware with blue transfer decoration of Freemasons’ Tavern circa 1820, M2009/838. © Museum of Freemasonry, London.

<sup>71</sup> For instance, in 1802 his judging team consisted of the landowner, Lord Grimstone, the Leicestershire grazier and breeder, Richard Astley, Mr Wheeler a meat salesman, Mr Bird, a butcher, and William Oakley, a wool stapler. John, Lord Somerville, *Facts and Observations: Sheep, Wool, Ploughs and Oxen...*, (1809 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), 172.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Lord Somerville’s Cattle Show’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. II (1808), 70.



On Tuesday Lord Somerville having according to annual custom, most liberally and extensively circulated his dinner tickets, the company invited adjourned to the Freemasons' Tavern at five o'clock. A comfortable squeeze ensued in the anti-room where the hats and coats were deposited, and after a good deal of – 'for God's sake gentlemen keep back', on throwing open the doors, between three and four hundred persons rushed into the dinner hall, every company striving for the upper places, in proximity to the table of the noble president. Between twenty and thirty were unable to find places and had the mortification to stand by and look on, whilst their fellow guests were comfortably seated and attended, dispatching with an impressive and commendable diligence, the dainty cheer which was placed before them. The writer hereof had the misfortune to make a unit among these real *tantalides*, a mishap he bore with philosophical temper, since he had the honour to share it with the Earl of Egremont, who exclaimed he was happy to see such a company. The 'outs' were however, in about twenty minutes, very comfortably provided with a well spread table, in another room, and rejoined the main body in time for the business of the meeting. Notwithstanding the over-flow, the dinner was conducted with the utmost regularity, and both the provisions and wines were of excellent quality, the Spanish mutton being universally a favourite dish.<sup>73</sup>

**Figure 83**<sup>74</sup>



The Duke of Clarence, who sat next to Somerville on the top table, would not have been expected to queue up, jostling to get in. However, the Earl of Egremont, a significant and influential agriculturalist, and presumably other aristocrats, had to. Dinner was announced at Woburn and Holkham by ringing a bell. The quote above and the excerpt from the Holkham Sheep Shearing poem below show that the dash for seats at these dinners was the usual occurrence.

**George O'Brien Wyndham, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Egremont**

Samuel William Reynolds after  
Thomas Phillips

© National Portrait Gallery, London

<sup>73</sup> 'A Breeder', 'Historical Chronicles - Domestic Occurrences', *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. IX (1808), 257.

<sup>74</sup> Samuel William Reynolds after Thomas Phillips, *George O'Brien Wyndham, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Egremont (1751-1837)*, Mezzotint Engraving, 385 mm x 277 mm (1804, pub. 1826), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D20446.

The din and bustle of the shew are o'er,  
Sheep oxen, ploughmen, are surveyed no more;  
For lo! a livelier note attracts the train,  
The dinner calls, nor sounds its call in vain...  
...In anxious scramble one and all contend,  
Nor stops the strong to help a fallen friend;  
Till calmly seated each surveys the prize,  
With hungry stomach and with longing eyes.<sup>75</sup>

The Introduction began with a description of Somerville's dinner in 1805. One can only imagine how congested the anteroom must have been when Somerville's dinner was an hour and a half late, no one wanting to go far in case the doors were suddenly thrown open.<sup>76</sup> Clark has made the point that it was not feasting, drinking, singing and ceremonies that united club members during this period, but conversation, a factor he sees as central to this process.<sup>77</sup> Young and other members of the agricultural press certainly considered discussion was essential in bringing the men together. They saw the noblemen, gentlemen and farmers who attended the farming meetings together 'and vied with each other in public spirit' as 'harmonising' the country.<sup>78</sup> So, it is not surprising to hear that when Somerville's dinner was late on this occasion, the time was 'amply filled up by many interesting conversations of so many respectable and intelligent persons'.<sup>79</sup>

As discussed, the management of the Smithfield Club from 1800-1813 was in the hands of all its members. However, the running of the RASE was in the hands of its members of council. Whilst between 30 and 40 Smithfield Club members, who were interested in the Club's management, dined together after the completion of judging, the corresponding dinner of the RASE attracted around ten times more. For instance, at the Smithfield Club's dinner in

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<sup>75</sup> *Holkham: A Poem: Dedicated Without Permission to Joseph Hume Esq., M.P. A.S.S.* (William Sams, 1822 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), 4-5.

<sup>76</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew', 6 March 1805, *British Press*, 3, in BNA.

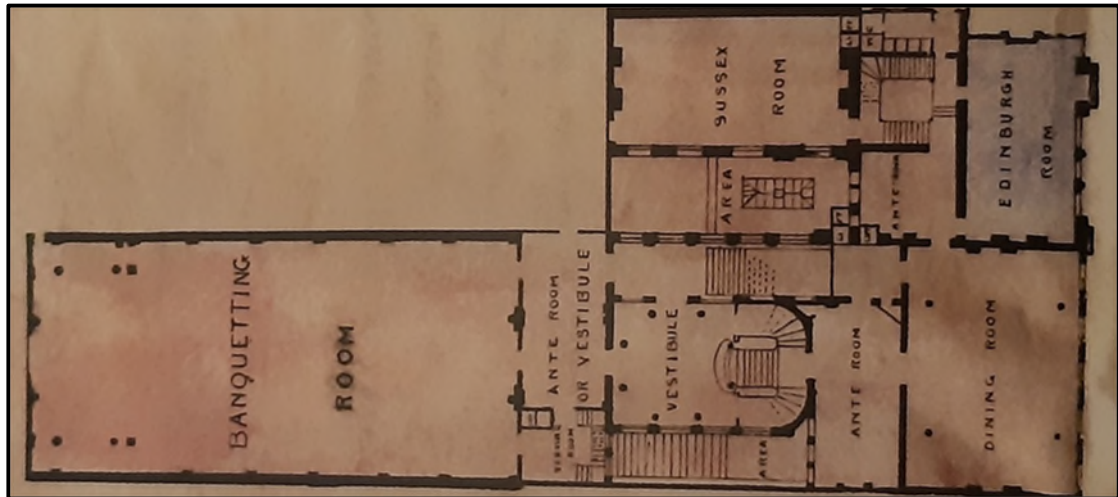
<sup>77</sup> Clark, 229.

<sup>78</sup> 'Proceedings of Agricultural Societies', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XI (1804), 304.

<sup>79</sup> 6 March 1805, *British Press*, 3.

1804, 30 men dined together whilst 44 years later, at the RASE council dinner in York's Guildhall in 1848, 300 members of council ate together.

Figure 84 <sup>80</sup>



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*First Floor plan of Freemasons' Tavern, remodeled by Cockerell, c.1860s.*

©

Museum of Freemasonry, London

This is where the Grand Hall (Banqueting Room [sic] on plan) was located. The Anteroom and Vestibule are clearly visible. The Smithfield Club's management dinners would have been held in one of the smaller rooms on this floor.

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At the Smithfield Club's dinner, the sixth Duke, Somerville and a mixture of graziers, breeders, butchers, landowners, tenant farmers and bankers ate together. At the RASE council members' dinners, the diners were far more elite, supporting Harriet Ritvo's assertion that this sort of man was at the forefront of agricultural improvement in mid-Victorian times. For instance, at the dinner in York, diners included the Prince Consort, a marquess, three earls, the High Sheriff of Yorkshire, the Lord Mayor of York, and Ministers of State for Belgium, Prussia and America. <sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> First Floor plan of Freemasons' Tavern, remodeled by Cockerell, c.1860s, GBR 1991 FMH P/8/3 © Museum of Freemasonry, London. In 1860 the anteroom and vestibule areas were converted to hold urinals. But in the early years of the nineteenth century, there would have been an area set aside for the men to relieve themselves.

<sup>81</sup> 'Council Dinner', *The British Farmer's Magazine*, Vol. XIV, New Series (1849), 117.



Figure 85 <sup>82</sup>

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*The Council Dinner of the Royal Agricultural Society, in the Guildhall, York*

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The image above shows the hierarchy seated on two tables at the end of the room, one table higher than the other to emphasise its superiority over the lower table and the whole room. These council members met the following night again at the society's annual dinner, where 1,200 men sat down together to dine, 'a company as distinguished by rank' 'as it was by number'.<sup>83</sup> The Smithfield Club and the RASE dinners have little in common. However, there are some similarities between the RASE's York council dinner and the agricultural dinners this chapter is interested in, particularly Somerville's London dinner, where he hosted a similar number in an urban environment. As discussed, his dinners were held in the Grand

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<sup>82</sup> Anonymous, *The Council Dinner of the Royal Agricultural Society, in the Guildhall, York*, Engraving, 220 mm x 146 mm, 15 July 1848, *Illustrated London News*, 16.

<sup>83</sup> *The British Farmers Magazine*, Vol. XIV, New Series (1849), 125.

Hall at the Freemasons' Tavern: an imposing structure, with its ornate decoration to the walls and ceiling.

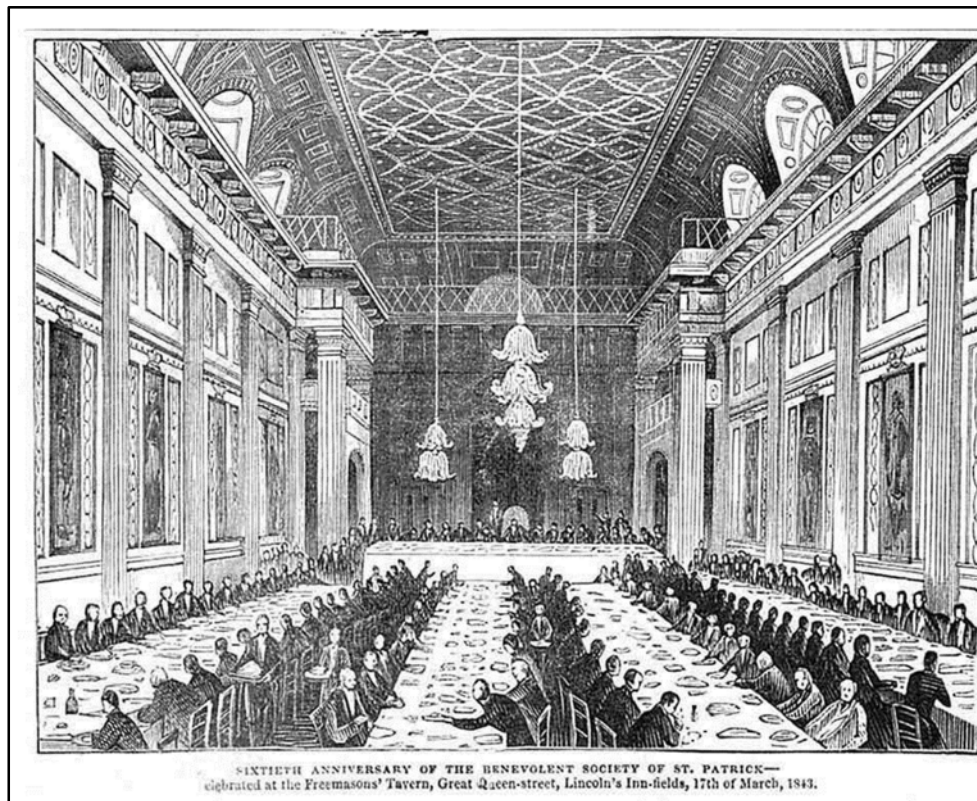


Figure 86<sup>84</sup>

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***Sixtieth Anniversary of the Benevolent Society of St. Patrick***  
celebrated in the Grand Hall of the Freemasons' Tavern (c. 1843)

The layout of Lord Somerville's dinner would likely have been similar to this image. But here only about 150 are seated whilst Somerville sometimes entertained over double this amount. Probably the table width would have been narrower, and the aisles not as wide to accommodate the extra tables.

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Just as Somerville presented his prizes at this dinner, the RASE also presented theirs at these smaller, more intimate council dinners. The council meal was their 'convivial dinner'. After the meal and the presentations, this smaller group of men conversed among themselves on different farming topics: for instance, at York, there was a spirited discussion

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<sup>84</sup> Anonymous, *Sixtieth Anniversary of the Benevolent Society of St. Patrick – celebrated at the Freemasons' Tavern, Great Queen-street, Lincoln's Inn-fields, 17<sup>th</sup> of March, 1843*, Engraving, 160 mm x 110 mm, 18 March 1843, *Illustrated London News*, No. 46, Vol. II, 186.

on calf rearing.<sup>85</sup> This thesis argues that these farming discussions at the RASE council dinners were a tradition inherited from the Woburn Group. Clark is convinced of the importance conversation played in uniting club members. Undoubtedly it did this at the Group's dinners, 'which brought together, from all part of the kingdom, persons who are skilled in agriculture, and by mutual communications, they improve the art.'<sup>86</sup> The reports of their dinners were always full of them conversing on one farming subject or another. Their discussions included hints on growing Swedish turnips, what plough performed best, how a new variety of Sicilian wheat seed was performing or the merits of growing a specific variety of elm for shipbuilding.<sup>87</sup> But, always, the topic of sheep was never far from the lips of these improvers, and samples of wool or broadcloth, often provided by Coke, Somerville or Tollet, were passed around the tables for inspection. Paintings and prints of livestock or associated subjects, such as Garrard's *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, were often displayed in the dining rooms. Only after diners had scrutinised them would they put their hands into their pockets and subscribe to them.<sup>88</sup> Anne Secord relates how artisan botanists would pass round botanical samples at their meetings, learning the Latin names of these plants by habitual repetition.<sup>89</sup> But the men this thesis is interested in were already specialists within their chosen fields, and they improved their knowledge by conversing with their peers, not learning by rote. Somerville presided over the meal following the Melrose cattle show in 1815, where he provided his fellow diners with 'much instruction and information'. Notably,

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<sup>85</sup> 'Council Dinner', *The British Farmers Magazine*, Vol. XIV, New Series (1849), 118-20.

<sup>86</sup> 'Dinner of the Smithfield Club', 17 December 1805, *Morning Chronicle*, 3, in NA.

<sup>87</sup> 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', 19 June 1805, *Morning Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>88</sup> In 1807 Lord Somerville handed out samples of a new variety of wheat for the Earl of Winchilsea and others to trial. They discussed the results at his 1808 show. 'Lord Somerville's Spring Show of Cattle', 5 March 1808, *Westminster Journal and Old British Spy*, 4, in NA.

<sup>89</sup> Anne Secord, 'Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire', *History of Science*, Vol. XXXII, Issue 3 (1994), 269-315, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F007327539403200302>, (accessed 21 December 2021), 281.

within the context of this chapter, Somerville also ‘encouraged conviviality and mirth’ among his fellow diners.<sup>90</sup>

During this period, most agricultural club dinners were for members only, and tickets had to be bought in advance if members wanted to attend: a policy the RASE also adopted forty years later. After the fifth Duke radically restructured it, the Smithfield Club initially restricted its membership, but its annual dinner was open to anyone, provided they purchased a ticket. The Club covered the room hire, the wax candles, the waiters' hire, and the stockmen's dinners, but the members paid for their dinners at the AGM and the management meetings.<sup>91</sup> Tickets were advertised and sold in advance. When the Club dined at the Crown and Anchor (1799-1805), it announced the date of both dinners in the London newspapers two days before the show, advising ‘Tickets to be had at the bar.’<sup>92</sup>

The dinners were free at the more prestigious shows, such as Woburn, Holkham and Somerville's. However, although the public breakfast was open to everyone, the more prestigious afternoon dinner was only available to ticket holders. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, like any club dinner, the kitchen staff preparing the food needed to know an approximate number of guests to be catered for and, secondly, to stop infiltrators. Because the dinners at events such as Woburn, Holkham and Somerville's were not only free but undoubtedly more prestigious than most agricultural club dinners, demand to attend was keen: the paragraph about Somerville's dinner in 1808 clearly illustrates this. However, during one of the early Woburn Sheep Shearings, there had been an influx of unsuitable people to the dinner, so from 1800, ‘to prevent improper persons intruding themselves,’ nobody was admitted unless they ‘had been presented by his Grace with a ticket.’<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> ‘Melrose Cattle Show’, *Caledonian Mercury*, 18 July 1816, 4, in BNA.

<sup>91</sup> 18 December 1810, ‘The Smithfield Club Minutes’, Vol. I, 150, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>92</sup> 11 December 1804, *Morning Chronicle*, front cover, in NA.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Woburn Sheep Shearing’, 17 June 1801, *Morning Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

Recipients of these invitation cards had to sign and return them if they planned to attend.<sup>94</sup> By only wanting specific individuals to attend his dinner, the Duke was plainly operating a segregation policy, but it is argued that this was not on social grounds but farming ability.

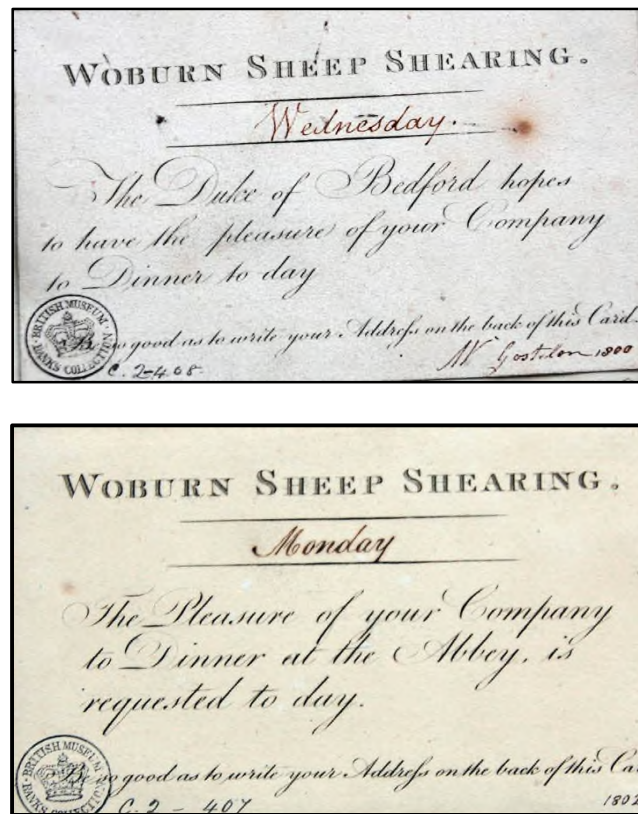


Figure 87<sup>95</sup>

Invitation cards for dinner at the Woburn sheep  
shearings 1800 and 1802

© The Trustees of the British Museum

The Duke wanted to dine with men he liked, but, as the previous chapter demonstrated, he also wanted to associate with men he respected in the farming world and felt could help move

<sup>94</sup> The tickets in the image above state that those attending should put their name on the back of the card.

<sup>95</sup> Two invitation cards to the 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', Paper Engraving, 72 mm x 116 mm, No. C,2.408 1800, & No. C,2.407 1802, London: The British Museum. Both licenced under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>. Both tickets were those used by Sir Joseph Banks, being donated to the British Museum by his descendants. The 1800 card above is by invitation of Francis fifth Duke of Bedford, whilst the one below is a general invitation. This is because in 1802 John, sixth Duke of Bedford was not in attendance, his elder brother having died three months earlier. The sixth Duke asked Lord Somerville, Thomas William Coke and Arthur Young to oversee the event in 1802 during his absence.



the Group forward in their quest to learn more about new scientific farming techniques. The names of those put forward to join the restructured Smithfield Club, some of whom were involved in the dispute, is testament to this. The Duke did not want men who wanted a free meal and had nothing to contribute to the agricultural endeavours of the Group.

Somerville's dinner, which also operated a ticket system, demonstrates this well. Although he often entertained royalty from both home and abroad, foreign dignitaries and many aristocrats, his egalitarian philosophy was that anyone who had made an effort to visit his show should be entitled to attend his dinner.<sup>96</sup> This policy meant his dinners were often oversubscribed. In 1811 he had a notice pinned to the wall of the show yard stating 'that it was his particular wish that, among the limited number which the dinner room would accommodate, to prefer practical farmers attending from distant counties.' He entrusted tickets to his friends John Ellman and Henry King Jnr to distribute them to farmers from further afield.<sup>97</sup>

The exhibitors' stockmen were not overlooked and usually ate in a room nearby. At Woburn, the stockmen ate in the Steward's Room each night, with Andrew Wilson, the Park Farm bailiff, acting as their host.<sup>98</sup> Until 1811 the Smithfield Club paid for their stockmen's meals, and even at smaller shows, the ploughmen and stockmen were provided with dinner, albeit in a separate room.<sup>99</sup> Because they were close by, the stockmen could be summoned

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<sup>96</sup> 'Lord Somerville's March Exhibition 1820', 7 December 1818, *Evans and Ruffy's Farmers' Journal*, 7, in NA.

<sup>97</sup> The notice went on to say that in case any farmer had been missed then they should leave their name and address with Mr Sadler, the yard owner, who presumably would give them to Ellman or King. 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew, First Day', 9 March 1811, *Evans and Ruffy's Farmers' Journal*, 1, in NA.

<sup>98</sup> In 1800 the following number of men sat down to dinner at Woburn: on Monday 160 dined with his Grace and 60 in the Steward's room, on Tuesday 175 and 70, on Wednesday 174 and 70 and on Thursday 94 and 44, making 847 covers over the four days. *Annals*, Vol. XXXV, 227.

<sup>99</sup> It is unclear from the Club's minutes whether the Club paid for these meals out of subscription money, or it came out of the money the men paid for their dinner tickets. The practice was stopped in December 1810 when the Club was experiencing financial pressure. 18 December 1810, *The Smithfield Club*, Vol. I, 150, Smithfield, MERL. In 1807 when the Hertfordshire Agricultural Society held their ploughing match at the King's Arms Inn in Great Berkhamsted, the agriculturalists ate in one room in the inn, whilst the farmers' servants dined in an

Figure 88 <sup>100</sup>



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John Holland

Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810)

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if needed, such as in 1805 when Somerville called in John Holland, the sixth Duke's shepherd, to explain a new award he was instigating for shepherds. Somerville asked Holland to let as many of his brother shepherds as possible know about his new prize.<sup>101</sup>

Although the egalitarian nature of these dinners extended to the farmers and ancillary tradesmen, there were limits in a hierarchical Georgian society to how far it could spread, and the stockmen's involvement would never have extended to any more than this.

## 2. Eating and drinking together

'First we eat, then we do everything else' was very much the order of the day when the men came together after the day's activities.<sup>102</sup> Thomas Simpkin of the Crown and Anchor provided a good idea of what was served at one of these grand dinners in his

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adjoining one. 'Hertfordshire Agricultural Meeting', 20 June 1807, *Oxford University and City Herald*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>100</sup> George Garrard, detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, Proof, Hand-coloured Engraving (1810).

<sup>101</sup> Acting on Ellman's suggestion, Somerville intended to offer first and second monetary prizes to the shepherds who reared the most lambs in proportion to the age of ewes in their flocks. Somerville offered three guineas for the shepherd rearing the most lambs and two guineas for the shepherd rearing the second highest number. 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew', 4 March 1804, *Bells Weekly Messenger*, 7, in BNA.

<sup>102</sup> 'First we eat then we do everything else' is a quote by M.F.K. Fisher. Fiona Wilson, 'The Gastronomical Me by M.F.K. Fisher', May 13 2017, *The Times*, [website], <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-gastronomical-me-by-mfk-fisher-jwsl5z0py>, (accessed 17 January 2022).

proposed menu for the Farming Society's dinner in 1800.<sup>103</sup> There would be three courses, and the cost to members was one guinea each, 'including every expence'.<sup>104</sup> The ticket price for the Smithfield Club's dinner that year, at the same venue, was 9/6d, over a third of which was for the bottle of sherry or port, so clearly the food Simpkin was proposing to serve was superior to what the Club received.<sup>105</sup> However, the food served at Holkham, Woburn and Somerville's dinner would have been very similar to what Simpkin was proposing for the Farming Society's dinner. The first course comprised roast beef and mutton, from different breeds, 'the whole interspersed with the different kinds of Pork, fresh-water Fish, and the various sorts of Vegetables.' These vegetables would consist of potatoes (kidney, champion and ox noble varieties), carrots, parsnips, turnips, Jerusalem artichokes, beetroot, and different green vegetables and salad types. The second course would consist of 'Veal, Lamb, Hams, Poultry, Tarts and Puddings' whilst he proposed a third course of 'Desert of English Fruit'.<sup>106</sup> The only significant difference between Simpkin's proposed menu and that offered at Woburn and Holkham would likely have been venison, whilst Holkham's proximity to the coast meant Coke's dinners had a plentiful supply of fresh sea fish.<sup>107</sup>

Although fish was a welcome addition at Holkham, it was meat rather than fish that was important to agriculturalists. The relationship of the agricultural improvers to the meat they ate at these dinners was different to that of other club and society members, including

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<sup>103</sup> The Farming Society had been Sir John Sinclair's ambitious idea. His proposal was that 1,600 members subscribed £50 each to provide the society with £80,000 of working capital. This would be spent on purchasing eight lowland arable and grazing farms, two upland farms and 5,000 acres for tree planting. He advertised its aims and objectives in February 1800, but it never appears to have got off the ground. 'Proposals for Establishing by Subscription a New Institution...', 9 February 1800, *London Observer*, 1, in NA.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Mr Simpkin from the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand Respecting the Farming Experimental Dinner, Ref CA/B47/60 in Cornwall Archives, Kresen Kernow (CA/B47/60, CAKK).

<sup>105</sup> In June 1796 a bottle of port of the sort drunk at an agricultural meeting cost 3/6d. This was the price Mr Anderson paid to the Essex and Suffolk Agricultural Society which had omitted to charge him for his bottle of port at the Club's annual dinner. 'Expences [sic] 30 June 1796', *Essex and Suffolk Agricultural Society: Minutes and Correspondence 1791-1801*, facsimile copy of the papers given to *The Friends of Historic Essex* by Sir John Ruggles Brise, descendent of the society's first chairman, Thomas Ruggles, in private ownership.

<sup>106</sup> Simpkin, CA/B47/60, CAKK.

<sup>107</sup> Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young*, 452.

those belonging to beef steak clubs. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Beefsteak-Club in London had about 40 members, and although visitors who disliked beef could request pork or mutton chops, it was not encouraged. It was impressed on foreign visitors that they were not entering into the Club's spirit if they did not eat 'beefsteak'.<sup>108</sup> The meat eaten by the Beefsteak members was undoubtedly the best available and bought from select butchers. Still, they were not 'intimately' acquainted with the meat they ate the same way the Woburn Group were. For instance, the objective of the Farming Society's menu was to sample beef and mutton from different breeds to ascertain superior species.<sup>109</sup> At Woburn, Holkham and Somerville's show, carcasses were hung on display for appraisal by the agriculturalists. At the sheep shearing events, they would handle and inspect specific unshorn sheep before observing them shorn and then handle the shorn animals before minutely inspecting their fleeces. Finally, after slaughtering them, their carcasses were displayed for further perusal. Labels were displayed on each carcass specifying its total weight and the weight of its fat, skin and entrails.<sup>110</sup> However, these displayed carcasses were never cooked and served at the agricultural dinners because it was impossible to hang them long enough. It is imperative to hang meat, including game, for at least 10 days. Otherwise, it will be tough and flavourless. The flavour and texture of different breeds was an ongoing debate between these agricultural improvers, especially the sheep enthusiasts.

Somerville always served meat from his own livestock at his post-show dinner, slaughtered some days or weeks previously. However, in 1808, Somerville had five of his Anglo-Merino wethers killed 10 days before the show. Their carcasses were displayed on the show yard wall on the opening show day and then sent off to the Freemasons' Tavern, where

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<sup>108</sup> John Bernard, *Retrospections of The Stage*, Vol. II (London: Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1830), 114. Bernard was formerly the secretary of the Beef-Steak Club.

<sup>109</sup> Simpkin, CA/B47/60, CAKK.

<sup>110</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Spring Show of Cattle', 10 March 1808, *Derby Mercury*, 2, in BNA.

they were cooked and served to his guests the following evening. The carcasses were described as ‘full of fat, fine in the bone, and inclining to the venison in colour.’<sup>111</sup>



Figure 89 <sup>112</sup>

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**Carcasses displayed on barn wall**  
Detail from *Woburn Sheepshearing* (1810)

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Among the visitors to the show yard was the Duke of Clarence: Somerville’s guest of honour. The Prince spent a long time talking to the breeders, graziers and implement makers. As he minutely examined everything, this must have included the carcasses.<sup>113</sup> Doubtless, Somerville proudly told him this was the mutton the Prince would be served the following night! The next day, hanging in their place, were the carcasses of various breeds of freshly slaughtered sheep, all exhibited live the day before.<sup>114</sup> Cattle carcasses were also displayed.

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<sup>111</sup> ‘Lord Somerville’s Cattle Shew’, 4 March 1808, *The Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>112</sup> Garrard (1810).

<sup>113</sup> ‘Lord Somerville’s Spring Show of Cattle’, 5 March 1808, *Oxford University and City Herald*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>114</sup> 4 March 1808, *The Kentish Weekly Post*, 4.

Richard Astley had intended to exhibit a Longhorn ox that year, but, unfortunately, it had died en route. Undeterred Somerville displayed its carcass instead.<sup>115</sup>

Eight years earlier, in 1800, Simpkin proposed to display the carcasses he intended to cook for the Farming Society. These would be displayed the day before their dinner.

As the Members may wish to compare the different sorts of meat, before they are dressed, I shall take care to have them ready for their inspection, on Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, from ten to four o'clock. -Particular care will be taken, that the butchers employed, shall give the live and dead weight, the quantity of tallow, the weight of the hide, and every other particular, of any consequence, regarding the different animals that may be killed for the occasion.<sup>116</sup>

Although the Farming Society's dinner never came to fruition, Somerville repeated Simpkin's idea in 1808. He provided information on each carcass, including age at slaughter, growth weight amount and type of food consumed. Simpkin thought it imperative to roast meat, saying 'it is impossible to judge so well of its real quality, when dressed in any other way', and likely Somerville also followed Simpkin's advice, roasting the mutton.<sup>117</sup>

Armed with all this information, together with their visual appraisal of the carcasses, meant that when the men sat down to eat the following evening, their very act of consuming this mutton made them participants in Somerville's dinner. John Scheid has shown that much of our political vocabulary derives from the Roman sacrificial meal.<sup>118</sup> Participating in Roman times meant literally 'to have one's share of a sacrificial meal'; hence, today, to take part in or have one's place in a group. These agriculturalists indeed participated in these meals, but there was no sacrificial element, as Scheid considers was involved in the Roman slaughter of animals to their gods. Somerville's rationale was neither religious nor pagan: the

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<sup>115</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Spring Cattle Show', 9 March 1808, *Hereford Journal*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>116</sup> Simpkin, CA/B47/60, CAKK.

<sup>117</sup> Simpkin, CA/B47/60, CAKK.

<sup>118</sup> Participate derives from the Latin *pars capere*, literally meaning 'to have one's share, to take part'. John Scheid (1984 & 2005), cited in Fischler, 536.

whole performance, from slaughter to plate, was instigated by him to satisfy not only the stomachs of the agricultural improvers but also their minds. Inspecting it on the hook, tasting it, assessing its tenderness and flavour, observing the marbling of the fat and the meat's colour and texture, and knowing how it was reared was integral to furthering their knowledge in their quest for improvement. They wanted faster and earlier maturing animals that were cheaper to produce and satisfied market demands. For Somerville, a great patriot, these factors helped his country during the prolonged wars with France.

Beef was also on the menu at his dinner that night. On one of the tables was meat of the 'Crossed Breed' from a fat ox bred and fattened by Thomas Bates in Northumberland. He had sent it to Somerville specifically for serving at the dinner. Bates' friend, George Harbottle, was one of the guests, and he wrote to Bates the following day, reporting to him that his beef had been very well received, although, sadly, it had not been served at his table. Surprisingly, Somerville had never met Bates, but he toasted the Shorthorn breeder for obligingly sending the beef, saying he hoped to make his acquaintance soon.<sup>119</sup> However, whether everyone at Somerville's dinner that night enjoyed his Merino mutton as much as Bates' beef is debatable. Although it was reported that Somerville's 'Spanish mutton being universally a favourite dish', it appears not to have been to everyone's liking.<sup>120</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two, the Merino divided the agricultural world, not least in people's opinion of the quality and taste of its meat. The following year John Wright derisively said, 'I much wonder at Lord Somerville and the nobility eating this meat and his Lordship year after year, inviting three or four hundred Gentlemen and Agriculturalists to partake of carrion.'<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Bates, 79.

<sup>120</sup> *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. IX (1808), 257.

<sup>121</sup> John Wright 'On Merino and New Leicester Sheep, in answer to Mr Hunt', 6 June 1809, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. V (1809), 15.

Nevertheless, partake they did and, as the first-hand report of the rush for seats at Somerville's dinner makes clear, they were more than keen to attend and eat it. But any misgivings some of them may have had about the palatability of Merino mutton would have been mitigated by the excellent quality of alcohol provided at Somerville's dinner.<sup>122</sup> The quality of liquor served at dinners such as this was a significant factor in the men's enjoyment. At the Smithfield Club's annual dinner later that year, the members certainly enjoyed the excellent wine they were served, and it was the reason given for them staying together so long.<sup>123</sup> However, it was more likely to have been quantity that kept them there rather than quality! Port and sherry were then classified as wine and included in the Smithfield Club's dinner ticket price was a bottle of either.<sup>124</sup> Beer was called porter and could be served either from the cask or bottle: Samuel Whitbread II, one of the Group, owned the Whitbread Brewery, which produced porter. For the Farming Society's dinner, Simpkin was planning to offer *Burton* and *Dorset*, two varieties of Strong Ale, *Yorkshire*, which was a Mild Ale and regional varieties such as 'Welch and Scotch Ales' and 'Cyder.'<sup>125</sup> At home, many of the men would have drunk beer brewed by an employee. Bate Dudley's advertisement for a gardener specifically stated applicants must 'be able to brew well'.<sup>126</sup>

Clark rightly points out that alcohol consumption was staggeringly high during this period: with club meetings 'assiduously promoted by that leading patron of societies, the drink interest.' He says that excessive drinking was a particular worry to club organisers with accompanying risk of disputes and disorder.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, at the agriculturalists' dinners, glasses

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<sup>122</sup> *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. IX (1808), 257.

<sup>123</sup> 'Smithfield Club Cattle Show', *Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1809), 422.

<sup>124</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 227. At least until 1826 a bottle of port or wine was included with the dinner ticket. 'Agreement for the Annual Dinner 1826,' Smithfield Club Minutes, Vol. IV, 673, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>125</sup> Simpkin, CA/B47/60, CAKK.

<sup>126</sup> The advert stated, 'Wanted immediately a WORKING GARDNER who understands the laying out of pleasure Grounds, Kitchen Garden, cutting and laying turf, the management of Green-house, Fruit Trees, Forcing, Planting, &c., he must likewise be able to brew well... Apply at the Rev Bate's Surry-street in the Strand.' *Morning Herald*, Monday 23 July 1781.

<sup>127</sup> Clark, 225-6, 250.



and crockery did get broken, and the Freemasons' Taverns' arrangement with the Smithfield Club included a nominal amount for damage to china and glassware in the room hire fee. If any member caused excessive breakages, the Club expected them to settle directly with the Tavern's proprietors. However, sometimes it proved impossible to identify the culprit and the Club ended up paying for the breakages itself.<sup>128</sup> But generally, there appears to have been no reports of unruly behaviour at the larger agricultural dinners or the shows preceding them. As discussed in Chapter Three, even when the Smithfield Club members, many of whom would have been drinking throughout the day, learned that the fifth Duke had decided to restructure the Club, costing them all money, tempers had not become frayed.

It is difficult to estimate how much alcohol was consumed at these dinners, but heavy drinking by these agriculturalists, and any disruption it might have caused, was unlikely to have been publicised. The newspaper and magazine reporters aimed to enlighten their readers on events at these shows. They recorded the attendees, winners, and speeches to show the agricultural improvers in a patriotic light, seeing them as good for the country's morale during the prolonged war.

Nevertheless, men in high positions did get drunk, as when the alderman, chief magistrate and the mayor of Colchester, Edward Capstack, got extremely drunk at a civic dinner held in Colchester in 1787. Despite a strategically placed chamber pot behind his Worship's chair, Captstack urinated under the table, splashing the legs of two clerical gentlemen seated near to him. One complained to Bate Dudley, seated opposite, that the mayor had urinated down his leg. Ever the agriculturalist, Bate Dudley replied to his clerical companion, 'Surely not Nicholas. That is impossible, for mares [mayors] always piss

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<sup>128</sup> On 19 December 1809 the Smithfield Club moved to increase the price of its annual dinner tickets to 12/6d. It agreed to this with the Freemasons' Tavern proprietors provided this covered all expenses 'except for any extraordinary breakage of glass, china etc. that may happen, for which the Tavern-keeper cannot recover of the individual, who may occasion such breakage.' Smithfield Club Minutes, Vol. I, 112-22, Smithfield, MERL.

backwards.’<sup>129</sup> A regular at the agricultural shows and dinners, Bate Dudley doubtless amused the Woburn Group with this anecdote on more than one occasion.

At farming events such as tup lettings and farm sales, those running them routinely provided alcohol to entertain potential hirers and buyers and loosen their wallets. As discussed, the tup letting always commenced after the dinners at Woburn and Holkham, when the men were in ‘an agreeable mood’. An excellent example of how drink could affect prices was when the Carlisle farmer James Losh sold some small parcels of land in 1820 during the agricultural depression. Although the land was unprofitable for Losh, yielding only about £30/year, he successfully sold it at auction for £1200. He attributed this to the doors of the sale opening at 7 pm but the land not being auctioned until 9 pm. The organisers liberally supplied punch to the whole party during those two hours. Losh wrote in his diary that as the sale progressed, ‘the liquor beginning to warm the persons intending to buy, they [the parcels of land] went on very briskly indeed’. The men buying were *statesmen*, yeomen with small landed estates, whom Losh thought a bit uncouth.<sup>130</sup>

Many ancillary tradesmen who attended Somerville’s show, such as the wool stapler, Henry Laccocke, Sir Joseph Banks’ right-hand man with the King’s Merinos, would also have been ‘a bit rough and ready’. Although these men were surely dazzled by the array of fine wine and sumptuous food on offer, they never appear to have abused Somerville’s hospitality by getting drunk and disorderly. However, men did get the worse for wear at some of these dinners by imbibing too much. Lord Ludlow had been presiding at one of the outdoor tables at Woburn, the year the sixth Duke was in Ireland, and must have got drunk because the Duke’s 13-year-old son, noted in his diary, ‘Lord Ludlow came home ill, partly with taking

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<sup>129</sup> Shani D’Cruze (ed.), *Colchester People, The John Bensusan Butt Biographical Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century Colchester*, Vol. III, Appendices and Indexes (2010), 56.

<sup>130</sup> James Losh, *Diaries and Correspondence of James Losh*, Vol. I, ‘Diary, 1811-1823’, 121-2, cited in Edward Hughes, *North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. II, Cumberland and Westmorland 1700-1830 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 213.

too much wine.’<sup>131</sup> On another occasion, Young complained bitterly in his diary about the conduct of Major Battine, who was the worse for wear at another of the sheep shearings at Woburn, calling him ‘that miserably swearing and profligate Major B’. Young thought at 81 years of age, Battine should have known better.<sup>132</sup> But instances of over-indulgence of alcohol are limited, and although these men drank copious amounts at these dinners, there is little evidence to suggest they abused it. Some within the Group, including Banks, were tee-total, but their abstinence may have been less to do with upholding moral standards but more to do with gout, a condition several of them had.

### **3. The after-dinner toasts, speeches, and awards**

After the men had finished eating the tables were cleared, and the cloth was removed, so the main business of the evening could commence: the presentation of awards, toasts and speeches. The interaction between the men during these events contributed to the camaraderie among them. Immediately after the dinner, the awards were presented. The four significant shows discussed in this chapter all made presentation awards at their dinners to the successful winners of the classes held earlier. Typically, plate and, or premiums were on offer.<sup>133</sup> Somerville’s trophies were splendidly ornate, and he offered his prize winners either an exquisitely engraved trophy or money: the monetary prizes being between £10 and £30. When King Jnr, as the feeder of the best pair of oxen, was offered £15 or one of Somerville’s trophies, he chose one of the elegant trophies on the table in front of Somerville rather than the money. Although the competition was keen between these men, they were educated enough to accept defeat graciously. King was a butcher's son, and his decision to take the

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<sup>131</sup> Spencer Walpole, *The Life of Lord John Russell*, Vol. I (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1889), 23.

<sup>132</sup> Betham-Edwards, 397.

<sup>133</sup> Plate was the common name for silver and gold trophies, whilst premiums was the usual name given to awards of a monetary value at shows.

trophy rather than the money pleased his fellow diners, and he ‘bore it off to his seat amidst the plaudits of the company.’<sup>134</sup>

Somerville also awarded trophies for merit. For instance, in 1803, he produced two extra cups because he thought his show had been graced by particularly good animals that year. Having selected the four men he thought worthy of receiving these two trophies, he placed their names in the cups, two in each, and asked two of his aristocratic guests to select one name from each. The lucky recipients were Mr Miller, for his yoke of Kentish oxen, and Robert Byng, for his yoke of Hereford oxen. Somerville then presented each with the actual cup from which their name had been drawn.<sup>135</sup> In 1804, when he had another spare cup, he awarded it to Mr Bridge, just for the expense and distance he had travelled to bring five Dorset lambs to his show.<sup>136</sup> When Frank Sitwell bought four New Leicester sheep 360 miles to exhibit at his show Somerville presented him with a piece of plate. But on this occasion, it was not from him but on behalf of a group of Northumbrian landowners and farmers who asked Somerville to present it to Sitwell as a testimony of the esteem they held him in.<sup>137</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, Sitwell may not have been a good husband, but his agricultural peers liked and respected him.

The obligatory speeches followed the prize-giving. These were often verbose, as were the replies by those mentioned explicitly in the address; Curwen’s annual address to the members of the Workington Agricultural Society was always garrulous, whilst Tollet’s reply to Coke’s toast at the 1810 Holkham Sheep Shearing epitomised a long-winded response.<sup>138</sup> Hosts often used these speeches for specific purposes. For instance, the Dukes of Bedford

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<sup>134</sup> ‘Lord Somerville’s Cattle Shew’, 4 March 1804, *Bells Weekly Messenger*, 7, in BNA.

<sup>135</sup> 3 March 1803, *Star (London)*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>136</sup> 4 March 1804, *Bells Weekly Messenger*, 7.

<sup>137</sup> Sitwell exhibited a New Leicester tup and three ewes. ‘Lord Somerville’s Spring Cattle Shew’, *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. XI (1809), 272-3.

<sup>138</sup> ‘Holkham Sheep Shearing’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VII (1810), 55-7.

rallied Smithfield Club members to pursue their objective, and at their sheep shearings, encouraged Bedfordshire farmers to embrace agricultural improvement whilst Somerville announced some new initiative to aid the war effort, such as growing hemp. These speeches could be very influential and have long term implications. Coke's speech at the 1810 Holkham dinner on what he perceived as the failure of the Merino illustrates this well; his speech affected the breed's long-term future in England.<sup>139</sup>

Unsurprisingly Clark states there was a close link between society drinking and toasting. They both emphasised the mutuality and solidarity of members.<sup>140</sup> Toasting was integral to the dinners attended by the Group; everyone expected to participate: cordial available for men not drinking alcohol. Apart from their hosts, these men toasted anyone and anything they thought had influenced agricultural improvement: from 'Robert Bakewell' and 'George III' to 'long leases for good tenants'. Even at the more intimate Smithfield Club management meeting dinners, the number of toasts reached double figures. For instance, in 1809, there were more than 15 toasts during the evening,<sup>141</sup>

Some toasts concluded with 'Three Times Three': the 'highest accolade' in toasting etiquette.<sup>142</sup> A bumper toast often accompanied this.<sup>143</sup> These toasts required a wide-bottomed glass called a bumper to be banged hard on the table.<sup>144</sup> Men using their knuckles

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<sup>139</sup> Coke had lost patience with the Merino breed. He thought that although its staple was superior to native breeds, it was not enough to compensate for its inferior carcase in relation to other breeds. He thought it was also a bad doer and that although there might be some benefit in crossing it with breeds such as the Norfolk his trials had shown that it was not beneficial to cross it with the Southdown. The breed never fully recovered from his verdict on his trials. For his speech about this, as well as Sir Joseph Banks and George Tollet's replies to him, see 'Holkham Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol VII (1810), 55-7.

<sup>140</sup> Clark, 226.

<sup>141</sup> 'Smithfield Club Cattle Show', *Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. V (1809), 434.

<sup>142</sup> 'Three Times Three' is better known today as 'Hip, Hip Hoorah', which is usually said three times.

<sup>143</sup> For information on where the name bumper came from see Anatoly Liberman, 'Drinking vessel: bumper', in *Oxford University Press's Academic Insights for the Thinking World*, [website], <https://blog.oup.com/2012/12/drinking-vessel-bumper-etymology-word-origin/>, (accessed 20 August 2019).

<sup>144</sup> Today bumper glasses are more often referred to as firing glasses, especially at Masonic and guild dinners. This name originates from the noise created by guests banging these glasses repeatedly on the table, producing a noise like a volley of musket fire. Suzanne Von Drachenfels, *The Art of The Table: A Complete Guide to Table Setting, Table Manners, and Tableware* (Simon & Schuster, 2000), 308.

could create the same effect, albeit more painfully. Writing to Bates in 1808, Harbottle told him that after Somerville had toasted Bates for providing beef at his dinner, he had received a bumper toast. Bates' beef had gone down well, and Harbottle said, 'without flattering, I assure you I was not the most silent with my knuckles on the table'.<sup>145</sup> Writing to him

**Figure 90**



A bumper or firing toast glass

immediately after the show, Harbottle was keen to let his friend know that Somerville had toasted him personally. Munificence, success, philanthropy, and even hard work were all rewarded at these farming shows with the accolade of a toast. As Clark rightly points out, the honour of being the subject of a toast could enhance the reputation of those toasted and elevate their public standing in the local community.<sup>146</sup> Humphry Davy wrote to his wife from the penultimate Woburn Sheep Shearing in 1812, telling her that he had had to make a speech after his health had been drunk.<sup>147</sup>

Another custom at these dinners was to pass around a 'loving cup'. A loving cup was generally a sizeable two-handled silver or gold cup, often with a lid, filled with alcohol and passed around the tables. In turn, each man would stand up, take a sip, and give it to his neighbour. Today many Masonic and guild dinners continue this tradition. However, apart from passing the cup around the table at the Board's 1822 show dinner, it is not mentioned as occurring at the agricultural dinners. Possibly this was because

<sup>145</sup> Bates, 79.

<sup>146</sup> Clark, 163-4.

<sup>147</sup> 'Humphry Davy to Lady Jane Davy', 15 June 1812, HD/25/29a, in *The Davy Letters Project*, Royal Institution Manuscripts, [website], <https://www.rigb.org/about/heritage-and-collections/heritage-projects/davy-letters>, (accessed 19 January 2022).

it was always done as a matter of course and only reported at the Board's 1822 dinner because murmurs of discontent accompanied it over a preceding toast.<sup>148</sup>



**Figure 91**

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**Agricultural loving cup**  
In silver and engraved with sheep

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The Group, including the aristocrats, often sang songs interspersed with convivial toasts.<sup>149</sup> Sometimes a singer would be brought along to entertain them after the main business had ended. Although Captain Charles Morris, the Prince Regent's favourite singer, is not recorded as attending any farming dinners, another popular singer, Charles Dignum, did, such as when he entertained the Essex Agricultural Society's members at their dinner in Chelmsford's Shire Hall in 1805. It was the Society's post-show dinner, and many of the

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<sup>148</sup> 'Annual Cattle Shew of the Board of Agriculture', 25 April 1822, *Morning Post*, 3, in NA.

<sup>149</sup> 'Duke of Bedford's Sheep-shearing', 17 June 1801, *Morning Post*, 3, in BNA; 'Holkham Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IX (1811), 63.

Woburn Group were there, including the sixth Duke, who had been one of the judges.

Dignum's repertoire after the dinner included several patriotic songs.<sup>150</sup>

#### 4. Sweepstakes and challenges

Even if there was no singer, after the meal, toasts and speeches ended, the men stayed on, singing, drinking and socialising, often remaining together until a late hour if it was an evening dinner. At this point in proceedings, their minds turned to ideas for sweepstakes and challenges, generally with money involved. Clark is again useful for background information on gambling in clubs and societies. He considers that despite its potential for causing disputes among members, gaming could ideally reinforce links between them, serving to redistribute modest sums of wealth, 'underlining equality and unity.'<sup>151</sup> Clark's views that betting reinforced unity could equally apply to the Woburn Group, although it was not through gaming. The dictionary definition of gaming is 'the risking of money in games of chance, especially at a casino.' If this is what Clark perceives as being prevalent within these associations during this period, this was not the sort of gambling that occurred at the agricultural events.<sup>152</sup>

It was sweepstakes, challenges and betting on these challenges that held more appeal for the Woburn Group, and probably what Clark means by gaming. Participating in sweepstakes fulfilled two needs. Firstly, although only gently rubbing it, it did satisfy to some degree the itch for gaming that Hutton thought was predominant in all ranks during this period.<sup>153</sup> Secondly, it was a way for participants to display their agricultural husbandry skills

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<sup>150</sup> 'Essex Agricultural Society', *Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 449-50.

