

2 Georgian Montagus

The Manor of Lackham

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by

Tony Pratt

Last updated : 14 December 2016

Wiltshire College Lackham

2nd edition 2015

Introduction

The Manor of Lackham, secure on a ridge west of the River Avon near Chippenham, has been in existence for well over a thousand years. In that time many people have lived, worked and died there - a home and community, refuge and sanctuary.

For just under two hundred years the Wiltshire branch of the influential Montagu family owned Lackham, guiding the estate through the turbulent period of the English Civil War and the centuries beyond.

This concise history looks at two of the last Montagus to live at Lackham, George Montagu and his son, George Conway Montagu.....

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George Montagu (1753 - 1815)



In the century and a half since William Cunnington first published a life of George Montagu¹ a number of articles have considered his contributions to natural history and the work by June, the Countess Badeni² details the events of his life. Only Ron Cleevely's excellent articles³ give a full account of both the life and works of this fascinating eighteenth century Wiltshireman⁴, and there is no account of his son at all....

It has been said that "*George Montagu was just an upright simple-minded English country gentleman who loved Natural History*"⁵ but there was far more to him than that.

George Montagu was born, in 1751, 1753 or 1755⁶, at his family's ancestral estate of Lackham near the small Wiltshire market town of

¹ Cunnington, W (1852) *Memoir of George Montagu* Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine (henceforward WAM) III. pp87 - 94

² Badeni, J (1960) *Wiltshire Forefathers*, chapter on Lackham

³ Cleevely, R (1978) *Some background to the life and publications of Colonel George Montagu (1753 - 1815)* J. Soc. Biblphy nat [sic] Hist 8 (94) 445-480

⁴ Another attempt to look at George Montagu's life and work has been made recently by the author (2016) and the resulting article was published in the 2016 Devon History Society Journal. Obviously the new information gathered for that paper cannot be included here and the interested reader is directed to their website [Tony Pratt *George Montagu of Kingsbridge and Lackham: Georgian Soldier, Naturalist and Libertine* [The Devon Historian](#) vol 85, 2016, 51-63]

⁵ Cummings, B F (1912) *A biographical sketch of Col. George Montagu (1755-1815)* *English Field Zoologist* Zoolgische Annalen Wurzburg

⁶ *The Dictionary of National Biography*, (hereafter DNB), vol X p 693 gives 1751 Cleevely, R (undated) *Chart of singular events in the life of George Montagu* Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B has 1753 and Cunnington, W (1852) *ibid* p 87 have 1755

Chippenham. [The actual date was 9 July 1753](#)⁷ He was the second eldest of 13 children - his elder brother James inherited in 1790, the fifth James Montagu in as many generations to own the estate.

Little is known of George's early life, he personally recorded that he was attending Urchfont school, near Devizes, in 1765⁸. He and his siblings were raised in the ancient Manor House at Lackham (the current house was not built until later.)

In 1770⁹ George Montagu joined the 15th Regiment of Foot¹⁰, and two years later married Ann, the eldest daughter of William Courtenay and Lady Jane Stuart. Ann was a granddaughter of the Earl of Bute¹¹, Prime Minister¹² during the reign of George III.

⁷ [Lackham Baptisms 1559 - 1873](#) [Devizes, Wiltshire Family History Society, hereafter WFHS, 2012], 97

⁸ Montagu, G (undated) *Natural History of Wiltshire*, Mss notes in the Library of the Linnean Society

⁹ The Army List for the Fifteenth Regiment of Foot gives that he was an ensign in the regiment 22 June 1770

¹⁰ <http://www.pwstubbs.force9.co.uk/15th/15th.htm>

Raised at Nottingham in June 1685 by Col. Sir William Clifton and known initially as Col. Sir William Clifton's Regiment of Foot. It was then named after the Colonels of the Regiment until 1751 when it became the 15th Regiment of Foot, in 1782 it was renamed as the 15th (The Yorkshire East Riding) Regiment of Foot, in 1881 the East Yorkshire Regiment, in 1935 the East Yorkshire Regiment [The Duke of York's Own] before finally, in 1958, it was amalgamated with the West Yorkshire Regiment [The Prince of Wales' Own] to form the Prince of Wales' Own Regiment of Yorkshire. The West Yorkshire Regiment was raised in the same year as the 15th and was formerly known as the 14th Regiment of Foot.

¹¹ <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/terrace/adw03/pms/bute.htm>

In 1736 he married Mary Worsley Montagu (see DNB for details of her achievements) and they had five sons and six daughters

¹² <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/terrace/adw03/pms/bute.htm>

May 1762 - April 1763

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It has been suggested ¹³ that George eloped with Anne to Scotland, and support for this might be seen in a 1774 letter from his uncle Edward, Master in Chancery, to Lord Ailsbury - "I know nothing of the young couple in Scotland, but thro' my unhappy brother. I understand the young man is taking the advantage of his mother's weakness and by her means working his way to Lackham. I am afraid my brother must yield to all her wishes" ¹⁴ where his brother is James IV and the mother is Eleanor Hedges. The only other possibility would be a son of his other brother John Montagu, but Edward tends to refer to him as "The Admiral" in letters to Ailsbury. No further evidence for this elopement has been found but the comment by Edward is interesting in context.

George was stationed at various locations in the United Kingdom, for example when Ann and George were married the regiment was stationed in western England. In 1774 it was posted to the north of Ireland, and in July 1775 to Dublin ¹⁵. If the conjecture above is correct then presumably this would have been before the deployment to Ireland. A number of British military units were moved from Ireland to North America in June and July 1774, so the 15th may not have gone there to replace them before Edward's letter was written.

In December 1775 George was promoted to the rank of Captain on the same day that the regiment was ordered to America ¹⁶ during the American War of Independence (1775 -1783). The orders were dated 1st December 1775, and the regiment embarked their transports at Cork on the 10 January 1776. They were unable to sail until the 12th February, however, because of "shortages of stores and ships" ¹⁷. The

¹³ S Peter Dance *Letters on Ornithology 1804 - 1815 Between George Montagu and Robert Anstice* [Wigtown, GC Book Publishers, 2003], 8

¹⁴ WA 9/35/203 18 Letter dated London July 25 1774 Edward Montagu to Lord Ailsbury

¹⁵ Cleevely, R (1978) *Some background to the life and publications of Colonel George Montagu (1753 - 1815)* J. Soc. Bibliophy nat Hist 8 (94) 445-480

¹⁶ Cleevely, R (undated) *An attempt at a timeline of events in the life of George Montagu* Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B

¹⁷ Jones, R. J (c 1959) *A History of the 15th (East Yorkshire) Regiment, Duke of Yorks Own 1685 - 1914*

15th finally arrived in North Carolina on the 5th May 1776¹⁸.

Ann stayed with the Montagus at Lackham during this separation, it is uncertain whether she normally accompanied George to his UK postings. It was here that she gave birth to their first child, the other subject of this study, George Conway Courtenay Montagu¹⁹

At this time three members of the family were stationed in North America. George was with the 15th Regiment of Foot, his uncle Admiral John Montagu was Admiral Commanding the British Navy in the colonies (he was an eye-witness to the Boston Tea Party²⁰); and George's cousin²¹ John was serving in Admiral Montagu's flagship. A brother officer in the 15th was Conway Courtenay²². He was cousin to Ann Montagu²³, which might explain why George was commissioned into the 15th Foot.

This would seem even more likely as George and Mary gave the names

¹⁸ Cleevely, R (1978) *Some background to the life and publications of Colonel George Montagu (1753 - 1815)* J. Soc. Biblphy nat Hist 8 (94) 445-480

¹⁹ *Lacock Parish Registers* baptised 24 July 1776

²⁰ Hibbert, C (1990) *Redcoats and Rebels : the war for America 1770-1781* Penguin Classic Military History ISBN 0 141 39021 2 p 21

As the Mohawks marched away Indian file, to the tune of a fife, Admiral John Montagu, Commander-in-Chief on the North American Station, threw up a window of the house of an American loyalist friend with whom he was dining and called out to them

"Well boys, you have had a fine pleasant evening for your Indian caper haven't you? But, mind, you have got to pay the fiddle yet"

"Never mind, Squire" one of them shouted back, "just come down here if you please and we will settle the bill in two minutes"

²¹ son of Admiral John Montagu

²² Jones, R. J (c 1959) *A History of the 15th (East Yorkshire) Regiment, Duke of Yorks Own 1685 - 1914*

²³ Repko, K (2003) *perss. comm.*

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"Conway Courtenay" to their two oldest sons. This remains speculative, however.

