**Turner and West Kent**

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Contents

[Introduction 1](#_Toc148859574)

[Chapter 1: Pictures of West Kent 2](#_Toc148859575)

[Chapter 2: Turner’s Medway Tours 6](#_Toc148859576)

[Chapter 3: The West Kent Landowners 10](#_Toc148859577)

[Chapter 4: Turner’s Family: The Harpurs & Mercers 13](#_Toc148859578)

[Chapter 5: Turner and his Cousins 20](#_Toc148859579)

[References 24](#_Toc148859580)

# Introduction

Turner’s first biographer, Walter Thornbury, remarked on Turner’s sentimental fondness for the Medway. From about the age of 30, his acquisition of a boat on the Thames and his building of a villa beside it and his oil-sketches made on it all shifted the focus of his attention decisively to the capital’s river. But that has obscured the fact that earlier love of the two rivers had run parallel.

Strangely no writer on Turner has remarked that his mother’s eldest sister married the vicar (Henry Harpur) of a Medway town, Tonbridge, and so none has noticed the connection between the vicar’s family and the Woodgates of Somerhill, the mansion overlooking the town, which Turner painted in 1810-11. Their papers are in the Centre for Kent Studies at Maidstone and formed the basis of a history of the family published in 1910 which deserves a wider audience than it has had. The letters of the female members of the Woodgate family conjure up a world familiar to the readers of Jane Austen, and even occasionally echo the bantering and allusive tone of Turner’s clumsier epistolary efforts.

Whereas two studies have been published recounting Jane Austen’s Tonbridge connections, none has hitherto been devoted to Turner’s. Yet we know, as we do not in Jane's case, that Turner definitely visited the town. How many times we can still only guess – in c.1787-9, 1793, c.1803-6, 1810? The following chapters and gazetteer summarise what can be gleaned about the background to the works which Turner created as a result.

Thornbury declared that, “I come across him in the green hop-fields of Kent,” but considerable imagination is needed, as the evidence is fragmentary. As the clues have to be pieced together from diverse sources and Turner’s involvement in the area had different aspects, I have not pursued a purely chronological account, but taken those aspects in turn. Moreover his visits to the Weald of Kent cannot be considered in isolation from those to neighbouring areas, as he was in the habit of engaging in extensive tours.

If, as I suggest is likely, Turner was drawn to the area partly by his relations, their *milieu* can only be properly comprehended by giving it the treatment which has been accorded to Jane Austen’s family, that is, by investigating all the ramifications which would have been significant to them. However they have left behind virtually no correspondence, and so we have to fall back on the drier documents of wills and suchlike to construct an outline of their world, which I have tried to encapsulate in the Gazetteer and Genealogies. Their properties were not extensive, yet they might extend over several parishes and even into Sussex, so that what Vita Sackville-West said of the Sackvilles is true on a smaller scale and *mutatis mutandis* of Turner’s cousins:

… If I allowed myself full licence I might ramble out over Kent and down into Sussex, to Lewes, Buckhurst and Withyham, out into the fruit country and the hop country, across the Weald, over Saxonbury, and to Lewes among the Downs, and still I should not feel guilty of irrelevance…. The whole district is littered with their associations, whether a village whose living lay in their gift, or a town where they endowed a college, or a wood where they hunted, or the village church where they had themselves buried.

Equally there are few parts of Kent which held no associations for Turner or those connected with him, and that is true of the middle of the county and not just of the coastal areas which have hitherto been the focus of Turnerean studies.

# Chapter 1: Pictures of West Kent

The Tonbridge episodes in Turner’s life ended with the catastrophic bankruptcies of 1816 (when he was 40) to which we come later. Turner today is rightly most esteemed for his works made after that time. If he had died before he was 40 or even 50, he would not now be remembered as he is. But in his lifetime many had just the opposite view, that he ruined the talent which gained him very early recognition by his later extravagancies. To ignore the early work, some of which gives rise to this booklet, is to fail to do justice to his achievement. As John Constable wrote, “*a true taste is never a half taste.*” Turner had intended that his work should be judged as a whole, and to that end willed (in instruments drafted by his cousin, Henry Harpur IV, whose Tonbridge roots appear later in our story) to the National Gallery a “*Turner’s Gallery*” comprising the full range of his finished pictures. The nation was too incompetent and mean to build that and The National Gallery has ignorantly, self-servingly and illicitly ignored Turner’s wish, as Turner’s first serious biographer, A.J.Finberg, amongst other pointed out two generations ago, since when the disregard has increased.[[1]](#endnote-1)1 Today the National Gallery has held on to a few plums, overwhelmingly late works, though not properly representative of that period either, and passed on the rest to the Tate, which treats them whimsically as the spirit moves it.

Turner’s ambition to encompass all the branches of landscape was first codified in his *Liber Studiorum*, a series of prints etched by himself, but mostly engraved by others, which he planned while staying in 1807 with his friend (and later intended executor) W.F.Wells at Knockholt near Sevenoaks. This was related decades later by Wells’ daughter Clara:

He [Wells] had for a long time urged upon Turner the expediency of making a selection from his own works for publication, telling him that it would surely be done after his death, and perhaps in a way that might not do him that justice which he could ensure for himself. After long and continued persuasion, Turner at length gave way; and one day, when he was staying with us in Kent (he always spent a part of the autumn in our cottage), he said, ‘Well, *Gaffer*, I see there will be no peace till I comply …’ My father said, ‘Well, divide your subject into classes – say, Pastoral, Marine, Elegant Pastoral, and so forth – which was accordingly done. The first drawings were then and there made, and arranged for publication. This was in the autumn of 1806.[[2]](#endnote-2)2

The other categories chosen were Mountainous and Architectural. Turner had a certain weakness for the academic classifications of the day, another of which was to divide art into the Sublime, Beautiful and Picturesque, and yet another into the different national schools of art. Such divisions (yet another is into periods, such as Ruskin and others have chopped Turner’s *oeuvre* into) can obscure as much as they elucidate, as paintings, Turner’s not least, cannot be pigeonholed.

However Turner’s few surviving scenes of West Kent can illustrate almost all the categories, except perhaps Mountainous and Elegant or Elevated Pastoral. He first made his name largely with marine pictures deriving from Dutch painting. A Dutch professor and yachtsman, Fred. Bachrach, has shown how these illustrate the Sublime, conveying ideas of excitement and danger through stormy weather in which boats are sometimes set on a collision course, as in the *Calais Pier* of 1803 at the National Gallery.[[3]](#endnote-3)3 Captain Henry Napier RN had already remarked in 1831 that “Turner’s boats …would run each other down”[[4]](#endnote-4)4; some scholars now see collision courses everywhere! A similar scene off Calais of c.1803, but smaller, (reproduced p.54) later belonged to his cousin Henry Harpur IV, who offered it to the National Gallery, which declined it saying that it had too many Turners. (Now, when it is pointed out that it holds the larger picture contrary to the terms of Turner’s codicil which Harpur drew up, it says it has too few Turners and cannot surrender it to its rightful owners!). This smaller marine was the basis of a *Liber Studiorum* plate etched and engraved by Turner and published on 1 January 1816. Londoners had long travelled by boat along the North Kent coast, sometimes disembarking at Gravesend for Rochester and East Kent, sometimes going on to Margate or Calais. In 1807-9 Turner exhibited several dramatic seascapes off Sheerness, the confluence of the Thames and Medway and Whitstable.

Even earlier Turner had gained a reputation for his picturesque views of mediaeval abbeys, cathedrals and castles, preferably ruinous. Examples, before he had mastered the genre, are two of Tonbridge Castle, one engraved in 1795. Paul Sandby had the year before depicted the same scene, and the taste for such subjects, engendered as much by the Society of Antiquaries as the Royal Academy, was strong in Turner’s youth. It developed out of an interest in mediaeval history which became linked with Romanticism. In 1745 the young bluestocking Mrs Montagu, having already had more than her fill of the graves in Tonbridge churchyard, visited the castle with a Doctor of Divinity who could well have been a candidate for the Antiquaries or the Revd. William Gilpin’s Dr Syntax:

After dinner we walked to the old Castle, which was built by Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, in William Rufus’ days. It has been a most magnificent building the situation is extremely beautiful: the Castle made a kind of half moon down to the river, and where the river does not defend it, it is guarded by a large moat. The towers at the great Gate are covered with fine venerable ivy. It was late in the evening before we got home, but the silver Cynthia held up her lamp in the heavens, and cast such a light on the earth, as showed its beauties in a soft and gentle light. The night silenced all but our Divine Doctor, who sometimes uttered things not fit to be spoken in a Season when all Nature seems to be hushed and hearkening. I followed gathering wisdom as I went, till I found by my horse’s stumbling that I was in a bad road, and that the blind was leading the blind: so I placed my servant between the Doctor and myself, which he not perceiving, went on in a most philosophical strain to the amazement of my poor clown of a servant, who not being brought up to any pitch of enthusiasm, nor making answer to any of the fine things he heard, the Doctor wondering I was dumb, and grieving I was so stupid, looked round, declared his surprise, and desired the man to trot on before.[[5]](#endnote-5)5

Another bluestocking, Lady Eastlake, in 1844 was struck by Turner being “very knowing about all the castles he has drawn.”[[6]](#endnote-6)6 Such an interest a generation ago was foreign to most Turner scholars, and even the present ones treat it as something to be researched rather than as the living tradition which Ruskin and other readers of Walter Scott enjoyed and which was still just alive in the present writer’s boyhood.

Thus Butlin & Joll concerned themselves little with the associations of the scenes which Turner depicted or even with their topography (even Pevsner, who likewise ignored the first, paid more attention to the second). In their entry on *Linlithgow Palace,* for example,they say not a word about the palace itself! Other writers, such as the indefatigable Eric Shanes, have sought to recover the attitudes of Turner’s and Ruskin’s days, but even they hardly mention the Revd. Archibald Alison (1757-1839), whose *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790) treated the subject of the association of ideas. Still less are they likely to have perused the antiquarian, and admittedly very dry, tomes of the Edward Hasted JP (1732-1812) on the history of Kent except perhaps as a quarry for footnotes. Several erudite and artistic clergymen, however, became Turner’s friends, as we shall see, including Alison’s contemporary at Oxford, Robert Nixon, and some, like Mrs Montagu’s divine companion or the Revd.William Gilpin (1724-1804), helped fashion taste and attitudes.[[7]](#endnote-7)6a

Of course the interests of these literary clerics were as foreign to the yeomen farmers of the county as they are to most people today, though all the gentry at Tonbridge (George Children, Thomas Harvey, Thomas Hooker and Henry Woodgate) subscribed to Hasted’s volumes. Jane Austen’s relation, the poet and genealogist Sir Egerton Brydges Bt.(1762-1837), felt himself to be a fish out of water in East Kent when he later wrote his *Autobiography.* He had been at Cambridge with the brother of Turner’s patron and executor, Samuel Rogers (remarking on how very few of the 2,900 who took degrees there 1754-1823 “obtained in after life the smallest distinction”).[[8]](#endnote-8)7 His literary taste was for the poets of Rogers’ generation, though he was dismissive of Richard Cumberland (1732-1811) at Tunbridge Wells (who had “a great facility of feeble verbiage” and was represented by Sheridan as Sir Fretful Plagiary).[[9]](#endnote-9)8 So he had little sympathy with *avant-garde* poetry and painting, which ran parallel in practitioners such as Shelley and Turner. Of the first (distantly connected with the owners of Penshurst Place) he observed, “Ridiculed and neglected while alive, and represented in most of the literary journals as a bye-word of absurdity, charlatanism, and incomprehensibility; - now he is gone, he is lauded to the skies as a supernatural genius. He *was* a genius, but…”[[10]](#endnote-10)9 Turner by then (1834) was evidently under Shelley’s spell, and must have been one of Brydges’ targets, when the latter wrote, “Those who accustom their eyes to a modern gallery of pictures, where all is freshness and glare and violence of colouring, do not look with pleasure on the mellow tints and natural forms of the old masters.”[[11]](#endnote-11)10

Shanes and others have rightly pointed out that Turner was a “poetical painter”, as opposed to Constable, who was only a landscape painter pure and simple. By this they mean that Turner introduced poetical, literary and historical subjects into his works. Yet for him associations were not always signalled by title, text or incident, but often intangible, emotional and personal. They were not expressed in hieroglyphics as in the Renaissance, and sometimes only by the mood of his works. Scenes and places have sentimental connections such as Proust explored. The scholars sometimes conventionally denounce the idea of “sentimentality”, though in Turner’s day “sentiment” was another key attribute of a good picture. They have also failed to see that Tonbridge and its vicinity surely had associations for Turner.

B&J typically fail to investigate the history of his one painting connected with the area, *Somer-Hill, near Tunbridge, the Seat of W.F.Woodgate, Esq.* Yet the association is half given in the title! (The late Evelyn Joll, who so shamefully betrayed Turner’s wishes for his bequest, contradicting himself in the process, confessed to the present writer that he had too little time to write the catalogue entries, but equally his historical curiosity was very limited, except for the details of the collectors out of whom his firm had made a profit).