<sup>151</sup> Clark, 228.

<sup>152</sup> 'Gaming' *Cambridge English Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/gaming>, (accessed 27 August 2019). No gaming appears to have taken place at the dinners, and it is unlikely that the houseguests, at both the Woburn and Holkham shearings, played cards for money before they went to bed. They were most likely tired after a long day's activities and happy to sit and discuss the events of the day together rather than gamble. Young was often one of these houseguests. From 1800 onwards, after he became more religious, Young would likely have disparagingly noted in his diary if gaming had taken place.

<sup>153</sup> William Hutton, cited in Clark, 228.



to their peers. Sweepstakes took two different forms: one involved competing against one another by showing livestock or participating in a ploughing competition or similar arable activity. The other involved estimating the weight of something, usually a carcass.

Sweepstake classes were like any other competitive class and took place at the end of the scheduled classes. The only tangible difference between the two types of classes was that the competitors themselves subscribed to the prize money for the sweepstake class rather than the show organiser. Sometimes there were as many as six sweepstake classes at a farming show. Some societies minuted sweepstakes, stipulating they had to be organised under the same terms as the official classes.<sup>154</sup> The sweepstake entry money (the purse) was divided according to how many had entered, with the major share going to the winner. These sweepstake classes were often well subscribed, and at the Sussex Agricultural Society's show at Lewes in 1799, 23 candidates showed for the sweepstake for the finest-woolled sheep.<sup>155</sup> They could be organised a year in advance or with very little notice. The suggestion to hold a sweepstake class often arose at one of these dinners.

The second form of a very popular sweepstake was estimating the weight of a whole or part of a sheep's carcass. The sweepstake operated just as any village fete's 'guess-the-weight-of' competition does today. At Woburn and Holkham, the Dukes of Bedford and Coke organised them to encourage camaraderie. The subscribers usually paid either a guinea or half a guinea to enter, and the person who guessed closest to the actual weight of the carcass won the entire purse. The result was announced at the dinner after the awards had been presented.<sup>156</sup> Any number of men could enter, but it appears from the extant lists of subscribers that only one guess per person was allowed. For the agriculturalists who took

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<sup>154</sup> General Rule VII in 'Statement of the Kendal Agricultural Society', *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 476.

<sup>155</sup> 'Some Notes at Glynde in Sussex, 1799', *Annals*, Vol. XXXIII, 449-50.

<sup>156</sup> For instance, the result of the sweepstake to estimate the weight of one of Coke's sheep carcasses in 1805 was announced the following night, after the presentation of the prizes. 'Holkham Annual Sheep Shearing: Third Day', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XIII (1805), 58-9.

part, this was no guessing game but a competition of skill to determine who was the most proficient in estimating the weight of a carcass.

The sweepstake organised at the Holkham Sheep Shearing in June 1803 demonstrates this well. Five wethers, appraised live and then slaughtered, had their carcasses hung up for examination by the agriculturalists. Coke organised a sweepstake to see whose estimation was nearest to the actual weight of one of these carcasses: his own Southdown wether. Thirty-one men paid a guinea each to try their luck. As this thesis has consistently shown, they were a mixed group, comprising a duke, three earls, a knight, a handful of large landowners, some tenant farmers, a butcher, and the son of a tenant farmer.<sup>157</sup> The carcass weighed 130lbs, and Money Hill won, guessing the exact weight. However, the winner could also have been Edward Kett, a Norwich butcher.<sup>158</sup> Kett estimated the carcass weighed 128lbs but had not realised he had to include its feet. Had these been removed before weighing, which was the standard procedure among the Norwich butchers, the weight would have been 2lbs less, and Kett would have won. The butcher must have complained, and his discontent over whether the weight should have included the feet is reminiscent of George Watkinson's disgruntled letter to Young on the same subject discussed in the previous chapter. Kett went on to estimate the correct weight of the other four carcasses to within one pound, and Coke, clearly impressed, rewarded his judgement by giving him the carcass of 'a very fine fat wether'.<sup>159</sup>

What comes over very strongly from contemporary reports of these dinners is that these men thought challenges, sweepstakes and pledges played an integral part in their drive for agricultural improvement. What it also did was bond them. By giving the carcass to Kett Coke's gesture underlines one of the core themes of this thesis, that what united this group of

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<sup>157</sup> 'Holkham Sheep Shearing', *Annals*, Vol. XL, 617-20.

<sup>158</sup> Young calls this butcher Mr E. Rett, but it is actually Edward Kett who was a Norwich butcher during this period, and a regular at the Holkham Sheep Shearing. Kett is a very common Norfolk name.

<sup>159</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XL, 620.

men was not only a shared interest in agricultural improvement but respect for the men who possessed the skills to further this improvement: in this case a Norwich butcher.

The men enjoyed the carcass estimations. They were egalitarian, giving butchers, tenant farmers and the like a chance to compete on equal terms with the aristocracy and their landlords. On occasions, aristocrats beat the best professional farmers, such as in 1805 when the Earl of Winchilsea won, his guess being within half a pound, the sixth Duke and Coke coming second and third.<sup>160</sup> All three were closer than top sheep breeders, such as Money Hill and two Dishley men, Richard Astley and Nicholas Buckley. There is no record of whether Winchilsea and the sixth Duke donned their smocks as Coke, the fifth Duke, and Somerville did, but they did judge on occasions, so they may well have done.<sup>161</sup>

There is no record that Kett was at Holkham when Winchilsea won. However, he was there in 1810 when a number bet half a guinea to estimate the weight of a half-bred carcass. This carcass weighed 8 stone 1lb, and surprisingly and, apparently with no collusion between the participants, an equal number guessed either 8 stone or 8 stone 2lb, which meant there was no outright winner.<sup>162</sup> Susanna Wade-Martins rightly says that Coke loved the publicity his sheep shearings generated, and he gave the carcass to Kett to display in his shop in Norwich.<sup>163</sup> More than likely, Coke asked the butcher to attach a label to it, announcing it had caused an 'unprecedented circumstance' that year at the Holkham Sheep Shearing.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> The wether weighed 183lbs and the sixth Duke was 1lb out and Coke 2lbs out. 'Holkham Sheep Shearing', *Annals*, Vol. XLIV, 230.

<sup>161</sup> As discussed earlier in the chapter, the sixth Duke of Bedford judged at the Essex Agricultural Society's show in 1805. The Earl of Winchilsea judged at Somerville's Show in 1806. 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Show', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XIV (1806), 199.

<sup>162</sup> There is no mention whether the entry fee was returned to the participants when there was no outright winner. 'Holkham Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VII (1810), 62.

<sup>163</sup> Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 118.

<sup>164</sup> Whether Kett took part in this sweepstake and was one of the men who tied for the result is not recorded. None of the subscribers' names are listed. *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VII (1810), 62.

Challenges were different to sweepstakes. Individuals who considered they possessed something, be it an animal, implement or skill, superior to anyone else, issued a challenge, being prepared to wager a sum of money to prove it. Usually, it was between two men and generally involved their livestock or their plough team. Within the Woburn Group, it was not only the aristocracy who challenged each other. Challenges were issued and accepted by men from across the agricultural sector. These challenges created a stronger sense of solidarity among them than estimating the weight of a carcass. They could generate significant interest and attract large numbers of side bets on the result. Making a challenge and accepting one increased the participants' standing within the Group, engendered respect between the participants and the whole group, and created interaction and camaraderie.

One such challenge was the wager in 1804 between two inveterate Southdown sheep enthusiasts, Sir Thomas Carr and Money Hill. Carr was a close neighbour and friend of Ellman. George III had knighted Carr when, as High Sheriff of Sussex, Carr had congratulated him on surviving his recent assassination attempt.<sup>165</sup> Money Hill was 36 years of age, 11 years younger than Carr, one of Coke's best tenant farmers and an enthusiastic Smithfield Club member. Carr was also a Smithfield member, and at the Club's annual dinner in December 1804, Carr proposed a bet of 50 guineas for anyone to produce a better pair of twin heifers than his.<sup>166</sup> There were no takers, but Money Hill then suggested a different wager for the same amount but now involving sheep.<sup>167</sup> His challenge was for anyone to produce five Southdown sheep, fed only on grass, hay and turnips, that would beat him at Somerville's forthcoming show.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> 'Saint Andrew, Beddingham', *Around British Churches*, [website], <http://aroundbritishchurches.blogspot.com/2009/05/lewes-beddingham-is-today-known-best.html>, (accessed 22 August 2021).

<sup>166</sup> 'Smithfield Cattle Show, Saturday, December 14', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XI (1804), 456.

<sup>167</sup> Young and some reports state the bet was for 50 guineas but others state it was for 100 guineas. 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Show', *Annals*, Vol. XLIII, 650-1.

<sup>168</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XI (1804), 456.

Money Hill was vice-chair at this meeting. In this capacity, he sat next to the president, the sixth Duke. Whether this increased Money Hill's sense of self-importance, or he had had too much to drink can only be speculated, but this was a large sum of money for a tenant farmer, even a relatively prosperous one. Carr, who was clearly in the mood to wager that night, accepted his challenge.<sup>169</sup> As was usual with wagers, the terms were written down, which both men signed.<sup>170</sup> Each produced five Southdown wethers at Somerville's show ten weeks later. Because challenges often involved large sums of money, different appraisers assessed the animals independently of the show judges. In this instance, Charles Callis Western, the Essex landowner and Whig MP, Henry King Snr the Leadenhall butcher, and Edward Smith Jnr examined the sheep, alive and dead.<sup>171</sup> Somerville announced the result at his dinner, saying the judges 'were unanimously of the decision, with relation to frame and shape of carcase, and general symmetry, Money Hill's [were] the best'. He went on to say that the two men had discussed the wager since the original challenge and had agreed to leave it to him 'to name the amount of the bet'. Somerville was highly respected in the farming world and considered a very good sheepman, and in asking him to name the terms, Carr and Money Hill thought he would be fair. Somerville told his audience the challenge had not been about money and therefore considered 10 guineas would suffice.<sup>172</sup> But because Money Hill brought his sheep 120 miles to the show, more than twice the distance Carr's had travelled, Somerville presented him with his remaining extra silver cup. He said this was because he

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<sup>169</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XI (1804), 456.

<sup>170</sup> Carr had written into the agreement that he should be allowed to select his sheep from some home bred ones that he had recently sold to George Gunning. 'Smithfield Club', *Annals*, Vol. XLIII, 393-4.

<sup>171</sup> *The Star* considered the sixth Duke of Bedford was one of the three judges, but this was an error, it was Edward Smith Jnr. 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Show', 5 March 1805, *Star (London)*, 4; 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Show', 6 March 1805, *British Press*, 8, both in NA.

<sup>172</sup> There are two versions regarding the result of this wager. Arthur Young's version, discussed in the chapter, is likely to be the correct one as Young was present at the dinner. 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Show', *Annals*, Vol. XLIII, 650-1. Also, Somerville's gesture, giving the extra cup to Money Hill, was a very typical one during the presentation of his awards. The erroneous second version stated that Money Hill magnanimously stated he would be happy to accept 10 guineas from Carr, rather than 50 guineas. Carr, equally delighted at having to pay a far lower amount, was reported as graciously presenting Money Hill with a silver cup. 6 March 1805, *British Press*, 8.

was 'so well satisfied with Mr [Money] Hill's sheep, considering the distance they had travelled'.<sup>173</sup> So, although Money Hill received less than initially agreed, he went home with an ornate silver trophy. Money Hill must have been delighted with winning the challenge and Somerville's commendation, but also being awarded the trophy. When he died eight years later at only 42, his will records that his second bequest (the first to his wife) was that all his plate, won at agricultural shows, should go to his eldest son, Charles William.<sup>174</sup>

Although over a hundred and fifty miles apart and on different rungs of the agricultural social ladder, Money Hill and Carr were friends. At Somerville's show the previous year, Young listed the two men together at the dinner and, the day before, they had competed against one another in the class for the best five-year-old Southdown ewe.<sup>175</sup> However, neither man won because Coke walked away with the first prize. As discussed in Chapter Two, Coke's great interest was selective sheep breeding; however, he was also a keen ploughing enthusiast and regularly issued challenges involving both. Young thought the favourite topic of the Group was the plough and this interest among the Group manifested itself in numerous ploughing matches held in different areas.<sup>176</sup> The British Isles has varied soil types, and ploughs were built in different locations to suit local conditions. Although the skill of the ploughmen and how well he handled both the plough and the team of horses or oxen that pulled it was paramount to how well the plough team performed, there is no doubt that some ploughs were superior to others. Ploughing competitions were an immensely popular pursuit among the Woburn Group, especially Coke, a great advocate of the Norfolk Plough. At Woburn, in June 1801, he proposed a trial of ploughs and, wagering 50 guineas, he challenged 'all England with a Norfolk Plough'.<sup>177</sup> Although not accepting Coke's initial

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<sup>173</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Show', *Annals*, Vol. XLIII, 650-1.

<sup>174</sup> 'Will of William Money Hill, of Waterden, Norfolk', 23 March 1813, The National Archives, PROB 11/1542/41, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D208877>, (accessed 20 July 2019).

<sup>175</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Cattle and Sheep Show', *Annals*, Vol. XLII, 73-6.

<sup>176</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXV, 256.

<sup>177</sup> Edward Wakefield did accept this challenge. 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', *Annals*, Vol. XXXVII, 217.

challenge, Sir John Sebright countered it with a slightly different challenge, again for 50 guineas. His wager involved Coke bringing his Norfolk Plough to Sebright's estate in Hertfordsire. Coke accepted Sebright's challenge and, six months later, brought his plough team to Beechwood House and beat Sebright's Hertfordshire Plough with his Norfolk Plough.<sup>178</sup>

Figure 92 <sup>179</sup>



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*The Norfolk Plough*  
(1794)

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One who did take up Coke's challenge was Edward Wakefield.<sup>180</sup> Chapter One discussed how disruptive Wakefield's show was for his heavily pregnant wife and broader family and how often he was absent from home during this period. Wakefield's name first appeared in connection with the Group in 1801 when he exhibited his Suffolk stallion at the

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<sup>178</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVII, 217-18. The original pledge, the letter from the fifth Duke of Bedford informing Coke that he had won, the letter from Sir John Sebright to Thomas William Coke and his reply are held in F/TWC2, Holkham.

<sup>179</sup> Anonymous, *The Norfolk Plough at Work*, Nathaniel Kent, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Norfolk* (C. Macrae, 1794), between 14-15.

<sup>180</sup> Wakefield first accepted Coke's challenge in June 1801. *Annals*, Vol. XXXVII, 217. In 1802 it was decided that it should be over three legs: at Woburn, Holkham and Burnham. 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', *Annals*, Vol. XXXIX, 50. When the result was printed in *Annals* in 1803 a rider was added saying that it had been agreed that it would take place at Burnham. 'Woburn Sheep Shearing, 1803', *Annals*, Vol. XL, 508-9.

Woburn Sheep Shearing, and later in the year, he was one of the first to be elected to the newly constituted Smithfield Club.<sup>181</sup> He judged the livestock and the shearing classes at Woburn six months later with Ellman. The pairing of the two most likely to get the older and far more experienced Ellman's opinion of him.<sup>182</sup> Later that year, he was with Somerville in Somerset, purchasing Devon cattle.<sup>183</sup> The following year, he stayed in the Abbey at the

**Figure 93**<sup>184</sup>



**Edward Wakefield**  
George Garrard (1805-9)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Woburn Sheep Shearing as a house guest of the sixth Duke.<sup>185</sup> Wakefield was not only good with livestock, but he also excelled on the arable side. Such was his expertise that no less a person than Sir John Sinclair, the first President of the Board of Agriculture (the Board), paid tribute to his drilling methods in *Annals*.<sup>186</sup>

The ploughing challenge between Coke and Wakefield took place at Wakefield's show on 26 May 1803. Although 21 ploughs exhibited their different techniques on Wakefield's land that day, only his and Coke's were involved in the wager. The challenge involved each plough working two-fifths of an acre. Wakefield's Essex plough took 29 minutes longer than Coke's Norfolk plough.

<sup>181</sup>Not only was Wakefield's Suffolk stallion admired but a footnote explained Wakefield was 'a very noted cultivator' and provided some information about his cropping system. 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', 1 September 1801, *Monthly Magazine*, [176] 90, in NA. Wakefield was one of the new members elected after the Club's constitutional change. 'Smithfield Cattle and Sheep Society', *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 78-9.

<sup>182</sup> 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', *Morning Chronicle*, 19 June 1802, 3, in NA.

<sup>183</sup> Wakefield was at Somerville's estate in Somerset at Michaelmas 1802. 'Account of Young's Survey of Essex, concluded from p.76', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. I, 1807 (1808), 148.

<sup>184</sup> George Garrard, *Edward Wakefield*, Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>185</sup> Wakefield's brother Daniel also stayed at the Abbey 'Woburn Sheep Shearing, 1803', *Annals*, Vol. XL, 481-2.

<sup>186</sup> 'Essex Husbandry near Kelvedon, Coggeshall, &c\*', *Annals*, Vol. XL, 325-6.



Because both ploughs used different techniques, opinions varied on which was the best method, so it was referred to the sixth Duke and Ellman for them to decide. The illustration below gives a good idea of a ploughing match in progress.



Figure 94 <sup>187</sup>

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*Sir Charles Morgan at the Castleton Ploughing Match 1845*

James Flewitt Mullock

© National Museum of Wales

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The winner was announced at the forthcoming Woburn Sheep Shearing three weeks later when Coke and Wakefield stayed in the abbey as guests of the sixth Duke. Arriving at their decision, the sixth Duke and Ellman considered various factors. These included the depth and cleanness of the furrow and the time taken to perform the work.<sup>188</sup> They decided

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<sup>187</sup> James Flewitt Mullock, *Sir Charles Morgan at the Castleton Ploughing Match 1845*, Oil on Canvas, 613 mm (1845), Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, NMW A 26149, [Sir Charles Morgan at the Castleton ploughing match - Collections Online | National Museum Wales](#), (accessed 10 November 2021).

<sup>188</sup> Both cultivators produced different results; the Essex Plough laid furrows with a feather edge which produced channels where the seed could be dropped into and then completely buried when harrowed, whilst the Norfolk Plough produced a flatter surface, with no channels and gave the impression that the ground had been simultaneously harrowed. 'Mr. Wakefield's Sheep Shearing at Burnham, in Essex', *Annals*, Vol. XL, 644-5.

‘the BET to have been won by Mr. Coke’s Norfolk plough.’<sup>189</sup> A 50 guinea wager was a significant amount for Wakefield to lose, but as Chapter One pointed out, although hosting his show was a considerable financial outlay for the family, it was immense as a public relations act for Wakefield cementing his place within the Group.<sup>190</sup> Recognising Wakefield’s

Figure 95 <sup>191</sup>



prowess with livestock,

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**Edward Wakefield’s Suffolk  
Stallion**  
George Garrard (1804)

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Garrard positioned him in the Group of livestock men inspecting the sixth Duke’s Oakley Hereford bull, placing

him beside Westcar, ‘that prince of graziers’. But he also depicted Wakefield’s renowned Suffolk stallion, much admired when Wakefield exhibited him at Woburn in 1801, in the background behind him. Apart from the famous Durham Ox, Wakefield’s stallion is the only animal portrayed not owned by the sixth Duke.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>189</sup> ‘BET.-Decision.’, *Annals*, Vol. XL, 508-9.

<sup>190</sup> Wakefield would have settled this wager with Coke in one of three ways. He could have paid by cash, but this would have been unlikely for large amounts such as 50 guineas. Alternatively, Wakefield could have sent a draft for Coke to present to his bank or directly paid it into Coke’s bank. The latter was the method Sir John Sebright used in November 1801 when he settled his wager with Coke, writing to him for his bank details after the fifth Duke of Bedford informed him, he had lost the bet. Sebright thought this would be easier for Coke than him sending him a draft which he would then have to present to his bank. Sir John Sebright to Thomas William Coke, F/TWC 2, Holkham.

<sup>191</sup> George Garrard, *Suffolk Stallion*, Plate XXXI, drawn to a scale of 1.25 inches to 1 foot., in R.W. Dickson, *Practical Agriculture*, Vol. II (Richard Phillips, 1807), opp. 708.

<sup>192</sup> Wakefield exhibited his Suffolk stallion at Woburn in 1801. ‘Woburn Sheep Shearing’, 1 September 1801, *Monthly Magazine*, 90, in NA. George Garrard painted the stallion when Wakefield brought it to Lord Somerville’s show in 1804. ‘Lord Somerville’s Annual Show of Cattle’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. X (1804), 219. Garrard incorporated the stallion into *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, identifying it in his key, describing it as ‘a Suffolk Punch’. Wakefield is depicted in a group of livestock men in the foreground, whilst the horse is

Figure 96 <sup>193</sup>



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John Westcar (left) and Edward Wakefield (second left) with Wakefield's Suffolk stallion being held and inspected behind them  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1810)

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As well as sweepstakes and challenges, the men enjoyed betting like much of Georgian society. However, whilst there are records of sweepstakes and challenges, betting was on a far more ad hoc basis, and there is very little information about its extent within the Group. In his letter to Ellman in 1797, Young indicates that betting and challenges were

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positioned in the background behind him. It was Garrard's intention to depict only the very best livestock specimens within the painting and the Durham Ox is also depicted, although the ox was never at the event, although lodged in Woburn village for nine days between 21 and 30 August 1805. John Day, *An Account of the Late Extraordinary Durham Ox* (1807), 31, cited in Norman Comben *The Durham Ox* (Nottingham: Adlard Print and Reprographics Ltd., 2007), 59.

<sup>193</sup> Garrard (1810).

linked. Even though Ellman was not at the first Woburn Sheep Shearing, Coke issued three challenges to him there, involving Southdown sheep and all for different sums ranging from £500 to 20 guineas. Young wrote to Ellman from the show informing him of Coke's challenges, saying, 'If you accept, he is clear of beating you; if you reject, you are sunk as a tup-man in the estimation of a very numerous party here from various countries.' But Young clearly felt Ellman had the beating of Coke because he went on to say, 'I have backed you five guineas with Bevan that if you accept you win. Mr. Hall has also backed you a rump and a dozen.'<sup>194</sup> Ellman politely refused the challenge, and such was his standing in the agricultural world that his reputation remained intact.<sup>195</sup> But it is evident from Young's letter that betting on the outcome of these wagers had already commenced before Ellman even knew about the challenge.

Large sums of money could change hands on the betting surrounding these challenges, but not to the same extent as at the gaming tables, where one of the Group, the ninth Earl of Thanet, won £40,000 in one night and lost £120,000 on another.<sup>196</sup> After dinner was the time to pledge bets, and when the fifth Duke hosted the shearings at Woburn, his brother, then Lord John Russell, 'sat as Croupier.'<sup>197</sup> At the dinner in 1802, two Bedfordshire farmers agreed to wager 50 guineas over who could produce the best wether at the next Woburn Sheep Shearing.<sup>198</sup> The following year the judges, Somerville and Westcar, decided in Mr Bithrey's favour, which cost his opponent, Captain Moore, far more than 50 guineas

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<sup>194</sup> A rump and a dozen is a rump of beef and a dozen bottles of claret.

<sup>195</sup> [Walesby], xxvii-iii.

<sup>196</sup> Thomas Seccombe, rev. K.D. Reynolds, 'Tufton, Sackville. ninth earl of Thanet', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27802>, (accessed 3 Aug 2018).

<sup>197</sup> 24 June 1800, *Kentish Gazette*, 2, in BNA. An uncatalogued typed note regarding the Woburn Sheep Shearings held in the curatorial department at Woburn Abbey defines croupier as 'both assistant, one who stands behind, vice president etc. and one who helps with betting'.

<sup>198</sup> This wager resulted from the judges at the 1801 Woburn Sheep Shearing (Lord Somerville, John Bennet and Thomas Crook) deciding not to award Captain Moore first prize in the class for the best 2-shear wether bred in Bedfordshire as he had fed it on corn and they clearly thought it too fat. They decided to award Mr Bithrey first prize and Capt. Moore second. 'Woburn Sheep Shearing'. *Monthly Magazine*, 1 September 1801, 90-1, in NA.

because he lost a further 130 guineas in the side bets he made with other people over the wager's outcome.<sup>199</sup>

Ploughing matches were always popular events for betting, and doubtless, the challenge between Coke and Wakefield resulted in much side betting. As Chapter Two discussed, Somerville was also keenly interested in ploughing and patented and sold the double furrow plough he had invented. Mr Tweed, an Essex tenant farmer, had bought one and in 1802 told Somerville that he had made a wager that he could plough two acres with three horses using Somerville's double furrow plough in the same time that it would take a single plough and two horses to plough one acre. Mr Gibling had accepted Tweed's challenge and the match drew a vast crowd with Tweed starting as the underdog, the odds being 'three and four to one' against him winning. Tweed's plough won, and he told Somerville that on another occasion, his double furrow plough had also beaten the ploughing teams of Wakefield and the Essex landowners, Western, Filmer Honeywood and Montague Burgoyne. Tweed took three guineas off each and undoubtedly a considerable amount in side bets.<sup>200</sup>

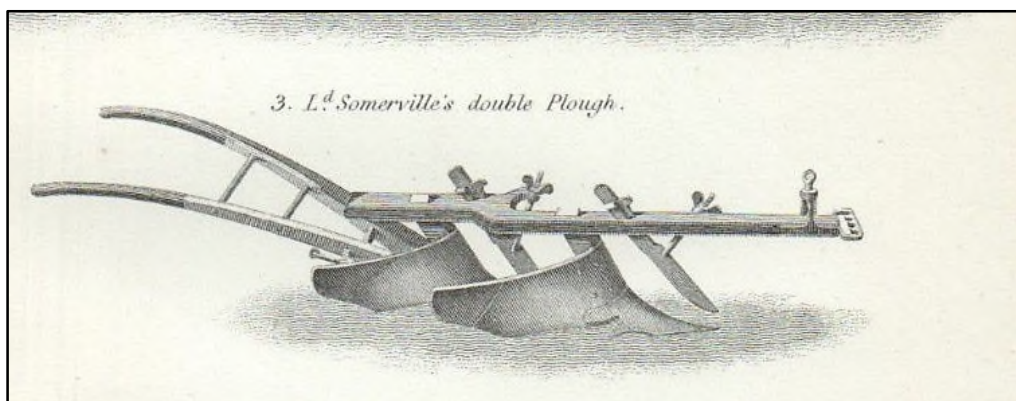


Figure 97 <sup>201</sup>

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*Lord Somerville's Double Furrow Plough*

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<sup>199</sup> 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', 19 June 1802, *Morning Chronicle*, 3, in NA.

<sup>200</sup> Somerville, *Facts and Observations*, 144-6.

<sup>201</sup> *Lord Somerville's Double Furrow Plough*, Plate XXIII, *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, Vol. II (1800), opp. 420.



Figure 98<sup>202</sup>

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*The Groundslow Ploughing Match*

James Egan (1840)

This image provides a good idea of a ploughing match in progress

© The Trustees of the British Museum

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As Young said in 1801, the plough raised no end of interesting debates and bets.<sup>203</sup> As these examples have shown, it was a favourite topic among the Group and instrumental in creating friendly interaction among them. It achieved this through their participation in challenges and ploughing matches and the discussion created when they dined together. However, it was also a great social leveller. An incident at the 1805 Woburn Sheep Shearing illustrates this well. Many ploughs took part in a complicated match. The match drew a large crowd, so the judges, Somerville and Bate Dudley, banned anyone from entering the

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<sup>202</sup> James Egan, *The Groundslow Ploughing Match*, Mezzotint Engraving, 523 mm x 763 mm (1840), London: British Museum, No. 2010,7081.4242. Licenced under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

<sup>203</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXVII, 217.

competition field. Spectators were allowed to watch from behind a low hedge in an adjoining field. When the sixth Duke and the Duke of Clarence arrived slightly late, they were unaware of the ban and tried to enter the field. Somerville and Bate Dudley promptly denied them admittance. So, ‘with the greatest good humour’, the owner of the vast Russell estates and the future King William IV, ‘took their stand among the rest of the spectators, without the field.’<sup>204</sup>

## **5. Subscriptions and donations**

Whilst betting induced the Group to put their hands in their pockets, they also occasionally subscribed to various causes. After the main business of the speeches, toasts and presentations were over, there were often announcements about new farming products and notifications about them were passed around. These might include a new agricultural book, a novel idea to catch rats, eradicate turnip rot fly, or a remedy to cure scouring (diarrhoea). Much discussion would ensue over them. The inventors of new products would only reveal their idea or remedy if they received money for it. How they instigated payment was through a subscription list. The number of subscribers required was usually between 500-1,000 men, who each invested a guinea. After obtaining the requisite subscribers, the ‘inventor’ revealed his idea or remedy. The conclusion of the toasts was a good time for circulating subscription lists among the diners. By this time, they were usually in a genial mood. Obtaining an endorsement from the host or involving a respected member of the Group in trialling the product assisted greatly in gaining subscribers. The Birmingham veterinary surgeon, Richard Lawrence, clearly understood how important it was to have influential names on a subscription list. When he sent Coke a notification advertising his new treatise on the treatment of sheep and cattle diseases, he told him that, at Woburn, he had been honoured

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<sup>204</sup> ‘Woburn Sheep Shearing: Third Day’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 442.

that noblemen, including the sixth Duke and Somerville, had added their names to his list of subscribers.<sup>205</sup>

Often these subscription lists came to nothing, or it could take years to gain the requisite number of subscribers: as with *Bellamy's Bath Powder*. Mr Bellamy had developed a remedy that stopped scouring in cattle. Having discussed the remedy at the Bath and West Society's dinner in 1801, his subscription list was handed around and then left with the secretary.<sup>206</sup> The following year, at the same meeting, the remedy was endorsed by Thomas Crook and Charles Gordon Gray, both respected livestock men within the Woburn Group.<sup>207</sup> In December 1803, Gray and Somerville actively promoted it at the Smithfield Club dinner. They had been trialling it for Bellamy and were both impressed with the results, notably Gray, who enthused about the success he had achieved with it. Somerville corroborated Gray's testimony, saying it deserved the serious attention and support of all the society's members.<sup>208</sup> Still short of his requisite 500 subscribers, Bellamy advertised in *Annals* advising that he would provide the 'recipe' and other remedies to cure cattle diseases as soon as he reached this number.<sup>209</sup> It was not until December 1804 that the sixth Duke could announce at the Smithfield Club's dinner that the subscription had been met, and 'Mr Bellamy' had copies in the room to distribute.<sup>210</sup> Bellamy was still handing these out to his long-suffering subscribers at the 1805 Woburn Sheep Shearing: three and a half years after his 'cure for scour' was first discussed at the 1801 Bath meeting.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Richard Lawrence to Thomas William Coke, 21 June 1805, F/TWC 2, Holkham.

<sup>206</sup> 'Bath and West of England Society', *Annals*, Vol. XXXVI, 205.

<sup>207</sup> Arthur Young wrongly dated his report of the Bath and West's meeting as 8 December 1800. The meeting began on Tuesday 8 December 1801, Lord Somerville was in the chair as the fifth Duke of Bedford was unwell and unable to attend. 'Bath and West of England Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture, Arts, Manufactures and Commerce', *Annals*, Vol. XXXVIII, 113.

<sup>208</sup> 'Smithfield Club', *The Repertory of Arts, Manufactures and Agriculture*, Vol. IV (1804), 158.

<sup>209</sup> 'Miscellaneous Information: Remedy for Scouring', *Annals*, Vol. XLI, 478-9.

<sup>210</sup> 'Smithfield Cattle Show, Saturday 14 December', *The Agricultural Magazine for 1804*, Vol. XI (1804), 456; 'Smithfield Cattle Shew', 18 December 1804, *Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>211</sup> 'Woburn Sheep Shearing: First Day', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 339. The page number relating to Bellamy handing out his work *Diseases of Cattle* should read 439, but it is erroneously printed as



Figure 99 <sup>212</sup>



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**Francis, Duke of Bedford**  
Richard Westmacott (1809)  
Image courtesy of George P Landow  
*The Victorian Web*

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Men within the Group could also instigate subscriptions to commemorate or reward endeavour. These functioned on a donation basis. Shortly after the fifth Duke died, the main protagonists within the Group met at Banks' London house to discuss a suitable memorial to the late Duke. They decided to erect a colossal bronze statue of him in London's Russell Square, funded by 'a voluntary and general subscription.'<sup>213</sup> Banks took on the fund's administration and, just over a year later, £3,172 had been raised, with donations ranging from 1 guinea to 50 guineas.<sup>214</sup>

The sixth Duke displayed preliminary drawings of his brother's statue at the 1805 Woburn Sheep Shearing so that the men

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339. There is a copy of Bellamy's book within the archive collection F/TWC 2, Holkham. Bellamy's dedication to the sixth Duke of Bedford reveals that he had originally intended to dedicate it to the fifth Duke of Bedford. The list of subscribers appears on the pages following the dedication and reveals that many of the Woburn Group subscribed. T. Bellamy, *Recipes to prepare and administer various medicines for the cure of diseases incident to cattle, sheep &c* (W. Meyler, 1804).

<sup>212</sup> Richard Westmacott, *Francis, Duke of Bedford*, 1809, (9ft bronze statue on a granite pedestal base, total height 27ft). It stands centrally on one side of Russell Square in London and depicts the fifth Duke in Roman attire surrounded by groups of allegorical figures and emblems, all connected with agriculture. For more information on the statue and detailed images of the fifth Duke and the agricultural and classical motifs, see George P. Landow, *Victorian Web*, [website], <https://victorianweb.org/sculpture/westmacott/12.html>, (accessed 22 August 2021).

<sup>213</sup> 'Domestic Events', *The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners*, Vol. XIII (1802), 294.

<sup>214</sup> 'A List of Subscribers to the Erection of a Statue in Memory of the Late Duke of Bedford', *Annals*, Vol. XXXIX, 11-19.

could look at and discuss them. Many of them had donated, and they would have been gratified to see that its inscription was to read:

To the Memory of Francis, Duke of Bedford, this Statue was erected by Public Subscription, in Gratitude of his Grace's unwearied Endeavours to improve the Theory and Practice of Agriculture.<sup>215</sup>

However, at its unveiling in 1809, the inscription simply read 'Francis, Duke of Bedford, erected MDCCCIX'. Although this was a public fund, many of its subscribers were from the farming world. This short inscription, lacking any mention of his agricultural endeavours, would have disappointed many agriculturalists, particularly the Smithfield Club members. As Chapter Three discussed, they viewed the fifth Duke as their natural leader.

Funds could reward and commemorate, and the Norfolk farmers' generous gesture in presenting Coke with a trophy in 1804 illustrates this well. The Norfolk Agricultural Society members subscribed 700 guineas to commission the renowned silversmith Paul Storr to produce a wonderfully ornate 3ft high silver urn. It is embossed and engraved with agriculturally themed allegorical motifs. Garrard sculpted Coke's favourite breeds for the relief panels: a Southdown sheep and a Devon ox, whilst the third panel depicts a Norfolk Plough.<sup>216</sup> Apart from Coke's name and the date, the inscription states it was presented by the Farmers of Norfolk for Coke's liberality as a landlord, as a valuable member of their society and for the example he portrayed as a practical farmer.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. X (1804), 466.

<sup>216</sup> Although Garrard stated in his catalogue that it is a Hereford Ox, it is a Devon Ox. The Norfolk Farmers commissioned a Devon ox and a Southdown tup from life in silver from Garrard. 'Holkham Sheep-Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XI (1804), 69; Garrard's exhibition was nine years after he received the commission, and he made a mistake in compiling his catalogue. 'An Hereford Ox. Cast in silver, and placed on the Cup presented to T.W. Coke by the Norfolk Farmers, No. 197 & A South Down Tup, ditto, No. 198', *Garrard, Soane*, Item Ref. 4995 11.

<sup>217</sup> The Trophy is inscribed 'Presented to THOMAS WILLIAM COKE, Esq. of Holkham, By the FARMERS of Norfolk, As a token of their Esteem, For the Liberality of his conduct as a Landlord. And Of their gratitude For the Benefit of his Example As a Practical Farmer, And most valuable Member of Society.' *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XI (1804), 69.



Figure 100 <sup>218</sup>

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**The Trophy presented to Thomas William Coke in 1804 by the Norfolk Agricultural Society**  
Paul Storr (silversmith) and George Garrard (relief panels)  
Southdown sheep (left panel) and Norfolk plough (right panel)  
By kind permission of the Earl of Leicester and the Trustees of the Holkham Estate

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<sup>218</sup> Paul Storr (silversmith) and George Garrard (relief panels), Silver, Embossed and Engraved (1804), Norfolk: Holkham Hall.



Figure 101 <sup>219</sup>

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**Devon ox**

Silver relief panel, taken from the urn (above)

Paul Storr and George Garrard (1804)

By kind permission of the Earl of Leicester and the Trustees of  
the Holkham Estate

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In 1806, at his post-show dinner, Somerville proposed that they should all subscribe to a piece of plate as a token of their grateful esteem for the sixth Duke's hospitality in hosting the Woburn Sheep Shearings.<sup>220</sup> He suggested the formation of a committee to oversee this, and he and Hoare took charge of the money with Hoare's bank managing the funds. The aristocrats and monied men each subscribed three guineas, whilst everyone else donated a guinea.<sup>221</sup> A magnificent silver platter was commissioned from the £190 subscribed and presented to the Duke at the 1808 Woburn Sheep Shearing.<sup>222</sup> But unlike the Norfolk

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<sup>219</sup> George Garrard, detail of silver relief panel of a Devon Ox from Figure 100, Norfolk: Holkham Hall.

<sup>220</sup> The sixth Duke of Bedford was not at Somerville's show being on governmental duty in Ireland with the 'ministry of all the talents.' 'Lord Somerville's Cattle Shew', 13 March 1806, *Derby Mercury*, 1; 4 June 1808, *Northampton Mercury*, 3, both in BNA.

<sup>221</sup> 'Hoare, Henry Hugh Esq, Treasurer to the Committee of Subscribers to a Piece of Plate to be given to His Grace the Duke of Bedford', Subscription acct: Customer ledger/folio no: 92/422+423+215, 100/81, 9/148, Archives, C. Hoare & Co.

<sup>222</sup> The silver salver was by Mr. Thomas and inscribed 'Presented to His Grace, John Duke of Bedford, by the Agriculturalists of Great Britain, Anno Domini, 1807' and was still on display in the Treasure Room at Woburn Abbey until 2020 when a major refurbishment of this area was undertaken. It may now have been relocated

farmers trophy, this one was presented as a testimony of the agriculturalists' sincere esteem and gratitude for the many hospitable entertainments they had all enjoyed at Woburn Abbey.<sup>223</sup> The Duke of Clarence was to have made the presentation, but, unfortunately, he was ill, so Somerville presented it instead. Accompanying him was the presentation committee, made up of men at the Group's heart: Bate Dudley, Byng Ellman, Hoare, Ludlow, Sinclair, Westcar, Western, the Earl of Darnley and Sir Watkin Williams Wynn.<sup>224</sup> The sixth Duke was pleased with their gesture, telling them that he had always endeavoured to follow in his brother's footsteps, albeit a long way behind.<sup>225</sup> It was clearly a special night and must have involved much toasting, and unsurprisingly, the Duke admitted he felt unwell the following evening.<sup>226</sup> Doubtless, he was not the only one suffering from a hangover! Both trophies are magnificent and show the regard and affection the agriculturalists held these men in, valuing both their agricultural endeavours and their hospitality.

Donating to causes bonded the Group, but they also came together on occasions to assist 'one of their own'. In 1805 the Group opened a subscription to help the implement maker Mark Duckitt after he faced financial embarrassment. Chapter Two discussed Duckitt's subscription and George III's part in it in more detail. Nevertheless, help was not always forthcoming from the Group. William Lester had been farming in the Midlands but had developed an interest in inventing farm machinery. In 1800 he relocated to Paddington Green in London to pursue a career as an implement maker. Over the next decade, he published two books on farm machinery, the last one dedicated to Somerville.<sup>227</sup>

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(March 2022). It measures 18 inches by 24 inches, and its border is embossed with agricultural emblematical figures. The Bedford coat of arms is engraved in the centre. 'Bedfordshire', 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', 18 June 1808, *General Evening Post*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>223</sup> *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. IX (1808), 541.

<sup>224</sup> For a list of the presentation committee see 'A sketch in oil, of the Duke of Bedford's Sheepshearing dinner', No. 237, Garrard, *Exhibition*, Soane, Item Ref. 4995 11.

<sup>225</sup> 18 June 1808, *General Evening Post*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>226</sup> 'Woburn Sheep-shearing', 20 June 1808, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>227</sup> Lester, *The Economy of the Barn: A Dialogue between a Farmer and an Economist* (1811); *A History of British Implements* (1811).

Figure 102 <sup>228</sup>



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*Mr Lester, Engineer*  
V Woodford, after Samuel Drummond (1804)

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His books, mixing with the Woburn Group and attending the management meetings of the Smithfield Club, clearly gave him some standing in his Paddington community.

Between April 1810 to 1811, he was appointed the ‘Overseer to the Poor of the Parish’. However, instead of handing in his accounts in April 1811, as required by law, he allegedly absconded with a large sum of money.<sup>229</sup> He wrote to the Smithfield Club

when he was in financial difficulty, claiming ‘unjust treatment from Paddington Parish’. Lester sent letters and testimonials

to try to convince the Club to help him, but they were to no avail. Secretary Farey was instructed to tell him they considered it a subject they could not interfere with.<sup>230</sup> In August, a reward of 10 guineas for his arrest was issued, along with a description of him.<sup>231</sup> Lester went to prison, and whilst incarcerated, he possibly thought back ruefully to the one guinea he subscribed at Woburn to aid his fellow implement maker, Mark Duckitt.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> V. Woodforde after Samuel Drummond, *Mr Lester, Engineer*, Engraving (1804). Image inside front cover of William Lester, *A History of British Implements and Machinery Applicable to Agriculture with Observations on their Improvement* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1811).

<sup>229</sup> ‘Paddington Middlesex: Ten Guineas Reward’, 23 August 1811, *Leicester Journal*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>230</sup> ‘14 December 1812’, Minutes of the Smithfield Club, Vol. I, 217, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>231</sup> 23 August 1811, *Leicester Journal*, 3.

<sup>232</sup> Lester’s name appears among the list of subscribers in ‘Bedford, Duke of; Somerville, Lord; Burgoyne, Montagu Esq; Hoare, Henry Hugh Esq, Mark Duckitt’s Trustees Acct opened June 1805. Closed June 1821’. Customer ledger/folio nos. 89/237-239, Archives, C. Hoare & Co.

As Clark points out, many clubs and societies often made charitable donations to increase their standing in their local community.<sup>233</sup> But, because the Group was never a recognised club, there was never ‘a pot’ to dip into to support charitable causes as many clubs and societies did. Indeed, the Smithfield Club was always short of money, so subscribing was out of the question for them. As many of the more monied landowners were philanthropic in their outlook, they subscribed to many charitable organisations. For instance, for many years, until his death, Somerville was one of the major supporters of the Society for the Discharge and Relief for Persons Imprisoned for Small Debts.<sup>234</sup>

One charitable organisation that some of the Woburn Group subscribed actively to was Joseph Lancaster’s school system. Lancaster’s endeavours had been made known to the Group through Wakefield, who, on the insistence of his mother, had introduced ‘his noble friends’, Somerville and the sixth Duke, to his fellow Quaker, the educationalist Lancaster.<sup>235</sup> Wakefield would actively promote Lancaster’s ideas for educating poor children for many years, whilst the two aristocrats became Lancaster’s greatest benefactors.<sup>236</sup> Others in the

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<sup>233</sup> Clark, 260.

<sup>234</sup> Somerville made annual donations of £20 for many years. ‘Society for the Discharge and Relief for Persons Imprisoned for Small Debts’, 19 January 1811, *Morning Chronicle*, 1; ‘Society for the Discharge and Relief for Persons Imprisoned for Small Debts’, 20 January 1818, *Morning Chronicle*, 1, both in NA.

<sup>235</sup> Edward Wakefield, ‘Education’, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, Vol. II (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1812), 402.

<sup>236</sup> Lord Somerville first visited Joseph Lancaster in 1803. He then introduced him to the Duke of Bedford. Kevin John McGarry, ‘Chronology’, ‘Joseph Lancaster and the British and Foreign School Society: The Evolution of an Educational Organization from 1798 to 1846’, PhD Thesis, University of Wales, 1985, vii; Joseph Lancaster dedicated *Improvements in Education* to ‘John, Duke of Bedford and John Lord Somerville, in Testimony of the cheerful, generous and important Assistance they have repeatedly given to the Institution and System of Instruction described in the ensuing Pages, this Publication is most respectfully inscribed, by their obliged and grateful Friend, Joseph Lancaster, 1805.’; Both men’s names appear as subscribers in various subscription lists in this publication. Joseph Lancaster, *Improvements in Education* (London, Darton & Harvey, 1805 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), [online facsimile], <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=jkIAAAAQAAJ>, (accessed 19 February 2022).



Group also subscribed to Lancaster's new schooling system.<sup>237</sup> The Duke also opened a school in Woburn based on Lancaster's teaching methods.<sup>238</sup> Lancaster's novel education system attracted beneficiaries as illustrious as George III, whose interest was doubtless stimulated by Somerville.<sup>239</sup>

**Figure 103** <sup>240</sup>

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*Joseph Lancaster*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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## **The final course: the end of the great farming events and the Group**

In 1819 Coke wrote, 'every dog has his day, and I have had mine' after his interest in hosting his sheep shearings had begun to wane.<sup>241</sup> Earlier, his great friend, the sixth Duke, tiring of the Woburn Sheep Shearings, had announced at the dinner in June 1813 that it would be the last.<sup>242</sup> The end of the Woburn Sheep Shearing was the first nail in the coffin of these great farming get-togethers, with their grand convivial dinners where 'peers of the highest

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<sup>237</sup> Henry Hugh Hoare, Samuel Whitbread II, Sir Watkin Williams Wynn and Lord Sheffield were some of the Group who were also subscribers of Joseph Lancaster's system.

<sup>238</sup> The sixth Duke of Bedford paid for the establishment of a school which taught 150 boys on the Lancaster schooling system. *The Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XXVI, Part II (1808), 54.

<sup>239</sup> Society of Friends, 'Joseph Lancaster', *Biographical Catalogue being the Lives of Friends and Others whose Portraits are in the London Friends' Institute* (London: Friends Institute, 1888), 415.

<sup>240</sup> Garrard, 'Joseph Lancaster', Oil on Paper Sketch (1805-9), from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>241</sup> Thomas William Coke to 'Bessy' Caton, 24 November 1819, in Caton letters in Holkham Archives, cited in Hiskey, 266.

<sup>242</sup> 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', 18 June 1813, *Morning Chronicle*, 3, in NA.



rank, and men of the most opulent fortune sat promiscuously with their tenants and tradesmen', and 'the utmost hilarity prevailed.'<sup>243</sup> Within nine years, all but one of the meetings had gone, and the Smithfield Club was on its knees. Undoubtedly their demise was connected to the financial stranglehold the long war with France imposed upon the British Isles, particularly during its final years, and the agricultural depression that followed it. The Corn Law bill had created a wedge between the agriculturalists and the poor. From around its introduction in 1815, the patriotic light the general public held the agricultural improvers in had dissipated. However, as this chapter will now discuss, other factors also brought about the end of these great social farming events.

The sixth Duke's decision to end the Woburn Sheep Shearing was less to do with the country's state and more to do with what he perceived as its failure to achieve its objective of motivating the Bedfordshire farmers to improve their farming practices.<sup>244</sup> But, although this was the reason he gave in his last address to the assembled agriculturalists at the final dinner, in reality, it was more to do with ridding himself of a significant annual expenditure as well as ensuring harmonious relations at home.<sup>245</sup> Like his elder brother, the sixth Duke was profligate with money. Marrying at just 19 and with three young sons, Lord John Russell, as he was then, always had more familial responsibilities than his unmarried brother. Although the fifth Duke was very generous to his brother, even as a young man, John Russell was a spendthrift: a man who had '8 hundred a year, with a disposition to spend 8 thousand.'<sup>246</sup> On inheriting the Russell estates, he inherited his brother's immense debts of £400,000. Still,

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<sup>243</sup> 'Lord Somerville's Dinner'; 'Woburn Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 215, 339 (this page should read 439).

