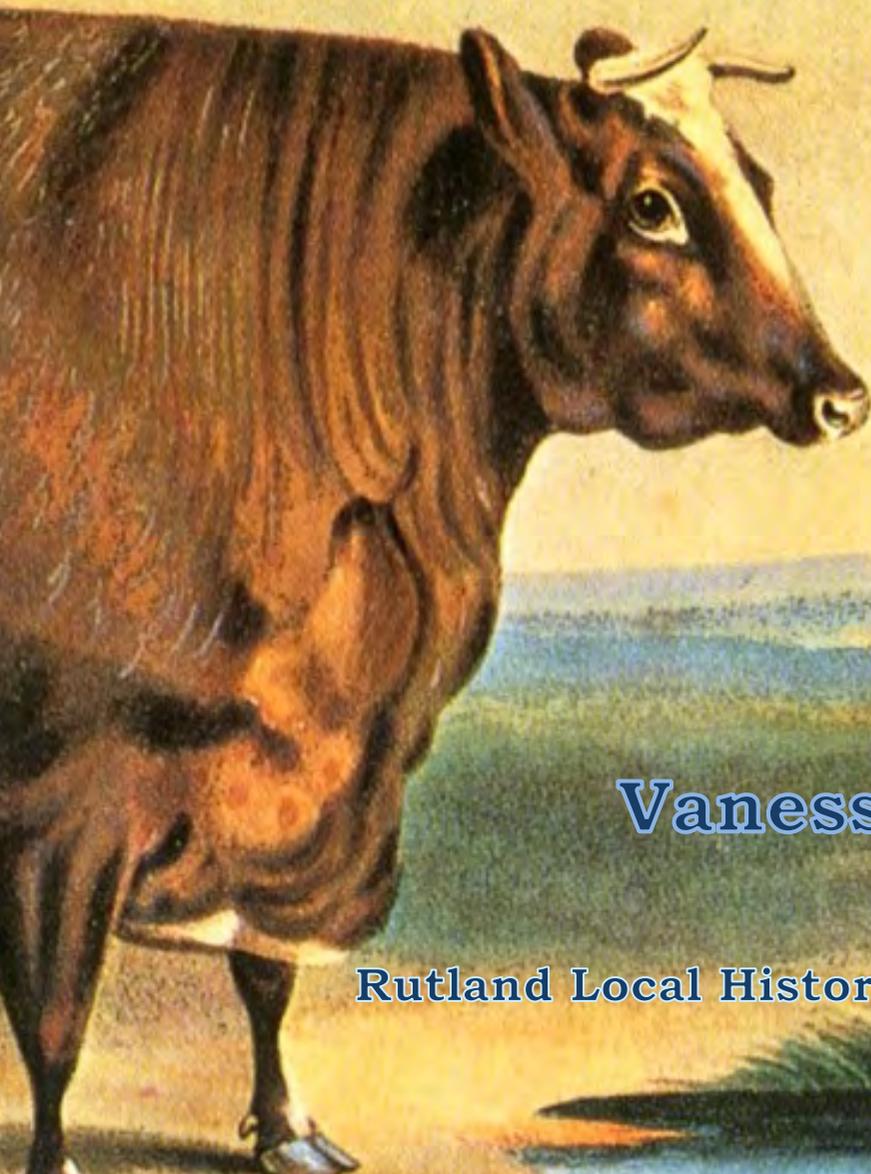


Improving Agriculture in Nineteenth Century Rutland

The Life and Achievements of
Richard Westbrook Baker (1797-1861)
Steward of the Exton Estate



Vanessa Doe

Rutland Local History & Record Society

About the Author

After studying for a degree in history at Cambridge, Vanessa Doe joined the staff of the Department of Economic History at Sheffield University where she completed her doctorate. She then transferred to the Extra-Mural Studies Department to work on local history projects in Derbyshire. Having lived in Derbyshire during her teaching career she moved to Rutland in 2006. Her interest in Richard Westbrook Baker, the Exton Steward, began in 2007 with work on documents in the Exton archive in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland. Whilst this archive was closed for the preparation of a new catalogue in 2010 she joined the Lyddington Manor History project and contributed to the publication of *Buildings and People of a Rutland Manor* in 2015, after which she resumed work on Richard Westbrook Baker.

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Richard Westbrook Baker (1797–1861),
Steward of the Exton Estate

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Rutland Local History & Record Society

Rutland Record Series No 6

2018

RLHRS Record Series No 6

First published in 2018 by
Rutland Local History & Record Society
Registered Charity No 700273

Rutland County Museum
Catmose Street
Oakham
Rutland
LE15 6HW

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ISBN 978-0-907464-58-7

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Designed by T H McK Clough

Printed by Leicestershire County Council's Central Print Services
County Hall, Glenfield, Leicester

Cover illustrations

*Front: Detail from a chromolithograph by C Hullmandel of an improved Shorthorn heifer
(The Neat One) bred by R W Baker, after a painting by W H Davis (Rutland County Museum)
(see also fig. 41 and p110)*

*Back: Engraving of the Rutland Plough, from J A Ransome, Implements of Agriculture (1843), 39
(see also p53 and figs 31, 33 and 68)*

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*The Rutland Local History & Record Society
would particularly like to thank the Rutland Agricultural Society
for its generous contribution towards the cost of producing this book
and David Wood, Chairman of their Trustees,
for writing the Foreword*

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Foreword

Richard Westbrook Baker took a keen interest in improving farming practices and the well-being of farm labourers. He felt that skilful ploughing was the basis of good farming, setting up annual ploughing matches that still continue today. He brought about considerable improvements in arable farming on the Exton Estate and also developed improvements in rearing livestock, winning many prizes in local shows and at Smithfield Market. His ideas for improvement led him, with the support of his employer Sir Gerard Noel, to be the driving force that founded the Rutland Agricultural Society in 1831.

I believe he would be proud to see how the Society that he founded is still flourishing in Rutland today. That said, it has not always been easy for the Society. The Society's Annual Show has had many homes, progressing from the Catmose Riding Stables (now the Rutland County Museum), to South Street, to a small site at Barleythorpe, and then to the 28-acre site known as the Old Showground. The show soon outgrew this site and in 1976 it moved out of Oakham to Burley on the Hill's *Cour d'Honneur*, supported by the goodwill of Mr J R Hanbury, who was President that year. In 2003, the show moved into the main Parkland area at Burley on the Hill.

