

# **Elite Women and the Agricultural Landscape, 1700–1830**

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## **Chapter 4 Improving the estate**

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## 4 Improving the estate

As we saw in the last chapter, Elizabeth Knight of Chawton was alive to opportunities to improve her estates, describing herself as ‘on the watch’ to achieve enclosure at West Dean near Chichester in the 1720s. Nor was she the only propertied woman to be keeping an eye out for chances to enclose or otherwise improve her property. Women like Jane Ashley, Amabel Hume-Campbell, Anna Maria Agar, Sarah Dawes and Mary Cotterel were all involved in pushing through parliamentary enclosure awards, while Elizabeth Prowse introduced wide-ranging agricultural improvements after the informal enclosure of the open fields at Wicken. The contributions of these women and others like them to a bundle of related practices – including parliamentary enclosure and agricultural improvement, but also non-agricultural sources of estate income – are discussed in this chapter.

### **Propertied women and parliamentary enclosure**

Like male and institutional landowners, the female owners of landed estates across the English Midlands and beyond stood to gain significantly from the enclosure and improvement of unenclosed common fields, pastures, meadows and wastes.<sup>1</sup> Many were therefore actively involved in the various stages of an enclosure: from negotiating with local tithe-owners and freeholders about the desirability of parliamentary enclosure to petitioning Parliament for the necessary bill, from appointing commissioners to oversee the division and reallocation of the fields to investing in post-enclosure improvements like new farmhouses. Some even saw the enclosure as an opportunity to push forward sweeping changes to village plans. Thus, for example, Henrietta Masterman Sykes petitioned Parliament for an enclosure act for Settrington (North Yorkshire) in 1797.<sup>2</sup> She had inherited Settrington from her father and married Sir Mark Sykes of Sledmere (ERY) two years earlier, though given that it was her – rather than her husband – who was named in the petition as lady of the manor and owner of most of the open fields and village houses, she almost certainly held the property as separate estate. The fields were enclosed later the same year and the village replanned around the same date: the village green was enclosed, houses on the green and near the church demolished to make way for the new gardens surrounding the rebuilt manor

house and neat pairs of estate cottages built further north. Farmhouses were also built out in the newly enclosed fields, and there was also work undertaken on the stables, riding school, garden pavilions and estate offices. Here date stones suggest that work had actually begun in the few years before enclosure – and indeed before Henrietta's marriage to Sir Mark – implying that she almost certainly played a much bigger role in the improvements than has traditionally been attributed to her.<sup>3</sup>

Jane Ashley of Ashby St Ledgers (Northamptonshire) was actively involved in the enclosure of Ashby in 1764. Probably best described as a member of the lower gentry, the widowed Jane Ashley controlled 1,300 acres in Ashby under her marriage settlement, amounting to just over two-thirds of the parish.<sup>4</sup> Her father-in-law had made his fortune as a London draper before buying the estate in 1703, and his son John Ashley had consolidated the family's place in local society by becoming Sheriff of Northamptonshire in 1756.<sup>5</sup> Jane Ashley managed the estate at Ashby for more than 20 years between her husband's death in 1761 and her own in 1784. Evidence for her management of Ashby comes from the frequent correspondence she maintained with both her estate steward in Rugby (Warwickshire) and the family solicitor in London. The positions were held by brothers Thomas and Samuel Harris, with whom Ashley had a long-standing and close relationship.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, Ashley's letters do not survive but the 25 or so letters addressed to her from the Harris brothers provide a valuable insight into her management of the estate in the 20 years after her husband's death.

From the letters it is clear that Ashley was personally involved in managing the agricultural estate at Ashby. She oversaw the collection of rents and organised for repairs to her tenants' farms, as well as writing to her two agents on various agricultural issues including the sowing of grass and clover seed and improvements to the tenant farms.<sup>7</sup> She was listed as lady of the manor at the enclosure of 1764 – one of only a handful of women in the county to be so named – and played an important role within village society, gifting a communion plate, chalice and paten to the church in 1780 as well as arranging for an elaborate and expensive monument to be erected in the church in memory of her husband.<sup>8</sup> Rather unusually, she also acted as surveyor of the highways in 1768.<sup>9</sup>

Ashby's enclosure took place at the beginning of the first great wave of parliamentary enclosures in the Midland counties.<sup>10</sup> Prior to enclosure, it was a classic Midlands parish consisting of a nucleated village and medieval three-field system but little in the way of common grazing land, although more extensive common cow pastures had been laid out by agreement in the early eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The enclosure had been first proposed during her husband's lifetime, but the petition was not presented to Parliament until February 1764, more than two years after Ashley had first been widowed.<sup>12</sup> Ashley maintained a frequent correspondence with Samuel Harris in London, who drummed up support for the bill amongst MPs and reported to her on its progress through Parliament in the winter and spring of 1764. The bill seems to have encountered two main problems in its passage through Parliament. Firstly, the only other sizeable landowner

objected to the enclosure, threatening to submit a petition against it because he believed it would increase the poor and highways rates. Secondly, having got the bill signed by the major landowners, the vicar died just weeks before it was due to be presented to Parliament.<sup>13</sup>

Yet for all the problems, Ashley seems to have been an enthusiastic proponent of enclosure. She had high expectations for the enclosure and, in January 1764, she wrote to Samuel Harris apparently reporting the profits she expected to make from the enclosure of the open fields. Her letter does not survive, but in an undated reply written in mid-January, Samuel responded, saying he was

glad to hear you are like to make so much advantage tho' I was always quietly certain of it – however I would not have this much talked of yet till the Act is gone through both houses.<sup>14</sup>

Gossip was – of course – thought of as a peculiarly feminine vice, and Samuel seems to have been worried that Ashley would talk too freely about the financial advantages of enclosure.<sup>15</sup> He was no doubt concerned that she would endanger the progress of the Act through Parliament by raising new objections from those who did not stand to profit so much.

The enclosure of the open fields finally went ahead in the autumn of 1764. Ashley was by far the biggest landowner and received over 90 per cent of the land enclosed in Ashby. It is clear that Ashley oversaw a major reorganisation of the tenancies in the wake of enclosure. There had been 15 principal tenants in both 1750 and in c. 1761, each holding a farm made up of open field strips, meadow and pasture.<sup>16</sup> Yet by 1784, the year of her death, there were only ten principal tenancies.<sup>17</sup> Rental incomes, which had remained relatively stable in the two decades before enclosure, increased significantly in the 20 years after. The 15 principal holdings had brought in £518 in c. 1761, but by 1784 rental income for the ten amalgamated farms had reached more than £1,115. That is, rental income from the Ashby farms more than doubled in the 23 years Jane Ashley managed the estate. If we compare the c. 1761 and 1784 rentals, we can see that despite the rent increases many of Ashley's tenants remained on their farms or the farms remained with the same families. In other words, Ashley successfully improved rents in the wake of enclosure without losing large numbers of tenants, as had been the case, for example, on the neighbouring Grafton estate.<sup>18</sup>

There were also significant rent rises in the wake of enclosure on female-owned estates at places like Acaster Malbis (West Yorkshire) and Aynho (Northamptonshire). The duchess of Beaufort's decision to increase rents on the Stoke Gifford estate in 1780 was unpopular amongst the tenants, but she dismissed their petition as 'unreasonable'.<sup>19</sup> Rents also rose on the Lucas estates in Bedfordshire after a number of enclosures in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and here the survival of a considerable quantity of correspondence – including hundreds of letters between the landowner and her relatives, as well as the correspondence sent to her by her estate steward, bailiff and London

solicitor – makes it possible to explore a female landowner's role in and attitudes to enclosure in greater detail.<sup>20</sup> The Lucas estates were owned by Amabel Hume-Campbell, Baroness Lucas, who had inherited the estates at the death of her mother Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey in 1797. Hume-Campbell's mother and father had been deeply conservative in their estate policy at Wrest, enclosing only on the fringes of the estate where the initiative came from neighbouring landowners, and generally doing little to improve rents or rationalise farm layouts in the six decades they held the estate.<sup>21</sup> Hume-Campbell too was initially less than enthusiastic about the potential for enclosure on the estate. Shortly after her mother's death, she enquired whether the enclosure at Harrold could be put off, but was told by her steward Joseph Pawsey that things had progressed too far already and any delay would be to the general disappointment and inconvenience of the tenants and landowners.<sup>22</sup>

Hume-Campbell's ambivalence towards enclosure is perhaps surprising given the interests of her husband Alexander Hume-Campbell, Lord Polwarth. The pair married in July 1772 and he immediately set about convincing his mother- and father-in-law to lease him a farm on the Wrest estate. After initial wrangles about the size, layout and location of the farm, Hardwicke consented and Polwarth established a model farm in which he took great pleasure.<sup>23</sup> Polwarth was a keen agricultural improver, enthusiastically reading Arthur Young's works and other farming treatises while at Marchmont House on the Scottish Borders in 1773, as well as undertaking complicated calculations as to the economy of different methods of sowing seeds.<sup>24</sup> He made various improvements to the farm and warren and wrote animated letters to his wife about his work at the farm.<sup>25</sup> He was also an enthusiastic foxhunter, building new kennels on the Wrest estate, a project which his parents-in-law tolerated if ultimately disapproved of.<sup>26</sup> Yet Polwarth's health was never good and he died in March 1781 aged just 30, some 16 years before Hume-Campbell inherited the Lucas estates.