<sup>244</sup> 18 June 1813, *Morning Chronicle*, 3.

<sup>245</sup> Blakiston, *Woburn and the Russells*, 172.

<sup>246</sup> Joseph Farington reported that Lord Inchiquin 'spoke highly of the fifth Duke of Bedford's character, from the report of Mr Macnamara, the Duke's political agent. His generosity to his Brother and his kindness to others, was great, and always shewn in the most princely manner', cited in James Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary by Joseph Farington*, Vol. I, 1793-1802 (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1922), 38; Lady Sutherland to Lady Gower, 13 December 1785, Granville papers, PRO 30/29/5, cited in Blakiston, *Lord William Russell and his Wife 1815-1846* (John Murray, 1972), 18, f.n. 2.

although he tried to implement measures to reduce these, he did not curb his own spending. After his death, his eldest son and heir, Francis, seventh Duke of Bedford, ruefully commented, ‘My father had not the power or resolution to hold his hand when money was within his reach.’<sup>247</sup> When he acceded to the dukedom in 1802, the sixth Duke was very recently widowed, but he married his second wife, Lady Georgiana Gordon, the following year. Shortly after their marriage, Young disparagingly commented in his diary, ‘An extravagant duchess, Paris toys, a great farm, little economy and immense debts will prove a canker in all the rosebuds of his [the sixth Duke of Bedford] garden of life.’<sup>248</sup> And so it proved to be. The sixth Duke was an affable and quiet man devoted to his young wife and many children, but he spent heavily and, as Young pointed out, the duchess was extravagant.<sup>249</sup> When she wanted an expensive *cottage orné* in Devon, the Duke's savings on ending the sheep shearings helped fund it.<sup>250</sup>

As Somerville was unmarried, it was not the demands of an extravagant wife that forced him to cancel his show two years later, but an unruly and angry public. He had held his show and dinner in London each year since 1802, but in February 1815, only two weeks before it was due to begin, Somerville advised he was ‘reluctantly obliged’ to cancel it although he offered to pay any expenses if exhibitors’ livestock were already en route.<sup>251</sup> Although he gave no reason for cancelling, it was undoubtedly because of the unsettled and divided opinions over proposals to introduce a law restricting corn importation. Somerville

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<sup>247</sup> Blakiston, *William Russell*, 19.

<sup>248</sup> Betham-Edwards, 396.

<sup>249</sup> Daniel Wakefield and Sawrey Gilpin both thought the sixth Duke of Bedford ‘a valuable man: very punctual in his attention to engagement & to everything: very silent, but easy and natural’. Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (eds.), *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. VI, April 1803-December 1804 (Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1979), 2197; The artist Henry Howard RA thought the Duke a well-informed man who read a great deal and knew a lot about many subjects, and although he didn’t talk much, what he said was sensible. Grieg (ed.), *The Farington Diary*, Vol. V 1808-1809 (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1925), 19.

<sup>250</sup> The Duke had built for the Duchess an elaborate *cottage orné*, in the ‘picturesque manor’, between 1810-1816 at Endsleigh, Devon.

<sup>251</sup> ‘Spring Cattle Show 1815’, 25 February 1815, *Star (London)*, 2, in NA.

most likely knew that the previous month his friend, the Whig MP Charles Callis Western, had his coach pelted with stones by a mob, resulting in broken windows and panels. Western had been in Colchester, discussing a petition to support the introduction of the unpopular corn law. His coach was attacked on his short trip home to Kelvedon.<sup>252</sup> It was not only Western among the Group who favoured controlling the import of foreign corn. Although not politically minded, Somerville would have been concerned that if pro-corn law supporters like Western were exhibiting or attending his show, it might have resulted in insurrection among the restless and starving London populous.<sup>253</sup> His letter to William Kinglake, who managed his Somerset estates, clearly supports this argument. Asking his agent to keep it to himself, he told him that he had consulted the Secretary of State about cancelling. The minister agreed in the propriety of his proposal, thanking him for doing so. Somerville went on to tell Kinglake, ‘such is the inflamed state of the public mind among the lower classes in London –the walls are this morning covered with inflammatory placards.’<sup>254</sup> Cancelling his show was a prescient move on Somerville’s part. The unrest over the proposal to keep corn prices high, thereby protecting English farmers from cheap grain imports, had exacerbated.<sup>255</sup> In early March, just days after his show should have begun, there were riots in London over the introduction of the Corn Law bill. The main protagonists who supported this bill had their Mayfair houses attacked, including the Earl of Darnley, who lived in Berkley Square, close to

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<sup>252</sup> Somerville could have heard this from his friend Edward Wakefield. Wakefield mentioned this incident in a letter to Francis Place. Francis Place to James Mill, 17 January 1815. Place Papers, MS 35152, British Library.

<sup>253</sup> Somerville had been one of the 16 Scottish peers but had stepped down from the House of Lords nine years earlier, in 1806 and had no political input into the Corn Law Bill. Western regularly exhibited at Somerville’s show, as he did the other major shows. In 1811 when the Merino Society first began hosting an annual show, they held it immediately after Somerville’s show but by 1815 it had moved its date to May, so it was not affected by Somerville’s decision to cancel his show.

<sup>254</sup> John, Lord Somerville to William Kinglake, 25 February 1815 in ‘Letters from Lord Somerville to William Kinglake 1805-1818’, Ref. No. DD/X/HFD/2, Somerset Heritage Centre, South West Heritage Centre.

<sup>255</sup> The passing of the Corn Law Bill in 1815 meant that from 23 March 1815 foreign corn was not permitted to be imported for human consumption unless the average price of wheat fell below 80 shillings a quarter; rye, peas and beans 53 shilling, barley 40 shillings and oats 26 shillings. A lower ceiling was fixed for corn from British plantations in North America. The Corn Law Bill would not be repealed until 1846. For a good overview of the Corn Laws see Katie Carpenter, ‘Petitions and the Corn Laws’, 26 July 2019, ‘Committees’, *UK Parliament*, [website], <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/326/petitions-committee/news/99040/petitions-and-the-corn-laws/>, (accessed 23 January 2022).

Somerville.<sup>256</sup> Although Somerville's house was not targeted, his footman, Phillip Chaffey, innocently got caught up in the affray. He was wounded in the face when walking through Burlington Street, just as soldiers opened fire, killing a woman who collapsed at Chaffey's feet.<sup>257</sup>

Somerville reinstated the show in March 1816, but he was forced to cancel it the following year. Writing to 'the Landowners and Yeomanry of Great Britain' in November 1816, he announced that although his annual show 'had ever been [to him] a source of exceeding gratification', he had reluctantly decided to suspend it until further notice. His letter in the newspapers cited the poor harvest and the scarcity it was causing throughout the country as being significant factors in his decision, saying that it was impossible to convene a show with 'equal propriety and safety in the metropolis', as 'Attempts to stir up the people to insurrection are now so frequent and notorious, as to render further explanation useless.'<sup>258</sup> But in 1816, the fear of sedition was not only confined to London, and although Somerville thought it was still possible to host meetings in country areas, huge disparities in wealth among those in the country had made class conflict endemic. Although Somerville praised the landowners and yeomen for the part they had played during the war in the defence and triumph of the country, achieving this through increasing public supplies and by 'personal and gratuitous service when required', the unprecedented high price of corn meant the divide between farmers and labourers had widened during the war years.<sup>259</sup> Whilst high profits had allowed one class to prosper, the other had sunk into poverty, and disturbances involving the

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<sup>256</sup> 'Riots in the Metropolis: Tuesday', 12 March 1815, *London National Register*, 12-13, in NA.

<sup>257</sup> The police were in the home of Mr Robinson who had put forward the Corn Law Bill. There had been rioters there the night before and soldiers were stationed in his parlour to defend him and his house. At the court case it was disclosed that there had been a crowd of about 50, including many spectators who were dispersing when the soldiers opened fire. Somerville visited his footman daily whilst he was in hospital. 'Coroner's Inquest', 20 March 1815, *London Statesman*, 4; 'Coroner's Inquest', 22 March 1815, *London Correspondent and Public Cause*, 9, both in NA.

<sup>258</sup> This letter was written from Ashdown Park, dated 12 November 1816. Somerville mistakenly said he was forced to cancel his show in 1814 for the same reason. He meant 1815. 'Agriculture', 3 December 1816, *Manchester Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>259</sup> 3 December 1816, *Manchester Mercury*, 3.

labouring classes had become daily occurrences in towns and country areas across England. Labourers denied political or legal redress, not only resorted to rick burning and machine-breaking on farms but also directed their anger towards the malpractices of middlemen such as shop owners, butchers, and millers. The threat of sedition was ever-present from 1816 onwards.<sup>260</sup> Earlier that summer, after the price of bread reached unprecedented levels, many East Anglian labourers had rioted. This real threat of revolution emanating from the Eastern counties brought swift action from the government. Intent on making an example of the rioters, five of the East Anglian labourers were executed.<sup>261</sup> This intense period of political unrest would continue until 1819 with a further outbreak of agricultural discontent in East Anglia in 1822, again in 1830-31 and low-level 'covert' protest throughout this period.

Although Somerville hoped the time would return when farming would once again engage the country, and it would be possible to stage his show again, the despair in his letter is very apparent, and Richard Flower took him to task over it. In a letter to the *Farming Journal*, he stated that he had exhibited at Somerville's show, partaken of his gracious hospitality, witnessed his liberality and the handsome manner with which he presented his awards and the emulation this created. He went on to say that he was not criticising him for cancelling his show, considering that as its instigator, he was entitled to do this. What annoyed Flower was Somerville's despondency, telling him, 'you appear to have rung the knell of the departing spirit of agriculture.' He went on to say to him that with his keen and intelligent mind and his easy access to the throne, remedies must have come to his mind to aid the present situation in which the country found itself. He demanded of him to 'Stand

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<sup>260</sup> A.J. Peacock, *Bread or Blood. The Agrarian Riots in East Anglia: 1816* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1965), 25,14. Peacock gives a very nuanced account of the East Anglian riots.

<sup>261</sup> Peacock, 129.

forth then in your place, as a Peer of the Realm, and manfully propose and support them [these remedies]’.<sup>262</sup>

As a keen patriot, Flower’s letter would have hurt Somerville, and he announced through the press that he would reconvene his show in March 1820. But it would now be on a biennial basis. He had given its reinstatement a great deal of thought because his letter was full of details about the date, type and number of classes and the prize money on offer. He intended to conclude it with his usual dinner, but he had capped the numbers of attendees to 300, stipulating his guests must have first attended his show.<sup>263</sup> Unfortunately, in August 1819, he was again forced to cancel it.<sup>264</sup> This time it was nothing to do with the unrest in the capital but his ongoing ill health. For health reasons, he had left England for Italy in May 1818. He never returned, dying in Vevey in Switzerland on 5 October 1819. He was 54 years of age.

By 1820 the depression had deteriorated further, so even if ill health had not forced Somerville to cancel his show, the worsening situation in London would have necessitated it. However, as he had noted in November 1816, meetings could still be held safely in the country, and the Holkham Sheep Shearing and the Workington Agricultural Society’s show carried on until 1821. Coke did not expressly state the reason for ending his show. But as it was the only time in its long history that he allowed politics to enter into the meeting’s after-dinner discussion, likely the ongoing agricultural depression and the hardship it was causing was a significant factor. Despite the economic difficulties discussed that year, Richard Bacon’s very detailed report of the meeting, especially its dinners, shows that Coke and his

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<sup>262</sup> ‘To the Right Honourable John Lord Somerville’, 2 December 1816, *Evans and Ruffy’s Farmers’ Journal*, 3, in NA.

<sup>263</sup> ‘Lord Somerville’s March Exhibition 1820’, 7 December 1818, *Evans and Ruffy’s Farmers’ Journal*, 7, in NA.

<sup>264</sup> ‘Artificial Intelligence’, 30 August 1819, *Evans and Ruffy’s Farmers’ Journal*, 3, in NA.

guests enjoyed themselves. Indeed, it was one of the most well attended of them all.<sup>265</sup>

However, letters written in October 1819 reveal that Coke's heart was no longer in the event.

Writing to his close friend Bessy Caton he admitted that his sheep shearings 'had become more of a trial than a pleasure.'<sup>266</sup> It can be no coincidence that Coke wrote this letter two weeks after the announcement of Somerville's death; he and Somerville had been good friends for many years and highly respectful of one another.

The following month Coke wrote again to Caton, saying, 'every dog has its day and I have had mine', and from these comments, he was surely considering ending 'Coke's Clippings', as it was affectionately known.<sup>267</sup> But personally, this dog had not quite had his day because Coke married again in February 1822, less than eight months after his last sheep shearing. He was 68, and it had been 22 years since his beloved wife Jane had died. In his choice of a bride, he surprised many and shocked some, marrying his 17-year-old god-daughter. It is unknown whether Coke had been contemplating the idea of marriage when he announced the end of his sheep shearings, but if it was on his mind, it might well have played a significant part in his decision to make 1821 his last show. The marriage appears to have been happy, producing Coke six further children, including, finally, an heir for the Holkham Estate.<sup>268</sup> Although the shearings had ended, Coke still hosted dinners twice a year, on audit (rent) day. These were held in the Audit Room below the Statue Gallery when 60 or 70 tenants joined their landlord. A typical spread consisted of '40 dishes besides vegetables and mince pies and 25 bowls of punch.'<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> For a full report of this event and the numbers Bacon estimated attended the dinners see R.N. Bacon, A *Report on the Transactions of The Holkham Sheep-Shearing* (1821).

<sup>266</sup> 'Thomas William Coke to 'Bessy' Caton', 28 October 1819, cited in Hiskey, 266.

<sup>267</sup> 'Thomas William Coke to 'Bessy' Caton', 24 November 1819, cited in Hiskey, 266.

<sup>268</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, Coke already had three daughters with his first wife Jane, who died in 1800.

<sup>269</sup> Hiskey, 259.

Curwen was still actively involved in agriculture, and a month after Coke's last Holkham meeting, he presided as usual at the annual Workington Agricultural Society's Show, with over 400 seated for dinner.<sup>270</sup> But this would also be the Society's last show as

**Figure 104** <sup>271</sup>



**John Christian Curwen**  
George Garrard (1806)  
with Schoose Farm in the background

the following spring 'in consequence of the depressed state of agriculture' it was announced there would be no meeting in 1822.<sup>272</sup> His failing coal mining business was probably also a factor in his decision to end his show: he died in debt six years later, owing over £118,000.

Although Curwen was always an honoured guest whenever he attended Holkham, he does not appear to have been at Coke's last meeting in 1821.<sup>273</sup> However, he was in London earlier that year because he attended the Board of Agriculture's first show. The Board had recently lost its

government grant, and its members aimed to run it as a voluntary body, supported by subscriptions and donations.

One of the Board's initiatives to draw support was to host an agricultural show in London in April 1821. Unfortunately, this only hastened the Board's demise. Although the

<sup>270</sup> 'Workington Agricultural Meeting', 17 August 1821, *Edinburgh Advertiser*, 8, in NA.

<sup>271</sup> Garrard, 'John Christian Curwen', Engraving (1806).

<sup>272</sup> 'Cumberland', 5 August 1822, *Evans and Ruffy's Farmers' Journal*, 2, in NA.

<sup>273</sup> Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk*, 118. Bacon.



show was well attended and attracted some good stock, with the venerable Ellman one of its three judges, only about 70 men sat down for dinner afterwards. As well as Curwen, the Earls of Winchilsea and Thanet, Western, William Northey and Christopher T Tower from the Group were there.<sup>274</sup> In a tradition long established by Somerville and the Smithfield Club, the dinner began at 5 pm in the Freemasons' Tavern. Although reports state that the meal was excellent, it was not convivial; two events occurred to mar it. Complaints in the show yard about the results and discontentment on both shows days about the lack of information about the exhibits resulted in a letter signed by exhibitors complaining that the judges had only awarded prizes to over-fat animals. After the meal's conclusion, one of the guests stood up and asked why all the premiums had not been handed out in the cattle and sheep classes when the stock forward was of a good standard. He then proceeded to hand a protest letter to the President, the Earl of Macclesfield. Rather than the President responding to him, Tower strongly admonished this protest, calling it 'unprecedented and pretentious.' As the president again did not step in, it was left to the plain-spoken Curwen to defuse the situation. He said that in his opinion, the judges had possibly considered fatness as being more preferential than fitness to breed. Still, he thought some precautions would be taken in the schedule next year to avoid this occurring again. He then suggested the protest letter be withdrawn. Finally, the president responded, reiterating this sentiment.<sup>275</sup> Although reminiscent of the Smithfield Club members' protest letter 21 years earlier, the fifth Duke of Bedford's successful handling of that was the antithesis to the President of the Board's response to this display of discontent.

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<sup>274</sup> Rosalind Mitchison states that Sir John Sinclair was at the dinner. Although it would be likely he was there, no record can be found to substantiate Mitchison's assumption. Certainly Christopher T. Tower proposed a toast to Sinclair as 'Father of the Board', but there is no mention of Sinclair responding to this toast nor of him supporting the President at the table as would be expected of such an eminent person within the Board. Rosalind Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John: The Life of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster 1745-1835* (Geoffrey Bles, 1962), 256-7; 'Board of Agriculture's Cattle-Shew and Dinner', 12 April 1821, *British Press*, 3, in NA.

<sup>275</sup> 12 April 1821, *British Press*, 3.

In her excellent chronicling of the Board's history and her biography on Sinclair, the Board's primary driving force, it is somewhat surprising that Rosalind Mitchison fails to mention the protest letter, just as all four of the Smithfield Club's biographers failed to mention the Club's earlier protest letter.<sup>276</sup> However, she picks up on the second event to mar the evening, which she says was 'typical of Sinclair's bad luck to have a Mr Towers [sic]' at the dinner.<sup>277</sup> Tower was one of the Board's ordinary members, and his mood had not improved after Curwen's intervention, nor the retraction of the protest letter, because he then 'threw a complete damp' on the rest of the evening's proceedings. He said that the refusal of the government ministers to give the Board its annual grant had sounded its funeral knell. He went on to say that he lamented to see so thin an attendance of landlords, whom, he thought ought to have rushed forward to save and support such a valuable institution. Reports state the company stayed together until late, but this was more likely to formulate a plan to encourage subscribers to keep the Board afloat rather than because they were enjoying one another's company.<sup>278</sup> Unlike most of the reports of the dinners discussed in this chapter, the word convivial is conspicuously absent from every account of it.

No doubt, as a result of their discussions at the show dinner, the Board called a special meeting, urging all members to attend so that they could sort out its financial problems. Although only 11 members turned up, it did generate interest, and donations and subscriptions amounting to £602 were received.<sup>279</sup> Although this was far less than the amount subscribed 20 years earlier to the fifth Duke's memorial statue fund, the Board felt secure

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<sup>276</sup> Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture, (1793-1822)', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXIV, Iss, 290 (1959), 41-69, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/LXXIV.290.41>, (accessed 10 June 2017); Sir Ernest Clarke did mention the protest at the dinner in his biography of the Board of Agriculture. Ernest Clarke, 'The Board of Agriculture', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Third Series, Vol. IX (London: John Murray, 1898), 38-40.

<sup>277</sup> Rosalind Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John*, 256-7.

<sup>278</sup> 12 April 1821, *British Press*, 3.

<sup>279</sup> Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture', 65; 'Premiums offered by the Board of Agriculture', 16 July 1821, *Evans and Ruffy's Famers' Journal*, 7, in NA.

enough to announce in July 1821 that it would convene a second two-day show in April 1822.<sup>280</sup> This show attracted more livestock than the previous year, but not many attended the dinner, and like the previous year, it was not overly convivial.<sup>281</sup> This time unrest was due to one of the toasts. ‘A large army, well fed and well clothed’, was considered ill-timed and out of place, and whilst the cup was passed between them, ‘remarks of disapprobation were freely interchanged in a low voice amongst the company’.<sup>282</sup> Eight weeks later, the Board was disbanded.<sup>283</sup> It had lasted less than thirty years.

The Earl of Macclesfield had been trying to step down from the presidency of the Board for some time.<sup>284</sup> So too had the sixth Duke from the Smithfield Club, in his case since 1813. Finally, in 1821, the sixth Duke wrote to the Club saying he thought they had achieved their objective and should now disband. He went on to say that he was withdrawing both his membership and the premiums he provided each year for the show. The previous chapter established that the Club’s members were united in pursuing its aims. Now, faced with the loss of their president and the premium money, it is to their credit that they wanted to soldier on. They unanimously resolved ‘that the Club ought to continue and receive the utmost support from its members’.<sup>285</sup> As the previous chapter argued, this sense of community united the different factions within the Club. When the Duke formally withdrew from the Club, Sir John Sebright, a vice-president, chaired the AGM. Although Sebright did not want the position permanently, he acted as its de facto president for four years. Sebright was a keen

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<sup>280</sup> 16 July 1821, *Evans and Ruffly*, 7.

<sup>281</sup> ‘Annual Cattle Show of the Board of Agriculture’, 23 April 1822, *London St James Chronicle and General Evening Post*, 4, in NA.

<sup>282</sup> ‘Annual Cattle Shew of the Board of Agriculture’, 25 April 1822, *Morning Post*, 3, in NA.

<sup>283</sup> The final meeting was held on 25 June 1822, but the final books were not signed off until 10 July 1822. Clarke, 41; Mitchison, ‘The Old Board of Agriculture’, 65.

<sup>284</sup> George Parker, fourth Earl of Macclesfield was President of the Board of Agriculture between 1816-1819 and 1821-1822, alternating with Philip Yorke, third Earl of Hardwicke, who was in office between 1813-1816 and 1819-1821. Clarke, 35.

<sup>285</sup> Minutes of The Smithfield Club, Vol. III, 538-41, Smithfield, MERL; Leonard Bull, ‘1821’, *History of the Smithfield Club: 1798-1825* (The Smithfield Club, 1926), 42.

agriculturalist but was also enthusiastic about fancy poultry and hawking: developing the Sebright bantam and writing a book on hawking. He was a good man to hold the reins at the AGM dinners because he encapsulated the egalitarian ethos of the Group. Not only had he been one of the Club's show stewards in 1809 and 1810, sharing the duties with the butcher and grazier, John Warmington, but as James Secord says, he was as much at home visiting the aviaries of labourers as he was those belonging to aristocrats.<sup>286</sup>

Since the middle of the last decade, Richard Astley had been 'the father of the Club', and he often took the chair at the Club's committee meetings.<sup>287</sup> Robert Honeyborn, Nathaniel Stubbins and Nicholas Buckley had all died, and with Samuel Stone taking on additional land agency work, Buckley's son John joined Astley at many committee meetings, keeping up the long Dishley presence. The Club had been unable to secure a permanent president, and there had been two attempts, in 1817 and 1821, to wind it up.<sup>288</sup> Membership was precariously low, and in 1822 stalwarts including Coke, Westcar, King Jnr, the Marquess of Tavistock and James Backwell Praed all resigned from the Club. At the AGM dinner in 1823, only 40 of them ate together, including Astley, the butcher Thomas Wace, Ellman, and John Ellman Jnr. Although they still had the AGM dinner at the Freemasons' Tavern, it is unlikely that the committee dined together as they had done in the years the members managed it. To save money, the Club had had to move its committee meetings to Mr Sadler's parlour in the show yard.<sup>289</sup> Now 76, the AGM was the last Smithfield meeting Astley attended, but it was not his last act in his long association with the Club. In 1824, possibly remembering when he had been a signatory to the protest letter presented to the fifth Duke, which almost brought about the Club's downfall in 1800, he wrote to secretary Farey in

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<sup>286</sup> James A Secord, 'Nature's Fancy: Charles Darwin and the Breeding of Pigeons', *Isis*, Vol. LXXII, No. 2 (1981), 178, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/230968>, (accessed 24 January 2022).

<sup>287</sup> [Walesby], xxxi.

<sup>288</sup> Minutes of The Smithfield Club, Vol III, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>289</sup> Minutes of The Smithfield Club, Vol III, Smithfield, MERL.

December about his concerns that a handful of members could bring about the Club's demise, as had nearly happened in 1817 and 1821.<sup>290</sup> His proposal to make sure a handful of members could not do this was voted through the following year, in 1825.<sup>291</sup> It was a significant year for the Club as Viscount Althorp, the future Earl Spencer, took over the presidency. Althorp had been widowed in 1818, and he never remarried. He was a practical livestock man with a deep love of Shorthorns, and he steadied the Club. As farming recovered in the 1830s, the idea of forming a national society took fruit, and he was instrumental in the formation of the RASE.<sup>292</sup> The ceremonial dinners discussed earlier in this chapter were an essential part of its shows. In no small part, they were a nod to their illustrious forebears and their great dinners discussed within this chapter.

The Group and the agricultural shows had always depended upon one another, unable to exist without the other. As this period of intense agricultural activity that spawned both came to an end, one by one, the shows ceased, and the Group quietly faded away, leaving just a handful of stalwarts behind. Although Flower told Somerville that cancelling his show had sounded the death knell to the spirit of agriculture, it has been argued that the sixth Duke first rung it when he ended the Woburn Sheep Shearings in 1813. In 1805 the average age of the Group was 45.65 years. By 1815 many of the younger and more influential members had died, whilst the older ones dropped out through old age. In the early part of this decade,

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<sup>290</sup> See Minutes of The Smithfield Club, Vol. III for a full report of the AGM and the committee meetings during 1822, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>291</sup> Astley's proposal was that if the constitution of the Club was to be materially altered, a motion had to be put in writing and submitted to all the members and a meeting arranged at least 14 days later when it could be discussed and determined. Richard Astley to John Farey, 18 December 1824, Minutes of The Smithfield Club, Vol. III, 651-3, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>292</sup> For more information on Viscount Spencer, later Earl Spencer and his reign as President of the Smithfield Club see Sir Denis Le Marchant (ed.), *Memoir of John Charles, Viscount Althorp, Third Earl Spencer* (Richard Bentley 1876); Charles Spencer, 'Honest Jack Althorp', *The Spencer Family* (Viking, 1999); Robert Trow-Smith, 'After Waterloo (1815-1845)', *History of The Royal Smithfield Club* (The Royal Smithfield Club, 1980), 21-32.

several tenant farmers and ancillary tradesmen were made bankrupt; some even went to prison, ending their association with the Group.

Still, the most influential members of the Group's lack of sons was the most significant factor in its demise; almost 20% of the Group never married, whilst 26% had no legitimate children. Although sons of tenant farmers and ancillary tradesmen, including Buckley, Ellman, Farey, Thomas Gibbs, Paul Giblett, and Robert Overman took an active role in the Smithfield Club, and the RASE, the sons of aristocrats and large landowners from the Group, were conspicuously absent. This lack of sons to carry on their father's interest, especially among the aristocracy, meant the Group had no natural successors. Major influences, such as the fifth Duke, Somerville, Winchelsea, Bridgewater, Western and Banks, produced no legitimate male heirs. Still, even when there were sons, such as with the sixth Duke, his son could not be persuaded to take over the presidency of the Smithfield Club: the Marquess of Tavistock being far more cautious with money than his father or uncle. When there were sons who could have kept this spirit of agricultural improvement alive, they were either born too late to have any impact within the Group, such as the sons of Coke and Williams Wynn, or they inherited debt, as the sons of Curwen and Sitwell did, and so were financially unable to carry on their father's shows even if they had wanted to. As the Group died out, Coke's quote that every dog has its day and he had had his could equally well apply to this group of agriculturalists. They, too, had had their day, but what a day it had been.

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This chapter has shown that even though the agricultural dinners, hosted by the Dukes of Bedford, Coke, Somerville and the Smithfield Club, were grand and formal affairs, they were almost always convivial. Eating and drinking together helped create friendly interaction between the Woburn Group, allowing their agricultural friendship to flourish. In making this claim, this chapter disagrees with current sociological thinking. Grignon states that the serious social implications of commensality can be undermined by confusing the term with the euphoric ideals associated with convivial dining. The chapter has revealed that the Dukes of Bedford, Somerville, Coke, and others arranged and organised their dinners to actively aid sociable interaction within the Group so that their dinners were convivial affairs. They achieved this in several ways. One was hosting the dinners in opulent surroundings, be it in the august settings of Woburn Abbey, Holkham Hall or the Grand Hall at the Freemasons' Tavern. However, rather than many of the men feeling inhibited by this grandeur, the opulent surroundings and the classically inspired rooms where they ate only added to the ambience of the occasion, heightening the men's enjoyment. The guests enjoyed the fine wines and sumptuous food served up for their delectation and appreciated the magnificence displayed by their hosts as they dined in grandeur.

Practicalities employed to enhance camaraderie included placing the tables to cover almost the entire floor space, enabling as many men as possible to be seated. Because numbers were restricted, there was never more than a few hundred seated together: an essential factor that aided the Group's interaction. Positioning the tables so that they all sat close to one another, with the president or host nearby, helped the men socialise better. Seats were not reserved, except for the hosts, their special guests and the judges, so free seating meant a rush for seats. Not allocating seats made it difficult for cliques to sit together and encouraged men to dine and converse together who may not have otherwise done so. This is an important factor in understanding how the concept of agricultural friendship functioned within the Woburn Group. Their dinners were in sharp contrast to those hosted by the RASE, 40 years later, where thousands of men sat regimentally in large venues, limiting social interaction.

Naomi Leite believes eating together and sharing food are powerful means to express and solidify mutual trust, intimacy, and kinship.<sup>293</sup> But conviviality is also a powerful tool. This chapter has demonstrated that diners were motivated by a collective desire for friendliness and sociability. This allowed individual men to become friends and created a sense of camaraderie and fraternity, helping bond them as a group. Participation in these dinners, especially Somerville's, increased this bond. Somerville encouraged this participation by displaying carcasses of animals that his guests eventually ate. He also provided a plentiful supply of information about the animals, alive and dead. After the carcasses were dressed, cooked, and eaten, the men deliberated on the flavour and texture of the meat. It was almost a theatrical performance in which they all played their part. In their

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<sup>293</sup> Leite, 243.



participation in these dinners, the agriculturalists had a far closer relationship with the meat they ate, especially at Somerville's dinners, than beefsteak club members ever did.

After the cloth was removed, the Group toasted and applauded their hosts' public-spirited ambition for the magnificent array of food and drink and their generous gesture in presenting plate and premiums. These rewarded arable skills, livestock prowess, but also endeavour and hard work. The presentation of these awards allowed the Group to physically show their approbation to the successful recipients whilst the speeches and singing together created a sense of patriotism. All these factors were important because they allowed the egalitarian ethos within the Group to flourish. After the formal part of the evening, the men created their own entertainment, issuing challenges to one another, betting on the results and proposing sweepstakes. Individual challenges could result in friendships between men directly involved in them, even when they come from different social backgrounds. This wagering and pledging allowed the Group to interact, talk and bet among themselves. They also spent money subscribing to new ideas and remedies and rewarding and commemorating their natural leaders. Although they could help 'one of their own' if they thought he had furthered their agricultural cause: as many did by coming to the aid of Mark Duckitt, there were limits to their goodwill, as in the case of William Lester when the Smithfield Club refused him help after he broke the law.

The importance of conversation to the agricultural friendship within the Group has been argued throughout this thesis. In sharp contrast were the two dinners the Board held after their shows in 1821 and 1822. These were not such convivial affairs, especially the first when 'a complete damp' was thrown on it, firstly by a protest letter, and then by a perceived lack of support for the Board.

The demise of the Woburn Sheep Shearing was the first bell rung in the death knell of these great farming meetings and their splendid dinners. It also began the demise of the regular group of agriculturalists who attended them. Nevertheless, during the intense period of agricultural activity around the turn of the nineteenth century, this eclectic group had flourished at these meetings. Their accompanying dinners were grand sociable affairs, where often ‘the utmost hilarity [had] prevailed among the company’.<sup>294</sup> As this chapter has argued, it was the conviviality of these dinners which, in no small part, was responsible for bringing this eclectic group together, allowing their agricultural friendship to flourish. It can be no better summed up than by Arthur Young, who eloquently said,

That every part of the kingdom, animated by the same principle, and inspirited by the same attentions might see the great Lord, the farmer, the breeder, the mechanician, and the philosopher, at the same table, each striving in the sphere of their own ideas to throw out hints, to debate propositions, to elucidate difficulties, and to bring all to the test of experiment...This we have seen, and those who best know the human heart, will least doubt the admirable effect. Were I a poet I would sing the merit – Were I a minister, I would reward it.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> ‘Woburn Sheep Shearing’, *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. XII (1805), 339 (439).

<sup>295</sup> ‘Petworth Prize Meeting, November 20 1797’, *Annals*, Vol. XXIX, 519-20.

## Conclusion

### THE SPIRIT OF AGRICULTURAL FRIENDSHIP

‘O happy, happy husbandmen did they but know the blessings they possess for whom, far from the din of war, the kindly earth pours forth an easy sustenance.’<sup>1</sup>

The focus of this thesis has been a socially diverse group of men whose interest in promoting scientific agriculture allowed for a friendship to develop between them. They met up at large agricultural meetings, and George Garrard depicted the most influential of them, the celebrated agriculturalists as he called them, within his portrayal of the 1804 Woburn Sheep Shearing. Yet despite Garrard saying that he had had to ‘labour through all the intermediate characters in Society’ to produce *Wobourn Sheepshearing* and close mixing of this type, on a quasi-equal basis between people of very different social standing, being rare in late Georgian Britain (and indeed remains so today), scholarship has largely ignored these men and their friendship.<sup>2</sup>

The thesis considered a detailed investigation into what these men thought of as their agricultural friendship, would contribute towards a clearer understanding of friendship, how it works in a practical situation and how it can cross social borders on occasions. To substantiate that the group was as heterogeneous as Garrard and contemporary reports suggested, the thesis began by compiling a prosopographical analysis of 74 of the most influential agriculturalists portrayed in *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, together with a biographical sketch of each of them. For ease of identification, the study labelled these men as the Woburn Group (the Group) but stressed they were only ever an unofficial collection of men from across the farming world and from different locations, who met up primarily at the four most significant shows during this period. It determined that these men were the most influential of

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<sup>1</sup> Virgil, *The Georgics*, (2:458), various translations.

<sup>2</sup> George Garrard, *Proposals for publishing a print of the Woburn Sheep Shearing* (1811), 2.

a larger, similarly diverse group of between 250 and 300, all interested in agricultural improvement, which lack of research time precluded this study from exploring further.

Although the thesis spanned 1793-1822, it primarily focused on 1797-1813, a period when these agriculturalists were at their most active. Despite a long-running war with France and a spate of poor harvests, agriculture was exceedingly profitable, and many of those focused upon made considerable profits. But whilst many landowners and tenant farmers undoubtedly became prosperous during the war, poorer classes suffered severe hardship. Although this led to endemic class conflict, tensions, and outbreaks of violence on occasions, the thesis found no evidence that a fear of revolution played a significant part in the alliance between some of these men nor influenced in any discernible way the sociability and friendships formed within the Group. There appears to have been no ulterior motive in banding together between the old elite and new monied landowners because they felt threatened by the fear of sedition, rather just a desire to increase productivity. Undoubtedly, increased production was extremely profitable for these men, but there was also a desire to add to the country's breadbasket, alleviating food shortages. Although not wishing to overplay the altruism of this last factor, there was certainly a nod to Jonathan Swift's oft-quoted lines that the person who could make two blades of grass or two ears of corn grow where only one had grown before was of more essential service to his country than a race of politicians, about their thinking.<sup>3</sup> The Whigs among the Group, out of power for almost the entire period, regarded this objective as within their remit as patriots, and the contemporary press, who published extensive accounts of their shows and meetings, actively promoted these farming events as patriotic.

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (London: Jones & Company, 1826), 178, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ta1uaL7RF5gC>, (accessed 28 July 2022).

The thesis established that these men began meeting regularly after the fifth Duke of Bedford established the Woburn Sheep Shearings, coming together at Woburn and the Holkham sheep shearings, Lord Somerville's cattle show, and the Smithfield Club's show. The impetus and drive to form the Smithfield Club came directly from discussions between those at the heart of this group, and it was these men who continued to support it during the Club's early years.

Having established the heterogeneity of the Group, the thesis explored how the agricultural friendship between these men worked in practice. The prosopographical study drew attention to the strong Whig presence within the Group, and Chapter One explored this further, pointing out that much of the credit for bringing such an eclectic group together and creating sociable interaction among them was down to three eminent Whigs who headed the Group: the fifth and sixth Dukes of Bedford and Thomas William Coke. These men were all staunch Foxite Whigs bound together by a deep affection for their leader, Charles James Fox and a passion for agricultural improvement. The Whigs were sympathetic to the republican principles that underpinned the French Revolution and largely opposed the war. As the party was in opposition for almost the entire period of this study, the Dukes of Bedford and Coke considered promoting agricultural improvement the most useful pursuit they could be engaged in and the best way to support their country. Indeed, the sixth Duke said that he and Coke had no business being farmers and had failed in their duty if they did not promote every farm improvement that helped cut farmers' costs.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Whigs focused on were not as liberally-minded as those of the 1830s, Whig ideology still allowed for egalitarianism. The thesis argued that these Whigs played an essential role in facilitating and maintaining the fellowship among agricultural enthusiasts.

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<sup>4</sup> [F.P. Walesby], 'Memoir of Mr. Ellman', *Baxter's Library of Agricultural and Horticultural Knowledge* (J. Baxter, 1834 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.),

The camaraderie engendered at their shows and dinners allowed men from different levels of society to not only debate and propose ideas on agricultural improvement but to become friends. Although never a Whig, Lord Somerville was naturally egalitarian, and in hosting his post-show dinners, he adopted the same format as these leading Whigs. Chapter Four revealed how these four men ensured that although large and prestigious, their shows were always convivial affairs, encouraging sociable interaction through discussion centred on agricultural improvement. As the thesis made clear, politics were not discussed, debating agricultural initiatives was far more important than political point-scoring at these meetings.

Sarah Wilmot rightly says that agricultural science, along with science in general, was considered an emblem of national culture.<sup>5</sup> Many Georgian Whigs had a fascination for science, and Joe Bord argues that this interest functioned not as an ideology or policy for staunch Whigs but as a style or value and had a place within the spectrum of Whig manners.<sup>6</sup> The thesis supported Bord's concept but also expanded upon it in its discussion of the sixth Duke of Bedford's encouragement to local Bedfordshire farmers to adopt an innovative cultivation technique devised by Thomas Greg, a Hertfordshire farmer. In the sixth Duke's endeavours, not only can all four manners of liberality, statesmanship, rational sociability and agricultural improvement be identified, but importantly, it is also evident that in the process, a friendship developed between the sixth Duke and Greg. But what is also clear is how practical many of those who headed this group were, such as the fifth Duke of Bedford, Somerville and Coke and that they considered improvements had to be based on sound

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<sup>5</sup> Sarah Wilmot, 'The Business of Improvement': Agriculture and Scientific Culture in Britain, c.1700-c.1870', in *Historical Geography Research Series*, Number 24 (1990), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Joe Bord, *Science and Whig Manners: Science and Political Style in Britain c. 1790-1850* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1-3.

working practices. As Somerville succinctly said in 1798, 'let practice, well-grounded practice and theory, go hand in hand together.'<sup>7</sup>

As one of George III's noble companions, Somerville was more supportive of the war than his Whig friends. The thesis revealed how he pledged his assistance to the war effort in different ways. These included the short-term measures he implemented during his short presidency of the Board of Agriculture, something not previously understood. Exploring Somerville's blossoming friendship with George III informed the discussion on how they not only devised plans to develop farming on the Cape but also supported the son of a tenant farmer, whose late father they had both been friends with and whose ingenuity they had admired. The thesis concluded that the Board's future may have been different had Somerville not been removed from office by political machinations. In drawing attention to Somerville's continual endeavours to move agriculture forward during his lifetime, this thesis suggests his name be reinstated within the British agricultural canon.

The statistical analysis identified that 77% of the Group were married. The unmarried or widowed among them included Somerville, the fifth Duke, Coke, and a couple of other influential improvers. The thesis determined that with less familial responsibilities, these men had more time and money to devote to agricultural pursuits. Coke's wife Jane died in 1800, but throughout their 25-year marriage, her continual support for Coke's agricultural endeavours allowed him to shine on the agricultural stage. But although Coke is a colossus still in the agricultural world, little is known about his first wife. The role of Georgian women like Jane Coke and their part in agricultural social history has been sadly neglected, and a reappraisal of their role, although now beginning to gain some impetus, is long overdue. Adding its voice to this debate, Chapter One explored a handful of marriages of prominent

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<sup>7</sup> John, Lord Somerville, *The system followed during the last two years by the Board of Agriculture* (W. Miller, 1800 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), 19.

men within the Group, seeking to understand how supportive or otherwise their wives were to these men's friendships with other agriculturalists. It concluded that in marriages where there was already discontent, a passion for agricultural improvement only added to the unhappiness. In contrast, wives were far more likely to support their husband's agricultural endeavours in more harmonious and financially stable relationships.

Chapter Two emphasised the importance of a shared agricultural interest in facilitating relationships between socially diverse men and the part correspondence could play in this. It stressed that this shared interest had to be beneficial to both parties, with each bringing something different to the table that others found valuable and informative. The thesis established that friendship of this type incorporated aspects of Aristotle's concept of a friendship of utility and Kant's friendship of taste, whilst elements of Lewis's ideas of an interest-based friendship were also identified.

The ethos of agricultural friendship was that it encompassed men from many sectors of the farming world, with different farming interests and a shared desire to move agriculture forward. Lewis thought that such a group did not want to discuss their personal and social lives; they only wanted to discuss and debate topics that helped them achieve their objective.<sup>8</sup> Focusing on the Smithfield Club in Chapter Three illustrated this well. Their shared goal was to fatten animals more quickly and cheaply, which united its disparate membership, creating common property between them. As the protest letter from some members in 1800 made clear, the club served no material use without this shared objective.

But like all relationships, agricultural friendship could come under pressure. Chapter Three highlighted the Smithfield Club's second show as an example where tension among members disrupted their friendship, threatening the Club's existence. In shedding light on a

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<sup>8</sup> For a short overview on Aristotle, Kant and Lewis' friendship models see James O. Grunebaum, *Friendship: Liberty, Equality, and Utility* (State University of New York Press, 2003), 9-23.



little-known episode within the Club's history, the thesis drew attention to the crucial role of the fifth Duke of Bedford in this dispute. As the Club's President, he was ultimately responsible for the schism that developed within the membership. But his prompt actions and tactful handling of members' complaints solved the dilemma, united the disparate factions, and maintained his friendship with them. Exploring the Duke's movements during this period allowed for a more informed understanding of the constraints he was working under, and the thesis suggests that it is to his credit that he was able to quickly and decisively act when he saw the Club fragmenting, uniting the members whilst keeping their shared objective in view. One can only speculate if history would have remembered this group of agricultural improvers and their fellowship differently had the fifth Duke lived beyond 1802.

Focusing on the Dishley Tup Society's members' part within the Smithfield Club dispute revealed that although they were strongly opinionated men, the quality of their sheep and their knowledge made them invaluable members of the Group. They were essential to the landed interest at its head, who bought and hired their livestock. For the Dishley men dealing with aristocracy and the landed elite was highly profitable, and they enjoyed the social aspect of these meetings. It was a symbiotic relationship; each gained more benefits from their friendship than without it. It illustrated well how agricultural friendship worked in practice and supported Adam Smith's views that in commercial Georgian society, 'necessity or conveniency of mutual accommodation' could engender a sense of fraternity.<sup>9</sup>

But although the thesis established that for any form of agricultural friendship to develop, it had to be advantageous for both sides, it also determined that respect was vital. Georgians loved ingenuity, and the agriculturalists were no exception. A shared respect for

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<sup>9</sup> D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (eds.), Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 223-4, cited in Allan Silver, 'Friendship in Commercial Society: Eighteenth-Century Social Theory and Modern Sociology', in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XCV, No. 6 (1990), 1481, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2780332>, (accessed 1 April 2018).

skill and endeavour united this group, regardless of rank or occupation. This respect levelled the playing field between them, permitting the social barriers to be breached when they came together, allowing them to eat, drink and socialise together for several hours. However, it was evident that men of a lower social scale were accepted as part of the group only if they brought something of value to the table that benefitted others. The tenant farmer John Ellman and the sheep expert Thomas Walton illustrated this well. Ellman's assistance and friendship were essential to the aristocrats in the Group, and the thesis argued that both Dukes of Bedford considered him a mentor. Walton's skill with livestock put his services and his company in great demand, especially with Coke, who saw him as his friend and his right-hand man.

Nevertheless, at no point does this thesis contend that agricultural friendship or the respect and admiration in which these men held each other could entirely remove the social barriers between them. It could not. Unsurprisingly in the class-conscious world of late Georgian Britain, the thesis found no evidence of any stockmen included within the Group; it primarily incorporated a mixture of upper-class landowners and men who spanned the different levels of the middle class. However, what was clear was how much importance Georgian agriculturalists placed on specialist livestock men, such as the sheep expert Walton, a man from the lower middle class. Although the thesis has drawn attention to how many eminent agriculturalists sought his expertise and companionship, it suggests further research is required into the role of livestock specialists such as Walton during this period.

Although the thesis provided examples of how the agricultural friendship between these men worked in practice, it emphasises that it was never all-encompassing. It worked within parameters that, although allowing long-term friendships to develop, such as the one between Coke and George Tollet, in most instances the friendship among these men existed purely because of their shared interest and lasted only as long as each retained their

involvement in promoting agricultural improvement. It did not exist beyond the confines of an agricultural environment. So although Somerville and Henry King Jnr, the Leadenhall butcher's son, became friends because their relationship was valuable to each of them and had commercial benefits for both, the vast gulf in class between them meant their relationship never extended to mixing socially outside of these parameters. Equally, although Ellman and Walton knew their worth to these aristocrats, they also understood the proprieties of these relationships; Ellman appears never to have accepted an invitation to stay in the Abbey during the Woburn Sheep Shearings.

As Chapter Four discussed in some detail, there was a real sense of fellowship when these men met up at shows and dined together. Although a free seating policy for ticket holders at the dinners meant aristocrats did not always sit together, in most cases, they were seated on the top table. However, as these dinners were generally oversubscribed, the tables had to be crammed in to accommodate everyone bringing the aristocracy closer to the farmers and tradesmen and engendering a sense of fraternity. In its detailed description of how these post-show dinners were organised and how they worked in practice to achieve the maximum sociable interaction among guests, the thesis established that although commensal, the dinners, often with royalty present, were also convivial, disagreeing with Claude Grignon's views on this.<sup>10</sup> For those interested in researching dining and socialising between groups of men in the Georgian period, Chapter Four will complement Paul Clark's more general chronicling of clubs and societies at this time.<sup>11</sup>

Although these dinners, always held within opulent settings, were arranged to encourage fellowship, the men needed to play their part. As many were from different sectors

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<sup>10</sup> Claude Grignon, 'Commensality and social morphology : an essay of typology', in P. Scholliers (ed.), *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 23–33, cited in Claude Fischler, 'Commensality, society and culture', in *Social Science Information*, 50, No. 3-4 (2011), 535, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018411413963>, (accessed 18 December 2021).

<sup>11</sup> Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800* (Oxford University Press, 2011 rep.).

of the farming world, there had to be a collective desire for them to want to spend time together, happy to eat, drink, toast, applaud, bet, and sing. The study identified that this was a collective desire to further agricultural improvement. But for any friendship to flourish, either at a group level or individually, the thesis concluded it had to be mutually beneficial to all parties and, importantly, underpinned by respect for skill and endeavour.

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To summarise, this thesis is important because it has opened a window onto a little-understood group of agriculturalists and their friendship, provided a more transparent and historically accurate picture of them and reappraised their importance to agricultural progress during this period. In achieving this, it has conclusively demonstrated the heterogeneity of those who promoted and disseminated their ideas on agricultural improvement, including the members of the Smithfield Club during its formative years, something it believes historians, particularly those seeking to restore the concept of animality into scholarship, should be aware of.

Although friendship is an essential component of being human, studies into friendship have tended to be neglected. Through its reintroduction of the concept of agricultural friendship and in its investigation into how it worked in practice, this thesis has not only rectified what it saw as a gap within agricultural social history but added to our understanding of friendship processes in the late Georgian period. In shedding light on the interaction

between these agriculturalists, both at a group level and on a one-to-one basis, the thesis has drawn attention to the crucial role that respect and mutual benefit played within their relationships. It has shown the potential agricultural friendship possessed to draw men in from different social levels and work towards a common goal and highlighted the role of Whig ideology. It offers a slightly different perspective on how agriculturalists from different classes of Georgian society could socialise together, showing the benefits and limitations to their relationships and contributes to our understanding of how friendship works or can work in an applied setting. The thesis concludes that where a strong common interest brings people together, sharing knowledge through mutual exchange and practical experience, the resultant fellowship can bridge social divides and, in the process, become a powerful engine of creativity and innovation within their shared field of interest.