Those who stress the importance of the subject-matter of Turner’s pictures neglect the fact that “poetical” had two quite distinct meanings in Turner’s day, and that, though “literary” was one, “imaginative/immaterial” was another. The difference between prose and poetry has been defined as that between walking and dancing. In this second sense Constable was also poetical, whereas some other landscapists (Callcott, Collins, Stanfield) were judged to be prosaic. It was in this sense that Turner’s works of this period were so often praised by the critics for their poetry – the poetry of light and mist, of the indefinite, a mysteriousness which also characterised his approach to life, ideas, history and myth. Such poetry was not expressed by incidents of subject (though Turner sometimes employed those too) but by the handling of paint.

Of *Somer-Hill* Finberg wrote in 1939:

It is now in the National Gallery of Scotland, and was lent to the recent exhibition of Turner’s early paintings at the Tate Gallery [1931], when its excellent condition excited much comment. It is, besides, a remarkably beautiful picture, though merely a view of a gentleman’s country house; but what in other hands ‘would be mere topography’ - to repeat Pasquin’s [John Williams 1761-1818] words – ‘touched by his magic pencil has assumed a highly poetical character.’ The words ‘magic pencil’ lose their metaphorical sense when applied to a picture like this; they must be accepted literally when so much of its poetry depends upon the actual touch of Turner’s brush on the canvas. It is only in a finely preserved painting like ‘Somer-Hill’ that we can appreciate the extraordinary tenderness and certainty of Turner’s handling, the justness of his tones, and the ineffable sweetness of his colour.[[12]](#endnote-12)11

Rothenstein and Butlin in 1964 said that it represented “the culmination of Turner’s revolutionizing of the topographical tradition.”[[13]](#endnote-13)12 His new use of white grounds for his oils, giving them the appearance of watercolour, was anathema to the conservatives, but followed by some younger artists. At the same time this phase of his art exhibited strong naturalistic and classical tendencies. Jack Lindsay wrote in 1966 that the painting

shows an extremely fine control of the recessions leading up to the house on the hill-top, with regard to structure, placing of detail, and rhythmic treatment of light and shadow: a masterly union of strong recession and delaying or balancing elements. Turner had completed his transformation of the topographical tradition into a lyrical image; the idyll was drawn into reality; a clear classical structure merged with movement of light and air.[[14]](#endnote-14)13

It is an exemplification of the Beautiful and Pastoral (plain, if also a touch elevated), with Architecture, though central, relegated to the background.

A couple of years earlier Turner had depicted another Woodgate property, Pembury Mill, as one of the first plates (published in 1808) of his *Liber Studiorum.* This he put in the category of Pastoral, though clearly also Architectural. Watermills were as naturally picturesque as mediaeval ruins, and Turner had depicted many in the 1790s in such a manner, two of which are seemingly of another watermill at Pembury.[[15]](#endnote-15)13a Now, in his more naturalistic and classical phase, the formal structure is obvious, as in the scene of an unidentified watermill (possibly between Hindhead and Guildford) which was the subject of a *Liber* plate published in 1812. The treatment of the scene is also mathematical and diagrammatic, with the wheel on the left, the sacks of corn being filled in the centre and being loaded on a cart at the right demonstrating the business sequence. The unusually close-up view could be explained by the artist sketching from the millhouse a very few yards on the other side of the watercourse. The poetical touch is given by the evening sun streaming in through the doorway.[[16]](#endnote-16)14 That was added by the engraver, Charles Turner, following Turner’s sepia drawing and after Turner made the etching, which was printed on paper from the Maidstone watermill of the innovative James Whatman II. The resulting plate is not one of Turner’s more immediately attractive or best known ones (a descendant of Turner living at Pembury expressed surprise when I showed my lack of familiarity with it a dozen or so years ago) and was criticised by Thornbury (“The figures are dull and laboured, the whole uninteresting”[[17]](#endnote-17)15), but it repays study. Finberg said, “it is a scene of cheerful industry and plenty, the noise of the millstone mingling with the cooing of pigeons, and lush leaves growing beside the water-wheel. It is a pretty subject, while no conscious attempts have been made to prettify or blink the actual facts of the case."[[18]](#endnote-18)16

After the disasters of 1815-16 Turner had no cause to revisit Tonbridge, and, if the area had any fond memories, may have preferred not to do so; he never revisited Farnley Hall after the death of his friend and patron Walter Fawkes in 1825. He may have ignored West Kent because it had no obvious scenic possibilities, but even the picturesque Hastings later came to fall out of favour. It too had personal associations for Turner.

One area from his youth to which he did return was Margate. That necessitated occasional stops at Rochester, and that vicinity too continued to be painted by him. His spectacular watercolour, *Castle Upnor,* exhibited in 1833 (reproduced p.54) serves as a qualification of my remark that West Kent was only a subject of his earlier style.

# Chapter 2: Turner’s Medway Tours

Thornbury, relying on an unpublished account by Edward Bell (1768-1847), said that Turner and Bell made a six weeks’ tour one summer visiting Margate, Canterbury and elsewhere. That resulted in a drawing of Rochester, an engraving of which was published on 1 May 1794 in the *Copper-Plate Magazine*, the first of fifteen engravings in it after Turner.[[19]](#endnote-19)17 On 1 September 1795 a view of Tonbridge Castle was issued in another series by the same publisher, *The Pocket Magazine.* Possibly the *Tonbridge Castle* grey and bluewashdrawing, 7¾ x 10¾ ins., at Cambridge, sharing the common viewpoint from across the river,had been an alternative design for the publication.[[20]](#endnote-20)18 It has sometimes been questioned whether itis really by Turner, but Ruskin in 1878 wrote appreciatively that “the little bit of reflected light under the bridge and half tone over the boats in this drawing, is worth any quantity of sensational etchings.” Trees encroach further on the buildings of the Tunbridge Ware manufactory on the opposite bank at the right than they do in other views. Was this a variation on Paul Sandby’s print made by Turner at Dr Monro’s “academy” in London, where he was joined by Thomas Girtin, who made a similar drawing?

A visit by Turner to Tonbridge seems likely in view of his drawings of c.1793-5 of a mill, one inscribed “Pembury mill”, of about the same date and size (Large Post Quarto or about 8 x 10 ins. or 210 x 270 mm, a size much favoured by Turner then).[[21]](#endnote-21)19 These later belonged to Turner’s friend, Charles Stokes, and one of them was the basis for two watercolours of c.1795-6, one now at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and another larger one, basically the same but with variations, at the British Museum. Maybe these are of the now demolished Keyes Mill, Pembury. The second Stokes drawing seems to show a different mill, unlike the first or the one depicted in the *Liber Studiorum.* A third watermill, Herrings Mill, over the parish border with Brenchley, was near enough to sketch on the same day.

Thornbury added, “He had frequently visited the town [Rochester] before [bef.1793?], and indeed was so fond of the river Medway that in after years he loved to throw out those dark hints that made many curious people believe he was a Kentish man.” He went on further: “He used occasionally to imply that his father came from Kent.”[[22]](#endnote-22)20 Evidently, though no one has spotted this before, that was a confused reference to the fact that his maternal aunt had married the vicar of Tonbridge, to whom I come in the next chapter. Turner had been sent to school at Margate in the 1780s (according to another garbled account to stay with a maternal uncle who was a fishmonger there, but more likely through his uncle who was a butcher at Brentford and a friend there of the Trimmers, who had sent their son to Margate).[[23]](#endnote-23)21 Did he pass through Rochester then or make the voyage by sea?

How did his attachment to the Medway arise? Was it through family connections or artistic ones or both? How extensive was it? The evidence is scanty. In 1793 appeared Samuel Ireland’s illustrated *Picturesque Views on the River Medway*. About the same time, c.1792-3, Turner’s friend Thomas Girtin also produced views of Rochester. It has been asserted that as an apprentice to Edward Dayes he would not have been allowed to visit the place, but would have based his watercolours on views by others.[[24]](#endnote-24)22 That too is uncertain.

The experience of Joseph Farington, “dictator of the Royal Academy”, was not altogether encouraging.[[25]](#endnote-25)23 Travelling from Rochester to Maidstone on 25 September 1794, he commented: “I felt disappointed as I had reckoned on being able to describe with the pencil the stile of this country but vain would be an attempt to discriminate where there is no leading feature.” Maidstone was “a common & dirty looking indifferently built Town,” though over it “the country rose in a beautiful manner.” “On our way to Tonbridge we passed through a rich well-wooded country for some miles …We passed many Hop plantations and the fragrance issuing from [them] was sensibly felt in passing on the road.”

In 1825 William Cobbett wrote that, though born in Hampshire, he gave the palm to Kent: “the ten miles between Maidstone and Tunbridge (which the Kentish folks call the *Garden of Eden*) is a great deal finer [than the vale between Farnham and Alton]; for there, with a river three times as big and a vale three times as broad, there are, on rising grounds six times as broad, not only hop-gardens and beautiful woods, but immense orchards of apples, pears, plums, cherries and filberts, and these, in many cases, with gooseberries and currants and raspberries beneath; and, all taken together, the vale is really worthy of the appellation it bears.”[[26]](#endnote-26)24 This partly echoes Jane Austen, also a native of Hampshire: “People get so horribly poor and economical in this part of the world that I have no patience with them. Kent is the only place for happiness; everybody is rich there.”

Also assigned to the putative 1793 tour are drawings of Hartfield and Withyham in Sussex. One has been called “a cottage near East Grinstead”, but is evidently of something bigger, and these two villages are equally near to Tunbridge Wells. Hartfield was an old seat and burial-place of the Dukes of Dorset of Knole, the 3rd Duke (1745-99) being Lord Lieutenant of Kent 1769-97. He had been a keen cricketer and ladies’ man and patronised many of the leading portrait painters of the day, including Ozias Humphry R.A., whose brother was vicar of Seal and married to a Woodgate. Was Turner just passing by or had he had some introduction? It seems that he was making a tour of the upper Medway from Pembury and Tonbridge to its source, taking in watermills at Groombridge near Tunbridge Wells and Tablehurst near Forest Row.

Drawings of Maidstone and Aylesford are watermarked 1794. The next of Turner’s trips to Kent of which we hear was in 1798. This was recorded by Stephen Rigaud, two years younger than Turner, who was the son of John Francis Rigaud R.A. (1742-1810), of whom he compiled a *Memoir.* Stephen had exhibited at the Royal Academy in the previous year. He was visiting the Revd. Robert Nixon DD, FRS, FSA, FLS (1759-1837), a graduate of Christ Church, Oxford, who exhibited at the R.A. 1792-1808, as did his brother John (d.1818), a merchant of Basinghall Street. Robert Nixon was the curate at Foot’s Cray 1784-1804, and Stephen Rigaud was staying with him at the Parsonage. Soon after 14 April

an unexpected visitor made his appearance – William Turner, … who was received by the generous occupant of the little parsonage with a hearty welcome. Mr. Nixon had been one of the first to notice him when he was living with his father the hairdresser in Maiden Lane Covent Garden; he brought him to my Father, who greatly encouraged him, introduced him to the Royal Academy as a Student, and was the first friend he had amongst the Royal Academicians; so of course we were all intimately acquainted with each other. Mr. Nixon was also a Pupil of Turner’s in landscape painting, and of mine in figures. It was then Saturday evening, and it was soon arranged that on Monday morning we should all three set off on a pic-nic sketching party for three days. The next day, being Sunday, I accompanied our mutual friend to the parish church, close by, which stood almost concealed by tall, majestic trees, a sweet secluded spot, whose solemn stillness seemed to invite the soul to meditations and to God! Alas! For Turner it had no such attraction… On our return from Church, we were grieved and hurt to find him, shut up in the little study, absorbed in his favourite pursuit, diligently painting in Water colours.