During 1776 the regiment was involved in a number of battles, including those at Brooklyn, White Plains and Fort Washington²⁴.

It was during the time that it was in America that the Regiment earned one of its nicknames, The Snappers

The Regiment had exhausted its supply of musket balls, but still had powder. They were told to keep "snapping" which was the act of charging a musket with powder only and firing it off (rather similar to today's blank ammunition). By doing this the Regiment convinced their attackers that they still had ammunition and the attack was beaten off²⁵

This was during the Battle of Brandywine, which was fought on the 11th September 1777. In this battle the 15th were part of the 3rd Brigade, under General Cornwallis²⁶, which routed Sullivan's Division. The 15th were then posted in Concord on September 13th and the army eventually occupied Philadelphia on the 25th of September. Four days later the regiment was engaged in the Battle of Germantown²³.

Few army records mention George Montagu by name, but the Regimental Muster Rolls show that "Pte. Matthew Lyon, of Capt. George Montagu's Company was killed on the 4th of November "²⁷. George retired from the

²⁴ Cleevely, R (1978) *Some background to the life and publications of Colonel George Montagu (1753 - 1815)* J. Soc. Biblphy nat Hist 8 (94) 445-480

²⁵ <http://www.pwstubbs.force9.co.uk/15th/15th.htm>

²⁶ <http://earlyamerica.com/portraits/cornwallis.html>

"Charles Cornwallis (1738-1805)

British general and colonial governor, served with distinction in American Revolution, won battle of Brandywine, captured Philadelphia in 1777 and Charleston in 1780, forced to surrender to Washington at Yorktown in 1781 ending the war."

²⁷ The Regiment issue 44

regiment less than two weeks after Pte. Lyon's death, on November 11th 1777²⁸.

This may have been due to his unhappiness with the experiences he had:

"the misery which often fell on the inhabitants of the scattered villages and lonely dwellings, from the brutality and licentiousness of the soldiery, was painful to him in the extreme; and in narrating anecdotes of the war to his children in after years, he was wont to allude to circumstances of this nature with abhorrence " ²⁹

which might refer to the German Troops (Hessians) who

"acted so shamefully towards the inhabitants, who had been assured of immunity from outrage, that the population retaliated " ³⁰

It was while he was in America that George Montagu first started his work as a naturalist - initially "by shooting any of the more interesting American birds³¹", although initially this was only so that he could show them to his mother ³² or wife ³³.

After George returned to England he and Ann lived at Rowde in Wiltshire.

When Thomas Hedges of Alderton (George Montagu's maternal

²⁸ ²⁴ Jones, Robert J (c 1959) *ibid* p212

²⁹ Cunnington, *ibid* p88, a quote from George's daughter Louisa (married Mathew Crawford)

³⁰ Jones, Robert J (c 1959) *ibid* p204

³¹ Crawford, L (1838) "Autobiographical Sketches of Lackham House and Laycock" *Metropolitan magazine* September p191

³² Cunnington, W (1852) *ibid*

³³ Moroney EH (1965) Col Montagu and his harrier *Country Life*, Aug 26 p516-517, and Badeni, J (1960)

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grandfather) died in 1782 ³⁴ he left George a small bequest of £200 per year ³⁵ which made him independent of his father.

In 1780 their daughter Eleanora Anne was born ³⁶ followed by Frederick Conway Courtenay in 1783 ³⁷. Later in 1786 the family moved to Surrendell, part of the Hedges estate near Alderton, where they remained until September 1788 when they moved to Easton Grey near Sherston ³⁸. Their second daughter Louisa was baptized exactly two months later³⁹

This was the same year in which Elizabeth Hedges, widow of Thomas Hedges, died ⁴⁰. Whether there is any connection to the move to Easton Grey is unknown.

At some time around 1789 or 1790 George met Mrs Elizabeth Dorville in London ⁴¹. It is known he

"formed a deep and lasting attachment to [her],

³⁴ Alderton Parish Registers Wiltshire County Record Office (hereafter WRO) fiche 1078/3

³⁵ Will of Thomas Hedges WA P1/H/1291 B. This was the largest annuity - Thomas' sister Eleanor (George Montagu's aunt) was granted £200 per annum, his brother James Montagu junior also received £200 per annum as long as his father James Montagu senior lived, and Thomas Hedge's servant John Mansfield received a bequest of £100 and £30 per annum

³⁶ Rowde Parish Registers (transcriptions in WANHS Library) 17 April 1780

³⁷ Rowde Parish Registers *ibid* 11 March 1783

³⁸ Cleevely, R (1978) *Some background to the life and publications of Colonel George Montagu (1753 - 1815)* J. Soc. Bibliophy nat Hist 8 (94) 445-480 10 September 1788

³⁹ christened 1788 (Easton Grey Parish Registers). She married Matthew Crawford, barrister, of the Middle Temple, and died Tuesday December 29th, 1857. She wrote several articles about her family homes, and provided interesting accounts of the old Manor houses at both Lackham (which she never lived in) and Alderton (where she spent her early childhood). Some of her statements should probably be regarded with caution

⁴⁰ Alderton Parish Registers *ibid*

⁴¹ The exact date is unknown but given other dating evidence it must have been around 1790

the wife of a city merchant ⁴², *a woman of talent and education, who made beautiful drawings for his books* " ⁴³

Elizabeth Dorville was the daughter of George Wolff of Balham, her brother was Jens Wolff ⁴⁴. Elizabeth Wolff married John Dorville. Exact details are unclear but it would appear that John Dorville and George Wolff were partners in a London company ⁴⁵ which later went bankrupt ⁴⁶

John and Elizabeth Dorville had three children ⁴⁷ before she separated from him, ~~presumably to be with George Montagu. It was certainly her~~ idea, John Dorville referred to it as an "unhappy separation" ⁴⁸.

George's sister Arabella married Ralph Dorville Woodford ⁴⁹ some three or four years before this. It is tempting to speculate that it was through his brother-in-law that George came to know Mrs Dorville, but this is unknown. No Dorville Woodford is associated with Elizabeth's family, as far as can be found out, and it may be a coincidence of surnames.

⁴² John Dorville

⁴³ Lacock inscriptions WA Monumental Inscriptions fiche

⁴⁴ Wolff, G (1825) Last Will and Testament Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B. folio 14 dated 8 August 1825, codicil dated 3 April 1826

⁴⁵ The firm of Wolff, Dorville and Ernest (later Dorville and Wolff,) is mentioned in the East Kent area between 1783 and 1807 (East Kent Archive Centre EK-U1453/B5/4/1425). In 1807? the firm came under the control of Jens Wolff, Elizabeth's brother, and probably moved to London

⁴⁶ In his will (Dorville, J (>1815) The Will of John Dorville Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B. folio 15) John Dorville refers to "the dreadful calamity of the bankruptcy of Dorville and Wolff in 1812".

⁴⁷ John William, Elizabeth and George Phillip (Dorville, J (>1815) *ibid*)

⁴⁸ Dorville, J (>1815) *ibid*

⁴⁹ WA 137/39/6 partial transcript of James Montagu's will, codicil dated 4 July 1797, £2000 was left to be invested for dividends to provide annual gratuities of £200 for "my sister Arabella. Wife of Ralph Dorville Woodford"

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In 1790 George's father James Montagu died ⁵⁰ leaving the estate to the eldest son, James.

George joined the Wiltshire Militia, he was with them in South Wales during 1790 and 1791; in the latter year he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and commanded the regiment

⁵¹

It is thought that Mrs Dorville accompanied George to his military postings. Their first child Henry Dorville was born sometime during this period; he was not baptized until 1792 when he was said to be "about two years old" ⁵². This was the same year in which George published his first book, entitled *The Sportsman's Directory*

In 1794 the regiment was stationed in Sussex and in the following two years in the south west of England.