Today, if one stands among the buildings at Park Farm, Woburn, much as they were when Garrard painted *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, it is almost possible to smell the livestock and hear the agriculturalists talking and laughing, their presence palpable with eyes closed. There is a strong sense of a *genius loci* residing there, the spirit of improvement very evident. Now cognisant of the fellowship and camaraderie among these agricultural improvers, the thesis concludes that the spirit of agricultural friendship dwells there too.

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## APPENDIX I

### 1. DATABASE OF DEFINED POPULATION BY TITLE, AND AGE

SURNAME	FORENAME	TITLE	LIFE SPAN	AGE IN 1804	AGE AT DEATH
Adam	William	Esq.	1751-1839	53	88
Astley	Richard	Esq.	1747-1830	57	83
Baker Holroyd	John	Lord Sheffield	1735-1821	69	86
Banks	Joseph	Sir	1743-1820	61	77
Bate Dudley	Henry	Reverend	1745-1824	59	79
Beaumont	Thomas	Esq. (Colonel)	1758-1829	46	71
Buckley	Nicholas	Mr	1752-1814	52	62
Byng	Robert	Esq.	1773-1829	31	56
Bligh	John	4th Earl of Darnley	1767-1831	37	64
Carr	Thomas	Sir	1757-1814	47	57
Cartwright Chetwynd-	Edmund	Reverend	1743-1823	61	80
Talbot	Charles	2nd Earl Talbot	1777-1849	27	72
Coke	Thomas William	Esq.	1754-1842	50	88
Conyers	John	Esq.	1748-1813	56	65
Corbert	Andrew	Sir	1766-1835	38	69
Crook	Thomas	Mr	1750-1821	54	71
Curtis	William	Sir	1752-1829	52	77
Curwen	John Christian	Esq.	1756-1828	48	72
Davy	Humphry	Esq.	1778-1829	26	51
Egerton	John	7th Earl of Bridgewater	1753-1823	51	70
Ellman	John	Mr	1753-1832	51	79
Ellman	Thomas	Mr	1737-1813	67	76
Farey	John	Mr	1766-1826	38	60
Finch	George	8th Earl of Winchilsea	1752-1826	52	74
Fitzpatrick	John	2nd Earl Upper Ossory	1745-1818	59	73
Foster	John	Esq.	1740-1828	64	88
Garrard	George	Mr	1760-1826	44	66
Gibbs	Thomas	Mr	1771-1849	33	78
Gray	Charles Gordon	Esq.	1759-1822	45	63
Higgins	John	Mr	1740-1813	64	73
Hoare	Henry Hugh	Esq.	1762-1841	42	79
Honeyborn	Robert	Mr	1762-1816	42	54
Isted	Samuel	Esq.	1750-1827	54	77
Lechmere	Anthony	Esq.	1766-1849	38	83
Lee Antonie	William	Esq.	1764-1815	40	51
Lester	William	Mr	1761-1824	43	63
Ludlow	Augustus	2nd Earl Ludlow	1755-1811	49	56
Marshall	William	Mr	1745-1818	59	73
Money Hill	William	Mr	1769-1813	35	44
Montagu	William	5th Duke of Manchester	1771-1843	33	72
Northey	William	Esq.	1752-1826	52	74

<b>SURNAME</b>	<b>FORENAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>LIFE SPAN</b>	<b>AGE 1804</b>	<b>AGE AT DEATH</b>
Oakley	William	Mr	1755-1839	49	84
Overman	Robert	Mr	1752-1808	52	56
Pickford	Thomas	Mr	1747-1811	57	64
Platt	Edward	Mr	1747-1824	57	77
Praed	James Backwell	Esq.	1779-1837	25	58
Reeve	John	Mr	1761-1841	43	80
Reynell	Richard	Esq.	1759-1807	45	48
Runciman	William	Mr	1758-1820	46	62
Russell	John	6th Duke of Bedford	1766-1839	38	73
Russell	William	Lord	1767-1840	37	73
Salmon	Robert	Mr	1763-1821	41	58
Sebright	John Saunders	Sir	1767-1846	37	79
Sinclair	John	Sir	1754-1835	50	81
Sitwell	Francis	Esq.	1774-1813	30	39
Smith	Robert	Lord Carrington	1752-1838	52	86
Smith	William	Mr	1769-1839	35	70
Somerville	John,	15th Lord Somerville	1765-1819	39	54
Stone	Samuel	Mr	1767-1828	37	61
Stubbins	Nathaniel	Mr	1760-1817	44	57
Tollet	George	Esq.	1767-1855	37	88
Tower	Christopher T	Esq.	1775-1867	29	92
Tufton	Sackville	9th Earl of Thanet	1769-1825	35	56
Wakefield	Edward	Mr	1774-1854	30	80
Walton	Thomas	Mr	1746-1831	58	85
	Edmond				
Waters	Thomas	Esq.	1764-1848	40	84
Westcar	John	Mr	1748-1833	56	85
Western	Charles Callis	Esq.	1767-1844	37	77
Whitbread	Samuel	Mr	1764-1815	40	51
White Parsons	John	Mr	1758-1808	46	50
Wilson	Andrew	Mr	1775-1836	29	61
Williams-Wynn	Watkin	Sir	1772-1840	32	68
Wyndham	George O'Brien	3rd Earl of Egremont	1751-1837	53	86
Young	Arthur	Mr	1741-1820	63	79
<b>AVERAGE AGE</b>				<b>45.65</b>	<b>70.21</b>

#### **BREAKDOWN OF TITLES**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Number of Men (74)</b>
DUKES	2
EARLS	8
LORDS	4
KNIGHTS	7
REVDS.	2
ESQ.	22
MR.	29

#### **BREAKDOWN OF AGE**

<b>Number of Men</b>	<b>AgeRng</b>
5	20-29
20	30-39
19	40-49
23	50-59
7	60-69

## 2. LOCATION, OCCUPATION AND POLITICAL AFFILIATION

<b>SURNAME</b>	<b>FORENAME</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>POLITICS</b> (* = MP)
Adam	William	Kincardineshire	Solicitor/Auditor	Whig *
Astley	Richard	Leicestershire	Tenant Farmer	
Baker Holroyd	John	Sussex	Landowner	Tory
Banks	Joseph	Lincolnshire	Landowner	Tory
Bate Dudley	Henry	Essex	Clergyman/Editor	Whig
Beaumont	Thomas	Northumberland	Landowner	Tory *
Buckley	Nicholas	Leicestershire	Owner/Occupier	
Byng	Robert	Hertfordshire	Tenant Farmer	Whig
Bligh	John	Kent	Landowner	Whig
Carr	Thomas	Sussex	Owner/Occupier	
Cartwright	Edmund	Bedfordshire	Clergyman/Inventor	
Chetwynd-Talbot	Charles	Staffordshire	Landowner	Whig
Coke	Thomas William	Norfolk	Landowner	Whig *
Conyers	John	Essex	Owner/Occupier	Tory
Corbert	Andrew	Shropshire	Owner/Occupier	Tory
Crook	Thomas	Wiltshre	Owner/Occupier	
Curtis	William	Middlesex	Owner/Occ/Alderman	Tory *
Curwen	John Christian	Cumberland	Landowner	Whig *
Davy	Humphry	London	Chemist	Tory
Egerton	John	Buckinghamshire	Landowner	Tory
Ellman	John	Sussex	Tenant Farmer	
Ellman	Thomas	Sussex	Tenant Farmer	
Farey	John	London	Surveyor	
Finch	George	Rutland	Landowner	
Fitzpatrick	John	Bedfordshire	Landowner	
Foster	John	Ireland	Landowner	Tory? *
Garrard	George	London	Artist	
Gibbs	Thomas	London	Seet Merchant	
Gray	Charles Gordon	Somerset	Tenant Farmer	
Higgins	John	Bedfordshire	Owner/Occupier	
Hoare	Henry Hugh	Bedfordshire	Landowne/Banker	
Honeyborn	Robert	Leicestershire	Tenant Farmer	
Isted	Samuel	Northamptonshire	Owner/Occupier	
Lechmere	Anthony	Worcestershire	Owner/Occ/Banker	
Lee Antonie	William	Bedfordshire	Landowner	Whig *
Lester	William	London	Engineer	
Ludlow	Augustus	Bedfordshire	Tenant Farmer	Whig
Marshall	William	Yorkshire	Author	Whig
Money Hill	William	Norfolk	Tenant Farmer	
Montagu	William	Cambridgeshire	Landowner	Tory
Northey	William	Wiltshire	Owner/Occupier	Whig *
Oakley	William	London	Wool Stapler	
Overman	Robert	Norfolk	Tenant Farmer	
Pickford	Thomas	Hertfordshire	Owner/Occupier	

<b>SURNAME</b>	<b>FORENAME</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>POLITIC</b> (* = MP)
Platt	Edward	Bedfordshire	Tenant Farmer	
Praed	James Backwell	Buckinghamshire	Banker	Tory
Reeve	John	Norfolk	Tenant Farmer	
Reynell	Richard	Northern Ireland	Owner/Occupier	
Runciman	William	Bedfordshire	Tenant Farmer	
Russell	John	Bedfordshire	Landowner	Whig
Russell	William	Surrey	Landowner	Whig *
Salmon	Robert	Bedfordshire	Engineer	
Sebright	John Saunders	Hertfordshire	Landowner	Whig*
Sinclair	John	Caithness	Lanowner	Tory *
Sitwell	Francis	Northumberland	Landowner	Tory *
Smith	Robert	Nottinghamshire	Landowner/Banker	Tory
Smith	William	London	Geologist	
Somerville	John,	Surrey	Landowner	
Stone	Samuel	Leicestershire	Tenant Farmer	
Stubbins	Nathaniel	Nottinghamshire	Tenant Farmer	
Tollet	George	Staffordshire	Owner/Occupier	Whig
Tower	Christopher T	Essex	Owner/Occupier	Whig
Tufton	Sackville	Kent	Landowner	Whig
Wakefield	Edward	Essex	Tenant Farmer	
Walton	Thomas Edmond	Derbyshire	Sheep Expert	
Waters	Thomas	Surrey	Shipping /Owner-Occ	
Westcar	John	Buckinghamshire	Tenant Farmer	
Western	Charles Callis	Essex	Landowner	Whig *
Whitbread	Samuel	Bedfordshire	Landowner	Whig *
White Parsons	John	Somerset	Owner/Occupier	
Wilson	Andrew	Bedfordshire	Bailiff	
Williams-Wynn	Watkin	Denbighshire	Landowner	Tory *
Wyndham	George O'Brien	Sussex	Landowner	
Young	Arthur	Suffolk	Author	

19 Whigs 9 MPs

15 Tories 6 MPs

### 3. SMITHFIELD CLUB MEMBERSHIP, MARITAL STATUS AND CHILDREN

SURNAME	FORENAME	SMITHFIELD CLUB	MARRIED	CHILDREN
Adam	William	NO	Widowed	Yes
Astley	Richard	YES	Married	Yes
Banks	Joseph	YES	Married	No
Bate Dudley	Henry	YES	Married	No
Beaumont	Thomas	YES	Married	Yes
Buckley	Nicholas	YES	Married	Yes
Byng	Robert	YES	Single	No
Bligh	John	YES	Married	Yes
Carr	Thomas	YES	Married	Yes
Carrington	Robert	YES	Married	Yes
Cartwright	Edmund	YES	Married	Yes
Chetwynd-Talbot	Charles	YES	Married	Yes
Coke	Thomas William	YES	Widowed	Yes
Conyers	John	YES	Married	Yes
Corbert	Andrew	YES	Married	Yes
Crook	Thomas	YES	Married	Yes
Curtis	William	YES	Married	Yes
Curwen	John Christian	NO	Married x 2	Yes
Davy	Humphry	NO	Single	No
Egerton	John	NO	Married	No
Ellman	John	YES	Married x 2	Yes
Ellman	Thomas	YES	Married	Yes
Farey	John	YES	Married	Yes
Finch	George	YES	Single	No
Fitzpatrick	John	NO	Married	Yes
Foster	John	NO	Married	Yes
Garrard	George	YES	Married	Yes
Gibbs	Thomas	YES	Married	Yes
Gray	Charles Gordon	YES	Married	Yes
Higgins	John	YES	Married	Yes
Hoare	Henry Hugh	YES	Married	Yes
Honeyborn	Robert	YES	Married	No
Isted	Samuel	YES	Married	Yes
Lechmere	Anthony	YES	Married	Yes
Lee Antonie	William	YES	Single	No
Lester	William	YES	Married	Yes
Ludlow	Augustus	YES	Single	No
Marshall	William	NO	Single	No
Money Hill	William	YES	Married	Yes
Montagu	William	YES	Married	Yes
Northey	William	YES	Single	No



<b>SURNAME</b>	<b>FORENAME</b>	<b>SMITHFIELD</b>	<b>MARRIED</b>	<b>CHILDREN</b>
Oakley	William	YES	Married x 2	Yes
Overman	Robert	NO	Married	Yes
Pickford	Thomas	YES	Widowed	Yes
Platt	Edward	YES	Married	Yes
Praed	James Backwell	YES	Single	No
Reeve	John	YES	Married	Yes
Reynell	Richard	NO	Married	Yes
Runciman	William	YES	Married	Yes
Russell	John	YES	Married x 2	Yes
Russell	William	YES	Married	Yes
Salmon	Robert	NO	Married	Yes
Sebright	John Saunders	YES	Married	Yes
Baker Holroyd	John	YES	Married x 3	Yes
Sinclair	John	YES	Married x 2	Yes
Sitwell	Francis	YES	Married	Yes
Smith	William	YES	Single	No
Somerville	John	YES	Single	No
Stone	Samuel	YES	Married	Yes
Stubbins	Nathaniel	YES	Single	No
Tollet	George	NO	Married	Yes
Tower	Christopher T	YES	Married	Yes
Tufton	Sackville	YES	Single	No
Wakefield	Edward	YES	Married	Yes
Walton	Thomas	NO	Married	Yes
	Edmond			
Waters	Thomas	YES	Married	Yes
Westcar	John	YES	Widowed	Yes
Western	Charles Callis	YES	Single	No
Whitbread	Samuel	YES	Married	Yes
White Parsons	John	YES	Married	Yes
Wilson	Andrew	NO	Married	No
Williams-Wynn	Watkin	YES	Single	No
Wyndham	George O'Brien	NO	Married	Yes
Young	Arthur	YES	Married	Yes

81% MEMBERS OF SMITHFIELD CLUB (60 members and 14 non-members)

MARRIED	57	77%
WIDOWED	3	4%
SINGLE	14	19%
CHILDLESS	19	26%

## APPENDIX II

### BIOGRAPHIES OF THOSE INCLUDED IN DATABASE

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Christian Name and Title</u>	<u>Surname</u>	<u>Christian Name and Title</u>
<b>Adam</b>	William.	<b>Manchester</b>	William Montagu, 5th Duke
<b>Astley</b>	Richard,	<b>Northey</b>	William
<b>Banks</b>	Sir Joseph,	<b>Oakley</b>	William
<b>Bate Dudley</b>	Henry	<b>Overman</b>	Robert
<b>Beaumont</b>	Thomas	<b>Pickford</b>	Thomas
<b>Bedford</b>	John Russell, 6th Duke	<b>Platt</b>	Edward
<b>Bridgewater</b>	John Egerton, 7th Earl	<b>Praed</b>	James Backwell
<b>Buckley</b>	Nicholas	<b>Reeve</b>	John
<b>Byng</b>	Robert	<b>Reynell</b>	Richard
<b>Carr</b>	Sir Thomas	<b>Runciman</b>	William
<b>Carrington</b>	Lord	<b>Russell</b>	Lord William
<b>Cartwright</b>	Edmund	<b>Salmon</b>	Robert
<b>Coke</b>	Thomas William	<b>Sebright</b>	Sir John Saunders John Baker Holroyd, 1st Earl
<b>Conyers</b>	John	<b>Sheffield</b>	Earl
<b>Corbert</b>	Sir Andrew	<b>Sinclair</b>	Sir John
<b>Crook</b>	Thomas	<b>Sitwell</b>	Francis
<b>Curtis</b>	Alderman Sir William	<b>Smith</b>	William
<b>Curwen</b>	John Christian	<b>Somerville,</b>	John, 15th Lord
<b>Darnley</b>	John Bligh, 4th Earl	<b>Stone</b>	Samuel
<b>Davy</b>	Humphry	<b>Stubbins</b>	Nathaniel
<b>Egremont</b>	George O'Brien Wyndham, 3rd Earl	<b>Talbot</b>	Charles Chetwynd, 2nd Earl
<b>Ellman</b>	John	<b>Thanet</b>	Sackville Tufton, 9th Earl
<b>Ellman</b>	Thomas	<b>Tollet</b>	George
<b>Farey</b>	John	<b>Tower</b>	Christopher T
<b>Foster</b>	The Rt. Hon. John	<b>Upper Ossory</b>	John Fitzpatrick, 2nd Earl
<b>Garrard</b>	George	<b>Wakefield</b>	Edward
<b>Gibbs</b>	Thomas	<b>Walton</b>	Thomas
<b>Gray</b>	Charles Gordon	<b>Waters</b>	Edmond Thomas
<b>Higgins</b>	John	<b>Westcar</b>	John
<b>Hoare</b>	Henry Hugh	<b>Western</b>	Charles Callis
<b>Honeyborn</b>	Robert	<b>Whitbread</b>	Samuel
<b>Isted</b>	Samuel	<b>White</b>	
<b>Lechmere</b>	Anthony	<b>Parsons</b>	John
<b>Lee Antonie</b>	William	<b>Wilson</b>	Andrew
<b>Lester</b>	William	<b>Williams</b>	
<b>Ludlow</b>	Augustus, 2nd Earl	<b>Wynn</b>	Sir Watkin
<b>Marshall</b>	William	<b>Winchilsea</b>	George Finch, 8th Earl
<b>Money Hill</b>	William	<b>Young</b>	Arthur
		<b>(Bedford)</b>	(Frances, 5th Duke)

## THOSE NOT INCLUDED IN THE DATABASE

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Christian Name and Title</u>
Assheton Smith	Thomas
Baker	George
Bariatinski	Prince (from Russia)
Battine	Major William
Bedford	Duchess Georgiana and the various Russell children
Bunbury	Sir Charles
Clarence	Duke of (future King William IV)
Cunningham	William, Lt. Col.
Dundas	Lord Thomas
Fetherstonhaugh	Sir Henry
Hanmer	Sir Thomas
Hanmer	Walden Henry
Holland	Henry
John Holland	The Woburn stockmen and John Westcar's stockman
Hutton	Rev.
Lee	Robert
Miller	Sir Thomas
Moore	John Patrick
Osborne	Sir George
Russell	Francis, Marquess of Tavistock
Smernhove	Rev. (from Russia)
Somerset	Lord Charles
Stanley	Edward
Thornton	Godfrey
Wilbraham	George
Yates	Dr.

**ADAM, WILLIAM (1751-1839)<sup>1</sup>**  
**Politician, Barrister and Agent-in-Chief**



**William Adam**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Adam was 53 years of age in 1804. He was born in Blair-Adam.<sup>2</sup> His father, John, was one of the Adams brothers, all eminent architects. Adam was a barrister, MP, chief fundraiser and political fixer for the Whig party. From 1789 he was political manager to the Whigs, coordinating the organisational activities for the party.<sup>3</sup> He was a close friend to the Prince Regent and Sir Walter Scott.<sup>4</sup>

To sort out the Woburn finances, in April 1802, John, sixth Duke of Bedford, employed Adam as Agent in Chief on the Woburn Estate, and Robert Salmon, Edmund Cartwright, and Edward Platt all reported to him.<sup>5</sup> He was an honorary member of the Board of Agriculture (the Board).

In 1777 he married Eleanora Elphinstone, who died in February 1800. They had five sons and one daughter. Garrard exhibited a model for a bust of William Adam at the Royal Academy in 1811.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> George Garrard, *William Adam*. This Garrard sketch and all subsequent ones used in this Appendix are Oil on Paper Sketches (1805-09). from the Woburn Abbey Collection.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of William Adam's life see the biography accompanying details of the portrait of him painted by Sir Henry Raeburn compiled by the *Chantry Fine Art Collection*, [website], [https://www.chantryfinearts.co.uk/william\\_adam.html](https://www.chantryfinearts.co.uk/william_adam.html), (accessed 13 July 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Donald E. Ginter, 'The Financing of the Whig Party Organization 1783-1793', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. LXXI, No. 2 (1966), 421-40, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1846340>, (accessed 19 December 2021).

<sup>4</sup> The Prince of Wales made Adam his Solicitor-General. David R. Fisher, 'ADAM, William (1751-1839), of Woodstone, Kincardine and Blair Adam, Kinross', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/adam-william-1751-1839#biography>,

(accessed 13 July 2018). For papers and letters relating to his friendship with the Prince of Wales and Scott see 'NRAS1454, Adam Family of Blair Adam, Fife', The National Register of Archives for Scotland, Edinburgh.

<sup>5</sup> On his deathbed, Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford, requested that Adam became the salaried auditor to his successor, the sixth Duke, at a salary of £1200/year, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/adam-william-1751-1839#biography>, (accessed 13 July 2018); But according to the Russell family estate papers in the Bedfordshire Archives, he did not become agent-in-chief until 1804. 'The Russell Collection in Beds and Bucks Estates: Administration and Finance', R5, *Bedfordshire Archives*, [website], <http://bedsarchivescat.bedford.gov.uk/docs/R5introduction.pdf>, (accessed 18 March 2022).

<sup>6</sup> 'Model for a bust of W. Adam, Esq.', Cat. No. 901, Algernon Graves, 'GARRARD, George, A.R.A.', *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769-1904*, Vol. III (Henry Graves & Co. Ltd. 1906), 208.

## ASTLEY, RICHARD (1747-1830) Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder



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**Richard Astley**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Astley was 57 years of age in 1804. He was a renowned breeder of Longhorn cattle and New Leicester sheep and a significant improver of Berkshire pigs. He grew up in Warwickshire and moved to Odstone Hall, near Market Bosworth in Leicestershire, in 1771 after his brother Francis Dugdale Astley inherited it along with a large estate in Wiltshire.<sup>7</sup> Odstone Hall came with 500 acres. The hall was in disrepair when Astley moved in, and he carried out significant renovations and remodelled it.

Astley owned the famous bull called Union and a 'celebrity cow', which was exhibited all over the country in a 'van'.<sup>8</sup> He was a significant exporter of both Longhorns and New Leicester Sheep to Ireland and made an honorary member of the Farming Society of Ireland.<sup>9</sup>

He was a renowned livestock judge. In 1798 Astley was judging in Lewes with the fifth Duke, and in the early years of the nineteenth-century notable judging appointments were at Somerville's Spring Cattle Show, where he judged three times, and at both Woburn in 1804 and the Smithfield Club show in 1806, where he judged alongside Lord Somerville. He judged

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<sup>7</sup> There is some dispute whether Richard Astley inherited Odstone himself from Sir Richard Astley (1668-1771) or his brother was the owner, having inherited Odstone, along with the far larger Everleigh Manor estate in Wiltshire. Nick Kingsley says that Astley inherited himself from Sir Richard Astley, but in 1809 William Pitt, said Odstone belonged to his brother. Pitt is recognised as one of the best and most accurate of those who compiled the county reviews for the Board. He knew Astley well over many years and Astley may well have told Pitt himself when Pitt visited him at Odstone Hall in July 1808. Sir Richard Astley's only son died before his father and Sir Richard over-looked his daughters in favour of Francis Dugdale Astley, his first cousin, twice removed. It seems unlikely that he would have overlooked his daughters a second time to leave Odstone to Francis Dugdale Astley's younger brother. Nick Kingsley, '(220) Astley (later Astley-Corbett) of Patshull Hall, Everleigh Manor and Elsham Hall, baronets', *Landed Families of Britain and Ireland*, [website], <https://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2016/06/220-astley-of-patshull-hall-everleigh.html>, (accessed 17 September 2021); William Pitt, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Leicester* (1809), 38.

<sup>8</sup> It can be presumed that Astley made money out of this venture because travelling show animals, such as the Durham Ox, could earn considerable sums of money for their owners. Fitt disclosed the information about the travelling cow but as his article contains some errors, it should be treated with caution. J. Nevill Fitt, 'XVII Longhorn Cattle: their History and Peculiarities', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Second Series, Vol. XII (John Murray, 1876), 467.

<sup>9</sup> For details about Astley's honorary medal presented to him by the Farming Society of Ireland and a photograph of it see Dix Noonan Webb's medal archive. *Dix Noonan Webb*, [website], [https://www.dnw.co.uk/auction-archive/lot-archive/lot.php?lot\\_uid=356785](https://www.dnw.co.uk/auction-archive/lot-archive/lot.php?lot_uid=356785), (accessed 11 March 2020). Pitt, *General Review of Leicestershire*, 527. Page wrongly numbered; it should read 257.

cattle, sheep, pigs and horses, judging pigs at Woburn in 1803, whilst at Ballinasloe in 1807, he judged both sheep and horses for the Farming Society of Ireland.<sup>10</sup>

Astley was well known for his livestock dealing, the fifth Duke good-humouredly remarking to Ellman that Astley would ride 100-miles and spend £20 to sell a tup for £10.<sup>11</sup> He also bred and owned cart and blood horses, an interest that increased over the years and when he retired in 1824, a whole day of the four-day auction of his livestock was devoted to the sale of his horses.<sup>12</sup> In 1805, his horse dealing ended in court after selling a horse to Revd Joseph Sturges, who refused to pay. The defence barrister, William Garrow, thought Astley little better than 'a knowing horse dealer' and considered he had 'most egregiously duped' his client. But Astley was found not guilty.<sup>13</sup>

He was a member of the Dishley Tup Society, but not in the Society's early years when members were fined for dealing with him.<sup>14</sup> He was a founder member of the Smithfield Club and was called 'the father of the Club' for some years.<sup>15</sup> In later years he regularly chaired committee meetings. His letter in 1824 was instrumental in the Club changing its rules, thereby preventing a handful of members from winding it up as had been threatened.<sup>16</sup>

He married Mary, the second daughter of John Boswell, and they had one son, Richard, who took the name Gough in 1818.<sup>17</sup> Richard junior was also a Smithfield Club member and attended committee meetings with his father.<sup>18</sup> In September 1824, Astley retired, selling his livestock over four days. Odstone Hall was rented, and Astley appears to have moved to his son's home at Misterton Hall, where he died in 1830, aged 83.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> 'Monthly Register', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. III (1809), 283-4. Astley obviously enjoyed judging as he was judging at the Staffordshire Agricultural Show in 1822, at the age of 75. 10 August 1822, *Oxford University and City Herald*, 2, in The British Newspaper Archive (BNA).

<sup>11</sup> [F.P. Walesby], 'Memoir of Mr. Ellman, late of Glynde', *Baxter's Library of Agricultural and Horticultural Knowledge* (J. Baxter, 1834 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), xxxi.

<sup>12</sup> Pitt, *General View of Leicestershire*, 284; John Farey, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Derbyshire*, Vol. III (1817), 151. 'Extensive Sale at Odstone Hall', 11 September 1824, *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>13</sup> 'At Hertford Assizes', *The Ipswich Journal*, 3 August 1805, 2, in BNA.

<sup>14</sup> 'Papers of the Dishley Sheep Society', MS9, 'Manuscripts and Special Collections', University Library, University of Nottingham, (UN MS9/24A).

<sup>15</sup> [F.P. Walesby], 'Memoir of Mr. Ellman', xxxi.

<sup>16</sup> The Smithfield Club Minute Book, Vol. III, the uncatalogued archives of The Royal Smithfield Club, held at The Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading (Smithfield, MERL).

<sup>17</sup> Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire* (Harrison, 1865), 45; 'Marriages of Eminent Persons', 29, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXXXVI (1816), 82.

<sup>18</sup> The Smithfield Club Minute Book, Vol. I, 112, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>19</sup> 'Eligible and Genteel Family Residence', 22 December 1824, *Derby Mercury*, 1, in BNA.

## BANKS, SIR JOSEPH (1743-1820) Naturalist, Scientist and Agriculturalist



*Sir Joseph Banks*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Banks was 61 years of age in 1804. At an early age, he inherited his principal estate at Revesby, Lincolnshire, but he also owned land in other counties, including Derbyshire.<sup>20</sup> He lived for many years at 32 Soho Square, London.

Banks was a scientist, naturalist, botanist, and agriculturalist. At 25, he accompanied Captain Cook as a botanist on the Royal Navy and Royal Society expedition to the South Pacific Ocean on HMS Endeavour between 1768-1771. He was President of the Royal Society for over 40 years and unofficially managed Kew Gardens for George III.<sup>21</sup>

He had a small holding at Spring Grove, Isleworth, Middlesex, where he kept an assortment of livestock. He managed George III's Merino flock on an informal basis for many years.<sup>22</sup> Apart from being long-term president of the Royal Society, he was a founder official member of the Board, proprietor of the Royal Institution (RI) and a Smithfield Club member.<sup>23</sup> He was also a Freemason.

He married Dorothea Hugessen in 1779, but they had no children. He suffered severely from gout in his later years, particularly during the winter when he had to be conveyed in a sedan chair. He died at Spring Grove in 1820. His grave is in St Leonard's Church, Heston, and a memorial commemorates him in Lincoln Cathedral.

<sup>20</sup> For a good overview of Banks' life and particularly his interests in Lincolnshire see the website of the *Sir Joseph Banks Society*. The page 'About Sir Joseph Banks' has a video interview on Banks by Sir David Attenborough, a patron of the society. *The Sir Joseph Banks Society*, [website], <https://www.joseph-banks.org.uk/>, (accessed 22 January 2022).

<sup>21</sup> Kerry Lotzof, 'Joseph Banks: Scientist, explorer and botanist', *Natural History Museum*, [website], <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/joseph-banks-scientist-explorer-botanist.html>, (accessed 22 January 2022).

<sup>22</sup> For a good insight into Banks's later life and his interest in all things agricultural see Harold B. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock* (Angus & Robertson, 1964).

<sup>23</sup> To commemorate the bicentenary of Banks' death the Royal Society produced an issue of their journal specifically on Banks. Simon Werrett (ed.) 'Rethinking Joseph Banks', *Notes and Records: The Royal Society Journal of the History of Science*, Vol. LXXIII, No. 4 (2019), <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/toc/rsnr/2019/73/4>, (accessed 22 January 2022).

## BATE DUDLEY, THE REVD HENRY (1745-1824) Newspaper Editor, Playwright and Agriculturalist



*The Revd Henry Bate Dudley*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Bate Dudley was 59 years of age in 1804. He was born in Worcestershire, but after his father took over a school in Chelmsford, the family moved to Essex. Like his father, Henry Bate Jnr became a clergyman. He had a short spell in the army before becoming a curate in Prittlewell, Southend.<sup>24</sup> After Henry Bate Snr's death, his son took over his father's Essex parish in North Fambridge. He added Dudley to his name in 1784, following a bequest received from an aunt.<sup>25</sup>

Bate Dudley was one of the proprietors who established the *Morning Post* in 1772, becoming its first editor. When he sold his shares in the *Morning Post* in 1780, he became the proprietor and editor of the *Morning Herald*.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, he bought the advowson at Bradwell, which he successfully converted from marshy land into a profitable farming enterprise, for which he received much fame and medals from the Royal Society of Arts.<sup>27</sup>

Bate Dudley championed his friend, the artist Thomas Gainsborough, over Sir Joshua Reynolds in his newspapers. He was a close friend of David Garrick, the leading actor of the period. Encouraged by Garrick, Bate Dudley wrote the libretto for several operettas, regularly performed in London, provincial theatres and overseas.

Bate Dudley spent a year in prison for libelling the Duke of Richmond in the *Morning Post* and fought seven duels.<sup>28</sup> In 1798 he lost the advowson in Bradwell after the Bishop of London accused him of simony.<sup>29</sup> Bate Dudley then went to Ireland to become the Chancellor and Prebendary of Ferns Cathedral. He returned to England in 1812 and eventually became a Canon of Ely Cathedral.<sup>30</sup> In 1814 he regained the advowson at Bradwell.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup> 'Biographical Index for 1824', *The Annual Biography and Obituary for the Year 1825*, Vol. IX (1825), 408-13.

<sup>25</sup> 31 January 1784, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>26</sup> L. Werkmeister, *The London Daily Press 1772-1792* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 40-2.

<sup>27</sup> *Transactions of the Society, Instituted in London, for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers, and Commerce*, Vol. XI (1788), 56-62, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40059812>, (accessed 21 February 2022).

<sup>28</sup> Anonymous. *The Trial (at Large) of The Rev. Henry Bate, Clerk, with the previous proceedings, upon An Information exhibited against him by his Grace the Duke of Richmond for Libel* (1780), 49-50.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Bate Dudley, *Letters, &c. which have lately passed between the Bishop of London and the Rev H.B. Dudley, respecting the Advowson of the Vacant Rectory of Bradwell near the Sea* (London: Longman, 1811).

<sup>30</sup> 'Whitehall July 14', 15 July 1812, *London Courier, and Evening Gazette*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>31</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, New Series, Vol. LXXXIV (1814), 492.



After the onset of rioting in East Anglia in 1816, Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, sent Bate Dudley to put down the Littleport riots. At 70 years of age, Bate Dudley rode at the head of the Dragoon Guards and successfully quelled the riots.<sup>32</sup> He was an unofficial publicist for the Prince of Wales during his period as the Prince Regent and then as George IV, suppressing stories about the Prince's mistresses in his newspaper.<sup>33</sup> For this, the Prince Regent knighted him in 1813.<sup>34</sup>

Bate Dudley was a keen agriculturalist and would gain a reputation as 'the most distinguished cultivator in Essex.'<sup>35</sup> He was firstly an honorary and then ordinary member of the Board, a Smithfield Club member, attending management meetings and a Farming Society of Ireland member.<sup>36</sup> Bate Dudley was often in demand as a judge, judging arable and livestock competitions. He was one of the committee responsible for the presentation by agriculturalists to the sixth Duke of Bedford in 1808.<sup>37</sup> From a young age, Bate Dudley was a Freemason. He was a founder member of the Whig Club in London and a competent viola de gamba player.

He married Mary White, whose sister was Mrs [Elizabeth] Hartley, the famous actress.<sup>38</sup> They were married for over 50 years, but there were no children. In 1824 he went to Cheltenham when his health was failing. He died there and is buried in the churchyard at St. Mary's Church, Cheltenham.

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<sup>32</sup> A.J. Peacock, *Bread or Blood: A study of the agrarian riots in East Anglia 1816* (London: Victor Gollanez, 1965), 95-133.

<sup>33</sup> King George IV to Lord Liverpool, 14 February 1812, British Library Add MS 38190, f54; A. Aspinall, *The Letters of King George IV*, Vol. I, 1812-1815 (Cambridge University Press, 1938), 114, fn. 2.

<sup>34</sup> 'Whitehall Nov. 3', 4 November 1812, *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>35</sup> 'Holkham Sheep Shearing', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. VII (1810), 61.

<sup>36</sup> 'Farming Society of Ireland', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IX (1811), 274-5.

<sup>37</sup> 'Recommencement of the Woburn Sheep-Shearing, Bedfordshire', 23 June 1808, *Dublin Evening Post*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>38</sup> *The Annual Biography and Obituary for the Year 1825*, Vol. IX, 408-13.

## BEAUMONT, COLONEL THOMAS RICHARD (1758-1829) Politician and Landowner



Beaumont was 46 years of age in 1804. He was born in North Yorkshire and inherited a modest estate there. His wife inherited substantial estates in Yorkshire and Northumberland, including a lead mine, and they made their home in Hexham Abbey, Northumberland. He was a Tory MP for Northumberland from 1795 but was an infrequent attendee and never spoke in the House.<sup>39</sup>

He was a proprietor of the RI, an honorary member of the Board, and then elected as an ordinary member in 1808. He was also a Smithfield Club member. George Garrard exhibited a portrait of Beaumont at the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1813, which this image is presumably a working sketch.<sup>40</sup>

His wife Diana was the illegitimate daughter and heir of Sir Thomas Wentworth Blackett, and they had eight children.<sup>41</sup>

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**Colonel Beaumont**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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<sup>39</sup> J.M. Collinge, 'BEAUMONT, Thomas Richard (1758-1829), of Hexham Abbey, Northumb. and Bretton Hall, Yorks.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/beamont-thomas-richard-1758-1829>, (accessed 11 August 2018).

<sup>40</sup> 'Colonel Beaumont, M.P. for the County of Northumberland', Cat. No. 70, Graves, 209.

<sup>41</sup> Collinge, 'BEAUMONT'; 'Sir Thomas Wentworth Blackett (1726-1792)', *Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project*, [website], <http://www.dukesfield.org.uk/sir-thomas-wentworth-blackett-1726-92/>, (accessed 28 December 2021).

## BEDFORD, JOHN RUSSELL, 6th DUKE of (1766-1839)<sup>42</sup> Landowner and Agriculturalist



*His Excellency John Duke of Bedford*  
George Garrard (1806)

The sixth Duke was 38 years of age in 1804. He inherited the Woburn Estates after his brother's unexpected death in 1802. Less than six months before his brother's death, he had become a widower; his wife of 17 years, Georgiana, died, leaving him with three young sons.<sup>43</sup> In 1803, he married Georgiana Gordon, one of the Duke of Gordon's daughters.

John Russell was a staunch Foxite Whig and was the MP for Tavistock from 1788-1802. After his brother's death, he moved up to the House of Lords. His only taste of office was during the 'ministry of all the talents' when he was Irish viceroy between 1806 and 1807.<sup>44</sup>

John faithfully continued his brother's agricultural endeavours after becoming the sixth Duke. These included hosting the annual Woburn Sheep Shearing, taking over his brother's position as President of the Smithfield Club and his seat on the Board. However, he had a more profound love of horticulture, particularly grasses and sponsored several botanical publications. His head gardener, George Sinclair, carried out trials at Woburn that investigated the biology of grassland plants and how their diversity was responsible for a more significant amount of plant matter.<sup>45</sup> In 2002 Sinclair's experiments, under the Duke's

patronage, were recognised as the first ecological experiments that helped inspire Darwin in his work on the evolution of species.<sup>46</sup>

With the second Duchess, he had a further 10 children; however, their last daughter was likely to have been the daughter of the animal painter, Sir Edwin Landseer (1803-73). Although 20 years older than Landseer, the Duchess was Landseer's mistress for over 30 years.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Garrard, *His Excellency John Duke of Bedford*, Engraved Print from the original painting in the possession of Lord Somerville, (1806).

<sup>43</sup> Georgiana Byng, second daughter of George Byng, 4<sup>th</sup> Viscount Torrington, (1768-1801).

<sup>44</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, 'Russell, John, sixth Duke of Bedford', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ONDB)* (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24322>, (accessed 5 September 2018).

<sup>45</sup> George Sinclair, *Hortus Gramineus Woburnensis* (1816), cited in Joe Bord, *Science and Whig Manners* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 109.

<sup>46</sup> Bord, 109-10; Andy Hector and Rowan Hooper, 'Darwin and the First Ecological Experiment', *Science*, Vol. CCXCV, Iss. 5555 (2002), 639-40, <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.1064815>, (accessed 28 December 2021).

<sup>47</sup> Thompson, 'Russell, John,'; Georgiana Blakiston, *Woburn and the Russells* (London: Constable, 1980), 21-3.

## BRIDGEWATER, JOHN EGERTON, 7<sup>TH</sup> EARL of (1753-1823)<sup>48</sup> Militarian, Landowner and Agriculturalist



**General John William Egerton 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bridgewater**  
Samuel William Reynolds after William Owen (1825)  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

The Earl of Bridgewater was 51 years of age in 1804. His seat was at Ashridge House, Buckinghamshire, but he also had a London townhouse.<sup>49</sup> Egerton was the son of The Right Revd John Egerton, Bishop of Durham. He joined the British Army in 1771 and by 1812 had progressed to the rank of General in the 14<sup>th</sup> Dragoons.<sup>50</sup> He was a Tory MP for Morpeth and then Brackley until 1803 but spoke only twice in the House.<sup>51</sup> In 1803, Egerton inherited a fortune and estates in 11 counties from his second cousin, Francis Egerton, the third Duke of Bridgewater (the Canal Duke).<sup>52</sup>

Egerton was a keen agriculturalist, an honorary member of the Board, and later elected ordinary member. He was also a proprietor of the RI.

He was an enthusiastic Southdown breeder and regularly visited and corresponded over many years with his good friend, John Ellman. Ellman regularly attended the Earl's shows in Shropshire and Hertfordshire, often as a judge.<sup>53</sup>

Egerton married Charlotte Catherine Anne Hayes in 1783, but there were no children. Endeavouring to regain the

dukedom for the family, his will was fantastically complicated.<sup>54</sup> The Earl's younger unmarried brother Francis succeeded him, and upon his death, the title became extinct. The seventh earl is buried in the Egerton family vault at Little Gaddesden Church.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel William Reynolds after William Owen, *John William Egerton 7th Earl of Bridgewater*, Mezzotint, 354 mm x 258 mm (pub. 1825), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D811.

<sup>49</sup> Ashridge was then on the Buckinghamshire/Hertfordshire border. It is now in Hertfordshire.

<sup>50</sup> For information on his army career see, '14<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons', *British Empire*, [website], <https://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyunits/britishcavalry/14thlightdragoonsjohnegerton.htm>, (accessed 29 December 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Sir Lewis Namier, 'EGERTON, John William, (1753-1823), of Albermarle Street, London', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1754-1790, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/egerton-john-william-1753-1823>, (accessed 17 July 2018).

<sup>52</sup> Michael Turner, 'Land Industry and the Bridgewater Inheritance', B.A. Holderness and Michael Turner (eds.), *Land, Labour and Agriculture, 1700-1920: Essays for Gordon Mingay* (The Hambleton Press, 1991), 20.

<sup>53</sup> [F.P. Walesby], 'Memoir of Mr. Ellman', xviii.

<sup>54</sup> For a good understanding of why Egerton did not become the fourth Duke and to understand how complicated his will was, see Holderness and Turner, 1-25.

## BUCKLEY, NICHOLAS (1752-1814)

### Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder



**Nicholas Buckley**

George Garrard (1805-1809)

From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Buckley was 52 years of age in 1804. He came from a farming family at Normanton Hill, Loughborough, Leicestershire. Along with his father John and later his son and grandson (John and John Nicholas respectively), Buckley was a celebrated and well-respected New Leicester tup breeder. His brother John Buckley was also a well-known breeder who lived nearby in Normanton on Soar. The Buckley family's hospitality was well known. Buckley's obituary stated that he was a disciple of Robert Bakewell's Dishley school, imitating many of his ideas and was particularly intimate with him.<sup>55</sup>

Buckley was an original Dishley Tup Society member but initially not a Smithfield Club member until 1805. Unlike other Dishley Society members, he was not a regular at their management meetings, only attending one in 1806 at Woburn, when no other Dishley breeders were present.<sup>56</sup>

He married Barbara in 1784, and there were at least four children. Unlike many other Dishley tup breeders, the Buckley family do not appear to have been

Unitarian.<sup>57</sup> Buckley died aged 61 when he was seized by a fit and fell off his horse whilst checking his flock.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *The Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XXXVIII (1814), 100.

<sup>56</sup> Arthur Young, *Annals of Agriculture and Other Useful Arts*, (*Annals*), Vol. XLIV (1806), 363.

<sup>57</sup> The Buckley family appear never to have been Unitarian. John Buckley owned the advowson and the manor around the Anglican church of St James, Normanton-on-Soar whilst The Revd T. Buckley was the vicar there. For more information on this see, 'White's Directory of Nottinghamshire 1853', Normanton on Soar on *GenUki* [website], <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/NTT/NormantononSoar>, (accessed 29 December 2018).

<sup>58</sup> *The Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XXXVIII, 100.

## BYNG, ROBERT (1773-1829) Gentleman Farmer and Agriculturalist



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**Robert Byng**  
George Garrard (1805-09)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Byng was 31 years of age in 1804. He was born at Wrotham Park, Barnet, the youngest son of George Byng by his second wife Anne Connolly, who hailed from Castletown in Ireland. He was the brother of the longstanding Whig MP, George Byng. He was a second cousin of Georgiana, the first wife of John, sixth Duke of Bedford, and Lucy, wife of Orlando Bridgeman, first Earl of Bradford. He attended Westminster School and stewarded at an anniversary dinner for the school in 1802.<sup>59</sup>

He was a keen agriculturalist and farmed in the South Mimms area, but there is little information about him. It is probable that he either farmed the land associated with the family home at Wrotham Park or tenanted one of the estate farms. However, he was a stalwart of the Smithfield Club; he judged, stewarded, and chaired their management meetings on occasions. He resigned in 1815. Sometimes his brother, George Byng MP, would also attend the agricultural events. In 1807 Byng was one of the cattle judges at the Dublin Show.<sup>60</sup> He likely stayed with the Duke of Bedford, who was also at the show.<sup>61</sup>

Byng was not married. In *History of the Landed Gentry*, Burke does not list any spouse, although he lists the wives and children of his brothers and sisters. On the few occasions he is mentioned as dining in London at a non-farming event, there is no mention of a wife accompanying him.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Byng stewarded for a reunion dinner of the school in 1802. 'Westminster School Anniversary', 24 February 1802, *Morning Chronicle*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>60</sup> 'Adjudication, Dublin Spring Shew – March 4. Neat Cattle', 18 March 1807, *Hibernian Journal*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>61</sup> The sixth Duke of Bedford was living in Ireland between 1806-1807 during the period he was Viceroy for Ireland for 'the ministry of all the talents'.

<sup>62</sup> John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of The Landed Gentry or Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. I (London: Henry Colburn, 1837), 14, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=FBtVAAAACAAJ>, (accessed 30 December 2021).

## CARR, SIR THOMAS (1757-1814) Gentleman Farmer and Agriculturalist



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Sir Thomas Carr  
George Garrard  
detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811)

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Carr was 47 years of age in 1804. His farm at Beddington in Sussex was very close to John Ellman's farm at Glynde, and Arthur Young reports that they were friends.<sup>63</sup> They went together to shows such as the Woburn Sheep Shearing.<sup>64</sup>

Carr was High Sheriff of Sussex in 1800, and on George III's birthday, he delivered an address of congratulations from the people of Sussex for the king's recent deliverance from an assassination attempt by James Hadfield at the Drury Lane theatre.<sup>65</sup> After his speech, the King knighted him.<sup>66</sup>

Carr was an enthusiastic Southdown sheep and Sussex cattle breeder and occasionally showed pigs. He was a keen Smithfield Club member in its early days, joining in 1799 and attending management meetings. When Carr resigned in 1811, he was in arrears with his yearly subscriptions, which was not unusual for many members from 1810 onwards.<sup>67</sup> He was an active member of the Sussex Agricultural Society.

Carr was married with two children. He died in March 1814.

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<sup>63</sup> *Annals*, XXXV, 240.

<sup>64</sup> 'Lewes, June 23', 23 June 1800, *Sussex Advertiser*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>65</sup> 2 June 1800, *Sussex Advertiser*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>66</sup> 'Chichester', 2 June 1800, *Hampshire Chronicle*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>67</sup> Carr joined the Smithfield Club in December 1799. *Annals*, Vol. XXXIV, 358. His resignation is in *The Smithfield Club Minute Book*, Vol. I, 158, Smithfield, MERL.

## CARRINGTON, ROBERT SMITH, 1<sup>st</sup> LORD (1752-1838)<sup>68</sup> Landowner and Banker



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*Robert Smith, Baron Carrington*  
William Sharp (c. 1820)  
Image courtesy of National Library of Wales

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Carrington was 52 years of age in 1804. His grandfather founded Smith's Bank of Nottingham, later, Smith, Payne and Co., of which he was a partner (now part of Natwest Group).<sup>69</sup> He was the first person from the financial sector to be elevated to a peerage. Carrington's properties included estates in Nottingham, Wycombe, a London house at 26 St James's Place and a plantation in Jamaica.<sup>70</sup>

Carrington was a cousin of William Wilberforce, a friend of William Pitt, and a Tory supporter.<sup>71</sup> As an MP, he represented Nottingham from 1779-1797.<sup>72</sup>

Carrington was the third president of the Board, succeeding Lord Somerville in 1800-1803, and a proprietor for the RI. In his diary, Arthur Young, Carrington's secretary during the period he was President of the Board, recounted his dislike for him and stated that Carrington was a Unitarian.<sup>73</sup>

He married twice, the second, just days before his 84<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>74</sup> By his first wife, he had a son and eleven daughters. In his will, proved in 1838, Carrington left £120,000.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> William Sharp, *Robert Smith, Baron Carrington*, Lithograph, 366 mm x 273 mm (c. 1820), Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales. Licenced under <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/>.