The next morning, after an early breakfast, we started on our sketching party through a beautiful part of the Country of Kent. It was a lovely day, and the scenery most delightful. After having taken many a sketch, and walked many a mile, we were glad at length to seek for a little rest and refreshment at an inn. Some chops and steaks were soon set before us, which we ate with the keen relish of appetite, and our worthy friend the Clergyman, who presided at the table, proposed we should call for some wine, to which I made no objection, but Turner, though he could take his glass very cheerfully at his friend’s house, now hung his head, saying - “*No*, I can’t stand *that*.” Mr. Nixon was too polite to press the matter further, as it was a pic-nic concern; so, giving me a very significant look; we did without the wine. I mention this anecdote to show how early and to what an extent the love of money as a ruling passion, already displayed itself in him, and tarnished the character of this incipient genius; for I have no hesitation in saying that at that time he was the richest man of the three; Mr. Nixon having then but a very small Curacy, and I having little more than the pocket money allowed me by my Father, whilst Turner had already laid up money in the funds, and for which his good friend Mr. Nixon was one of the Trustees whilst he was still under age. This little incident, though calculated to throw a chilling influence over the cordiality of our sketching party, could not prevent our greatly enjoying the remaining part of our beautiful tour, particularly the river scenery on the banks of the Medway, as far as Aylesford; and at the end of the third day we returned to the quiet rural parsonage of Foots Cray, very much delighted with our excursion.[[27]](#endnote-27)25

Turner at 23 was already the most successful of the three and was to be elected an Associate of the Royal Academy next year. At the same time his mother was to be committed as incurably insane and was almost certainly already giving trouble.[[28]](#endnote-28)26 Mrs Clara Wheeler mentioned “many domestic trials too sacred to touch on,” when the house of her father, W.F.Wells, was a “haven of rest” from those.[[29]](#endnote-29)27 Maybe Nixon’s was another haven. Turner and his father, who always urged him to save every penny, were probably feeling financially insecure, when “lunacy … might prove such a financial drain on the resources of a middling household as to entail a descent into pauper status”.[[30]](#endnote-30)28 Later Turner saved in order to endow an almshouse for poor artists, though, to quote Clara Wheeler again, “unhappily, either through ignorance or carelessness, or something worse, this noble design has been frustrated”, like that for a Turner Gallery.[[31]](#endnote-31)29

As for Turner’s reluctance to attend church, the Revd. Henry Scott Trimmer’s son painted a different picture, telling Thornbury that whenever Turner visited, he always behaved with great decorum and regularly attended church.[[32]](#endnote-32)30 Thornbury added that he believed (or guessed?) that the interior of a church published in the *Liber Studiorum* in 1819was of Trimmer’s church at Heston, adding that it was almost the only church interior he painted. However Turner’s “Wilson” sketchbook of c.1797 has several unidentified church interiors, which it has been supposed might depict some churches in North Kent, though mostly larger than those in the Foot’s Cray area.[[33]](#endnote-33)31 The *Liber* plate was based on pp.26-7 (though omitting the Communion service).

According to Thornbury, “it was in the parsonage at Foot’s Cray, the residence of the father of Dr. Nixon, the Bishop of Tasmania, that what was Turner’s first oil picture … was finished; a view of Rochester Castle …”[[34]](#endnote-34)32 Bishop Nixon later had amongst his Turners a *View of Snowdon*, of which it was said, “it is believed that it is the first production in oils of that distinguished artist.”[[35]](#endnote-35)33 Another muddle. *Rochester Castle with Fishermen drawing Boats ashore in a Gale* was painted for the Rev. James Douglas FSA (1757-1819), chaplain to the Prince of Wales, and has also been called a watercolour. In 1780 Douglas married the daughter of a surgeon of Rochester. It has been dated to c.1794, as we believe Turner was in Rochester in 1793. But that is just a guess, and we are also told that Turner had been to Rochester before. As it has not been seen since 1860, its date remains uncertain. In general claims made to be the first, made decades after the event, should be treated with caution (Bell made the claim for other pictures), and we know Rigaud was not always accurate. An oil on paper by Turner of a watermill has been dated c.1791-2. How often Turner visited Foot’s Cray we also do not know, but Stephen Rigaud was with Nixon again in July 1800, then living in a much more imposing residence, Vale Mascal, North Cray.[[36]](#endnote-36)34 In 1795 the son of one of Turner’s Trimmer friends had been received into the church, following baptism, in North Cray. Foot’s Cray Place became the seat of Lord Bexley, related to the Stonhouses of Radley (cousins of the Stonehouses of Islington), a house which Turner had drawn in c.1789 while staying with his maternal uncle’s sister-in-law in Berkshire.[[37]](#endnote-37)35

“Turner,” Farington recorded on 30 October 1799, “called. Has been in Kent painting from Beech Trees.” One oil sketch, made then or soon after, was later called “Honour Park, Kent.” Others belonged at Turner’s death to Sarah Danby, the widow of the musician John Danby (d.1798). She became the mother of his first daughter in 1801.[[38]](#endnote-38)36 As we have seen, Turner became a close friend of another artist, William Frederick Wells, who acquired a country cottage, Ashgrove, at Knockholt in 1801, and stayed with him every autumn. Wells’ wife died on 7 February 1807 and was buried at Knockholt, and by April Miss Susanna Thrale, daughter of the friends of Dr. Johnson, was the joint or main occupant. Wells still owned it in 1831. He had a residence in London, but taught drawing at Addiscombe College from 1813 and just before Christmas 1819 moved to a house on the North side of Mitcham Common, which he enlarged, being buried there in 1836. His daughter Clara had married in 1817 Thomas Lowe Wheeler, a surgeon in London, and nephew of a wealthy attorney, James Rivington Wheeler (1758-1834), who in 1798 subscribed to John Danby’s 4th Book of Glees and 1817-c.1822 commissioned watercolours from Turner. Thomas and Clara in c.1848 moved to Sundridge just across the valley from Knockholt.[[39]](#endnote-39)37

There is a watercolour at the Whitworth Art Gallery inscribed on the back *Turner/ View in Kent/ from Mr Wells’ Collection,* to which a date of c.1795 has been assigned. As W.F.Wells was not at Knockholt nor William Wells at Penshurst until later, one may query the identification or date. However there are many other unidentified scenes, of countryside, churches, houses, cottage interiors, mills, and some of these may be Kentish scenes. Turner’s depictions of rural life, in oils such as *The Blacksmith’s Shop* or *Harvest Home* or other untitled *Liber* plates and drawings, whether of Kent or not, must derive from a knowledge of the country economy gained partly in Kent.

W.F. Wells also had other artists to stay and had among his friends George Hibbert MP, who bought one of Turner’s pictures of 1810, the Cazalet family, the Revd. Robert Finch (1783-1830), an antiquarian, and the Revd. Dr Henry Fly, DD, FSA (1744-1833), curate at St Katherine’s, Knockholt 1791-1813, who became confessor to the King’s household and a friend also of Turner.

As Wells was baptised at Chislehurst and had the same coat of arms, it is possible he was related to William Wells, who c.1807/8 acquired Redleaf, Penshurst, and who is sometimes confused with W.F.Wells as well as with his own nephew. Wells of Redleaf collected English painting, but was no great admirer of Turner.

Turner probably was at Hastings in 1801 for the birth of his first daughter by Sarah Danby there. In the years 1803-7 he did not travel much. On 15 April 1804 his mother died in Bedlam. From 1805/6 he shared a house by the Thames with Sarah Danby. Even if she kept him at home more, he may well have made short visits in the Home Counties of which we have no record. The next trip of which we hear was to Sussex via Kent in 1810. On 21 April Farington recorded that John Fuller, MP for Sussex, “has engaged Turner to go into that County to make drawings of three or four views. He is to have 100 guineas for the *use* of His drawings, which are to be returned to him.” A series of aquatints was later produced after Turner’s views of the seats of Fuller (Rosehill near Battle) and of neighbouring landowners. It is generally assumed that Turner may have received a commission to paint Somerhill about the same time, and stopped at Tonbridge en route to draw Rosehill. He also a little later produced a watercolour of Eridge Castle, almost three miles South of Tunbridge Wells, which might have been commissioned by the Earl of Abergavenny to mark the refurbishment of the castle in 1810, the architect’s drawing for which is preserved by the present Marquess.

At this time Turner was having a particular success with views of country seats. The previous year he had exhibited at the R.A. a pair of views of Tabley, the country home of the collector, Sir John Leicester, one of which was to hang in Leicester’s London home. At the 1810 exhibition, which opened on 30 April, there was one of Petworth House and two of the home of Wordsworth’s patron, the Earl of Lonsdale, Lowther Castle, which was on high ground, like Somerhill. He had also painted the Earl of Egremont’s Cockermouth Castle (killing two birds with one stone again on his visit to Cumberland the previous year), which he exhibited at his own gallery, an exhibition which probably had opened by 21 April and continued until 9 June. At that were also to be seen some new paintings with others exhibited the year before: *Linlithgow Palace; Fish Market [at Hastings?]*; and some delicious pastoral scenes, *Dorchester Mead, Oxfordshire* (bought by Hibbert) and *Calder Bridge, Cumberland*; a more prosaic *High Street, Oxford*; some fine seascapes, *Blyth Sand; Dutch Boats (Sun rising through vapour); Sheerness, from the Great Nore; Shobury-ness, Essex; Poets Garret; Grand Junction Canal at Southall Mill,* a scene between Brentford and Hanwell sketched on a visit to his Trimmer friends; and *Harvest Dinner, Kingston Bank,* a low key pastoral genre subject which attracted the attention of David Cox. This fairly extensive display of Turner’s range would appeal to any landowner with a love of the country and a desire to see his property immortalised.

Turner also painted a somewhat similar view of Rosehill about the same time, but it was never exhibited at the R.A. and is now rather inaccessible and coated in varnish. The culmination of his house portraits came with his depictions of Mortlake Terrace in 1826-7. In between he painted *Raby Castle, the Seat of the Earl of Darlington*, in 1818. This measured 4 x 6ft, unlike the others, which were Turner’s usual size of 3 x 4ft, and was commensurately ambitious. The Earl (later created Duke of Cleveland) hunted six days a week, and Turner painted a prominent hunting scene in the foreground. This pleased neither the critics nor apparently the Earl, as Turner repainted it. The middle distance, “where light and shadow sweep over the landscape in a passage of breathtaking beauty,” is praised by Butlin & Joll. It must have given some satisfaction, as later it was “one of the few things taken by the Duchess from Raby Castle” when she left in a dudgeon.[[40]](#endnote-40)38 We come to the Earl/Duke and other Vanes again later.

Turner’s trip to Kent and Sussex, which may have included Hastings, was probably completed before 27 July 1810. His cousin, William Harpur, was buried at Tonbridge on 21 July, as his aunt had been on 24 March 1809. William Woodgate of Somerhill had died just before, and his eldest son did up the house before moving into it, a move that no doubt he hoped to celebrate by commissioning Turner’s picture. Whether he visited Turner’s gallery in 1809 or 1810 or Turner met him at Tonbridge then we can only surmise. He must surely have known the *Liber* plate, *Pembury Mill,* the mill being owned by his father and brother, and it is not improbable that he knew Turner as early as c.1794 at Tonbridge Castle, and that he had also known John Danby (d.1798), as he knew most of the leading London musicians; Henry Woodgate paid for a new organ at Tonbridge church in 1787.

The commission of the painting may have been an imprudent act of extravagance (the Tonbridge Bank, Children, Woodgate & Scoones was already in trouble and bankruptcy was not far off), but it could have been a good investment, if it had not been sold with the house, perhaps because it would have been an unhappy reminder of what had been lost. The cost of *Somerhill* is unknown, but was probably 200 or 250gs (say, £6-8,000 today). In 1851 it sold for £320 (=£16,000 today), in 1876 for £892 (=£38,000), and in 1922 £3,990 (£100,000). At that rate of progression it might be now worth £1 million, though it probably would be valued at more despite the comparative lack of interest in Turner’s earlier works. Several authorities have categorically stated that Woodgate neither commissioned nor paid for the picture on the grounds that no note of such appears in Turner’s jottings. A likelier hypothesis is that payment was delayed because of the growing troubles of the Tonbridge Bank.

# Chapter 3: The West Kent Landowners

Members of the Woodgate family were known to Farington, and especially their relations the Allnutts and Hardinges at Penshurst. William Woodgate the father “was a man of a most narrow mind whose sole consideration seemed to be to accumulate property” (8 October 1811). The property which he left in 1809 was estimated at “full £300,000”.[[41]](#endnote-41)39 According to the Kent custom of gavelkind he did not leave it all to his eldest son, William Francis, but between his four sons with much smaller amounts to the daughters; to John he left Stonewall Park, Chiddingstone, where the Woodgates resided until they acquired Somerhill a century earlier, to Henry most of the property at Pembury and thereabouts and to Stephen, vicar of Pembury, the perpetual advowson, rectory and great tithes of that parish.