In the mid-2000s an opportunity arose to sell the land in Oakham, and this was discussed at much length amongst the committee and members. The simple truth was that after several wet years coupled with the cancellation of the show in 2001 due to the foot and mouth outbreak, the show was struggling and reserves in the bank were low. Had it not been for a few loyal members and sponsors the show would probably have collapsed. However, a deal was struck with Larkfleet Homes and Rutland County Council to move the Society, along with Oakham Rugby Club and Royce Rangers Football Club, to the new showground north of the Oakham bypass. Coincidentally, the new Showground is adjacent to Richard Westbrook Baker's land at Langham.

The move to the new Rutland Showground took place in 2014. The first show saw a huge increase in numbers through the gates as many visitors could walk to the new showground from town. The show has gone from strength to strength in its sixth and perhaps permanent home. This year will be the 186th Show since the Society was formed.

Going forward, the Trustees of the Society intend to invest a proportion of the funds received from the sale of the Old Showground for development to support education and training both to encourage young people to enter farming as a profession and also to increase the general public's awareness and understanding of the agricultural industry. This is exactly what Richard Westbrook Baker would have wished for when he founded the Society. This book is testament to his work and ambition and what he set out to achieve.

R David Wood
Chairman of Trustees, Rutland Agricultural Society

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Noel family of Exton for allowing access to their archive in ROLLR for research. During my work in the archive I am particularly grateful to Robin Jenkins and his staff for their help and courtesy and for their knowledge of and help with the new catalogue. Documents for inclusion in the appendixes were transcribed by Jeanette Ovenden. I have also made full use of material relating to Baker in the Rutland County Museum in Oakham, and I am grateful to Lorraine Cornwell and her colleagues for their helpful approach.

Tim Clough has been a major influence on this book. It was his article on the Rutland Show (Clough 1981) which first alerted me to the interesting possibility of work on the Show's prime mover, Richard Westbrook Baker. Work started on his correspondence in the Exton archive in 2007 but when the archive was closed to prepare a new catalogue it was necessary to pause my research and wait for the reopening in 2015. Once the manuscript was complete it was ably edited by Tim, with many of his interesting views and comments now incorporated in the text.

I owe a very large debt of gratitude to Robert Ovens. He has been involved with this project almost from the start, and has been a source of persistence and encouragement throughout. He has undertaken online research, particularly in Ancestry, Findmypast and the British Newspaper Archive, as well as parish records in local record offices. I am very grateful for the material he has generously given to me from these digital sources. He has also sourced, arranged and handled brilliantly many of the illustrations for the book, as well as compiling the Indexes.

I am grateful to Pat and John Stanley of the Blackbrook Gallery for their hospitality and for discussing with me their material on Robert Bakewell and other livestock 'improvers'. They also freely gave their permission to use paintings presently or formerly part of their gallery stock.

I spent time, while it was still in the J Arthur Rank centre, in the Royal Agricultural Society library in Stoneleigh, and I thank the librarian, Dr John Wilson, for his generous contributions to my research and for access to his huge store of knowledge about the library and its contents.

I would also like to thank Professor Robert and Karin Tregay, the present owners of Cottesmore Grange, for their hospitality and their patience with our investigations to ascertain beyond doubt that Richard Westbrook Baker and his family had made it their home in 1828. It may seem obvious now but there was much uncertainty initially and it was good to be able to investigate fully what the house could tell us about its role in the life of the Baker family.

With what proved to be perfect timing, three of Richard Baker's descendants from Australia visited Rutland in 2017. They were Ann Fraser (*née* Brain), his three times great-grand-daughter, and two of her daughters, Fiona Olney-Fraser and Yvonne Brown. They brought with them photographs of the silver replica of the Rutland Plough, and I am grateful to Ann Fraser, Alison Brain and Sheila Pope for agreeing to the use of these as illustrations. Whilst here, they visited Cottesmore Grange and I would particularly like to thank Karin Tregay for hosting this. Then, by chance and at the last minute, the Society was contacted by an Australian descendant of Joseph Baker, Richard Baker's brother, with details of Joseph's naval career – but that is another story.

Vanessa Doe, March 2018

Introduction

For a young man intending to become a Steward or Land Agent on a country estate, early nineteenth century Rutland will have seemed an excellent county in which to look for employment. It was not particularly rich farming country and there were areas where there were known to be old-fashioned farming methods on poorly cultivated land, but it contained four extensive well-known aristocratic estates, each extending to between 9,000 and 15,000 acres, and between them occupying just over half the land area of the county.

These great landed estates in Rutland seem to have developed despite rather than because of the attractions of farming. The County Reports to the Board of Agriculture by John Crutchley in 1794 and Richard Parkinson in 1808 show that Rutland's economy at this time was basically agricultural and that it was not a wealthy county. It had a poor reputation in many areas for arable cultivation, particularly on the clay soils where drainage was an issue. It also had problems with the quality of its farm livestock. The grassland was likely to be used as a staging post by graziers who were buying-in poor quality hill cattle and sheep from Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and feeding them for the butchers of the surrounding towns and villages. The relatively small number of dairy herds in the county meant that breed improvement was little practised. This was in contrast to some farms in Leicestershire where much effort and skill were being employed to improve the desirable commercial qualities of both cattle and sheep.

Of course, we have no real idea of what our subject Richard Westbrook Baker thought as he contemplated the prospect of taking up a career in estate management. The state of agriculture in the county would have represented a challenge to him, and it is helpful to quote a contemporary view of how a person might think when weighing up such a career. He may have thought like George Eliot's Caleb Garth, the estate steward in her novel *Middlemarch* (1872, ch 40), who says, '*... it's a fine thing to come to a man ... to have the chance of getting a bit of the country into good fettle, as they say, and putting men into the right way with their farming ... that those who are living and those who come after will be the better for. ... I hold it the most honourable work that is*'.

However, Richard Westbrook must have been well aware of the challenges he would face in his new life, particularly in Rutland where agricultural improvement, in the difficult period before the effects of enclosure had been fully understood, would mean dealing with outdated methods of cultivation to improve the profitability of farms. It would also mean dealing with the issue of rural poverty, a subject by then attracting discussion at a national level (see Snell 1985, for example), with attempts to review the way in which poor relief was administered. Richard Westbrook did not come from a farming background, but with his knowledge of the county he will have noted what he perceived as an obvious need on

Introduction

Rutland estates for an energetic and far-sighted overseer, a manager with a good education and sufficient knowledge of agriculture to bring about improvements which would benefit both the landlords and their tenants.