Hume-Campbell then was exposed to arguments about the benefits of enclosure and agricultural improvement as early as the 1770s, but not seemingly persuaded. Her change of heart in 1807 was a reflection not of the influence of Polwarth – by then dead for more than 25 years – but of her solicitor Christopher Ware and her steward's son, J. W. Pawsey. While the old steward was ambivalent about enclosure, his son was a passionate advocate for it. In May 1807, he wrote his mistress a long letter arguing for the enclosure of the home estate by informal means, believing a Parliamentary Act was an unnecessary expense.<sup>27</sup> Early the next month, Ware made a trip to Bedfordshire in order to look over the common fields at Flitton, Silsoe, Pulloxhill and Clophill. He strongly recommended enclosure by Parliamentary Act, noting that 'no general improvement can take place until [the fields are] divided and allotted' and arguing that Pawsey was 'mistaken to a very great extent' in his estimate of the additional expense of an enclosure act.<sup>28</sup> Ware was also central to the decision to appoint an estate steward with experience of enclosure. He first interviewed Lewis Harrison in July 1807 – two months before the new steward met with Hume-Campbell and her nephew and heir Lord Grantham – and remarked in his recommendation to

his employer that Harrison had run a large farm for the past five years during which time enclosure had taken place.<sup>29</sup>

Within days of coming to the job, Harrison was working towards the enclosure of Clophill, the first of the local enclosures actively promoted by the Wrest Park owners and stewards.<sup>30</sup> The Clophill bill was followed a year later by one for Flitton, Silsoe and Pulloxhill.<sup>31</sup> Harrison was an enthusiastic proponent of enclosure, reporting progress on the various parliamentary bills<sup>32</sup> and arguing in a letter to Hume-Campbell that spending ‘a considerable sum of money in inclosing will not only produce double the interest it can make in the funds, but will be a permanent and substantial improvement to the estate’.<sup>33</sup> Thus it was with the strong support of her solicitor and estate steward that Hume-Campbell eventually plumped for enclosure, a decision which was probably also affected both by the knowledge that her tenants were keen to see their farms consolidated and rationalised and perhaps more importantly, by concerns about estate finances.<sup>34</sup>

In an undated letter probably of 1807, Harrison wrote, ‘I perfectly coincide with your Ladyship in the propriety of lessening the outgoings of the Estate, but still more in expediency of increasing the incomings’. He did not think reductions in the number of livestock and particularly dogs would much help, but increasing the tenants’ rents, taking land in hand to avoid the costs of repairs and improving the pasture – and hence, increasing agistments – might boost estate income.<sup>35</sup> Importantly, both Ware and Harrison thought that parts of the Lucas estates were too cheaply let. Making comparisons between the Lucas property at Clophill and that of another female landowner, Ware concluded that Hume-Campbell’s rents sat at three-fifths of their actual value, while Harrison noted that ‘if a considerable rise was to take place in many of the farms, the rents would still be lower than any other of the Nobility in the County’.<sup>36</sup> Those tenants whose rents stood in most need of being raised were, he said, in very good circumstances and he hoped it would ‘not hurt your Ladyship’s feelings, after so many years indulgence, to let them pay a fair price from Lady Day’. Those he had in mind were some of the bigger farmers at Flitton and Silsoe, Clophill, Stondon and Higham Gobion, but tenants at Harrold and Henlow also saw their rents put up again, having already had their rents raised after the enclosures there in the late 1790s.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, much thought was put into how best the farms might be amalgamated, the number of farmhouses reduced and the costs of repairs lessened after the enclosures.<sup>38</sup>

Yet if Hume-Campbell and her agents hoped the enclosure of parts of the Wrest estate would help to improve estate incomes, they were certainly not prepared to spend unlimited sums on achieving those enclosures. There was instead a strong desire on the part of the family to keep the enclosure expenses down, and the letters between Hume-Campbell, Harrison and Ware reveal great concern about how best to manage costs. Plans were made to re-use the fencing from the Clophill enclosure at Silsoe, and a nursery was established at Wrest Park where trees and quicks for the new hedgerows were grown.<sup>39</sup> Some of the expenses were met by melting down ‘leaden images’ – presumably some kind of statuary – from the gardens, and there seems to have been a desire to complete the fencing slowly

over a number of years and to stagger the building of new farmhouses.<sup>40</sup> Harrison made steady – if not rapid – progress on the enclosures and, although the awards were not finally signed until 1826, the allotments for Flitton and Silsoe had been agreed by January 1810 and the fields had been divided and the new hedges planted there and at Clophill by the time a map of 1814 was drawn up.<sup>41</sup>

Rents rose significantly in the decade after enclosure. At Clophill plans to rearrange the farms had been mentioned in 1777 and 1783, but little appears to have been done.<sup>42</sup> Six of the eight big farms were let at the same rents in 1807 as 1763, five of them to the same tenant families, suggesting that any reorganisation prior to enclosure was limited to the two remaining farms which both lay in the area of old enclosures in the south-west of the parish.<sup>43</sup> Yet while rents had been changed little in the 45 years before enclosure, they increased dramatically in the decade after it. Rents on the nine principal tenancies – eight farms plus Clophill mill – almost doubled from £759 in 1807 to £1,455 in 1818/19, even taking into account abatements of up to 18 per cent allowed by the estate.<sup>44</sup> Rents had also increased significantly at Gravenhurst, as well as at Harrold and Blunham where rents rose immediately after enclosure in the late 1790s and again between 1807 and 1818/19.<sup>45</sup> While the estate had problems with a handful of tenants in the early 1810s – several of whom quit their farms with significant arrears – by the end of the decade the steward could report that ‘the Credit of the Farmers upon the Wrest Estate stands as high as the Credit of any upon any other Estate in the County (or he might add the Kingdom)’.<sup>46</sup> A year later he reported that while the agents of other landowners had had difficulty collecting rent, Hume-Campbell’s Bedfordshire tenants brought their rents ‘cheerfully’, and in April 1820, the tenants were said to have paid ‘punctually and promptly’ with the exception of the usual defaulters.<sup>47</sup>

### **Motherhood, estate management and improvement**

Other women supervised the enclosure of family properties even where they were not identified in the act or award. Dame Sarah Dawes, for example, managed the Escrick estate (ERY) on behalf of her young son for more than a decade in the 1750s and early 1760s. Dawes was the daughter of Richard Roundell of Hutton Wandesley (North Yorkshire) and had been twice married – first to Sir Darcy Dawes and second to Beilby Thompson of Escrick Hall – but at the death of her second husband in 1750 she returned to using her previous married name.<sup>48</sup> While her son – another Beilby Thompson – was away at school and at Cambridge, she managed the Thompson estates, building them up through a series of purchases and exchanges in the south-east corner of the East Riding.<sup>49</sup> With enclosure in mind, she organised for the Thompson property at Riccall (ERY) and Bole (Nottinghamshire) to be surveyed, and acted on her son’s behalf in the enclosures at Stillingfleet and Ottringham.<sup>50</sup> She also oversaw building works at Escrick Hall which included refronting the house and adding a third storey in 1758, and it was probably her who financed a new pulpit, reading desk, pews and west gallery in the church in the following year.<sup>51</sup> Yet it was her son’s name

which appeared both in the enclosure records and on the date stones at the hall, another example of the hidden contributions made by wives and mothers to estate management and improvement.<sup>52</sup>

Beilby Thompson came of age in the spring of 1763 and continued his mother's building works at the hall. Thompson commissioned John Carr to build a new wing and stable block in 1763–5 and by 1781 he had obtained an Act of Parliament to enclose the open fields and remove the church and rectory as part of a plan to landscape the grounds around the hall. Twenty-six cottages were removed and three roads diverted in order to create a new park over the former open fields, and the church and rectory rebuilt to the north of the village.<sup>53</sup> At least three outlying farms were built in the enclosures south and east of the old village and a huge quantity of quicksets used to hedge the new fields.<sup>54</sup> It was, of course, Dawes's sound financial management during her son's minority that provided the opportunity to undertake such costly improvements at Escrick. She certainly seems to have been financially astute. When in the midst of his improvements at Escrick, Thompson was asked to stand as Lord Rockingham's candidate at York in 1768, Dawes strongly objected. She thought York too expensive a constituency and, as a result of his mother's intervention, Thompson was elected instead to Hedon.<sup>55</sup>

Nor was the Escrick estate the only property Sarah Dawes managed. Dawes had inherited land in Acaster Malbis (West Yorkshire) from her father and later made significant purchases there and at Thorpe Bassett and Scagglethorpe (North Yorkshire). She later claimed that she had spent £42,000 on the properties and that as a result of the enclosure of Acaster Malbis – achieved by non-parliamentary means in 1758 – and the building of new farmhouses, she had increased her rental from £1,200 to £1,800 a year.<sup>56</sup> This was property held separately to the Thompson inheritance and she controlled it throughout her lifetime, using the profits to fund the marriage portion she had promised her daughter and eventually leaving it to her second son Richard in her will.<sup>57</sup>

Another woman involved in enclosure by parliamentary means was Mary Cotterel (formerly Cartwright) of Aynho in the extreme south-west of Northamptonshire. Mary and her new husband Sir Steven Cotterel managed the estate on behalf of her young son William, a baby when his father died in 1772. During his long minority they improved the estate by establishing new plantations and acquiring freeholds by means of a series of purchases and exchanges which brought most of the parish into Cartwright hands.<sup>58</sup> This was all done with a view to enclosure and, while Cartwright was away at university and on the Grand Tour in the early 1790s, the Cotterels progressed with the enclosure in his absence and in his name. The Cartwright agent Robert Weston was appointed as the family's enclosure commissioner, and his correspondence acknowledges William Ralph Cartwright's legal status as owner at the same time as signalling the leading role played by Mary Cotterel in pushing forward the enclosure. It was she who instructed Weston to write to remaining freeholders to outline the family's plans for enclosure and negotiate about the appointment of an enclosure commissioner, and her compliments and thanks which Weston extended to his correspondents.<sup>59</sup> She also played a leading part in negotiations over the course



of a new turnpike road associated with the enclosure, which effectively rerouted the old road and allowed her son to expand the park.<sup>60</sup> Her role as *de facto* landowner was also acknowledged by the freeholders in their letters to Weston and by Cotterel herself, who referred to estate matters at Aynho as ‘my business’.<sup>61</sup>

The Enclosure Act received the Royal Assent in April 1792, and when the estate was enclosed in the autumn it was her son’s name which appeared on the award.<sup>62</sup> Yet Cartwright was still on the Continent, and the news from Aynho was relayed to him by his mother and step-father. In late August, they both wrote to him to tell him how things went on, reporting in slightly different words that ‘everything looks well and seems to promise much’.<sup>63</sup> It was also the Cotterels who travelled to Aynho to see the new hedges laid out and the new farmhouses erected, spending a fortnight there in November.<sup>64</sup> The parliamentary enclosure provided an opportunity for a radical reorganisation of parish space. Houses and other buildings near the mansion were demolished and the park extended westwards, leaving the church isolated within the parkland. The displaced tenants were rehoused in new cottages elsewhere in the village and at least two new farms were built, although unfortunately nothing has survived to tell us about the tenants’ reaction to these changes.<sup>65</sup> Whatever her tenants’ views on the improvements, it is clear that Mary Cotterel pushed forward the Aynho enclosure in her role as her son’s legal guardian and with the assistance of her second husband and the family’s land agent, thereby doing much to increase the value of her son’s inheritance.