In 1795 George was elected a Fellow of the prestigious Linnean Society ⁵³, proof that he was already much respected as a naturalist. He published his first paper in their journal the following year.

James Montagu died on 12 September 1797. He had never married and in his will ⁵⁴, dated 6 September 1792, he set up three trustees to run the estate and handle bequests. The first two bequests in his will were not for his immediate family, but secured annuities for life for his two illegitimate children, George and Sophie Angles. After other bequests he willed

"The capital messuage or mansion house at Lackham

⁵⁰ Buried 25 April 1790 [Lacock Burials 1859-1837 \[Devizes, Wiltshire Family History Society, hereafter WFHS, 2012\]](#), 91

⁵¹ Clevely, R (undated) *ibid*

⁵² Millbrook Parish Registers, in Blackmore, M (1965) Note on baptism of Anna Elizabeth and Henry Dorville Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B Folio 23. (L Mss Mon /23)

⁵³ George was nominated by T. Lamb, J. Latham and W. Peete and was elected a Fellow on 21 July 1795 [ref? Linnaean asociety journal ?](#)

⁵⁴ WRO137/39/6 p11 onwards

aforesaid and with the closes, gardens, grounds and landsupon trust to and for the use and on behalf of my dear brother George Montagu Esq Lt Colonel in His Majesties Wiltshire regiment of Militia during his natural life and then reverting to the Trustees"

⁵⁵

This was changed, however, in a codicil James added 20 September 1792 ⁵⁶ which said that

"My brother George Montagu shall not live or reside in my Mansion House at Lackham unless he shall so live with his wife"

This she refused to do, probably because of her husband's infidelity, and in 1801 the Trustees were ordered to

"Enquire whether the defendant George Montagu the elder had resided in the Mansion House at Lackham since the Testator's decease and under what circumstances, and whether Ann Montagu his wife had resided there and under what circumstances, and was it proper " ⁵⁷

The problems of the succession were not made public. In 1797 the Rev. Samuel Denne FSA wrote that a friend of his was staying with Colonel Montagu who had been left

"by his brother a noble house built within the last five years situated in the midst of a good estate and the manor extensive to the river Avon meandr'ring by a considerable part of it " ⁵⁸

⁵⁵ WRO137/39/6 ibid p13

⁵⁶ Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B. folio 10 p13

⁵⁷ WA 137/59-6, ibid

⁵⁸ actually it was probably no more than 18 months or two years old by this time, the House was certainly before the end of 1795 (Pratt, T, (2003) The Manor Houses of Lackham, Wiltshire College ackham)

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It is very likely that George's association with Mrs Dorville was also the major cause of his problems with the Militia . In 1799 three of the officers in the Wiltshire Militia (Captains Awdry, Houlton and Phayre) brought Col Montagu before a court martial on five counts of abusing his position as Commanding Officer and conduct unbecoming a Commanding Officer, after what one observer has described as "some provocative marital skirmishing" ⁵⁹.

The Court Martial was held in Plymouth, where the regiment was stationed at the time, between 28 September and 15 October 1797 ⁶⁰. The Court comprised 4 Colonels, 2 Lieutenant Colonels, 4 Majors, 4 Captains and was presided over by Col. Francis Rodd of the 1st Royal Cornish Militia. George was found guilty and dismissed from the regiment

"For conduct derogatory to his situation as Field Commanding Officer of the Regiment and that his actions were not consistent with the need for good order and harmony within the Regiment" ⁶¹

Cunnington was writing very close to George's lifetime and so it is perhaps understandable that neither George's association with Mrs Dorville nor his court martial makes an appearance in the account at all ⁶².

In 1800 George Montagu moved to Knowle, near Kingsbridge, Devon, ⁶³ close to where his wife's family came from. Elizabeth Dorville had been

⁵⁹ Badeni, J (1960) *ibid* p70 gives details of the actual charges, Allen (*ibid*) gives the "marital skirmishing"

⁶⁰ Cleevely, J (1978) *ibid* p449

⁶¹ Cleevely, J (1978) *ibid* p448

⁶² None of this, or its consequences, makes an appearance in Cunnington's Memoir but then, as Cleevely notes, his "accounts were subjected to the restraints imposed by family sensitivity. As a consequence the more colourful aspects of Montagu's behaviour that might have attracted wider interest were omitted" Cleevely, RJ (1978) *ibid* p 446

⁶³ Badeni, J (1960) *ibid* p7

resident there since December 1797 ⁶⁴.

This was not a good year for George Montagu - he and his surviving son George Conway Courtenay Montagu fell out which may not have been helped by the fact that George senior

"Was a colonel, an upright and honourable man, with a mind perhaps a little too conscious of its own rectitude, very susceptible to outrage, and a temperament somewhat irate according to type" ⁶⁵

Cleevely, however, formed a different opinion of his character:

"My own readings indicate that he was of excellent character; honest, sincere, responsible, considerate, reliable and exhibited all the other traits that warrant a commendation " ⁶⁶

This indeed supports Louisa Montagu's assessment that her "father's temper was remarkably sweet and serene ⁶⁷".

Following this family contretemps George Conway brought a law suit against the Trustees for failing in their duties and colluding with his father, allowing him to strip the assets of the estate. This and further litigations eventually resulted in the sale of the estate, although this was after the time of both Georges. It may well be that this very public brawling, as well as his association with Elizabeth Dorville, played a part in George's removal from the Wiltshire Militia.

George Montagu lived at Knowle House, near Kingsbridge in Devon, for the rest of his life. During this period his major books appeared and he was constantly busy with his studies.

Although George was living at Knowle he is known to have been at Lackham after this -

⁶⁴ Cleevely, R (unknown) ibid

⁶⁵ Cummings, BF (1912) ibid

⁶⁶ Cleevely, R (1978) ibid p463

⁶⁷ Crawford, L (1838) ibid p191

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July 1813 Wednesday midnight, as George Montague, Esq, of Lackham near Laycock was shooting in company with a Gentleman who was on a visit at his house Mr Montague's gun accidentally went off and lodged its contents in the body of his friend who survived only a short period Mr M's state of mind is indescribable ⁶⁸

George Montagu was never a man for ceremony and

"preferred to live a secluded life spending his days beating through thin brushwood to identify the song of a woodwren or collecting sea worms from the mud at Kingsbridge or dredging in Tor Bay." ⁶⁹

George and Elizabeth's youngest daughter, Arabella, was born in 1801 ⁷⁰

1802 saw the publication of George Montagu's most influential book, the Ornithological Dictionary and the following year his study of British shells, arguably the start of British Conchology, Testacea Brittanica.

He did not spend all his time on natural history however. His military skills were still in demand

"Napoleon's Grand Army, massing on the cliffs of Boulogne in 1803, waited only a fair wind to cross the channel to invade England. The Royal Navy, too, waited. And Col. Montagu raised a regiment of Yeomanry at Kingsbridge to repel invaders" ⁷¹

George was in charge of the Guides for Napoleonic defence. He wrote

"Armaments and thoughts of invasion engross the

⁶⁸ handwritten transcription in Kite, E (undated) Pedigrees of Wiltshire vol II 2 volumes of bound mss in WA NHS collection, Devizes. Probably from the local paper; although it reads like the Gentlemans Magazine it was not found in the relevant volume.

⁶⁹ Cummings, BF (1912) *ibid*

⁷⁰ Kingsbridge Parish Registers, St Edmund's Church "Arabella, daughter of Mrs Elizabeth Dorville"

⁷¹ Moroney EH (1965)

mind in these turbulent times... I have been
overpowered in persuasion to agree to the extensive
command of the Corps of Guides of South Devon" ⁷²

For the remainder of his life George was deeply involved in his studies.

George Montagu died of lockjaw on 28th August 1815 after stepping
on a rusty nail.

A copy of George Montagu's will is held in the Museum Library at Devizes
and another in the General Library at the Natural History Museum. It is
addressed as both "Lackham, Wilts" and "Knowle, Devon".

George gave annuities to "My wife Ann Montagu from the Wilts estates at
Alderton and Sevington etc as bequeathed to me by my worthy friend Thos
Hedges" ⁷³ and he made provision for his legal children.