In his youth Richard Westbrook Baker had become well acquainted with the owner of the largest of the four Rutland estates, the Noel estate and its 15,000 acres based around the family seat at Exton Hall. It had been presided over after the death in 1798 of the fourth Earl of Gainsborough by his heir, his nephew Gerard Noel Edwards, who from this point on was known as Gerard Noel Noel and was later to become a baronet (*see below*, p13). We now know from detailed internet research (www.ancestry.co.uk, www.findmypast.co.uk and www.familysearch.org) that the Baker family, originally maltsters from Baldock in Hertfordshire, had moved to Oakham sometime between 1802 and 1810 when their eldest son Richard Westbrook was a schoolboy. Correspondence between Catherine Baker, his mother, and Gerard Noel in 1812 and 1813 (*see Appendix 1*) shows how she appreciated the extent of the interest that Gerard Noel was taking in her and her family. Her letters were addressed from the Riding House, attached to Noel's Riding School of 1794, opposite Catmose Lodge, his house and park in Catmose Street, Oakham. It is interesting to note that the Bakers possibly lived at the Riding House rent free as there is no mention of them in the estate rentals. Gerard Noel seems to have been treated as a family friend, particularly by Catherine, her stepson William and her sons, Richard Westbrook and Joseph Francis (DE3214/10769–10772).

Richard, who was finishing his education in 1813, may have impressed Gerard Noel as a possible addition to the staff on his estate. With all the difficulties stemming from his near bankruptcy in 1816, perhaps then he came to see Baker as having the kind of intelligence and energy to lead the Exton tenants from their current state of apathy and decline towards a better future. Richard Westbrook's mother's letters to Gerard Noel show she was anxious for him to take a safe job, perhaps in London, so that he could support himself and not rely on parental finance. However, having a strong connection with the Oakham area, he evidently decided to pursue a career in estate management in Rutland.

As we have seen, Gerard Noel seems to have been viewed as a family friend, so Richard may have felt that as an employee he would be treated well. That he decided to find employment in Rutland was perhaps not surprising. There were several great estates he might have approached and he had many local connections. His maternal grandparents, William and Catherine Richards, lived in Stamford and his parents had moved to Oakham. The documentary records show that, after his father's death in 1816, his mother and sisters continued to live in the Riding House, perhaps with Richard Westbrook still living as part of the family until his marriage to Ann Hind Brown in 1820.

Richard Westbrook Baker did indeed turn out to be a very good Steward for Sir Gerard Noel, recognising the need for innovation and improvement in all aspects of agriculture and in the rural society to which it gave rise. He was a leader among his contemporaries both at a local and a national level, and was skilled at persuading farmers and others by showing them examples of the benefits of improvements. Although it was clear that he was an

intelligent well-educated young man, able quickly to grasp the situation of the estate on which he was employed, it was probably his relationship with Sir Gerard Noel which fostered his potential in all aspects of estate management. Perhaps his most important contribution to the improvement of the farms on the estate was his annual ploughing meeting, where he was able to demonstrate new ideas and allow his contemporaries to see examples of new machines and new techniques. He did not use prescriptive leases to compel tenants to improve their land, clearly preferring to use examples of good practice and premiums to have the desired outcome. Until his death in 1838, Sir Gerard Noel actively supported his Steward and made possible much of his work towards improvement. It was a valuable and successful partnership which helped to ensure the future of the Exton estate and the Noel family.

Given the circumstances of the Baker family in Oakham, Richard Westbrook's choice of the Exton Estate for employment was unsurprising, but it is clear from the evidence given, much later, to the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1872, set up to enquire into landholdings in Britain, that in Rutland there were a number of options he could have considered. The results of the enquiry were published in 1873 as the *Return of Owners of Land*, and it is the subject of *Who Owned Rutland in 1873?* (Clough 2010). A follow-up publication to the *Return* by Thomas Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Britain and Ireland*, appeared in 1883.

F M L Thompson, in his *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (1963), examined the location of the aristocratic estates by county and found, like Clough, that Rutland had a very large acreage of land held by aristocratic landowners and that a large part of the county was occupied by estates of over 10,000 acres. Rutland also came top of Thompson's list of counties with the greatest density of country seats, over half of the land in the county being owned directly by great landowning families: the Noels of Exton who owned 15,000 acres, 16% of the county, the Heathcotes at Normanton owning 14.6 %, and the Cecils at Burghley, Stamford, who owned 11.5%. The fourth important estate at the time of the survey was held by George Henry Finch, a descendant of the Earls of Winchilsea and Nottingham, with over 9,000 acres around Burley on the Hill, accounting for 9.9% of the county. Rutland, according to Bateman, was '*beyond question the most aristocratic county*' in England (Clough 2010, 13). These four estates together occupied 53% of Rutland's 93,000 acres.

As described in 1873, Rutland had not changed in any significant way from that shown in descriptions of the county earlier in the century, and the acreages recorded for the great estates were much the same. The state of agriculture described in the Board of Agriculture Reports in 1794 and 1808, and the surveys of estates in the 1820s, show that the area would still be very like the countryside known both by experience and reputation to Richard Westbrook Baker from childhood. He may also have realised that Rutland would need much improvement in farming and agricultural development if land-owning families living off rents were to be able to maintain their sizeable estates, with some, like Exton, already heavily in debt. Rutland could not boast that it was a prosperous farming county and it had no great wealth to be derived from thriving or potential industries other than valuable limestone quarries – its extensive ironstone resources, including those of the Exton estate,

remained as yet untapped. Its connections to London and the fashionable social and political scene there depended, at least partly, on the Great North Road, much of which lay on the line of the Roman Ermine Street, as well as on other routes to London further west. According to Defoe, in his *Tour* of c1725 (Defoe 1971, 429–44), all these routes came up against the difficulties of crossing the midland clay, but by the 1820s they had been much improved by turnpikes.

When Richard Westbrook Baker joined the Exton estate in 1814, aged only 17, it was apparently in a poor state, at least partly owing to the serious financial problems encountered elsewhere by Sir Gerard Noel. Initial resistance from local employees like Thomas Dain, and particularly William Dollin whose personal dislike is evident in his letters (perhaps because Dollin saw that he was a close associate of Gerard Noel and therefore a competitor for his own post – *see also* p29) may have delayed Baker's progress, but he carved out a role for himself and by 1828 he had become Sir Gerard Noel's Steward in Rutland. A measure of his success in this role, in his employer's estimation, was his appointment by Sir Gerard, under his will, as sole executor when he died in 1838. He retained his job as Steward under Sir Gerard's heir, Charles Lord Barham, later Lord Campden and the first Earl of Gainsborough of the second creation.

