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The life and afterlife of the Craven Heifer: on the biography of a famed beast

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Abstract

The mania for agricultural ‘improvement’ in England at the turn of the nineteenth century extended in often paradoxical ways to livestock. At once the pursuit of perfection was a matter of yields – deadweights, number of progeny, milk volumes – and fitter and stronger animals. However, the same imperatives also encouraged the breeding of outlandishly large but often unfit animals. Such cattle, sheep, and pigs became status symbols, evidence of their owners’ success, their celebrity further fuelled by paintings that distended their proportions in cartoonish ways and through being toured and exhibited to the public. (In)famous and ubiquitous yet curiously little studied, this paper takes one such famed animal – the so-called Craven Heifer, born on the Bolton Abbey Estate in 1807 – and through a study of its life, reception, and afterlife attempts to better understand the complex histories of celebrity farm animals.

In May 2008 the story of Chilli, a 6’6” tall Friesian bullock, took British print, television, and online news media by storm. Believing him to be the tallest cow in Britain, Chilli’s owners had applied to Guinness World Records to have their claim verified. For a moment, Chilli was not only the most famous bovine in Britain but also one of the most featured living things.¹

Abandoned as a young calf in 1999 at the door of an animal rescue shelter at Ferne near Chard, Somerset, Chilli had proceeded to grow at a prodigious rate, overtaking the height of Britain's previous tallest living cow, the Colonel, who had been raised by large cow specialist Arthur Duckett at nearby Alstone. Chilli's celebrity soon drew crowds (and funds) to the shelter, but a year later, on the advice of vets, he was euthanised, his huge size placing a massive strain on his joints leading to crippling arthritis. Chilli's demise was also widely covered, the grim reality hidden behind such noble headlines as 'Chilli the giant cow dies'.² Truly, as the *Farmers Weekly* put it, Chilli had been a 'media phenomenon'.³

The story of Chilli, and indeed that of other 'giant' cows in the recent past, bears remarkable parallels to the case of gigantic livestock at the turn of the nineteenth century. A boom in livestock breeding in the final decades of the eighteenth century, in part fuelled by a huge increase in the demand for meat and in part due to the fashionable nature of agricultural improvement, gave rise to the cultish status of celebrated and often prodigiously large farm animals. Cattle such as The Durham Ox, Comet, The White Heifer that Travelled, Duchess, Red Rose, the Ketton Ox, the Lincolnshire Ox, amongst many others, found fame not just through being exhibited at agricultural and private shows – and in the case of some animals through being toured wherein members of the public would pay to see the famed beast – but also through portraiture.⁴ The names and likenesses of some of these remarkable beasts lives on through pub names – one directory of pubs listing eleven pubs currently trading and a further eight recently closed named after the Durham Ox – and in a revived interest in early nineteenth century farm animal portraiture.⁵ But the animals themselves remain obscure, their lives hidden behind the almost comedic condescension of posterity that has become their lot due to their portraits so often grotesquely exaggerating their physical form.

This paper seeks to remedy this by telling the life one such celebrated cow, the Craven Heifer. Born in the Craven District of North Yorkshire in March 1807, the Craven Heifer gained notoriety by virtue of her gargantuan size, at her peak weighing 312 stones, and measuring some 11ft 4ins in length and over 7ft in height making her the supposedly the largest heifer in England. Beyond offering for the first time a systematic biography of a once famous farm animal, and thus taking the remarkably sparse historiography on giant Georgian and Victorian

livestock in new directions,⁶ the focus on the Craven Heifer also offers a way of understanding both the place (and places) of livestock beyond the farmyard and field but also the one-time mania for such extraordinary animals.

Drawing inspiration from works of animal studies that have followed individual animals, not least the work of geographers Phil Howell and Chris Bear,⁷ this paper offers a corrective to agrarian histories in which the individual farm animal has been altogether lost, subsumed into an amorphous animal collective. Indeed, a narrowly socio-economic view of the function of agrarian history serves to not only ignore the agency and subjectivities of animals but also the vital role that animals' being and presence played in determining the very form and practices of agriculture past and present.⁸ Of course, the very process of the industrialisation of the making of meat – this driven by the need to feed Britain's rapidly growing industrial population – acted, as Timothy Pachirat has noted, to denude individual animals of their distinguishing features and characters.⁹ The archive shadows this process, individual animals relegated to numbers in ledgers. Historians have duly followed course.

This is not to say that all work in agrarian history has relegated the animal to the status of things to be acted upon – the subject of improvement rather than the subject itself – for some notable studies have concentrated on the history of specific livestock breeds. Indeed, recent work by Rebecca Wood has shown the importance of focusing not on the species – cattle and sheep in the case of her landmark book – but on the breed to better understand the scales and plays of ecological imperialism.¹⁰ The pioneering work of Harriet Ritvo, Hilda Kean and the wider animal studies movement has also inspired a renewed attention on the places of animals in agricultural history, human-animal relations, violences enacted against animals on farms, and animal health and welfare, the work of Abigail Woods and Karen Sayer blazing a trail.¹¹ We also do well to remember that works of agricultural history on the general theme of improvement have long since mentioned the breeding exploits of such famed individuals as Robert Bakewell, the Leicestershire farmer who as much perfected the arts of self-publicity as he did the principles of improved livestock through interbreeding.¹²

As it will be seen, there can be no doubt that the life of the Craven Heifer was in many ways very different to that of most cattle kept by British farmers. Most cows were not raised as

curiosities or to be shown. Nor were they were subjected to the wretched paradox of pampering and torturous touring. Rather, they lived their lives in the byres, barns, commons, fields, roamed feral in the open spaces of the globe, or were engaged as beasts of burden at the plough or in front of the cart and waggon. To claim the Craven Heifer can be read as an ‘every cow’ is thus an evident fallacy. Yet to research a famed beast, however apart from the rest of the species, is still to study an *individual*, their life no less important than any other animal. Indeed, celebrity animals might live very different lives to other members of their species but they represented a distinct form of individual that in itself is worthy attention. We also do well to remember that the very visibility of celebrity cattle, whether through touring or the reproduction of prints, meant that to large parts of the (particularly urban) population such animals did become a proxy for all cows. The Craven Heifer might be placed apart, but her innate ‘cow-ness’ – biologically and behaviourally – mattered and continues to matter.

There is also a critical methodological point in that writing the life of an individual farm animal is necessarily circumscribed by the paucity of material. Celebrity cattle, like the Craven Heifer, leave a fuller, if not fulsome, archive; an archive dominated by her enrolment in human circuits but that occasionally speaks to her own agency and experience. Their study gives us arguably our only way of writing the existence of an actual cow from the period. The example of the Craven Heifer also allows us to think through the ‘afterlife’ of an individual animal, the paper going on to analyse the way her representations and fame continue(d) way beyond her untimely slaughter in early 1813. Before the paper plots the life and then afterlife of the Craven Heifer, it is important to briefly place the existence of this extraordinary cow into its wider context, taking stock of existing scholarship both on the mania for giant livestock in Georgian and early Victorian Britain and the wider set of works on breeding and cattle-rearing more generally.

Adam Smith is not usually held up as an expert on the livestock trade in Georgian Britain, but in an obscure section of his seminal *The Wealth of Nations*, first published in 1776, he relates a series of significant structural shifts that had taken place in the market for cattle. Urbanization outside of London had led to a reworking of the market: '[I]n the neighbourhood of a great town, the demand for milk, and for forage to horses, frequently contribute, together with the high price of butcher's meat, to raise the value of grass above what may be called its natural proportion to that of corn.' This rising demand for meat and milk in urban centres thereby not only altered the economics of fattening cattle for slaughter and dairying on the urban fringe but also increased demand for cattle rearing at a distance, drawing in even the Highlands of Scotland into the English meat market.¹³ We know that this growing demand for beef also acted to promote imports of cattle from Ireland, this reversing earlier attempts to control and even ban such imports as evidenced in the 1667 Irish Cattle Act.¹⁴ The effects of the shifting contours of demand were not just geographical. Rising consumption encouraged greater stocking levels, the better prevention and treatment of murrains – the outbreaks of the 1740s having both decimating stock levels across Europe and also led to a dip in consumer demand for beef that was not reversed until the late 1750s¹⁵ – and, critically, advanced attempts to improve deadweight yields.¹⁶ The market thereby had a huge impact on driving agricultural change and in making the 'improvement' of cattle a subject worthy of serious attention and investment.