He stipulated that if all the children should die before Ann their money
should go to "Elizabeth wife of John, merchant / London ⁷⁴". This part
went on to say that if Elizabeth should die the money was to go to "her
younger children who may be alive and born since the separation from her
husband Henry Isabella, Georgina D " (the D here is exactly as written
by George, and confirms this is Mrs Dorville)

George went on to bequeath all the Wiltshire property to Ann and

*"all my belongings re property landed and personal,
about Knowle House parish of Kingsbridge and
elsewhere not bequeathed before, my library of
books, collections of natural history, cabinets,
manuscript publications and copyrights thereof also
coins, plate, jewels, rings, watches, household
furniture to my beloved friend Elizabeth Dorville as
an acknowledgement for the very great assistance*

⁷² Letter from James Sowerby dated 12 December 1809 quoted in Cleevely, RJ (1978) *ibid*
footnote 28 p475

⁷³ Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B. *ibid* folio 2 *Copy of the Will of George Montagu*

⁷⁴ Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B. *ibid* folio 2 *Copy of the Will of George Montagu*

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she has given me in my pursuits of natural history "

⁷⁵

He referred to Eliza as his "dear friend " in several places.

The distance between him and his son was made very clear in the final part of the will where he instructs that

"One consideration shall be my son George Montagu may not be concerned directly or indirectly with my will or my Executor if Elizabeth D does not act [as the executor] but Mrs Wolff to be instead " ⁷⁶

The will was witnessed at Kingsbridge by Thos Ellis and Arthur Goodyear and probated 27 July 1815 to Elizabeth Dorville.

He specified that the funeral costs should not exceed £50 and that "I am to be buried where I die or at the Parish Church of my dear friend and executor ⁷⁷". By the end of the nineteenth century the location of George's tomb was a mystery -

"It is said Montagu was buried in Kingsbridge Church [but] no stone exists in the church that I can find neither does the parish register show any entry of burial⁷⁸"

In 1897, however, an unsuspected crypt was found at Kingsbridge parish church, containing two very badly damaged coffins, and a plate, attached to one of them, with the inscription

*"George Montagu Esq
Born 18th of June 1753*

⁷⁵ Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B. *ibid*

⁷⁶ Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B. *ibid*

⁷⁷ Nat. Hist. Museum GL Mon B. *ibid*

⁷⁸ Elliot, EAS (1897) from *The Field*, quoted in *Supplement to the Kingsbridge Gazette* Friday 2 July 1897

Died 20th June 1815 aged 62 " ⁷⁹

The discovery confirmed George's resting place as being in Kingsbridge Parish Church. The discovery was made by Dr. Elliot, he and previous searchers had missed the burial in the parish registers; it was eventually located by the Vicar ⁸⁰ and reads "Col George Montagu Kingsbridge June 24 1815 62" ⁸¹

⁷⁹ Lane, R (1897) in Supplement to the Kingsbridge Gazette ibid

⁸⁰ the Rev H A Birks (Crockford's Clerical Directory 1898 p1618)

⁸¹ "Mentor" (1897) Kingsbridge Gazette Friday July 2 1897 the "Kingsbridge" in the entry may indicate that the entry is actually in the Churchstow Registers, not Kingsbridge. This is not clear but the vicar of Churchstow was also responsible for Kingsbridge. This might explain why the entry was missed in the preceding 80 years; it seems very strange that it was not found at all until after the discovery of the burial

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George Conway Montagu (1776 - 1847)



George Conway Montagu was born in 1776, at the ancient manor house at Lackham, which has been described as

"Deserv[ing] a passing mention. It exhibited specimens of various periods from the Norman downwards, and presented an appearance of rude grandeur rather than the beauty of regular architectural proportion. It stood completely embosomed in woods. The great hall was hung with armour " ⁸²

When George Conway was aged six the family moved to Alderton, another ancient manor house. It isn't known when George Conway left home, but his sister mentions that he was in the Navy for a time ⁸³. Nothing further is known, and he did not make a career of it; there is no other evidence that he was at sea at all.

George Conway Montagu was a spendthrift and

"even in 1797 ⁸⁴ he had already started to sign promissory notes for ready cash, and by 1799 he was living in the north of England and elsewhere under an assumed name (sometimes more than one!) in an effort to dodge his creditors. Thereafter he spent some time, on and off, living under Kings' Bench Rules

⁸² Cunnington W (1852) *ibid* p87

see Pratt, T (2003) *ibid* .for more information on the houses at Lackham

⁸³ WA 44/1 *ibid* Louisa Crawford's deposition

⁸⁴ The year of James Montagu's death, when the estate went into trust instead of being inherited by Col Montagu.....

and thus came the gradual sale of the estate " ⁸⁵

One of these assumed names was "William Thompson "; in 1803 (when he was 27 years old) he "was embarrassed in his pecuniary circumstances [and] went to reside in Liverpool where he assumed the name William Thompson ⁸⁶". It was here that he "paid his addresses" to Margaret Green Wilson, who was 10 years his junior and "in the month of December 1803 ⁸⁷they went together to Gretna Green in Scotland and were there lawfully married in their own proper names " ⁸⁸This last was important although they did not use the name Montagu for a long time; even when Margaret wrote to her aunt, Mary Wilson, to explain that "she had the previous day married George, and in this letter she falsely signed herself Margaret Thompson "⁸⁹.

The newly weds lived in Edinburgh until 1804, under the name of Thompson ⁹⁰, before moving to Hornsea near Beverley in Yorkshire. Here their eldest son Frederick was born⁹¹ At this time they were living under the name "Conway "⁹². They then stayed briefly in Liverpool before moving to Lackham, where they lived between 1806 and 1808.

According to Louisa Crawford's deposition, the family lived at Lackham but George Conway was usually away on business and only returned to visit every now and then. Ann Montagu was living at Lackham at this time with Louisa, her remaining daughter, and seems to have remained there until she died.

⁸⁵ Lacock inscriptions ibid

⁸⁶ WA 44/1 ibid

⁸⁷ "On or about 29 December" WA 44/1 ibid Judge's declaration and pronouncement

⁸⁸ WA 44/1 ibid Libel section 1

⁸⁹ WA 44/1 ibid transcription of letter in Evidence

⁹⁰ WA 44/1 ibid Mrs. Allen's testimony. They were living in two rooms in Mrs Allen's house at 1, St. James Squ

⁹¹ 3 Oct 1805

⁹² WA 44/1 George Crosbie's testimony. He had returned from Russia in 1806 and was met at Hull by George Conway Montagu, who told him that they were living in Hornsea under the name Conway. This must have been shortly before they moved to Liverpool for a short stay

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Apparently she was not prepared to live there with her philandering husband but did so when George sen. moved to Knowle.

George Conway Montagu was also known by his real name in this period. George Crosbie described how, in 1807, he witnessed George Conway under arrest at the Sheriff's house in Newcastle Street in the Strand, and accompanied him to the Kings' Bench Prison, where he was detained in the name of Montagu⁹³.

George Conway and Margaret had two sons, Frederick Courtenay and Humphrey (no details known). There was also a daughter, Eleanora Christine Courtenay Montagu, who was born in 1811; she married Thomas Keeld Harvey in 1842, having two children.

The concerns with the inheritance of Lackham were a continuing problem; it appeared that shortly before his death James Montagu had borrowed £10,000 from Lord Ellenborough to purchase land. He had repaid the loan before his death but the interest was still outstanding and so the estate remained entailed until this was sorted out. George Conway brought an action against his father and the trustees in June 1817⁹⁴ to get the interest paid but it did not succeed.

George Conway, Margaret and the family moved around the country throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century. They lived at Lackham between 1808 and 1810, then moved to Wallingford in Berkshire. After a short time there, and in London, they removed to Alwick Hill near Worcester for a couple of years⁹⁵.

In 1814, George Conway stood as a candidate in the Parliamentary election in Grampound (between Truro and St Austell) in Cornwall, but was not elected⁹⁶.