Richard Westbrook Baker worked tirelessly for the Noels, bringing in many improvements on the estate in Rutland, until his death at Cottesmore in 1861. There may have been speculation as to why and how a young man from a brewing and malting background in Hertfordshire found his way into such an important role in the changing Rutland countryside in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, we now know that he was in fact brought up in Rutland and probably knew the county and its people well. He also had a strong connection, along with the rest of his family, with Sir Gerard Noel and his Rutland estate at Exton.

1 – Growing up in Hertfordshire and Rutland

Early years and Family Connections

Richard Westbrook Baker was born in Baldock, Hertfordshire, on 4th July 1797, the son of Richard Baker, a maltster, by his second wife Catherine Richards. *'In the fifteenth century, the Bakers were a family of property in the North, and subsequently, about the year 1650, were resident at and near Ailesbury [sic], Bucks, at which period the greater number of them became the followers of the celebrated George Fox, the Quaker, and with him suffered imprisonment, by order of Cromwell'* (Burke 1847, 48). His family tree is given in fig. 2.

Richard Westbrook's maternal and paternal grandfathers were both doctors. His paternal grandfather, William, and his family lived in Ware, Hertfordshire, where he practised as a surgeon. He married Ann Leete at a Quaker ceremony in Royston, Hertfordshire, on 17th August 1745 (TNA RG 6/1430). They had three children, Ann, William and Richard. Their youngest son Richard, Richard Westbrook's father, was born in 1762 and also brought up as a Quaker. However, as a young man in 1783 he was expelled from the Quaker meeting in Baldock for having a *'criminal conversation with a young woman'* (HRO NQ2/5/32), but further investigation has revealed no more information on this episode. In Rutland, Richard Westbrook was a pillar of the parish church in Cottesmore where he was appointed Churchwarden in 1832, along with Francis Boulton. Their names are recorded on a sheet of lead



Fig. 1. Section of lead from Cottesmore church roof (Robert Ovens).

recovered from the roof and now preserved in the church (fig. 1). Despite the strong family connections with the Quakers, there is no indication that he had any Dissenter leanings.

Baldock, where Richard Westbrook spent his early childhood, was one of a group of towns in north-east Hertfordshire where very good quality barley, ideal for malting, was grown. The main occupations in Baldock, as in other towns like Ware and Hoddesdon in east Hertfordshire, were malting and brewing. The early records of Sun Alliance Insurance Company in the London and Middlesex Archives show that his father, Richard Baker senior, applied for insurance as a maltster in 1789, 1790 and 1791. He married twice. His first wife, Ann Reynolds, whom he married on 25th February 1787, and who had died by 1793, had two children, William and

Ann. Census Returns and other later records indicate that both were born in 1789, and this is confirmed in Burke's *Landed Gentry* (Burke 1847, 48) which states that William was born in March 1789, in which case they were probably twins. However, the announcement of William's death in the *Stamford Mercury* in October 1842 (*SM*, 14th Oct 1842, 3) curiously

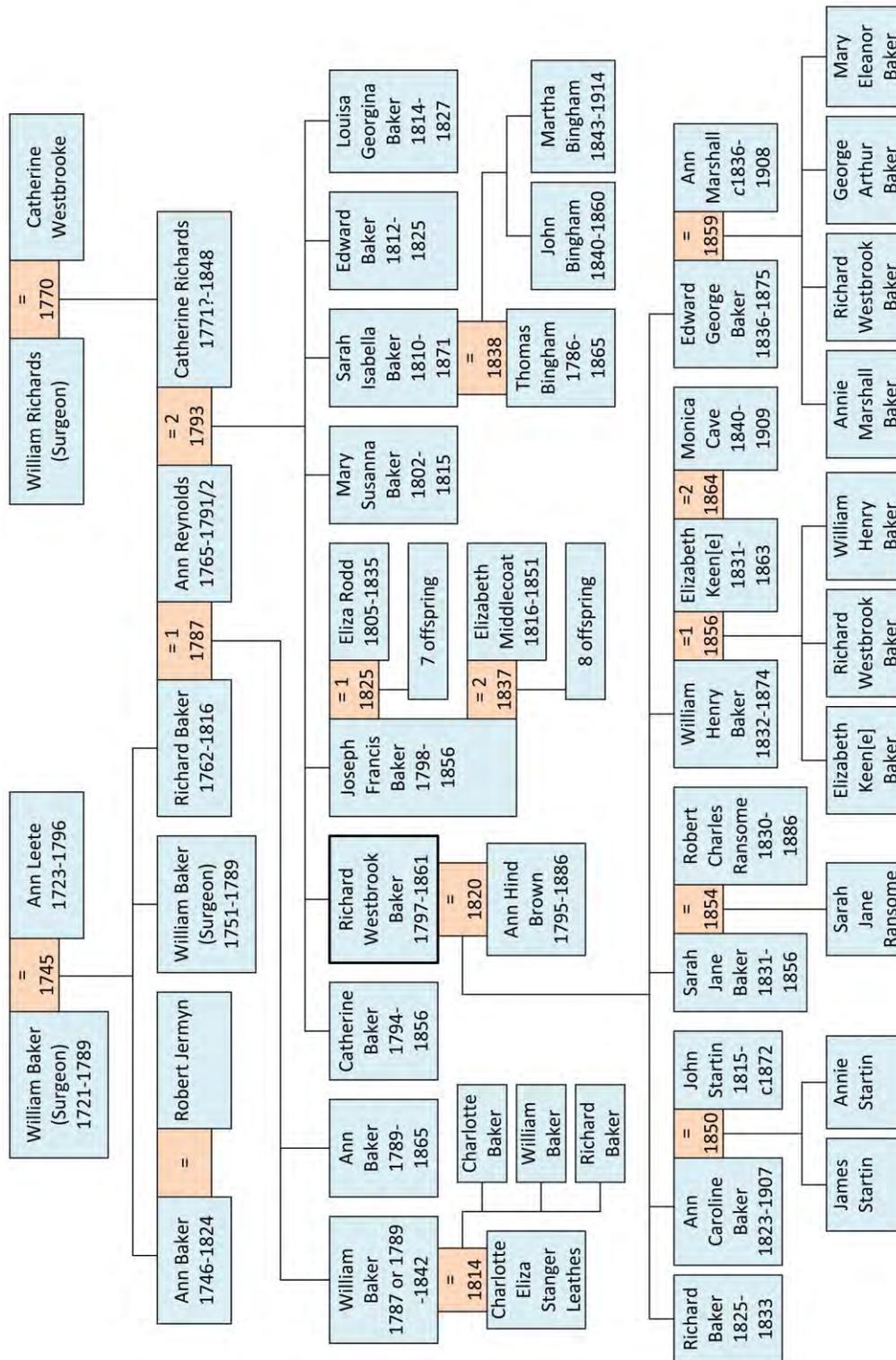


Fig. 2. Richard Westbrook Baker's family tree (Robert Owens).