The replanning of the villages at Escrick and Aynho is indicative of the changes to the landscape which might follow parliamentary enclosure. Enclosure extinguished common rights and divided up the former open fields, commons and meadows with new hawthorn hedges to create regularly shaped fields often laid out with little reference to the pre-existing field pattern. Enclosure commissioners also had the power to realign roads or stop them up, something the owners of both Escrick and Aynho took advantage of in order to extend the parklands around the halls.<sup>66</sup> Enclosure awards usually provided for the land of individual landowners to be reorganised into reasonably consolidated blocks, and large landowners with multiple tenants often restructured their tenancies so as to create rationalised farm layouts. With the land held by each tenant now arranged in a ring-fenced block – rather than spread across the parish as under the medieval open-field system – it made little sense for farmers to continue to reside in the village. In many places, new farmsteads were built on these consolidated holdings which often lay at some distance from the village.<sup>67</sup> These are generally called post-enclosure farmsteads, and one sees them standing lonely in their fields across great swathes of central England. It was this kind of new farmstead that Mary and Stephen Cotterel watched being erected in the fields at Aynho and that Sarah Dawes attributed the 50 per cent increase in her rental to in Yorkshire.

### **The landscape outside the Midlands**

Parliamentary enclosure and agricultural improvement did not of course affect all parts of England equally. Enclosure had its greatest impact in the

English Midlands, where in counties like Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Huntingdonshire more than 50 per cent of the land was enclosed by parliamentary means between around 1730 and 1850. In East Yorkshire too, more than 40 per cent of the county was enclosed under Parliamentary Act, and in Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire large swathes of open-field arable were enclosed in the century after 1750.<sup>68</sup> Thus many of the women discussed so far in this chapter lived in counties like Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Gloucestershire and parts of Yorkshire, a reflection of the geography of the enclosure movement as well as the survival of archival sources.

Regions outside this central zone have their own histories of agricultural change and improvement. Large-scale drainage works were important in transforming the landscape in parts of the north-west and west of England and in the Fens of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, and here too, propertied women were involved in agricultural change and improvement.<sup>69</sup> A good example comes from King's Sedgemoor in the Somerset Levels, a vast area of waterlogged moorland that was still regularly flooded in the 1770s when it was said to be fit for grazing cattle for only two or three months of the year.<sup>70</sup> Reclamation had been underway in the Levels from the medieval period onwards, but the pace and scale of drainage works increased significantly from the 1780s. In the case of Sedgemoor, an Act of 1791 allowed for the drainage and division of the moor. The river Cary was diverted to a new cut called the King's Sedgemoor Drain and thousands of open drainage ditches – known locally as rhyes – were dug.<sup>71</sup> The account books of Elizabeth Hood of Butleigh Wootton (Somerset) – a propertied woman from the lower reaches of the gentry already mentioned in Chapter 3 – signal her involvement in these changes to the landscape. As a landowner in nearby Butleigh and Street, she contributed to the initial costs of the drainage works in both Sedgemoor and the Brue Valley as well as to ongoing maintenance works which included cleaning and repairing the rhyes. More significantly, she purchased land and commons in Sedgemoor in the mid-1790s and early 1800s, speculating on the success of the drainage works in the years between the Drainage Act becoming law and the final enclosure of that part of the Levels. Having increased her holdings in Sedgemoor, she invested in improvements to the land, paying for underground trenching – probably on land kept in hand – as well as buying vetches to be planted on the newly drained land and offering rebates to those tenant farmers who engaged in improvements such as ditching.<sup>72</sup> In the years immediately following the drainage and enclosure, large areas of land on Sedgemoor were brought into cultivation for the first time, producing high yields of wheat and oats and leading to a significant increase in rents.<sup>73</sup> Hood's rental rose dramatically in the decades around 1800: having stood at £580 in 1786, it had reached £711 in the late 1790s and £1,007 by 1806, an increase due not only to the purchase of additional acres but also due to high yields and increased rents.<sup>74</sup> Yet the growth in yields and profits short-lived, and by the 1830s continual cropping had left the land exhausted and repeated ploughing had lowered the surface of the land, meaning that it continued to be

frequently inundated.<sup>75</sup> Hood, however, had been ideally placed to benefit from the boom years in the Levels, and it seems likely that the improvements to Wootton House and the home estate in the early 1800s – including refacing the house, works in the gardens, two new orchards and the planting of a number of fir trees – were in part financed by the profits she made from farming Sedgemoor.<sup>76</sup>

Elsewhere the reclamation of heathland and the enclosure of commons provided opportunities for improved agriculture. The enclosure of commons and waste under Parliamentary Act was of most significance in the four northern counties of England, but there were also large acreages enclosed in North and West Yorkshire, the Lincolnshire Wolds, Norfolk and Hampshire, as well as smaller pockets throughout the Midlands.<sup>77</sup> Cornwall too had vast moors and wastes with only an estimated third of the county under the plough in 1811 and 200,000 acres said to be suitable solely for grazing goats and sheep.<sup>78</sup> There was little in the way of parliamentary enclosure in the county until the early nineteenth century when a number of wastes were enclosed and improved. The *General View of Agriculture* for Cornwall cited the efforts of three male landowners, but parts of Lady Camelford's Boconnoc estate were enclosed under her stewardship, as were parts of Anna Maria Agar's Lanhydrock property.<sup>79</sup> Agar's marriage settlement set aside £20,000 – controlled by Agar independently of her husband and one of the ways the couple tried to increase estate incomes – for enclosures and other improvements to the estate, and as a widow she was involved in a number of other enclosures on her Cornish property.<sup>80</sup>

### **Innovation and experimentation: crops, rotations and technology**

Like the drainage of wetlands, the enclosure of wastes and commons was usually associated with an expansion of the acreage under cultivation – at least temporarily – and perhaps also with the introduction of new crops to a region. Lady Elizabeth Monoux was said by Arthur Young to be responsible for introducing improvements following the enclosure of wastes and warrens on an estate belonging to her husband at Sandy (Bedfordshire). The parish was enclosed in 1804 under an act of 1798, and both the act and the award recognised Sir Philip Monoux as the landowner.<sup>81</sup> Yet Young attributed the improvements to his wife, noting that Sir Philip's estate was 'entirely under the management of Lady Monoux, who takes much pleasure in husbandry'.<sup>82</sup> She had planted several parcels of the newly enclosed warren with oats and achieved excellent yields without the need to marl, lime or manure the land. In the previous year, Young had also reported that she was growing lucerne on portions of the new enclosures, again with good results. The lucerne was used as fodder for horses and was said to be 'a very fine crop' which over 20 weeks produced a yield valued at more than £9 an acre after the labour. Young praised 'the agricultural talents of the intelligent farmeress' and her 'very great exertions' in planting newly enclosed land at Sandy, where her crops were said to be thriving and 'promise to be a source of immense profit'.<sup>83</sup>

Other female landowners consciously experimented with the latest crops and crop rotations, introduced new agricultural machinery and technologies, or significantly extended drainage works on their estates without necessarily themselves overseeing enclosure, which might have been accomplished by the previous landowners, sometimes their father or husband. The duchess of Beaufort was using ploughs supplied by her son to remove molehills on her Stoke Gifford estate, while the author, literary hostess and bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu (née Robinson) (Figure 4.1) was also a committed agricultural improver.<sup>84</sup> Born into a wealthy Yorkshire family, she married Edward Montagu in 1742 but their only child died young, and when her husband died in 1775 he left her his entire estates, said to be worth to be worth £7,000 a year.<sup>85</sup> Montagu was a conscientious manager of her estates in Berkshire, Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland, maintaining a frequent correspondence with her estate stewards and making regular visits to her properties.<sup>86</sup> She also experimented with improved farming, overseeing improvements to the farmhouses on her Yorkshire estates as well as investing considerable sums in fencing and drainage works. At Sandleford, she had progressive husbandry clauses inserted into the tenants' leases and in Northumberland, she bought an estate adjoining her Denton property specifically because its purchase allowed the tenant farms to be reorganised and enlarged.<sup>87</sup> She was a committed improver who was not shy in drawing attention to her achievements, commenting in 1790 that she took particular pleasure in improvements which resulted from 'one's own prudence and activity' and elsewhere referring to 'my genius for farming'.<sup>88</sup> Nor were her efforts without financial reward: at her death in 1800 the estates were said to be worth £10,000 a year, a 33 per cent increase on their annual value in the 25 years since her husband died.<sup>89</sup>

Elizabeth Prowse too introduced a range of agricultural improvements and innovations to her newly enclosed estate at Wicken (Northamptonshire). Prowse's role in keeping the estate ledgers has been discussed in Chapter 3 as has her contribution to managing the home farm and collecting tenant farmers' rents. Yet in addition to overseeing the day-to-day functioning of the estate, Prowse also tirelessly improved the house, park and estate during her 43-year widowhood. Her work at Wicken is discussed here both because of the wide-ranging and innovative nature of the improvements she introduced in the wake of enclosure, and for the light it sheds on Prowse's role in the circulation of ideas, knowledge and expertise about estate management, agriculture and landscape improvement. Wicken Park House (Figure 4.2) had been rebuilt on a new site outside the village in 1717, but Prowse and her husband George planned significant additions and improvements to the house.<sup>90</sup> Plans for two new wings and a third storey to the main block were drawn up by her father-in-law, but work continued on the interiors for more than a decade after his and her husband's deaths in 1767.<sup>91</sup> Work on the cellars was still ongoing as late as 1787.<sup>92</sup> Coals were used in the house for the first time in 1766, probably to fuel new heating apparatus bought from Prowse's brother James Sharp, a London ironmonger (shown in the Sharp family portrait, Figure 4.3).<sup>93</sup> Prowse bought several more of Sharp's American



Figure 4.1 Elizabeth Montagu (née Robinson), by John Raphael Smith, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1776 (NPG D13746). © National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 4.2 Wicken Park, Northamptonshire, by J. P. Neale, 1818. Reproduced from an original print owned by the author.

stoves in the 1770s and early 1780s, as well as installed a water closet supplied by him in 1781.<sup>94</sup>

Prowse's ledgers and memoirs also provide good evidence for her improvements to the gardens and parkland. Examples include new gravel walks laid out in Park Copse to the north-west of the house in 1771 and a ha-ha dug between the pleasure grounds and the stables in 1778.<sup>95</sup> Sadly no plan for the gardens now survives, and it remains unclear how far Prowse's visits to important picturesque gardens like Stowe (Buckinghamshire), Studley Royal and Hackfall (Yorkshire) and Thoresby and Clumber (Nottinghamshire) or her 1785 tour of key sites of picturesque tourism, including the Lake District and the Scottish Highlands, impacted upon the design of the gardens at Wicken.<sup>96</sup> More is known about the estate woodlands, where at least four new ridings were laid out in the 1770s and 1780s.<sup>97</sup> These functioned to emphasise the house's woodland setting, as well as mirroring and extending the elaborate pattern of rides which criss-crossed the neighbouring Wakefield Lodge estate. Wakefield belonged to the Duke of Grafton, who was himself involved in improving his house, grounds and home farm between 1747 and the 1770s.<sup>98</sup> Prowse seems to have viewed her work at Wicken as part of a self-consciously improving aesthetic: she certainly celebrated the completion of the first riding in Lilby Woods in July 1772 with a