If 'improvement' went hand-in-hand with expansion and growth, as Peter Jones has recently asserted agricultural improvement had many other drivers. Demand was but one facet alongside sustained economic growth – evident across Europe from the late 1760s – and what Jones labels 'Agricultural Enlightenment', 'the production and diffusion of knowledge, the transfer of skills, the role of technology, and, not least, the actions of the State'.¹⁷ If we do well to remember that, as Nicholas Russell has so artfully shown, the art and science of animal breeding can be traced back to the 1530s, in relation to beef cattle it was not until the 1750s and 1760s that agriculturalists systematically used breeding to encourage certain attributes and to increase yields relative to feeding costs, the limits to breeding knowledge the major barrier to breed 'improvement'. Indeed, if the 'novelty' of famed breeder Robert Bakewell's interbreeding method in the improvement of horses and livestock has been overplayed, his ability to

standardize, articulate, and proselytize the approach positioned him as the figurehead for animal advancement.¹⁸ By taking the desired attributes of successful animals, and in particular successful sires, the Bakewellian method, as Margaret Derry has recently put it, took on a Foucauldian biopolitical emphasis on population rather than the individual, ‘stamping type and creating lines that truly bred’. Consistency and predictability mattered.¹⁹

Arguably the most important aspect of this approach was a shift to the utilitarian understanding that, in the words of a twentieth-century textbook, ‘the real purpose of cattle’ was to ‘convert roughage to meat, milk, and by-products’.²⁰ The holy grail for livestock breeders was thus to produce animals whose attributes met the demands of the market. And, on those terms, it arguably worked. Sir John Sinclair, founding chair of the Board of Agriculture, noted that the average weight of beeves sold at Smithfield rose from 370lbs in 1710 to 800lbs in 1795, the year of Bakewell’s death and a year of near famine conditions in much of England. Sheep in the same period reportedly increasing from 28lbs to 80lbs. Such figures were necessarily boosterish, tending to underestimate the size of cattle at the start of the eighteenth century as much as selectively representing certain ‘improved’ breeds of cattle at the centuries end.²¹ We also do well to remember that notwithstanding centuries of efforts to try and standardize weights, variations between (and even within) regions, over time, and also in the way which individuals and organizations interpreted weights means that such comparisons over nearly a century are likely to be flawed.²² It is also important to note that by 1795 the Bakewellian ideal of efficient and reliable meat machines was not universally understood and practiced. As late as 1786 it was possible for an agricultural writer to assert that for cattle ‘no true standard of shape was recognized. Size was the only criterion of merit... The pail and the plough set the standard; the butcher was ignored.’²³

The point can easily be overplayed. By the turn of the nineteenth century a transformation had occurred in the purpose, yield, and sheer number of cattle in England. Further, as Fussell noted, beef beasts also matured quicker and were thus slaughtered earlier.²⁴ Cattle bred for beef also grew significantly in size in the final decades of the eighteenth century, although the increased mean hid a huge degree of variation. Indeed, we do well to remember that for Bakewell size was of tertiary importance to shape and yield, the rougher pastures in the

neighbourhood of his farm at Dishley near Loughborough, Leicestershire, not well-suited to feeding the largest animals. In relation to cattle the point held regardless of local conditions, Bakewell being ‘an advocate for small bone in all kinds of cattle’.²⁵

Bone did not pay. It had negligible value. As Arthur Young wrote of Bakewell’s approach in 1771, ‘the value lies in the barrel, not in the legs’.²⁶ And the barrel needed to be covered with fat for that was what consumers demanded, fat being high in calorific value and thus ‘an important commodity’. By the time that Young visited Dishley again in 1785, Bakewell had refined his method of producing animals, with, by the standards of the early twenty-first century, ‘enormous masses of fat over the hip bones, around the tail head and on the ribs behind the shoulder’.²⁷ These attributes were notoriously distorted in the portraits that Bakewell and others commissioned to show off their improved stock – and their prowess as breeders. Cattle and sheep (and to a lesser extent pigs) were painted to accentuate their long straight backs, large hind quarters, and to show that they were covered in fat, especially on the rump. Every other body part was irrelevant hence such representations also often rendered legs as spindly, feet tiny, and heads as comedically small. These paintings also adopted motifs from racehorse portraiture – well established by the mid-eighteenth century – of placing animals in portrait against a distant, large background to create a sense of hugeness.²⁸ This demand for farm animal portraits fuelled a boom in animal painting, what was once an obscure exercise becoming a respectable – and profitable – business for an artist, though until the 1970s these now familiar representations fell again into obscurity.²⁹

To render such animals, and their representations, as mere attempts to assert fatness is arguably to miss a broader set of points. In this hugeness had a paradoxical place. At once the mission of putting meat on the tables of every family in the country encouraged breeding animals of, as Elspeth Moncrieff and the Josephs put it, ‘the most extraordinary size and dimensions’.³⁰ And yet there was a realization that the very biggest – the freakishly big – were invariably animals ill-suited to breeding and were thus left for fattening, or if truly prodigious for showing to the general public. Thus, the showing of ‘celebrated’ giant animals at Lord Somerville’s annual Christmas Smithfield show, the pinnacle fatstock show first held in 1799, was ‘contrary to his custom’, the showing of giant cattle more akin to a form of entertainment

against the serious business of improvement.³¹ Indeed, it is important to make the distinction between the two rather different forms of showing. Agricultural and ‘private’ shows were rarefied occasions, often, as in the case of Somerville’s show, having aristocratic patronage and interest, this encouraged by ‘Farmer’ George III’s keen interest in agriculture making all aspects of farming of fashionable. To have one’s stock present inferred a degree of respectability and social cachet, to win a prize was to confer considerable status and add value to the herd and to the breeder. As Ritvo put it, these were the ‘barons of beef’, their motives a confusion of patriotically wanting the English to eat roast beef – in contrast to the French who ate relatively little beef – and to position English agriculture as the leading force in the world. Ordinary farmers were warned not to bother showing their cattle at such shows, the prize invariably being paid in prestige rather than pounds, and the costs of showing their animals in the suitable elaborate way – the 5th duke of Bedford having a mock-up Chinese dairy to frame his bovine beauties – likely to be beyond their reach.³²

The touring cow – usually a heifer or bullock, castrated animals being better at putting on weight – met a different demand and interest. These animals were not positioned as the very best examples of the breed but instead as the very biggest. If George III’s passion for agriculture had legitimised farming as a subject of personal interest for the nobility, there was a desire from the increasingly urban-residing lower classes to both understand and, critically, see animals too. This was manifest in huge demand for works of natural history and to see live animal exhibits. And the demand was well met by shows of the freakish (such as the ‘double cow; shown in London in 1748, a monster with the leg, udder, and partial digestive system of a second cow growing on its back),³³ the wild and exotic animals of touring menageries, and also through touring giant cattle. This, in turn, fed into both a representational change and a shift in the purposes of breeding. If fat had been the commercial breeders’ aim since the final decades of the eighteenth century, breeding fatter still animals for show – and especially for touring – became a niche if important trend. Public demand to see spectacular mammals in turn creating a market for enormous farm animals from dealers and showmen, saving those beasts which showed prodigious potential and the potential for prodigiousness from the slaughter (if often, as we will see with the Craven Heifer, only for a short while).

II

Bakewell's bovine subject was the Longhorn, an already-established breed of cattle that originated in the Craven district of North Yorkshire where since at least the sixteenth century it had been used both as a draught animal and as a dairy cow. And yet the Craven Heifer, the most celebrated beast ever to hail from Craven, was not a local Longhorn but a Shorthorn, a breed that had developed out of the Teeswater and Durham cattle. Thanks to the efforts of brothers Charles and Robert Colling who farmed at Ketton Hall in Brafferton and Barmpton respectively, these neighbouring parishes in County Durham, the Shorthorn became synonymous with the north-east, and thanks to Bakewell's efforts the Longhorn notwithstanding its Yorkshire heritage became associated with the East Midlands.³⁴ Ultimately, it was the Shorthorn that won out as the go-to beast for agricultural improvers, Arthur Young noting as early as 1811 that the 'particular merit of the Dishley breed is of small consequence, compared with the just principles Bakewell disseminated'.³⁵

Unlike the brothers Colling, who by the turn of the nineteenth century already had a reputation as the leading breeders and improvers of the Shorthorn, Rev. William Carr who raised the Craven Heifer was not a known breeder. Indeed, what we know of Carr does little to suggest a keen interest in livestock breeding, rather he came from a long line of clergyman (following his grandfather and father in the curacy of Bolton Abbey), was the duke of Devonshire's steward for his Bolton Abbey estate, and took an active interest in landscape aesthetics and the local dialect for which he compiled a dictionary published in 1824.³⁶ Nor do we know who bred the Craven Heifer's dam and sire, although given the relative proximity to the Collings' farms – some fifty miles distant – and their reputation for breeding huge cattle, it is likely that the Craven Heifer came from a line of already much 'improved' cattle whether with a direct lineage to Charles and Robert Colling's. Indeed, it is important to note that whatever the Collings' pre-eminence, as John Walton has argued the breed was already being 'improved' in the north-east before they adopted Bakewellian techniques.³⁷ Notwithstanding Carr's lack of pedigree as a breeder, the prestige attached to having such improved cattle on one's farm, not least for a clergyman who

had a close relationship with his employer the 6th Duke who took a keen interest in agricultural improvement, was such that investing in known breeding stock was a likely strategy.³⁸