states that he was then 56 years old, making his birth year 1786/7. They were not baptised until after their mother's death. Ann only appears in her younger half-brother Richard Westbrook's story when her baptism is recorded at Baldock in 1794, following their father's second marriage, to Catherine Richards. Richard Westbrook also notes her presence at their father's funeral in 1816 to pay a '*last tribute to a departed parent*' (DE3214/7036), but nothing else is known about her other than her death at Hoddesden in 1865.

William, on the other hand, kept in touch with Richard Westbrook, his half-brother. He had a career in the India Office and appears to have been well connected. Mrs Anne Magennis, of Great Chesterford, Essex, whose husband was the naval surgeon Dr James Magennis but who had been widowed by the time of her death in 1835, left him £5,000 in her will as well as £500 to his step-mother Catherine, Richard Westbrook's mother. It has not been possible to establish the relationship between Anne Magennis and the Baker family, but her substantial and unexplained bequest to William was the largest in her will (TNA PROB 11-1853-112), which totalled £24,900. William subsequently commented, in a letter to Richard Westbrook, that the bequest would enable him to clear his late father's debts (DE3214/7438/1-15).

From his letter of 1826 (DE3214/10772, transcribed in Appendix 2), William seems to have also been on familiar terms with Gerard Noel and travelled regularly to Rutland for the shooting, which he '*much enjoyed*', and he was grateful for presents of game sent by Richard Westbrook from the Exton estate. William lived in Montpellier Row, South Lambeth, London, and was referred to in the announcement of his death in the *Stamford Mercury* of 14th October 1842 as '*Captain Wm Baker*'. '*Captain*' was almost certainly a rank he achieved as an employee of the East India Company. Burke (1847, 48) describes him as '*Captain E.I.C.S.*', and his occupation was given in the parish registers of St Mary, Lambeth, as '*Clerk of the Treasury, India House*' when his son Richard was baptised in 1820.

The announcement in the *Stamford Mercury* also records that he was '*highly esteemed by a wide circle of friends*' and that he was '*an active Magistrate for Surrey*'. Elsewhere, he is noted as a land tax commissioner for Surrey in 1837 and 1838 (Eyre & Spottiswoode 1838, 286). He married Charlotte Eliza Stanger Leathes at St George's, Westminster, on 22nd November 1814. They had three children, Charlotte, William and Richard. The Bakers from Rutland attended daughter Charlotte's wedding in London on 4th August 1835, and Ann, Richard Westbrook's wife, was invited to be a bridesmaid and stay on in London for a few days afterwards. William and Charlotte's son, another William, was a civil engineer in Watford and in 1836 his father transferred the lease of a property in Market Place, Uppingham, to him. It appears that Richard Westbrook and his half-brother William, together with their families, enjoyed exchanging visits and were happy in each other's company. This is confirmed by the familiar tone of William's letter, and that of his wife, to Richard in 1835 (DE3214/7438/1-15).

The death of Ann, Richard Baker senior's first wife, is not recorded, but it was as a widower that he married again in 1793. Catherine, his new wife, was the daughter of William Richards, a Stamford doctor. They may have met as a result of Richard Baker senior's malting business bringing him to Stamford. They were married in St Martin's Church, Stamford Baron, on 7th February 1793. Catherine's mother was the widow of

Early years and family connections

Clement Westbrooke [*sic*] of Stamford and it was from this family that Richard Westbrook, the eldest son of her marriage to Richard Baker, took his middle name. After their marriage, Richard and Catherine Baker settled in Baldock where they had a daughter, Catherine, who was baptised in Baldock on 12th June 1794, along with Ann and William, the two children from Richard's first marriage. Daughter Catherine was followed by two sons in quick succession, Richard Westbrook on 4th July 1797 and Joseph Francis on 31st July 1798. Their next child was Mary Susanna who was baptised at Baldock on 23rd March 1802. After this, the family moved to Oakham sometime before 1810, and in 1812 they were living in accommodation at the 'Riding House', built by Gerard Noel in 1794–95 in Catmose Street. The Riding House, later known as the Riding School (White 1846, 648), includes a substantial double-fronted building at its southern end, now known as Catmose Cottage. It was originally built as domestic quarters for cavalry officers using the Riding School (Clough 1995, 214–15) (see below, pp13–14) (fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Catmose Cottage in about 1920, formerly officers' quarters for the Riding School of the Rutland Fencible Cavalry (RCM Jack Hart Collection 2002.6.1209).

Richard and Catherine's later children were all born at the Riding House. Sarah Isabella was baptised at All Saints' Church, Oakham, on 26th May 1810, Edward was born in 1812 but apparently not baptised, and Louisa Georgina was born in 1814 but not baptised until 2nd November 1817.

Richard Baker senior died and was buried in Oakham on 23rd May 1816, aged 53. He had suffered much from an undiagnosed illness '*which baffled medical opinion*', including that of a Mr Jones, who was probably the Surgeon who ran the Oakham Dispensary, and a Mr Vyse

of Stilton (DE3214/7036). Richard Westbrook was with him when he died and wrote of his father's '*terrible suffering*'.

We know from Catherine's letters to Sir Gerard Noel, addressed from the Riding House (DE3214/10769/1-2), that she treated him as a family friend, showing her appreciation of his generosity to Catherine herself and to her family. He had found them a home in Oakham, lent Catherine a chaise in 1812 so she could get out and about after the birth of her son Edward, and made sure she had the best medical attention. It is clear from the correspondence that Gerard Noel had taken an interest in the whole Baker family, particularly Catherine's sons, Joseph, who had gone to sea as a boy, and Richard Westbrook, her eldest son who, aged 16, had probably been away at school (see *Education* below).