The last had just married Frances Hardinge, “a near relation of Earl Camden, with a Fortune of Ten thousand pounds”.[[42]](#endnote-42)40 Earl (later Marquess) Camden was Lord Lieutenant of the county 1808-40, and had a seat at Bayham Abbey, near Tunbridge Wells, the other magnate in that vicinity being the Earl of Abergavenny. One may wonder if Turner gained the latter's patronage c.1810 through Woodgate, or whether Turner had tried to earlier through making in 1799 two large watercolours of Abergavenny in South Wales, one of which was purchased instead by John Allnutt, brother of Richard of Penshurst and brother-in-law of W.F.Woodgate, and another by a Mr Harvey (of Penshurst?).[[43]](#endnote-43)40a Farington said (13 March) that one was made for Lawrence, who had painted John Allnutt in 1798-9, and was later to paint one of the Woodgates (c.1823), Peter Nouaille (c.1806) and Earl Camden (1811,1814) and his son when Earl of Brecknock (c.1815). Lawrence had in 1809 tried to interest another collector in Turner. “I have just been at the gallery of Mr. Turner (indisputably the first landscape painter in Europe) and there seen a most beautiful picture which in my opinion would be very cheaply purchased at two hundred guineas …”[[44]](#endnote-44)41 When John Allnutt started buying works by Turner is uncertain, but it could have been early. He later had a gallery in his house at Clapham, a place with which Turner had other associations, and a view of it by David Cox junior shows his second wife presiding.[[45]](#endnote-45)42

Was Allnutt the friend of Lawrence at Clapham who commissioned the latter “to order of Turner a picture at a most liberal price”, ending in Turner complaining that he had not been paid the 6/- which the coach had cost to bring the finished picture?[[46]](#endnote-46)43 Another story is that “when Mr. Allnutt had a drawing of Tivoli [1817] by him engraved [1827], he wanted additional money for the copyright; and, on being refused, he declined to sell him some sketches on the Rhine.”[[47]](#endnote-47)44

Another connection with the world of art was provided by the brother-in-law of William Woodgate, Ozias Humphry R.A., who in 1798 voted for Turner in the Academy elections, though he later became disenchanted with him.[[48]](#endnote-48)45 Farington’s diary entries suggest that Turner, who had tended to be quiet and retiring (one of his pupils of the 1790s later remembered him as “eccentric, but kind and amusing”), became for a while rather assertive and loud after he was elected a full R.A. in 1802, and some thought he lacked breeding.

Such behaviour as that shown to Allnutt kept Turner firmly in the ranks of tradesmen, though he might be called gentleman and styled “esquire” as a Royal Academician. Allnutt, however, was but a wine merchant, even if he was the brother of a small landowner. Of course even peers might engage in business, such as Turner’s patrons the Duke of Bridgewater (in canals) and Lord de Tabley (in salt mines), and agriculture too was a business. But the Woodgates and their relations were not on a par with the great landlords of the area – Baron Le Despencer at Mereworth Castle, Viscount Vane at Fairlawn, Earl of Aylesford at Aylesford, Earl Cornwallis at Linton Park, the Sackvilles of Knole. Nor were they of the same antiquity as other commoner families who come into this story, the Childrens of Tonbridge or the Colepepers, who went back to mediaeval times. Baronets created a century earlier, such as the I’Ansons, may have been poorer, but had higher rank.

When Earl Camden as Lord Lieutenant was asked by the Prime Minister to suggest a ministerial candidate for the 1812 election, he replied that “the gentlemen in this county are tired of contests and all say, though many are loyal to the greatest degree, that the pressure of the times is such that they can be at no expense whatever.” In any case, they believed that Sir Thomas Dyke would not stand; Sir Henry Hawley was too old; Mr Woodgate too new; Sir John Gregory Shaw not wealthy enough and Col. Stratford regarded as too Irish.[[49]](#endnote-49)46 The period of the Napoleonic wars and the Reform Bill was an intensely political one, and affected even the Royal Academy, whose members divided on party lines. Where Turner stood on this, as on so much else, was ambiguous, and no record of the way he voted is preserved. He had early Liberal tendencies, albeit not evidently revolutionary as in the cases of Wordsworth, Chantrey or Girtin, and also patriotic and Tory ones. Maybe, as in the case of others, the latter became more pronounced as he aged, and certainly in Academy matters he was regarded as a conservative at the end, though his art still seems to us revolutionary compared with that of the Academy modernisers.[[50]](#endnote-50)47

In general the aim was to have one MP from West Kent and one from the East, though in contested elections (as were those of 1734, 1790, 1796, 1802, 1806, 1818) that was hard to ensure. We find from the East the Knatchbulls as Pittite or Tory and the Honywoods as Whig. The Gearys from West Peckham, to the North of Tonbridge, who first entered the lists in 1796, tried to be independent, but veered to the conservative side.

Virtually all the landowners voted for the ministerialists, and that was true too of many of Turner’s relations and their country cousins. A century later Frank Streatfeild wrote that “we are very conservative in West Kent,” and that was probably true of the yeomanry and gentry of Turner’s day.[[51]](#endnote-51)48 Elections involved not only constitutional matters, but questions of tax that affected the rural and business communities, and they were also bound up with matters of patronage. Turner’s grandfather had voted for “a pompous Jacobite” in Middlesex in 1750. His butcher uncle, however, was inclined to the Whigs, voting for a candidate of John Wilkes in 1768 and for Sir Francis Burdett in 1802. A witness at Turner’s parents’ marriage had voted in Middlesex in 1774 for the extreme Whig, the future 3rd Earl Stanhope. Like Hogarth, Turner grew up in a society whose watchword was “Beef and Liberty.” Beef and beer were the staple diet of John Bull, distinguishing him from the Frenchman. Beef was the business of his mother’s family, and hops for the beer were his cousins’ concern.

Of more immediate relevance to Turner the painter were accessible art collections, and of these there were no very notable ones in the area beyond Sevenoaks, though William Wells’ at Penshurst later became renowned for its contemporary art. However increasingly topographical books noted even the smaller collections, beginning with Sprange’s guide to Tunbridge Wells and Samuel Ireland’s tome of 1793. The most imposing house was perhaps the Palladian Mereworth Castle, home to Fanes and Dashwoods (families with which Turner and Sarah Danby had links) and from 1788 the Stapletons, all taking the title of Baron Le Despencer. They were landlords of Turner’s cousins at Tudeley, though Sir Thomas Stapleton was mired in debt by 1796, so that he was no candidate to be a patron of anything. The *coup de grâce* was given by the fall in agricultural prices after 1813, and two years later he fled to Brussels. However before that Sprange listed pictures at Mereworth attributed to Claude, Rembrandt and Rubens.

Turner seems to have visited the park of Chevening, and so maybe also the house. The 3rd Earl Stanhope “was a frequent attendant at concerts, and knew most of the best performers, both in England and on the Continent,” and wrote a technical pamphlet on tuning; his largest legacy was to a pianoforte player.[[52]](#endnote-52)49 So Sarah Danby may have had an *entrée* there. He had been a radical candidate to be M.P. for Middlesex in 1774 and would have been seen at the hustings by Turner’s mother, whose cousins were tenants at Shelford Manor of the Earl’s cousin, the Earl of Chesterfield. “He was in some senses of the word the truest Jacobin I have ever known," said Lord Holland, and “had a scorn of dress and fashion.” He also had scientific interests.

To an even greater degree so too had John George Children, encouraged by his father George of Ferox Hall, Tonbridge.[[53]](#endnote-53)50 His interest in electricity and friendship with scientists such as Sir Humphry Davy, whom Turner knew, would have been a bond with the latter, who must have come across him at the British Museum and Royal Society after bankruptcy forced his father to sell their Tonbridge home and the son to take posts at those institutions, if not before. Turner quite likely knew the son either through his Mercer cousins or the Woodgates, who were partners with the Childrens in the Tonbridge Bank.

Even before the 1816 bankruptcy John George Children had a house in London, when he was not travelling abroad, while the Woodgates had one also, as had many of the other wealthier gentry.[[54]](#endnote-54)50a So it is not necessary to assume that Turner had to go to Kent to meet them. The same was true with regard to meetings with some of his cousins, who inherited a house in Westminster 1800-25 from the I’Ansons of Tonbridge, having lived in the previous decade in Southwark and Lambeth.

Others, such as Sir William Ashburnham, instead of residing at their seats might spend most of the year at Tunbridge Wells.[[55]](#endnote-55)51 That was passing its heyday, but still attracted a select society with more pretension to intellectual activity than had Tonbridge town. Tonbridge was on the way to Hastings, which was popular as a resort for the locals as well as Londoners. A letter in the Woodgate papers describes the scene in December 1825: “Thursday evening we attended a party at Mrs Fawkes’s [the widow of Turner’s patron and close friend?] who is residing in one of the best Houses in Wellington Place. There is a great similarity in all the Hastings Parties, Quadrilles are the constant amusement of the Evening. At present a scarcity of Beau’s prevails but a reinforcement is expected next week when the young Men leave the Universities.”[[56]](#endnote-56)52 Turner had a liking for the place, which increasingly attracted artists, and his close friend James Holworthy chose to be married there in 1821.

Walter Bradford Woodgate in 1909 recalled:

When I was a lad I now and then saw guests who could not climb into their coaches without friendly supervision, yet used to be told that such scenes were nothing to those of my father’s boyhood, when at my grandfather’s [Major W.F. Woodgate’s] town house (right hand corner of Hanover Square, where it abuts George Street), sturdy serving-men leaned their chins on their staves as they sat waiting in the entrance hall to escort home masters who might no longer be fit to take care of themselves. Or, as at my great-grandsire’s [William’s, d.1809] at Somerhill … *on dit* there was always a reliable lad under the table, to loosen the neckloth of any gentleman who subsided from his chair.[[57]](#endnote-57)53

There was a legend that the cellars at Somerhill were so wide that the Major could drive round them in a coach and four. (The Somerhill coach was painted yellow, though that was before Turner gained a reputation for being addicted to the colour). Certainly the house contained plenty of drink when it was sold in 1816. In London the Major could conveniently indulge his love of music by attending the concerts in the Hanover Square Rooms, where John Danby’s glees had been sung in 1793 and Haydn performed.

# Chapter 4: Turner’s Family: The Harpurs & Mercers

Thornbury wrote:

I can claim no ‘blue-blood’ for Turner, nor do I want to do so. All old families have sprung from peasants, and every second peasant family will one day be noble. There is no rank in souls or bodies, and our heralds now are mere inventors of ancestry for uneasy men who, having grown rich, are ambitious to bear arms. Pedigree and genealogy both are vanities, and I put them behind me as dead and gone. A family like Turner’s, that produced a small tradesman, a bank clerk, and a solicitor, must at least have been of as good yeoman rank as Shakespeare’s. It is the middle classes, indeed, that have produced England’s greatest minds.[[58]](#endnote-58)54

Such radical thoughts (for 1861) hit a glaring target. Many families, including those of quite a few artists, imagined rather than demonstrated notable ancestries. However, if blue blood was not a requisite for artistic genius (and maybe the reverse was true), Thornbury slightly exaggerates the humbleness of Turner’s background, which was indeed middle class, as too was his own (with a number of professional relations and a family vault at The Hague). Turner’s cousins did not number one solicitor, but half a dozen, and though the family background was predominantly one of tradesmen, there were semi-gentrified connections who came into contact with the nobility. At a time when connections were vital for anyone seeking success, even the remotest may have been an asset for Turner. The Royal Academy provided an avenue to success for the humblest, but those, like Turner, lacking the ability to ingratiate themselves needed patrons predisposed to help.

Thornbury, using information from Dr. John Shaw (whose name was printed as Shand), whose grandmother, as he said, was a first cousin of Turner’s mother, continued:

There is an absurd tradition to the effect that Turner’s mother was of good family, and related to the Marshalls formerly of Shelford Manor House, near Nottingham, now the property of Lord Chesterfield. The vague story is that Turner in his youth paid a visit to his maternal connections, and that he was repulsed by them.[[59]](#endnote-59)55

Tim Marshall has recently shown that Shaw’s claims were essentially true. Turner presumably called at Shelford Manor, which had been the seat of the Earls of Chesterfield and was still owned by them, leased out to the husband of Turner’s mother’s cousin, on his tour of the Midlands in 1794.[[60]](#endnote-60)56

This relationship of course did not betoken blue blood but the blood of prosperous yeomen. The artist’s two maternal great-grandfathers were successful members of the London meat trade. One, Joseph Mallord II, became Master of the Butchers’ Company twice and had a house with portraits and other pictures in the City. The other, John Marshall, would presumably have become Master of the Vintners’ Company (as had been one of the Dashwoods), if he had lived a year or two longer. Turner’s grandfather, William Marshall, had a sizeable house in Islington with a garden and field and a carriage, and was like his father a “salesman”, a middleman between the farmers and butchers. His son was named Joseph Mallord William Marshall, quite a mouthful for the time, but does not seem to have lived up to expectations, becoming a butcher at Brentford until he retired in 1802 to Sunningwell in Berkshire.

What family wealth remained had probably gone on a dowry for the eldest daughter, who in 1755 married the son of the Marshall’s landlord in Islington, Henry Harpur, whom I have called Henry I. He was the grandson of Henry Harpur or Harper, a successful watch and clockmaker, who had homes in the City and Islington. Henry I became an attorney, a prosperous one to judge from his account at Hoare’s Bank. He also became a Commissioner in Bankruptcy through the recommendation of the Earl of Bristol. Probably he overworked, as the Countess noticed in 1736 that he was repeatedly unwell, and 1737-48 he went to live at Hollingbourne, sending his eldest son, who married Turner’s aunt, to be schooled at Maidstone.