*Figure 4.3* The Sharp Family, by Johan Joseph Zoffany, 1779–1781 (NPG L169). Private collection; on loan to the National Portrait Gallery, London. Reproduced with permission. Elizabeth Prowse is in the centre playing the harpsichord. Her two sisters and four surviving brothers sit around her with their wives and children. *Left to right*: James (with the serpent), Granville (holding her music), William (at the tiller with his hat raised), Frances (seated and holding music), John (behind her, holding his hat) and Judith (with the theorbo).

tea party for 50 guests, who were shown the new riding and entertained by her brothers' band.<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, Prowse's plans for improvements extended well beyond the park pale. Improvements to the agricultural estate had actually begun under her father-in-law in the mid-1750s. He had bought out large numbers of freeholders, so that whereas there had been at least 400 acres of freehold land in Wicken in 1717, 40 years later Prowse owned the whole parish with the exception of the glebe and a handful of cottages.<sup>100</sup> These purchases were clearly undertaken with a view to enclosing the open fields. As a result of negotiations in 1756 by which

he acquired one of the last remaining common rights, Thomas Prowse achieved unity of ownership, and the final enclosure was completed the following year without recourse to an Act of Parliament.<sup>101</sup> It was most likely then that the land held by each farm was reorganised to produce the kind of rational layout later advocated by agricultural improvers like Nathaniel Kent and Arthur Young. This was certainly the case by 1796, when a rental demonstrates that the nine principal tenancies on the estate were each made up of consolidated blocks of land.<sup>102</sup>

Yet if the enclosure of the open fields was achieved by her father-in-law, Prowse nevertheless introduced a range of agricultural improvements and innovations to the newly enclosed estate. These included improvements to both the tenant farms and the home farm, as well as a departure in estate policy regarding leases. By March 1768, less than a year after her husband's death, Prowse had settled with all but one of her tenants to replace their yearly tenancy agreements with new leases. She offered them favourable terms, including a rebate of half the first year's rent, as well as agreeing to contribute towards a range of improvements on the farms.<sup>103</sup> The farmer who quit his farm rather than take a lease was already thought to be 'taking advantage', and it may in part have been his attempts to profit at the expense of the long-term quality of the land which prompted Prowse to suggest leases to her tenants.<sup>104</sup> The shift from yearly tenancies to longer-term leases was also no doubt aimed at encouraging the farmers to invest in their farms. Unfortunately, none of Prowse's leases survive, so we don't know if they specified particular rotations or contained covenants aimed at encouraging tenants to adopt improved agricultural methods, although the leases of other propertied women certainly did.<sup>105</sup> However, there is evidence of improvements being undertaken in partnership between Prowse and her tenants, many of which were agreed when the tenants took new leases. Thus there are entries in the ledgers for ditching, hedging, fencing and other improvements, as well as quantities of grass seed, all paid for by Prowse and agreed to as part of the negotiations over tenancies.<sup>106</sup>

Prowse also invested in repairs and improvements to the houses and outbuildings on her tenants' farms. Either Prowse or her father-in-law built a new farm called Little Hill on the former open fields in the south-west of the parish soon after enclosure, with work continuing on its outbuildings into the early 1770s.<sup>107</sup> Prowse also contributed towards repairs to barns and stables belonging to two other tenants in the late 1760s, as well as installing water pumps in at least four of the farms, in the yard and stable at Wicken Park and in some of the estate cottages in the 1770s.<sup>108</sup> This was followed by another programme of repairs in the early 1780s, which affected all eight rented farms and included thatching and glazing, repairs to the pumps, and work by a mason, carpenter and smith.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, when she organised insurance for Wicken Park House and the home farm, Prowse also paid the premiums on the tenant farms, a malting house and kiln, and 51 estate cottages.<sup>110</sup> All this no doubt contributed towards the good relations between landlords and tenants advocated by Kent and other leading agricultural writers, and it is perhaps not surprising that Prowse's tenants should be hailed as 'the happiest set of peasants in England', as they were by one visitor in 1777.<sup>111</sup>



Alongside improvements to the eight tenant farms, Prowse undertook similar improvements on the ninth farm which she kept in hand. For example, she invested considerable sums on improving the soil quality of parcels of land lying to the north, west and south of Wicken Park House which together made up the home farm. In the winter of 1772, she marled areas of the Dial Ground to the north of the mansion, presumably with the intention of putting the former parkland under new crop rotations.<sup>112</sup> Elsewhere, she drained, burnt and eventually ploughed the Great Leys, as well as spending £70 clearing the ground of anthills, a particular problem in Northamptonshire and one noted by the Board of Agriculture in their report of 1794.<sup>113</sup> Another problem on the heavy clays of Northamptonshire was poor drainage, a difficulty Prowse tackled by installing stone drains on part of the estate.<sup>114</sup>

Here and elsewhere Prowse seems to have attempted to run the estate along the lines proposed by the leading improvers and agricultural ‘scientists’ of her day. Whilst we know little about any formal education she received as a child, Prowse’s memoirs and ledgers provide strong evidence that she read widely throughout her adult life, taking regular newspapers and purchasing numerous books. These included religious literature, poetry and history, as well as a wide range of didactic material concerned with the practical management of the estate. Thus, for example, she paid 6s for ‘Mr Kent’s Book’ in 1775, presumably *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property*, and she later acquired other popular texts including one of Arthur Young’s *Tours* and Kent’s *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Norfolk*.<sup>115</sup> In both Kent and Young, Prowse found support for many of the improvements she had already put in place at Wicken, including the conversions of yearly tenancies to longer-term leases, consolidated farm layouts and good relations between landlords and tenants.<sup>116</sup>

Yet Prowse’s improving contemporaries were by no means the only conduit through which she accessed ideas about landscape improvement and estate management. Instead both her husband’s family and her own family played a key role in shaping her attitudes towards and interest in agricultural modernisation and improvement. For example, it was a trip to her mother-in-law’s property at Berkeley (Somerset) in June 1770 that seems to have inspired Prowse to experiment with the animal feeds used at Wicken. Whilst there, she noted the quantities of cheese, cream and butter produced by the dairy herd.<sup>117</sup> From 1772 onwards, Prowse was growing cabbages on the home farm which were fed to the milk cattle in an attempt to improve the milk and cheese at the same time as saving grass and hay. She carefully recorded the number and weight of the cabbages grown on the estate and appears to have been disappointed when she compared these figures with the yields at Berkeley.<sup>118</sup>

Another area for experimentation was with the agricultural machinery used on the estate. Prowse’s brother James Sharp was a London ironmonger who manufactured a wide range of agricultural implements including Rotherham and Dutch ploughs, draining and trenching ploughs, seed-drills, harrows, hoes, wheelbarrows, winnowing-machines and horse-shovels for removing anthills.<sup>119</sup> As she carried out the improvements in the late 1760s and 1770s, Prowse used much of

this technology, particularly the so-called rolling carts and wagons (Figure 4.4). These had rollers instead of wheels and were designed to stop the roads becoming rutted by the passage of wheeled carts. Sharp brought several rolling carts to Wicken in the winter of 1771–2 where they were used on the home farm in the construction of the new riding and stone drains, as well as for ‘carting which is all towards the improvements of the estate’.<sup>120</sup>

As the estate ledgers make clear, the carts were operated at first by Sharp’s oxen and horses, which were fed and sheltered by Prowse at his expense.<sup>121</sup> In this sense, Wicken clearly functioned as an important test site for the rolling carts: whilst Sharp kept horses at his Southwark yard in order to demonstrate the utility of his ploughs, shovels and carts to interested parties, at Wicken he had access to a considerable estate on which he could experiment on a far greater scale than was possible in his London manufactory.<sup>122</sup> Thus it was only after a successful season at Wicken that the carts and wagons appeared more widely, at first fairly locally and later much further afield. In the winter of 1772–3, Sharp gained a government contract to extract timber from Whittlewood Forest and transport it to Northampton using the rolling carts. As part of the venture, he took a house and yard at Old Stratford and used the carts to transport coal and timber from Northampton and Warwickshire, which he sold locally.<sup>123</sup> The rolling carts were being used on the estate of Prowse’s mother-in-law in Somerset by January 1774, as well as for journeys into Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Bedfordshire.<sup>124</sup> There had even been talk in the previous year that they might be introduced into Holland.<sup>125</sup> They were said to be especially useful in heavy clay soils like those found in Northamptonshire and elsewhere in the Midlands, and Sharp clearly saw his success at Wicken as critical in promoting their wider adoption. In 1773, he placed several advertisements in the London newspapers and the *Gentleman’s Magazine* inviting the public to view the rolling carts at work in Northampton and Stony Stratford.<sup>126</sup> In these adverts, Northamptonshire was imagined as a site of successful experimentation, even if – for obvious reasons – Wicken was not explicitly mentioned. Prowse too seems to have seen the experiment with the rolling carts as a success.<sup>127</sup> Having initially paid her brother for his work on the home farm, she later invested in several of the carts for her own use on the estate, buying two double-shafted rolling carts from Sharp at a cost of more than £40 in 1776.<sup>128</sup> Thus the use of the rolling carts at Wicken proved to be a mutually beneficial experiment for brother and sister, as well as for the tenants, several of whom purchased rolling carts and wagons in the mid-1770s with the help of small subsidies from Prowse.<sup>129</sup>

### **Networks of improvement**

The evidence from Wicken is useful on a number of fronts. It highlights the role landowners might play in encouraging investment in agricultural improvements on tenant farms – by introducing long-term leases, including covenants in those leases, contributing financially towards hedging, drainage or marling, and offering subsidies towards the purchase of new agricultural tools or machinery – and