<sup>69</sup> For more information on his banking activities see 'Robert Smith', *Natwest Group Heritage Hub*, [website], <https://www.rbs.com/heritage/people/robert-smith.html>, (accessed 18 July 2018).

<sup>70</sup> For more information on his slave plantations see, 'Robert Smith 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Carrington', *Centre for the Study of British Slavery*, [website], <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/11954/#addresses>, (accessed 31 December 2021),

<sup>71</sup> He voted for the abolition of slavery in 1791 (unsuccessful) but became the owner of a slave plantation in 1798 which he owned for 40 years. *Centre for the Study of British Slavery*.

<sup>72</sup> P.A. Symonds and R.G. Thorne, 'SMITH Robert (1752-1838) of Bulcote Lodge Notts. and 26 St James Place, Middx', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/smith-robert-1752-1838>, (accessed 31 December 2021).

<sup>73</sup> There are no references to Carrington being a Unitarian apart from in Young's diary where he says, 'Also he is a dissenter and a democrat. A Unitarian he may be, but certainly no democrat.' Carrington was from Nottingham and many of nearby Leicester's population were Unitarian, including several banking families so he was likely to have been of this faith. In his diary, Young mentions his dislike of Carrington on several occasions. M. Betham-Edwards (ed.). '25 May 1801, Diary Continued 1801-1803', *The Autobiography of Arthur Young* (Smith, Elder, & Co., 1898, rep. by Augustus M. Kelley, 1967), 368.

<sup>74</sup> *Natwest Group Heritage Hub*.

<sup>75</sup> 'Robert Smith, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Carrington of Upton', *The Peerage*, [website], 1473, <http://www.thepeerage.com/p1473.htm>, (accessed 16 July 2018).



## CARTWRIGHT, DR. REVD. EDMUND (1743-1823)

### Inventor and Agriculturalist



*Revd. Edmund Cartwright*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From Woburn Abbey Collection

Cartwright was 61 years of age in 1804. Born in Nottinghamshire, the son of a landowner, he began his education at 14 years of age at University College. In 1779 he became a rector at Goadby Marwood, Leicestershire, and then appointed a prebendary at Lincoln Cathedral in 1786, a position he held until his death.<sup>76</sup>

Cartwright became interested in farming whilst working the glebe land at Goadby Marwood. He was a prolific inventor whose inventions included the power loom, patented in 1785 and a wool combing machine patented in 1789. He established a factory for the looms in Doncaster, but the venture ended in bankruptcy, and he moved to London.<sup>77</sup>

In 1801, Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford, employed him to manage his experimental farm at Woburn. After the fifth Duke's death, he remained at Woburn until 1807, becoming the Abbey's in-house

chaplain.<sup>78</sup> Although Cartwright's duties for the sixth Duke involved less experimental work, he was still awarded a silver medal for the invention of a three-furrow plough in 1803 by the Society of Arts.<sup>79</sup> In 1804 he was elected an honorary member of the Board.<sup>80</sup> He was a Smithfield Club member, attended management meetings occasionally and with Andrew Wilson, the Park Farm bailiff, entered the animals for the Dukes of Bedford at the Smithfield Club shows. He resigned from the club in March 1808, shortly before moving to Kent.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Some of the information for this biography has been gleaned from an anonymous biography of Cartwright. It is generally accepted that this was written by his daughter, Mary Strickland (nee Cartwright), especially as the preface says that the author had access to authentic family papers and personal recollections. Furthermore, this preface is signed 'MS' and dedicated to Lord John Russell. [Mary Strickland], *A Memoir of the Life, Writings and Mechanical Inventions of Edmund Cartwright, D.D. F.R.S. Inventor of the Power Loom, etc. etc.* (Saunders & Otley, 1843).

<sup>77</sup> David Hunt, 'Cartwright, Edmund (1743-1823)', *ODNB* (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4813>, (accessed 31 December 2021).

<sup>78</sup> Hunt, 'Cartwright, Edmund'.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Batchelor, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Bedfordshire* (Sherwood Neely & Jones, 1813), vi. 'Agricultural Intelligence – England', *The Farmer's Magazine*, Vol. IV (1803), 369. Hunt, 'Cartwright, Edmund'.

<sup>80</sup> Hunt, 'Cartwright, Edmund'.

<sup>81</sup> The Smithfield Club Minute Book, Vol. I, 62, Smithfield, MERL.

He was an accomplished poet and in 1771 published '*Armine and Elvira: A Legendary Tale*', which ran for many editions.<sup>82</sup> In 1807, he published a volume of letters and sonnets addressed to the fifteen-year-old Lord John Russell.<sup>83</sup>

In 1809, after he successfully petitioned the House of Commons to recognise his work on the power loom, he used their award of £10,000 to retire to a small farm at Hollenden in Kent. He married his first wife Alice in 1772, and she was the mother of his four surviving children. After she died in 1785, he married his second wife, Susannah Kearney, in 1790.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Edmund Cartwright, *Armine and Elvira: A Legendary Tale* (London: John Murray, 1771).

<sup>83</sup> Edmund Cartwright, *Letters and Sonnets on Moral and other interesting subjects* (London: Longmans 1807), accessed through British Library online.

<sup>84</sup> [Strickland]; Hunt.

**COKE, THOMAS WILLIAM (1754-1842)<sup>85</sup>**  
**Agriculturalist, Landowner and Politician**



*Thomas William Coke Esq*  
George Garrard (1806)

Coke was 50 years old in 1804.<sup>86</sup> He was born in Derbyshire, inherited Holkham Hall in Norfolk in 1776, and was a Whig MP for Norfolk from 1776-1832.<sup>87</sup> He was major commandant of the Holkham Yeomanry in 1798 and Lt. Colonel of the West Norfolk Yeoman Cavalry in 1804.<sup>88</sup> He was created first Earl of Leicester in 1837.

Coke was a colossus in English agriculture and was a founder member of the Board and the Smithfield Club. He hosted the annual Holkham Sheep Shearing event from the 1790s to 1821.<sup>89</sup>

In 1775 he married Jane Dutton, whose brother James had married Coke's sister Elizabeth the year before. They had three daughters. Jane died in 1800, and Coke did not remarry for almost 22 years, surprising his friends and London society by marrying his 18-year-old godchild, Lady Anne Keppel, in 1822. They had six children, including an heir, and although 50 years younger than Coke, his wife only outlived him by two years.<sup>90</sup> Having turned down peerages in the past, Coke finally became the first Earl of Leicester in 1837 when he was 83.

<sup>85</sup> Garrard, *Thomas William Coke Esq.*, Engraved Print after the original painting in the possession of Lord Somerville (1806).

<sup>86</sup> For an excellent review of Thomas William Coke's life, see A.M.W. Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk and His Friends* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1912 edn.) and Susanna Wade-Martins, *Coke of Norfolk 1754-1842: A Biography* (The Boydell Press, 2010 rep.).

<sup>87</sup> There was a period of six years between 1784-1790 when Coke withdrew his parliamentary nomination. To understand the political tension and division within the Whig party then, see Wade-Martins, 39-44.

<sup>88</sup> Margaret Escott, 'COKE, Thomas William (1754-1842), of Holkham, Norf.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1820-1832, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/coke-thomas-1754-1842>, (accessed 13 August 2018).

<sup>89</sup> In 1821 R.N. Bacon stated that the last Holkham Sheep Shearing was the forty-third meeting. This would date the first to 1778. Susanna Wade-Martins states that the 1819 meeting was also considered to be the forty-third so dating the first one to 1776, almost immediately after Coke took over at Holkham. Wade-Martins rightly says Coke's sheep shearing was first mentioned in the press in 1798 when Coke likely decided to increase the size of his event following the fifth Duke of Bedford's first Woburn Sheep Shearing the year before. Wade-Martins gives very valid reasons why it was most likely after 1790 before Coke began hosting these events to a wider clientele than his tenants, the earlier events likely to have been only for tenants. R.N. Bacon, *A Report of the Transactions of the Holkham Sheep-Shearing* (Norwich, 1821), front cover; Wade-Martins, 114-5.

<sup>90</sup> Wade-Martins, 24-5, 169.

## CONYERS, JOHN (1748-1813) Gentleman Farmer and Agriculturalist

Conyers was 56 years of age in 1804. He inherited Copped (Copt) Hall in 1775 and was the third generation of his family to live there. His father rebuilt the hall, which lies only 12 miles from central London, on the outskirts of Epping, Essex. Conyers also had a London townhouse in Mount Street, WI, between 1776 and 1811.<sup>91</sup> His grandfather, Edward Conyers, was the son of a barrister and appears to have made money buying and selling property, extensively in Walthamstow and then in Essex.<sup>92</sup> Conyers' political affiliation was to the Tory Party, and his father was a Tory MP for Reading and then Essex.<sup>93</sup>

The Copped Hall estate in 1803 consisted of 2,981 acres farmed over nine farms. A further 532 acres of unenclosed land in Epping Forest also belonged to the estate.<sup>94</sup> The Epping and Ongar areas of Essex were renowned for their dairy herds during this period, and Conyers kept milking cows, primarily of the Devon breed.<sup>95</sup> In 1807 the milking herd numbered 30 cows. He was a founder ordinary member of the Board, a position he held for many years. He was an early member of the Smithfield Club but let his membership lapse, paying no subs from 1805. He resigned from the Club in 1811.<sup>96</sup>

Conyers married Julia Matthew in 1773. She was the heiress of William Matthew, a plantation owner in the West Indies and her inheritance included plantations and slaves in Antigua and St Kitts.<sup>97</sup> They had two children, a son and a daughter.<sup>98</sup> In 1812 Conyers separated from his wife, and she received maintenance of £31,000/year.<sup>99</sup> Conyers died the following year, in 1813. He was a keen hunter, and the Essex Hunt's foxhounds were kennelled at Copped Hall. His bad-tempered eldest son and heir Henry John Conyers was even keener on fox hunting, spending vast sums (rumoured to be over £100,000), and consequently, the estate became neglected and run down.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> For a good overview of the Conyers family and Copped Hall, see Raymond Cassidy, *Copped Hall: A Short History*, updated by Alan Cox (Waltham Abbey Historical Society, 2015 rev. edn.), and Sylvia Keith, *Nine Centuries at Copped Hall* (2014, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.).

<sup>92</sup> Keith, 33.

<sup>93</sup> Keith, 34.

<sup>94</sup> Keith, 49.

<sup>95</sup> Garrard stated that Conyers initially bought 24 Devon heifers and 2 bulls and was so pleased with them he doubled their numbers. He went on to say that they served the dairies of Essex so well that many farmers sent for Devon cows to provide liquid milk and to suckle their calves. George Garrard, 'Devon Cattle', *A Description of the Different Varieties of Oxen Common in the British Isles: Embellished with Engravings; being an Accompaniment to a Set of Models of the Improved Breeds of Cattle* (Garrard, 1815), 6. For more information on dairying in Essex and Conyer's dairy enterprise see Arthur Young, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex*, Vol. II (1807), 282-92; G.E. Fussell, *The English Dairy Farmer: 1500-1900* (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966), 45-6.

<sup>96</sup> The Smithfield Club Minute Book, Vol. I, 158, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>97</sup> Keith, 50; 'John Conyers II of Copped Hall Essex' *Legacies of British Slavery database*, [website], <http://www.depts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146645417>, (accessed 1 January 2022).

<sup>98</sup> Richard Morris, *The Three Conyers Sisters of Copped Hall, Epping* (The Copped Hall Trust, 2016).

<sup>99</sup> Keith, 50.

<sup>100</sup> Keith 51-3.

## CORBET, SIR ANDREW (1766-1835)<sup>101</sup>

### Landowner



*Sir Andrew Corbet*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Corbet was 38 years of age in 1804. The Corbets were large landowners in Shropshire and Buckinghamshire.<sup>102</sup> Corbet's seat was in Shropshire, firstly at Shawbury Park before relocating to Acton Reynald Hall, Moreton Corbet. Corbet made extensive renovations to the Moreton Corbet property.<sup>103</sup> He was High Sheriff of Shropshire in 1798 and created a baronet in 1808.<sup>104</sup> His London address was 1 Hill Street, Berkley Square, so a near neighbour of Lord Somerville who lived in the same street. Like Somerville, Corbet was also descended from a Norman knight, being a 23<sup>rd</sup> descendent of the knight Corbet.<sup>105</sup> In 1796 he nominated the longstanding MP, John Hill as a candidate for Shrewsbury. As Hill was a Pitt supporter, Corbet was also likely a Tory.<sup>106</sup>

In 1790 Corbet married Mary Taylor, eldest daughter of Thomas Taylor of Lymme Hall, Chester. They had four sons and one daughter.<sup>107</sup> Corbet was recorded as being an excellent landlord, and at least eighty of his tenants attended his funeral.<sup>108</sup> The ale served after Corbet's funeral had been brewed the day he was born.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Garrard exhibited a portrait of Corbet at the 1817 Royal Academy Exhibition, most likely taken from this sketch. 'Portrait of Sir A. Corbet, Bart.', Cat. No. 416, Graves, 209.

<sup>102</sup> The Corbet family, through inheritance, owned the Linslade Estate in Buckinghamshire which was sold in 1829. 'Linslade Estate, Buckinghamshire', *Discovering Shropshire's History*, [website], Doc. Ref: 322/14 in Shropshire Archives, [http://search.shropshirehistory.org.uk/collections/getrecord/CCA\\_X322\\_14/](http://search.shropshirehistory.org.uk/collections/getrecord/CCA_X322_14/), (accessed 2 January 2022).

<sup>103</sup> Augusta Elizabeth Corbet, *The Family of Corbet: its life and times*, Vol. II (St Catherine Press, 1920 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), 363-5, [https://archive.org/stream/familyofcorbetit02corb/familyofcorbetit02corb\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/familyofcorbetit02corb/familyofcorbetit02corb_djvu.txt), (accessed 20 July 2017).

<sup>104</sup> Corbet was not knighted until 1808, but as Garrard used his title in the print's key, the thesis has adopted this title, even although post 1804. 'Sir Andrew Corbet, Bart.', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. IV (1835), 203.

<sup>105</sup> 'Sir Andrew Corbet, Bart.', 10 June 1835, *Salopian Journal*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>106</sup> 8 June 1796, *Hereford Journal*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>107</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. IV, 203.

<sup>108</sup> 17 June 1835, *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, 3; 24 June 1835, *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 2, both in BNA.

<sup>109</sup> 'The late Sir Andrew Corbet, Bart', 17 June 1835, *Salopian Journal*, 2, in BNA.

## CROOK, THOMAS (1750-1821) Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder



Thomas Crook  
detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811)

Crook was 54 years of age in 1804. He lived at Coggswell, a Tudor farmhouse at Tytherton Lucas, Wiltshire, farming much of the adjoining land.<sup>110</sup> Crook was a highly respected livestock breeder and wrote about rearing calves without milk.<sup>111</sup> As well as breeding Alderney cattle, he produced a breed of cattle called Tytherton, two-thirds French and one-third Devon. Crook was one of the top livestock men whom the first Smithfield Club committee proposed to bring onto their fledgling committee.<sup>112</sup> But although he was an early member of the Club, his membership lapsed.

Crook was a patron of the livestock artist James Ward. He employed William Smith to drain his farms, and Thomas William Coke and others visited Crook to see this drainage work. He was a churchwarden at St Nicholas' Church in Tytherton Lucas and was instrumental in its major restoration in 1802.<sup>113</sup>

He married Mary Susannah Bayliffe, the daughter of a successful Chippenham attorney, in 1787. They had a son, who died at twenty-four, and three daughters. Mary Susannah Crook was a woman of independent means, and through her father's side of the family, inherited land at Eversholt, a village very close to Woburn.<sup>114</sup> In 1847 the Crooks' granddaughter, Mary Ellen Bethell, wrote that the Crooks' marriage had not been happy.<sup>115</sup> Knowing his wife was financially independent, Crook bequeathed everything in his will to his daughters and their husbands rather than to her.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Coggswell was originally called West Tytherton Farm.

<sup>111</sup> 'Mr. Thomas Crook, of Tytherton, (England) fed his calves on a jelly, made by boiling for ten minutes one quart of linseed in six quarts of water, mixed with a small quantity of the infusion of the best hay, steeped in boiling water; he fed the calves three times a day'. Crook observed that his calves grew on better on this regime than those reared by his neighbours. 'Agriculture No. 11', *The Halcyon Luminary and Theological Repository: a monthly magazine devoted to religion and polite literature*, Vol. I (1812), 227-8.

<sup>112</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXXII, 209.

<sup>113</sup> Bryant G. Bayliffe, *George Searle Bayliffe*, [website], <http://www.rawes.co.uk/bryant/georgesearlebayliffe.htm>, (accessed 17 July 2018).

<sup>114</sup> Bayliffe.

<sup>115</sup> Ellen Mary Bethell, 'History of the Wood Family', cited in Bayliffe, (accessed 17 July 2018).

<sup>116</sup> Jerry Green, 'Thomas Crook of Tytherton – his Will – 23 Aug. 1821', *History and News of the Green Family from Harpole, Northamptonshire, their Ancestors and Relatives*, [website], <http://www.historyandnews.co.uk/article.php?story=20171208172125245>, (accessed 17 July 2018). Bethell.

## CURTIS, ALDERMAN SIR WILLIAM (1752-1829)<sup>117</sup> Businessman, Merchant, and Politician



*Alderman Sir William Curtis, BART* (c. 1805)

© The Trustees of the British Museum, London

Curtis was 52 years of age in 1804. Nicknamed ‘Billy Biscuit’, he lived at Culland’s Grove, Southgate, Enfield and had a house built in Ramsgate.<sup>118</sup> At 19, he and his brother Timothy inherited the family biscuit bakery in Wapping, established by his grandfather.<sup>119</sup> The bakery supplied hard biscuits to the British Navy. Curtis’s other commercial activities included shipping to the East Indies and whaling. He was likely involved directly and indirectly in slave transportation.<sup>120</sup> He was a partner in the bank, Robarts, Curtis, Were, Hornyold, Berwick and Co.<sup>121</sup>

He was elected as a London Alderman in 1785, a life-long position, Sheriff of the City of London in 1788-9, and Lord Mayor in 1795-6. He was made a baronet in 1802. He was an MP for 35 years, and although a close friend of the Prince Regent, he was principally a Tory and long-time supporter and friend of William Pitt, financially supporting Pitt’s loyalty loan in 1797.<sup>122</sup>

He was a keen farming enthusiast, reported as having ‘the best farmyard in Middlesex’. In 1804 he exhibited Indian cattle and their offspring at the Smithfield show. He had owned one of the Indian cows for 14 years.<sup>123</sup> Curtis was also a keen New Leicester breeder, and in 1791, Robert Bakewell sent him a haunch of mutton because he considered Curtis was

<sup>117</sup> Anonymous, *Alderman Sir William Curtis, BART*, Drawn on Paper and inscribed Alderman Curtis, 347 mm x 240 mm (c. 1805), London: The British Museum, No. 1875,0710.1306.

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<sup>118</sup> Much of the information for this biography is from J.H. Curtis-Dolby and Nick Brazil, *Billy Biscuit: The Colourful Life and Times of Sir William Curtis Bt MP, 1752-1829* (Brazil Productions, 2010).

<sup>119</sup> Michael Fowle, ‘Alderman Sir William Curtis, Bart, MP: A much loved, but often lampooned figure’, *Mike Rendell.com*, [website], <http://mikerendell.com/alderman-sir-william-curtis-bart-mp-a-much-loved-but-often-lampooned-figure/>, (accessed 20 July 2018).

<sup>120</sup> Curtis-Dolby and Brazil, 62-9.

<sup>121</sup> Norman Gash, ‘Curtis, Sir William, first baronet’, *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6964>, (accessed 1 August 2018). There must have been banking connections with Anthony Lechmere (see below) as Robarts and Berwick were both involved with the Lechmere bank, and with Berwick, Lechmere and Co.

<sup>122</sup> Curtis’ firm subscribed £10,000 and his bank subscribed £30,000. Lawrence Taylor and R.G. Thorne, ‘CURTIS, William (1752-1829), of Culland’s Grove, Southgate, Mdx.’, *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/curtis-william-1752-1829>, (accessed 3 January 2022).

<sup>123</sup> ‘Smithfield Annual Cattle Show’ *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. II (1804), 568.

a 'well-wisher to the cause' of the New Leicester.<sup>124</sup> He was on the committee concerned with the Corn Laws between 1813-15 and continually opposed their revision.

With his wife Anne, they had four sons and two daughters. With his uncouth diction, Curtis is supposed to have invented 'the three R's': 'Readin' Ritin and Rithmitic'. His bad grammar, fat stomach and red nose made him a favourite subject for caricaturists, with over 100 caricatures produced of him, many still extant.<sup>125</sup> He was an active Freemason, first joining in 1775 at 25 and was a member of the Drapers' Company.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 15 December 1791, in H. Cecil Pawson, *Robert Bakewell: Pioneer Livestock Breeder* (London: Crosby, Lockwood & Son, Ltd., 1957), 162-3.

<sup>125</sup> Fowle.

<sup>126</sup> Curtis-Dolby and Brazil, 33-7, 45-8.



## CURWEN, JOHN CHRISTIAN (1756-1828) Agriculturalist and Politician



*John Christian Curwen*  
George Garrard (1805-07)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Curwen was 48 years of age in 1804. His seat was at Workington Hall, Cumberland. John Christian was the son of two eminent Cumbrian families, the Christians of Ewanrigg and the Curwens of Workington.<sup>127</sup> After his first wife died, he eloped with his cousin and wealthy heiress, Isabella Curwen, and in 1790 he took her name (also his mother's maiden name). Fletcher Christian, who sailed on the ill-fated *Bounty*, was another cousin.

He was an MP for Carlisle and then Cumberland for most of the period between 1786 to 1828 and supported the Whigs.<sup>128</sup> During the 1820s, he also sat as a member of the House of Keys, the Isle of Man parliament. He is the only man ever to hold the titles of MP and MHK.<sup>129</sup>

He was the founder of the Workington Agricultural Society, which also had a branch in the Isle of Man. He hosted the Society's annual show at his farm, the Schoose, from 1805 to 1821 and compiled the society's comprehensive annual report. He was Sheriff of Cumberland in 1784-5 and an honorary member of the Board.<sup>130</sup>

His first marriage was to Margaret Taubman in 1775. After she died in 1778, he married Isabella Curwen in 1782. He had one son from his first marriage and eight children from his second.

Curwen inherited coal mines in West Cumberland from both sides of his family. These suffered financially during the depression following the Napoleonic Wars, and he had to borrow heavily to support them. At his death, these debts amounted to £120,000.<sup>131</sup> He is buried in an unmarked grave in Workington.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>127</sup> For more on Curwen's life, see Henry Lonsdale, *The Worthies of Cumberland: John Christian Curwen. William Blamire*. (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1867).

<sup>128</sup> J.M. Collinge and R.G. Thorne, 'CURWEN, (formerly CHRISTIAN), John Christian (1756-1828), of Ewanrigg and Workington Hall, Cumb.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/curwen-%28formerly-christian-%29-john-christian-1756-1828>, (accessed 20 August 2018).

<sup>129</sup> 'John Christian Curwen (1756-1828): Agricultural Reformer', *TYNWALD, The Parliament of the Isle of Man*, [website], <https://www.tynwald.org.im/education/history/roh/Pages/Patriots/Christian-Curwen-John.aspx>, (accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>130</sup> Collinge and Thorne, 'Curwen'.

<sup>131</sup> J.V. Beckett, 'Curwen, John Christian', *ODNB* (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37334>, (accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>132</sup> Personal communication from The Helena Thompson Museum, Workington. The museum is an excellent source of information on John Christian Curwen. Its artefacts include the cane Curwen is holding in Garrard's sketch above.

**DARNLEY, JOHN BLIGH, 4<sup>TH</sup> EARL of (1767-1831)** <sup>133</sup>  
**Landowner and Agriculturalist**



*John Bligh, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Darnley*  
Henry Meyer after John Wright after Thomas  
Phillips  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Darnley was 37 in 1804. He resided at Cobham Hall, Kent and Berkeley Square in London. He owned almost 25,500 acres in co. Meath in Ireland inherited from his mother's family.<sup>134</sup>

He was a keen cricketer, as was his brother, and he played for Kent in 1790. The cricketing interest remained strong in the family and the Hon. Ivo Bligh (later the eighth Earl of Darnley) captained the English cricket team that toured Australia in 1882-83, bringing the Ashes to England for the first time.<sup>135</sup> The Bligh family were also the first to produce three generations of first-class cricketers.<sup>136</sup>

Darnley was an Ordinary Member of the Board between 1802-3, and bred Kentish, Suffolk and Devon cattle, exhibited cattle and sheep at events including Lord Somerville's Cattle Show and Ashford Wool Fair. He was a regular attendee at the Woburn and Holkham Sheep Shearings. Darnley was a Smithfield Club Member

and occasionally attended management meetings.<sup>137</sup> Darnley resigned after his membership lapsed, and the club submitted his name to their debt collector in 1813.<sup>138</sup>

He married Elizabeth Brownlow in 1791, and they had seven children. He was a fellow of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries. He was a captain of the Athby Volunteers in co. Meath.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Henry Meyer after John Wright after Thomas Phillips, *John Bligh, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Darnley*, Stipple Engraving, 378 mm x 327 mm (Published 18 June 1816), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D34680.

<sup>134</sup> 'Bligh, John, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Darnley, (1767-1831)', 'British Armorial Bindings', *The British Armorial Database*, [website], University of Toronto Libraries, <https://armorial.library.utoronto.ca/stamp-owners/BLI001>, (accessed 30 August 2018).

<sup>135</sup> For an account of England's tour of Australia, and how the Darnley family later presented the Ashes urn to Lords, see the Ashes history page of the website of *Lords*, [website], <https://www.lords.org/lords/our-history/the-ashes>, (accessed 27 December 2021).

<sup>136</sup> E.V. Bligh, L.S. Bligh and A.S. Bligh all played first-class cricket between 1848-1922. E.V. Bligh was the fourth Earl's grandson. Paul Donnelly, *Firsts, Lasts and Onlys of Cricket* (Hamlyn, 2010).

<sup>137</sup> For instance, at Woburn on 18 June 1805 the Earl attended the Committee meeting of the Smithfield Club. He paid lapsed subscription fees of three guineas to the Club the same year. *Annals*, Vol. XLIV, 216. 363.

<sup>138</sup> 'The Smithfield Club Minute Book', Vol. I, 214, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>139</sup> 'Bligh, John, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Darnley', *The British Armorial Database*.

**DAVY, HUMPHRY (1778-1829)**  
**Chemist, Inventor and Poet**



**Humphry Davy**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Davy was 26 years of age in 1804. He was born in Penzance. With help from his godfather, he went to school but could not go to university because of his father's bankruptcy and so was largely self-educated. He was apprenticed to a local apothecary surgeon and then met and became friendly with Davies Giddy (from 1818 Davies Gilbert). Through Giddy, he met Joseph Beddoes. In 1798 Davy went to work at Beddoes' laboratory at the Pneumatics Institute in Bristol, working on nitrous oxide.<sup>140</sup>

In 1801 he started work at the newly formed Royal Institution (RI) in London and became Professor of Chemistry in 1802. One of his inventions was the Davy Safety Lamp for use in mines.<sup>141</sup> As well as lecturing for the RI, Davy also gave a series of lectures for the Board, which was conveniently located in Sackville Street, around the corner from the RI's premises.<sup>142</sup> Whilst at the RI, Davy carried out soil samples for agriculturalists. He was the first commoner to be knighted in 1812 by the Prince Regent, and in 1820, after the death of Sir Joseph Banks, he was elected President of the Royal Society (RS). Whilst Davy was involved

with the Board, he regularly attended the sheep shearings and other agricultural meetings.

He was a keen sportsman, travelled widely and wrote poetry. He met and became friends with Robert Southey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Bristol and, at their instigation, edited the second edition of William Wordsworth's lyrical ballads.<sup>143</sup> Another literary friend was Sir Walter Scott, a near neighbour of Lord Somerville's at Melrose. Somerville was one of Davy's agricultural friends, Davy enjoyed shooting and fishing with him. Later, he published two non-scientific books, including the well-received *Salmononia, or, Days of Fly-Fishing*.

Davy married the wealthy heiress Jane Apreece in 1813, but they had no children. He suffered two strokes, the first in 1826, resigning from the RS shortly afterwards. The second was in 1829, whilst he was abroad. Davy died in Geneva shortly after the second stroke.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>140</sup> For a good overview of Davy's life see, David Knight, 'Davy, Sir Humphry, baronet (1778-1829)', *ODNB* (2011), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref.odnb/7314>, (accessed 5 January 2022).

<sup>141</sup> For a timeline and further information on Davy's life and career see *The Royal Institution*, [website], <http://www.rigb.org/our-history/humphry-davy>, (accessed 6 March 2022).

<sup>142</sup> For a good overview of Davy's work with the Board of Agriculture see, *Morris Berman, Social Change and Scientific Organization: The Royal Institution, 1799-1844* (Heinemann Educational Books, 1978).

<sup>143</sup> 'Biography', *The Royal Institution*, <https://www.rigb.org/explore-science/explore/person/sir-humphry-davy-1778-1829>, (accessed 6 March 2022).

<sup>144</sup> Knight, 'Davy, Sir Humphry'.

**EGREMONT, GEORGE O'BRIEN WYNDHAM, 3<sup>RD</sup> EARL of (1751-1837)<sup>145</sup>**  
**Landowner and Agriculturalist**



*George O'Brien Wyndham, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Egremont*

John Samuel Agar after John Wright after Thomas Phillips (1810)  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Egremont was 53 years of age in 1804. He was 11 when he inherited Petworth House and the Egremont estates, which extended to over 110,000 acres.<sup>146</sup> He was a great philanthropist, art lover and agriculturalist. He was instrumental in building canals that linked Sussex to London. He was Lord-Lieutenant of Sussex between 1819-35.<sup>147</sup>

He was a founder ordinary member of the Board. He joined the Smithfield Club in June 1799 but did not re-join after the Club changed its constitution in 1800.<sup>148</sup> He hosted the annual Petworth show, begun in the 1790s, and was president of the Sussex Agricultural Society and a good friend of the Sussex tenant farmer, John Ellman. Egremont bred Sussex cattle and Southdown sheep and tried out the Spanish Merinos, presented to him by George III.

He was a vice president of the RI, a fellow of the Royal Society, and a member of the Society of Antiquaries. He was a great patron of the arts, and many artists and sculptors worked and lived at Petworth for long periods. A horse racing enthusiast, his racehorses won the Derby and the Oaks five times.<sup>149</sup>

Egremont reportedly had around 15 mistresses and over 40 illegitimate children.

His long-term mistress was Elizabeth Ilive, and they had seven illegitimate children. He married her in 1801, but they separated two years later after their legitimate daughter died in infancy. After his death, their eldest illegitimate son inherited the estate but not the title.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>145</sup> John Samuel Agar, after John Wright, after Thomas Phillips, *George O'Brien Wyndham, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Egremont*, Stipple Engraving, 408 mm x 283 mm (1810), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D14676.

<sup>146</sup> For more on the Wyndham family see, H.A. Wyndham, *A Family History 1688-1837, The Wyndhams of Somerset, Sussex and Wiltshire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

<sup>147</sup> Christopher Rowell, 'Wyndham, George O'Brien, third earl of Egremont (1751-1837)', *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30141>, (accessed 16 December 2017).

<sup>148</sup> 'Additional Subscribers admitted at Woburn, &c', *Annals*, Vol. XXXIII, 325.

<sup>149</sup> Rowell, 'Wyndham, George O'Brien'.

<sup>150</sup> For more information on Ilive and the Earl's mistresses see, Sheila Haines, Leigh Lawson & Alison McCann, *Elizabeth Ilive, Egremont's Countess c. 1769-1822* (Bakehouse Press, 2017).

**ELLMAN, JOHN (1753-1832)**  
**Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder**



*John Ellman*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Ellman was 51 years of age in 1804. He was a tenant farmer and livestock breeder. From 1780 Ellman farmed at Place Farm Glynde, Sussex, initially farming 580 acres, which later increased to 700.<sup>151</sup>

He made significant improvements to the Southdown breed, and his opinion was sought by many, his visitors included dukes, earls and lords, and he sold two Southdown tups to the emperor of Russia.<sup>152</sup> With Lord Sheffield, he established the Lewes Wool Fair in 1786 and the Sussex Agricultural Society with the Earl of Egremont in 1797. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Smithfield Club, and its ‘father’ from 1830. He judged at shows as far afield as Shropshire, regularly attending those hosted by his friend the Earl of Bridgewater.<sup>153</sup> In 1804 he was elected an honorary member of the Norfolk Agricultural Society.

Ellman married twice, his first wife dying, and he had children from both marriages. John Ellman junior, his son from his first wife, succeeded his father and was also a successful Southdown breeder. Ellman Jnr often attended the agricultural events with his father and married the daughter of John Boys, the great Kent agriculturalist and a good friend of his father. John Ellman Jnr wrote extensively on farming matters and was friendly with many politicians, predominantly Tories, entertaining many of them at Glynde when he took over the farm

after his father retired.<sup>154</sup> John Ellman’s tomb is in the churchyard at Glynde beside Place Farm.

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<sup>151</sup> Much of this information for this biography is taken from Alsager Vian, rev. Gordon Mingay, ‘John Ellman’, *ONDB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8725>, (accessed 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021) and Sue Farrant, ‘John Ellman of Glynde in Sussex’, *Agricultural History Review*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (1978), 77-88, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40273966>, (accessed 28 November 2016).

<sup>152</sup> For information on Ellman’s illustrious visitors to Glynde, see Maude Walker (ed.), *Recollections of a Sussex Parson: Rev. Edward Boys Ellman 1815-1906, Rector of Berwick, East Sussex* (St Michael and All Angels, Berwick, 2006) and [F.P. Walesby], ‘A Memoir of Mr Ellman’.

<sup>153</sup> [Walesby], liii.

<sup>154</sup> See *Evans and Ruffey’s Farmers’ Journals* during 1816, to see many letters by John Ellman Jnr. on agricultural matters, often of a political nature.

**ELLMAN, THOMAS (1737-1813)**  
**Gentleman Farmer and Livestock Breeder**

Thomas Ellman was 67 years of age in 1804. He was John Ellman's cousin and farmed in Sussex.

He began breeding Southdown sheep at Old Erringham Farm, Shoreham, farming about 1,000 acres around 1791. In 1794 Arthur Young visited him there, and in *Annals*, Young gave a detailed report of his farming system.<sup>155</sup> By 1813 he was reported as leasing the 560-acre Little Buckingham Farm at Shoreham.<sup>156</sup>

Ellman married Martha Johnson (1744-1830) in 1775. They had one daughter who died at 32 in 1809.<sup>157</sup> They moved from Shoreham to Brighthelmestone (Brighton) shortly before Ellman died in June 1813.

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<sup>155</sup> *Annals*, Vol. XXII, 517-20.

<sup>156</sup> This article cites The Revd Arthur Young, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sussex* (Sherwood, Neely & Jones, 1813, David & Charles Reprints, 1970) fn. 35 for information on Thomas Ellman of Shoreham. However, the references under fn. 35 do not all relate to Thomas Ellman of Shoreham, some pertain to John Ellman of Glynde. When Young said Mr. Ellman he meant John Ellman, whilst for Thomas Ellman he used his first name and added the suffix 'from Shoreham' to differentiate between them. A.P. Baggs, C.R.J. Currie, C.R. Elrington, S.M. Keeling and A.M. Rowland, 'Old and New Shoreham: Economic history', in *A History of the County of Sussex: Volume VI, Part 1, Bramber Rape (Southern Part)*, T.P. Hudson (ed.) (London, 1980), 154-64, *British History Online*, [website], <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/sussex/vol6/pt1/>, (accessed 22 July 2018).

<sup>157</sup> 'Will of Thomas Ellman, Gentleman of Brighton, Sussex', 20 September 1813, The National Archives, Prob 11/1547/502, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D793431>, (accessed 6 March 2022).

**FAREY, JOHN (1766-1826)**  
**Land Agent, Surveyor and Smithfield Club Secretary**



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*John Farey*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Farey was 38 years of age in 1804. He was born on one of the Woburn Abbey estate farms, where his parents farmed. His mother, Rachel Wright, his father's second wife, was a Wesleyan Methodist. In 1782 Farey studied drawing and surveying at an academy run by Robert Pullman in Halifax and moved to London in 1785.<sup>158</sup>

In 1792 Francis, the fifth Duke of Bedford, appointed Farey as his land steward, and Farey worked for him for 10 years. However, after the fifth Duke's sudden death in 1802, the sixth Duke, endeavouring to reduce the vast Woburn debts, did not retain Farey's services. Farey moved back to London, working as a land surveyor.

Farey is remembered today as a pioneering, practical geologist. He also had a life-long interest in mathematics and became a leading expert in mineral surveying in his later years. Farey produced the Derbyshire agricultural report for the Board, which included a detailed survey of the county's minerals resources.<sup>159</sup> He also undertook private surveying work for Sir Joseph Banks on his Derbyshire estate.<sup>160</sup>

In 1806 Farey became the paid secretary of the Smithfield Club, taking over from Arthur Young. The salary was 30 guineas a year.<sup>161</sup> In 1815 Farey also took on the role of treasurer, receiving extra

money. Paul Giblett, the London butcher, had previously undertaken this position voluntarily but had been made bankrupt and imprisoned. Shortage of money was also a problem for Farey, and he had to work for a shilling an hour as a copyist before he died.

He married Sophia Hubert in 1790, and they were both keen singers, performing with a variety of choral societies. They had seven surviving children. Farey's eldest son John built up an excellent reputation as a consulting engineer whilst William took over his father's position of secretary and treasurer at the Smithfield Club after Farey's death. William Farey held this position until his death 10 years later. After a paralytic stroke, John Farey died aged 60 at his house in Howland Street. He was buried at St James's Chapel, St Pancras, London, in 1826.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> This information on John Farey was primarily obtained from H.S. Torrens, 'John Farey (1766-1826), Geologist and Surveyor', *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9154>, (accessed 25 July 2018).

<sup>159</sup> John Farey, *A General View of the Agriculture of Derbyshire*, Vols. I & II (1813).

<sup>160</sup> Torrens gives an excellent account of Farey's work in this field. Torrens, 'John Farey', *ODNB*.

<sup>161</sup> The Smithfield Club Minute Book, Vol. I, 119. Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>162</sup> Torrens, 'John Farey'.

**FOSTER, JOHN (1740-1828)**  
**Landowner, Irish Politician and Agriculturalist**



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*John Foster*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Foster was 64 years of age in 1804. He was born and lived most of his life at Collon, co. Louth. He was an Irish peer, politician, and keen agriculturalist. He was MP for Dunleer from 1761-68 and then MP for co. Louth from 1768-1821.<sup>163</sup> He was Chancellor of the Exchequer of Ireland and the last Speaker for the Irish House of Commons. He was an articulate speaker but possessed a ‘grating’ voice. Although Foster was ultra-Protestant and anti-Catholic, he did ally himself with the Irish Whigs and their Catholic supporters on occasions.<sup>164</sup>

He built a model farm at Collon.<sup>165</sup> He was elected an ordinary member of the Board in England in 1804. He was an active agricultural promotor throughout Ireland, and with the Marquess of Sligo, he set up the Farming Society of Ireland in 1800. This association was in existence until 1827, holding two shows a year: one at Ballinasloe and one in Dublin.<sup>166</sup> He was very friendly with Lord Sheffield, and they corresponded regularly.<sup>167</sup> Foster was also friendly with The Revd Henry Bate Dudley and Edward Wakefield, and during the time they were in Ireland, he was helpful to both.

He married his first cousin, Margaretta Burgh of co. Kildare, in 1764 and had three surviving children. Although she became Baroness Oriel in 1790, Foster did not become the first Baron Oriel until 1821.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> A.P.W. Malcomson, ‘John Foster’, *Dictionary of Irish Biography (DIB)*, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/foster-john-a3339>, (accessed 9 January 2022).

<sup>164</sup> R.G. Thorne, ‘FOSTER, John, (1740-1828), of Collon, co. Louth’, *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/foster-john-1740-1828>, (accessed 26 July 2018).

<sup>165</sup> The model farm is still extant, and today forms part of the farm belonging to a Cistercian Monastic Order. Personal visit to Collon House and the farm buildings on 18-19 May 2018.

<sup>166</sup> Today, the Ballinasloe Fair is still an annual event, being held in September each year.

<sup>167</sup> Malcomson, *An Anglo-Irish dialogue : a calendar of the correspondence between John Foster and Lord Sheffield, 1774-1821* (Belfast: Public Record Office, 1976).

<sup>168</sup> Malcomson, ‘John Foster’.



## GARRARD, GEORGE (1760-1826)

### Artist, Sculptor, and Engraver



George Garrard  
Self-portrait from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811)

Garrard was 44 in 1804. He was born in London and lived there his entire life. Apprenticed to the artist Sawrey Gilpin, Garrard was an artist who worked in many mediums, including sculpture and engraving.<sup>169</sup> Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Garrard was primarily a horse and livestock artist, specialising in scale models, engravings and oil paintings of cattle, sheep, and pigs. He joined the Royal Academy in 1778, but although he became an associate in 1800, he was never elected as a Royal Academician, although Gilpin canvassed actively for him.

After Gilpin recommended Garrard to the somewhat notorious Colonel Thomas Thornton, Garrard accompanied Thornton on his travels through Northern England and Scotland, sketching images for Thornton's subsequent book of this trip.<sup>170</sup> From around 1790, Samuel

Whitbread II began patronising Garrard's work and became his major patron and friend until Whitbread committed suicide in 1815.

With the approval of the Board of Agriculture, Garrard began making scale models and engravings of the best livestock specimens from about 1795.<sup>171</sup> Realising there was no copyright for sculptures, he successfully petitioned parliament to obtain an act to rectify this. The act was granted in 1798. In his endeavours to achieve this, he received support from Lord Somerville, the third Earl of Egremont, the fifth Duke of Bedford, Samuel Whitbread, and others.<sup>172</sup>

He attended many livestock shows and meetings during this period and joined the Smithfield Club. His interest in livestock portraiture caused Gilpin to ironically comment to Mrs Wilmot in 1798, "He is just now seized with a violent longing to erect a statue of a bull in Smithfield Market, to be worshipped by all the graziers who frequent it..."<sup>173</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Sawrey Gilpin's brother was William Gilpin, the travel writer who originated the idea of the picturesque.

<sup>170</sup> Colonel T. Thornton, *A Sporting Tour through the Northern Parts of England and great part of the Highlands of Scotland* (London: Edward Arnold, 1896 ed.).

<sup>171</sup> Garrard, George. *A Description of the Different Varieties of Oxen Common in the British Isles: Embellished with Engravings; being an Accompaniment to a Set of Models of the Improved Breeds of Cattle* (Garrard, 1815).

<sup>172</sup> [George Garrard], *A Copy of the Documents &c, respecting an Act of Parliament entitled "An Act to encourage the Art of making New Models and Casts of Busts &x."* (1799).

<sup>173</sup> Sawrey Gilpin to Mrs Wilmot, 12 November 1798, Lady Babarina Charlotte Grey, *A Family Chronicle* (London: John Murray, 1908), 15.

He married Matilda, Gilpin's daughter, and they lived at 28 George Street, Hanover Square, and then at 4 Queens Buildings, Knightsbridge (now the site of Harrods). He had a studio that he entitled the Agricultural Museum at George Street, and from around 1813-1814 at 28 Old Bond Street. He and Matilda had many children, including Charles, who exhibited portrait sculpture at the RA between 1815-29.<sup>174</sup>

Garrard was always hard-up, and when he died in 1826, Matilda was forced to apply to the RA for a pension. The RA granted this, and she received £45/year for herself and an invalid daughter.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Robyn Asleson, 'Garrard, George (1760-1826)', *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10402>, (accessed 5 March 2022).

<sup>175</sup> Asleson, 'Garrard, George'.

**GIBBS, THOMAS (1771-1849)**  
**Seedsman and Agriculturalist**



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**Thomas Gibbs**  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing*  
(1811)

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Gibbs was 33 years of age in 1804. He was born in Amphill, went to school in Apsley and studied botany and agriculture under William Aiton at Kew.<sup>176</sup> He became a noted seedsman whose seeds firm operated from Half-Moon Street, Piccadilly, London. Gibbs traded under the name of Thomas Gibbs & Co., and he was named seedsman and nurseryman to the Board on 7 May 1799.<sup>177</sup> His nursery was in Brompton, where he also had land where he kept livestock. As well as exhibiting and trading in seeds at the agricultural shows, he exhibited a wild black pig, imported from Montevideo, at Lord Somerville's show in 1809.<sup>178</sup>

He married Sarah Prosser Brandreth from Houghton Regis in 1799.<sup>179</sup> Humphrey Gibbs (1807-1864), one of his sons (later Humphrey Brandreth), took over as the secretary of the Smithfield Club in 1836 after William Farey, John Farey's son, had died. Humphrey Brandreth (as he was then known) resigned as secretary in 1843 after seven years. In 1863, the year before his death, he was nominated as a Vice-President of the Club.<sup>180</sup>

Thomas Gibbs's youngest son, the agriculturalist, Benjamin Thomas Gibbs, (1821-1885, afterwards Sir B.T. Brandreth Gibbs), took over from his brother at the Smithfield Club, being elected the honorary secretary of the society in 1843. He served in this

capacity for 42 years until his death in 1885. During this period, he was also a club trustee.<sup>181</sup>

In his book *The Smithfield Club*, Ben Thomas Brandreth Gibbs called Gibbs 'the father of the club' when he recorded his father's death in 1849. Gibbs had been a member of the Club for 50 years.<sup>182</sup> Garrard depicted Gibbs in *Wobourn Sheepshearing*, showing a turnip to the mounted William Northey.

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<sup>176</sup> 'The Late Thomas Gibbs Esq.', *The Farmer's Magazine*, Vol. XIX, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series (1849), 220.

<sup>177</sup> Ernest Clarke, 'The Board of Agriculture', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Third Series, Vol. IX (London: John Murray, 1898), 39; *A Catalogue of Agricultural Seeds etc. sold by Thomas Gibbs and Co.* (1800, Thomas Eddy rep.), [http://www.thomasetty.co.uk/seeds/vegetables/1800\\_thomas\\_gibb.pdf](http://www.thomasetty.co.uk/seeds/vegetables/1800_thomas_gibb.pdf), (accessed 28 July 2018).

<sup>178</sup> Bonington Moubray, [aka John Lawrence], *A Practical Treatise on Breeding, Rearing and Fattening all kinds of Domestic Poultry* (Sherwood, Gilbert & Piper, 1830 6<sup>th</sup> edn.), 181.

<sup>179</sup> 'The Late Thomas Gibbs Esq.'.

<sup>180</sup> 'The Late Thomas Gibbs Esq.'.

<sup>181</sup> For a list of the Smithfield Club secretaries, treasurers and trustees see Leonard Bull, *History of the Smithfield Club, 1798-1925* (The Smithfield Club, 1924), 193.

<sup>182</sup> B.T. Brandreth Gibbs, *The Smithfield Club* (London: James Ridgway, 1857), 33.

**GRAY, CHARLES GORDON (1759-1822)**  
**Grazier and Agriculturalist**



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**Charles Gordon Gray**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Gray was 45 years of age in 1804. He was a grazier at Tracy Park, near Bath. Gray did not live at Tracy Park as Robert Bush was in residence at the house during this period. He most likely farmed the land for Bush. Gray lived at Stratton House, nr. Chilcompton, Somerset at the time of his death.

Gray's family came from Sutherland, where his grandfather was a gentleman farmer. His father, Robert, went to Jamaica and became a successful planter, owning estates there. Both his grandfather and father were renowned for their stockmanship.<sup>183</sup> Gray was Vice President of the Bath and West Agricultural Society, committee member and vice chairman of the Smithfield Club, and he also judged and stewarded.

He married Frances Hughes in 1782, and they had ten children. He owned slaves on his estates in Jamaica, including Virgin Valley, inherited from his father.<sup>184</sup> His eldest son, also Charles Gordon Gray, died in Jamaica, and the report of his death appeared five weeks after his father's.<sup>185</sup> Gray was well respected in the agricultural world, and Garrard placed him in the centre of *Woburn Sheepshearing*, talking with Lord Somerville and John Christian Curwen. *The Times* reported at his death that his scientific

knowledge of stock and husbandry was well known.<sup>186</sup> He was buried in Stratton on the Fosse, Somerset.