He had some property at Broad Street, Hollingbourne, on which he voted in 1734. The chief family in the parish was the ancient one of Colepeper, and John Spencer Colepeper was one of his clients and a fellow lawyer in London, so Harpur may have acted as his bailiff in Kent until Colepeper sold his manor to a cousin, owner of Leeds Castle, in 1748. Next Harpur, with the support of the Earl of Bristol, became steward of The Duke of Somerset, who owned Northumberland House in London, Syon House outside it, Alnwick Castle and Petworth House. The Duke’s half-sister married the 3rd Earl of Aylesford (1715-77), who was Tory MP for Maidstone 1741-7 and 1754-7, and their son, the 4th Earl (1751-1812) was a talented landscape artist, who, like Sir George Beaumont, was a pupil of J.B.Malchair while at Oxford, and exhibited at the Royal Academy 1786-90. To the Dowager Countess, who resided at The Friars, Aylesford, Samuel Ireland in 1793 dedicated his views of the Medway. Harpur now lived at Westminster, and, when the Duke died in 1750, stayed on as steward for one of his heirs, the future 1st Duke of Northumberland, the patron of Canaletto and Adam and a Trustee of the British Museum. After a year or two he retired to Hatton, where the Duke had land. Towards the end of his life Turner was indebted to the steward of the 4th Duke, an art patron who after his death bought one of his pictures which is still at Alnwick Castle, as are some of Harpur’s letters.

Henry I left his property to his daughters, having procured a commission in the army for his younger son and the living of Tonbridge for his elder, Henry II. The patron of that was Viscount Vane, who had been one of Henry I’s clients, and who had manors at Hollingbourne, but lived at Fairlawn (where the son of a former steward was the poet Christopher Smart (1722-71), author of *The Hop Garden*) to the North of Tonbridge. His notorious wife published her memoirs in Smollett’s *Peregrine Pickle*, in which she described her husband as “a thin, meagre, shivering creature, of a low stature, with little black eyes, a long nose, sallow complexion, and pitted with the small pox.” She referred to Vane’s disagreeable steward, Holdman, appointed c.1737, an unnamed successor who “bore a very fair character” and an unnamed lawyer. Whether Harpur was appointed steward or solicitor is unknown. In 1818 Vane’s cousin, the 3rd Earl of Darlington, got Turner to paint Raby Castle. He may have helped to pay for his first continental trip in 1802.

Henry II was vicar of Tonbridge 1756-90. His predecessor but one, Revd. William Davis (d.1747), had cut a rather sorry figure before Mrs Montagu (Appendix 1), though his daughter married into the local gentry (Thomas Harvey, will pr.1779). Harpur’s immediate predecessor Henry Hemington (will pr.1784), perhaps encouraged to move by Vane, became Rector of Hamsey, North of Lewes. Harpur was succeeded by the Papillons, heirs of Vane, one of whom, John Rawstorne Papillon, followed George Austen in his Hampshire living, George and his cousin Henry earlier holding a curacy at Shipbourne in the gift of Vane. Henry II and Jane Austen’s father were born in almost the same year, the one going to St John’s College, Cambridge, the other to St John’s Oxford. When Henry came to Tonbridge, George was Second Master at Tonbridge School. Neither seems to have become JPs, as did John Rawstorne Papillon in 1799 and as the “squarson” successor to the Papillons, Sir Charles Hardinge Bt., did in 1814. Kent had fewer clerical JPs than had many other counties, among the exceptions being the Monypennys at Hadlow. In 1831 2 JPs out of 145 in Kent were clergy, 16 out of 153 in Middlesex, 52 out of 59 in Lincolnshire, though 0 out of 189 in Sussex.[[61]](#endnote-61)57 Hardinge reigned for 52 years, and was “an aristocrat and autocrat”, A.H.Neve in 1932 remembering as a small child “hearing in constant use, many years after the vicar’s death, the phrase ‘Sir Charles will never yield’.”[[62]](#endnote-62)58 The implied power that he exercised over the town would have existed in large degree in the case of Harpur, who would have had a finger in many pies, including the election from the school of Fellows of St John’s College, Oxford, the poor rates and even outside the town as one of those chosen to approve the Land Tax assessments in parishes round about.[[63]](#endnote-63)59

In Harpur’s day there were numerous improvements to the church, and he was probably efficient in soliciting financial contributions. Did he get any from his patron Viscount Vane either for the church or the vicarage? The latter was, when he inherited it, a sizeable building (Appendix 1), but possibly quite old. Whether he improved it is unknown, and Hardinge left it to his curates, living himself at Great Bounds, though they managed to have 4 servants. So the vicarage was clearly larger than many, but smaller than some of the quasi-manor houses that were being built by the richest incumbents. Hardinge’s father was a wealthy rector in Co. Durham, being the son of a Secretary of the Treasury; his rectory was built in 1697 and rebuilt in 1821 with a seven-bay front the year after he died.

The parish was the largest in the county, albeit quite thinly populated in parts. By 1847 its income was also one of the largest, and that must have been true in Harpur’s day, though figures are lacking. A chapel with incumbent existed at Tunbridge Wells, then largely part of Tonbridge parish, and it is not clear what share of that revenue he took. Sources of income came from glebe land (not very extensive), tithes and surplice fees, the last related to the size of the population. It has been estimated that between 1700 and 1840 benefice incomes of the richer livings on average increased by 325% with the increase in agricultural value. A decade or two after Harpur’s death the income of the Tonbridge living may have been about £1,000 (in 1830 the average income in the diocese of Rochester was £414; in Kent 6.7% had £1-2,000 and 2.5% had over £2,000). The evidence of Jane Austen’s novels is that then an income of £700-£1,000 was that of “the most prosperous pseudo-gentry families”, its “most significant consumer marker” being the possession of a carriage, which Jane’s father acquired when his income reached £700, though he found it too expensive to maintain on that.[[64]](#endnote-64)60 Harpur is not found among those paying the Carriage Tax in the 1754-66 Returns (neither are the Woodgates of Somerhill then) and may never have had one. Possibly the surrounding hills and availability of post chaises for hire in the town would have made general reliance on a horse more sensible, though his wife was used to a carriage in Islington. At Chawton, Hampshire, John Rawstorne Papillon had 64 acres of glebe, as against 3 for Henry Austen at Steventon. When the latter tried to induce the former to give up his claim to Chawton, estimates of the annual value of the living varied by £300-400, showing how difficult a true appraisal of benefices was, when the value was tied to fluctuating agricultural prices.[[65]](#endnote-65)61 In Kent it was still not unusual for the incumbent to demand payment of tithes in kind, though others had made compositions with farmers for a money payment. Either way clergy were closely involved with farming.

In 1761 Harpur’s sister Catherine died unmarried leaving all her property to the younger sister, Mary, who in 1766 married, as his second wife, John I’Anson, who succeeded to Little Bounds at Southborough (a part of Tonbridge parish) in 1764 and just before his death to the baronetcy. He was a successful attorney at Westminster (with another house at Epsom), at first in partnership with his uncle Bryan, who had a two-wheel chaise 1755-62, while John paid tax on silver for two years to July 1768 and on two male servants in 1780.[[66]](#endnote-66)62 Viscount Vane in 1782 made him one of his executors, leaving £500 to him.

Most of Henry Harpur I’s property must thus have passed to John I’Anson. In return Henry II’s son, Henry III, was articled to Bryan I’Anson on 4 March 1775 and then, on Bryan’s death, on 9 August 1775 to John Fox, perhaps a partner of John I’Anson, to whom Henry III became a partner by 1789. John died on 3 March 1800, leaving to Henry III £500, all his law books, his two sets of chambers in Cliffords Inn and house at 1 Cannon Row, Westminster (his other house at Epsom he left to his barrister son-in-law, Samuel Fyler). He also bequeathed an annuity of £22 to the widow of Henry II (Turner’s aunt) and another of £20 to the widow of Henry II’s brother, Captain Robert Harpur, who had died in Ireland. The large house remained in the occupation of Henry III and then of his wife and children until 1823/5. Cannon Row had once consisted of “town houses of the nobility, with gardens reaching down to the river”, but some had been replaced, the Duke of Manchester’s, adjacent to I’Ansons’, by Manchester Buildings, apartments for bachelor MPs.[[67]](#endnote-67)63 Henry III carried on I’Anson’s practice, opened an account at Coutts in March 1800, married the mother of his children in October and put up a monument to his father in Tonbridge church next to the large one erected by John I’Anson to his family (mentioning Henry Harpur I “of Grays Inn”). Next year he was acting for Jeremy Bentham.

The I’Ansons were friends of John Wesley, who stayed at Little Bounds with them. The occupants of Great Bounds, Sir Sydney Stafford Smythe, also had leanings towards the Methodists, as had George Stonehouse at Islington and maybe Stonhouses at Clapham. A connection was made between religious enthusiasm and madness by such Tory and Jacobite doctors as the Monros.[[68]](#endnote-68)64 Turner c.1795 attended Dr Thomas Monro’s informal art academy at his home and five years later his mother was transferred to Bethlem Hospital, to which Thomas was physician. As the C18 progressed mad doctors became more concerned about the hereditary transmission of insanity. Thus William Pargeter, *Observations on Maniacal Disorders*, 1792, referred to the danger “when madness exists in the blood of families and shews itself regularly in the several branches of the pedigree.” This raises a question in our minds of whether any other member of Turner’s family was disordered, and very probably in his own about whether he might develop the symptoms, not least when art critics accused him later of being mad. His paternal cousins after his death suggested - unsuccessfully - that he was not in his right mind when he cut them out of his will. There was another warning in the fate of the great watercolourist J.R.Cozens, who was consigned to Monro’s private asylum in Clerkenwell, dying there in 1797.

Turner’s Marshall grandfather and great-grandfather, also having Tory and Jacobite tendencies, could likewise have been anti-Methodist. The clergy with whom Turner associated all seem orthodox middle-of-the-road Anglicans, and Henry Harpur II may have been such too. Turner’s paternal relations were predominantly non-conformist, while his mistress, Sarah Danby, had on marriage become a Catholic.[[69]](#endnote-69)65 Turner was the product of mixed influences and remained paradoxical; while so matter of fact in some ways, he also to judge from his pictures harboured less mundane thoughts.[[70]](#endnote-70)65a

Henry Woodgate left £20 in his will in 1787 to Henry Harpur II. Henry III in 1805 witnessed the will of his successor, William Woodgate, who left £500 to Henry’s younger brother William, “acting for me” and in occupation of Pembury Mill. In a codicil of 1808 Woodgate revoked that legacy because he found himself “under an engagement to pay to Harpur one thousand guineas as a remuneration of his time and services while he continued in my employment which sum far exceeds any sum I ought to pay to him and consequently he can have no further claim or equity on me.”[[71]](#endnote-71)66 Farington said that Woodgate “was a man of a most narrow mind whose sole consideration seemed to be to accumulate property” (8 October 1811). His eldest son was quite different and seems to have maintained good relations with the Harpurs.

William Harpur is found at Pembury c.1792-1805. It seems that he lived at Little Hawkwell, a large farmhouse, and managed the Woodgates’ watermill for grinding corn. Maybe he was steward for the whole Hawkwell Manor in Pembury or maybe for all the Woodgates’ estates, an office which William Woodgate’s younger son John later filled. Meanwhile another son, Henry, four years younger than William Harpur, declining his father’s offer of Great Hawkwell, occupied a smaller house at Pembury, and was willed the Hawkwell Estate, the management of which he presumably then, c.1806, took over, making William Harpur redundant.

What happened to Turner’s aunt, when her husband Henry Harpur II died in 1790 is unknown, but we may guess that she soon went to live with her bachelor son William at Little Hawkwell together with her unmarried daughters. One had married a William Turner of Southwark in 1789. Two others married in 1795 and 1796, the first to Dr Richard Jordan, a surgeon of Bermondsey who inherited property in Essex, and the next to Thomas Mercer, the only child and heir of Ambrose of Greentrees at Hadlow, who had died in 1794, when he was described as “the largest hop planter in the Kingdom.”[[72]](#endnote-72)67

Farington remarked that “variations in the prices of Hops in different seasons are prodigious” (25 September 1794) and “the growth of Hops is always considered to be a lottery as to its success” (14 October 1811). In 1919 of the 144 acres of the Greentrees estate only 40 were described as “suitable for fruit or hop growing”, and Thomas Mercer may have thought it best to diversify. He went into partnership with Thomas Hugh Boorman and then to sole ownership of the Brandbridges Mill, East Peckham, a watermill on the Medway producing linseed oil and which in 1816 was capable of returning £20,000 p.a. This was a bigger operation than the watermills on the Medway tributaries and one with potential for expansion; it lay on an important crossing of the Medway, where the Medway Company had extensive wharves, and where there had been plans to drive a canal South further into the heart of the Weald.