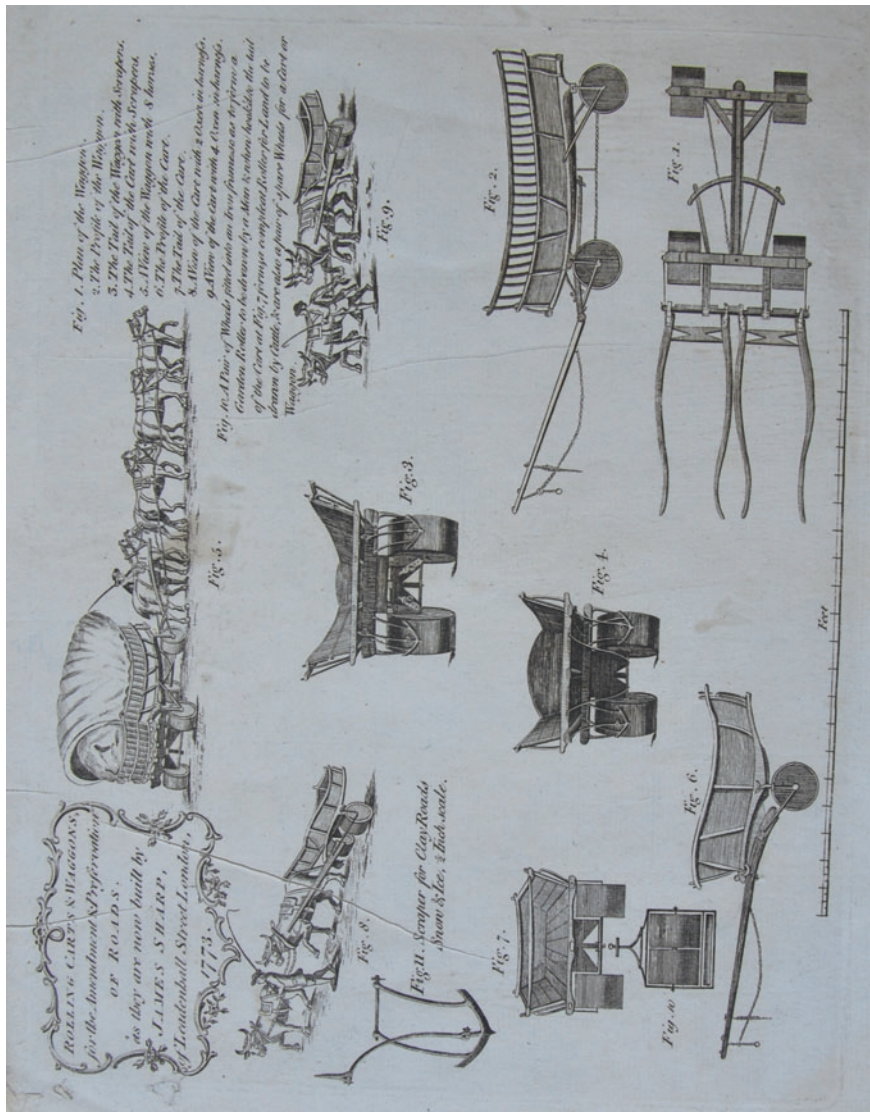


Figure 4.4 James Sharp's rolling carts and wagons (GA, D1245 FF38 B). Reproduced with permission.

relatedly, the role of home farms in leading improvements on the wider estate.<sup>130</sup> It also tells us a great deal about how propertied women accessed ideas about estate management, agricultural improvement and the latest scientific approaches to farming. In Prowse's case, we know she read widely, taking newspapers and buying the latest publications by leading agricultural improvers like Kent and Young. In these, she found support for many of the improvements she had put in place at Wicken as well as detailed information about developments on improving estates in East Anglia and elsewhere.<sup>131</sup> She also visited a number of newly landscaped and improved properties both in the Midlands and further afield, particularly during the northern tour she made with her brothers and sisters in 1785. That she showed a great interest in what had been achieved on these and other estates is evidenced by the notes she made on her mother-in-law's dairy herd at Berkeley. In other words, Prowse herself played a key role in bringing new ideas to Wicken, whilst her stewards – mostly local men who lived on the estate – probably played a more subsidiary role in the circulation of ideas, knowledge and expertise than was probably the case on properties managed by professional land agents.<sup>132</sup> Yet Prowse's improving contemporaries were certainly not the only influence on her attitude towards estate management and agricultural improvement. Importantly, it was through her brother James Sharp that Prowse accessed the latest domestic technology and agricultural machinery, including the coal-powered stoves used in the house and church, the rolling carts and wagons, and probably also the trenching ploughs and horse shovels with which the drains were cut and anthills cleared.

The sources for Prowse are of course particularly good, allowing one to say a great deal both about her involvement in agricultural improvement and experimentation and about the networks through which she gained knowledge on such topics. Less is known about the ways other female landowners gained information about agricultural improvement, but discussions with estate stewards and agents, conversations and correspondence with landowning peers and relatives, personal contact with agricultural writers like Kent and Young, and the reading of agricultural periodicals, didactic texts and newspapers must all have been important.

That said, Prowse was by no means the only female landowner either to be reading agricultural texts or to be consciously experimenting with the latest agricultural crops, technologies and methods. In a letter published in Arthur Young's *Annals of Agriculture*, Lady Elizabeth Guise of Highnam Court (Gloucestershire) reported on improvements she had made to a small farm purchased in 1803 specifically, as she said, 'by way of experiment'.<sup>133</sup> Like Prowse, she had installed underdrains, grubbed-up trees, removed weeds and stones, and manured the land, as well as repaired the dead hedges with 4,000 quicks and planted elms in the hedgerows. Guise reported that she had more than tripled the crop of hay cut from 15 acres in her first year, an improvement which was so rapid and significant as to 'surprize my neighbourhood'. She had another 8 acres yet to improve but had been discouraged from doing so because the land was overrun with ferns, something she appealed to Young's readers for advice on how best to eradicate.

The estate was admittedly a very small one – only 23 acres are mentioned in the article, the family's main estate having descended to Guise's eldest son at the death of her husband in 1794 – but having succeeded in improving the ground and been congratulated by the neighbouring landowners for the good example she was setting local farmers, she now planned to take on a much larger farm.<sup>134</sup>

Nor was Guise the only woman writing in to the *Annals of Agriculture* about her involvement in agricultural trials. Elizabeth Ilive, for example, wrote at least one article for the *Annals*. Also known as 'Mrs Wyndham', Ilive was the mistress of the third earl of Egremont, chatelaine at Petworth House (Sussex) and later countess of Egremont.<sup>135</sup> Her origins are obscure and nothing is known of her early education, though she certainly had access to the large library of agricultural periodicals at Petworth House and probably also discussed agriculture with the earl – himself a keen agricultural improver – and his many visitors.<sup>136</sup> In her 1797 article in the *Annals*, she described her experiments growing potatoes on land she had rented, making a careful study of the effect different methods of planting had on yields. Her work was underpinned by rigorous scientific method and demonstrated the value of planting the shoots removed from the chitted potatoes. The article appeared anonymously, the earl apparently having refused to allow her name to appear, though it is unclear if this was because of her gender or her unusual social position as his live-in mistress.<sup>137</sup> Young commented specifically on Ilive's piece, noting that she as an 'ingenious lady' and the article was 'highly satisfactory, and proves clearly that the method detailed is of real importance'.<sup>138</sup>

The potato trials were not Ilive's only scientific venture. Young – a regular visitor of the earl's – also bought her equipment for the laboratory at Petworth House and taught her how to use it. In early 1796 she wrote to the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce describing a new method of using levers to raise large weights.<sup>139</sup> Her letter – which included both a diagram and a model – outlined how the workmen on the estate 'all approve of it very much', though she also hinted there had been some laughter at Petworth about her invention, at least initially.<sup>140</sup> Her letter was apparently well received at the Society and the Mechanics Committee awarded her the silver medal in May 1796, the first woman to receive a medal from a scientific section of the Society, though others had previously won for Polite Arts.<sup>141</sup> She was by then heavily pregnant with her seventh child and did not receive the medal in person, instead nominating the Society's president Samuel More to collect it for her.<sup>142</sup>

As the examples of Prowse, Guise and Ilive reveal, women – as well as men – could be part of scientific correspondence networks whereby information was exchanged about agricultural experimentation, improvement and land management. This was also the case for women involved in botanical science and Ilive's agricultural trials closely parallel the botanical experiments of women like Mary Somerset, duchess of Beaufort, who a century earlier had collected thousands of exotic seeds and plants from around the world, corresponded with leading botanists and created an important 12-volume herbarium now in the British Museum.<sup>143</sup> In this way, gentle and perhaps especially aristocratic women could

tap into networks of contacts with both scholarly and practical knowledge of farming and improvement. Such networks were reciprocal in their nature, conducted both through correspondence and via scientific journals where they involved both known and unknown correspondents, as in Guise's appeal to the readers of the *Annals of Agriculture*. In their modest contributions to these networks, Prowse, Guise and Ilive were all part of a much wider movement which aimed to establish a progressive and scientific approach to farming and thus push forward agricultural improvement for the benefit – as they saw it – both of their own class of wealthy landowners and of the nation as a whole.

### **Non-agricultural estate incomes: mining**

Whilst most landed estates included significant quantities of agricultural land, its enclosure and improvement were not the only means by which gentle and aristocratic landowners might increase estate incomes. Instead mining – for coal, tin, copper, lead, iron ore and stone – industrial activity, investments in canals and turnpike roads, and urban development could all provide alternative means of improving estate incomes, as could property in the colonies, the latter often dependent on slave labour.<sup>144</sup> The final part of this chapter discusses the contribution made by a number of elite women to managing non-agricultural interests, drawing particular attention to the role played by women like Elizabeth Montagu, Judith Baker, Anne Lister and Anna Maria Agar in capitalising on the mineral wealth of their estates, sometimes – as in Agar's case – in combination with the development of new transport networks and the laying out of new settlements.

