

John Iveson

At the end of the eighteenth century, the work of estate management was changing. In earlier years, solicitors had been leading, because of legal issues such as land tenure and enclosure. But in the later part of the eighteenth century there was new interest in economic improvement, and new roles for middlemen between the landlord and the labourer.

Agents mediated complex and wide-ranging estate improvements, such as the newly developed agricultural techniques, and supervised the 'moral improvement' of tenants. They were expected to oversee the administration of the estate including the home farm, house, gardens and park and were also involved in land purchases, surveying accountancy, political campaigning, and legal issues, including the administration of Poor Laws.¹

They were also responsible for maintenance of the estate accounts and therefore overseeing collection of the rents and making payments to the landlords. Some of this work comes before the Parliamentary Committee on the Distressed State of Agriculture at the time of the Corn Laws. Iveson was called to give evidence to the Committee.² He describes the variations in price of corn (wheat and rye), and therefore bread, around the country; and to pay their rents, how the low price could force those with little capital to have to sell their stock, and how workers unable to pay their rent were forced further into poverty. The debate polarised over the next decade, with the final 1832 repeal of the Corn Laws – to the benefit of urban poor, with lower prices from American imports, but to the disadvantage of the rural poor.

The firm of Kent, Claridge and Pearce were among foremost in this work of estate improvement. Their office was at Craig's Court in Charing Cross. Nathaniel Kent had built a substantial practice, partly through Royal endorsement (including Windsor estate) and through his writing.³ "Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property" (1775) helped landlords and tenants to improve their land and yields, and his 1797 broadsheet "The Great Advantage of a Cow to the Family of a Labouring Man" showed how transfer of small-holdings could be beneficially raise productivity. From the 1790s, his partners included John Claridge, who continued his practice after his death in 1810 at offices at 47 Pall Mall, where he was joined as a partner by John Iveson.

Since Claridge took over the accounts from Greenland, it is likely that Claridge became Lord Camden's land agent from 1803. The 1812 Act has as an appendix, a Schedule itemising the existing tenancies, acreage and annual ground rents. It is signed by John Iveson. Iveson came from Yorkshire, from a legal family at Hedon still in Beverley archives: there's a map he made of Hedon in 1804.

Iveson was evidently the surveyor as well as accounts manager. There is little correspondence preserved, but one undated letter to Lord Camden shows Iveson with

¹ Sarah Webster: p197

http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/11990/2/Sarah_Webster_PhD_10_May_2011.pdf:

² Parliamentary papers 1821 X HC 668, Evidence of John Iveson p337.

³ Pamela Horn. An Eighteenth-century land agent: the career of Nathaniel Kent (1737–1810). *Agricultural History Review* 1982;30(1):1-16

responsibilities for both Camden Town and other estates. It includes discussion of a proposal by Mr Law to take a lease for part of Camden Street without any in College Street, which Iveson says 'is better for your Lordship as the ground in College Street will in a few years be much more valuable. The ground in Camden Street I think worth 3s /9d to 4 shillings. He is able to build a good house in the centre so as to face the other line to the Kentish Town Road – of these I will send your Lordship the ground plan and the elevations before the buildings are begun.' The same letter also describes as accompanying the 'particulars and valuation' of the woodland at Bayham – indicating a substantial sum at £66,176.

Claridge and Iveson were based at no. 47, and later no. 40 Pall Mall between 1808 and 1822 Iveson was described as a 'land agent to a very considerable extent' when a witness in 1821 to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture.

John Iveson was also agent for the estates of Lady Frances Anne Tempest. Frances Anne Vane, (1800 – 1865) became the second wife of Charles Vane, 3rd Marquess of Londonderry. She was also "an object of affection" for the Tsar Alexander I of Russia after he saw her portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1818.



Frances Anne inherited wealth from lands from her father in north east England and with her husband, she developed coal mines, a railroad, and docks at Seaham.⁴ Her correspondence about the marriage is in the Camden papers.

Quite when or why Claridge & Iveson give up their role is unclear. It would seem Iveson moved to Wiltshire, with his increased work with Lord Ailesbury. Ailesbury was a major landlord, and he rode the turmoil of the Reform Act elections of the early thirties – "owning 70 or 80 qualifying houses and most of the land now included in the enlarged constituency, and his candidates were successful after a violent contest".⁵

There is a large collection of letters from Iveson to the Earls of Ailesbury about estate affairs.⁶ Nevertheless, Iveson's integrity is not entirely clear. FML Thompson, writing in 1958, stated: "Nor was Ailesbury's interest greatly reduced by his financial difficulties, which were caused by the enormous cost of rebuilding Tottenham and the fraudulent activities of

⁴ Durham County Records Office (Ref: D/Lo/C 332-334)

⁵ <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/marlborough>

⁶ Wiltshire and Swindon Archive Catalogue – Archive Information 9/1/472

his steward, John Iveson, who was exposed in 1833.” Thompson suggests that Iveson was ‘not merely uncontrollable...but a rascal’, who had lived ‘like a lord at the Marquess’ expense’, had exaggerated the income of the estate and neglected the estate buildings.⁷

Iveson was also deeply involved in development for the estate for Lord Egremont (George Wyndham), now Petworth in Sussex. However, there are also financial irregularities indicated here. Sarah Webster writes that, “in contrast to the £24,000 estate left by Nathaniel Kent on his death thirty years earlier, in 1832, Claridge owed the Earl of Egremont an incredible £35,700”.⁸

Nevertheless, Iveson continued in practice. In evidence to the House of Commons in 1844 as a Commissioner for Inclosures, he gave his address as ‘at Halliford near Chertsey’ and described work of enclosure and fee scales at Charnwood Forest in Leicestershire.⁹ The London Gazette of 1843 records him as Quartermaster for the Royal Wilts Yeomanry Cavalry, and he was Treasurer for the Marlborough and Froxfield Turnpike Trust in 1848.¹⁰ And a set of Agricultural Statistics ‘made by a very able statist, Mr John Iveson’ on wheat cultivation in Marlborough were published in 1846.¹¹

And, rather surprisingly, there is one letter in the Kent archives from Iveson to Lord Camden, written in 1857, when Iveson was living in Marlborough probably in his retirement. It responds to an enquiry from (George) Lord Camden about a survey of Bayham abbey in 1815: Iveson recalls there having been two plans drawn, but does not have any further memory. Yet the tone is respectful on both sides.



My dear Lord
I am very sorry
to hear of your
illness
I am
Yours
John Iveson
Lampeter
27 Aug. 1857
The Marquis Camden
to be to

⁷ Michael Thompson, English Landownership: The Ailesbury Trust 1832-56. *Economic History Review*, 1958;11(1):121-132.

⁸ http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/11990/2/Sarah_Webster_PhD_10_May_2011.pdf

⁹ Parliament 19 July 1844. M W Beresford. *Economic History Review*, 1946;a16(2):135

¹⁰ Royal Wilts Yeomanry Cavalry. John Iveson to be Quartermaster. *London Gazette* 1843 part 2. P 1462.

¹¹ Agricultural statistics. *Agricultural Gazette* 1846;37:619.