When the Tonbridge Bank of Children, Woodgate & Scoones had to close in 1812, he started a new bank with a London merchant, John Barlow, as junior partner. This might seem rash, as the first bank had been in trouble since 1809, and other country banks had failed. (On 11 December 1812 Lord Auckland told Lord Grenville, “the Tunbridge bank, which had £90,000 in circulation and another Kentish bank, have stopped.”).[[73]](#endnote-73)68 However they were needed by farmers, such as Mercer, as a deposit for their surplus income. Sir Egerton Brydges remarked in 1834 that “the spirit and skill applied to agriculture were entirely owing to the country banks”.[[74]](#endnote-74)69 However in times of agricultural depression, as c.1812-13, farmers wanted their money back and a run on the banks started. In September 1814 Bishop, Brenchley and Bishop (The Weald of Kent/Cranbrook Bank) failed.[[75]](#endnote-75)70

Maybe questions of friendships, connections and status as well as of profit were involved in Thomas’ decision. He became friends with the Children and Woodgates as a fellow landlord, but a nouveau riche one. Maria Woodgate (the 21-year-old daughter of William) wrote on 21 January 1796 to Susan Allnutt: “I will tell you what, I have made a discovery that Mr. Mercer and Miss Harper (whom I shall distinguish by the appellation of the constant couple) will before May day enter the temple of Hymen.”[[76]](#endnote-76)71 Indeed they married on 30 January, at St Gregory by St Paul’s Cathedral, a parish situated conveniently close to Doctors’ Commons, where marriage licences were issued. Evidently Maria Sophia Harpur, if she was living at Pembury, did not wish to marry there. On 26 May 1800 Maria (?) Woodgate wrote to her brother Stephen that her father and Mr Mercer “were going to Layton to buy some horses for the young farmer … Mrs Mercer [was] safe in the straw yesterday with a daughter [Maria Sophia, b.22 May], to the great joy of that noble and ancient family.”[[77]](#endnote-77)72

Early in 1801 a letter said “We junket away at Green Trees”. In March another, to Stephen Woodgate, gave an account of Greentrees:

We had a very large party at Mr Mercers’s; there really was fish, flesh, fowl and good red herring. We made a dance of eleven couples; they certainly meant well but I had much rather have sat down to a good comfortable game of Cards, for what pleasure do you think it could have been to me to be pulled and panted about by Will Mugridge and Harper, all very good people in their way as ever lived but certainly not the most agreeable or best dancers in the world? However the Mercers meant well, so of course I was pleased.[[78]](#endnote-78)73

Mugridge, an illegitimate son of William Eldridge, a friend of William Harpur, had the fine Georgian house of The Postern. Another letter to Stephen, of May 1801, related: “Your Horse is at present under the care of Mr. Harpur who says he is the best steed in the county, & will be in excelllent condition by the time you return.”[[79]](#endnote-79)74 In June: “Tom Mercer and Mr. Luttrell are both getting better as fast as possible: what a shocking thing it would have been had either of them died.”[[80]](#endnote-80)75

On 24 March 1802 a letter described an entertainment given by Henry Woodgate of Spring Grove, Pembury. “The Greentrees” [i.e. the Mercers] and Gips met the Woodgates at Somerhill and they went together. The party lasted until 2am. Major William Francis Woodgate led off the songs and was followed by others “and seven better songs upon such an occasion were never warbled …The company were so mightily tickled by some of them that the songs were obliged to be stopped while they indulged in their laughter.”[[81]](#endnote-81)76

By the time William Woodgate died in 1809 Mercer had joined the other leading citizens, Woodgates, Childrens etc., in being one of those who had to approve the Land Tax Assessments. He never became a JP - unlike the others he had not had a classical education at Tonbridge School, though he seems to have sent his son there by 1811 to join the Woodgate children – but in the 1851 census he described himself as being a Deputy Lieutenant for the county. That he had been made one was quite probable, as it was the policy, said Hasted, to make “most of the principal gentlemen of the county” such from the time when the militia were established at the beginning of George III’s reign. (Mercer’s descendant, Fanny Marchant, erroneously described him as “High Sherrif of Kent”).[[82]](#endnote-82)77 Not only wealthy, he voted for the two Tory candidates, Knatchbull and Geary, in the 1802 election. He must have known the Tory Marquess Camden, who became Lord Lieutenant in 1808, as he was a creditor of Mercer in 1816. It was about 1808 when he became one of the gentry approving the Land Tax Assessments. In the same year he was listed as “T.Mercer Esq.” as subscriber for three copies of *Two Sermons on the Reasonableness and Salutary Effects of Fearing God* by the Tonbridge schoolmaster, the Revd. Thomas Jefferson (1757/8-1829).[[83]](#endnote-83)77a William Harpur was designated “Mr.Harpur, Hadlow” (evidently by then he was living with his brother-in-law), though at birth he would have ranked higher than Mercer. Now the latter had risen from the rank of yeoman to that of gentleman and could look forward to his son going to university and his daughters, like the Wests of the Postern, marrying into families such as the Woodgates.

The failure of the bank changed that. It stopped payment on 20 May 1815. According to his clerk, Mercer stayed at Millers Hotel, Jermyn St., St James, for three weeks to hide from creditors for fear of being arrested. However his promise that they would all be paid in full with interest was honoured by, it is said, 1827, and later recollection of him was a benevolent one.[[84]](#endnote-84)78 Whether Children & Co paid in full is less certain, but George Children was given a hero’s funeral at Tonbridge in 1818, such was the respect for him and his refusal to get out of the mess before the first bank collapsed.

In 1816 all three houses – Greentrees, Somerhill and the Childrens’ Ferox Hall – were put up for sale, the owners getting rather poor prices. They left Tonbridge, Children going to Chelsea and Woodgate eventually to France. Where Mercer went is unknown, until he turns up at Harrietsham c.1837. Possibly he stayed at first with his Saxby cousins, who had several farms at Hadlow.

The Mercers, like Jane Austen’s family, had come from Horsmonden, where William “Flea” Mercer was a prosperous farmer, though not seriously wealthy like the Austens, who had made their money earlier from the cloth-making industry before it moved North. There were other Mercer families in Kent which probably were not connected and certainly not closely. Thomas thought that he might be related to John Dunmoll Mercer (1737-1831), a quite wealthy yeoman at Hawkhurst.[[85]](#endnote-85)79 Another Mercer family, at East Farleigh, became partners in a successful bank at Maidstone, and they were related by two marriages (the first performed in 1775 by Revd. Henry Harpur) to the Saxbys and our Mercers. On the whole the other branches of our Mercers were poor and undistinguished, though a sister of Ambrose married into the long established family of millers at Hawkhurst, the Ayersts. But that was not close to Tonbridge, and Thomas seems to have had little to do with them.

He had more to do with his maternal cousins, the Nortons, Walters, Collisons (the last, though, also marrying into the Mercers). Daniel Collison, who leased the biggest farm in West Peckham, was a witness at his marriage. The Saxbys were doubly connected through the Mercers and the Nortons, as Elizabeth Mercer (1757-1832), who married Henry Saxby in 1783, was the daughter of Thomas Mercer and Mary Norton, respectively the brother and sister of our Thomas Mercer’s father and mother. We find them at Hadlow and Tudeley repeatedly involved with Thomas.

Meanwhile Jane Norton, Thomas’ aunt, in 1763 married Stephen Walter of Marden, the parish to which Thomas Mercer’s grandfather had moved from Horsmonden. Stephen was a substantial yeoman at Marden, whose sister married a member of the Monckton family of Brenchley, ancestors of the Viscounts Monckton of Brenchley. Stephen and Jane’s son Stephen went to live at Grovehurst, one of the two large Austen houses at Horsmonden. Their daughter Jane married Thomas Bold Marchant of Matfield House, Brenchley, and a son of those two, Robert, in 1869 married his cousin Fanny Woodbridge Stickings, granddaughter of Thomas Mercer. Robert became the chief partner in the big papermaking concern based at Dartford, Thomas Harry Saunders & Co., which his brother-in-law (now in the *Dictionary of National Biography*) had created. In that he had one of the Moncktons as his manager. Fanny researched the family history back to Turner and beyond, somewhat imaginatively, claiming that the Harpurs were decended from the baronets of that name in Derbyshire. We may perhaps picture the vicar of Tonbridge, like one of Jane Austen’s characters, avidly perusing the *Baronetage*. One of Fanny’s sons trained as an architect under Lutyens, while the daughter of her sister Georgiana married James Stirling, a member of the family of inventors and railway engine designers (there is now a Stirling Society) and the chief engineer to the S.E.Railway.

Two of Thomas Mercer’s daughters never married, whether because they were plain or because they had virtually no money. They and a third became schoolteachers. However the youngest, Georgiana, in 1834 married a surgeon, George Stickings, who had a long career at Lenham. They had a large family, including the aforementioned Fanny Woodbridge. Perhaps it was partly to be near the Stickings that Thomas Mercer in 1837 succeeded the family of the great Kent cricketer, Alfred Mynn, at Goddington Farm, Harrietsham, which had some 30 acres, some devoted to hops. This was almost a stone’s throw from the house of the Colepeper client and patron of Henry Harpur I, Greenway Court, Hollingbourne, the parish in which Mary Sophia Mercer’s father had been brought up. A generation ago a descendant called at Goddington and at Tonbridge enquiring about Thomas Mercer.[[86]](#endnote-86)80

# Chapter 5: Turner and his Cousins

If one of his maternal cousins at the end of the C19 took a slight interest in Turner, how far had Turner earlier concerned himself with them? Was the commission to paint Somerhill just a coincidence, which would have been given anyway, even if Major Woodgate had not known William Harpur and Thomas Mercer? Did Turner really visit Tonbridge more than once or twice, and then only in passing?

Henry Harpur IV became Turner’s solicitor in c.1840, and one of his executors in 1848, and was chief mourner at his funeral. When he made his own will in 1875, he bequeathed two marine paintings by Turner to the National Gallery, which declined them, and which he had presumably been given out of friendship or in lieu of payment for his legal services. The two cousins had been brought together when Turner’s uncle, J.M.W.Marshall, died in 1820, and the Mallord property was divided between them. However Henry IV said that he had known Turner 50 years when the latter died, that is since c.1800. At that date Harpur was nearly 10 and his family had just moved into the large house, 1 Cannon Row, Westminster, where it would have been easy for Turner to visit them. Turner’s mother was in Bethlem Hospital. How did that affect relations? One could imagine that Turner’s father might have thought that she was the Harpurs’ problem, being her blood relations and having more money than he did. The Harpurs conversely might have wanted nothing to do with the matter. However in 1804 she was buried, as her parents had been, at Islington. Was that due to the intervention of her brother, J.M.W.Marshall, who had retired to near Oxford in 1802?

It is likely that after their parents deaths’ in 1758-61 she had acted as his housekeeper until she married in 1774, followed by his doing likewise in 1776. That Turner was sent to Brentford to stay with him and go to school there a decade later, and also to stay with his uncle’s sister-in-law near Oxford, suggests that relations remained good. On 12 May 1803 Farington recorded: “A Clergyman [perhaps the Revd. Henry Scott Trimmer] has complained of T[urner] neglecting an Uncle, a Butcher, who once supported him for 3 years. He has become Academical. He does not look towards him.” The previous year had been very eventful for Turner, who had been elected R.A. and had visited France and Switzerland. The estrangement was only temporary, as after his uncle’s death Turner took an interest in his widow’s concerns.

What was the relationship, however, with the eldest sister, Sarah? She had married Henry Harpur II much earlier, a marriage to which none of the Harpurs, perhaps significantly, was witness. The couple seem to have received much of the remaining Marshall wealth as their settlement, which might not have endeared them to the Marshall siblings. However we find that Turner drew Pembury Mill some time before 1808, presumably in the years when William Harpur “occupied” it (c.1798-c.1806). This suggests that he called on his aunt and cousin. It has been supposed that he visited Tonbridge and Pembury on a tour of Kent in 1793. It seems quite likely he stayed at Little Hawkwell, Pembury, then and maybe again a decade later. The house was quite large and probably occupied just by his aunt, her younger son and two unmarried (until 1795-6) daughters apart from servants.

Had Turner visited Tonbridge before his uncle the vicar died in October 1790? The vicarage had been sizeable, but in, say, 1787, had to accommodate maybe five children aged 13-27 as well as their parents and servants. If relations between his mother and Mrs Harpur were good, a visit was quite likely, as it was only 35 miles from London, from which his parents were evidently keen to get him out by c.1785. A watercolour of All Saints, Maidstone, of c.1787 (of which there may be more than one version) might belong to such a visit, and would surely have interested the vicar of Tonbridge, who had received his schooling at Maidstone. However both Maidstone and Tonbridge drawings *could* be based on ones by others (though the evidence for that hypothesis too is lacking). Turner’s friend from Brentford, Henry Scott Trimmer, visited his elder sister Selina and the Countess Spencer at Tunbridge Wells in July 1789.[[87]](#endnote-87)81a Might he and Turner have gone together to Tonbridge?