Some context. On 15 April 1807, one month after the birth of the Craven Heifer, the Durham Ox, then arguably the most famous bovine in Britain and bred by Charles Colling, was slaughtered. An otherwise healthy animal but placed under the strain of both its own huge bodily mass and from having travelled some 3000 miles since it started to be toured by its travelling showman-owner John Day six years previously, the Durham Ox dislocated his hipbone on being led from his specially-constructed carriage at Oxford on 19 February. Failing to heal, two months later he was slaughtered, Day erecting a tent around the suffering animal and charging members of the public to witness the Ox's dying moments.³⁹ For a young animal to show promise, to potentially become the next Durham Ox, was therefore significant: Day having been offered – and refusing – £2000 in July 1801 for the Ox and having reportedly once taken £97 in a single day in ticket sales to view him. Several of the Collings' cattle already showed such potential. Comet, a bull calf to the same inbred parents as the Durham Ox, was born in 1802 – five years after the Durham Ox – and quickly became *the* in-demand bull. Comet was the first bull to sell for 1000 guineas (on the dispersal of Charles Colling's herd on his retirement in 1810) and, in the words of the Collings' biographer, represented 'the high- water mark attained at Ketton'.⁴⁰

Comet's celebrity did not extend to the wider public, but that of his half-sister – having the same sire, Charles Colling's Favourite – did. Born a twin to a bull calf in 1806, and thus a freemartin heifer, she was infertile and rapidly put on weight. As early as autumn 1808 she was reported as 'surpassing any animal ever yet seen for fat'. Harnessing this potential, Robert Colling proceeded to raise her to her 'greatest flesh-taking capacity'⁴¹ and knowing that 'the peregrinations of the Durham Ox had advertised the name of Colling far and wide', sold her to two butchers, Robinson and Spark, who 'carted [her] about the country'. From this the 'Durham Heifer' became known as 'The White Heifer That Travelled'.⁴² Yet 'in spite of the loud advertisement of her being by the same sire as the thousand-guinea Comet', as the Collings' biographer put it, 'she does not seem to have made a sensation equal to that caused by the Ketton ox [aka the Durham Ox]'.⁴³ We shall return to her later.

The Craven Heifer was thus born into an (agri)culture that valued prodigious farm animals, and a popular culture that celebrated extraordinary beasts and prized fatty beef. Also born a freemartin, the Craven Heifer was of no use as a breeding animal and thus could only be fattened. And put on fat she did. Carr fed her relentlessly until she weighed 2468lbs – a claimed weight not yet surpassed in Britain – measured 11ft 2ins in from her rump to her nose. She was also extraordinarily tall, standing at 5ft 2ins to her shoulder and thus over 7ft tall to the tip of her head. Even then she was related to be ‘still in a growing and improving state’. Given the average weight for a Shorthorn was 1000 lbs she was not just big but prodigiously so, even surpassing the weight of the White Heifer That Travelled who weighed 2300lbs immediately prior to her slaughter.⁴⁴ So unusually large was she that a special door, twice as wide as was the norm, had to be fitted to her cowshed at Bolton Abbey.⁴⁵ We cannot be certain that Carr deliberately fed the young heifer with an eye to her sale as a bovine curiosity. What is clear though is that Carr encouraged her prodigious growth and was thus evidently (at the very least) intrigued as to the likely outcome of her fleshing out, this intrigue grounded in a knowledge of the public interest in, and cachet of, animals such as the Durham Ox and Comet.

Her size and weight evidently attracted interest, for on 23 September 1811 she was sold by Rev. Carr to John Watkinson of nearby Halton East for 200 guineas.⁴⁶ The sum is dwarfed by that paid for Comet the previous year but matched the very highest prices for breeding heifers sired by Comet at the dispersal sale of Charles Colling’s stock. The price Watkinson paid, then, was a function of what he thought he could make from showing her, Day having paid £250 for the Durham Ox *and* his purpose-built carriage in April 1801.⁴⁷ Indeed, in a notice of the sale of the Craven Heifer – the usually sober *Leeds Mercury* evidently amazed at the price: ‘Two Hundred Guineas!’ – it was related that ‘she is intended for public exhibitions’.⁴⁸ We know very little about Watkinson. From the notice of his death in the Leeds press in May 1845, it was detailed that he was a farmer and a butcher, perhaps not surprising given the purely agrarian nature of the economy of Halton East.⁴⁹ So, at the time of the purchase of the Craven Heifer, Watkinson was c.47 years old and evidently willing to add ‘showman’ to his list of other occupations, although perhaps the purchase of the Craven Heifer was also an attempt to add cache and generate publicity for his farming and butchery businesses.

Watkinson's intended plan to profit from the Craven Heifer was soon publicly manifest. First, he – or rather, as we will see, 'they', although it is likely it was left to Carr – commissioned an oil-on-fabric portrait of the heifer from a local artist. We know from the research undertaken by the auction house Bonham's in advance of a 1982 sale of a copy of the painting that the artist was W. D. Fryer of Knaresborough. This is likely to be the same 'experienced Drawing Master' whom the *York Herald* reported in August 1811 was to take residence in the city, something that 'would give much pleasure to those families who are acquainted with Mr. Fryer, as an artist'.⁵⁰ As early as 28 October it was advertised that Watkinson was to publish by subscription an engraving of 'the Celebrated Heifer, of the same Dimensions as that of the Durham Ox [2' x 1'6"]'. Each print was to cost one guinea. The celebrity of the Craven Heifer therein both asserted and seeded through association with the Collings' most famed beast.⁵¹ This was a short gap between commissioning the portrait and advertising the print – indeed we know that Fryer did not complete the painting until 14 October – but given that many beasts were painted (in outline) in the matter of hours after winning a prize at Smithfield and then being slaughtered the next day suggests that artists were prepared to work quickly to secure a commission.⁵² Either way, the portrait is of a size typical of cattle portraits at 43 x 60cm and shows the Craven Heifer in portrait, her head slightly askew, shyly looking towards the artist. The setting is a highly stylised landscape with what appears to be the ruins of Bolton Abbey in the background and the River Wharfe passing behind the heifer.⁵³ The respectable, even aristocratic, provenance of the heifer thus subtly and iconographically asserted (see figure 1).

In the commissioning of the portrait and the engraving, the making of the prints, and in arranging the tour, Watkinson appears to have been a silent presence. Indeed, whilst Watkinson was *publicly* reported to be the sole purchaser of the Craven Heifer, in terms of his attempt to make money from her he did not act alone. In the words of a later report, Watkinson formed a 'small company' to take the heifer on 'an exhibition tour of England'.⁵⁴ This comprised several members of the Pickop family of Bolton Abbey, including Henry Pickop who acted as the coordinator of all business from Bolton Abbey, a J.R. Kitchin, and with Carr assuming an important role in arranging the engraving. Henry Pickop, in a letter to Carr, referring to 'my

partners', though whether there were any other individuals in Watkinson's company and what their precise financial involvement was is forever lost to history.⁵⁵

III

On 13 October 2020 a collection of some 30 letters as well as assorted receipts and handbills relating to the tour of the Craven Heifer was auctioned online by Hansons Auctioneers. With an estimated price of £300-500, the virtual hammer finally fell at £5500. Alas, whilst the fevered bidding for the archive demonstrates strong public interest in the heifer, the sale also means that the archive remains in private hands.⁵⁶ Whilst it is not possible to ascertain the precise details of every aspect of the collection, the contents of the archive was first outlined in a report in the *Leeds Mercury* in November 1897, while the recent Hansons' sale catalogue and sale report offer useful confirmation and some further detail.⁵⁷ From this we know that head of the list of subscribers for the print of Fryer's portrait was the duke of Devonshire, with Rev. Carr second on the list.⁵⁸ Whilst Watkinson might be expected to assert the respectability of his bovine charge – the Craven Heifer not just being a prodigiously large beast but bred on the estate of one of the most important noble families in the land – it would appear that in such matters he was little versed. Indeed, the obsequious dedication of the print to the 'most noble William Spencer Duke of Devonshire' by 'his Grace's most obedient humble servant John Watkinson' was not penned by Watkinson – or his associates – but instead by Carr: Henry Pickop writing to ask Carr 'When your great Cow is engraven, to whom must she be dedicated?'. Indeed, from a further letter it is clear that Pickop had been charged to determine the dedication, he both relating to Carr that he had mentioned 'to my partners about the dedication of the Heifer' and also stating that 'we have left it to your own pleasure'.⁵⁹