⁹³ WA 44/1 *ibid*

⁹⁴ WA 137/39/6 p22 a very large bundle of transcripts, not signed, of the will, and synopses of the various court actions. These are not the original documents but a solicitor's record collection, those of Mr. Tugwell Robbins, George's solicitor and lifetime friend.. (20 Barnard St, Russell Square)

⁹⁵ WA 44/1 *ibid* Preamble

⁹⁶ PRO C 202/202/22A "Oaths of Parliamentary Candidates for Grampound, co

The family were again living at Lackham in 1815 (when George Montagu sen. died), and then in Crescent Place, in London, from 1816 until August 1817. They then moved to Northampton Square, Islington.

Sometime in the spring of 1818 they returned to Liverpool, and very shortly after this George Conway returned to London "under pretence of breaking up the Housekeeping in Northampton Square ". He shut down 18 Northumberland Square and then rented number 4. While there Mary Baldwin was employed as a servant and shortly thereafter George Conway carried on an adulterous relationship with her ⁹⁷, with the end result that Mary gave birth to George Conway's illegitimate child at Hoxton Poor House, Middlesex, in December 1819⁹⁸.

It is interesting to note that George Conway may have tried to fake his own death in 1819, about 4 months before his first illegitimate child was born..... "On Friday last, [late August] aged 43, suddenly George Conway Montagu esq of Lackham House in this county "⁹⁹, which agrees with Vernon ¹⁰⁰ and also with an article about George Conway Montagu published in the Wiltshire Times by Kite¹⁰¹. *Whether this is connected with his new illegitimate offspring is unknown, there were possibly lots of reasons why*

Cornwall dated 13th July 1814

⁹⁷ WA 44/1 ibid Libel section 12

"and they frequently and at night lay naked and alone in one and the same bed and had carnal use and knowledge of each other's bodies "

⁹⁸ The poor house is long gone but the site is clearly shown on Roque's 1745 map of London , and can still be located in Hoxton, between Hoxton Street and Pitfield Street, south of where they meet Hide (now Hyde) Road. The workhouse is now St Leonard's Hospita See <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/study/maps.htm> for a representation of Roque's map, modern information from London Street Atlas (1995) map 62, E2 Geographers A-Z Map Co. Ltd 0 85039 244 6

⁹⁹ *Devizes and Wilts Gazette* September 2nd 1819, *Death notices. The Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* of 30 August 1819 said "August 27, aged 45, suddenly George Conway Montagu, Esq of Lackham House, Wiltshire"

¹⁰⁰ Vernon, TE (1969) A short history of the Lords of the Manor of Lackham from Saxon Days Lackham College

¹⁰¹ *Wiltshire Times* February 7th and 14th, 1929

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dieing would have been useful....

If this was not enough Mary's sister Sarah, also employed at Northampton Square as a servant, bore George Conway an illegitimate child in the same workhouse, in January of 1820.

Margaret did not find out about this, however, until 1823. In March of 1823 George Conway once again left on business, to France. At this time the Montagu's were living in Ramsgate, in Kent. It is certain that they never lived together after March¹⁰². Although Margaret stated that George Conway's indiscretions "only came to her knowledge in or about the month of December 1823¹⁰³" it may be this is not strictly true - it is obvious from a letter written by Margaret in September that someone had told her something very negative about George Conway, and it may well be that she knew earlier than she said.

George Conway was still in Paris on business, possibly trying to obtain finances but this was apparently unsuccessful. He eventually arrived in Calais penniless -

*I am here by a sort of miracle again from the interior after waiting the results of many fruitless applications without money, clothes or the means of procuring any and ... without a franc piece in my pocket and expect hourly the refusal of common sustenance. "*¹⁰⁴

Whether Margaret replied is unknown, nor how George Conway was able to return to England, but he did. He then had to deal with Margaret's suite as she

*commence[d] divorce proceedings against him
for the furtherance of obtaining a divorce from Bed*

¹⁰² WA 44/1 Libel 10

¹⁰³ WA 44/1 Libel 11

¹⁰⁴ WA 44/1 ibid Evidence no 4 Letter from George Montagu to Margaret Montagu, 13 Trafalgar Terrace Ramsgate. Post marked 1823. Not dated but evidence from other submissions gives September 20. This is a quite extraordinary letter and is reproduced in full in Appendix 3

Board and mutual cohabitation. ¹⁰⁵

The citation was issued 10 May and libel brought 24 November 1824. The case was heard in the Consistory Court on 7 June 1824 ¹⁰⁶. This was to prove solely whether the marriage was legal, as George Conway's defence was that the marriage was not, probably on the basis it was held at Gretna Green. This may be supported by the opening sentence in a number of press reports on the case- "*This proved to be a case of singular importance as involving some general question upon the validity of Gretna Green marriages*" ¹⁰⁷ and Margaret's case was that the marriage was valid under Scottish law ¹⁰⁸. Testimony was produced, from numerous witnesses ¹⁰⁹, to show that the ceremony and pledges had been

¹⁰⁵ WA 44/1 *ibid*, Preamble.

¹⁰⁶ *Dublin Morning Register* 13 July 1825 p4, *Drogheda Journal or Meath & Louth Advertiser* - 16 July 1825 p2, *Cumberland Pacquet*, and *Ware's Whitehaven Advertiser* 19 July 1825 p4, henceforth News reports

¹⁰⁷ News reports

¹⁰⁸ This being in Scotland, and the Act of Union having joined Scottish and English law, Scottish law applied in this instance "*as it applied to marriages between males above the age of 14 and females above the age of 12; and it set forth that valid marriage might be contracted between parties of or above such respective ages, in the kingdom, and my the immemorial law and customs of Scotland, by their consent "per verba depraventi" without publication of any bans, or authority of any license, or the intervention of any religious ceremony whatever; that the mutual acknowledgement of one another as husband and wife, and their public cohabitation together as such, is taken as conclusive evidence of their marriage, unless it is distinctly proved that they have not really intended to contract such marriage thereby' and that, in the case of persons being so above the age of pupillage, and entering into such contracts, within the kingdom of Scotland, the law of that kingdom does not hold the consent of parents or guardians to be necessary to the validity thereof"*

News reports

¹⁰⁹ News reports "*eight witnesses in London, three under a requisition to a place called Longtown in the county of Cumberland and twelve under a requisition at Edinburgh*"

Longtown was probably the place where the depositions were taken as it is only 3.7 miles (5.7 km) from Gretna Green, although on the English side of the border, and was "*a seat of petty sessions*", ie it had a court [John Marius Wilson (1870) *Imperial Gazetteer of*

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undertaken at Gretna properly, and even that a written record had been made at the times, and then to show that the couple had "*cohabited together in all aspects as husband and wife in Edinburgh, till about the end of March 1804, when they returned to Liverpool*"¹¹⁰ and that from then until March 1823 they had cohabited "*together and always acknowledging one another as husband and wife*"¹¹¹. The court found the marriage lawful and proved and so the suite for separation on the grounds of adultery (by GSSM) could proceed later. In the meantime alimony of 500 l was made to Margaret. It has not yet been possible to locate the result of the separation case but it is likely this was proved in about 1826 or 27 and a separation granted.

In 1826, both George Conway and his eldest son were living in Bloomsbury, London; George Conway was living in Connaught Terrace, Portman Square, and Frederick was in Queen's Square¹¹². In 1827 the two Montagus sold land to John Lodge of Connaught Terrace¹¹³. John Lodge was the agent for Joseph Neeld¹¹⁴, and the land involved was the manor of Alderton, where George Conway had grown up:

"Memorandum of an agreement made and entered into this sixteenth day of November one thousand eight hundred and twenty seven between John Lodge of Connaught Terrace in the county of Middlesex and Tugell Robins (inserted) late of Queen Square Bloomsbury in the same county (inserted) bachelor of Magdalene College Cambridgeshire of the first part George Conway Montagu of Connaught Terrace

England and Wales" at "A Vision of Britain through Time"

<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/place/20357> accessed 6 December 2015 .

¹¹⁰ WA 44/1 Article 5

¹¹¹ News reports

¹¹² WA 137/39/6 ibid p26, Details given for a court case when selling off some of the Lackham estates. George was said to be "late of Lackham, now living at.."