Just as the geography of agricultural improvement varied regionally, so too, incomes from non-agricultural sources were more important in some areas of the country than in others. Income from mining was especially important to estate economies in parts of North-East England and in Cornwall. Not all female landowners with mineral resources on their estates were directly involved in their exploitation, and like their male peers, many leased out their coal mines.<sup>145</sup> The duchess of Beaufort leased the colliery that was part of her Stoke Gifford estate to her son the 5th duke from 1775, while Margaret Salkeld of Whitehall (Cumbria) was sucked into decades of litigation about the Clifton Colliery but ultimately wanted to sell it and the estate in order to pay her husband's debts.<sup>146</sup> Mary Bowes, countess of Strathmore had little to do with the coal mines her father had so expertly exploited, while Ann Walker left her mining interests in the hands of her lesbian partner Anne Lister – discussed in greater detail below – and showed little interest in the coal mines even after inheriting a life interest in the Shibden estate and pits on Lister's death in 1840.<sup>147</sup>

Yet other women kept their mining interests in hand, managing and exploiting the coal themselves. Elizabeth Montagu, for example, took on an active role in both improving her agricultural estate and developing her collieries. Her husband had inherited property at Denton (Northumberland) from an insane relative in 1758, and Montagu had taken considerable interest in the estate in her husband's lifetime, encouraging him in the initial legal wrangles over the settlement of the

estate and later regularly visiting it with him. She also encouraged him to repair the house.<sup>148</sup> As she told her sister in a letter, Edward Montagu had supposedly remarked that ‘If it was not for you my Dear ... I should take no pleasure in these matters and had rather have a poor £1000 a year without trouble than all we are likely to reap from this inheritance’.<sup>149</sup> Her interest in the property was – according to Barbara Hill – driven by her determination to secure an income for the couple which could support the aristocratic lifestyle she craved.<sup>150</sup> The property was legally Edward Montagu’s, but there are indications of collaborative management of the estate between husband and wife: as she reported to a friend, ‘as [Edward] is so good as to communicate the enjoyment of his fortune very freely with me it is but right I should take some share of the trouble of looking after it’.<sup>151</sup> When the Church of Scotland minister Alexander Carlyle met her in Newcastle in 1764, he described her as ‘an active manager of her affairs ... and a keen pursuer of her interest, not to be outdone by the sharpest coal-dealer on Tyne’ – and that whilst her husband was still alive.<sup>152</sup> In her widowhood, Elizabeth Montagu continued to be an involved and committed manager of her Northumberland coal interests. She maintained a regular correspondence with her agents and managers and had an excellent knowledge of matters relating to the coal trade in the north, as her letters on the subject attest. She visited her Northumberland property in 1775, 1778, 1783 and 1786 where she audited the accounts and paid careful attention to the management of the estate and its coal interests, as well as dispensed charity to the colliers’ and their families.<sup>153</sup> She also owned tile, brick and tar manufactories in the area, established copper works on the estate and in 1783 purchased the neighbouring West Kenton estate where she reopened the colliery. Later that year Montagu could report to a friend that ‘all things are in as prosperous a state as possible’.<sup>154</sup>

Judith Baker of Elemore Hall (Durham) and Anne Lister of Shibden Hall (West Yorkshire) both managed and developed mining interests on their estates. Baker took on estate management after her husband’s death in 1774, keeping meticulous accounts for the family’s lead, coal and alum mines.<sup>155</sup> Further south in West Yorkshire, Lister capitalised on the coal under the Shibden estate near Halifax in a manner that one recent commentator characterised as both ‘single-minded’ and ‘ruthless’.<sup>156</sup> A member of the minor gentry, Lister owned Shibden Hall from the death of her uncle in 1826. The estate was only 400 acres, but income was boosted by coal-mining and stone-quarrying, as well as by income from a large number of canal shares.<sup>157</sup> Upon inheriting, Lister spent seven years travelling on the Continent, leaving her agricultural estate and collieries in the hands of agents, but when she returned to England in 1833 she set about developing her coal interests, having recognised the potential growth in this sector in part occasioned by the opening of a new canal to Halifax in 1828. She read geology books and wrote detailed notes about her plans for the mines in her diaries. She visited neighbouring pits and discussed mining operations with other local coal-owners who shared more information with her than might have been sensible with a competitor. They seem to have been caught off their guard by Lister, perhaps because she was a woman but also because she came from a

family who had always leased out their mines rather than actively managed them. Lister, however, brought the pits back in hand and managed them herself with the help of her solicitor, coal agent and master miner. It was apparently Lister who kept the now lost colliery account book, and she seems to have carefully calculated the various costs of the operation in order to undercut her competitors' prices in the town.<sup>158</sup> She also had oversight of the pits belonging to her 'wife' Ann Walker, the co-heiress of a neighbouring mercantile family who had inherited 500 acres on the death of her brother in 1830.<sup>159</sup> Lister arranged for a new pit to be sunk on Walker's land in 1835 and developed another more ambitious colliery at Listerwick. In 1839 the couple set off to travel through northern Europe and Russia, from where Lister wrote detailed and demanding letters to her estate steward about the management of the pits.<sup>160</sup> Thus like both Montagu and Baker, Lister played an important role in the industrial revolutions of north-east England, supplying the coal which underpinned local manufacturing and industrial development.<sup>161</sup>

### **Transport developments and urban speculation**

Nor was Lister the only woman in Georgian England to invest in and benefit from extensions to the canal and turnpike road networks. Women made up a significant proportion of the investors in joint stock enterprises, including those building canals and railways, and by so investing these women supported the developing transport network of Georgian England.<sup>162</sup> Occasionally propertied women were more actively involved in improvements to local road and canal networks. Both Anne Lister and Mary Cotterel were involved in negotiations over turnpike roads, while Charlotta Bethell, the widow of William Bethell of Rise Hall (ERY), sponsored the building of the Leven Canal, securing an Act of Parliament for it in her name in 1801 and opening the canal in 1805.<sup>163</sup> The three-mile long canal linked the village of Leven with the river Hull, thereby providing access by water to Beverley and the port of Hull. Unlike the earlier Market Weighton Canal, its purpose was primarily one of trade rather than drainage. The canal was built at the same time as the enclosure of several nearby parishes in which the Bethell family owned land – including Leven in 1796, Witherwick in 1802, North Frodingham in 1808 and Hornsea in 1809 – and it was intended that the construction of the canal would both increase the market for local goods and allow marl and lime to be cheaply carried up the canal where they would be used to improve agricultural land on the Bethell estate.<sup>164</sup> Profits would accrue to the estate from improved yields and increased trade – both directly from land kept in hand, and indirectly via increased rents from tenanted holdings – and the tolls levied on the canal. Yet the tolls did not cover the expense of constructing the canal, and a second Act of Parliament was passed in 1805 to allow Charlotta Bethell to increase the tolls and wharfage charges.<sup>165</sup> Given the loss of the records relating to the canal, its impact on estate finances is hard to gauge, although the population of Leven grew by almost 40 per cent between 1801 and 1811 and by a similar percentage again in the 1830s, perhaps a sign of increased trade and prosperity.<sup>166</sup>



Anna Maria Agar too was involved in investigating the potential for transport developments to improve incomes from her Cornish estate. Agar's management of Lanhydrock has been discussed in this and the previous chapter – particularly in relation to enclosure, estate improvement and woodland management – but as part her efforts to reduce the estate's significant debts she also explored a number of non-agricultural sources of income, including mining, railway transport and urban development. Mining had been a major concern on the estate long before Agar inherited, but in 1823 she employed the surveyor and land agent William James to survey her properties and assess their potential for improvement. James focused on the non-agricultural elements of the estate, highlighting the estate's 'inexhaustible minerals' in an early report and proposing to build a railway between Padstow and Fowey in order to reduce the cost of transporting granite and other raw materials to the Cornish sea ports. James also played a key role in the development of Devoran, a planned settlement built by Agar four miles south of Truro on the tidal Restronguet Creek. A prospectus published in 1832 outlines James's and Agar's plans for a new town and floating harbour which aimed to open up the small existing port to more general trade, including tin mined on the Lanhydrock estate.<sup>167</sup> Although it was not built on the scale imagined in prospectus, trade at the port did increase, and a new town consisting of two parallel streets had been laid out by 1841.<sup>168</sup> By then the town had a population of 250 and by 1856 there were said to be 90 houses and 450 people.<sup>169</sup> Capital outlay on the Devoran development was high: the cost of purchasing freeholds, buying out the tenants' leases and otherwise developing the town came to around £4,400. The project was undoubtedly a risky one, but the 50-year leases granted by Agar continued to be an important source of income for the estate throughout the nineteenth century, as did the tin that was exported through the port.<sup>170</sup> William James's other enterprises were somewhat less successful. The proposed coast-to-coast railway was never built, and James was sacked in 1833, in part due his erratic accounting but also his eccentric demeanour.<sup>171</sup>

## Conclusions

This chapter has presented strong evidence that propertied women were involved in a bundle of related practices, including parliamentary enclosure and agricultural improvement. These involved pushing forward parliamentary enclosure bills, commissioning estate surveys with a view to enclosing, purchasing freeholds in order to facilitate enclosure, negotiating with freeholders about the appointment of enclosure commissioners, making decisions on behalf of young or absent sons, and relaying news to them whilst at university or on the Grand Tour. Once the bill had passed, much of the day-to-day work of the enclosure was taken on by the commissioners, but propertied women like Mary Cotterel made sure they were present to protect their families' interests and see the new fences laid out and new farmhouses erected.

In many places, the subdivision of allotments and the building of new farmhouses took place over a number of years, so that propertied women who had not themselves petitioned for an enclosure act might still be involved in the raft of

other changes to the local agricultural landscape which generally followed enclosure. Thus they might oversee the rationalisation of farm layouts and the creation of ring-fenced, post-enclosure farms – sometimes facilitated by additional purchases or associated with the amalgamation of holdings and the downgrading of farmhouses to cottages – and pay for improvements to barns, stables and other agricultural buildings. By converting annual tenancies to longer-term leases, inserting improving covenants in those leases, paying towards the costs of hedging, drainage and other improvements, and subsidising the cost of new agricultural machinery, landowners like Elizabeth Prowse encouraged improvements on the tenant farms. On their home farms, women like Prowse experimented with new crops, new animal feeds and new agricultural technology, they marled and limed land in order to increase yields or bring new ground into cultivation, and they invested in drainage works.

Outside the Midlands agricultural change took different forms. Here the enclosure of open-field arable by parliamentary means was of less significance, but the reclamation of wetlands and the enclosure of commons and wastes – both typically achieved under Act of Parliament – transformed the landscapes of parts of the north, west and south-west. The enclosure of these marshes, moors and heaths was usually associated with an increase in the land under arable cultivation rather than the laying down of open-field arable to pasture as in much of the Midlands, but here too, propertied women like Hood, Agar and Monoux played a key role in pushing forward change.<sup>172</sup>

By enclosing, reclaiming and improving farmland, landowners aimed to increase yields and rents and thus enlarge profits margins. Such profits needed to cover the capital expenditure laid out by landowners on things like fencing, hedging and building materials, as well as on the costs of obtaining the Act and paying the expenses of the enclosure commissioners and surveyor. Some estates were extremely careful to keep the costs of enclosure to a minimum – the Wrest estate is a good example of this – and here and elsewhere steep post-enclosure rent rises probably reaped rewards relatively quickly, doing much for the overall financial position of the estate. In doing so, propertied women made important contributions to the economic wellbeing of the aristocracy and gentry, generating – rather than simply preserving – wealth and social capital which could be handed on to future generations. Yet landowners who engaged in enclosure and agricultural improvement were by no means solely motivated by the search for profits. Instead, they were also influenced by a wider intellectual commitment to the idea of improvement, a discourse which bound together purely economic concerns with ideas about the appearance of the landscape and the social and moral dimensions of improvement. Thus alongside enclosing their fields, landowners invested new cottages and schools, extensions and embellishments to local churches, and new country houses, gardens and parks. Sarah Dawes and Mary Cotterel are good examples of women who pursued such an approach. The role played by a greater number of propertied women in directing, supervising and paying for a range of building projects on the local estate is discussed in detail in the next chapter, as are the motivations for their involvement in such schemes.