Carr was also requested to arrange the engraving of the Fryer portrait, Pickop requesting that 'We will thank you to make the best agreement that can (be made) for the plate engraving in a masterly manner, we should wish to know what the expense of it will be, also what the engraving will cost per 100 printing'. Evidently Watkinson and his 'partners' were not only unused to the niceties of elite etiquette but also uncomfortable to be operating in the alien to

them art world. John Whessell of Oxford, known as the engraver of the portraits of the Durham Ox and the Drifffield Cow, was commissioned by Carr after the two met on 30 October. The matter was subsequently agreed, with Carr again acting as the intermediary: the print would be coloured and that, in the first instance, 500 copies would be ordered from Whessell.⁶⁰

The resulting print arguably represented a more commercial image than the portrait. A rather doleful looking Craven Heifer in Fryer's original now rendered in a more purposive way, and the elaborate painterly palate of browns for the foreground and the moody swirling sky of the portrait replaced with a softer, lush, green valley-scape with a blue sky with large cottony clouds in Whessell's engraving (see figures 1 and 2). The print proved popular, selling 'fairly well' on the tour, notwithstanding being delivered late in February 1812, and thus missing out on significant potential sales in the initial stages of the tour. In London there was 'exceptional demand', while we also know that copies of the print were sent from London to Skipton, albeit in small numbers but suggestive of sustained demand even after the tour: 26 in 1812, 56 in 1816 and 60 in 1819.⁶¹ These numbers are probably a significant underestimate of demand in Craven though, for we also know that the print – notwithstanding the relatively high price of one guinea – was hawked about the area. A report in the Leeds press in March 1812 relating that 'On Monday last James Warriner, of Draughton, a youth about 23 years of age, employed in hawking prints of the Craven Heifer, was unfortunately found drowned in the Canal near Marton'.⁶²

IV

The tour can meaningfully be divided into three parts. The first from Craven to Sheffield; the second from Sheffield to London; and finally from London back to Craven. Before the tour began, the partners charged Thomas Pearson of Skipton to 'see about purchasing the Carriage at Shap', this evidently the carriage used to carry the famed 'Highland Ox' on its tour. Successfully purchased, when the carriage arrived in Craven on 26 October – twelve days after Pearson had travelled to Cumbria – it was found to be 'complete' and 'well made'. However, the Craven Heifer, evidently being a much bigger beast than the Highland Ox, was not able to turn in the carriage. The subsequent adjustments, making an opening at the 'fore end' to allow her to gain

egress, delayed the start of the tour, the Craven Heifer finally loaded into the ‘Caravan’ on 31 October and taken to Skipton. Here we have the only description of her character: Pickop relating to Carr that she was ‘very quiet and likely to do well’.⁶³

The first leg was under the stewardship of G Pickop and started with exhibitions in Skipton on 2 and 5 November, the Craven Heifer apparently staying in Skipton before travelling to Otley on 6 November and onwards again to Leeds on 7 November.⁶⁴ At Leeds she was shown, so an advert placed in the *Leeds Mercury* of 11 November related, for ‘a few days only’.⁶⁵ In Leeds, proforma handbills advertising subsequent stops on the tour a space being left blank for the location of the exhibition – were printed, and the price of entry to see the heifer set at one shilling (see figure 3). From Leeds she travelled via Bradford to Wakefield, where she was shown on 18 November, before heading to Pontefract, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield where she was on 2 December. At this point, G. Pickop ended his account, the tour then running at a loss.⁶⁶

At Sheffield, Kitchin assumed responsibility, keeping the accounts ‘afresh, not taking into account the entries made by Pickup [sic]’. Having journeyed through Yorkshire, the tour now made its way to London following a direct line through the East Midlands and the Home Counties. After Sheffield, she travelled to Chesterfield, on to Alfreton, Ripley, and Derby, then moving into Leicestershire stopping at Loughborough and Leicester, thence to Northampton, Newport Pagnell, Dunstable, and finally St. Albans before arriving in the capital on 31 January 1812, the tour having already taken nearly three months. In London, she was exhibited at the Cock Inn, Haymarket, the entry fee 1s for ‘ladies and gentlemen’ while servants were admitted for 6d. A dedicated handbill was printed, detailing the pedigree of the Craven Heifer as well as her extraordinary dimensions. ‘This Beast’, the handbill boasted, ‘is allowed by all who have seen her, to be the largest and fattest of her Age, of any ever shewn in England.’⁶⁷

The central focus of her being in London was Lord Somerville’s prestigious ‘Grand Spring Shew of Cattle’, held at Sadler’s Repository in Smithfield. This was a private show, and tightly controlled by Somerville, although members of the public could pay a shilling for ‘inspection’. Here, alongside the usual show of cattle, the Craven Heifer was exhibited alongside the Durham Heifer, aka the White Heifer That Travelled. Together, so advertisements of the

show claimed, they were ‘allowed to be two of the best ever seen.’ This being a more genteel event than the Haymarket exhibition, only ‘Ladies and Gentlemen’ were to be admitted.⁶⁸ Yet the spectacular nature of the heifer head-to-head seemingly went against the spirit of Somerville’s spring show. Indeed, Somerville stated that ‘his reasons for admitting the famous Craven and Durham Heifers to be separately shewn in the yard, contrary to his custom’ were the ‘earnest request[s] of the land-owners, the Duke of Devonshire and Mr Robert Collings’. Yet, as Moncrieff et al have suggested, this would seemingly contradict a plea that Somerville had made in with correspondence with Colling. As the Barmpton breeder put it in a letter to the renowned animal artist Thomas Weaver – who had been commissioned by Colling to produce a portrait of the White Heifer, from which an engraving had also been made and prints sold at one guinea – Somerville was ‘so very obliging to express his particular wishes that she [the White Heifer] might also be exhibited at his [Smithfield] show’. Further, Somerville would ‘take the direction of her himself, provide a suitable place for her, and take care the men had every advantage that might arise from it’. It is fair to assume therefore that the same offer was made to Watkinson. The show, then, was an opportunity to further both heifers’ celebrity – and to sell prints.⁶⁹

It is unclear as to how long she remained in London after the Somerville show. What we do know is that the account book (kept by Pickop then Kitchin) ends on 13 April.⁷⁰ Other than that she returned to Craven, we know very little about the return leg of the tour – with one exception. Having ‘just arrived’, ‘this beautiful animal... one of the greatest curiosities in the world’, was advertised on 2 May to be ‘exhibiting for this day only’ at the Crown Inn Yard, Corn Market, Oxford. The advert also noted that she had been ‘exhibited at Lord Somerville’s Cattle Show in London...and was allowed by judges to be best ever shewn’, this a clear rebuke to similar claims made for the White Heifer.⁷¹ Thereafter, the trail goes cold. Given the expense of having to cart her home, it would seem unlikely that she was not shown again. Indeed, that she visited Oxford shows that a different, and less direct, route was taken on the return journey compared to the tour to London. Further, the naming of public houses after her in broad swathes of Lancashire (Barnoldswick, close to Skipton, but also Bolton and nearby Astley Bridge and Horwich, Bury, Rochdale, Darwen, Preston, Edge Hill on the edge of Liverpool, Chaigney near Clitheroe, Manchester, Salford, Rawtenstall, and Burnley), and in the far west of the

Yorkshire Dales (at Ingleton and Stainforth) is highly suggestive of either a return tour that sojourned through Lancashire and on to the Dales before returning to Craven or of a subsequent north-western tour.⁷² As a later writer put it: 'It is exceedingly probable that the familiar "Craven Heifer" attached to the signs of so many hostelries in Yorkshire and the neighbouring counties was suggested by the tour of this beast, which was indeed a beautiful specimen of animal symmetry'.⁷³ Either way, we know from later accounts that the tour was 'not the success that Watkinson hoped it would be', the cost of transporting and feeding not met by ticket sales.⁷⁴

V

After appearing at Oxford in May 1812, the next certain record we have of the Craven Heifer is on 23 March 1813, with the final record of her life on 24 March. After the relative failure of the tour, Watkinson evidently decided that the Craven Heifer was of no use to him. Indeed, given that her celebrity was assured, that the sale of prints had proved successful, and that demand for prints continued, she was now an encumbrance to him, a cost. Tomlinson thus decided to dispose of her. Whether he tried to sell her we know not, although given her initial cost and her ongoing celebrity it would be a fair assumption that he attempted but failed to sell her. Instead, on 23 and 24 March the Craven Heifer was competed for in a main of cocks (a cockfighting competition involving multiple competitors and birds) at Carleton, a small village a mile outside of Skipton. This, then, was a final attempt to monetise her, presumably showman Watkinson controlling both the entry fees and the betting book. The main must have been advertised, for the winner, a Mr. Boothroyd, was a Huddersfield innkeeper whilst another competitor came from Manchester. Boothroyd having won 'the mass of obesity', as one account put it, proceeded to have her slaughtered and sold her butchered remains at one shilling a pound, this a considerable advance on the then standard price of five to six pence for a pound of beef. Even in death, people were evidently prepared to pay a premium. The event was not without controversy. Rev. Robert Thomlinson 'both in and out of the pulpit, raised his voice against the barbarism', one boy at his school being subsequently expelled for attending the cockfight. Rev.