¹¹³ WA 1305/9

¹¹⁴ An incredibly wealthy young man, who had inherited a fortune from his uncle only recently. He eventually owned large areas of northern Wiltshire; Alderton was his first purchase in the county

Portman Square in the said County of Middlesex esquire and Frederick Conway Montagu of Queens Square Bloomsbury (inserted) aforesaid esquire of the second part and Joseph Neeld the Younger of the Inner Temple London esquire of the third part. ¹¹⁵

This agreement allowed Joseph Neeld to start planting the manor before formally purchasing the estate. The estate was sold to Mr. Neeld the following year.

GCC was actually put up to be an MP for Weymouth and Melcombe in June 1829.

" the London attorney Daniel Wilson Davison of Clement's Inn and some other adventurers put [him up]....., who, as a prisoner in king's bench, was unavoidably absent [sic!]. [His opponent] Sugden, was thrown to the floor during scuffles on the hustings, 13 June, when he defended his support for emancipation against Montagu's anti-Catholic supporters. The erection of booths, which were requested because the number of voters was put between 1,600 and 2,500, proved to be unnecessary, as Montagu's candidacy was withdrawn after the first day, on which only seven freeholders were polled." ¹¹⁶

George Conway is also mentioned in papers dated 1835 but only Frederick Montagu, however, is mentioned after 1837.¹¹⁷

In 1841 George, still in the King's Bench Debtor's Prison, was petitioning the Insolvent Debtors Court in Portugal Street in London for bail from

¹¹⁵ WA 1305/16 Memorandum of agreement as to the planting of the Alderton Estate without prejudice to the pending investigation of the site

¹¹⁶ Stephen Farrell "Weymouth and Melcombe Regis" in D Fihser (ed) *The History of Parliament, the House of Commons 1820-1832* [Cambridge, CUP, 2009] online at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/weymouth-and-melcombe-regis> accessed 5 December 2015

¹¹⁷ WA 44/8 on the day the first edition of this booklet was due to be printed

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prison, which was opposed ¹¹⁸. He had been there since 1827. the case involved "an immense mass of property and debts to a large amount" ¹¹⁹. His release was opposed by Mrs Rudd, amongst others, who was given in the report as an "executrix", presumably of George Montagu and/or James Montagu's estates, but exactly which is unclear. George represented himself and claimed that Mrs Rudd had nothing to do with the case and that demanded she prove her debts, but the oppositions were allowed and the case continued. A Mr George Padmore, formerly a tailor in Bond Street but now also a debtor in prison, proved George owed him £500.

It was suggested that George Conway had income of £26,000 while he was imprisoned. His reply, "No Sir not so much. I paid £4,500 law costs in a Chancery suite. My estates involved property to £200,000 and odd" doesn't really deny this. He also claimed he had lost £1,000 at "play", (wagers) while in prison and £1,500 at cards. He denied losing £1,800 to the "celebrated gambler" Russell. Mr Podmore, however, claimed that George Conway "had been connected with all the notorious gamblers who infest London and which had been the cause of his ruin"

Mrs Rudd's solicitor.

Complained of the Insolvent's conduct in remaining in prison for so long a period, and now coming on after he had spent every farthing and had nothing now left for his creditors. Since his imprisonment he had received in hard cash no less a sum than £12,000, and had frittered away a life interest worth £98,000, and all he had paid to his bone fide creditors had been only £1800, and therefore he charged him with making away with near £11,000 in prison, which ought to have been divided among his creditors, and which, had it been properly applied, would have paid 40s in the

¹¹⁸ *Morning Post* 26 July 1841 p4

¹¹⁹ *London Evening Standard* 27 July 1841 p2 *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser* p6 & *Windsor and Eton Express* p3 31 July 1841, *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* 5 Aug. 1841 p2,

pound, owing... only £5,000 or £6,000 ¹²⁰

George Conway "addressed the court with much energy" and referred to a notice in the Times of 1832 calling for his creditors to prove their debts which, he said, had not been attended to. The 1832 notice has not been located but there was a Notification for a Chancery Enquiry into debts and charges on the estates of George Conway Montagu unsettled in 1834 ¹²¹

The judge was not sympathetic and, while being sorry to remand such an elderly gentleman to prison for longer than usual, said that "*since I first took my seat on this bench I have never met a case that called more strongly for the Court's marked reprobation.*" And sentenced him, despite the length of time already served, to a further two years inside. It was reported that "*The insolvent was guarded by two of the Queen's Bench tipstuffs back to prison greatly dejected*"

George Conway Montagu married again late in life. The first indication of this marriage was that Kite's 1929 article provoked a letter from a granddaughter of George Conway, then living in Armadale, Australia. In her letter to the Editor ¹²² she says that George Conway

was born on June 24th 1776 and died on May 30th 1847, aged 71, his death having been caused by a painful internal malady through the last three months of which my mother was his devoted nurse.

This fits with the date given by both Brocklebank and the Dictionary of National Biography¹²³. Jane Courtenay Montagu said that six years after the death of his first wife in 1834 George Conway married Jessy, daughter of John Elphinstone Campbell, which would mean a marriage date of 1839-40. This is supported by a news report of July 1842, where a

¹²⁰ *London Evening Standard* 27 July 1841 p2 *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser* p6 & *Windsor and Eton Express* p3 31 July 1841, *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* 5 Aug. 1841 p2,

¹²¹ *London Courier and Evening Gazette* 17 Dec 1834 p1

¹²² *Wiltshire Times* 1931, *Lacock Inscriptions* *ibid*

¹²³ *DNB* XIII pp 693-694
George Conway Courtenay Montagu 1776 - 1847

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footnote records that "it was stated to the reporter that the Insolvent [GCM] was married to this young lady [JC] 15 months ago, for which purpose he had a habeous corpus. The young lady was then under twenty"¹²⁴, George being at that time 65. They had 2 daughters - the author of the letter, Jane Stewart Courtenay Montagu, and Mary who was born in Bermondsey in 1845¹²⁵.

George Conway Montagu died on May 13th 1847 at 15, Albert Street, New Town, Bermondsey.¹²⁶ The death certificate¹²⁷ shows that his "long painful illness" was "disease of the rectum and prostate gland and debility of old age"¹²⁸. Jessy was present at the death and informed the Coroner.

There is much that is still uncertain in the lives of both George Montagus but hopefully this will be clarified in due time.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to Mr. Ron Cleevely, for his help and encouragement, and for so generously sharing the results of his. I am indebted to you, sir.

I also happily acknowledge the kind, expert and professional assistance given to me by Gina Douglas, Librarian and Archivist to the Linnean Society, Mrs P Boyd, of the Prince of Wales' Own Regiment of Yorkshire Regimental Headquarters, Ms. Reekie, Library Assistant at the Natural History Museum General Library and Karen Repko and Pamela & Manfred Mondt, Ohio, USA. My thanks also to Mr. Blackmore, whose careful work

¹²⁴ [London Evening Standard 27 July 1841 p2](#) [Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser p6](#) & [Windsor and Eton Express p3](#) 31 July 1841, [Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette](#) 5 Aug. 1841 p2,

¹²⁵ BMD Surrey 1837-69 vol 4 p69

¹²⁶ WA 44/8 Death certificate of George Conway Montagu

¹²⁷ WA 44/8 found by chance, tucked into a very large bundle of incredibly tedious (although useful) deeds! Not, as yet, indexed separately.

¹²⁸ WA 44/8 ibid

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was of great benefit to my studies. I was saddened at his death in June 2002.

Finally I must once again express my gratitude to Andrew Davies, Curator of the Lackham Museum of Agriculture and Rural Life Trust, and Maureen Peters, of Wiltshire College Lackham, for encouragement and many helpful suggestions on content and layout. Thank you both.

Tony Pratt, Chippenham. 2003

(The text was updated in 2008 but this new edition was only produced when considerable new material became available in 2014)

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Appendix 1

George Montagu - naturalist

George Montagu might hardly be remembered at all save that he was a famous naturalist. He published several books on natural history (see below for a full list), the best known of which were the *Ornithological Dictionary* (1802) & *Testacea Brittanica* (1803). George Montagu travelled widely to study natural history but much of his work was done locally, in Wiltshire and in Devon.