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<sup>183</sup> 'Charles Gordon Gray Obituary', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. CXXXIII, Part 1 (1823), 89.

<sup>184</sup> 'Charles Gordon Gray senior', *Legacies of British Slavery database*, [website], [http://www.depts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/-1895631527/](http://www.depts.live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/-1895631527/), (accessed 11 January 2022).

<sup>185</sup> Although Gray's son's death is not reported until January 1823 it is likely he was already dead or dying as there is no mention of him in Charles Gordon Gray's will, which leaves the plantations under the management of his other son John Robert a'Court Gray. *Legacies of British Slavery*.

<sup>186</sup> 'Died' 25 December 1822, *The Times*, 3, in *The Times Archive* online.

**HIGGINS, JOHN (1740-1813)**  
**Gentleman Farmer and Agriculturalist**



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*John Higgins*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Higgins was 64 years of age in 1804. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Higgins and Longuet-Higgins were the principal landowners and owners of Turvey, Bedfordshire.

John Higgins built Turvey House in Turvey, near Olney, on the Buckinghamshire/Bedfordshire borders. Turvey House was originally a modest villa; it was Higgins' son, Thomas-Charles, who in the mid-1840s remodelled it into the Georgian manor house that it is today.<sup>187</sup> Higgins was a Justice of the Peace and High Sheriff of Bedfordshire in 1797.<sup>188</sup> He was an early Smithfield Club committee member and judged for the club at its first show in 1799 and again in 1801. Higgins was a keen Shorthorn and New Leicester tup breeder, but he sold his stock at an auction in 1809.

His relative, Bartholomew Higgins, farmed at nearby Weston Underwood and was another Smithfield Club member but not as active in the Club as John Higgins. Bartholomew Higgins died in 1817, four years after John Higgins.

John Higgins married Martha Ferrer in 1793 when he was 53 and she was 14. They had five children, and his son, Thomas-Charles, succeeded him upon his death. The house is still in the family's ownership today, although now under the name of Hanbury.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> *Turvey House*, <http://www.turveyhouse.co.uk/>, (accessed 18 April 2018); 'The Higgins family of Turvey', *The Turvey Website*, [website], <http://www.turveybeds.com/higgins.html#TCHiggins>, (accessed 13 January 2022); 'An Introduction to the Higgins of Bedford & Turvey Family Tree', *Turvey History*, [website], <https://www.turveyhistory.org.uk/topics/time-periods/introduction-higgins-bedford-turvey-family-tree>, (accessed 13 January 2022).

<sup>188</sup> 'Obituary', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXXXIII (1813), 92.

<sup>189</sup> Turvey House was owned by Daniel Hanbury, a direct descendent of John Higgins at the time of the initial research into John Higgins in 2018. It is now in the hands of another generation of the family, Charlie and Grace Hanbury. *Turvey House*.

**HOARE, HENRY HUGH (1762-1841)<sup>190</sup>**  
**Banker and Landowner**



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*Henry Hugh Hoare* (c. 1800-17)  
John Rising (atr.)  
Stourhead House  
© National Trust/ David Cousins

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Hoare was 42 years of age in 1804 and was always known as Hugh. Originally from Barn Elms, Surrey, he bought Wavendon House, Bucks., close to Woburn Abbey, in 1797. His London townhouse was at 1 Hill Street, Berkley Square, a few doors from Lord Somerville.

Hoare was a working partner in the family banking firm of Hoares Bank, situated in Fleet Street, London.<sup>191</sup> Established in 1672, it is the oldest privately-owned bank in the UK and is today under the stewardship of the 12th generation of the family.<sup>192</sup> In 1834 Hoares Bank became the Smithfield Club's official bank.<sup>193</sup>

Hoare was an enthusiastic agriculturalist, buying New Leicesters from top breeders such as Nicholas Buckley.<sup>194</sup> He was an honorary member of the Board and committee member and steward for the Smithfield Club.<sup>195</sup> Hoare joined the Shakespeare Freemason Lodge in Covent Garden.<sup>196</sup> He was a life member of the Society for Bettering the Conditions of the Poor (SBCP), a proprietor and visitor of the RI and a fellow of the Royal Society. Hoare and the

second Earl Ludlow were the Woburn Gentleman and Yeomanry Cavalry captains.<sup>197</sup>

He married Maria Palmer, a relative on his mother's side, and they had 16 children.<sup>198</sup> Their eldest son, Hugh Richard, joined the family bank and was also a Smithfield Club member and attended management meetings.<sup>199</sup> Hoare succeeded his half-brother, Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1758-1838), to become both baronet and owner of Stourhead, Wiltshire. In 1946 Sir Henry Hugh Arthur Hoare (1865-1947) gave Stourhead to the National Trust.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> John Rising (attributed), *Sir Henry Hugh Hoare (1762-1841)*, Oil on Canvas, 750 mm x 610 mm (c. 1800-17), Wiltshire: National Trust, Stourhead, No.732207.

<sup>191</sup> Hutchings provides a detailed history of the bank and the major members of the Hoare family. Victoria Hutchings, *Messrs. Hoare Bankers: A History of the Hoare Banking Dynasty* (London: Constable, 2005).

<sup>192</sup> 'About Us', *C. Hoare & Co.*, [website], <https://www.hoaresbank.co.uk/about-us>, (accessed 29 July 2018).

<sup>193</sup> B.T. Brandreth Gibbs, *The Smithfield Club* (James Ridgway, 1857), 30. The bank's archives do not show any official relationship between the bank and the Club before this date. Personal email communications July 2018 with Pamela Hunter, archivist at C. Hoare & Co.

<sup>194</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. I (1807), 238.

<sup>195</sup> Hoare and John Westcar stewarded for the Smithfield Club in 1804 and 1805. *Annals*, Vol. XLIII, 385-401.

<sup>196</sup> 'Henry Hugh Hoare', United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Registers, 1751-1921. Folio 131 (179D-146E), 215, in *Ancestry.co.uk* [website], (accessed 18 March 2019).

<sup>197</sup> 'Military Promotions', *Northampton Mercury*, 3 December 1803, 3, in BNA.

<sup>198</sup> Hutchings, particularly chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>199</sup> *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. I (1807), 473.

<sup>200</sup> 'The Hoare family at Stourhead', National Trust, [website], <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead/features/the-hoare-family-at-stourhead>, (accessed 14 January 2022).

## HONEYBORN, ROBERT (1762-1816) Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder



**Robert Honeyborn**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Honeyborn was 42 years of age in 1804.<sup>201</sup> He was born in Warwickshire and was the nephew of Robert Bakewell, his mother Rebecca being Bakewell's sister. When Bakewell died in 1795, Honeyborn inherited his uncle's tenure and stock at Dishley Grange. He had been working with Bakewell before this date and was responsible for the arable side of the farm.<sup>202</sup> He was the treasurer of the Dishley Society and a founder committee member of the Smithfield Club.<sup>203</sup>

In 1797, two years after Bakewell's death, he married Elizabeth Bratt in St. Luke's Church in Chelsea. She resided in the parish of Kensington and Chelsea at that time.<sup>204</sup> They had no living children, and in his concise 12-line will, Honeyborn left everything to her.<sup>205</sup> He died on 19 March 1816. He is buried beside his uncle in the Unitarian church within the grounds of Dishley Grange.<sup>206</sup> Like his uncle, he was an active member and subscriber of the Loughborough Unitarian chapel, had his own pew and paid for its upkeep.<sup>207</sup>

After Honeyborn's death, his New Leicester tups were auctioned on 10 June 1816, traditionally the week the Dishley Tup members opened their doors for the public to view their tups.<sup>208</sup> The rest of the stock was sold on 17 September 1816.<sup>209</sup> His death ended the association of the Bakewell family with Dishley Grange.

<sup>201</sup> Honeyborn is the correct spelling of his name. This is how it appears on the register of his birth, his gravestone, and in the Dishley Papers. However, despite this, the New Dishley Society members tend to spell his name as Honeybourne.

<sup>202</sup> *Annals*, XVI, 571-82.

<sup>203</sup> UN MS9/24A.

<sup>204</sup> They were married at St Luke's Church, Chelsea on 10 August 1797. *Ancestry.co.uk*.

<sup>205</sup> Honeyborn's will was written in 1810, six years before he died, but his will was not proved until 1819. 'Will of Robert Honeyborn, Farmer of Dishley, Leicestershire', 30 December 1819, The National Archives, PROB 11/1623/418, The National Archives, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D230669>, (accessed 7 March 2021).

<sup>206</sup> 'Died' 29 March 1816, *Stamford Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>207</sup> Janet Spavold, *The Bakewell Family and the local Unitarian Chapels*, <https://www.le.ac.uk/elh/newdishley/BakewellsLocalUChapels.pdf>, (accessed 30 July 2018), 3-4.

<sup>208</sup> 'Dishley Stock to be Sold by Auction', 1 June 1816, *Ipswich Journal*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>209</sup> 'Dishley Stock to be Sold by Auction', 9 September 1816, *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 1, in BNA.

**ISTED, SAMUEL (1750-1827)**  
**Gentleman Farmer and Agriculturalist**



Samuel Isted  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811).

Isted was 54 years of age in 1804. He was a gentleman farmer from Ecton Hall, Northamptonshire.<sup>210</sup> The family originated from Denmark and his grandfather Thomas Isted bought the hall in 1712. In 1825 Ecton Hall consisted of about 2,240 acres.<sup>211</sup> His father, Ambrose Isted, owned Mickleton Place Plantation, Jamaica, through inheritance on his wife or her sister's side.<sup>212</sup>

Isted was an honorary member of the Board and attended management meetings of the Smithfield Club. He was a keen stock breeder, including breeding and exhibiting pigs. He kept many different breeds of sheep and bought Merinos from the royal flock, 'fleecy treasurers' as he called them.<sup>213</sup> He was an enthusiastic fox hunter and treasurer of the Pytchley Hunt.<sup>214</sup> He was a longstanding member of the Northamptonshire Militia and promoted to Lt. Colonel in 1804 and

a Justice of the Peace in the same county.<sup>215</sup>

Samuel Isted married Barbara Percy in London in 1795, when he was 45. Her father, Thomas Percy, was related to the Duke of Northumberland. He was the rector at nearby Easton Maudit and later a Bishop in Dromore. Percy was well respected in literary circles, a friend of Samuel Johnson and well known for his translations of Chinese and Icelandic verse.<sup>216</sup> Samuel and Barbara Isted had two children, a son who was deaf and dumb and a daughter who died before she was two. Their son Ambrose succeeded Isted, but with no children, Ecton Hall passed to his first cousin once removed at his death in 1881. Along with other Isted family members, Isted was buried in the church of St Mary Magdalene, Ecton.

<sup>210</sup> Rodney Ingram, 'The Manor of Ecton', *Ecton Village*, [website], <https://www.ectonvillage.co.uk/village-history/ectons-past/ecton-hall/>, (accessed 15 January 2022).

<sup>211</sup> John Cole, *The History and Antiquities of Ecton* (Philadelphia, 1865 edn.), 9.

<sup>212</sup> The records are incomplete, and Isted appears to have only owned it for a short period between 1761-5. 'Ambrose Isted', *Legacies of British Slavery database*, [website], <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146640747>, (accessed 15 January 2022).

<sup>213</sup> Samuel Isted to Sir Joseph Banks, 1 February 1793, Letter 527, Harold B. Carter (ed.), *The sheep and wool correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks 1781-1820* (The Library Council of New South Wales in association with the British Museum (Natural History), 1979), 247-8.

<sup>214</sup> 13 April 1805, *Northampton Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>215</sup> 'From the London Gazette', 14 January 1804, *Northampton Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>216</sup> 'Barbara Isted collection of Thomas Percy, 1754-1812', *Connecticut Archives Online*, [website], Collection ID: GEN MSS 465, <https://archives.library.wcsu.edu/caoSearch/catalog/beinecke-isted>, (accessed 15 January 2022).



**LECHMERE, ANTHONY (1766-1849)**  
**Gentleman Farmer, Agriculturalist and Banker**



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Anthony Lechmere  
detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing*  
(1811)

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Lechmere was 38 years of age in 1804. The Lechmere's had owned land in the Hanley area of Worcestershire since 1173. Lechmere's father was a Tory MP, and Anthony was the eldest son from his father's second marriage.<sup>217</sup> After his father died in 1805, Lechmere built Rydd Court, close to the family residence at Hanley Court.

The Lechmere family were bankers, owning Lechmere and Co. After Lechmere married into the Berwick banking family, he became a partner in their bank. In 1800 this bank became known as Berwick, Lechmere and Co, and in 1831, Lechmere merged both banks. The bank is a predecessor of the Lloyds banking group. In 1836 Lechmere was awarded over £4,000 compensation for 286 slaves on estates in the Virgin Islands held by his late father-in-law.<sup>218</sup>

Lechmere inherited his interest in agriculture from his father, whom Horace Walpole called 'a great grazier'.<sup>219</sup> When the young, and somewhat inexperienced, John Somerville wrote to Sir John Sinclair in 1794, he mentioned Lechmere's grazier and cattle breeding skills, and that he was someone who always admired good stock. But Somerville was likely referring to Lechmere's father, rather than to

Anthony Lechmere, who was a year younger than Somerville.<sup>220</sup> However, Anthony Lechmere became a renowned agriculturalist, owning three farms.<sup>221</sup> One had a dairy with seven or eight Yorkshire Shorthorn cows, and another had Herefords. Lechmere advised George Garrard about Herefords for the artist's folio of engravings.<sup>222</sup> He judged at Smithfield and attended management meetings of the club.

With his first wife, Mary Berwick, he had nine children. After she died in 1820, he married Eleanor Villiers. In 1818 he was made a baronet.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> R.S. Lea, 'LECHMERE, Edmund, (1710-1805), Hanley Castle, Worcestershire', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1715-1754, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/lechmere-edmund-1710-1805>, (accessed 31 July 2018).

<sup>218</sup> For information on Lechmere's banking, slave compensation and family details see 'Sir Anthony Lechmere 1<sup>st</sup> Bart.', *Legacies of British Slave Ownership, database*, [website], <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/relationship/view/2058780631/30083>, (accessed 30 July 2018).

<sup>219</sup> Lea, 'LECHMERE'.

<sup>220</sup> John Somerville to Sir John Sinclair, 6 December 1794, Sir John Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair, Bart.*, Vol. I (Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1831), 353.

<sup>221</sup> William Pitt discusses Lechmere's farms and methods on a number of instances in his review for the Board. W. Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Worcestershire* (1810).

<sup>222</sup> George Garrard, 'Herefordshire Cattle', *A description of the different varieties of Oxen common in the British Isles* (1815), n.p.n.

<sup>223</sup> 'Sir Anthony Lechmere', *Legacies of British Slave Ownership*.

**LEE ANTONIE, WILLIAM (1764-1815)**  
**Landowner and Politician**



William Lee Antonie  
detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811)

Lee Antonie was 40 years of age in 1804. He lived at Colworth in Bedfordshire. The Lee family already owned 3,500 acres in Mendlesham and Marlow before his father, William Lee, inherited the Colworth Estate in Bedfordshire from a distant cousin and friend, Richard Antonie. One of the will's stipulations was that William Lee junior took the surname Antonie.<sup>224</sup>

Lee Antonie was friends with the two other large estate owners in Bedfordshire, Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford, with whom he was at Westminster School, and Samuel Whitbread II, with whom he was very friendly. Although Lee Antonie was never a very assiduous MP, Whitbread and Lee Antonie were Whig MPs for the county.<sup>225</sup>

Lee Antonie was a keen agriculturalist. He initiated the Oakley Hunt with the fifth Duke of Bedford and Whitbread and was master for some years.<sup>226</sup> Lee Antonie was president of the Bedfordshire Agricultural Society, and he and Whitbread were brother officers in the Bedfordshire Voluntary Militia. He was also a

member of the fifth Duke of Bedford's 'crop club'.<sup>227</sup>

At 22 years of age, he became infatuated with Madame Duthé, sixteen years older than him, and although he never married her, she lived at Colworth with him until he died. There were no legitimate children. Suffering from ill health, he died just a few weeks after Whitbread had committed suicide in 1815; both were only 50.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> For more about William Lee Antonie and his time at Colworth, see Michael Jones, *Colworth in Context: A History of the Colworth Estate, Bedfordshire from 1720 to 1947* (1997), specifically Chapters 8 and 9.

<sup>225</sup> David R. Fisher, 'LEE ANTONIE, William (1764-1815), of Colworth, Beds.' *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/lee-antonie-william-1764-1815>, (accessed 17 January 2022).

<sup>226</sup> 'The Beginnings of the Oakley Hunt', *Bedfordshire Archives*, [website], <https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/Oakley/TheBeginningsOfTheOakleyHunt.aspx>, (accessed 11 November 2021).

<sup>227</sup> John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 178.

<sup>228</sup> Jones, *Colworth in Context*, specifically Chapters 8 and 9 for various references to Catharine Rosalie Duthé and Samuel Whitbread II,

**LESTER, WILLIAM (c.1761-1824?)**  
**Implement Maker and Agriculturalist**



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**William Lester**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Lester was 43 years of age in 1804. He was born in Leicestershire and had a local accent. He farmed as a tenant at Cotton End in Northamptonshire, but about 1800, he moved to Paddington after gaining a reputation for developing farm implements.<sup>229</sup>

In 1809 and 1810 he was awarded a gold and a silver medal for prize essays on agricultural improvement, one for 'Improved Cultivator with five shares steeled' and one for his 'Improved Root-washer'.<sup>230</sup> He wrote two books relating to agricultural implements, the second in 1811 dedicated to Lord Somerville.<sup>231</sup> He was a Smithfield Club member and attended management meetings on occasions.

His wife, Mary, was 14 years younger than him. They had a son called William in 1809. They lived at Mount Street, Lambeth, whilst his business was in Paddington Green. In 1811 Lester was overseer of the poor of Paddington Green parish, but after failing to hand in his accounts within 14 days to the succeeding overseers, a reward of 10 guineas was offered for information leading to his arrest.<sup>232</sup> By 1812, he ended up in Newgate Prison as an insolvent debtor.<sup>233</sup> He was discharged on 14 June 1813, and his wife Mary died six months later at the age of 38.<sup>234</sup> He was still living in Mount Street in 1817 and appeared to have been working in 1818 in Commercial Street, where he developed a different method of

projecting light from a lamp.<sup>235</sup> It is likely he died in a workhouse in Lambeth, London, in 1824 at around 62.

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<sup>229</sup> The *Leicester Journal* reported his age to be about 50 in 1811 and provides a description of him, including him having a local accent. 'Paddington, Middlesex: 10 Guineas Reward', 23 August 1811, *Leicester Journal*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>230</sup> The Repository for Arts awarded him a silver medal in 1809 for the essay entitled, 'Progressive improvements in the arts, agriculture, manufactures, and commerce of Great Britain', and a gold medal in 1810 for his essay entitled 'Advantages to be derived from an acquaintance with the elements of chemistry, in the operations of agriculture, manufactures, and domestic economy.' William Lester, *The Economy of the Barn* (1810), 28-37, 7-42. Medals listed in 'Lester's Patent Machinery', Lester, n.p.n. [44].

<sup>231</sup> Lester, *The Economy of the Barn* (1810) and William Lester, *The History of British Implements and Machinery applicable to Agriculture* (Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1811).

<sup>232</sup> 23 August 1811, *Leicester Journal*, 3, in BNA. Richard Burn, rev. George Chetwynd, *The Justice of the Peace and Parish Officer*, Vol. IV (T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1820), 194.

<sup>233</sup> William Lester's court appearances are in *London Gazette*, 30 June to 30 December, Part 2 (1812), 'First Notice', 1571; 'Second Notice' 1623; 'Third Notice' 1666, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=zRKAQAAMAAJ>, (accessed 7 March 2022).

<sup>234</sup> 'Newgate Calendar of Prisoners, 1785-1853', in *Ancestry.co.uk*, [website], (accessed 20 January 2022).

<sup>235</sup> William Lester is listed as living at 2 Mount St., Lambeth in 1817 when he proposed a 'safety-valve' for steam engines. 1 August 1817, *Repository of Arts and Manufactures*, 184-5, in NA. He developed the light projecting technique in 1818. 'List of Patents', 1 July 1818, *Repository of Arts and Manufactures*, 128, in NA.

## LUDLOW, AUGUSTUS, 2<sup>nd</sup> EARL LUDLOW (1755-1811) Gentleman Farmer



**Earl Ludlow**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Ludlow was 49 years of age in 1804 and educated at Eton College. He inherited the title of second Earl Ludlow after his father's death in 1803. He was the eldest son of Peter Ludlow and Lady Frances Lumley Sanderson. His father, born in co. Meath, resided with his wife and family in Great Stoughton, Huntingdon and became the first Earl in 1760 and was Comptroller to the Household of George III and an MP for Huntingdonshire from 1768-96. He generally aligned himself with the Whigs.<sup>236</sup>

Augustus Ludlow did not live at Great Stoughton Manor but on one of the fifth Duke's farms at Cople as a tenant, the farm bought by the fifth Duke in 1774. Lord John Russell's diary, written as a child, reveals that Ludlow was a close family friend.<sup>237</sup> Apart from living at Cople, Ludlow also had a London townhouse at 15 New Burlington Street.

Although Ludlow hunted with the Oakley Hunt, he did not have any monetary involvement in the hunt: the Dukes of Bedford, Samuel Whitbread II and William Lee Antonie financially supported it. Ludlow was a Smithfield Club member, and he and Henry Hugh Hoare were captains in the Woburn Gentleman and Yeomanry Cavalry.<sup>238</sup>

Unmarried, the title passed on his death to his brother, a renowned general in the British Army. The third Earl also lived at Cople Hall and was master of the Oakley Hunt from 1816-1822. Like his brother, he was also unmarried, and at his death, the title became extinct, but Francis, the seventh Duke of Bedford, inherited the Irish estates. The seventh Duke passed them to Lord William Russell, his uncle.<sup>239</sup> This bequest may have been through friendship. But after Hoares bank pressed for payment of a 40-year loan and many years of interest from Ludlow's father during the financial crisis around 1797, the fifth Duke of Bedford may have offered the second Earl Ludlow the opportunity to live and farm at Cople, on the understanding that the Dukes of Bedford would inherit the Irish estates upon the death of the third Earl.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Sir Lewis Namier, 'LUDLOW, Peter, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Ludlow, [1], (1730-1803), of Ardsallagh, co. Meath and Great Stoughton, Hunts.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1754-1790, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/ludlow-peter-1730-1803#constituency>, (accessed 29 July 2018).

<sup>237</sup> Spencer Walpole, *The Life of Lord John Russell*, Vol. I (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1889).

<sup>238</sup> 'From the London Gazette: Military Promotions', 3 December 1803, *Northampton Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>239</sup> *The Journal of The Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. IV, 5<sup>th</sup> Series (1894), 50.

<sup>240</sup> Hutchings, 97; 'Obituary: Earl Ludlow' *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XVIII, July to December (1842), 92-3.

**MANCHESTER, WILLIAM MONTAGU, 5<sup>th</sup> DUKE of (1771-1843)<sup>241</sup>  
Landowner**



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*William Montagu, 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Manchester*  
Sir William Beechey (1790)  
© Sotheby's London

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Montagu was 33 years of age in 1804. His seat was Kimbolton Castle in Cambridgeshire. He served in the army, achieving the rank of Colonel in 1794. The Duke became Governor of Jamaica (1808-1827) and Postmaster General (1827-1830). During his period in Jamaica, he was responsible for moderate reforms in the treatment of slaves, but he treated slave rebellions with great severity.<sup>242</sup> However, his regime did introduce preparatory measures for the emancipation of slaves in Jamaica.<sup>243</sup>

In 1793 he married Susan, one of the Duke and Duchess of Gordon's daughters. They had eight children. His wife was the sister of Georgiana, Duchess of Bedford, who would visit her sister at Kimbolton Castle during Woburn Sheep Shearing week.

Young stayed with the Duke and Duchess for a week in 1800 to observe the Duke's farming enterprises. He was captivated by the Duchess and thought her long-suffering considering the Duke's involvement with a mistress.<sup>244</sup> But she also had an affair, leaving home before 1813,

allegedly with a footman. By 1813 their marriage had broken down irrevocably.<sup>245</sup> The Duchess was ostracised socially afterwards, and the Duke never remarried. In 1820 he suffered a fractured skull after being thrown from his carriage in Jamaica.<sup>246</sup>

The Duke was a regular attendee at the Woburn Sheep Shearing, a Smithfield Club member, occasionally chairing management meetings and an honorary member of the Board.<sup>247</sup> His relocation to Jamaica in 1808 ended his attendance at agricultural meetings. He died in Rome in 1843 from a fever.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> William Montagu, fifth duke of Manchester (1771–1843), by Sir William Beechey, Oil on Canvas (1790).

<sup>242</sup> Ian Donnachie and Carmen Lavin (eds.), *From Romanticism to Enlightenment*, Anthology I, The Open University (Manchester University Press, 2003), 181.

<sup>243</sup> G. Le G. Norgate, rev. Lynn Milne, 'Montagu, William, fifth duke of Manchester (1771–1843)', *ODNB* (2011), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19036>, (accessed 3 September 2018).

<sup>244</sup> Betham-Edwards, 334-6.

<sup>245</sup> Norgate, 'William Montagu'.

<sup>246</sup> Norgate, 'William Montagu'.

<sup>247</sup> The Smithfield Club Minute Book, Vol. I, 16, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>248</sup> Norgate, 'William Montagu'.

**MARSHALL, WILLIAM (bap. 1745-1818)<sup>249</sup>**  
**Agriculturalist and Author**



*William Marshall*

Image courtesy of the National Library of  
Scotland

Marshall was 59 years of age in 1804. He was the son of a yeoman farmer in North Yorkshire. Having started as an apprentice in the linen trade, he moved into insurance and spent some years involved in commercial activities in the West Indies.<sup>250</sup> In 1774 Marshall decided to return to farming and rented a farm in Croydon for four years, then wrote about the experience. He then worked as an estate manager in Norfolk and Staffordshire, and by 1798 he had completed his study of England's Rural Economy in 12 volumes. Marshall also wrote the 'Agricultural Report' for *The Monthly Magazine* for some years.<sup>251</sup>

Marshall was keen to establish a national agricultural body but was disappointed when Arthur Young got the secretary's position at the Board rather than himself. He disliked the Board's ideas of publishing County Reports and published his critical analysis of these reports. Nevertheless, he was an honorary member of the Board and, in 1805, the sixth Duke invited him to stay in the Abbey with other favoured guests.<sup>252</sup>

In 1807, after a courtship of some 25 years, he married a distant cousin, Elizabeth Hodgson. Marshall was then in his sixties. Hodgson was a woman of considerable property who lived at Middleton, near Pickering. She predeceased him, dying in 1816. Marshall died two years later. Before his death, he was in the process of establishing an agricultural college at his home in Pickering.<sup>253</sup> There were no children; however, he did have one natural son who worked as a farm bailiff. *The Monthly Magazine's* obituary considered him 'a decided Whig' in his political principles.<sup>254</sup> He is buried at Middleton in the same grave as his wife.

<sup>249</sup> Anonymous, *William Marshall*. The image is on folio 167 verso and labelled image 345/175c, MS.967, 'Autograph and Portraits', and labelled 1, from a collection apparently formed by Thomas Thompson, Liverpool. Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland.

<sup>250</sup> Gordon Mingay gives a nuanced report of William Marshall's life in the *ODNB*. Gordon Mingay, 'Marshall, William (bap.1745 d.1818)', *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18155>, (accessed 1 August 2018).

<sup>251</sup> 'William Marshall Esq.', *The Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XLVI, Part II (1818), 471.

<sup>252</sup> 'Company in the Abbey', *Annals*, Vol. XLIV, 202-3.

<sup>253</sup> For more information on Marshall's life see Pamela Horn's biography of him. Pamela Horn, *William Marshall (1745-1818) and the Georgian Countryside* (Beacon Publications, 1982).

<sup>254</sup> *The Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XLVI, 471.

**MONEY HILL, WILLIAM (1769-1813)**  
**Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder**



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**William Money Hill**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Money Hill was 35 years of age in 1804. His birth name was William Money, but he became Money Hill when he married in 1790. He lived in North Norfolk, farming as a tenant of Thomas William Coke at Waterden and at West Basham, likely tenancing this farm from the Raynham estate.<sup>255</sup> Money Hill also owned land and property which he rented out, including farmhouses and land in Wells, Fakenham, East Basham and East Rudham.<sup>256</sup>

He was a renowned Southdown breeder. He kept a herd of some of the best Devon cattle and Southdown sheep in the country at Waterden. His 66 Devons made £1900 at an auction after his death in 1813.<sup>257</sup> Money Hill kept Galloway, Highland cattle, and Black Cart Horses on his West Basham farm.<sup>258</sup> He was vice president and committee member of the Smithfield Club and a Norfolk Agricultural Society member. Money Hill was adjutant in the East Norfolk Yeomanry for many years, whilst Coke was its captain.

He married Arabella Maria Hill Balders in 1790, adding Hill to his surname. Their children took only the surname of Hill.<sup>259</sup> They had seven children living when Money Hill died on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1813 at 45 after a long and painful illness.<sup>260</sup> His eldest son Charles William was his principal benefactor.<sup>261</sup> Money Hill's protracted illness was presumably why everything at the

West Basham farm was advertised for sale in June 1812 and sold in September 1812, months

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<sup>255</sup> Today West Basham is known as West Barsham. The transition, which also involved North Basham and East Basham, seems to have occurred around 1845. *The London Gazette*, Part 5 (17 November 1845), 4943. Money Hill was selling all his farm implements, livestock, and household goods from his West Basham farm in the autumn of 1812. 'To be Sold by Auction', 15 June 1812, *Evans and Ruffy's Farmers' Journal*, 4, in NewspaperArchive (NA); 'Sale by Auction' 30 September 1812, *Bury and Norwich Post*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>256</sup> 'To be Sold by Auction', 31 July 1813, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>257</sup> After his death in 1813 the sale of his 66 Devon cattle raised £1900. 'Agricultural Report for June', 8 July 1813, *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>258</sup> When Money Hill sold his livestock from his West Basham farm in September 1812, he owned 17 black cart horses and mares, 50 Galloway and Highland Oxen and 760 Southdown Sheep. 30 September 1812, *Bury and Norwich Post*, 1.

<sup>259</sup> His son William Charles Hill named his son William Money Hill in 1831 after his grandfather.

<sup>260</sup> 'Died', 6 February 1813, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>261</sup> 'Will of William Money Hill, of Waterden, Norfolk', 23 March 1813, The National Archives, PROB 11/1542/41, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D208877>, (accessed 20 July 2019).

before his death the following February. Despite his illness, Money Hill still sent Southdown sheep to the Smithfield Club Show in 1812, two months before he died.<sup>262</sup>

Reporting on his death, *The Monthly Register* called him ‘an eminent agriculturalist’, whilst *The European Magazine and London Review* considered him ‘a farmer and agriculturalist of great celebrity’.<sup>263</sup> In his will, after his first bequest to his wife, Arabella Maria Hill, Money Hill’s second bequest was his pieces of plate (trophies) won from various agricultural societies to his eldest son, Charles William.<sup>264</sup> Money Hill had commissioned a pew in front of the new gallery in Wells Church, but this was sold with other property.<sup>265</sup> He was buried at Waterden Church, across the field from his farmhouse.

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<sup>262</sup> ‘Smithfield Club Cattle Shew’, 12 December 1812, *Morning Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>263</sup> ‘Norfolk’, *The Monthly Magazine or British Register*, Vol. XXXV, Part I (1813), 185; ‘Monthly Obituary’, *The European Magazine and London Review*, Vol. LXIII (1813), 169.

<sup>264</sup> Money Hill had been awarded 17 prizes at different agricultural shows. 30 September 1812, *Bury and Norwich Post*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>265</sup> 31 July 1813, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.



**NORTHEY, WILLIAM (1752-1826)**  
**Gentleman Farmer and Politician**



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**William Northey**  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing*  
(1811)

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Northey was 52 years of age in 1804. He lived at Box Hall, Wiltshire, and from 1808 until he died in 1826, he also owned Woodcote House, Surrey. His London residence was in Bruton Street. He was educated at Eton and Queens College Cambridge and entered Middle Temple law court in 1771.<sup>266</sup> He was an MP for Newport, Cornwall from 1796-1826, and until 1818 he was a Whig supporter. After 1818 he tended to side with Lord Liverpool's ministry, but he was never an active MP.<sup>267</sup>

Northey was an honorary member of the Board and attended management meetings of the Smithfield Club. During the war, Northey commanded the Box Volunteer Infantry, which consisted of 80 rank and file.<sup>268</sup>

He was sometimes referred to as 'Wicked Billy of Box', and he entertained the Prince Regent and his friends in a manner 'more lively than respectable'.<sup>269</sup> Although some

reports state he was married, this was more likely to have been his second cousin. He did leave a £400 annuity to a Mrs Louisa Wiseman, but there is no indication in what context the bequest was made. He did not have any legitimate children.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Alan Payne, 'The Northey family of Box: 1726-1919', *Box People and Places*, [website], <http://www.boxpeopleandplaces.co.uk/northneys-of-box-1726-1919.html>, (accessed 4 September 2018).

<sup>267</sup> Howard Spencer, 'NORTHEY, William (1752-1826), of Box Hall, Wilts. and Woodcote, Surr.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1820-1832, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/northey-william-1752-1826>, (accessed 1 August 2018).

<sup>268</sup> 'Obituary – William Northey, Esq. MP', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XCVI, 1<sup>st</sup> Part (1826), 177.

<sup>269</sup> John Parsloe, cited in Payne.

<sup>270</sup> Spencer, 'NORTHEY'.

## OAKLEY, WILLIAM (1755-1839) Wool Stapler and Agriculturalist



**William Oakley**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Oakley was 49 years of age in 1804. He lived at St Johns, Southwark, London. He traded as a wool stapler, operating out of Church St., Southwark.<sup>271</sup> After the firm was made bankrupt in 1810, Oakley formed a new Southwark wool stapling business, but by 1816 that had also been declared bankrupt.<sup>272</sup>

Oakley joined the Smithfield Club in 1800, regularly attending events such as Woburn, Smithfield and Somerville's show. Oakley chaired the dinner, following the first dedicated sale of Merino wool, organised by Somerville, in 1808.

He married twice. In 1783 he married Sarah Smith, and their only son, William Smith Oakley, would later go into business for a short while with his father before working as a clerk at the Bank of England. After Sarah died in 1784, Oakley married her cousin, Mary Smith, in 1790. They had eleven children, the last when they were both 47. Seven of their children lived until at least 60, one to 88 and another to 90.<sup>273</sup>

After the collapse of Oakley's business in 1815, he had to pull his son Octavius out of medical school and send him to Leeds to work for a cloth manufacturer. Octavius had a talent for drawing and eventually became a reasonably successful watercolour artist, patronised by the Duke of Devonshire and others for his watercolour portraits. He specialised in pictures featuring Gypsies and street scenes.<sup>274</sup>

In 1805, three years after the birth of their last child, Mary died. In his later years, Oakley emigrated for a short while to America, his son William Smith Oakley settling in Morganfield, Kentucky. But he returned to England and died in Bath in 1839 at 84. His grave is on the west side of the churchyard of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Charlcombe, Bath.<sup>275</sup>

<sup>271</sup> He traded as William Oakley, W. Overend and W.S. Oakley and then as W. Oakley and Co.

<sup>272</sup> The debt was discharged in 1811. 'Alphabetical List of Bankruptcies', *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. XIII (1810), 519; 'Meeting of Creditors at Guildhall', 11 August 1817, *Morning Post*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>273</sup> William Oakley's life is accurately documented on *Ancestry.co.uk* by several people. There are three images of him (not including the one above) during his life, as well as well-documented information on his family and their family and family photographs. 'William Oakley 1755-1839', *Ancestry.co.uk*, (accessed 8 August 2018).

<sup>274</sup> R.E. Graves, rev. Mark Pottle, 'Oakley, Octavius (1800-1867)', *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20432>, (accessed 31 January 2022).

<sup>275</sup> 'William Oakley', *Charlcombe, Bath: Memorial Inscriptions* (2016), 92, [https://www.batharchives.co.uk/sites/bath\\_record\\_office/files/CHR%20Memorials.pdf](https://www.batharchives.co.uk/sites/bath_record_office/files/CHR%20Memorials.pdf), (accessed 23 January 2022).

**OVERMAN, ROBERT (1752-1808)**  
**Agriculturalist and Gentleman Farmer**



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**Robert Overman**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey  
Collection

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Overman was 52 years old in 1804. From 1782 he farmed in North Norfolk as a tenant of Thomas William Coke at Holkham, firstly at Burnham Deepdale before moving to Crabbe Hall Farm, Burnham Overy. In 1792 he was farming about 525 acres and by 1803 had over 600 Southdown ewes. He owned a small ship which he kept constantly busy, sending corn to London, hauling manure from London, Hull and Holland and renting it out when not in use by him for the farm.<sup>276</sup>

He was considered an exceptionally neat farmer, and in 1805 John, sixth Duke of Bedford, toasted him at the Woburn Sheep Shearing as one of the very best plough farmers in England.<sup>277</sup> Arthur Young thought him, ‘a gentleman of such clear and intelligent abilities, that great deference ought to be paid to his opinion.’<sup>278</sup> In March 1808, Overman and the land agent, Nathaniel Kent, spoke before a select committee investigating the distillation of sugar and molasses.<sup>279</sup>

He married Sarah Lubbeck in 1781, and they had a large family of 16 children. In his will, Overman made Coke his executor, leaving money so that Coke could set up each of his four sons with a farm on the Holkham estates.<sup>280</sup> As Susanna Wade-Martins says, this was a shrewd move because Overman’s sons and grandsons proved good tenants for Coke for some generations.<sup>281</sup> Overman left

half of his plate (trophies won for his livestock and arable crops) to his wife and the remainder to his eldest son, John Robert Overman.<sup>282</sup> He and other family members are buried at St Mary’s Church, Burnham Deepdale.

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<sup>276</sup> [Arthur Young], *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Norfolk* (London: G. & W. Nicol, 1804), 479, 453, 490-1.

<sup>277</sup> ‘Woburn Sheep Shearing’, 22 June 1805, *Oracle and the Daily Advertiser*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>278</sup> [Young], 350-1.

<sup>279</sup> *Report from the Committee on the Distillation of Sugar and Molasses (communicated by the Commons to the Lords)* (1808), 118-22.

<sup>280</sup> ‘Will of Robert Overman, Farmer of Burnham Sutton’, 23 August 1808, The National Archives, PROB 11/1484/222, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D358036>, (accessed 12 August 2018).

<sup>281</sup> When mentioning Coke’s involvement with Overman’s will, Wade-Martins misses a generation. It was not Robert Overman who was possibly killed by miners in Derbyshire but his father, whose tankard was allegedly poisoned. Susanna Wade-Martins, *A Great Estate at Work: the Holkham estate and its inhabitants in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 118; Personal communication with Sue Overman.

<sup>282</sup> ‘Will of Robert Overman’.

**PICKFORD, THOMAS (1747-1811)**  
**Haulage Contractor and Agriculturalist**



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**Thomas Pickford**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Pickford was 57 years of age in 1804. He was born in Cheshire and, with his brother Matthew, worked for the family firm Pickford Hauliers and Removals Company, established in Cheshire in 1646. The Pickford brothers invented the 'Fly Wagon', which cut the journey from Manchester to London to four and a half days, and they exploited the newly expanded canal system to expand their business.<sup>283</sup>

In 1780, as the business expanded, Thomas Pickford established a base in Market-Street (now called Markyate), Hertfordshire. Lying on Watling Street, Market-Street was a major coaching stop between London and Birmingham, on the A5 and close to the Grand Union Canal. One of the roads in Markyate today is called Pickford Road. Thomas managed the London end of the business, acting in a supervisory capacity and attending to the books, whilst Matthew supervised the Manchester end.<sup>284</sup> To attend to the southern end of the business, Thomas Pickford moved his family from Cheshire, buying a farm in Hertfordshire. A year after Matthew's death in 1799, Thomas retired from the company, as his brother had been the driving force of the business. Although Matthews and Thomas's sons continued to run the company, by 1817, the firm was close to bankruptcy and had to take in three new shareholders.<sup>285</sup> However, the company retained its name and is still known as Pickfords.

Thomas Pickford was a keen agriculturalist. Before he moved south in 1780, he had owned a 300-acre farm in Cheshire for nine years<sup>286</sup>. In Hertfordshire, Pickford farmed 509 acres at Mayfield, Market-Street, which he bought for £2,400.<sup>287</sup> He was particularly interested in pigs and turnips; in December 1803, he owned 300 pigs, and in 1807 he produced a 20lb 8oz

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<sup>283</sup> 'The History of Pickfords', *Pickfords*, [website], <https://www.pickfords.co.uk/pickfords-history>, (accessed 24 January 2022).

<sup>284</sup> Gerald L. Turnbull is unsure of what exactly Thomas Pickford's role in the company was. Gerald L. Turnbull, 'Pickfords 1750-1920: A study in the development of transportation', PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 1972, 107-8, fn. 32, <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/1731/1/1973turnbullphd.pdf>, (accessed 24 January 2022); But writing to Arthur Young in 1804 Pickford said he moved south to manage the business. *Annals*, Vol. XLII, 386.

<sup>285</sup> Turnbull, 135.

<sup>286</sup> *Annals*, XLII, 386.

<sup>287</sup> Turnbull, 110.

white Norfolk round turnip.<sup>288</sup> He exhibited at agricultural shows and also judged. He was a Smithfield Club Member and was a near neighbour of another keen agriculturalist, Sir John Seabright, who lived at Beechwood House.

In 1770 Pickford married Margaret Worrell. They had six children, four of whom succeeded Pickford. Margaret died in 1781, only a year after the family moved to Hertfordshire. She was buried in Cheshire.<sup>289</sup> Pickford, who never remarried, lived for a further 30 years.<sup>290</sup> Pickford is buried in a grade II listed tomb in the churchyard at St Leonard's Church, Flamstead, close to Markyate.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> For more information on Pickford's pig and arable enterprises see *Annals*, Vol. XLII, 96-102, 379-88. *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. I (1807), 473.

<sup>289</sup> Turnbull, 108, fn. 32.

<sup>290</sup> In his obituary he was called 'a useful agriculturalist', who 'maintained throughout life an unshaken loyalty and attachment to the constitution of his country both in Church and State.' *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXXXI, Part II (1811), 294, cited in Turnbull, 110.

<sup>291</sup> 'Tomb Chest in Flamstead Churchyard', *Historic England*, [website], <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1348461?section=official-listing>, (accessed 14 August 2018).

**PLATT, EDWARD (1747-1824)**  
**Agriculturalist, Gentleman Farmer and Land Steward**

Platt was 57 years of age in 1804. He was a livestock farmer who lived at Lidlington, Bedfordshire. Although Platt owned land there, which he rented out, most of the land he farmed was rented from the Dukes of Bedford and the Earl of Upper Ossory.<sup>292</sup> He also owned land at Marston Moretaine and rented at Millbrook from the Dukes of Bedford.<sup>293</sup>

He regularly exhibited his sheep and pigs at the Woburn Sheep Shearing. As well as farming Platt was also the land steward at Woburn for Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford from 1800, and was second in command to Robert Salmon from 1806-1812 for John, sixth Duke of Bedford.<sup>294</sup> He collected the rents, liaised with the tenants and sorted out the repairs. Apart from exhibiting at Woburn, he was also a Smithfield Club member and attended management meetings.

Platt was involved with two sheep-stealing cases, the first in 1801 when William Pepper stole a sheep from his land at Marston Moretaine and was executed in April 1801 for the offence.<sup>295</sup> In 1811 Platt's shepherd, John Bolland, was transported for stealing sheep from one of Platt's friends and neighbouring farmers.<sup>296</sup>

Platt married Harriet Toby, 15 years younger than him, and they had four sons and three daughters between 1784 and 1800. Apart from one son, Henry Edward Platt, all his children predeceased him. Unlike William Runciman, one of his fellow tenant farmers on the Woburn Estate, Platt was able to leave money and land to his wife, son, and grandchildren.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Land Tax Records, Bedfordshire, 'Lidlington', accessed through 'Platt, Edward', *Ancestry.co.uk*, [website], (26<sup>th</sup> January 2022).

<sup>293</sup> See Land Tax Records, 'Bedfordshire, Marston Moretaine, Millbrook and Lidlington', accessed through 'Platt, Edward', *Ancestry.co.uk*.

<sup>294</sup> 'The Russell Collection in Beds and Bucks Estates: Administration and Finance', R5, Bedfordshire Records, <http://bedsarchivescat.bedford.gov.uk/docs/R5introduction.pdf>, (accessed 7 March 2022).

<sup>295</sup> 'William Pepper', *British Executions*, [website], <http://www.britishexecutions.co.uk/index.php?time=1534261123>, (accessed 14 August 2018).

<sup>296</sup> 'John Bolland', *Convict Records*, [website], <https://convictrecords.com.au/convicts/bollard/john/78633>, (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>297</sup> 'Will of Edward Platt of Lidlington, Bedfordshire', 27 October 1824, The National Archives, PROB 11/1691/248, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D154500>, (accessed 7 August 2018).

**PRAED JNR., JAMES BACKWELL (1779-1837)**  
**Banker and Agriculturalist**



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*James Backwell Praed*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Praed was 25 years old in 1804. He grew up at Tyringham Hall, Buckinghamshire, but there was also an estate at Trevethoe, Cornwall. His father, William Praed, was an English businessman, banker and MP for Cornwall for twenty years and was the driving force behind the Grand Junction Canal, becoming its first president.<sup>298</sup> The family's original bank was in Truro but established Praed & Co. in Fleet Street in 1802. In 1891 this bank became part of Lloyds Bank.<sup>299</sup> The family owned estates in Jamaica worked by slaves, inherited by Praed Jnr's mother, Elizabeth Tyringham Praed.<sup>300</sup>

Praed Jnr became High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire at 28, but he did not come into his inheritance until 1835, two years before he died. He was an MP for Buckinghamshire for two years between 1835-1837, being described as a 'valuable and consistent Conservative' although not particularly eloquent.<sup>301</sup>

He was an enthusiastic Smithfield Club member, and in 1806 and 1807, he and the London butcher, Paul Giblett, were the Club's stewards. He married Sophie Chaplin in 1823 when he was 44. She was the daughter of Charles Chaplin, who, in 1788, had a protracted row with Robert Bakewell over the merits of the Lincolnshire and New Leicester sheep breeds.<sup>302</sup> The Praeds had two sons and three daughters.

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<sup>298</sup> Praed Street, Paddington, London, which sits beside Paddington Basin, at the base of the Grand Union Canal, was named after William Praed. R.G. Thorne, 'PRAED, William (1747-1833), of Tyringham, Bucks. and Trevethoe, nr. St. Ives, Cornw.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols, 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/praed-william-1747-1833>, (accessed 7 August 2018). The Grand Junction Canal is now called the Grand Union Canal. Ian Petticrew and Wendy Austin, 'Part II Building the Canal, The Personalities: William Praed', *The Grand Junction Canal: A road laid with water*, [website], [http://tringhistory.tringlocalhistorymuseum.org.uk/Canal/c\\_chapter\\_05.htm](http://tringhistory.tringlocalhistorymuseum.org.uk/Canal/c_chapter_05.htm), (accessed 7 August 2018).

<sup>299</sup> 'Praeds and Company (Fleet Street) Records', *Lloyds Banking Group*, [website], <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/b8017c33-0538-3a78-b4d7-055de1bbb37c>, (accessed 26 January 2022).

<sup>300</sup> 'William Praed', *Legacies of British Slave-ownership database*, [website], <http://www.depts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146645359/>, (accessed 7th August 2018).

<sup>301</sup> 'J.B. Praed, Esq. M.P.', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol VII, New Series (1837), 318.

<sup>302</sup> 23 July 1823, *Morning Post*, 3, in BNA. See Chapter Three of this thesis about Chaplin's row with Bakewell.