Carr too was reportedly ‘disgusted’ by the event.⁷⁵ Indeed, it is hard to think of a more ignominious end for such an extraordinary animal.

To suppose that the death, the slaughter and consumption of an animal necessarily marks the end of their story is a fair assumption for most farm animals. Yet, for the Craven Heifer her celebrity continued, and persists, after her death. Beyond the fact that prints of the Craven Heifer continued to sell, her afterlife figured initially in three ways. First, her (unproven) title as the fattest cow England had ever seen was subject to subsequent challenges which kept her name and her prodigious size in the public mind. For instance, in March 1818 a five-year-old ox (‘the Miniskip Ox’) was exhibited at Leeds then Otley, the promoters of the ox gaining publicity for their claim that he was ‘thought to be about 50 stone heavier than the Craven Heifer’ and yet was also ‘so gentle, that even children may handle him with perfect safety’.⁷⁶

Second, as noted above, inspired either directly by her having visited the vicinity or by dint of her celebrity,⁷⁷ several (the precise number is beyond the scope of this paper to delineate, but at least twenty) public houses in Lancashire and Yorkshire were named or renamed the Craven Heifer in her honour. The earliest reference I have found is to a Craven Heifer pub at Long Mill Gate in the centre of Manchester, this from an advert placed in March 1825 for a boxing tournament.⁷⁸ The subsequent extant reference is to a ‘fine dinner’ having been held at the Craven Heifer Inn in Blackburn.⁷⁹ A systematic trawl through the licensing archives for both counties might reveal earlier references still, though we know, for instance, that the Craven Heifer on North Road in Preston was first licensed in 1825.⁸⁰ Either way, in the period from the tour through to the explosion of the opening of new pubs in the 1830s and early 1840s due to the liberalisation of licensing laws under the terms of the 1830 Beerhouse Act,⁸¹ many publicans chose to call their pubs after the celebrated cow. Such pub naming practices showed that her celebrity continued to shine brightly and acted to further keep her in the public mind.

Third, in 1817 the Craven Bank changed the central picture on their banknotes from Castleberg, a ‘grand old rock’ and local landmark in Settle where the bank was based, to a portrait of the ‘well known’ Craven Heifer.⁸² Clearly such an act of rebranding would come at some cost – the design and printing of the new notes – and as such the decision speaks to the local potency of her image. Further, such a move was no doubt calculated to appeal to farmers,

Craven being a largely agrarian district. The notes would have largely circulated in the local area, although when a forged note ‘with the Craven heifer in the centre’ entered circulation in the summer of 1826 the story received national press attention.⁸³ The Craven Heifer continued to appear on banknotes until 1906 when the Craven Bank merged with the larger Liverpool Bank, although the Craven Heifer continued to appear on cheques issued until at least the 1930s.⁸⁴ We know too that the likeness of the Craven Heifer was used as the motif for speculative shares issued in 1846 for a railway that never was but would have joined the area of Skipton with Wensleydale via a line that was to run through Upper Wharfedale.⁸⁵

VI

What might be called ‘Craven Heifer mania’ in the years immediately after her untimely death, gave way from the middle of the nineteenth century. Her image continued to circulate on bank notes and cheques, prints and copies of the Fryer portrait (several versions of the painting are known, each varying in terms of the background detail)⁸⁶ continued to exist – one such appearing in the entrance hall of the Skipton branch of the Craven Bank – whilst people continued to frequent pubs that bore her name and image on their signs. But until the final years of the last century, her legend, her celebrity, arguably retreated to Craven where, as the Duchess of Devonshire put it in 1996, ‘she is still part of folklore’.⁸⁷ A minor revival of interest in the Craven Heifer during and immediately after the Second World War – and this confined to Yorkshire – was stimulated by high prices for livestock prompting memories of ‘famous cattle of the past’. Likewise, rationing provoked reminiscences of ‘those huge joints of beef which used to grace the dinner table on Sunday’ and prompted readers of the *Bradford Observer* to ask for ‘particulars of the famous Craven Heifer’. As the columnist articulated, ‘It certainly was a huge beast, and at the present rationing of meat it would have carved up into rations for a small town’.⁸⁸

As Jeanne Schinto, writing on the fate of livestock portraits, put it: ‘Many, perhaps most, ended up in rubbish heaps and bonfires when pictures of fattened farm animals went out of fashion after Queen Victoria’s reign’. Thankfully though, many paintings and prints of the

Craven Heifer did survive, and when interest in such portraits again strengthened from the mid 1980s not only did portraits start to be saved from ends as discreditable as the Craven Heifer herself but values started to increase as collectors and others created a market.⁸⁹ On 9 December 1982, a dedicated sale of sporting and livestock paintings was held at Bonhams, London, timed to coincide with the Smithfield show, and thus suggestive of attempting to attract landowners and agriculturalists. It proved a landmark success with few lots left unsold, the successful sale even drawing comment in the *Times*. Of note was the sale of Fryer's painting of the Craven Heifer – 'an engaging cow' – sold to the duke of Devonshire for £3,300, the duke planning to hang the painting in the Devonshire Arms hotel on the Bolton Abbey Estate.⁹⁰ A copy of the painting, which had been owned by Stephen and Iona Joseph since the late 1980s, was likewise auctioned by Bonhams on 29 January 2013, with an expectation that it would fetch £6,000. Publicity of the sale in the national press – including in the *Times* ('Fat cow picture expected to pile on more pounds at auction') and *Daily Mail* which both printed copies of the painting – helped to lift the sale price to £16,250.⁹¹ Generative of less publicity but no less notable in terms of the 'bidding war' that ensued, was the aforementioned sale of an archive of her tour in 1811 and 1812, sold by Hansons Auctioneers in an online auction on 13 October 2020, the lot estimated from £300-500 but selling at £5500. As the subsequent headline in the *Craven Herald* proudly put it, 'Fattest cow in England sparks auction bidding battle'.⁹² Whessell's prints of the Fryer original now regularly sell for upwards of £500, and occasionally more than £1000, at auction and are priced higher still by antique dealers, such is the level of interest in the Craven Heifer. Even an oil-on-canvas copy in the 'naïve' style of Fryer's painting sold for £840 at auction in 2008.⁹³

Arguably the most curious, and high profile, resurrection of public interest in the Craven Heifer came in the form of an announcement that a life-size statue of Yorkshire's most famous cow had been sculpted to mark the 160th Great Yorkshire Show (figure 4). First held in 1838 at Fulford near York, the annual exhibition of Yorkshire agriculture had a peripatetic existence until a permanent showground was acquired at Harrogate in 1949, thus making the touring Craven Heifer an apposite choice to mark the anniversary. Whitby-artist Emma Stothard's sculpture, fashioned from half a tonne of galvanised steel, was unveiled by the duke and duchess

of Devonshire at Bolton Abbey on 10 April 2018 before being taken on tour on the back of a specially designed truck. The first stop-off was Fulford, where the sculpture – named GYSheifer – arrived under a police escort ‘accompanied by music played by gurkha pipe player ... and was greeted by 50 soldiers of the 2 Signal Regiment, plus a group of cheering schoolchildren from Fulford School and St Oswald’s CE Primary’. Thereafter, mimicking the history of both the show and of the Craven Heifer, the GYSheifer toured the county, even visiting the Wold Top Brewery at Hunmanby who brewed a special beer to mark the tour, before arriving at the Great Yorkshire Showground in time for the opening of the 160th show.⁹⁴ Members of the public were encouraged to take ‘selfies’ with the sculpture, using the Twitter hashtag #GYSheifer, the best picture from each stop of the tour winning a family ticket to the show. Today, the sculpture of the Craven Heifer is a permanent exhibit at the showground taking pride of place near the entrance. As Margaret Chapman, the Show’s Chief Cattle Steward, proudly proclaimed: ‘I think the Heifer looks brilliantly placed – exactly where I had hoped she would be – welcoming visitors into the Showground. She looks magnificent!’⁹⁵