Colonel Montagu's *Testacea Brittanica* contains many references to Wiltshire snails, at Lackham alone he found 35 species. Here Montagu discovered *Clausilia laminata* and *Ena montana*, which he called *Helix lackhamensis*¹²⁹

His description of his discovery of *Ena montana* at Lackham is typical:

*we first found it in a moist wood at Lackham in Wiltshire in one small spot only adhering to the trunks of ash and hornbeam trees and afterwards tolerably plentiful in the woods belonging to the Marquis of Lansdowne at Bow Wood in the same county not very distant from the former place and in no other part*¹³⁰

(This description does not imply that Montagu was working with others at the time, he habitually used the term "we" when describing his own activities.)

He named many other species, for example the very rare *Helicella cantianna* and *Hygromia fusca*, and he discovered *Clausilia laminata*

¹²⁹ Swanton EW The Molluscs of Wiltshire WA M XXXVI p58

¹³⁰ Montagu, G (1803) *Testacea Brittanica*

biplicata at Easton Grey.

His Ornithological Dictionary (1802) was very well respected, and much of his work concerned birds - in 1808, in a paper entitled "*On Birds newly discovered in Great Britain*", he mentioned the "*little white heron*" which is now known as the buff backed heron. It is listed in the Handbook of British birds as being first recorded "*near Kingsbridge (Devon) end of Oct 1805*". The record is George Montagu's. He also described *Falco cineraceus* and *F. pagargus* and, after his death, the French naturalist L P Viellot named it Montagu's Harrier in his honour, by which name it is still known.

His bird collection, started so long before in North America, was purchased from his heirs by the British Museum; the original proposal was for £3,000 but this was reduced to £1,200 on the advice of Joseph Banks ¹³¹

Although chiefly remembered as an Ornithologist, George Montagu also carried out pioneering studies of British marine life. Edward Forbes, Professor of the University of Edinburgh, and a later contemporary of Montagu's, was impressed with his "*acute powers of observation*" and said

In cases where Marine Animals were concerned [I] have been astonished at the extent, variety, and minuteness of [Montagu's] researches. He laboured, moreover, at a time when there were few persons who took an interest in Marine Zoology, or who cared to investigate the structure and habits of Sub-marine Animals in their native haunts. Montagu, however, did not shrink from his work because he met few companions, or found little sympathy. He steadily pursued his chosen task, and laid the foundation of that thorough investigation of the natural History of the British seas, which now forms so distinctive, and appropriate a feature of the science of our country. ¹³²

Here, too, he named many species, an example being the sea slug

¹³¹ Cumings, BF (1912) *ibid* p 94

¹³² Cunnington, W (1852) *ibid*

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*Thecacera pennigera*¹³³. Montagu's harrier isn't the only name that recognises George Montagu work, there is Montagu's blenny, Montagu's ray, Montagu's sucker and Montagu's sea snail¹³⁴

George Montagu was a very early Fellow of the Linnean Society, and also corresponded with Gilbert White, as well as many other eminent naturalists of his day. It has been said that he "*played a not insignificant role in the development of modern biology*"¹³⁵

*His great contribution was to establish scrupulous standards in the acceptance of evidence which for many years were not to be surpassed. This was precisely what [natural history] needed at that particular stage in its history: a man without blinkers, prepared to charge about the country making certain of his facts by looking at them with his own eyes.*¹³⁶

Charles Darwin said that "*few more careful observers ever lived than Montagu*"¹³⁷ and quotes from George's works in several places.

¹³³ Rudman, W.B., (1997) Sea Slug Forum.

<http://seaslugforum.net/theopen.htm>

Thecacera pennigera (Montagu, 1815)

Order:	NUDIBRANCHIA	Suborder:	DORIDINIA
Family:	Polyceridae	Subfamily:	Polyceridae

Distribution : originally reported from the Atlantic coast of Europe, it is now known from South Africa, Pakistan, Japan, Brazil, eastern Australia and New Zealand.

¹³⁴ Cleavelly RJ (1978) *ibid*

¹³⁵ http://www.Montagumillennium.com/research/h_1815_george.htm

¹³⁶ http://www.Montagumillennium.com/research/h_1815_george.htm

¹³⁷ Darwin, Charles (1896) *The descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Species* quoted at http://www.Montagumillennium.com/research/h_1815_george.htm

Which is a fitting tribute to this versatile and colourful character.

Principal works

□ The Sportsman's Dictionary ; or a Treatise on Gunpowder and Fire Arms, &c. London, 1792, re-printed in 1803, 8vo.

□ An Ornithological Dictionary ; or Alphabetical Synopsis of British Birds, 1 vol., 8vo., 1802.

□ Testacea Britannica; or Natural History of British Shells, Marine, Land, ~~and Freshwater~~, including the most minute, systematically arranged and embellished with figures 4vo., London, 1803.

□ Supplement to the preceding [sic.] 1809, with plates and descriptions of new species.

In the Transactions of the Linnean Society he published the following papers :-

□ Description of three rare species of British Birds vol. IV, 1796.

□ Description of several Marine Animals found on the coast of Devonshire, vol. VII, 1802

□ On some species of British Quadrupeds, Birds, and Fishes, vol. VII, 1803.

□ On the larger and lesser species of horse-shoe Bats, proving them to be distinct, with a description of *Vespertilio barbastellus* taken in the south of Devonshire vol. IX, 1805

□ On the Natural History of the *Falco cyaneus* and *Pygargus*, vol. IX, 1807

□ Of several new or rare Animals, principally Marine, discovered on

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the south coast of Devonshire vol. XI, 1809.

□Of some new and rare British Marine Shells and Animals.

Appendix 2

George Montagu - Account of last hours and death
12 June 1815

by H Dorville ¹³⁸

On Thursday or Friday the 9th of June Col Montagu stepping back from a board trod on a nail which pierced his heel and made it bled profusely - the pain was not great and he soon walked about and was so well that he fixed to dine at Moulton in Salcombe on Friday 9, but on the Thursday he complained of an awkward stiffening of his jaw and the root of his tongue which prevented mastication. On Friday when the carriage was at the door he said that he had got the rheumatism so bad that he could not go and I remained at home with him. He was cheerful but at dinner he said "Its well I am no epicure for I cannot bite anything hard" and dined on bread and dairy. Towards evening he was worse I sent for the surgeon who ordered some ? attended him all night he slept comfortable and at dawn on the Saturday the surgeon called again. Whilst he was conversing with him he was taken with very acute spasms in the back and through to the chest which very much affected his breath. Embracing me affectionately he said "Eliza I fear it is all over". Copious doses of laudanum being given gave ease and the violence of the spasms abated. He slept for some hours a Physician was sent for who arrived y three o'clock and found him so much better that he pronounced his hope that altho an affliction of the nerves yet he hoped it would not be a totally locked jaw. He could however open his mouth but very little and swallow only small quantities of liquid at once. On Sunday the spasms continued but not so violent one surgeon always remaining with him night and day. On Monday he declared himself much better and put us all in spirits. He appeared comfortable and cheerful and slept for several hours together. In the evening it was however evident that his strength was fast going. We laid him comfortably and he was moved from the position. The spasms continued at intervals the Whole Night and I slept also for hours but it was with great difficulty he swallowed his last medicine at 5 o'clock after that was difficult in the extreme. He was delightfully composed and slept or laid quite still except when he asked for cold water

¹³⁸ WA NHS ms 593

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which was applied to his hands and face and if they ceased to fan him he instantly, called for it appearing to enjoy any species of refrigeration often saying "I should like anything cooler then cold water". On Tuesday the 12 June at rather before nine in the morning he resigned his spirit in the hands of his maker without a roan, patience and reasoning were his to the last what a loss to his surviving friends. God grant them his help to support it. Died 12 June 1815 aged 62.

Appendix 3

Letter from George Conway Montagu to Margaret ¹³⁹

This letter may seem overly dramatic to the modern reader, and may be rather flamboyant even for its era, but it is not unusually "over the top" for George; other letters written by him are structured along very similar lines¹⁴⁰. It is included here to give a taste of how he wrote and, maybe, some idea of how he felt about the world. It is important to recall, however, that this letter was written very shortly after he heard bad news from his wife. This may have been that she was suing for divorce, having presumably just been informed of his infidelity with the Baldwin sisters.....