**REEVE, JOHN (1761-1841)**  
**Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder**



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*John Reeve*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Reeve was 43 years of age in 1804. He lived and worked in the Norfolk parish of Wighton for nearly 70 years, farming Wheycurd Hall Farm as a tenant of Thomas William Coke.<sup>303</sup> But, like some of the other Holkham tenants, Reeve also owned land, both in Wighton and at Oxwick, near Fakenham.<sup>304</sup>

Unlike Coke and many other Holkham tenants, Reeve did not breed Devon cattle and Southdown sheep. He stayed loyal to the New Leicester breed after Coke, and his tenants all changed allegiance to the Southdown. At his death in 1841, Reeve still had New Leicesters in his flock of 1,000 sheep.<sup>305</sup> Reeve crossed polled Suffolk bulls onto Norfolk cows, and his results were the foundation of what became the dual-purpose Red Poll cattle breed.<sup>306</sup> Today he is considered the founder of the breed.<sup>307</sup>

Reeve was a friend of the livestock artist, Thomas Weaver, and corresponded with him.<sup>308</sup> He was also a Smithfield Club member and hosted his own livestock show before the Holkham Sheep Shearing.<sup>309</sup>

Reeve married Ann Brooke of Berry Hall, Great Walsingham, in 1786, and they had at least two sons and three daughters. Their middle son added his mother's maiden name to his, becoming John Reeve Brooke in 1840, after inheriting from the maternal side of the family.<sup>310</sup> The poet Rupert Brooke was

descended from John Reeve Brooke. John Reeve retired in 1828. At his death in 1841, one of his possessions auctioned with his effects was a print of *The Durham Ox*.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> There is a handwritten note under his burial entry stating that he had been a resident in the parish for nearly 70 years. Norfolk Record Office; Norwich, Norfolk, England; Reference: *BT ANW 1841\_r-y*, accessed through *Ancestry.co.uk*, [website], (accessed 7 August 2018).

<sup>304</sup> 'Extensive Sale of Farming Stock', 11 September 1841, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>305</sup> 11 September 1841, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>306</sup> Henry F. Euren, *The Heredity of Dual Purpose Cattle: A Study in Farm Economics Based on Red Polled Records from 1808 to 1915* (Democratic Press, 1918).

<sup>307</sup> *History of the Red Poll Cattle*, [website], <https://americanredpolls.com/red-polls-pages/history-of-the-red-poll-cattle/>, (accessed 27 January 2022).

<sup>308</sup> Lawrence Trevelyan Weaver, *Painter of Pedigree: Thomas Weaver of Shrewsbury* (Unicorn, 2017), 181-2.

<sup>309</sup> How long Reeve had been hosting his show is difficult to ascertain but it was certainly being held around 1812-13 as his letter to Thomas Weaver intimates. Weaver, 181-2.

<sup>310</sup> 22 February 1840, *Norfolk Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>311</sup> 'For Sale by Public Auction', 4 December 1841, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 1, in BNA.



**REYNELL, RICHARD (1759-1807)**  
**Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder**



**Richard Reynell**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Reynell was 45 years of age in 1804. He lived at Reynella House, Reynella, Westmeath, Ireland.<sup>312</sup> Reynella House is a Georgian mansion that Reynell's father built in 1770 after he came over to Ireland to manage the Irish estates of the Duke of Bedford.<sup>313</sup>

Reynell's father established the Reynella herd of Hereford cattle in 1775, and Reynell himself was a renowned Hereford cattle breeder, and his cattle were universally admired. The Reynell family kept Herefords for many generations.<sup>314</sup> On his way to Ballinasloe Fair in 1806, the sixth Duke of Bedford stayed with Reynell for a couple of days to look at his farm, Hereford cattle and New Leicester sheep.

Reynell was a keen agriculturalist saying, 'agriculture and planting have ever been my favourite pursuits'. He had the first threshing machine in Ireland and put into practice several forward-thinking ideas about managing his farm.<sup>315</sup>

Reynell was on the Farming Society of Ireland committee under the presidency of John Foster. Following Thomas William Coke's example, Reynell granted long leases to his tenants: twenty-one years and two lives in his case.<sup>316</sup> Although Reynell was dead when Edward Wakefield went to Ireland, the two men knew each other as they had both attended the Woburn sheep shearings. Wakefield wrote in his

statistical and political account of Ireland that Reynell had been a careful, conscientious man who was liberal to his tenants, erected comfortable cottages for the poor in his domain and had died with an 'exalted character'.<sup>317</sup> When milk was difficult to come by between Christmas and May, Reynell always gave his 50 labourers a pint of beer each at lunchtime, brewed by himself.<sup>318</sup>

Reynell married Elizabeth Molesworth in 1789, and they had three children: two boys and a girl. He was 48 when he died in January 1807.

<sup>312</sup> 'Reynella House, Reynella, Westmeath', *National Inventory of Architectural Heritage*, [website], <https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/15401310/reynella-house-reynella-westmeath>, (accessed 28 January 2021).

<sup>313</sup> James MacDonald and James Sinclair, *History of Hereford Cattle* (London: Vinton & Co. 1886), 300.

<sup>314</sup> MacDonald and Sinclair, 300.

<sup>315</sup> *Irish Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. I (1798), 238-43. Although the volume is dated 1798, Reynell's letters describing his threshing machine are dated 5 and 19 February 1799.

<sup>316</sup> Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, Vol. I (Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1812), 281.

<sup>317</sup> Wakefield, Vol. II (1812), 780-1.

<sup>318</sup> *Irish Agricultural Magazine* (1798), 242.

## RUNCIMAN, WILLIAM (1758-1820) Agriculturalist and Tenant Farmer



**William Runciman**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Runciman was 46 years of age in 1804. He lived in London, and his family were likely coachbuilders.<sup>319</sup> Runciman moved to Woburn around 1799, tenanting Birchmore Farm from the fifth Duke of Bedford. He worked about 200 acres.

Runciman bred and exhibited Southdown sheep and was one of the Woburn Estate's best tenant farmers. He was described as 'an eminent agriculturalist, breeder and grazier' at his death.<sup>320</sup> William Marshall considered Runciman 'a *practical* man of some consideration'.<sup>321</sup> He was a Smithfield Club member, attending management meetings, but he resigned from the club in March 1809.<sup>322</sup>

He married Catherine Barbara Stewart in Piccadilly in 1791 when he was 33, and she was 26. They had ten children, five born in London, the remaining five at Woburn. He died after a lingering illness in 1820, and after his death, the auction of his live and dead stock and house contents took three days.<sup>323</sup> Amongst the items for sale were several fine prints and drawings in gold frames, books on various subjects and 15 dozen bottles of alcohol. His Southdown sheep and the remainder of the live and dead stock were sold later in the year in September.<sup>324</sup> When he died, he was evidently in debt because his creditors did not receive their final dividends

until March 1822.<sup>325</sup> His wife returned to London and died in Notting Hill in 1829.<sup>326</sup>

<sup>319</sup> The major information on Runciman has been taken from 'dewry.net', *Ancestry.co.uk*, [website], <http://www.dewry.net/TreeMill/indi1492.html>, accessed 7 August 2018).

<sup>320</sup> 12 January 1821, *Stamford Mercury*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>321</sup> Marshall's use of italics. Marshall's comments appear in his review of Thomas Batchelor's report on Bedfordshire. William Marshall, *The Review and Abstract of the County Reports to the Board of Agriculture*, Vol. IV, Midland District (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1818), 597.

<sup>322</sup> Minutes of the Smithfield Club, Vol. I, 96, Smithfield, MERL.

<sup>323</sup> 26 May 1821, *Northampton Mercury*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>324</sup> 'Superior Flock of South-Down Sheep', 8 September 1821, *Northampton Mercury*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>325</sup> 16 March 1822, *Northampton Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>326</sup> 'Died', 26 December 1829, *Bucks Gazette*, 4, in BNA.

**RUSSELL, LORD WILLIAM (1767-1840)**  
**Landowner and Politician**



*Lord William Russell*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Russell was 37 years of age in 1804. He was the younger brother of Francis and John, the fifth and sixth Dukes of Bedford.<sup>327</sup> Russell lived at the Manor at Tooting-Beck, in Surrey, which was then part of the Bedford estates until 1816 when the sixth Duke sold most of the Tooting-Beck and Streatham estates. Russell also had a London townhouse in Norfolk Street, Mayfair.

Like his brothers, Russell was a keen Whig and MP for Surrey until 1809. He then had two lengthy spells as MP for Tavistock between 1807 and 1830. He was a member of the Whig Club and Brooks's Club, and, in his younger days, he was also a member of his eldest brother's 'crop club'. He was the captain commandant of the Streatham Volunteers between 1803 and 1804.<sup>328</sup>

During the Woburn Sheep Shearings period, Russell bred Southdowns and Devons on his Streatham estate and exhibited his Devons at Smithfield. He was a member of the Smithfield Club, and when the sixth Duke was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1806-7, Russell took over temporarily as the Club's president. The Norfolk Agricultural Society also elected him as an Honorary member.

Russell married Lady Charlotte Anne Villiers, daughter of the fourth Earl of Jersey, in 1789, and they had six children. After she died in 1808 and with financial problems, Russell became increasingly eccentric. He spent the bulk of his later years

commuting between England and Europe.<sup>329</sup> In 1840, whilst at his London home, Russell discovered that his Swiss valet Francois Courvoisier had been stealing from him. Russell intended to dismiss his valet the following morning, but Courvoisier murdered him in his bed by slitting his throat during the night. Later that year, the valet was found guilty and executed in front of a large crowd.<sup>330</sup> Russell's only surviving son, William, inherited just £2,000.<sup>331</sup>

<sup>327</sup> Russell's father died four months before his birth, and his mother died just over a year later. Georgiana Blakiston, 141-2.

<sup>328</sup> The information for this biography has primarily been taken from David R. Fisher, 'RUSSELL, Lord William (1767-1840)', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1820-1832, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/russell-lord-william-1767-1840>, (accessed 14 August 2018).

<sup>329</sup> Fisher, 'RUSSELL'.

<sup>330</sup> Fisher, 'RUSSELL'. For a full description of the murder see 'Francois Benjamin Courvoisier', *The Newgate Calendar*, Part III 1800 to 1841, in *Ex-Classics Web Site*, [website], <https://www.exclassics.com/newgate/ng629.htm>, (accessed 30 January 2022).

<sup>331</sup> Fisher, 'RUSSELL'.

**SALMON, ROBERT (1763-1821)**  
**Architect, Surveyor, Engineer and Agriculturalist**



**Robert Salmon**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Salmon was 41 years of age in 1804. Born in Warwickshire, Salmon had an instinctive gift for anything mechanical from an early age. The architect Henry Holland employed Salmon as a clerk of works. In 1790 whilst working at Woburn for Holland, Salmon caught the eye of the fifth Duke of Bedford. In 1794 the Duke employed Salmon as his resident architect and mechanic. Although restructuring the management of the Woburn Estate after his brother's death, the sixth Duke retained Salmon's services.<sup>332</sup>

Salmon worked at Woburn for 30 years: he invented many implements, including chaff cutters, drills, cultivators, and designed buildings on the estate.<sup>333</sup> He won awards and medals for his designs. Like William Lester Salmon wrote about his inventions, including a pamphlet on medical trusses to relieve and repair ruptures.<sup>334</sup> In *Woburn Sheepshearing*, Garrard depicted Lester and Salmon talking together, Salmon leaning on the arm of a plough.

Salmon designed the Park Farm complex and likely lived in Park House, overlooking the farm.<sup>335</sup> Salmon was married to Ann. She died in 1812, and their daughter and only child died shortly afterwards. Ill-health forced Salmon to retire from Woburn in 1821. He moved to Lambeth but died on a visit to Woburn a month after his retirement. He was buried in Woburn

church in the same grave as his wife and daughter. The sixth Duke had a tablet erected to his memory, commemorating 'his unwearied zeal and disinterested integrity'.<sup>336</sup>

<sup>332</sup> 'Memoirs of Mr. Robert Salmon', *The Monthly Magazine*, Vol. LII, Part II (1821), 468-71; E.I. Carlyle, rev. Jonathan Brown, 'Salmon, Robert, (1763-1821)', *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24556>, (accessed 6 August 2018).

<sup>333</sup> 'Park Farm Woburn', *Bedfordshire Archives*, [website], <http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityArchives/Woburn/ParkFarmWoburn.aspx>, (accessed 6 August 2018).

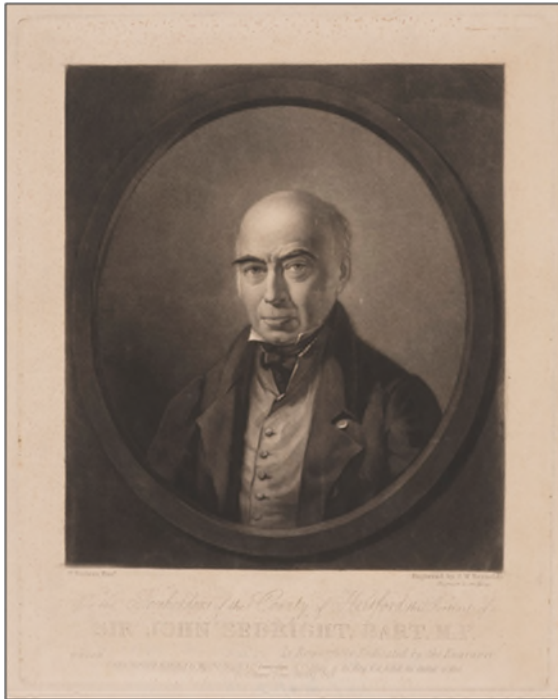
<sup>334</sup> Robert Salmon, *An Analysis of the General Construction of Trusses* (1807), cited in Carlyle, 'Salmon'.

<sup>335</sup> Garrard stated his point of sight for *Woburn Sheepshearing* was the upper window of the farm house. This view is taken from the northwest. In the 1925 valuation of the site, Charles Pynsent Elliott, the land agent, lived in 'a commodious residence just to the north-west of the main Park Farm complex called Park House'. It is reasonable to assume that Salmon, as the resident architect and surveyor, lived in Park House at the time that Garrard painted *Woburn Sheepshearing*. George Garrard, *Key to the Picture of the Woburn Sheep Shearing* (George Garrard, 1811), 4; 'Park Farm Woburn'.

<sup>336</sup> E.I. Carlyle, 'Salmon'.

## SEBRIGHT, SIR JOHN SAUNDERS (1767-1846)<sup>337</sup>

### Agriculturalist and Politician



*Sir John Sebright, Bart. M.P.*

Samuel William Reynolds after P. Boileau  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Sebright was 37 years of age in 1804. His seat was at Beechwood House in Hertfordshire, and he also owned land in Worcestershire. He was elected High Sheriff for Hertford in 1797 and served as MP for the town from 1807-1834. He generally sided with the Whigs.<sup>338</sup>

Sebright bred Southdown and Merino sheep. He was a committee member, steward, and vice-president of the Smithfield Club and its temporary president between 1821-1825.<sup>339</sup> Sebright was still exhibiting at its Shows in the 1840s. He was also an honorary member of the Board. In 1809 Sebright wrote a letter to Sir Joseph Banks about improving the breeds of domestic animals, which he subsequently published. He also published a book on hawking and animal behaviour.<sup>340</sup>

In 1793 he married Harriet Croftes. They had one son and eight daughters. He was famous for his eccentricities, his many plain daughters, his performing dogs and his expertise in hawking.<sup>341</sup> Today Sebright is remembered for developing the Sebright bantam. The Sebright Club are justly proud of his achievements.<sup>342</sup>

A long time ago  
As the embers burnt low  
Sir John finished work for the night  
He had toiled for perfection  
Created by selection  
Thus born was the bantam Sebright.  
Each feather fine-laced  
As an artist's pen graced  
A bird so compact yet so bold  
With God as his teacher  
He'd established a creature  
As precious as Silver and Gold.

<sup>337</sup> Samuel William Reynolds after P Boileau, *Sir John Sebright, Bart. M.P.*, Mezzotint, 255 mm x 203 mm (pub. 1834), London: National Portrait Gallery, No. NPG D13711.

<sup>338</sup> R.G. Thorne, 'SEBRIGHT, Sir John Saunders (1767-1846), of Beechwood Herts., and Besford. Worcs.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/sebright-sir-john-saunders-1767-1846>, (accessed 15 August 2018).

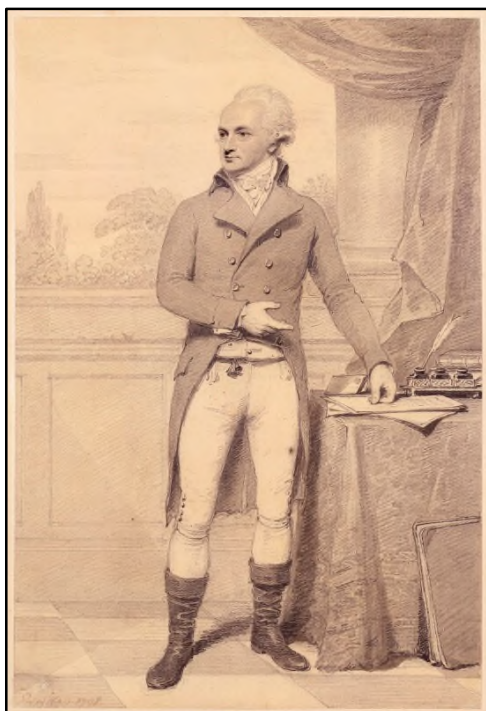
<sup>339</sup> Sebright chiefly performed the duty of President during the period of 1821-25 when the society had no official president. Bull, *History of the Smithfield Club*, 190.

<sup>340</sup> Sir John Saunders Sebright, Bart, M.P., *The Art of Improving the Breeds of Domestic Animals in a letter addressed to the Right. Hon. Sir Joseph Banks, K.B.* (1809); *Observations upon Hawking* (1826); *Observations upon the Instincts of Animals* (1836).

<sup>341</sup> Thorne, 'SEBRIGHT, Sir John Saunders'.

<sup>342</sup> Gordon Sebright, 'Sir John Saunders Sebright (1767-1846)', *The Sebright Club*, [website], <http://www.sebrightclub.co.uk/more-about-sir-john-sebright.html>, (accessed 15 August 2018). Thorne, 'SEBRIGHT'. The poem is from 'Fiction', *The Sebright Club*.

**SHEFFIELD, JOHN BAKER HOLROYD 1st EARL of (1735-1821)** <sup>343</sup>  
**Landowner and Agriculturalist**



*John Baker Holroyd, 1st Earl of Sheffield*  
Henry Edridge (1798)  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Sheffield was 69 years of age in 1804. Born in Yorkshire, he inherited Grave Hall. He bought Sheffield Place in Sussex in 1769, where he subsequently lived.<sup>344</sup> Sheffield was MP for Coventry between 1780-1785 and Bristol between 1790-1802. In 1792, he became Baron Sheffield of Roscommon and added Sheffield in 1802. In 1816, he became Earl of Sheffield.<sup>345</sup>

He was an Ordinary Member of the Board from its institution and its President between 1803 and 1806. He was also a Smithfield Club member and a keen breeder of Sussex cattle and Southdown sheep. One of the leading agriculturalists of the day, he established an annual wool fair at Lewes in 1786 and produced printed reports on the wool trade up until his death. He corresponded over a long period with John Foster, the Irish agriculturalist. Edward Wakefield worked as his land agent until Sheffield's death.

He was a close friend of the historian Edward Gibbon, and he preserved and edited Gibbon's papers after he died. He was a Whig early in his political career but left the Whig Club in 1793, just over a year after joining it, and seems to have moved over to the Tory party. He was a major in

the Sussex militia in 1778 and, in 1803, a colonel in the North Pevensey volunteers.<sup>346</sup>

He married three times. In 1767 he married Abigale Way from Richmond, Surrey, and they had three children. In 1794, a year after Abigail's death, he married the Hon. Lucy Pelham. She died three years later. In 1798 he married Lady Anne North, the daughter of Lord North, and they had two children, including his heir.<sup>347</sup>

<sup>343</sup> Henry Edridge, 'John Baker Holroyd, 1st Earl of Sheffield', Pencil and Wash, 273 mm x 184 mm (1798), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG 2185.

<sup>344</sup> John Cannon. 'Holroyd, John Baker, first earl of Sheffield (1735-1821)', *ODNB* (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13608>, (accessed 6 August 2018).

<sup>345</sup> David R. Fisher, 'BAKER HOLROYD, John, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Sheffield (1735-1821), of Sheffield Place, Suss. and Grave Hall, Yorks.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/baker-holroyd-john-1735-1821>, (accessed 6 August 2018).

<sup>346</sup> Fisher, 'BAKER HOLROYD'.

<sup>347</sup> Cannon, 'Holroyd, John Baker'.

**SINCLAIR, SIR JOHN (1754-1835)**  
**Agriculturalist and Politician**



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**Sir John Sinclair**  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing*  
(1811)

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Sinclair was 50 years of age in 1804. His seat was at Ulbster and Thurso Castle, Caithness, where he owned almost a quarter of the county. He also had houses in Edinburgh and London. He was created a baronet in 1786 and had a long parliamentary career between 1780-1811. Although called to the English bar in 1780, he never practised law in England or Scotland. In 1794 he formed the Rothesay and Caithness fencibles, spending six months with them in camp.<sup>348</sup>

He founded the British Wool Society in 1791 and was instrumental in forming the Board in 1793. He became its first President (1793-1798) and was re-elected president again in 1806, remaining in office until 1814.<sup>349</sup> During much of this period (1791-99), he wrote the *Statistical Account of Scotland* in 21 volumes and instigated the myriad of County Reports for the Board. He was not a founder member of the Smithfield Club but later joined and occasionally attended management meetings.

Around 1814 he experienced financial difficulties, and he had to put a large proportion of his land into the hands of trustees (considered as bankruptcy today). In 1815 he opened a public subscription which only raised £1,750 and was the cause of a fall-out with long term friends, Sir Joseph Banks and the third Earl of Egremont.<sup>350</sup>

He married twice, firstly in 1776, to Sarah Maitland, the daughter of a Stoke Newington merchant who came with a dowry of £9,000/year. They had two daughters, but he was devastated when she died in 1785. However, three years later, he married Lady Diana MacDonald, the daughter of Alexander, first Baron MacDonald, who came with a £4,000/year dowry. They had a further thirteen children.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Rosalind Mitchison, 'Sinclair, Sir John, first baronet', *ODNB* (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25627>, (accessed 6 September 2018).

<sup>349</sup> David R. Fisher. 'SINCLAIR, Sir John, 1<sup>st</sup> Bt. (1754-1835), of Ulbster and Thurso Castle, Caithness', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/sinclair-sir-john-1754-1835>, (accessed 6 August 2018).

<sup>350</sup> Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John: The Life of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, 1754-1835* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962), 232-4.

<sup>351</sup> Mitchison, 'Sinclair, Sir John', *ODNB*.

## SITWELL, FRANCIS (1774-1813) Landowner and Agriculturalist



**Francis Sitwell**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Sitwell was 30 years old in 1804.<sup>352</sup> He was born Francis Hurt and lived at Mount Pleasant, Sheffield. After his father received a large bequest, the family changed their names from Hurt to Sitwell. Upon his father's death in 1791, his elder brother inherited the more significant estate at Renishaw Hall, Derbyshire (still in the family today and from which the British writers Osbert, Edith and Sacheverell Sitwell were descended) and Francis (or Frank as he signed himself), the lesser estate of 3,766 acres at Barmoor Castle, Northumberland.<sup>353</sup> Sitwell also had a London house at 12 Durweston Street. He was MP for Berwick between 1803-1806 and supported William Pitt.<sup>354</sup> He was appointed major of the Loyal Berwick Volunteers in 1803.<sup>355</sup>

He was a keen agriculturalist and hosted agricultural shows between 1805 to 1808. He was an honorary member of the Board, a member of the Highland, Workington and Bath agricultural societies and a Smithfield Club member, occasionally attending management meetings. He exhibited stock at Lord Somerville's show in London on one occasion.<sup>356</sup>

He married Anne Campbell in 1795, and they had five children.<sup>357</sup> Sitwell, like his brother, spent lavishly. But also, like him, made substantial losses, primarily blaming his brother-in-law for

<sup>352</sup> For an overview of Sitwell's life see Hilary Matthews, "'As you love your father so love her': Remembering the Marriage of Francis Sitwell and Harriet Augusta Manners, 26 September 2018', *Reading History*, University of Reading, [website], [https://unireadinghistory.com/2018/09/25/as-you-love-your-father-so-love-her-remembering-the-marriage-of-francis-sitwell-and-harriet-aug\(usta-manners-26-september-2018/](https://unireadinghistory.com/2018/09/25/as-you-love-your-father-so-love-her-remembering-the-marriage-of-francis-sitwell-and-harriet-aug(usta-manners-26-september-2018/), (accessed 2 August 2021).

<sup>353</sup> In his biography of Sitwell, Collinge considers his date of birth was probably 1768. This thesis argues it was 1774. In his letter to his son, Sitwell stated that he was 19 years of age when his father died. He succeeded his father to Barmoor Castle in 1793, so if Sitwell said he was 19 when his father died this would make his date of birth 1774. J.M. Collinge, 'SITWELL, Francis, 1776?-1813), of Barmoor Castle, Northumb.' *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/sitwell-francis-1776-1813>, (accessed 5 August 2018); 'Will of Francis Sitwell of Barmoor Castle, Northumberland', 6 March 1813, The National Archives, PROB 11/1543/27, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D894502>, (accessed 5 August 2018).

<sup>354</sup> Collinge, 'SITWELL'.

<sup>355</sup> 25 October 1803, *Tyne Mercury: Northumberland and Durham and Cumberland Gazette*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>356</sup> Sitwell exhibited a New Leicester tup and three ewes. 'Lord Somerville's Spring Cattle Shew', *The Universal Magazine*, Vol. XI (1809), 272-3.

<sup>357</sup> Although Collinge spells Sitwell's wife's name as Ann, this thesis has adopted the spelling of Anne, as her name was spelt in the newspapers and as it appears in John Burke, *A General and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire* (London: Henry Colburn, 1838 5<sup>th</sup> edn.), 878; Collinge, 'SITWELL'.



these.<sup>358</sup> In June 1808, after his last sheep show, his livestock was sold by auction, and Sitwell left Barmoor because of poor health and pressing financial problems.<sup>359</sup> He never returned home, going on the run from his creditors for over four years to avoid debtors' prison. He was accompanied by his mistress Harriet Augusta Manners who nursed him. She was likely to have been the children's governess.<sup>360</sup>

Sitwell's letter to his son Francis (Frank), written three years before his death, was accepted as his last will and testament. This letter documents his unhappy married life and his financial problems.<sup>361</sup> He died in Aberystwyth at the age of 39. Five years later, his son Frank Jnr married Harriet Manners in September 1818 in the Chapel of the British Ambassador in Paris, three weeks after coming of age.<sup>362</sup> Two years after the death of his mother, the couple took on and won the battle to regain Barmoor Castle from Sitwell's creditors.<sup>363</sup> Their marriage lasted over 42 years until Harriet died in 1860. There were no children.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> 'Will of Francis Sitwell'.

<sup>359</sup> 'Barmoor Sheep Show, 1808', 25 June 1808, *York Herald*, 1, in BNA.

<sup>360</sup> In his letter to his son ('Will of Francis Sitwell'), Sitwell says Harriet Augusta Manners has been like a second mother to his son and, although illegitimate, she was better bred than they were. It is therefore likely that she was the Sitwell children's governess or possibly nanny. For more information on Harriet Augusta Manners, see Matthews, 'As you love your father', *Reading History*.

<sup>361</sup> 'Will of Francis Sitwell'.

<sup>362</sup> 'Married', *Perthshire Courier*, 15 October 1818, 3, in BNA.

<sup>363</sup> 28 June 1820, *Derby Mercury*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>364</sup> Matthews.

## SMITH, WILLIAM (1769-1839)<sup>365</sup>

### Surveyor and Geologist

Smith was 35 years of age in 1804. The son of an Oxfordshire blacksmith, he was educated at the village school. After training as a surveyor in the 1790s, he worked for the Somersetshire Coal Canal Company. Dismissed in 1799 over a disagreement about a caisson (watertight chamber), he went into partnership with Jeremiah Cruise obtaining premises in Trim Bridge, Bath. He began draining the estates of many landowners, including Thomas Crook.<sup>366</sup>

Crook introduced him to Thomas William Coke, and through him, Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford and John Farey. Among the estates Smith drained were Holkham and Woburn, and he regularly attended the Woburn and Holkham Sheep Shearings during the first decade of the nineteenth century and was a member of the Bath and West Society.<sup>367</sup>

Farey actively promoted Smith's career, including introducing him to Sir Joseph Banks, who was instrumental in Smith publishing the first geological map of England in 1815, which Smith dedicated to Banks.<sup>368</sup> In 1806 Smith published a book about draining water meadows, including the Dukes of Bedfords' Priestly Bog. Smith wrote this book with the agriculturalists he frequented with at the sheep shearings in mind, reflecting his close ties with the Woburn Group. He dedicated the book to Coke and included complimentary observations on Coke's tenants, including William Money Hill, Robert Overman and John Reeve. The book is interspersed with short poetic farming verses and charming pastoral vignettes.<sup>369</sup>

Smith wrote on geology and eventually became known as William 'Strata' Smith. In 1829 the Scarborough Philosophical Society opened the Rotunda Museum in Scarborough, designed by Smith. In 2008 it was renamed the William Smith Museum of Geology. In 1831 the Geographical Society of London awarded Smith its first Wollaston medal, the president referring to him as the 'Father of English Geology'.<sup>370</sup>

Smith married Mary Anne around 1808, but she had mental problems and, like Edward Wakefield's first wife, ended up in a lunatic asylum. There were no children. Smith's finances were always precarious, and in 1819 he ended up in the Kings Bench debtors' prison in London for ten weeks, losing money in a disastrous quarrying business near Bath. After his release, he moved north, eventually settling in Scarborough in 1834.<sup>371</sup> Smith died in Northampton on the way to a meeting. He is buried at St Peter's Church, Northampton, where a memorial bust was erected in his memory.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Garrard, who called Smith 'Mr Smith the Drainer' depicted him in *Wobourn Sheepshearing* with his back to the picture plane, in the process of walking away. For this reason, it has not been possible to provide an image of him as a young man. The only other paintings of him were produced in the 1830s when he was much older.

<sup>366</sup> Much of this information is taken from Smith's entry in *ODNB*. H.S. Torrens 'Smith, William [called Strata Smith] (1769-1839)', *ODNB* (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25932>, (accessed 13 September 2018).

<sup>367</sup> Torrens, 'Smith, William'.

<sup>368</sup> Banks opened a subscription at the 1804 Woburn Sheep Shearing after Smith's publisher for the map was made bankrupt. Torrens, 'Smith, William'.

<sup>369</sup> William Smith, *Observations on the Utility, Form and Management of Water Meadows* (1806).

<sup>370</sup> 'William 'Strata' Smith (1769-1839)', *Scarborough Museum Trust*, <https://www.scarboroughmuseumtrust.com/rotunda-museum/william-smith/>, (accessed 10 September 2018).

<sup>371</sup> Torrens, 'Smith, William'.

<sup>372</sup> 'William Smith, Father of English Geology', *Churches Conservation Trust*, [website], <https://www.visitchurches.org.uk/what-s-on/william-smith-father-of-english-geology-a-virtual-event.html>, (accessed 8 March 2022).

**SOMERVILLE, JOHN SOUTHEY, 15<sup>th</sup> LORD (1765-1819)**  
**Agriculturalist, Landowner and Courtier**



Somerville was 39 years of age in 1804. He was the son of an army officer, and the Somerville family could trace its lineage back to William the Conqueror. He was born in Somerset, and grew up in the family home at Fitzhead, but his mother died three weeks after his birth.<sup>373</sup> In 1795 he inherited the Fitzhead estate and land in Devon on his father's death. The following year, on the death of his uncle James, fourteenth Lord Somerville, he inherited the Somerville title, Drum House in Edinburgh and estates in Scotland, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire.<sup>374</sup> In 1799 he acquired a London townhouse in Hill Street, Berkeley Sq.

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*John Southey Somerville, 15<sup>th</sup> Lord Somerville*  
George Garrard  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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<sup>373</sup> For more information on Lord Somerville during his life see 'Lord Somerville', *Public Characters of 1807* (Richard Phillips, 1807), 198-226; 'Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Right Honourable John, Lord Somerville', *The Agricultural Magazine*, Vol. IX, No. XLIX (1811), 5-12. For his obituary see 'Lord Somerville', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, Vol. LXXXIX (1819), 370-1; Sir Walter Scott, 'Character of the late Lord Somerville', *The Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Walter Scott: Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. I (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1837), 243-9. For articles written on him in the late nineteenth century see Robert Arthur Kinglake, *Lord Somerville: A Forgotten President of Agriculture* (London: William Rider, 1883); Ernest Clarke, 'John Fifteenth Lord Somerville', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Vol. VIII, Third Series (1897), 1-19. Based upon this article, Clarke wrote Somerville's entry in *ODNB* in 1904. This was updated in 2004 when Anne Pimlott Baker made some minor additions to it. Ernest Clarke, rev. by Anne Pimlott Baker, 'Somerville, John Southey, fifteenth Lord Somerville', *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26023>, (accessed 7 January 2022). In 2000 Adrian Cross self-published a book on the village of Fitzhead, Somerville's home village. This book provides an in-depth look at Somerville, mostly gleaned from the writers quoted above. Adrian Cross, *Ten Hides: A Millennial History of Fitzhead, Somerset* (Adrian Cross in conjunction with the Fitzhead Community Group, 2000).

<sup>374</sup> Somerville inherited the Somerville estates from his paternal uncle Hugh Somerville, fourteenth Lord Somerville. Aston Somerville had been given to the Somerville family for their part in the Norman Conquest. The Edstone estate had come into the family upon the death of the poet William Somerville in 1742. Prior to his death, the poet had made an agreement with his cousin, James, thirteenth Lord Somerville to clear his debts with the estate reverting to the thirteenth Lord Somerville on the poet's death. *Philip Mould Ltd*, [website], <http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Item&ItemID=1980&Desc=William-Somerville-%7C-John-Smart-Junior>, (accessed 17 September 2017). Somerville's mother was Elizabeth Lethbridge, of Westway and he inherited the Fitzhead estate in Somerset from his great uncle on his mother's side, John Cannon Southey and lands in Devon from his mother which reverted to Sir Thomas Lethbridge on Somerville's death. *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, Vol. LXXXIX (1819), 370-1.

Both his inheritances were contested and had to go through chancery; the Somerville one was easier to settle than the Cannon Southey one, which took six years, his third cousins, the poet Robert Southey, and his brother, Thomas, challenging Somerville's right to the Somerset estate.<sup>375</sup>

In 1799 Somerville was made a Lord of the Bedchamber of George III, holding the position until April 1819, a few months before his death, George III dying a few months later. Somerville was elected a representative peer of Scotland with a seat in the House of Lords. He was re-elected in 1802 and 1806.<sup>376</sup> He was Colonel in the West Somerset Regiment until he resigned in 1802 following a serious carriage injury. The carriage accident was only one of several accidents he suffered throughout his adult life, and in later years, he was never fully fit.

He was elected an ordinary founder member of the Board and elected its president in 1798. He failed to be re-elected in 1800 after an absence of nine months in Portugal. Unsuccessful attempts to regain the presidency saw his removal from the Board on 22 March 1803, after only attending two meetings during the previous session.<sup>377</sup> He was a founder member of the RI and an assiduous founder member of the Smithfield Club and elected Vice President in 1815. He was president of the Bath and West Society in 1799 and elected an honorary member of the Norfolk Agricultural Society in 1804. From 1802 he held his annual show of cattle and sheep in London. His last show was in 1816, but he had been forced to cancel it in 1815 and permanently from 1817 onwards after unrest in London, caused by food shortages and lack of work after the end of the wars with France. He imported Merinos from Portugal in 1800, which he sold in 1810. He invented several farm implements, including a double furrow plough and a system of adjusting gravity together with a braking system for farm carts. He also invested considerable time, effort, and money into improving the fisheries on the west coast during the second decade of the nineteenth century, but with little success. He wrote two books on agriculture and a pamphlet encouraging farmers to join their local yeomanry troop.<sup>378</sup>

He died unmarried at 54 from dysentery and a burst abscess on his liver in Vevey, Switzerland. He left his four natural children well provided for, but the Somerville estate and title went to his brother Mark.<sup>379</sup> By 1870 the title was extinct. Somerville is buried in the small and unpretentious church of St Mary, Aston Somerville, the seat of the Somerville family.

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<sup>375</sup> Robert and Thomas Southey were still disputing it for years after Somerville's death because Cannon Southey's will stated that if Somerville died without issue, the estate should pass to the Southey side of the family. After Somerville's death, with no heir, the title and estates, including Fitzhead passed to his half-brother. But to circumvent this clause, Somerville had begun selling off the Fitzhead land. His brother Mark successfully inherited the remainder of the Fitzhead estate but sold it three years later.

<sup>376</sup> Ernest Clarke, 'Somerville, John Southey'.

<sup>377</sup> For details on Somerville's time at the Board see Minutes of Board of Agriculture, RASE minutes, MERL and Chapter Two of this thesis.

<sup>378</sup> Chapters Two, Three and Four of this thesis contain more information on Somerville's position of Lord of the Bedchamber to George III, President of the Board, acquiring his Merinos and other agricultural endeavours, including his show.

<sup>379</sup> 'Will of the Right Honorable John Lord Somerville', 6 March 1813, The National Archives, PROB 11/1624/243-1/2.

**STONE, SAMUEL (1767-1828)**  
**Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder**



**Samuel Stone**  
George Garrard 1805-9  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Stone was 37 years of age in 1804. He farmed at Knighton in Leicestershire (now a suburb of Leicester) and was a well-known New Leicester breeder and a member of the Dishley Tup Society. Stone's great uncle was the renowned sheep breeder, Nathaniel Stone from Goadby Marwood and his father, John and his two brothers, John Parnham Stone and Thomas Stone, also bred New Leicesters. The Stone family were related to Robert Bakewell; Samuel Stone's grandmother was Sarah Bakewell.<sup>380</sup> The family were Presbyterian chapel members (later Unitarian), and Stone belonged to the Presbyterian Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel in Leicester.<sup>381</sup>

As well as a New Leicester sheep breeder, Stone also bred Longhorn cattle. He was a keen Smithfield Club member and was one of the most regular attendees at its management meetings in the Club's formative years. Stone continued to advertise the letting of his New Leicester tups in 1821 and exhibited cattle at Smithfield in 1824, 25 years after he first exhibited at the show.<sup>382</sup> He also took on work as a land agent and valuer.

He married Mary Chamberlain in 1791, and they had a least six children, two sons and four daughters<sup>383</sup>. The eldest son was named Nathaniel, most likely after his friend and fellow

sheep breeder, Nathaniel Stubbins.<sup>384</sup> Stone died at 61 in 1828, and after his death, his son Nathaniel carried on his father's business as a land agent and valuer.<sup>385</sup>

<sup>380</sup> David L. Wykes, 'Robert Bakewell (1725-1795) of Dishley: farmer and livestock improver', *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. LII, No. 1 (2004), 42-3, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40275903>, (accessed 5 January 2022).

<sup>381</sup> Spavold, 'The Bakewell Family and the Local Unitarian Chapels'.

<sup>382</sup> Stone won with his New Leicesters at the Smithfield Club Show in 1800. For more about this show and Stone's part in the society see Chapter Three of this thesis. 'Rams to Let', 4 May 1821, *Stamford Mercury*, 3; 'Smithfield Club Cattle Shew', 11 December 1824, *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 3, both in BNA.

<sup>383</sup> 'Married', 28 February 1829, *Leicester Chronicle*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>384</sup> In their respective wills both Stone and Stubbins refer to each other as friends on several occasions. 'Will of Samuel Stone, Gentleman of Knighton, Leicestershire', 8 November 1828, The National Archives, PROB 11/1748/198, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D200241>, (accessed 28 January 2022).

<sup>385</sup> 'Deaths', 9 August 1828, *Northampton Mercury* 3; 'Mr. Nathaniel C. Stone', 20 August 1828, *Leicester Herald*, 3, both in BNA.

## STUBBINS, NATHANIEL (1760-1817) Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder



*Nathaniel Stubbins*  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing*  
(1810)

Stubbins was 44 years of age in 1804. He farmed at Holme Pierrepont, nr. Nottingham.<sup>386</sup> He was an agent for his landlord Charles Pierrepont (Earl Manvers from 1806).<sup>387</sup>

Stubbins was a very successful New Leicester tup breeder and an original member of the Dishley Society, more than likely its secretary.<sup>388</sup> He was a founder member of the Smithfield Club, sat on the original committee and was active in its management during the Club's first decade. His success as a sheep breeder led to him being made Sherriff of Nottinghamshire in 1798.<sup>389</sup>

Stubbins never married. He belonged to the High Pavement Presbyterian Meeting in Nottingham.<sup>390</sup> He was severely injured in 1814 when thrown from his horse at Nottingham St Matthew's Fair.<sup>391</sup> After his fall, Stubbins divided the flock between his two

nephews: Robert and Joseph Stubbins Burgess, his sister Catherine's children.<sup>392</sup> Joseph had been with Stubbins for some time, whilst Robert had set up very nearby at Cotgrove Park.

Stubbins died three years later, in 1817 at 57. After his death, his two nephews combined forces until ill health forced Joseph to retire and sell his part of the business in 1834. Robert Burgess continued very successfully until he died in 1846. Mr Sanday bought his flock and moved it back to Holme Pierrepont. After Sanday's death, his son continued breeding New Leicesters successfully, using Stubbins blood as the Burgess nephews had done and incorporating Buckley blood into his flock. He exhibited at the Smithfield Club shows and the Royal Agricultural Society Shows.<sup>393</sup>

<sup>386</sup> Stubbins also owned some land at Bramcote and Stapleford inherited from his mother. Beryl Cobbing, *Holme Pierrepont* (Ashbracken, n.d.), 218.

<sup>387</sup> 'Letter from Nathaniel Stubbins to Lord Manvers, c. 1807' in the Manvers Estate Papers MaB104/19, University of Nottingham, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Hallward Library, cited in John Orton, *The Story of a House: the History of Orchard Cottage, October 2005*, 14, fn. 26, [https://historyofcotgrave.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/9/2/129245213/orchard\\_cottage\\_with\\_pics\\_-\\_small.pdf](https://historyofcotgrave.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/9/2/129245213/orchard_cottage_with_pics_-_small.pdf), (accessed 6 February 2022).

<sup>388</sup> It can be presumed that Stubbins was secretary as the extant minutes can be traced directly back to him (see Chapter Three of this thesis). D.J. Rowe also believes that he was secretary. D.J. Rowe 'The Culleys: Northumberland Farmers: 1767-1813', *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol XIX (1971), 163, <http://www.bahs.org.uk/AGHR/ARTICLES/19n2a3.pdf>, (accessed 5 August 2018).

<sup>389</sup> William Dickinson, *The History and Antiquities of the town of Newark in the County of Nottingham*, (Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1819), 348, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=i5hTAAAcAAJ>, (accessed 5 August 2018).

<sup>390</sup> Wykes, 'Robert Bakewell (1725-1795) of Dishley', 43.

<sup>391</sup> It had not been a good week at the fair as a man had been run over and killed by a wagon on the bridge to the fair earlier in the week. 7 October 1814, *Stamford Mercury*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>392</sup> Catherine was married to Robert Burgess of Hugglescote, another successful New Leicester tup breeder.

<sup>393</sup> Henry Hall Dixon 'Mr Sanday's Herd' in 'The Herds of Great Britain', *The Farmer's Magazine*, Third Series, Vol. XVIII (1860), 299-303.

**TALBOT, CHARLES CHETWYND-TALBOT, 2<sup>nd</sup> EARL (1777-1849)<sup>394</sup>**  
**Landowner and Agriculturalist**



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*Charles Chetwynd 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Talbot*  
Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun (1799)  
Image courtesy of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough  
Council : the Ingestre Hall Collection

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Talbot was 27 years of age in 1804. He lived at Ingestre Hall, Stafford, but also owned land at Hensol, Glamorgan, and a London house at 33 Great George St. For a couple of years, Talbot was honorary attaché to the British Ambassador in Russia, and Vigée Le Brun painted his portrait (left) whilst he was in St Petersburg when he was aged 21. He was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1817-1821 and patronised Irish agriculture. From 1812 until his death, Talbot was Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire and was elected a knight of the garter on the recommendation of Sir Robert Peel in 1844.<sup>395</sup>

After returning from Russia in 1800, he married a niece of Thomas William Coke's, which 'led him to direct his attention to the science of agriculture'. He became an active agricultural improver on his Staffordshire estates.<sup>396</sup> He was president of the Staffordshire Agricultural Society, a fellow of the Royal Society, an honorary member of the Board, and an early member of the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE). Talbot is in Richard Ansdell's painting of the agriculturalists at the 1842 RASE meeting.<sup>397</sup>

Talbot married Frances Thomasine Lambert, from Beau Park, co. Meath, Ireland and they

had ten sons and two daughters. After the birth of their last child at 37 years of age, his wife died. He remained a widower for his remaining 30 years. His *ODNB* biographers describe him as a jovial, unconventional man with a passion for shooting. At his death, he weighed 19 stone.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Charles Chetwynd 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Talbot (1777-1849)*, Oil on Canvas, 900 mm x 600 mm (1798), Staffordshire: Ingestre Hall, No PCF59. Image courtesy of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council: the Ingestre Hall Collection.

<sup>395</sup> E.I. Carlyle, rev. H.C.G. Matthew, 'Talbot, Charles Chetwynd-, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Hensol, (1777-1849)', *ODNB* (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26924>, (accessed 5 August 2018).

<sup>396</sup> 'Appendix to Chronicle: Deaths 1849', *The Annual Register or a View of the History and Politics of the year 1849*, Vol. XIX (1850), 216-7, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=PYhWAAAACAAJ>, (accessed 5 August 2018).

<sup>397</sup> Richard Ansdell, *The Country Meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, but on long term loan to the RASE, Stoneleigh.

<sup>398</sup> Carlyle, 'Talbot, Charles Chetwynd'.

**THANET, SACKVILLE TUFTON, 9<sup>TH</sup> EARL of (1769-1825)**  
**Landowner**



*Sackville Tufton, ninth Earl of Thanet*  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811)

Tufton was 35 years of age in 1804. He lived at Hothfield, Kent, but travelled abroad for long periods in his early life. He was a Whig sympathiser and Fox supporter. In 1799 he was imprisoned in the Tower of London for a year for allegedly attempting to help Arthur O'Connor escape from Maidstone Court. The general opinion was that the Earl was treated extremely harshly and may not even have been involved.<sup>399</sup> Samuel Whitbread II spoke in Tufton's defence, and Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford, offered himself as bail, which was refused.<sup>400</sup>

After his release, Tufton returned to Kent and settled there. He was a keen and popular agriculturalist, regularly visiting Ashford livestock market and 'conversing with the graziers.'<sup>401</sup> He was a Smithfield Club member.

Tufton was in a relationship from at least 1791 with Anne Charlotte de Bojanowitz from Hungary. They eventually married in 1811, but there were no children. She died in 1819.

Tufton was a keen cricketer, as were two of his brothers, and he was a member of the Marylebone Cricket Club (M.C.C). He was famous as a gambler, winning and losing vast sums of money. He was troubled by poor health in later life, including erysipelas, cholera, and gout.<sup>402</sup> His two brothers succeeded him as the tenth and eleventh Earls of Thanet. With no children to succeed them, the title became extinct.<sup>403</sup>

<sup>399</sup> Most of this information on Tufton is from his *ODNB* entry. Thomas Seccombe, rev. K.D. Reynolds, 'Tufton, Sackville. ninth earl of Thanet', *ODNB* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27802>, (accessed 3 August 2018).

<sup>400</sup> The Earl of Derby also offered himself as bail. *The Whole Proceedings upon an Information Exhibited Ex Officio by the King's Attorney General against the Right Hon. Sackville [sic], Earl of Thanet, Robert Fergusson Esquire and others for a Riot and other Misdemeanours* (Cooper & Wilson, 1799). For Whitbread's cross-examination see 112-14, Thanet's speech and affidavit see 133-7, the Duke of Bedford's offer see 142, and the sentence see 150, [https://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_Whole\\_Proceedings\\_Upon\\_an\\_Informatio.html?id=Pu4yAAAAIAAJ](https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Whole_Proceedings_Upon_an_Informatio.html?id=Pu4yAAAAIAAJ), (accessed 8 February 2022).

<sup>401</sup> Seccombe, 'Tufton, Sackville'.

<sup>402</sup> He is reported to have won £40,000 on one night and lost £120,000 on another. Seccombe, 'Tufton, Sackville'.

<sup>403</sup> 'Thanet, Earl of (E. 1628-1849)', *Cracroft's Peerage* [website], <http://www.cracroftspeerage.co.uk/thanet1628.htm>, (accessed 8 February 2022).



**TOLLET, GEORGE (1767-1855)**  
**Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder**



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**George Tollet**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Tollet was 37 years of age in 1804. He was christened George Embury and educated at Trinity College Oxford. Tollet took up a career in law and qualified as a barrister in law from Lincoln's Inn Fields, working on the Oxford circuit from 1792.<sup>404</sup> When he first got interested in farming, he was at Churchend Farm Twinning (now Twynning) in Gloucestershire and farmed land at Shutthanger.<sup>405</sup>

In 1796 he changed his name to Tollet after inheriting Betley Hall in Staffordshire from Charles Tollet, a distant relative. The estate consisted of just under five hundred acres. Unable to move into Bentley Hall until Catherine, Charles Tollet's widow, had died, Tollet rented Swynnerton Hall in Staffordshire. Although there were some problems with his ownership of Betley Hall, Tollet eventually moved his family into Betley in 1815. Tollet was a magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire and a keen Whig, active politically in the county after moving to Staffordshire.