Richard Westbrook's younger brother Joseph may still have been living with the family when they moved to Oakham, but he was destined to spend his life at sea. Aged only 12, he was accepted by the Navy in July 1810 and entered service aboard the *Macedonian*, soon to be actively engaged with the batteries on the French coast (O'Byrne 1849, 39). On 25th October 1812, he was one of the 68 wounded in an engagement with the American frigate *United States* about 500 miles south of the Azores, when the *Macedonian* was dismasted and captured (Wikipedia: *USS United States vs HMS Macedonian*). Catherine asked Gerard for help to trace him through his contacts in the Navy Office (DE3214/10769/2, transcribed in Appendix 1). It was established that he was wounded in the arm in the battle, but was safe. Interestingly, Gerard supported Joseph with a small allowance in the 1820s (DE3214/10796/2, 4275).

Joseph was unable to return to England for his father's funeral in May 1816 because he was at sea, but he had returned to Devon by 1826 where he married Eliza Rodd. She died in 1835 and Richard's half-brother William wrote to him that he was shocked to learn that poor Joseph had lost his wife as '*he is left with four children*' (DE3214/7438/1-5). Joseph then married Elizabeth Middlecoat in 1837, by whom he had a further seven children. He attained the naval rank of Lieutenant and eventually became a coastguard (O'Byrne, *ibid*). He died in 1856 in Portloe, Cornwall. There is no surviving evidence that he ever met or communicated directly with his elder brother after he left Oakham, probably because he was so frequently at sea.

After her father's death in 1816, Catherine, the eldest daughter of his second marriage, lived with her mother, together with her sisters Sarah Isabella and Louisa Georgina, in what had become the family home in Catmose Street, Oakham. Mary Susanna had died in 1815 aged 13, and was buried in Oakham. Edward died in 1825 '*after a long illness*', also aged only 13 (*SM*, 26th Aug 1825, 3), and Louisa Georgina subsequently died in 1827 aged 12. In the 1841 Census, Catherine Baker, who was described as of '*Independent means*', and her eldest daughter Catherine were still living in Catmose Street. By this time, Sarah Isabella had married Thomas Bingham, a '*gentleman of independent means*' some 25 years her senior, and they were living nearby in Uppingham Road. Ten years later, in the 1851 Census, Catherine, Richard Westbrook's eldest sister, was living in High Street, Oakham. She was described as '*unmarried*' and a '*Fund Holder*'.

John and Martha Bingham, Sarah and Thomas's two children, were born in Oakham in 1840 and 1843. The family eventually moved to Derby, Thomas's home town. Whilst travelling

Education

to Chipping Campden in 1860, Richard Westbrook heard that his nephew John had died in Derby, and he was planning to attend the funeral (DE3214/9239/13).

From these events, it can be seen that by the time Richard Westbrook was ten or eleven years old the family were living permanently in Oakham and, as stated, viewing Sir Gerard Noel as a close family friend. After the death of his father, he wrote to Sir Gerard of his mother '*with three small children and not a sixpence to depend on*', and passed on her respects and those of his sister Catherine (DE3214/7036).

Education

When Richard Westbrook Baker was first employed on the Exton estate in 1814 his early duties appear to have been to manage Gerard Noel's correspondence as well as the logistics of his frequent journeys round the country. By 1820, his letters to Noel and to his advisers in London, William Leake and John William Bury, show how he had quickly acquired an impressive level of knowledge about the estate, the land, its people and its management.

He was clearly very intelligent and had been well educated. As he was living in Oakham from some time between 1802 and 1810 it was thought possible that he might have been educated at Oakham School. However, there are reasons to discount this. The first is that this and the other local town schools in Stamford and Uppingham were grammar schools with their Classics curriculum set by statute. It seems more likely that Richard Westbrook had a commercial and business-minded education from around the age of ten. The clue to the location of the school was subsequently discovered in a letter from his mother, Catherine Baker, to Sir Gerard Noel, as enlarged upon below.

Richard Westbrook probably attended his first school at Baldock, where he would have learned to write and read, and if his parents planned to send him to a good grammar school he may have been taught some basic Latin. In 1813, Catherine Baker wrote to Sir Gerard '*my boy came from Bury at Christmas and we have an excellent character with him for you to see*' (DE3214/10769/2 – see Appendix 2). She then went on to ask Sir Gerard to find a good situation for him '*in the Admiralty or the Navy Office so he can provide for himself*'. Richard Westbrook was sixteen years old at the time and it seems that he was just finishing his education in Bury and ready to start a career.

In 1807, when he was ten years old, he would have been ready to go on to a grammar school, possibly at some distance from his home. As far as we know, the family was at this date probably still living in Baldock but may have had connections in Bury St Edmunds through his father's malting and brewing business. In Bury there was the well-known Edward VI Grammar School, founded in 1550. This school could have been selected for him, although, like most grammar schools at the time, the curriculum, set out in the early statutes, allowed for little deviation from the teaching of the Classics, particularly Latin and Greek, and possibly some mathematics, to prepare pupils who were mainly the sons of gentlemen, for Oxford or Cambridge University.

The education of boys in the first decades of the nineteenth century was, however, changing. The strict curriculum of classical studies was under pressure and some schools

wanted to change to a more commercially oriented approach. The Trustees of Leeds Grammar School, for example, had noticed the large number of boys from a family background in commerce who were not attracted by the Classics and required a different kind of education. The Trustees put forward a plan to alter the curriculum to cater for the needs of pupils with a more commercially minded interest, but they were taken to Court in Chancery and barred from making the changes. However, they were allowed to open a separate commercial school. This solution was noted by other grammar schools and by 1805 four had followed Leeds' example. One of these was the Edward VI School in Bury St Edmunds (Sutherland 1990, 134), which, by 1809, had set up the Feoffment School, later known as the Guildhall Feoffment School. It was free to the children of Bury townsmen and was said to provide an '*excellent Commercial education*' (Elliott 1963, 98). This, it seems, was likely to provide the kind of education Richard Baker needed.

By the early nineteenth century many old grammar schools were no longer relying entirely on local boys, and schoolmasters were encouraged to provide boarding houses, attracting pupils in growing numbers from distant parts. In his detailed history of the school, *The Story of King Edward VI School, Bury St Edmonds*, R W Elliott gives the example in the 1820s of the Spedding family who came from Westmorland to Bury St Edmunds so that their sons could benefit from a grammar school education (Elliott 1963, 92). Although there is only the evidence of his mother's letter of 1813, it seems that Richard Westbrook was quite probably one of the boys who travelled to Bury to attend the town's commercial school as a boarder.