## Notes

- 1 On the winners and losers of enclosure, see John and Barbara Hammond, *The Village Labourer 1760–1832* (London: Longman and Green, 1919); Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963); Neeson, *Commoners*, 1996). For a contrasting view, see J. D. Chambers and Gordon Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750–1880* (London: BT Batsford, 1966); Gordon Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1968).
- 2 *Journals of the House of Commons*, 52 (1803), 277.
- 3 Keith Allison, *The East Riding of Yorkshire Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 187–9; VCH ER VIII, 24; *List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest* [hereafter LBSAHI], available online at [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk).
- 4 NRO, M(F)62.
- 5 Barron, *Northamptonshire Families* III, 371.
- 6 Samuel Harris had served the Ashley family as their London-based lawyer from the early 1750s, while his brother Thomas was acting as steward for the Ashley estates from at least 1757. As well as serving them in a professional capacity, the Harris brothers appear to have enjoyed a personal relationship with both John and Jane Ashley, who amongst other things provided breakfasts, horses and accommodation for Samuel Harris's sons as they travelled to and from boarding school in Rugby in the mid-1750s (NRO, ASL 1122; M(F) 30 and 32).
- 7 NRO, M(F) 66, 71, 90 and 174.
- 8 Field visit, Oct 2008; TNA, PROB 11/1117/420.
- 9 NRO, ZA558 and ASL 1225. Information on other Northamptonshire enclosures, drawn from J. W. Anscomb, *Northamptonshire Inclosure Acts and Awards* (unpublished, n.d. at NRO). Cf. *Annals of Agriculture* 27 (1796), 326 which refers to the practice of appointing a lady of property alongside two day labourers as overseers of the poor in parishes where there were no substantial (male) householders.
- 10 See Williamson, *Transformation* for a recent overview of the parliamentary enclosure movement and the changes it wrought.
- 11 David Hall, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire* (Northampton: Northamptonshire Record Society, 1995).
- 12 NRO, M(F) 879.
- 13 NRO, M(F) 75, 77–80, 87 and 90.
- 14 NRO, M(F) 83. See also M(F) 82.
- 15 Steve Hindle, 'Gossip, gender and the experience of authority in early modern England', *Continuity and Change* 9.3 (1994), 391–419.
- 16 NRO, M(F) 165 and 166. The undated rental was made for Jane's brother-in-law Solomon Ashley and was drawn up after 1754 when Mand arrived as vicar and before 1771 when Robert Verney gave up his farm. The most likely date is soon after the death of John Ashley in 1761, when Solomon became heir to the estate.
- 17 NRO, ASL 165 and 363.
- 18 VCH, Nhants V, 161–2.
- 19 GA, QP/4/6/1: Petition from tenants, Aug 29th 1780.
- 20 BA, L30/9 and /11. Amabel Hume-Campbell's replies to her agents unfortunately do not survive.
- 21 On enclosures, see L30/11/215/25; Godber, *Marchioness Grey*, 79, 93–4, 118; L30/11/215/123 (on the Everton enclosure bill). On farm layouts, see L30/11/122/89 and for rents, compare L26/31 (1763 rental) and L26/33 (1807 rental).
- 22 BA, L30/11/215/19.
- 23 BA, L30/9/60/18; Godber, *Marchioness Grey*, 94–5.
- 24 BA, L30/9/60/21.
- 25 BA, L30/11/151/5–32, *passim* (on the warren) and 12, 32 and 44 (on the farm).

- 26 BA, L30/11/122/34, 35 and L30/11/151/7.  
 27 BA, L30/11/216/12.  
 28 BA, L30/11/301/175 and 176.  
 29 BA, L30/11/301/179.  
 30 WYAS, WYL150/7/8/25, 154.  
 31 L30/11/301/195 and L30/11/132/21.  
 32 BA, L30/11/132/ 6, 7 and 30.  
 33 That is, a return of c. 8–10 per cent: BA, L30/11/132/29.  
 34 See J. W. Pawsey's letter for tenants' views: L30/11/261/12.  
 35 BA, L30/11/132/23 (undated letter). See also L30/11/132/88 for more on how to curb the kennel expenses.  
 36 BA, L30/11/301/176 and L30/11/132/23.  
 37 BA, L26/33 (1807 rental) and L30/11/132/12–14.  
 38 BA, L30/11/132/12, 14, 23, 117 and 145.  
 39 BA, L30/11/132/18, 19, 28–30, 36 and 40; WYAS, WYL150/7/8/25, 157 and /26, 24.  
 40 BA, L30/11/132/18, 30 and 40.  
 41 BA, L30/11/132/68 and L33/21.  
 42 British Museum, ADD MSS 693/294 and 484; transcribed in the BA, CRT100/27/3(ii).  
 43 BA, L26/31 (1763 rental) and L26/33 (1807 rental).  
 44 BA, L26/301 and 303.  
 45 BA, L26/31, 33 and 34. This was a period of significant rent rises on a national scale, but rents on the Lucas estate still increased considerably above what might be expected taking war-time inflation into account. See Michael Turner, John V. Beckett and Bethany Afton, *Agricultural Rent in England, 1690–1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), Appendix 2.  
 46 BA, L30/11/132/92, 103, 106, 117, 144 and 145; L30/11/40/10.  
 47 BA, L30/11/40/10, 12 and 19.  
 48 Lewis Namier and John Brooke (eds), 'Thompson, Beilby (1742–99)', in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754–1790* (London: Published for the History of Parliament Trust by HMSO, 1964), available online [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/>].  
 49 HHC, DDFA/8/11 and /14 (Kexby); DDFA/13/86 (Riccall); DDFA/18/6 (Wheldrake); DDFA/39/22 (Moxby Moor); DDFA/43/33 (Deighton); DDFA2/2/75 (Escrick); DDFA4/1/11 (Acaster Malbis). She also seems to have managed the estates while he was on the Grand Tour between 1765 and 1768 (J. P. G. Taylor, 'To Mr Merry for clack stockings': Eighteenth-century town and village life revealed in an estate account book', *East Yorkshire Historian* 5 (2004), 16–25).  
 50 For the Bole survey, HHC, DDFA/25/4.  
 51 David Neave, 'Escrick Hall and Park', *York Georgian Society Annual Report* (1971), 27; VCH, ER III, 17–28.  
 52 Between 1756 and 1764, Dawes was also involved in the Ouse and Derwent drainage commission.  
 53 VCH, ER III, 17–28; David Neave and Deborah Turnbull, *Landscaped Parks and Gardens of East Yorkshire* (Bridlington: Georgian Society for East Yorkshire, 1992), 28; J. P. G. Taylor, *Escrick: A village history* (York: Oblong, 1999).  
 54 Taylor, 'Mr Merry', 21–22.  
 55 Namier and Brooke, 'Thompson, Beilby (1742–99)'.  
 56 HHC, DDFA3/8/2.  
 57 HHC, DDFA1/44/35.  
 58 NRO, C(A) 8380, 8398, 8401 and 8461; Cooper, *Aynho*, 178 and 314–5.  
 59 NRO, C(A)3422  
 60 NRO, C(A) 3428.  
 61 For example, NRO, C(A) 4345 and 5125.  
 62 NRO, Enclosure Enrollment Volume I.

- 63 NRO, C(A) 8393, 8408 (for the quote), 8458 and 8840; Cooper, *Aynho*, 179 and 182.
- 64 NRO, C(A) 8461.
- 65 Cooper, *Aynho*, 185–7. Those interested in tenants' and small landowners' experience of parliamentary enclosure might consult Neeson, *Commoners*.
- 66 Cooper, *Aynho*, 177–87; NRO, C(A) 3428; VCH, ER III, 17–28. On changes to the Northamptonshire landscape, see Briony McDonagh and Stephen Daniels, 'Enclosure stories: narratives from Northamptonshire', *Cultural Geographies* 19.1 (2012), 107–21.
- 67 Gordon Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol. VI: 1750–1850* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 26–7.
- 68 Mingay, *Agrarian History IV*, 1114; Michael Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure: Its historical geography and economic history* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1980), 180–1. For wider changes associated with parliamentary enclosure, see Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*, 151–92.
- 69 See Mingay, *Agrarian History VI*, 58–64 on the regions affected by drainage works in the century after 1750; Williamson, *Transformation*, 115–38 on the agricultural revolution in north-west England.
- 70 Arthur Young, *Eastern Tour*, 4 (1771), 13; *Journals of the House of Commons* 33 (1776), 648–9, cited in Michael Williams, *The Drainage of the Somerset Levels* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970), 171.
- 71 Williams, *Somerset Levels*; Williamson, *Transformation*, 126.
- 72 Estate account book of John Periam (with additions by Elizabeth Hood), care of SHC.
- 73 Michael Williams, 'The draining and reclamation of the Somerset Levels, 1770–1833', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33 (1963), 163–79, especially 171.
- 74 Estate account book of John Periam (with additions by Elizabeth Hood), care of SHC.
- 75 Williams, 'Somerset Levels', 171.
- 76 Account and memorandum book of John Periam (with additions by Elizabeth Hood), care of SHC.
- 77 Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure*, 180–1. Williamson, *Transformation*, 47–8 and 71–2; John Chapman and Sylvia Seeliger, 'Formal agreements and the enclosure process: The evidence from Hampshire', *Agricultural History Review* 43 (1995), 35–46.
- 78 George Worgan, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Cornwall* (London: Board of Agriculture, 1811) 53 and 106.
- 79 Worgan, *Cornwall*, 44; CRO, F/4/76 (letter, Thomas Bennett to Lady Camelford, 12 Oct 1795).
- 80 Howells, 'Anna Maria Agar', 14; CRO, X919/1; *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 16 Aug 1844, 3.
- 81 BA, Inclosure Records A book E.
- 82 *Annals of Agriculture* 43 (1805), 205.
- 83 *Annals of Agriculture* 42 (1804), 527–8.
- 84 GA, QP/4/6/3 (letter, 22 Jan 1780).
- 85 Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, 'Elizabeth Montagu', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19014?docPos=1>].
- 86 On which see Beckett, 'Montagu', 156.
- 87 Beckett, 'Montagu', 154.
- 88 Beckett, 'Montagu', 154 and 151. For more on how propertied women understood their own contributions to estate management and agricultural improvement, see Chapter 6, which also discusses the reactions of wider eighteenth-century society to farming women.
- 89 Schnorrenberg, 'Montagu'.
- 90 VCH, Northants V, 418; Prowse, Memoir, 18.
- 91 Prowse, Memoir, 19, 21; NRO, 364p/67, fo. 40.
- 92 Prowse, Memoir, 73.
- 93 NRO, 364p/67, fo. 76.