When he settled at Betley Hall, Tollet built a model farm. The farm buildings which display his innovative design are still extant.<sup>406</sup> He came to prominence in the agricultural world for his Merino flock.<sup>407</sup> He began his flock by buying Merinos from Somerville and then from George III's royal flock through Sir Joseph Banks.<sup>408</sup> Although he later sold

his Merinos, he remained very involved in agriculture. He is one of those portrayed by Richard Ansdell in the painting of the RASE agriculturalists at Bristol.<sup>409</sup> In later years he became an enthusiastic poultry breeder, and a year before his death, he sold his poultry consisting of about 250 pure-bred Shanghai birds.<sup>410</sup>

In 1795 he married Frances Jolliffe, a merchant's daughter from Hull whose mother was a member of the wealthy Wickstead family. The Tollets had one son and seven daughters. In 1814, after Thomas Wickstead died, his fortune descended to Tollet's son Charles, who legally

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<sup>404</sup> Most of the information on Tollet is taken from the following publication and personal communication with Mavis Smith. Mavis E. Smith, *The Tollet Family of Betley Hall*, Occasional Publication No. 8 (Betley Local History Society, 2005), 12-20.

<sup>405</sup> 'George Tollet', Gloucestershire Land Tax Records 1733-1813, 1801-1802. *Ancestry.co.uk* (accessed 7 May 2019)

<sup>406</sup> Malcolm Hislop, Shane Kelleher & Susanna Wade-Martins, "'Vernacular' or 'Polite'? George Tollet's Farm, Buildings at Old Hall Farm, Betley, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire", *Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. XXXIX, Iss. 1 (2008), 58-9, <https://doi.org/10.1179/174962908X365037>, (accessed 5 December 2016).

<sup>407</sup> George Tollet, 'Spanish Sheep', *Annals*, Vol. XLII, 58-71; Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish flock*, 252-61.

<sup>408</sup> For the letters between Tollet and Banks, see Carter, *The sheep and wool correspondence*.

<sup>409</sup> Ansdell, *The Country Meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*.

<sup>410</sup> Smith, 16.

changed his name to Charles Wickstead. Unlike his son, Tollet was not keen on fox hunting, warning his son in a letter in 1825 about the extravagance of the sport. Tollet became very successful, buying and selling land in the area, and when Betley Hall was sold in 1925, the Tollets owned half the land in the Betley area. The Tollets were married for 55 years, Frances dying five years before Tollet in 1850.<sup>411</sup> Tollet lived to be 88, and there is a memorial in St Margaret's Church, Betley commemorating Tollet and his family. Betley has an active local history society, and George Tollet and his family are fondly remembered by residents today.

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<sup>411</sup> Smith.

**TOWER, CHRISTOPHER T. (1775-1867)**  
**Gentleman Farmer and Agriculturalist**



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*Christopher T. Tower*  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811)

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Christopher Thomas Tower was 29 years of age in 1804. He inherited Weald Hall, Essex, after his father's death in 1810. His mother was the daughter of the Whig MP George Baker of Elemore Hall, Durham, who was in the Wider Woburn Circle.

Tower was a barrister at law (called to the bar in 1802), deputy lieutenant for Essex and Hertfordshire, justice of the peace, high sheriff of Essex in 1840 and MP for Harwich (1832-34) supporting the Whigs. He was also lieutenant colonel of the 1st Essex local militia.<sup>412</sup>

Even before his inheritance, Tower was interested in agriculture, attending the Woburn Sheep Shearing and other farming events. He was a keen breeder and exhibitor of pigs, establishing his herd by buying his initial breeding stock from Thomas William Coke and Charles Callis Western. Tower was an ordinary member of the Board, a Smithfield Club member, eventually elected to the position of Vice

President in 1859.<sup>413</sup>

He married Harriet Beauchamp Proctor from Langley Park, Norfolk, in 1803, and they had nine children, five sons and four daughters.<sup>414</sup> He died in 1867 in his ninety-second year. Weald Hall was demolished in 1950, but the parkland became a country park, managed by Essex County Council.<sup>415</sup>

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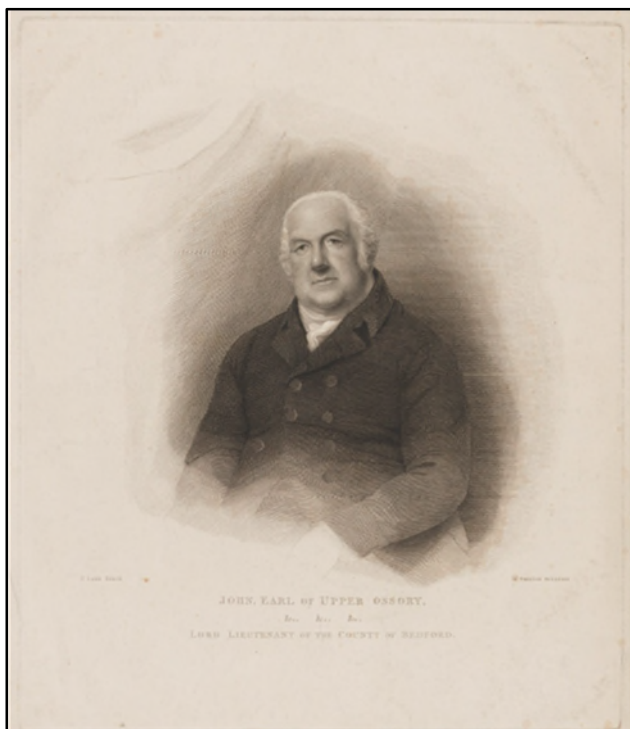
<sup>412</sup> 'Legal Obituary: C.T. Tower', *The Law Times*, Vol. XLII (1867), 352, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=-JADAAAQAAJ>, (accessed 4 August 2018).

<sup>413</sup> Bull, *History of the Smithfield Club*, 190.

<sup>414</sup> 'Christopher T. Tower Esq.' *The Illustrated London News*, Vol. L (1867), 219.

<sup>415</sup> For a history of Weald Hall and other properties the Towers family bought see W.R. Powell, Beryl A. Board, Nancy Briggs, J.L. Fisher, Vanessa A. Harding, Joan Hasler, Norma Knight and Margaret Parsons (eds.), 'Parishes: South Weald', *A History of the County of Essex*, Vol. VIII (London, 1983), 74-90, *British History Online*, [website], <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol8/pp74-90>, (accessed 4 August 2018).

**UPPER OSSORY, JOHN FITZPATRICK, 2<sup>nd</sup> EARL of (1745-1818)<sup>416</sup>  
Landowner and Politician**



*John Fitzpatrick, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Ossory*  
William Skelton after William Lane  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Fitzpatrick was 59 years old in 1804. His seat was at Ampthill Park, Bedfordshire, but he owned land in other parts of the county, including the Houghton Conquest estate.<sup>417</sup> He was a popular figure in Whig society.<sup>418</sup> Horace Walpole thought him sensible and good-natured without being weak. He liked gaming in moderation and was interested in Ampthill's history.<sup>419</sup> Fitzpatrick was an MP for the county from 1790-94 before being granted his Irish title in 1794. He was Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire from 1771-1818. He was colonel of the Bedford Militia from 1771-1795 and the Bedford Volunteers in 1803.<sup>420</sup>

He was an honorary member of the Board, a fellow of the Royal Society and the Society of Arts. He was a keen agriculturalist, and his boar won at the Woburn Sheep Shearing in 1808.

Fitzpatrick was a second cousin of the Dukes of Bedford. His father had married Evelyn Levenson-Gower, whose sister had married the fourth Duke of Bedford, the

grandfather of the fifth and sixth Dukes. In 1768 Fitzpatrick had an affair with Anne Liddell, the wife of Augustus Henry Fitzroy, third Duke of Grafton, the prime minister. He married her after her divorce.<sup>421</sup> Horace Walpole wrote many letters to the Countess of Upper Ossory, which were subsequently published.<sup>422</sup> The Fitzpatricks' had two daughters, but he also had two natural children. Having provided for all of them adequately, Fitzpatrick left Ampthill Park to Henry Richard Vassall-Fox, third Lord Holland. The Earl was Holland's maternal uncle and his former guardian.<sup>423</sup> He is buried at St James' Church, Grafton Underwood in Northamptonshire but there is a memorial column and epitaph to the Earl in St Andrew's Church, Ampthill, close to where he lived.

<sup>416</sup> William Skelton after William Lane, *Portrait of John Fitzpatrick, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Ossory*, Engraving, 381 mm x 322 mm plate size (c. 1810), London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D39274.

<sup>417</sup> Joyce Godber, *History of Bedfordshire 1066-1888* (Bedfordshire County Council, 1969), 302.

<sup>418</sup> David R. Fisher, 'FITZPATRICK, John, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Upper Ossory [1] (1745-1818), of Ampthill, Beds.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/fitzpatrick-john-1745-1818>, (accessed 8 August 2018).

<sup>419</sup> Godber, 394.

<sup>420</sup> Fisher, 'FITZPATRICK'.

<sup>421</sup> Fisher, 'FITZPATRICK'.

<sup>422</sup> Horace Walpole, *Letters to Anne Liddell, the Countess of Ossory*, Vols. I & II (reprinted by Nabu Press, 2012).

<sup>423</sup> Linda Kelly, *Holland House* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2015 rep.), 106.

**EDWARD WAKEFIELD (1774-1854)**  
**Agriculturalist and Land Agent**



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**Edward Wakefield**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Wakefield was 30 years of age in 1804. He was born into a Quaker family in Tottenham. Although his father inherited a yearly annuity of £3,000, his father's lack of business acumen meant his philanthropically minded mother, Priscilla, had to write children's books to provide a steady income for the family.<sup>424</sup> One of his cousins was Elizabeth Fry, the prison reformer.

Wakefield farmed in Essex at Romford and Burnham. His love of farming developed from the time he spent during his early years at his uncle's farm at Earlham, near Norwich.<sup>425</sup> With the aid of his family, Wakefield took on Romford Hall Farm. He then relocated the family to the Dengie Peninsula, where he rented Burnham Wyke Farm, also taking over the tenancy of Mundon Hall Farm. Financially overstretched, he was briefly in a debtor's prison after his uncle, who had funded his farming operation, called in the debt.<sup>426</sup> Wakefield had to relinquish the farms, but the quality of his animals at his two-day auction attracted buyers from as far afield as Ireland.<sup>427</sup>

Having spent some time in Ireland researching his two-volume book, *Ireland: Statistical and Political*, Wakefield worked at the naval arsenal in Northfleet for a short time before establishing himself as a land agent.<sup>428</sup> With Arthur Young's help, he began in Suffolk before finally moving to a prestigious Pall Mall address via offices in Tottenham and Lincoln's Inn Fields. His land

agency business was a success, and Wakefield was employed by many of those he had got friendly with at the agricultural events he attended or hosted as a tenant farmer.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> For a good, detailed understanding of the Wakefield family see Philip Temple, *A Sort of Conscience: The Wakefields* (Auckland University Press, 2003 edn.).

<sup>425</sup> Wakefield was the nephew of John Gurney (1749-1809), who was a prominent banker in Norwich. One of his daughters, and Wakefield's cousin, was Elizabeth Fry. Earlham Hall was rented by the Gurneys and is now the Norwich Law School, part of the University of East Anglia. David J. Moss, 'Wakefield, Edward', *ODNB* (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref.odnb/28414>, (accessed 16 August 2018).

<sup>426</sup> Temple, 18-22.

<sup>427</sup> There is a full report of Wakefield's two-day sale in *The Agricultural Magazine*, R.W. Dickson (ed.), Vol. I 1807 (1808), 238-9.

<sup>428</sup> Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, Vols. I & II (Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1812).

<sup>429</sup> Moss, 'Wakefield, Edward'.

Wakefield was a keen agriculturalist and was an early member of the Smithfield Club, involved in its management and for a short while subscribed to the RI.<sup>430</sup> Always philanthropically inclined, Wakefield became friendly with the more radical Whig Mountain members such as Francis Place during the second decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>431</sup> However, by 1826 he was standing as a Tory candidate for the Reading constituency.<sup>432</sup> He was an early supporter of Joseph Lancaster's school system, and through him, the sixth Duke of Bedford and Lord Somerville became Lancaster's major patrons.

At 17, Wakefield married Susanna Crush, the illegitimate daughter of an Essex yeoman farmer. They had ten children, but Susannah eventually died in a lunatic asylum in 1815. In 1823 he married Francis Davis, the daughter of a Macclesfield schoolmaster, but the marriage was not announced until 1826 when he had to disclose it during his canvassing for the Reading election. After his eldest son Edward Gibbon Wakefield abducted an heiress Wakefield's business collapsed, and he had to withdraw his candidacy.<sup>433</sup> Two of his sons went to prison following this scandal and Wakefield spent most of his last years abroad. Five of his sons went on to have notable careers as colonists, the most famous of them was Edward Gibbon Wakefield.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Wakefield joined the Smithfield Club in December 1799. *Annals*, Vol. XXXIV, 358.

<sup>431</sup> There are a number of letters from Wakefield to Francis Place and from Place to James Mill that mention Wakefield, and family members. Francis Place papers, British Library, Vol. XI, Add. MS 35152.

<sup>432</sup> For information on Wakefield's candidacy, and his subsequent relinquishing of it, see 'Reading Election 1826', Call No. 324 42291-REA, MERL.

<sup>433</sup> David J. Moss, 'Wakefield, Edward Gibbon (1796-1862)', *ODNB* (2021 rev.), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28415>, (accessed 20 February 2022).

<sup>434</sup> Moss, 'Wakefield, Edward'.

**WALTON, THOMAS (1746-1831)**  
**Agriculturalist and Livestock Expert**



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**Thomas Walton**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Walton was 58 years of age in 1804. He was born in Castle Donington and lived in various parts of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire before settling at Repton in Derbyshire.

At least two other Waltons apart from Thomas lived in the area, including John Walton, who lived in Ibstock and was an early Smithfield Club member. Thomas Walton was likely related to these other Waltons, like other Midland farming families such as the Buckleys and the Stones.<sup>435</sup> Walton was the acknowledged expert on livestock, particularly sheep, ‘the famous Tup man’ as Sir Joseph Banks called him.<sup>436</sup> He was firstly a pupil and then Robert Bakewell’s assistant until 1786.<sup>437</sup> Walton is depicted in two paintings by Thomas Weaver condition scoring sheep in both; the first commissioned by Thomas William Coke and the second by the first Earl of Bradford.<sup>438</sup> In 1808 he was made an honorary member of the Norfolk Agricultural Society.<sup>439</sup>

Around 1786 he married Sarah Dethick, a local girl born in 1758 who came from Willington, just over a mile across the Trent from Repton. They were married for 50 years. She died four years after him in 1835. They had one daughter, Sarah, who married a merchant but died at the birth of her only child.

Thomas and Sarah Walton were buried in the same grave at St Wystan’s Church, Repton, beside the graves of Walton’s father and mother, both also called Thomas and Sarah Walton, and his unmarried sister Eunice who was 30 when she died in 1791.

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<sup>435</sup> W. Walton was listed as a Smithfield Club member in 1801, whilst John Walton was listed as a member in 1802 and attended Woburn as well as Thomas Walton.

<sup>436</sup> Sir Joseph Banks to George John, second Earl Spencer, 31 July 1809, letter 1362, in Carter, *The Sheep and Wool Correspondence*, 493-4.

<sup>437</sup> Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 11 April 1786, in Pawson, 101-3.

<sup>438</sup> Thomas Weaver, *Thomas William Coke and his Southdown Sheep* (1807); *George Tollet and Orlando Bridgeman inspecting Southdowns* (1812). For more information on Walton being depicted in these paintings see Chapter Two of this thesis.

<sup>439</sup> ‘Norfolk Agricultural Society’, *Annals*, Vol. XLV, 94.

**WATERS, EDMOND THOMAS (1764-1848)**  
**Agriculturalist and Shipping Merchant**



*Edmond Thomas Waters*  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

Waters was 40 years of age in 1804. He was born in Tythegston, Glamorgan and worked as an Admiralty clerk in London.<sup>440</sup> When he was 20, he inherited two small estates in Wales after his parents died from smallpox. He moved his seven siblings to London and sold the Tyvry estate in Wales to invest in a mercantile house that dealt with Portugal. He became a director of the London Docks and a member of Lloyds, insuring ships for high premiums during the wars with France.

Waters married Catherine Methold in Kew in 1792, and they had nine children. She was well connected and wealthy and was known to the Royal family. Waters bought Bedstyle Farm in Southgate, and his chief ambition was to be a successful stock breeder. He then moved to a stately abode at Aldborough Hatch on the edge of Epping Forest with 320 acres, as well as leasing a London house. In 1804, because his children were suffering from poor health in Essex, he bought Grayburys Farm with 300 acres near Godstone, Surrey.

Waters bred Devon cattle, Merino sheep, and pigs, descended from Robert Bakewell's Dishley pigs. He was an exhibitor, attended the management meetings and was a steward for the Smithfield Club.<sup>441</sup> He was an honorary member of the Board and wrote a paper on molasses feeding of oxen, for which Lord Somerville awarded him a piece of plate at this Cattle Show in 1809.<sup>442</sup> He was also an Alfred Club member.

Waters had financial problems in 1807 and again in 1814 when he became bankrupt after Lloyds suffered catastrophic losses. Waters had to sell Grayburys, but with good family connections, he could re-establish his business in London and Portugal. In 1820 he relinquished his business to his son and moved to Versailles. He returned to England in 1830 and retired to Cheltenham. He died in 1848 at the age of 84, two years after his wife.

<sup>440</sup> Almost all the information on Edmond Thomas Waters has come from the extensive two volume history of the Chester of Chichley family. Robert Edmond Chester Waters, *Genealogical memoirs of the extinct family of Chester of Chichley, their Ancestors and Dependents*, Vol. II (Robson & Sons, 1878), 750-8, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=nqFCAAAAYAAJ>, (accessed 12 February 2022).

<sup>441</sup> Waters was a Smithfield Club steward in 1811 and 1812. Bull, 195.

<sup>442</sup> [B. Orson], 'Appendix', *Facts and Experiments on the Use of Sugar in Feeding Cattle: With Hints for the Cultivation of Waste Lands, and for Improving the Condition of the Lower Orders of Peasantry in Great Britain and Ireland ...* (John Harding, 1809), 112-21. John, Lord Somerville, *Facts and Observations relative to Sheep, Wool, Ploughs and Oxen* (John Harding, 1809 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), 229.



## WESTCAR, JOHN (1748-1833) Agriculturalist and Grazier



*John Westcar*

Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811)

Westcar was 56 years of age in 1804. He was the son of a renowned grazier who farmed at Woolstone on the Oxfordshire border. After he married, Westcar moved to Creslow Manor, near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, taking over the tenancy from his wife's family, who farmed the land owned by the Earl of Clifford, the current lord of the Manor of Creslow.<sup>443</sup>

Although Westcar bred cattle and sheep, he was celebrated as a grazier, buying Hereford cattle, often from the Tully brothers in Herefordshire.<sup>444</sup> He fattened them on The 'Great Field': purported to be the best grazing land in England.<sup>445</sup> Westcar utilised canals to get his cattle to London.<sup>446</sup> He was also involved with the Smithfield Club for many years and stewarded for the Club.<sup>447</sup>

Westcar married Mary Hedges in 1780, but she died the next year following the birth of their daughter Mary. Westcar never remarried. When he was 84, he died falling from his horse in one of his fields after complaining of giddiness. Westcar left a significant part of his estate to two nephews, having given his daughter £10,000 upon her marriage to Edmund Tuberville, a marriage that ended in divorce. To one of his nephews, Richard Rowland, he left £5,000, and the lease of his farm and the Rowlands farmed the land well into the twentieth century. He left a generous amount of money in his will for charity and an annuity of £100 to his housekeeper Mary Lake.<sup>448</sup> In St John, the Evangelist, Whitchurch, a handsome memorial monument depicts Westcar with an ox and sheep. On the southern outer wall of the same church, Westcar dedicated a tablet to Thomas Sirett, his 'faithful and diligent stockman', who was killed by a Hereford when he and Westcar were moving cattle.<sup>449</sup>

<sup>443</sup> Information on John Westcar is taken from 'John Westcar' *Benchmark House Histories*, [website], <http://www.benchmarkhousehistories.com/blog/2017/1/11/john-westcar>, (accessed 20 January 2018).

<sup>444</sup> For more information on Westcar and Hereford cattle see MacDonald and Sinclair, *History of Hereford Cattle*.

<sup>445</sup> 'Creslow Pastures', *Local Drove Roads*, <http://www.localdroveroads.co.uk/creslow-pastures/>, (accessed 5 August 2018). 'The Great Field' in 1868 was calculated as 323 acres, 3 rods and 2 perches and could support 220 bullocks and 200 ewes easily. No field in the country could fatten beasts as quickly. Henry Hall Dixon (aka The Druid), 'Prize Essay - Rise and Progress of Hereford Cattle', *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Second Series, Vol. IV (John Murray 1868), 287. Today 'the Great Field' still exists but the present owners, H.B. & L.J. Lear, have subdivided it into paddocks, (visit to Creslow Manor 31 January 2018).

<sup>446</sup> 'John Westcar' *Benchmark House Histories*.

<sup>447</sup> Westcar stewarded in 1803 and 1804. Bull, 195.

<sup>448</sup> 'John Westcar' *Benchmark House Histories*.

<sup>449</sup> 'Creslow Pastures', *Local Drove Roads*; personal visit to St John, the Evangelist, Whitchurch.

**WESTERN, CHARLES CALLIS (1767-1844)**  
**Agriculturalist and Politician**



**Charles Callis Western**  
George Garrard (1805-09)  
From the Woburn Abbey  
Collection

Western was 37 years of age in 1804. The Westerns of Rivenhall Place, Essex, were London grocers. Western was four years old when his father died after his family was involved in a chaise accident.<sup>450</sup> In 1781 he moved from Rivenhall to nearby Felix Hall, which he had rebuilt in a neo-classical style. He filled it with classical antiques acquired from his foreign trips.<sup>451</sup> He also had a London townhouse at 75 Harley Street. A staunch Whig, Western was MP for Maldon from 1790-1812 and Essex from 1812-1832. He championed the agricultural cause and promoted the introduction of the Corn Laws. In 1833 he was made Baron Western. He was captain of the Kelvedon Volunteers in 1798 and an Essex magistrate.<sup>452</sup>

Western bred Hereford and Devon cattle and Merino and Southdown Sheep. He was also a keen pig breeder, and in 1808 the livestock author and farmer, Richard Parkinson, thought Western's Sussex pigs were probably the best in the kingdom.<sup>453</sup> He was instrumental in developing the Improved Essex pig breed. The breed was widely exported and known as Lord Western's Pig. After his death the *New Zealand Journal* thought no one surpassed him either in his knowledge as a breeder or his efforts to bring his ideas to fruition. It advocated buying a regular source of pigs from his breeding and acquiring knowledge from his farm stockmen and bailiff.<sup>454</sup>

Western regularly exhibited his livestock and was a Smithfield Club committee member. In 1814 he was elected one of the club's first four Vice Presidents.<sup>455</sup> He was also an honorary member of the Board and, from 1805, an ordinary member. He

<sup>450</sup> P.L.P. Western, 'Lord Western', *Maximiliangenealogy* (1999), [website], <http://www.maximiliangenealogy.co.uk/charlescallis.html>, (accessed 14 February 2022).

<sup>451</sup> Baron C.C. Western, *Descriptive sketch of ancient statues, busts, &c. at Felix Hall: the seat of the right honorable Lord Western, at Kelvedon, in the county of Essex; with plates of some of the most striking objects in the collection* (Chalk, Meggy & Chalk, 1833), folio (f NB 71), ESAH spec. coll., The Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex.

<sup>452</sup> Winifred Stokes and R.G. Thorne, 'WESTERN, Charles Callis, (1767-1844), of Felix Hall, Kelvedon, Essex.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/western-charles-callis-1767-1844>, (accessed 4 August 2018).

<sup>453</sup> It is interesting that Parkinson describes the pigs that Western bred as of the Sussex breed. Generally Western is recognised for his endeavours with the Essex breed of pigs. However, Parkinson says he kept the breed himself and he was a well-respected livestock author, who was also a practical farmer who bred pigs. Richard Parkinson, *Treatise on the Breeding and Management of Livestock*, Vol. II (London: Cadell & Davies, 1810), 244.

<sup>454</sup> 'Hogs', *The New Zealand Journal*, No. 163, Vol. VI (handwritten note on cover states it should be Vol. VII) (Stewart & Murray, 1846), 62, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Lb8NAAAAQAAJ>, (accessed 4 August 2018).

<sup>455</sup> Bull, 191.

joined the RASE and is portrayed in Richard Ansdell's painting of the RASE agriculturalists at the Bristol Meeting in 1842.<sup>456</sup>

He was a keen patron of livestock portraiture, and he was one of Edwin Landseer's earliest patrons, employing Landseer when the artist was still in his teens. He also extensively commissioned the physically handicapped livestock artist John Vine.<sup>457</sup>

For his service of 42 years to the Whig cause, the sixth Duke of Bedford urged the prime minister Charles Grey, second Earl Gray to elevate Western to the peerage, which Grey agreed to, Western becoming Lord Western.<sup>458</sup> Western never married, and upon his death, the title became extinct. As his only brother had never married or had children, Western's cousin Thomas Western inherited the estate.

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<sup>456</sup> Ansdell, *The Country Meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*.

<sup>457</sup> Hugh Scantlebury, *John Vine of Colchester: An Account of the Life and Times of an Essex Livestock Painter* (2008), 54.

<sup>458</sup> David R. Fisher, 'WESTERN, Charles Callis (1767-1844), of Felix Hall, Kelvedon, Essex, *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1820-1832, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/western-charles-1767-1844>, (accessed 16 June 2022).

**WHITBREAD, SAMUEL II (1764-1815)**  
**Brewer, Landowner and Politician**



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**Samuel Whitbread II**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Whitbread was 40 years of age in 1804. He inherited the Whitbread Brewery in London and Southill Park in Bedfordshire in 1796.<sup>459</sup> But rather than brewing, he preferred Whig politics, going on to hold radical Whig Mountain political views. He began his political career in 1790, standing against his Tory father, taking his Bedfordshire seat for the Whigs. He remained a Whig MP for Bedford from 1790 until he died in 1815.

Whitbread was vehemently against the war with France, but in case of an invasion, he became Lt. Colonel Commandant of the Bedford Volunteer Infantry in 1803 and 1<sup>st</sup> battalion Bedfordshire Militia in 1809.<sup>460</sup>

For almost 20 years, Whitbread was George Garrard's major patron. When Garrard's father-in-law, the Royal Academician artist Sawrey Gilpin retired, Whitbread invited him to live at Southill, which Gilpin did for two years before returning to London.<sup>461</sup> Whitbread became a keen agriculturalist through his friendship with the Russell brothers and Lord Somerville and was involved in the Smithfield Club. He jointly financed the Oakley Hunt with his fellow Whigs, John, sixth Duke of Bedford and William Lee Antonie.<sup>462</sup>

He married Lady Elizabeth Gray in 1788. She was the sister of his university friend, Charles, second Earl Gray from Northumberland, a staunch fellow Whig. They had four children. Whitbread was heavily involved with rebuilding the Drury Lane theatre and securing funds for

its survival. Suffering from depression and health problems, Whitbread committed suicide in 1815, three weeks after the Battle of Waterloo.<sup>463</sup> The painting of *Woburn Sheepshearing*, was still in the Garrard family's possession until 1870. It was then bought at auction and taken to Woburn Abbey. But it had two significant alterations from the print: an enormous tower had been placed within it, and Whitbread had been erased.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> For more information on the Whitbread family and the brewery, see Sam Whitbread, "*Plain Mr Whitbread*": *Seven Centuries of a Bedfordshire Family* (The Book Castle, 2007).

<sup>460</sup> For a comprehensive study of Whitbread's parliamentary career see David R. Fisher, 'WHITBREAD, Samuel II (1764-1815), of Southill, Beds.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1790-1820, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/whitbread-samuel-ii-1764-1815>, (accessed 4 August 2018).

<sup>461</sup> Roger Fulford, *Samuel Whitbread 1764-1815: A Study in Opposition* (London: MacMillan, 1967), 100-2.

<sup>462</sup> 'The Beginnings of the Oakley Hunt', *Bedfordshire Archives*, [website], <https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/Oakley/TheBeginningsOfTheOakleyHunt.aspx>, (accessed 11 November 2021).

<sup>463</sup> Fisher, 'WHITBREAD'; 'Mr. Whitbread's Suicide', *Saunders's News-Letter*, 11 July 1815, 2, in BNA.

<sup>464</sup> The painting is now in the private quarters at Woburn Abbey.

**WHITE PARSONS, JOHN (1758-1808)**  
**Agriculturalist and Livestock Breeder**



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**John White Parson**  
George Garrard (1805-1809)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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White Parsons was 46 years of age in 1804. He farmed 500 acres at West Camel, Somerset. He took the name of Parsons after he inherited the farm from his uncle Henry Parsons in 1793. The will stipulated that the inheritance was for his life only, reverting to Henry Parsons' great-nephew, Henry White Parsons, on John White Parson's death.<sup>465</sup>

However, a person or persons unknown (most likely White Parsons) removed two pages from the will that stipulated this, making it appear as if White Parsons had inherited full ownership of the land and buildings, allowing them to pass to his family after his death. This fraudulent action was detected shortly after White Parsons' death and resulted in a court case over a mortgage on the land held by James Young.<sup>466</sup>

John White Parson was a Smithfield Club and a Bath and West Society member. In 1802 the Society awarded him a premium of 20 guineas for 'the most completely improved farm.'<sup>467</sup> He was a keen and accomplished livestock breeder, incorporating foreign blood into his breeding programmes and imported

Zebu cattle and other breeds. He firmly believed that heat was necessary for any form of farming; Harold Carter considers him one of the more curious mystics found in every

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<sup>465</sup> James Dowling and Archer Ryland, 'Fowle, executor for Woodman, v. Welsh', *Report of Cases Argued and Determined in the Court of King's Bench*, Vol. II (London: Sweet, 1823), 133-7, [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=W\\_svAAAAIAAJ](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=W_svAAAAIAAJ), (accessed 16 February 2022).

<sup>466</sup> In 1805 White Parsons sold land to James Young. But as the owner of the estate for his lifetime only, White Parsons should not have sold the land. After John White Parson's death, it was discovered that Henry Parsons's will had been tampered with and Henry White Parsons, the great-nephew of Henry Parsons, who now owned the estate under the terms of Henry Parson's will, successfully brought a case against Young to have the land returned to him. 'Cox v King', *The Law Times and Journal of Property*, October 1846 to March 1847, Vol. VIII, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=9xdCAQAAMAAJ>, (accessed 3 August 2018), 1-2; 'Henry White Parsons, Esq. v. Young', 29 August 1809, *Pilot (London)*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>467</sup> 'Bath and West of England Society', 27 December 1802, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 2, in BNA.

generation of British breeders, whilst James Sinclair thought him ‘facetious and eccentric.’<sup>468</sup> But despite these later views White Parsons was a good employer, and staunchly refused to use a threshing machine on his farm, and built twenty new cottages for his labourers, supplying each with a small garden/farm for their use.<sup>469</sup>

In 1804, White Parsons and two other defendants were accused of bribery and corruption at the previous Ilchester elections.<sup>470</sup> Several agriculturalists, including Dr Parry, sent affidavits regarding White Parsons’ character, but it was to no avail, and all three were committed to the Marshalsea Prison for 12 months.<sup>471</sup> But as there are no records regarding his prison term, or any mention of it in the piece on him in ‘Memoirs of Remarkable People’ in the *Universal Magazine* four years later, he likely escaped a prison sentence.

Whilst he was still John White, he married Mary Jacob, and they had Henry Parsons in 1787. There were three other children, Frances, Hester, and Thomas Bakewell White Parsons. This son was most likely named after Robert Bakewell.<sup>472</sup> Mary White Parsons died in 1802.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> For more on John White Parsons’ beliefs regarding the benefits of heat and his use of foreign breeds see, Carter, *His Majesty’s Spanish Flock*, 272-5; James Sinclair mistakenly calls him James [sic] White Parsons. Sinclair, *History of the Devon Breed of Cattle* (Vinton & Co., 1893, Forgotten Books 2015 rep.), 62.

<sup>469</sup> ‘John White Parsons: Memoirs of Remarkable People’, *Universal Magazine*, Vol. XI (1809), 351-3.

<sup>470</sup> Thorne, ‘Ilchester’, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1790-1820* (1986), <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/constituencies/ilchester>, (accessed 17 February 2022).

<sup>471</sup> ‘The King v. Alex. Davidson Esq., John White Parsons, and Thomas Hopping’, 8 May 1804, *Sun (London)*, 3 in BNA; ‘Court of King’s Bench, Friday May 11’, 12 May 1804, *London Times*, 3 in NA.

<sup>472</sup> When White Parsons died in 1808 his will indicated that Thomas Bakewell White Parsons was under 21. There are no easily accessible records about Thomas Bakewell’s birth, so it is not beyond the realms of possibility that he was born in 1795, the year Bakewell died.

<sup>473</sup> ‘Obituary’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Vol. LXXII, 2<sup>nd</sup> part (1802), 783.

**WILSON, ANDREW (1775-1836)**  
**Agriculturalist and Bailiff and Agent for the Russell Family**



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**Andrew Wilson**  
George Garrard (1805-09)  
From the Woburn Abbey Collection

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Wilson was 29 years of age in 1804. From a Scottish family, he was John, sixth Duke of Bedford's bailiff at Woburn Park Farm from at least 1803. William Adam possibly recommended Wilson when he became auditor after the fifth Duke's death. In 1816 Wilson moved to Devon, becoming borough steward and resident agent on the sixth Duke's Tavistock estate.<sup>474</sup> Wilson was still the Duke's resident agent, living in the Manor House on the estate at his death.<sup>475</sup>

Whilst working on the Woburn Estate, Wilson attended the Smithfield Club and Lord Somerville's shows, taking the Duke's stock with Edmund Cartwright. But he does not appear to have been a Smithfield Club member in his own right. In 1808 the sixth Duke awarded him a cup and 10 guineas for the best plough at the Woburn Sheep Shearing.

Wilson was married to Susan, but they had no children. He died suddenly after suffering severe lung inflammation on 3 January 1836. The newspaper reports of his death indicate that he had lived in the Tavistock area for twenty years, had a wide circle of friends, and was popular with the Duke's tenants, 'by whom he was proverbially designated 'The Farmer's Friend''.<sup>476</sup> Another reported 'the Duke has lost a

zealous, faithful and valued servant...' and that the tenants found him a liberal and indulgent steward, whilst his friends had lost a generous and kind-hearted friend.<sup>477</sup>

Wilson wrote his will in 1816 whilst he was still at Woburn but added a codicil in 1835 when he must have known he was dying. His wife was his primary beneficiary, and he specified she should receive the plate he had won over the years at the agricultural shows, as well as his books. As there were no children, he left money to his brother, three sisters and their children.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> William Adam to Andrew Wilson, P.V. Denham, 'Duke of Bedford's Tavistock Estate', *Trans. Devon Assoc.* cx (1978), 24-31 cited in Fisher, 'Tavistock', *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (1809), <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/tavistock>, (accessed 17 February 2022).

<sup>475</sup> 'Died', 30 January 1836, *Huntingdon, Bedford and Peterborough Gazette*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>476</sup> 'Died', 9 January 1836, *Western Times*, 3, in BNA.

<sup>477</sup> 'Died', 9 January 1836, *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 2, in BNA.

<sup>478</sup> 'Will of Andrew Wilson, Farmer of Woburn Park Farm, Bedfordshire', 31 May 1836, The National Archives, PROB 11/1862/313, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D278374>, (accessed 25 January 2022).

**WILLIAMS WYNN, SIR WATKIN (1772-1840)**<sup>479</sup>  
**Agriculturalist, Landowner and Politician**



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**Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, Bart.**  
William Say after John Jackson (pub. 1840)  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

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Williams Wynn was 32 years of age in 1804. He was the fifth Baronet of Wynnstay, Ruabon, Denbighshire. Williams Wynn also owned a London townhouse in St James' Square. He was Tory MP for Beaumaris from 1794 to 1796 and Denbighshire from 1796 to 1840. Williams Wynn was a keen military man, and he held several voluntary positions, including colonel of the Ancient Dragoon 1794-1800 and colonel of the Denbigh Militia from 1797.<sup>480</sup>

Williams Wynn was an enthusiastic agriculturalist and a keen Southdown breeder. In 1796 he was president of the newly formed agricultural society at Wrexham. From 1806 Williams Wynn held an annual agricultural show at Wynnstay that ran for some years.<sup>481</sup> He was an ordinary member of the Board and a Smithfield Club member, attending management meetings.

Often referred to as the 'prince of Wales', Williams Wynn was a large man in all senses of the word. Unfortunately, he was parodied in some circles because of a speech impediment caused by an overlarge tongue.<sup>482</sup> But he was very popular among the agriculturalists and a generous host at his farming meetings.

Williams Wynn married Lady Henrietta Antonia Clive in 1817, and they had two sons and a daughter.<sup>483</sup> His wife predeceased him, dying at 49 in 1835. In 1950 Lindisfarne College took over Wynnstay Hall Estate, and today it has been converted into residential properties.

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<sup>479</sup> William Say, after John Jackson, *Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, Bart.*, Mezzotint Engraving, 433 mm x 348 mm (plate size), published by Edward Parry (1840). London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG D36225.

<sup>480</sup> Margaret Escott, 'WILLIAMS WYNN, Sir Watkin, 5<sup>th</sup> bt. (1772-1840), of Wynnstay, Ruabon, Denb. And St. James's Square, Mdx.', *The History of Parliament*, Vols. 1820-1832, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/williams-wynn-sir-watkin-1772-1840>, (accessed 3 August 2018).

<sup>481</sup> Walter Davies, *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of North Wales* (London: Richard Phillips, 1810), 463.

<sup>482</sup> Escott, 'WILLIAMS WYNN'.

<sup>483</sup> Escott, 'WILLIAMS WYNN'.



**WINCHILSEA, GEORGE FINCH, 8<sup>TH</sup> EARL of (1752-1826)**  
**Agriculturalist, Landowner and Courtier**



The eighth Earl of Winchilsea  
detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811)

Winchilsea was 52 years of age in 1804. Like his father, he was a courtier, succeeding his uncle in 1769 to become the Earl of Winchilsea.<sup>484</sup> His main seat was Burley on the Hill in Rutland. He owned Eastwell Manor in Kent; land in Ravenstone, Buckinghamshire; Foulness in Essex, and a London residence.

He was Lieutenant-Colonel in the British Army during the American Wars of Independence.<sup>485</sup> He raised a local militia troop in Rutland. He was a Lord of the Bedchamber (1777-1812), Groom of the Stole (1804-1812) and Comptroller of the King's Household (1812-1820). He became a Knight of the Garter in 1805, and Garrard portrayed the Earl with the Garter star prominently displayed on his chest.<sup>486</sup>

He was a keen agriculturalist and the first President of the RI (1799-1813), an ordinary founder member of the Board and

the Smithfield Club. In 1806 he judged at Lord Somerville's show. An enthusiastic agriculturalist, he was a keen advocate of cottagers renting land and stocking it with one or two cows, and this became known as the 'Winchilsea System'.<sup>487</sup> He was passionate about cricket, played the game whenever he could, and was among those who founded the M.C.C.<sup>488</sup> He never married, and there is no documented record of any natural children.

<sup>484</sup> Most modern sources (apart from the RI who list him as the eighth Earl) title him as the ninth Earl. However, Debretts, and other contemporary sources, correctly identify him as the eighth Earl. He never married, and in 1816 Debretts stated his cousin, George-Finch Hatton of Eastwell Park, would become the ninth Earl. The confusion appears to have arisen in later years because the Countess of Winchilsea (1556-1634) was the first of the Winchilsea line and at her death, the title passed to her son, who became the actual first Earl of Winchilsea, although he was the second to bear the Winchilsea title. John Debrett, *The Peerage of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. I (London: F.C. and J Rivington, 1816 10<sup>th</sup> edn.), 157-62,

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=a8EvAAAAYAAJ>, (accessed 20 February 2022).

<sup>485</sup> Gerald M.D. Howat, 'White Conduit Cricket Club', *ODNB* (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64818>, (accessed 20 February 2022).

<sup>486</sup> R.O. Bucholz (ed.), 'The bedchamber: Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, 'Court Officers, 1660-1837', in *Office-Holders in Modern Britain*, Vol. XI rev. (London, 2006), 14-9, *British History Online*, [website], <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/office-holders/vol11/pp14-19>, (accessed 9 January 2022); 'King's Establishment at Windsor 1812-1820', Council, *The Data Base of Court Officers, 1660-1837*, Loyola University, Chicago, [website], <https://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/lists/List%2029a%20Kings%20Establishment%20at%20Windsor%201812.pdf>, (accessed 10 January 2022).

<sup>487</sup> [George Finch, Earl of Winchilsea], *Letter from the Earl of Winchilsea to the President of the Board of Agriculture, on the advantages of cottagers renting land* (1796).

<sup>488</sup> Howat, *ODNB*.

**YOUNG, ARTHUR (1741-1820)**  
**Agriculturalist and Author**



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Arthur Young  
Detail from *Wobourn Sheepshearing* (1811)

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Young was 63 years of age in 1804. He lived at Bradfield Hall, south of Bury St Edmunds, and spent nine months of the year in London for much of the last thirty years of his life. He was the youngest of three children, and after an indifferent education, rather than going to university, as he would have wished, he was apprenticed to a Kings Lynn wine merchant.<sup>489</sup>

Interested in writing from an early age, he published his first pamphlet at 17 on the war in North Africa. After moving to London, he began a monthly magazine called *The Universal Museum* at his own expense but soon abandoned it. Disliking trade and failing in his publishing endeavours, he took on the tenancy of a farm at Bradfield Hall, leasing it from his mother.<sup>490</sup>

Still interested in writing, he regularly wrote to *Museum Rusticum* on the benefits of experiments, drainage, and different cultivation methods. His first book was a compendium of these letters.

In 1765 he married Martha Young from a wealthy Kings Lynn family.<sup>491</sup> They had four children, but two of their children died young of tuberculosis. The Young's marriage was always difficult as his wife disliked the time he was away and the money and interest she considered he wasted

on farming.<sup>492</sup> She died five years before him.

Due to animosity between Young's wife and his mother, the Youngs left Bradfield to farm at North Mymms, Hertfordshire. This endeavour was unsuccessful, Young attributing its failure to poor soil. But his visits to farms in the southeast whilst searching for this farm formed the basis of his first 'Tours' book. He was habitually short of money, spent on experiments and frequent trips away, and so in 1773, he supplemented his income by working for the *Morning*

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<sup>489</sup> The information for this biography is largely taken from Gordon Mingay's biography of Young from the *ODNB*. G.E. Mingay, 'Young, Arthur (1741-1820)', *ODNB* (2015 ver.), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30256>, (accessed 3 March 2022).

<sup>490</sup> His mother had come with such a large dowry that it required Bradfield Hall and the small estate be transferred into her name. The Young family had owned the estate since 1672. Mingay, 'Young, Arthur'.

<sup>491</sup> Apart from Mingay's *ODNB* entry see also John G. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young 1741-1820* (American Philosophical Society, 1973); M. Betham-Edwards (ed.). *The Autobiography of Arthur Young* (London, 1898, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967 rep.).

<sup>492</sup> See Chapter One of this thesis for more information on Young's marriage.

*Post* as a parliamentary reporter, during the period when Henry Bate Dudley was both a proprietor and editor of the paper.

During the 1780s, his fortunes changed. He first inherited property and money from an aunt, and then Bradfield Hall, after his mother's death, as his older brother had died in a hunting accident.<sup>493</sup> Although he carried out numerous farming experiments and trials at Bradfield, his farming practices were poorly managed, George Culley wryly commenting after a visit that people who devote themselves to writing cannot act or execute.<sup>494</sup> But encouraged by the favourable response to his books on his various tours to different parts of the country, Young began the long-running *Annals of Agriculture* in 1784. Although keeping the journal going for 30 years, Young was always disappointed by its sales.

Between 1787 and 1790, shortly before the French Revolution, Young travelled extensively in France, Catalonia and Northern Italy. His resulting book on these tours was still in print in 1929 and has become a valuable historical resource. In 1793 he was appointed as secretary to the newly formed Board of Agriculture, necessitating he and Martha spending much of their time at Sackville Street rather than Bradfield Hall. Young wrote six of the county reports published by the Board. From 1798 to 1806, he also took on the position of secretary for the Smithfield Club.

After the death of Young's beloved youngest daughter, 'Bobbin', and his subsequent friendship with William Wilberforce Young became increasingly more religious. By 1808 his eyesight had deteriorated, and after an unsuccessful cataract operation in 1811, he became completely blind. Nevertheless, Young continued to write and work for the Board. He died at Sackville Street in 1820 and is buried at All Saints Church, Bradfield Combust. His son, The Revd Arthur Young, also developed an interest in agriculture, writing two of the Board's county reports and extensively surveying Russian agriculture. He inherited Bradfield Hall but died in the Crimea in 1827.<sup>495</sup> Today Bradfield Hall has been converted into residential dwellings.

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<sup>493</sup> The aunt intimated she would have left Young more had she not been insulted by his wife. Mingay, 'Young, Arthur'.

<sup>494</sup> 'Correspondence with George Culley', MSS, ZCU 1, 18, 44, Northumberland Record Office, Newcastle, cited in Mingay, 'Young, Arthur'.

<sup>495</sup> John G. Gazley, 'The Reverend Arthur Young 1769-1827: Traveller in Russia and farmer in the Crimea', *Manchester eScholar Services*, [data services], <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/api/datastream?publicationPid=uk-ac-man-scw:1m2797&datastreamId=POST-PEER-REVIEW-PUBLISHERS-DOCUMENT.PDF>, (accessed 4 March 2022).



employed top quality agriculturalists to aid his farming endeavours, including Edmund Cartwright, John Farey and John Duckitt. Inspired by Thomas William Coke's Holkham meetings, the Duke established the Woburn Sheep Shearing in 1797, which his brother, the sixth Duke, continued until 1813.<sup>501</sup>

The Duke died unexpectedly at 37, aggravating a hernia injury whilst playing tennis. The Duke never married but had several mistresses and two natural children.<sup>502</sup> Although there was speculation that he may have married Georgiana Gordon, a daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Gordon, they were never officially engaged. She married his brother, the sixth Duke, eighteen months after his death.<sup>503</sup>

The Duke was buried in St Michael's Church at Chenies in Buckinghamshire, the burial place of the Russell family. The collection of their family tombs is one of the finest in the country.<sup>504</sup> His funeral took place at 2 am, but despite the Duke requesting a modest funeral, it still attracted huge crowds, including pickpockets from London, who caused a great deal of disturbance, including stealing the escutcheons from the hearse.<sup>505</sup> There is an impressive statue by Richard Westmacott of the Duke on the edge of Russell Square in London. It depicts him in Roman attire surrounded by agricultural motifs.<sup>506</sup> But unfortunately, although the initial plans revealed that the inscription would include a reference to the Duke's agricultural endeavours, the inscription on the monument is very curt, mentioning only his name and the date the statue was erected.

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<sup>501</sup> See Chapters Two and Three of this thesis for more information on the Duke's agricultural activities.

<sup>502</sup> His mistresses included Lady Maynard (Nancy Parsons), Mrs Hill and Mrs Palmer, who was the mother of his two children. He also named other women in his will. Keir Davidson, *Woburn Abbey: The Parks and Gardens* (Pimpernel Press Ltd., 2016), 114, 127; Blakiston, 168-9. Images of Nancy Parsons and Mrs Hill, opp. 166.

<sup>503</sup> Smith, 'Russell, Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford'.

<sup>504</sup> David Ross, 'Chenies, St Michael's Church', *Britain Express*, [website], <https://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=4275>, (accessed 2 March 2022).

<sup>505</sup> 'Funeral of the Duke of Bedford', 12 March 1802, *Evening Mail*, 4, in BNA.

<sup>506</sup> For more information on the statue and detailed images of the fifth Duke and the agricultural and classical motifs, see George P. Landow, *The Victorian Web*, [website], <https://victorianweb.org/sculpture/westmacottr/12.html>, (accessed 22 August 2021).