VII

‘There has been a consistent, and generally accepted, call within the burgeoning “animal geographies” literature’, so states Lewis Holloway, ‘that nonhuman animals should be accorded a status as subjects, in opposition to tendencies to represent them in objectifying ways which suggest that animals are simply “there”’.⁹⁶ In some sense there can be nothing more objectifying for an animal than rendering it as a celebrity, parading it, slaughtering it, and then turning it into prints. Indeed, the Craven Heifer was exoticised and othered by those who paid to see her whilst on tour in precisely the same way that animals in touring menageries and those with monstrous mutations were consumed. Here, one might argue, we start from an unpromising base. But, whatever the representational and archival ethics, here we have an animal, not of some exotic and unusual (in the context of early nineteenth-century England) species, not a domestic companion, but a cow, something of the farm and ultimately of the fork, that leaves a reasonably rich archival trail. We might not know how the Craven Heifer felt, indeed we know very little of

her dispositions and character traits, but we can deduce a great deal about how she was in the world and how the world responded – and continues – to respond to her. That we can tell her life is important because, as an animal, she mattered and matters still.

Of course, very few beasts are immortalised in paintings, prints, banknotes, share certificates, pub signs, or sculpture. Arguably fewer still humans have been represented in *all* the ways the Craven Heifer has been. Over 200 years after her short life, her fame, notwithstanding the recent revival of interest, might no longer be at 1812 levels but still exceeds that of any bovine of recent times – including Chilli. The Craven Heifer, we must conclude, stands apart. Perhaps the level of public interest in extraordinarily sized livestock at the turn of the nineteenth century has helped fuel curiosity in such animals today, their very size a source of fascination but their one-time celebrity of even greater enthrallment, the survival of so many farm animal portraits further helping bridge a connection to past living things. She allows us to imagine past bovines in ways which would otherwise be impossible, by piecing together her life we can begin to understand not only her experience but also, by inference and stark difference, the lives of other cows. Her otherness was underpinned by her sameness, her essential bovine-ness, her breeding, feeding and fate decidedly ordinary.

There is also a sense that the Craven Heifer's celebrity also acted, in the context of the early decades of the nineteenth century, to help proselytise the utility of the Shorthorn as a meat machine and as such played a critical role in normalising the breed. Indeed, as Emily Pawley has noted of other famed biotic things – both animals and plants – in her study of 'improvement' in Antebellum New York State, the celebrity of individuals powerfully impacted upon the perception of the wider breed (or even species in the case of certain plants) in the agrarian mind.⁹⁷ The lives of extraordinary animals, and other biotic things, evidently matter. And the Craven Heifer was not just an extraordinary animal but also lived an extraordinary life, her celebrity shifting but enduring. By telling her story we are not only able to tell the life of a remarkable being of the early nineteenth century agrarian world, but it also serves to show the importance of asking questions about livestock lives in all settings. What, for instance, of the way in which certain farm animals lodged themselves in the affections of their human charges? What of other ways in which some individuals rose above the herd or flock – or in a Foucauldian

biopolitical sense the population – and assumed a degree of individual prominence, even celebrity? Perhaps beyond all else what the case of the Craven Heifer tells us is that even in a culture increasingly obsessed with the hard facts of yields and margins, of costs and usefulness, where beings were reduced to statistics, that in some ways the singularity of the individual might be recognised, valued, and even cherished. To understand that a heifer from Bolton Abbey might see more of England than most humans then alive, that she might become an enduring source of fascination and pride, speaks to a seemingly paradoxical culture at the heart of agriculture in the age of improvement that demands further investigation.

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Notes

¹ For example, see *Guardian*, 12 May 2008; 'Bullock could be record breaker', BBC News online, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/somerset/7397623.stm> (accessed 9 Sept. 2021).

² *Chard and Ilminster News*, 29 Oct. 2009. On the Colonel see: 'Britain's biggest steer weighs in at 261 stone', *Wales Online*, 1 Apr. 2003, <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/britains-biggest-steer-weighs-261-2456941> (accessed 9 Sept. 2021).

³ *Farmers Weekly*, 4 Nov. 2009.

⁴ E. Moncrieff, S. Joseph, and I. Joseph. *Farm animal portraits* (1996); J. Schinto, 'Good breeding: British livestock portraits, 1780–1900', *Gastronomica* 6 (2006), pp. 30-35. The early years of the agricultural show, remarkably, still awaits systematic analysis. For an excellent study of the mid-nineteenth century show see: L. Miskell, 'Putting on a show: the Royal Agricultural Society of England and the Victorian town, c. 1840–1876', *AgHR* 60 (2012), pp. 37-59. Helena Lim's doctoral thesis on the emergence of the 'premium system' also offers important analysis of the role of showing for premiums at agricultural shows: H. Lim, 'Stimulus to Innovation: the Premium System as a Method of Encouraging Agricultural Improvement, 1754-1870' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bath, 1997), esp. chs 2 and 4.

⁵ WhatPub?, 'Durham Ox', search for open and closed pubs
https://whatpub.com/search?q=durham+ox&t=p&p=1&_token=A28zPsD5dr02cJmEOvI6pxyYL4D9D0l1HBCIufnJ&features=PubClub (accessed 9 Sept. 2021).

⁶ For writings on giant livestock see: H. Ritvo, *The animal estate: the English and other creatures in the Victorian age* (1987), pp. 45-6, 56, 58-60; M. Quinn, 'Corpulent cattle and milk machines: nature, art and the ideal type', *Society and Animals* 1 (1993), pp. 145-57. See also: E. Pawley, 'The point of perfection: cattle portraiture, bloodlines, and the meaning of breeding, 1760-1860', *J. of the Early Republic* 36 (2016), pp. 37-72; Moncrieff et al, *Farm animal portraits*, esp. chs 2 and 6.

⁷ P. Howell, 'Flush and the banditti: dog-stealing in Victorian London', in C. Philo and C. Wilbert (eds), *Animal spaces, beastly places: new geographies of human-animal relations* (2000), pp. 35-55; C. Bear, 'Being Angelica? Exploring individual animal geographies', *Area* 43 (2011), pp. 297-304.

⁸ On the importance of taking the non-human seriously in writing agrarian histories see: A. Way, W. T. Okie, R. Funes-Monzote, S. Nance, G. N. Rosenberg, J. Specht, and S. Swart, 'Roundtable: animal history in a time of crisis', *Ag. Hist.* 94 (2020), pp. 444-84.

⁹ T. Pachirat, *Every twelve seconds* (2011).

¹⁰ G. Bowie, 'New sheep for old-changes in sheep farming in Hampshire, 1792-1879', *AgHR* 35 (1987), pp. 15-24; S. W. Martins, 'From black-face to white-face: an aspect of the agricultural revolution in Norfolk', *AgHR* 41 (1993), pp. 20-30; J. P. Boxall, 'The Sussex breed of cattle in the nineteenth century', *AgHR* 20 (1972), pp. 17-29; J. R. Walton, 'The diffusion of the improved Shorthorn breed of cattle in Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 9 (1984), pp. 22-36; R. Woods, *The herds shot round the world: Native breeds and the British Empire, 1800–1900* (2017).

¹¹ Ritvo, *The animal estate*; H. Kean, *Animal rights: Political and social change in Britain since 1800* (1998); E. Fudge, 'A left-handed blow: writing the history of animals', in N. Rothfels (ed.),

Representing animals (2002), pp. 3-18. On such recent work see: K. Sayer, 'Vermin landscapes: Suffolk, England, shaped by plague, rat and flea (1906–1920)', in C. Lynteris (ed.), *Framing animals as epidemic villains* (2019), pp. 27-64; A. Woods, 'Rethinking the history of modern agriculture: British pig production, c. 1910–65', *Twentieth Century British History* 23 (2012), pp. 165-91; *Idem.*, 'From cruelty to welfare: the emergence of farm animal welfare in Britain, 1964–71', *Endeavour* 36 (2012), pp. 14-22; C. Griffin, 'Animal maiming, intimacy and the politics of shared life: the bestial and the beastly in eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century England', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37 (2012), pp. 301-316; *Idem.*, 'Topologies of tenderness and violence: human–animal relations in Georgian England', in H. Kean and P. Howell (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Animal–Human History* (2018), pp. 322-44.