- 94 NRO, 364p/70, May 7 1776; 68, fo. 38; 69, fo. 40.
- 95 Prowse, Memoir, 37 and 60.
- 96 NRO, 364/69, fos 66–7; GRO, D3549/15/1/1; Prowse, Memoir, 71; Malcolm Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque, 1760–1800* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1989), 153–4 and 200; George Clarke, ‘The moving temples of Stowe: Aesthetics of change in an English landscape over four generations’, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 55 (1992), 479–509; John Hunt and Peter Willis, *The Genius of Place: The English landscape garden, 1620–1820* (London: Elek, 1975), 26–9; Susanne Seymour, ‘Eighteenth-century parkland improvement on the Dukeries estates of north Nottinghamshire’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1990), 176–82, 204–10; Stuart Handley, ‘John Aislabie’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/252?docPos=2>]; Michael Symes, ‘William Aislabie’, *ibid.* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/96719?docPos=3>].
- 97 Prowse, Memoir, 30, 68; Thomas Eyre and Thomas Jeffries, *Map of Northamptonshire* (1780), stored as NRO, Map 2647; Andrew Bryant, *Map of Northamptonshire* (1827), stored as NRO, Map 1118.
- 98 VCH, Northants V, 304, 312.
- 99 Prowse, Memoir, 42.
- 100 NRO, H(W)65, 111 and 133; 364p/65. The figures for the freehold land are drawn from a copy of the 1717 terrier. The accompanying map gives slightly different figures.
- 101 NRO, H(W)62; 364p/14.
- 102 NRO, YZ 8944.
- 103 NRO, 364p/68, fo. 207.
- 104 Prowse, Memoir, 27.
- 105 See for example, NRO, D2666, SS3838 and SS3866; Susanna Wade Martins and Tom Williamson, ‘The development of the lease and its role in agricultural improvement in East Anglia, 1660–1870’ *Agricultural History Review* 46 (1998), 127–41.
- 106 NRO, 364p/67, fos. 120, 12, 123, 127 and 128; 68, fos. 189, 192 and 196.
- 107 Eyre and Jeffries, *Map of Northamptonshire*; VCH, Northants V, 426; NRO, 364p/67, fos. 122, 127–8.
- 108 NRO, 364p/67, fos. 15, 40, 120–134; 68, fo. 197; and 364p/501.
- 109 NRO, 364p/69, fos. 185–205 *passim*.
- 110 NRO, 364p/501 and 67–69 *passim*.
- 111 Nathaniel Kent, *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (London: J Dodsley, 1775), 158–70; GRO, D3549/12/1/4.
- 112 Prowse, Memoir, 40; Williamson, *Transformation*, 67–8.
- 113 NRO, 364p/68, fos. 196, 199, 202; James Donaldson, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton* (Edinburgh: Adam Neill, 1796), 66.
- 114 NRO, 364p/68, fos. 190 and 191.
- 115 NRO, 364p/68, fo. 38; 69, fo. 5; Prowse, Memoir, 86.
- 116 Pamela Horn, ‘An eighteenth-century land agent: The career of Nathaniel Kent (1737–1810)’, *Agricultural History Review* 30 (1982), 1–16.
- 117 Prowse, Memoir, 34 and 46.
- 118 *ibid.*, 43 and 46.
- 119 GRO, D3549/12/2/1. After James’s death, his widow carried on the business providing Arthur Young with an engine for weighing live cattle in 1789 (*Annals of Agriculture* 14 (1790), 140).
- 120 NRO, 364p/68, fos. 190, 194 and 199; Prowse, Memoir, 40.
- 121 NRO, 364p/68, fos. 7–8, 190–1.
- 122 GRO, D3549/12/2/1.
- 123 Prowse, Memoir, 41.
- 124 *ibid.*, 46; GRO, D3549/12/2/1.
- 125 GRO, D3549/13/1/S13.
- 126 GRO, D3549/12/2/1.

- 127 Prowse, Memoir, 40.
- 128 NRO, 364p/68, fos. 194–5; 70, 7 May 1776.
- 129 NRO, 364p/70, 7 May 1776. At least one tenant also bought, and later returned, one of James's American stoves (GRO, D3549/12/1/4).
- 130 See Joan Thirsk, *Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol V.II: 1500–1750* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 553 who describes home farms as 'the spearheads of agricultural improvement'.
- 131 Kent, for example, detailed the drainage techniques in use in Essex and elsewhere, whilst Young included a lengthy discussion of Arbutnot's experiments with mould-board shape and plough designs, something in which Prowse's brother James was also no doubt interested (Kent, *Hints*, 19–24; Arthur Young, *A Farmer's Tour through the East of England, Vol II* (London: W. Strahan, 1771) 251–560).
- 132 Webster, 'Land agents', 61–2.
- 133 The farm lay in Gloucestershire, though Guise does not give its exact location. Guise was the widow of Sir John Guise of Highnam Court near Gloucester (d. 1794) and her husband was succeeded by their son Sir Berkeley William Guise (d. 1834) (VCH, Gloucs X, 19). During her widowhood, she continued to control property in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Fulham, as well as small parcels of land she purchased in Gloucestershire (GA, G326/F6–7).
- 134 *Annals of Agriculture* 44 (1806), 417–8. Guise's will of 1808 makes no reference to real estate in Gloucestershire (TNA, PROB 11/1482/267).
- 135 WSRO, PHA 91, letter 22 Mar 1797, Young to Egremont re. Mrs Wyndham's and Egremont's articles; cited in Sarah Webster, 'Agents and professionalization: Improvement on the Egremont estates c. 1770 to c. 1860' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2011), 79.
- 136 Sheila Haines, Leigh Lawson and Alison McCann, *Elizabeth Ilive, Egremont's Countess* (unpublished manuscript). I am most grateful to Leigh Lawson for providing me with a copy of this biography and for drawing the Petworth House material to my attention.
- 137 *Annals of Agriculture* 28 (1797), 324–33; Petworth House Archive 91.
- 138 *Annals of Agriculture* 28 (1797), 333.
- 139 PHA 91; RSA Transactions, 1796, 2295–8.
- 140 RSA Transactions, 1796, 2295–8.
- 141 Haines *et al.*, *Ilive*.
- 142 RSA/PR/MC/101/10/1541. The medal was awarded in the name of Mrs Elizabeth Wyndham.
- 143 Jennifer Munroe, '“My innocent diversion of gardening”: Mary Somerset's plants', *Renaissance Studies* 25.1 (2011), 111–23 especially 113. See also Anne Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's daughters and botany in England 1760–1860* (Baltimore: John Hopkins 1996) for more on women botanists of the eighteenth century.
- 144 Stephen Daniels, Susanne Seymour and Charles Watkins, 'Enlightenment, improvement, and the geographies of horticulture in later Georgian England', in David Livingston and Charles Withers, *Geography and Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 345–71, 346.
- 145 Michael Bush, *The English Aristocracy: A comparative synthesis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 189–90; Gordon Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963) which includes a section on aristocracy and industrial development; F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963) 264–6 who argues that most of the income aristocrats drew from mining in the nineteenth century was 'predominately and increasingly in the shape of ... rents'. But see David Oldroyd, *Estates, Enterprise and Investment at the Dawn of the Industrial Revolution: Estate management and accounting in the north-east of*

- England c.1700–1780* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) on the Bowes family's involvement in mining.
- 146 GA, D2700/QP12/1/5; Cumbria Record Office, D HUD 9.
- 147 Moore, *Wedlock*; Olyroyd, *Estates, Enterprise and Investment*; Jill Liddington, 'Gender, Authority and Mining in an Industrial Landscape: Anne Lister 1791–1840', *History Workshop Journal* 42 (1996), 58–86, 78.
- 148 Beckett, 'Montagu', 152.
- 149 Cited in Barbara Hill, 'The course of the marriage of Elizabeth Montagu: An ambitious and talented woman without means', *Journal of Family History* 26.1 (2001), 3–17, see 7 for the quote.
- 150 Hill, 'Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu', 7.
- 151 Huntington Library, MO 3038 (cited in Hill, 'Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu', 7).
- 152 John Hill Burton (ed.), *The Autobiography of Dr Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk, 1722–1805* (London: Foulis, 1910), 462.
- 153 Beckett, 'Montagu', 152 and 157.
- 154 Beckett, 'Montagu', 154–5. Although opening new pits required considerable capital outlay, Montagu nonetheless profited from the expansion of her coal interests in Northumberland, later using some of the profits of the coalmines to fund building and landscaping works at Sandleford (*ibid.*, 151).
- 155 Berry, 'Prudent luxury', 130–54; Phillips, *Women in Business*, 98.
- 156 Liddington, 'Gender', 61.
- 157 Catherine Euler, 'Moving between worlds: Gender, class, politics, sexuality and women's networks in the diaries of Anne Lister of Shibden Hall, Halifax, Yorkshire, 1830–1840' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 1995), 101 argues that canal shares were the single largest source of income for Lister between 1826 and 1828.
- 158 Liddington, 'Gender', 59, 65–7, 70–72.
- 159 Liddington, *Female Fortune*, 27–38.
- 160 Liddington, 'Gender', 71, 76 and 78. Lister died in Georgia in September 1840.
- 161 Liddington, 'Gender', 80 also makes this point about Lister.
- 162 Freeman *et al.*, 'A doe in the city', 287.
- 163 *Hull Packet*, 26 May 1801, 3; VCH, ER VII, 297, 333.
- 164 VCH, ER VII, 264, 282, 409; *An act for enabling Charlotta Bethell widow, to make and maintain a navigable canal from the river Hull, at a point in the parish of Leven, 1801* (available via Gale's *The Making of the Modern World*).
- 165 Baron Duckham, *The Inland Waterways of East Yorkshire, 1700–1900* (Hull: East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1972), 35.
- 166 Duckham, *Waterways*, 34; VCH, ER VII, 296; population figures from the census, available from A Vision of Britain Through Time [[http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10443751/cube/TOT\\_POP](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10443751/cube/TOT_POP)].
- 167 CRO, CL1320.
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