The youngest of the Harpur children was Jane, four months older than Turner and destined to die in July 1790, the eldest having died in 1785. The three surviving daughters all married in Southwark or London 1789-96, and one might wonder if the Turners went to any of the weddings or if Turner was prevailed on to make presents of his drawings. I have made the suggestion that the first watercolour of a mill at Pembury and another of the same size (8x11 ins) of Waltham Abbey, which are found in the same ownership in the C19, might have been given when Charlotte Harpur married Richard Jordan of Essex in 1795, and that the second larger one of Pembury Mill was given for the marriage of Mary Sophia Harpur to Thomas Mercer in 1796. For the marriage of his great friend James Holworthy in 1821 he gave a pair of watercolours, and in the 1790s he was presenting the odd watercolour to artist colleagues. It might be asked whether the drawing of Tonbridge Castle, of the same size and date as the *Waltham Abbey,* would not, as a mediaeval ruin of the same period, have made a more fitting pair. However Turner loved contrasting juxtapositions such as that of an abbey and a working mill, an aspect of his wish, which lay behind his *Liber Studiorum* and bequests to the National Gallery, to encompass a broad spectrum of life and art and to give his works a connected and cumulative effect.

In 1801 Turner’s eldest daughter by Mrs Sarah Danby was born at Hastings and baptised at Guestling by John Ashburnham, whose mother had been the sister of William Woodgate; John’s sister was to marry in 1804 James Eldridge West of The Postern, who succeeded the Woodgates at Tonbridge Castle. Surely that was not a coincidence? John’s brothers were interested in art. The eldest, Sir William, wrote verse and tragedies and corresponded with Samuel Rogers.[[88]](#endnote-88)81 He made drawings under the tuition of Mary Anne Humphry and visited the R.A. exhibition in 1830 with his brothers John and Denny. He wrote to Denny on 24 May 1836 from 27 Upper Marylebone Street (not so far from Turner’s gallery), “I have left unnoticed many excellent paintings of Daniell, Landseer, Turner & others which I must see again before I can attempt to describe them.”[[89]](#endnote-89)82 Denny Ashburnham in 1833 wrote to William about a visit to the British Institution, then showing the works of Reynolds, Lawrence and West: “Here you have a good opportunity of comparing ye respective merits of each artist, & in my opinion the former stands pre-eminently foremost. Many of his pictures reminded me of days of yore, when painting was ye rage; when we all were artists & when nothing delighted me more than to accompany my father and yourself & my brother John to ye Royal Academy.”[[90]](#endnote-90)83 That would have been in the last days of Reynolds and the first of Turner at the Academy.

Their brother John by 1801 was evidently another of Turner’s clerical friends. An earlier John, who had died of consumption in his 24th year, had been mourned by John Byng in verse and on his tour of 1788, as someone who

Saw thro false life, and all its follies scorn’d

Nor flatter’d meanness, tho’ with wealth adorn’d.[[91]](#endnote-91)84

The fact that Turner and Sarah were not married was glossed over in the parish register. Henry Harpur III seems only to have married in 1800, on the accession of his I’Anson legacy, though his eldest son was born in 1791 (which makes one wonder how the latter, but not his younger siblings, some born after 1800, was entitled to half of the Mallord inheritance). So the Harpurs could hardly look askance at Turner’s situation, which was the same as that of the Earl of Egremont, the Royal Dukes and others in society.

Sarah Danby, as the widow of a distinguished musician, whose last book of catches and glees was dedicated to the Duke and Duchess of York, would surely have been appreciated.[[92]](#endnote-92)85 The Woodgates “were all passionately devoted to music,” we are told by their historians.[[93]](#endnote-93)86 On 16 June 1800 Major Woodgate wrote to his brother Stephen (at Oxford 1798-1802, an exact contemporary of Charles Hardinge and Henry Scott Trimmer), “By all means attend the whole of the music next week, particularly the Business for Calcott’s Degree, as I understand from Sale & Neild that it is a prodigiously fine Composition. You will be charmed with Elliott.”[[94]](#endnote-94)87 John Wall Callcott received his doctorate that year at Oxford, and was elder brother of Augustus Wall Callcott, who became Turner’s closest follower. J.W.Callcott was a subscriber to Books 1, 3 and 4 of Danby’s Glees, Sale to Books 3 and 4 and Nield and Master Elliott to Book 4. On 4 December 1800 from the same to the same: “We had a very good concert here on Monday night, tho but thinly attended, but there was money collected sufficient to pay Sale, Page & Mr Smart.”[[95]](#endnote-95)88 John Page, Deputy Vicar Choral of St. Paul’s Cathedral, was a subscriber to Book 4.

Turner was trying to learn to play the flute and jotting down words from popular songs at this time, no doubt under the influence of Sarah Danby.[[96]](#endnote-96)89 Quite possibly they would have been welcome guests at the Regency table of the musical and raffish Major, who also had some interest in art. Ozias Humphry, R.A. and “something of a genealogist”, writing from London to his brother at Seal in April 1799, said, “I met Will: Woodgate of the Castle at Lord Camden’s and am to go with him to the Exhibition on Thursday.”[[97]](#endnote-97)90

Turner’s appreciation of popular songs is echoed in his watercolours of Richmond, Yorkshire, c.1818-28, in each of which a girl is prominently depicted, surely in allusion to *Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill,* a song that was a hit at Vauxhall Gardens in 1789, the year after Sarah Goose married John Danby, who was then also having success there with his own songs. The words were written by an Irish barrister, Leonard McNally, who in 1787 had married Frances I’Anson, whose father William was a second cousin of John I’Anson, eight years his senior, and was like him an attorney in London. Frances’ brother Thomas had an art collection at Richmond, Yorkshire. Turner might have known this link. It has been objected that the song more likely refers to Richmond, Surrey, but Yorkshiremen seem to have appropriated it, as maybe Turner discovered when travelling in their county in 1797 and 1816. The antiquarians have questioned not only the connection with Yorkshire, but also the identification of Frances I’Anson as the lass. Turner, who happily transported Juliet from Verona to Venice, would surely have laughed at such pedantry applied to works of fiction. His watercolours seem to say that Yorkshire too had a claim to the Lass.[[98]](#endnote-98)91

Returning to Tonbridge, we find Turner’s plate of *Pembury Mill* waspublished on 10 June 1808, and no doubt planned a year or two earlier, when William Harpur was in occupation of the mill, surely not just another coincidence. The drawing for it could have gone back to the 1790s, as he drew on early material for other plates. There are a drawing of a mill at Pembury of that time in an American museum and the two watercolours of the same mill at the V&A and BM. However, if Turner was making annual visits to the Wells at Knockholt from 1801, it is not inconceivable that in one of those years he went on to Pembury to see his aunt or maybe his cousin at Hadlow. The “Harvest Home” sketchbook (TB LXXXVI) dated vaguely c.1804-9 has a drawing identified as of Somerhill by Finberg and sketches of village life. (Ruskin jotted the comments: “Useless, except as samples of Turner’s want of power over expression in human face. They are sketches of a merrymaking, with failures in trying to catch the expression of a drunken negro.”)[[99]](#endnote-99)92 However David Hill has suggested that the place represented was Cassiobury, not Somerhill.

Finally the commission to paint Somerhill in 1810 could simply have arisen from Major Woodgate’s visits to the London exhibitions, but he must surely also have known about Turner from William Harpur and Thomas Mercer and also from his brother-in-law John Allnutt, who may have started buying Turner’s work in 1798, and maybe also from Ozias Humphry RA, whose brother, the Rector of Seal, had married Elizabeth Woodgate, the Major’s aunt, in 1778.

However the fact that Turner later made Henry Harpur IV his solicitor supports the idea that his relations with his maternal cousins had been quite close. Harpur had had a younger brother baptised Thomas Mercer Harpur in 1803, and so there was a bond between the Harpurs in Westminster and the Mercers at Hadlow, and it would not be surprising if Turner, if familiar with the first, had called on the latter as well in the years 1796-1810. His youngest daughter, Georgiana, seems to have been born c.1811, and the following year the Mercers had their youngest baptised with the same name. Was that just a coincidence? It was not a very common name. Turner may have chosen it in memory of Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, for whom one of his Trimmer friends worked as governess, as well as in allusion to the Prince Regent, whose patronage he was trying to gain. The Mercers may have been loyal royalists. Both Turner and Mercer were on the upward path. The latter was rich and seemingly agreeable, if not evidently interested in art. Association with him could only have been beneficial to Turner and a feather in Mercer’s cap.

Much changed at Tonbridge after the bank failures and the appearance of new men, as it did generally after the Reform Bill. Captain Henry Napier, a keen supporter of Reform, in 1832 in Hertfordshire noted that (unlike in Cambridgeshire then or Sussex in his boyhood),

The Labourers here, with whom I often talk, lament old times when Farmers were not Gentlemen, when their wives and daughters could make butter and cheese and take care of their poultry and took their eggs to market themselves on horseback; when the Farmer was not ashamed to Live with his men and let them eat at his own table; when he gave “Harvest-home” dinners … and considered his labourers as part of his family! But now they are estranged, enemies in fact: the farmer drinks his Port, sometimes Claret and even champagne, & the wife & daughter have Piano Forte’s and music parties while the Labourers’ wages are diminished, half.[[100]](#endnote-100)93

Hasted had detected such changes a couple of generations earlier, when he remarked that the term “yeoman” had come to designate two different categories, the common yeomanry and gentlemen farmers with an income of £400-£1,200 p.a.[[101]](#endnote-101)94 Since 1778 farm incomes had increased greatly, but even so the Mercers clearly qualified to be gentlemen rather than yeomen. Parallel to the inflation in farming incomes ran one in class designations, so that the terms “gentleman” and “esquire” were applied ever less restrictively, and the middle class frequently baptised their children with two or more Christian names.

Thornbury observed in 1861 that Turner’s patrons latterly were drawn mainly from the Northern industrialists rather than the aristocracy and gentry. The social change was reflected somewhat at Tonbridge. However Sir Charles Hardinge Bt. continued as vicar until 1864 and at Pembury the Woodgates still supplied the vicar as late as 1911. There can still today be found inhabitants with the old names - Children, Streatfeild, Waite etc. - even if Turner’s visits and connections have long been lost in the mists of time.

John Allnutt was still buying Turners in 1838. His brother, Richard, had died in 1827, and his home, South Park at Penshurst, became the home of 1st Viscount Hardinge, whose brother, Sir Charles, had, as we have seen, become the vicar of Tonbridge and whose sister had married Major Woodgate’s brother in 1809. Viscount Hardinge was one of those who attended a meeting at Somerset House (in the early 1840s?), at which “ it was unanimously agreed to buy two pictures of Turner for presentation to the National Gallery, as monuments of Art for the incitement and instruction of artists and Art-lovers for all time.”[[102]](#endnote-102)95 The offer of £5,000 for two pictures was conveyed through Turner’s agent, Thomas Griffith, but declined by Turner, who had already left two to the National Gallery in his will, perhaps because he wished to ensure that they were accepted on his terms.

Another of those proposing the purchase was Sir Walter James, later 1st Baron Northbourne, whose mother had married Hardinge as his second wife. Hardinge’s son, the 2nd Viscount, an amateur artist, was Chairman of the National Gallery Trustees when they initiated in 1882-3 the overthrow of Turner’s wishes for his “Turner’s Gallery”. He had already, as a member of the House of Lords Select Committee on that in 1861, shown some reluctance to put Turner’s wishes first. To judge from Thornbury, his uncle’s brother-in-law, John Allnutt, was still smarting then from Turner’s conduct to him, as he may have also told William Wells, another Penshurst resident, who was a Trustee of the National Gallery from 1835 (the year after Turner’s executor, Samuel Rogers, also became one) until his death in 1847. [[103]](#endnote-103)95a

Turner was one of those who are unhelpfully sometimes called “their own worst enemy.” His occasional boorish behaviour had alienated acquaintances such as Joseph Farington and Ozias Humphry, and has been used as one of the ever-changing excuses for the nation’s failure to treat his bequest (now worth perhaps £5 billion) as it has deserved. Yet he maintained friendships with other patrons and with some loyal members of his family (his father, his Harpur cousin, Hannah Danby, niece of his former partner) and others among his artist contemporaries. After his death William Bewick wrote:

Although so very close in money affairs, he was a cordial old chap. I was never introduced to him, but he came boldly up to me and held out his (extraordinary) hand, and being, as I am, a judge of shakes, his shake told me his character, and we thereupon gave a double shake. He was very pleasant, and you would have been mighty fond of him, but you could have seen no rainbow or prismatic colours in his costume.[[104]](#endnote-104)96

A decade later Bewick exclaimed:

Is it not a triumph to see such wonderful combinations of poetical conception, breadth of treatment, and colour that rivals the brilliancy of the sun! … Why, Davison, why don’t you go mad when in the Turner Gallery? How do you contain yourself?[[105]](#endnote-105)97

Turner might have been gratified by such enthusiasm, though not completely if it signified admiration of his later works only. The Turner Gallery which he planned was equally to show his earlier ones and those in the subdued vein in which he tried to capture the English countryside. He must have first learned to love that along the banks of the Medway and Thames. For this he was largely indebted to his maternal relations, his uncle at Brentford and in Berkshire, his aunt and her children at Tonbridge. His first visit to his father’s native county, Devon, seems to have taken place only in 1811, the year after possibly his last to Tonbridge, though he had stayed with friends of his father at Bristol in 1791-2 and toured from there. If he acquired hardly any patrons in Kent (leaving aside the outer fringes of London), the same was true at that date of other artists. That may help account for the lack of finished pictures and watercolours of the area. Whether more evidence for his sketching along the Medway will be found remains to be seen.