¹² For an 'early' and a more recent example see: J. Thirsk, 'The content and sources of English agrarian history after 1500', *AgHR* 3 (1955): p. 79; P. M. Jones, *Agricultural enlightenment: knowledge, technology, and nature, 1750-1840* (2016), esp. pp. 67 and 90-1. For specific studies on animal breeders and animal breeding see: H. C. Pawson, *Robert Bakewell: Pioneer livestock breeder* (1957). For more recent work on Bakewell and other subsequent breeders see: D. Wykes, 'Robert Bakewell (1725-1795) of Dishley: farmer and livestock improver', *AgHR* 52 (2004), pp. 38-55; M. E. Derry, *Masterminding nature: The breeding of animals, 1750-2010* (2015), esp. ch. 1. Ongoing work by Hilary Matthews on the connections and conviviality between breeders for the period will have a transformative effect on our understanding of these men and their motivations.

¹³ A. Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*, vol. I (1904, World's Classics edition), pp. 169-71.

¹⁴ J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural policy: public debate and legislation, 1640–1750', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, V, 1640-1750 (2 vols, 1985), II, p. 353.

¹⁵ C. Mounsey, "'Strong in zeal but impotent in head": British responses to the cattle plagues of the eighteenth century', in S. Booth and C. Mounsey (eds), *Reconsidering extinction in terms of the history of global bioethics* (2021), pp. 97-111; J. Broad, 'Cattle plague in eighteenth-century England', *AgHR* 31 (1983), pp.104-115. As John Beckett puts it, the panzootic led to a 'consumer revulsion to beef': J. V. Beckett, 'TS Ashton Prize Essay for 1980: regional variation and the agricultural depression, 1730-50', *EcHR* 35 (1982), p. 44.

¹⁶ On these dynamics see: G. E. Fussell and C. Goodman, 'Eighteenth-century traffic in live-stock', *Econ. Hist.* 3 (1936), pp. 214-36; Ritvo, *The animal estate*, pp. 46-7; D. Stead, 'Risk and risk management in English agriculture, c. 1750–1850', *EcHR* 57 (2004), pp. 334-61; T. Almeroth-Williams, *City of beasts: how animals shaped Georgian London* (2019), ch. 4.

¹⁷ Jones, *Agricultural enlightenment*, pp.1-2.

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- ¹⁸ Russell makes the point that such innovation was at first a product of the dairy industry, the beef industry a distant second: N. Russell, *Like engend'ring like: heredity and animal breeding in early modern England* (1986), ch. 6.
- ¹⁹ Derry, *Masterminding nature*, p. 18.
- ²⁰ H. M. Briggs and D. M. Briggs (1980) *Modern breeds of livestock*, 4th ed. (1980) cited in Quinn, 'Corpulent cattle', p. 146.
- ²¹ G. E. Fussell, 'The size of English cattle in the eighteenth century,' *Agric. Hist.* 3 (1929), pp. 160-81.
- ²² On these dynamics see: M. Cooper and J. Grozier (eds), *Precise dimensions; A history of units from 1791-2018* (2017); J. Hoppit, 'Reforming Britain's weights and measures, 1660-1824', *EngHR*, 108 (1993), pp.82-104.
- ²³ 'Baby Beef', *JRASE*, LXXXV (1926), p.179, cited in Fussell, 'The size of English cattle', p.163.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.181.
- ²⁵ J. Monk, *General view of the agriculture of the County of Leicester: with observations on the means of their improvement* (1794), p. 28.
- ²⁶ A. Young, *The farmer's tour through the east of England* (4 vols, 1771), I, p. 112.
- ²⁷ Moncrieff et al, *Farm animal portraits*, p. 169.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 1.
- ²⁹ On their role see: Schinto, 'Good breeding', p. 31. The revival of interest in livestock portraits rests in part with by husband-and-wife antique dealers turned farm animal portrait collectors Iona and Stephen Joseph whose 1996 co-written volume *Farm Animal Portraits*, a book that did much to not only raise the profile but also to make such portraits objects of serious study and scrutiny: Moncrieff et al, *Farm animal portraits*. Sadly, after Stephen's death, the Joseph's important collection was put up for auction at Bonham's, London, and dispersed: *Farmers Weekly*, 26 Mar. 2006; Bonham's, sale catalogue for auction 21 Mar. 2006, https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/14097/?bid_lot_no=2811434#! (accessed 9 Sept. 2021).
- ³⁰ Moncrieff et al, *Farm animal portraits*, p. 15.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ³² Ritvo, *The animal estate*, p. 53.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- ³⁴ P. Stanley, *Robert Bakewell and the Longhorn breed of cattle* (1995), *passim*; Cadwallader Bates, 'The brothers Colling', *JRASE* (3rd series) 10 (1899), pp. 1-30; R. Wallace, *Farm live stock of Great Britain* (5th edition, 1923), esp. p. 63.
- ³⁵ A. Young, *On the husbandry of three celebrated British farmers, Messrs. Bakewell, Arbutnot, and Duckett: being a lecture read to the Board of Agriculture, on Thursday, June 6, 1811* (1811), p. 6.

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- ³⁶ On Carr's genealogy see: 'St Peter's eighteenth century', <https://stpetersaddingham.org.uk/st-peters-church-history/st-peters-18th-century/> (accessed 9 Sept. 2021). On Carr's work as a landscape improver see: Bolton Abbey, 'Strid Wood and the Strid', <https://boltonabbey.com/what-to-see/strid-wood-and-the-strid/> (accessed 9 Sept. 2021); W. Carr, *Horae momenta Cravenae. Or the Craven dialect: exemplified in two dialogues* (1824). On Carr's position as steward, see: *Leeds Mercury*, 5 Oct. 1811.
- ³⁷ Walton, 'The diffusion of the improved shorthorn breed', pp. 22-36.
- ³⁸ D. Cannadine, 'The landowner as millionaire: the finances of the Dukes of Devonshire, c. 1800-c. 1926 (continued)', *AgHR* 25 (1977), pp. 77-97.
- ³⁹ Ritvo, *The animal estate*, pp. 45-6; *Farmer's Weekly*, 16 August 2002.
- ⁴⁰ Bates, 'The brothers Colling', p. 17.
- ⁴¹ A. H. Sanders, *Shorthorn cattle: a series of historical sketches, memoirs and records of the breed and its development in the United States and Canada* (1916), p. 43.
- ⁴² Bates, 'Brother Colling', p. 18; Wallace, *Farm Live Stock*, p.61.
- ⁴³ Bates, 'Brothers Colling', p. 22.
- ⁴⁴ Portrait of the Craven Heifer by F. Fryer and engraved by J. Whessell, published Jan. 1812, Museum of English Rural Life, Livestock in Art collection: https://www.reading.ac.uk/Instits/im/online_exhibitions/livestok/cat_ls.html (accessed 13 August 2021). It was related in an advert for 'The White Heifer That Travelled being shown at Shrewsbury, Wem and Oswestry in May 1813 that she then weighed 306 stones at 8lbs to the stone, or just short of the weight of the Craven Heifer in April 1811: *Salopian Journal*, 28 Apr. 1813. How accurate such measurements were will forever be lost for history, though what matters in the context of the world of enormous cattle was that the bragging rights as to who had the tallest or heaviest animal were of considerable import.
- ⁴⁵ The cowshed was a single-story section of a larger late seventeenth or early eighteenth-century threshing barn. The unusually large door can still be viewed today. See: 'Duke's Barn, Bolton Abbey' <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101451056-dukes-barn-bolton-abbey#.YRZIMi9Q01J> (accessed 13 Aug. 2021).
- ⁴⁶ *Leeds Mercury*, 5 Oct. 1811.
- ⁴⁷ Bates, 'Brothers Colling', p. 15.
- ⁴⁸ *Leeds Mercury*, 5 Oct. 1811
- ⁴⁹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 3 May 1845.

⁵⁰ *Times*, 11 Dec. 1982; *York Herald*, 3 Aug. 1811. Demelza Spargo incorrectly suggested the artist might have been either of the watercolourists E. Fryer or T. Fryer: Demelza Spargo (ed.), *This land is our land: aspects of agriculture in English art* (1988), p. 87.

⁵¹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 28 Oct. 1811.

⁵² Letter from Henry Pickop to William Carr, 14 Oct. 1811, Bolton Abbey Estate papers, uncatalogued estate papers.

⁵³ Spargo, *This land is our land*, p. 87.

⁵⁴ *Bradford Observer*, 14 Feb. 1946.