He had clearly received the benefit of a wide-ranging commercial education and was well prepared for his career, able to encompass the range of duties and responsibilities he had to undertake on his eventual appointment as the Steward of the Exton Estate in 1828. It is also clear that Sir Gerard Noel had already recognised this well before his appointment.

Sir Gerard Noel and the Exton Estate

Richard Westbrook Baker's employer (fig. 5) was a colourful character. Born in 1759 at Tickencote in Rutland, he was the son of Gerard Anne Edwards of Welham, Leicestershire, and his wife, Lady Jane Noel, sister of the 6th Earl of Gainsborough – the family tree is shown in fig. 4. The 6th Earl, who was unmarried, died childless in 1798. His nephew Gerard Noel Edwards was his heir and, as a condition of this bequest, took the surname Noel. As a youngster Gerard Edwards, as he then was, was often at Exton. He had been brought up in Rutland and in London, and had spent much of his youth with his uncles and aunts at Exton Hall. He was educated at Eton and attended St John's College, Cambridge. With several of his contemporaries, including William Wilberforce, a fellow student at St John's, and William Pitt, he became a member of Goostree's Club, a meeting place in Pall Mall for the discussion of political and social reform. At this time Gerard seems not to have been particularly active politically but broadly supported the Whig cause. With the backing of his wife's family he was elected Member of Parliament for Maidstone in 1784. He held the Maidstone seat until one of the two county seats in Rutland became available on the death of Tom Noel, his uncle, in 1788. He was returned for Rutland unopposed and, except between

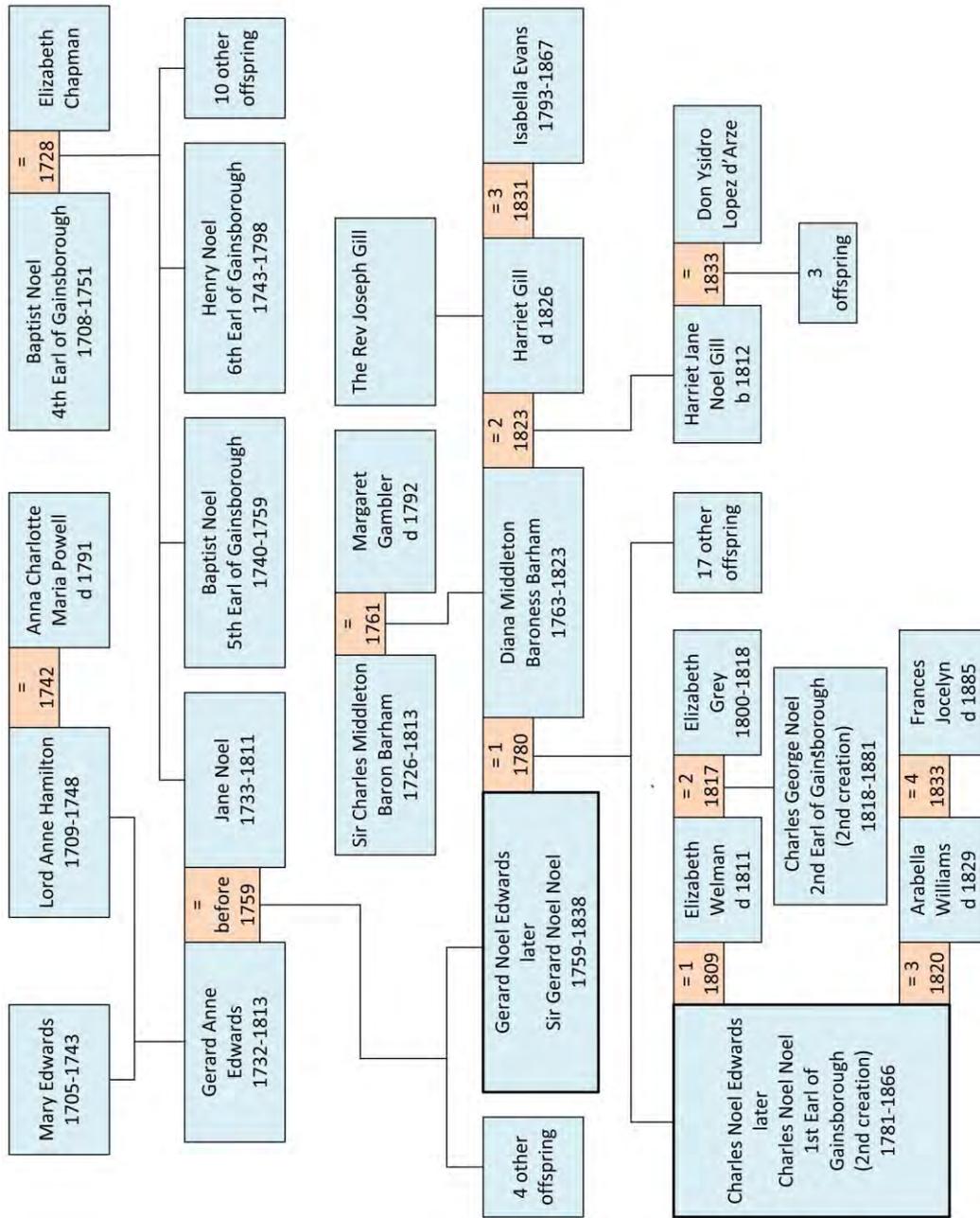


Fig. 4. Sir Gerard Noel's family tree (Robert Owens).

1808 and 1814 when his son Charles sat for Rutland, held this seat until his death in 1838. Articles in www.historyofparliamentonline.org by R G Thorne (for 1790–1820) and Simon Harratt (for 1820–1832) give full details of his active parliamentary career.



Fig. 5. Unsigned mezzotint portrait of Sir Gerard Noel from an original picture in the possession of Wm Leake Esq MP, published February 1821 by Wm Cribb, King St, Covent Garden (Sulis Fine Art Gallery Ltd).

When the Rutland Militia was embodied in 1778, Gerard Noel Edwards joined the regiment and he was its Captain in 1779 when the troop was deployed to Coxheath Camp, near Maidstone, Kent, to help defend the south coast. Over the next few years the regiment moved several times between Kent and Rutland, and remained embodied until 1783 (Markham 1924, 169–71; Traylen 1978, 76–8; Noel 2004, 68–70). It was while his regiment was training at Coxheath in the winter of 1779 that he met the Middleton family of Barham Court. The story of his courtship and marriage to Diana Middleton and subsequent large family has been told many times (eg Noel 2004, 73, 75–6). She and Gerard had eighteen children between 1780 and 1801.