Today Turner’s name is more celebrated than ever, though he still has not quite captured the heart of the British public. He received no nomination from a TV audience to be voted the greatest Briton nor indeed has he been a candidate to fill the empty plinth in Trafalgar Square, a situation he more than any other is qualified to fill, by his bequests to the National Gallery, his associations with neighbouring buildings, his celebrations of Trafalgar and his espousal of matters of national concern, for which Trafalgar Square has become the customary popular forum. Part of the problem may have been that he was so various, ranging from the reinterpretation of traditional themes to the exploration of wholly new ones. So much of his early work seems tame to admirers of the the later works, if they ever look at it, while those who like undemanding watercolours of country views fail to do justice to the grandeur of his purpose throughout. When we at last get a proper Turner Gallery, which adequately shows his full range (besides exhibiting individual works in the conditions they demand) in a context that does justice to the ideas of the Romantic Age and of such as Alison or Ruskin rather than purely academic ones, a true taste for Turner’s *oeuvre* as a whole will cease to be the preserve of a few enthusiasts.

# References

1. 1 Finberg, 1961, chap.37. I have published all the relevant documents. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. 2 Thornbury, pp.491-2. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. 3 Fred.G.H.Bachrach, *Turner’s Holland*, Tate Gallery, 1994. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. 4 P.Napier, p.145. This was on Napier’s visit to the Bridgewater Gallery at Cleveland House in April 1831. Napier’s point was that Turner was ignorant of nautical matters, whereas Bachrach’s was the opposite. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. 5 M.Barton; E.J.Climenson; Appendix 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. 6 Lady Eastlake, *Journals & Correspondence*, 1895, I, p.119. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. 6 a R.Sweet, pp.49-57, notes the preponderance of clergymen among antiquaries. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. 7 Brydges, I p.65. Brydges contributed a biography of Milton to the edition of his Works illustrated by Turner in 1835. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. 8 Brydges, I p.189. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. 9 Brydges, I p.322. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. 1 0 Brydges, II, p.113. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. 1 1 Finberg 1961, p.180. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. 1 2 John Rothenstein and Martin Butlin, *Turner*, 1964, p.27. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. 1 3 Lindsay, 1966, pp.107-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. 1 3a Ian Warrell, Picture Note, *Turner Studies*, IX,1, Summer 1989, pp.63-4; Whittingham 2005. See also Appendices 6 and 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. 1 4 Herrmann, p.46. In the 1st edition I suggested it was a morning view, but see Appendix 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. 1 5 Thornbury, p.498. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. 1 6 Finberg 1910, p.57; cf. Wilkinson, 1982, p.55. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. 1 7 Rawlinson, I, p.9, no.25. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. 1 8 Vallance; Cormack, pp.27-8, no.3; Wilton 1979, no.112. Samuel Ireland (1792-3) and Farington (1794-5) show a less leafy scene akin to Turner’s print (1793-5). Combe and Farington discussed the Medway project on 17.9.1794 (Farington). In 1795 Paul Sandby exhibited at R.A. *A View of Tonbridge Town and Castle.* He too must have toured the Medway in 1793 or early 1794 (he exhibited views of Maidstone and Rochester at the RA in 1794) – and seems to have visited Tonbridge before. See Appendix 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. 1 9 The two pencil drawings were acquired by Virginia Museum of Art, Richmond, Va., in 1986 (Malcolm Cormack informs me). Turner’s cousin, William Harpur, was probably living from 1791-2 at Little Hawkwell, from which paths lead to Keyes Mill, Pembury. Hawkwell or Pembury Mill was equidistant from Little Hawkwell, but Harpur did not “occupy” that until a few years later. See pages 44,53, 72-6, and Appendices 6 and 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. 2 0 Thornbury, p.45; cf. pp.3, 92, 96. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. 2 1 Hamilton pp.17-18. S.Whittingham, *Of Geese …, III,* collects most of the sources on Turner and Margate. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. 2 2 G.Smith, pp.45-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. 2 3 See Farington’s Diary for all the references to his remarks. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. 2 4 William Cobbett, *Rural Rides,* ed. E.W.Martin, 1958, p.251. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. 2 5 Rigaud pp.105-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. 2 6 Hamilton, p.59. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. 2 7 Thornbury p.235. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. 2 8 Andrews and Scull, p.165. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. 2 9 Thornbury p.235. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. 3 0 Thornbury p.224. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. 3 1 Wilton 1988. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. 3 2 Thornbury, p.45. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. 3 3 Michael Lloyd, *J.M.W.Turner,* National Gallery of Australia, 1996, pp.209-10, following some research I undertook. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. 3 4 Rigaud, p.109; Appendix 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. 3 5 On the Trimmers and Stonhouses, see Whittingham, *Of Geese …, IV, Marshalls & Harpurs.* [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. 3 6 On Sarah Danby, the baptism of their daughter, Evelina, in 1801 at Guestling, near Hastings, see Whittingham, *Of Geese …, I, The Danbys.* [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. 3 7 On Knockholt and W.F.Wells, see Chittock; Wheeler. See also Gazetteer (Sevenoaks Area; and, for William Wells, Penshurst). [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. 3 8 Thornbury, p.598. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. 3 9 Woodgates, p.372. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. 4 0 Woodgates, p.372. Camden was 1st cousin once removed of Richard Wilson R.A. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. 4 0a Sir Richard Colt Hoare thought Abergavenny a picturesque place. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. 4 1 Finberg, p.156. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. 4 2 On Allnutt see Macleod; Noble. Mrs Mary Wigan (see Ayerst genealogy) has drawn my attention to her connection with Allnutt’s second wife, Eleanora Brandram. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. 4 3 Thornbury, pp.296-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. 4 4 Thornbury, p.305. Allnutt “has been much imposed on by artists in general,” said Constable in 1825 (*John Constable’s Correspondence*, IV, p.85). [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. 4 5 On Ozias Humphry, see Farington; Woodgates; G.C.Williamson; John Brewer, *The Pleasures of Imagination*, 1997, pp.295ff. His diaries are in the Royal Academy Library. Turner solicited Humphry’s attention when he first opened his gallery in 1804 (*Turner Studies,* VI,1, Summer 1986, p.2). [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. 4 6 See House of Commons, Thorne, I, p.215; Appendix 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. 4 7 Thornbury, pp.265, 282. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. 4 8 Streatfeild, p.48. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. 4 9 Stanhope, p.252. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. 5 0 On J.G.Children and his father see Atkins; Gunther; Hoole 1978; *Gentleman’s Magazine*; Woodgates; *Oxford DNB* (correcting the view that George himself was a scientist). On Turner and science, Hamilton 1998. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. 5 0a In Holden’s 1809-11 directory Henry Woodgate Esq. was at 13 Argyle St (Turner wrote a letter from Argyle St in 1806); and William Woodgate Esq. at 41 Bryanstone St (where Henry was in 1811). W.F.Woodgate had a house in Hanover Sq. soon after. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. 5 1 On the Ashburnhams of Guestling, see Woodgates, chap. 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. 5 2 Woodgates, p.92. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. 5 3 W.B.Woodgate; Woodgates, p.375. Some Turner early house-portraits could be seen in the drawing rooms of Harewood House, Hanover Sq. (inventory of c.1814; *Turner Studies,* IV,2, Winter 1984, p.33). [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. 5 4 Thornbury, p.3. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. 5 5 Thornbury, pp.4-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. 5 6 Tim Marshall, unpublished papers; Whittingham, *Of Geese …, IV, Marshalls & Harpurs.* [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. 5 7 I.Collins; P.Virgin; S.B.B.Black 1987. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. 5 8 Neve, p.226. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. 5 9 Chalklin 1994. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. 6 0 Copeland, pp.135-7. See also I.Collins; P.Virgin; Appendix 1; Gazetteer (Tonbridge). Goldsmith had said that a country clergyman could be “passing rich on forty pounds a year.” [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. 6 1 I.Collins, p.57. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. 6 2 Public Record Office, T47/2; T47/6. In 1780 at Tonbridge William Woodgate paid on 3 male servants, Henry on 1, Mrs Woodgate on 1, Mrs Weller, Thomas Hooker and Mrs Harvey each on 2. Suspected defaulters on the silver plate tax 1757-68 were the Revd. James Cawthorn and James Eldridge. On the I’Ansons, see I’Anson; Whittingham, *Of Geese …, IV, Marshalls & Harpurs.* [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. 6 3 Rev. Mackenzie E.C.Walcott, *Westminster,* 1849, pp.76-8. In 1803 Jane Austen’s brother, Henry, was at 2 Cannon Row (*The Jane Austen Society Report for 2002,* pp.49-51). [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. 6 4 Andrews & Scull. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. 6 5 On the Danbys, see Whittingham, *Of Geese…, I, The Danbys.* Their friend, Charles Butler, was the influential secretary of the committee of Catholic laymen formed in 1782 to promote their interest. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. 6 5a Amal Asfour and Paul Williamson, *Gainsborough’s Vision,* chap.2, 1999, suggest a Nonconformist influence on Gainsborough (son of a Congregationalist and an Anglican) and landscape painting generally. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. 6 6 Woodgates, p.373. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. 6 7 *MaidstoneJournal,* 441, Tues. 1 July 1794; *European Magazine*, 26, July 1794, p.78. See Appendix 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. 6 8 Hist. MSS Comm., 30 Fortescue X; Neve, p.46; *Kent Archaeological Society Newsletter*, 21, 1992. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. 6 9 Brydges, I, p.198. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. 7 0 P.Allen. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. 7 1 Woodgates, p.337. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. 7 2 Woodgates, p.351. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. 7 3 Woodgates, p.358. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. 7 4 Woodgates, p.362. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. 7 5 Woodgates, p.364. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. 7 6 Woodgates, p.430. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. 7 7 Hasted, I; Mrs R.Marchant. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. 7 7a Curiously Jefferson is called “Rector” of the parish on his monument in Tonbridge parish church. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. 7 8 Diary of John King (CKS, Maidstone); Neve p.49. See also Appendix 3; Woodgates. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. 7 9 Mrs R.Marchant. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. 8 0 On the Mercers etc., see further Whittingham, *Of Geese …, IV, Marshalls & Harpurs.* [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. 8 1a Lady Spencer to Lady Caroline Howe 12 July 1789 (BL, Add MSS 7566634-7). Trimmer had a guide to Tunbridge Wells with an inscription from Lady Spencer, 1789 (Dr Greg Finch). [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. 8 1 Woodgates; 3 letters from him to Rogers 1824-30 are in the Sharpe MSS, 14/10-16, University College London. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. 8 2 Maidstone, CKS, U1050/c164. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. 8 3 Woodgates, p.136. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. 8 4 Byng, Tour of Sussex 1788, *Torrington Diaries,* vol.4. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. 8 5 Copies of the first two books of glees are in Canterbury Cathedral Library. See Oxford DNB further on John Danby. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. 8 6 Woodgates p.352. The Major in 1821 after bankruptcy retained “his enthusiastic fondness of musick” (Woodgates, p.382). [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. 8 7 Woodgates, p.352. [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. 8 8 Woodgates, p.357. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. 8 9 On Turner’s interest in music, see, amongst others, Ann Livermore, “Turner and Music”, *Music and Letters*, XXXVIII, 2, April 1957, pp.170-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. 9 0 Woodgates, p.350. [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. 9 On and the Danby link with N.Yorkshire see Whittingham, *Of Geese, I, The Danbys.* On the Lass, see B.I’Anson; L.Wenham. Wenham missed the I’Anson link with the Harpurs and so with Turner. An I’Anson at Richmond when Turner was there had an art collection.

    Finberg 1909, I, p.225. [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. 9 [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. 9 3 H.Napier, op.cit., and MS Journals. [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. 9 4 Hasted, I, p.cxxxvi. [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. 9 5 Thornbury, p.182. [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. 9 5a See note 44. [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. 9 6 Thomas Landseer, *Life & Letters of William Bewick*, 1871, II, p.158. [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. 9 7 ibid., II, p.197. [↑](#endnote-ref-105)