⁵⁵ Correspondence between Henry Pickop and William Carr, October 1811, Bolton Abbey Estate, uncatalogued estate papers; Sale catalogue for Lot 179, ‘Archive of manuscript correspondence and notes relating to the 1812 tour of the famous Craven Heifer’, Hansons Auctioneers, Oct. 2020 [herein ‘Hansons’ sale catalogue’], https://hansonslive.hansonsauctioneers.co.uk/m/lot-details/index/catalog/100/lot/44390?url=%2Fm%2Fview-auctions%2Fcatalog%2Fid%2F100%3Fpage%3D1%26view%3Dlist%26key%3Dheifer%26sale%3Dundefined%26catm%3Dany%26order%3Dorder_num%26xclosed%3Dno%26featured%3Dno (accessed 16 Aug. 2021).

⁵⁶ A disclaimer and a plea. Notwithstanding the help of auctioneer Jim Spencer, for which I am very grateful, it has not been possible to gain access to this private archive. If any reader of this archive can assist me in gaining access to the collection, please do get in touch. On the auction see: ‘Fattest cow in England sparks auction bidding battle’, 14 Oct. 2020, Hansons Auctioneers, <https://hansonsauctioneers.co.uk/fattest-cow-in-england-sparks-auction-bidding-battle/> (accessed 13 Aug. 2021).

⁵⁷ *Leeds Mercury*, 27 Nov. 1897; Hansons’ Sale Catalogue.

⁵⁸ ‘Proposals for publishing by subscription an engraving of the celebrated Four year-old, Short-horned Craven Heifer’, Hansons’ sale catalogue.

⁵⁹ Letters from Henry Pickop to William Carr, 14 and 26 Oct. 1811, Bolton Abbey Estate, uncatalogued estate papers.

⁶⁰ Letters from Henry Pickop to William Carr, 14 and 26 Oct. and 6 Nov., and Carr to Pickop, 30 Oct. 1811, Bolton Abbey Estate, uncatalogued estate papers.

⁶¹ *Leeds Mercury*, 27 Nov. 1897; ‘Description’, Hansons’ sale catalogue.

⁶² *Leeds Mercury*, 28 Mar. 1812.

⁶³ Letters from Henry Pickop to William Carr, 14 and 26 Oct. and 6 Nov. 1811, Bolton Abbey Estate, uncatalogued estate papers.

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- ⁶⁴ Letter from Henry Pickop to William Carr, 6 Nov. 1811, Bolton Abbey Estate, uncatalogued estate papers; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 28 Oct. 1811
- ⁶⁵ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11 Nov. 1811.
- ⁶⁶ *Leeds Mercury*, 27 Nov. 1897; Particulars, ‘Sale catalogue’.
- ⁶⁷ *Leeds Mercury*, 27 Nov. 1897; Moncrieff et al, *Farm animal portraits*, p. 28; Description, ‘Sale catalogue’.
- ⁶⁸ *Englishman*, 1 Mar.; *Star*, 4 Mar. 1812.
- ⁶⁹ Moncrieff et al, *Farm animal portraits*, p. 18; L. T. Weaver, *Painter of pedigree. Thomas Weaver of Shrewsbury -animal artist of the agricultural revolution* (2017).
- ⁷⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 27 Nov. 1897.
- ⁷¹ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 2 May 1812.
- ⁷² This list is based on lists of open and closed pubs on the websites WhatPub? And closedpubs.co.uk supplemented with a search of the National Archives ‘Discovery’ catalogue and: *Pierce Egan's Life in London, and Sporting Guide*, 20 March 1825; ‘50 years ago in Salford: 150-strong mob see police assaulted in Cross Lane beat club riot [14 July 1965]’, Salford Online, 14 July 2015, <http://salfordonline.com/3970-50-years-ago-in-salford-150-strong-mob-see-police-assaulted-in-cross-lane-beat-club-riot.html> (accessed 27 August 2021); ‘Fred Foley remembers Lovat Street’, oral history interview [nd], Edge Hill Station, <http://www.edgehillstation.co.uk/resources/fred-foley-remembers-lovat-street/> (accessed 27 August 2021).
- ⁷³ *Leeds Mercury*, 27 Nov. 1897.
- ⁷⁴ *Bradford Observer*, 14 Feb. 1946.
- ⁷⁵ *Leeds Mercury*, 27 Mar. 1813; James Henry Dixon, *Chronicles and stories of the Craven Dales* (1881), p. 144. On the price of beef in 1813 see: William Pitt, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Stafford* (2nd edition, 1813), pp. 221-3.
- ⁷⁶ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 30 Mar. 1818.
- ⁷⁷ The Durham Ox lent its name to an inn constructed in the Loddon Valley of west Victoria, Australia, in the 1850s. The inn no longer stands but the rural community that grew up around the inn persists. Evidently, celebrity travelled: ‘History and heritage [Loddon Valley]’, <https://www.bendigoregion.com.au/visit-loddon-valley/loddon-valley-history-heritage> (accessed 10 Sept. 2021).
- ⁷⁸ *Pierce Egan's Life in London, and Sporting Guide*, 20 Mar. 1825
- ⁷⁹ *Dublin Morning Register*, 1 July 1826.

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- ⁸⁰ Craven Heifer, North Road, <http://pubsinpreston.blogspot.com/2012/02/craven-heifer-north-road.html> (last accessed 30 Aug. 2021)
- ⁸¹ N. Mason, “‘The sovereign people are in a beastly state’: The Beer Act of 1830 and Victorian discourse on working-class drunkenness”, *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29 (2001), pp. 109-27.
- ⁸² H. Speight, *The Craven and north-west Yorkshire highlands: being a complete account of the history, scenery, and antiquities of that romantic district* (1892), p. 85.
- ⁸³ For example, see: *Morning Herald*, 11 Sept. 1826.
- ⁸⁴ Martin’s Bank Limited – Branch network: Skipton, <http://www.martinsbank.co.uk/11-90-70%20Skipton.htm> (accessed 30 Aug. 2021); Barclays Bank Archive - Craven Bank: Settle and Skipton <https://www.archive.barclays.com/items/show/5324> (accessed 30 Aug. 2021).
- ⁸⁵ C. S. Hallas, *The Wensleydale Railway* (1984), pp 4-18; *Bradford Observer*, 8 Dec. 1939.
- ⁸⁶ Moncrieff et al, *Farm animal portraits*, p. 28.
- ⁸⁷ Foreword by the Duchess of Devonshire, in Moncrieff, et al *Farm animal portraits*, p. 10.
- ⁸⁸ *Bradford Observer*, 26 Feb. 1943 and 14 Feb. 1946.
- ⁸⁹ Schinto, ‘Good breeding’, p. 30.
- ⁹⁰ *Times*, 11 Dec. 1982.
- ⁹¹ *Daily Mail*, 9 Jan.; *Times*, 9 Jan. 2013; Bonham’s Gentleman’s Library Sale, Catalogue, Lot 250, <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/20448/lot/250/?category=list> (accessed 31 August 2021).
- ⁹² For references see note 52 and ‘Fattest cow in England sparks auction bidding battle’, *Craven Herald and Pioneer*, 15 Oct. 2020, <https://www.cravenherald.co.uk/news/18797175.fattest-cow-england-sparks-auction-bidding-battle/> (accessed 31 Aug. 2021).
- ⁹³ Bonham’s The Sporting and Ornithological Pictures Including a Collection of Primitive and Livestock Art Sale, 9 Sept. 2008, Lot 11, <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/15812/lot/11/?category=list&length=12&page=1> (accessed 8 Sept. 2021).
- ⁹⁴ ‘Legend of the Craven Heifer reimagined to launch the 160th Great Yorkshire Show’, *Yorkshire Post*, 11 Apr. 2018, <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/legend-craven-heifer-reimagined-launch-160th-great-yorkshire-show-587245> (accessed 8 September 2021); ‘Steel sculpture visits Wold Top Brewery to celebrate 160th Great Yorkshire Show’, Yorkshire Agricultural Society, 4 June 2018, <https://media.yasdigital.com/2018/06/04/steel-sculpture-visits-wold-top-brewery-to-celebrate-160th-great-yorkshire-show/> (accessed 8 Sept. 2021).
- ⁹⁵ ‘Steel sculpture launched to celebrate 160th Great Yorkshire Show’, Yorkshire Agricultural Society, 10 Apr. 2018, <https://media.yasdigital.com/2018/04/10/steel-sculpture-launched-to-celebrate-160th-great-yorkshire-show/> (accessed 8 Sept. 2021); ‘Craven Heifer sculpture comes

home', Yorkshire Agricultural Society, 8 Oct. 2018,

<https://media.yasdigital.com/2018/10/08/craven-heifer-comes-home/> (accessed 8 Sept. 2021).

⁹⁶ L. Holloway, 'Subjecting cows to robots: farming technologies and the making of animal subjects', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007), p. 1041.

⁹⁷E. Pawley, *The nature of the future* (2020).