To you my wife. to the only ear and head I feel disposed to approach in the present afflicting errors of my appalling disastrous life - whose extinguishment I had cherished the hope of vaulting over the trammels of a remorseless fate ere the malignant star, which hovered in the horizon of my luckless birth, should 'ere arise to the zenith of its destructive course and enlist in its baneful train the compact of villainy recently formed against my name, family and property. Your only letter, my so equally suffered wife, which at length reached me and which would innocently urge me to the vortex of a devouring crater, has afforded me by its shortness little means of judging of the march of untouched events since last we met. I was prepared, however, for the worst as I ever am when I fix my resolve, and already feel myself the persecuted and the outlawed - deserted by all, even those the so warmest corner of my heart had fondly cherished. You leave me to the conjecture only of who tendered such advice, but there is only one who could with an unblushing affrontery have directed such to the ear of a wife, and from such one would I receive it with indignation proportional to the wicked diabolical intention of the projector whose word, or promise, were never yet preserved in one single instance with one single person with whom

¹³⁹ WA 44/1 Undated, but probably September 20th, 1823

¹⁴⁰ His letter was transcribed by a legal firm, and so the punctuation was removed. I have inserted punctuation to make it (slightly) more readable Author

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he had been concerned. Better to repose on the generosity and feeling of avowed and consistent enemies than lulled by the plausible sophistry of such diabolical pretended friends, who first entrap that they may, with less personal risqué, plunder and destroy their unfortunate reposing victims. Enquire of the countless round of those whose peace property and happiness have been (torn) ----- [sic] to his remorseless and damning villany if I am incorrect - that I have deep drank, my wife, of the bitter chalice of life's heaviest afflictions; some future and, perhaps, some early day, may tell when the grave will bury all my faults and rescue me from all my enemies.

I am here by a sort of miracle again from the interior - after waiting the results of many fruitless applications - without money, clothes or the means of procuring any and if I had not a passage here given to me must have dated this to you from a more remote period and to get across is impossible, even if advisable, without a franc piece in my pocket and expect hourly the refusal of common sustenance.

Thus situated, and to dwell on the misfortune which must equally affect yourself and my suffering family, and which are to my own feelings paramount to all other misfortunes that assail me, and almost dispossess me of reason, trusting that you followed my advice at our parting and have written to those who hold my property, alas, for a small consideration to the comparison of its yearly value. How many days I may linger here, or whether one friend may advance to our common rescue, is yet in the womb of fate. If you write to me, which I hope you do may be early, write fully my dear Margaret; whatever disappointment may engender from you I may hope for naught but the gentle soothing of a wife under present grief almost too much to sustain. With affectionate love and blessings to you all believe me to be, Margaret, yours most truly *GCM*

Address me post restante a
Calais

Addressed to
Mrs Montagu
3 Trafalgar Place
Ramsgate

Appendix 4

Timeline for George Montagu ¹⁴¹

8 Jun 1753	Born (various dates suggested by other authors)
1765	At Urchfont school, south of Devizes
22 Jun 1770	Enlisted in the 15 th Regiment of Foot, as Ensign.
1773	Married Ann Courtenay
17 Jun 1775	Regiment in Dublin after being in Belfast
1 Dec 1775	Promoted to Captain Regiment ordered to America
1776	
10 Jan	Embarked transports at Cork
12 Feb	Sailed
3 May	Arrived in North Carolina
24 Jul	Birth of George Conway Montagu, eldest son
Aug - Nov	Fought in the battles of Brooklyn, White Plains, Fort Washington and Fort Lee 1777
May - Sep	Fought in the battles of Peekskill, Danbury, Ridgefield, Brandywine, Whitemark and Georgetown
16 Nov	Resigns commission, leaves regiment returns to England
1777 - 1786	Living at Rowde, near Devizes
17 Sep 1780	Daughter Eleanora Ann baptised at Rowde
1782	Death of maternal grandfather Thomas Hedges of Alderton - annuity of £200
11 Mar 1783	Son Frederick baptised at Rowde
1786 - 1788	Living at Surrendell, near Alderton
10 Sep 1788 - 1792	Living at Easton Grey

¹⁴¹ After a timeline constructed by R. Cleevly, in the Nat Hist Museum Library

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- 10 Nov 1788 Daughter Louisa baptised at Easton Grey
c1789 / 90 Met Elizabeth Dorville, probably in London
- 25 Apr 1790 Father James died, estate inherited by older brother James
- 1790 - 1791 In South Wales with Wiltshire Regiment of His Majesties' Militia
- 25 Mar 1791 Promoted to Lt Col in Militia, CinC Wiltshire Militia
- 1792 - 97 Family living at Alderton House
- 1792 Publication of Sportsman's Directory
- 24 Jan 1792 Baptism of Ann Elizabeth Dorville and Henry Dorville at Millbrook Parish Church near Southam, Henry "about 2 yrs old"
- 1794 With Militia in Scunford camp, Sussex
- 1795 - 1796 With Militia in SW England
- 21 July 1795 Elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society
- 1796 First paper published with the Linnean Society 197
- 12 Sep Death of James Montagu, estate entailed
- Dec Elizabeth Dorville at Knowle House, Kingsbridge Devon
- 11 Sep 1798 Militia in Devon
- 1799
- July Events leading to George's court martial
- 28 Sep - 15 Oct Court martial of Lt Col George Montagu. Found guilty and dismissed

- from the Militia
- 1801 Baptism of "Isabella, daughter of Mrs Elizabeth Dorville" at St Edmund's Church, Kingsbridge
- 1802 Publication of Ornithological Dictionary
- 1803 Publication of Testacea Brittancia
George oversaw Napoleonic defences in Devon.
- 12 Dec 1803 Son *GCM* eloped with Margaret Green Wilson, married at Gretna Green "in their own names "
- 10 Mar 1805 George made Will
- 16 May 1811 Son Frederick killed at Alburra, Portugal
- 18 Feb 1815 Died of lockjaw at Knowle House

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Appendix 5 Timeline for George Conway Montagu

- 24 June 1776 Born at Lackham
- 1783 Moved to Alderton with the family
- <1799 Living in northern England "under an assumed name"
- 1803 Living in Liverpool as "William Thompson "
 Courts Margaret Green Wilson
- Dec. Eloped to Gretna Green and married Margaret (29th
 December)
- 1804 Living in Edinburgh under the name "Thompson "
- 1805 Moved to Hornsea, Yorks. Living under the name
 "Conway "
- 3 Oct Eldest son Frederick Courtenay born
 Moved briefly to Liverpool
- 1806 - 1810 Living at Lackham
- 1806 Met George Crossbie in Hull, still living in Hornsea
- 1807 Arrested in London under the name "Montagu "
- 1811 Daughter Eleanora Christine Courtenay born
 Moved to Wallingford, Berks.
- 1812? - 1815 Moved to London and Alwick Hall, Worcs
- July 13 1814 Stood as candidate at Grampound, Cornwall
- 1815 Moved to Lackham
- 1816 - Aug 1818 Living Northampton Square, Islington
- 1817 Brought court action against his father and Trustees
- Early 1818 Returned to Liverpool, George Conway living in London
- 2 Sept 1819 Death notice for George Conway published in
 Bath paper
- Dec Illegitimate child born to Mary Baldwin

- Jan 1820 Illegitimate child born to Sarah Baldwin
1823? Family together in Ramsgate, Kent
March 1823 George Conway visited France on business
Sept 20 Margaret wrote letter to George Conway.
George Conway fled Paris penniless
Dec Margaret informed of illegitimate children
1824 Court case to establish legitimacy of marriage
7 July 1825 Marriage proved legal, George Conway pays alimony
to Margaret
1826? Separation granted
1826 George Conway living in Portman Square,
Frederick living in Queens Square
1827 Sold Alderton to Joseph Neeld
1834 Margaret died
1840 Married Jessie Campbell
1843 Daughter Jane Stewart Courtenay Montagu born
1845 Daughter Edith Mary Wortley Montagu born
Bermondsey
30 May 1847 Died in Bermondsey

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