Diana's father, Charles Middleton, was Comptroller of the Navy from 1778 to 1790 and First Lord of the Admiralty from 1805 to 1806. He had been made a baronet in 1781 and became Lord Barham in 1805. As his sole heir, his barony was specially remaindered to his daughter, Diana, who, as Baroness Barham, inherited all her father's estates and titles on his death in 1813. Gerard's repeated claims to a peerage fell on deaf ears, but the baronetcy was exceptionally remaindered to him and from then on he was addressed as Sir Gerard Noel Noel Bart. Their eldest son Charles, born in 1781 in Oakham, became Lord Barham following his mother's death in 1823 (Noel 2004, 120) and eventually, in 1841, he was elevated to the re-created earldom of Gainsborough.

Noel resigned his commission with the Militia in 1794 (Traylen 1978, 78), and in March that year he successfully raised a regiment of light dragoons for the county, the Rutland Fencible Cavalry. By July he had obtained the rank of Colonel (Clough 1995, 213), and was referred to as Colonel Noel until the regiment was disbanded in 1800. He built the magnificent, large '*very capital*' Riding House, later known as the Riding School, in Oakham

in 1794–95 for use as a training base for the regiment, consisting of a large unobstructed exercise area with a spectacular roof constructed over its impressive wide span, in addition to stables and fodder stores (figs. 6 & 7). It was built on the site of a former malting house purchased from the Earl of Harborough (Clough 1995, 214–15), opposite Catmose House with its stables and park in Catmose Street, the house Gerard and his family often used in Oakham. Today, the Riding School’s officers’ accommodation, now called Catmose Cottage, has become the Rutland Register Office, and the exercise area and stable block are part of Rutland County Museum. Catmose House forms the offices of Rutland County Council, but the Catmose House stables were demolished long ago.



Fig. 6 (above). Aerial view of the Riding School complex, with Catmose House and its stables in the foreground and Oakham town centre beyond, c1930 (Jack Hart Collection, RCM 2002.6.1122).

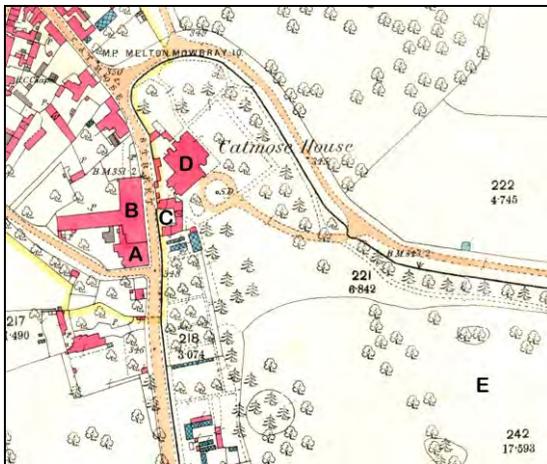


Fig. 7 (left). The Catmose buildings as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map of 1885: A: Catmose Cottage; B: Riding School (the long projection to the west is the Poultry Hall built by the Rutland Agricultural Society in the mid-nineteenth century); C: Catmose House stables; D: Catmose House; E: Catmose Park.

When Gerard’s wife Diana died in 1823, after over forty years of marriage, she had long been separated from her husband. Of their large family only two of the eighteen children had not survived infancy. They were Sophia, who lived only a few months and died in 1787,

and Arthur Anne, born in 1791, who died in 1792. After her father's death in 1813, Diana had moved from Barham Court in Kent to Fairy Hill in Reynoldstown, on the Gower Peninsula in South Wales, where she took on various philanthropic works. She was interested in education and set up schools in the area, and built six chapels to further the cause of Methodism on the Gower. Gerard claimed he was '*in total darkness concerning Lady Barham since we separated*' (Noel 2004, 120; DE3214/10627/1-2), and left all the arrangements for her funeral, which took place at Teston, Kent, to their eldest son Charles.

Gerard meanwhile had started a relationship with Harriet, the daughter of the Reverend Joseph Gill, vicar of Scraptoft in Leicestershire from 1792 until his death in 1849 at the age of 93, and vicar of Exton from 1791 to 1812 (Venn on-line; Longden 1938-42, V, 247). By 1810 the affair had become the subject of much local gossip and they lived mainly in London. They were back at Exton, however, when their daughter Harriet Jane was born and subsequently baptised in Exton church. It appears that in 1812 Gerard Noel then moved Gill to Pickwell, Leicestershire, which was also in his gift, to avoid further embarrassment. Within a few weeks of Diana's death in 1823 Gerard had married Harriet and she was living at Exton as the new Lady Noel. She died in 1826 when their daughter Harriet Jane was thirteen. Gerard's third marriage, in 1831, was to Isabella Evans, the supposed widow of the late Raymond Evans, although in accepting Gerard's proposal, she confessed that she had never actually been married.

By 1823 Exton Hall will have undergone significant changes from the house Harriet had known at the beginning of her relationship with Gerard. On 24th May 1810 a fire destroyed the south-east wing, including all the rooms to the east of the Great Hall. Many of the valuable contents including furniture, works of art, tapestries and pictures were lost in the fire. The paintings alone were said to be worth at least £20,000, but Gerard was only insured for £5,000. The impact, although devastating for the family, would have been even more serious for the estate had it not been for Gerard's dinner guests, Dr Jordan and his wife, who were sleeping at Exton Hall that night. Dr Jordan was first on the scene early in the morning, having been roused by the housemaids who discovered the blaze. Finding the drawing room in flames, he went to the '*evidence room*' on the first floor, next to the land steward's apartments, where valuable estate documents were kept, saving what he could of the estate records, papers and books. The ceiling fell in as he left the room and the remainder of the papers and the collection of priceless books in the library on the ground floor were destroyed. Sir Gerard had proved difficult to rouse, but once awake, he remembered the £2,000 in bank bills in his bedroom which he was able to save from the blaze. A full account of the tragedy was recounted in the press, as transcribed in Appendix 3. What remains of this building after the fire stands near the church at Exton (fig. 9). The present Hall (fig. 10), begun in 1811 but not completed until the 1850s, and intended originally to extend an old farmhouse, was occupied by the family after the fire. It stands at some distance to the north of the old site (fig. 8).

When Gerard and his first wife Diana married in 1780, Gerard was 21 and, having inherited his uncle's estates in Rutland and Gloucestershire, his father's estates in Leicestershire and his wife's estates in Kent and Hampshire, he was one of the wealthiest

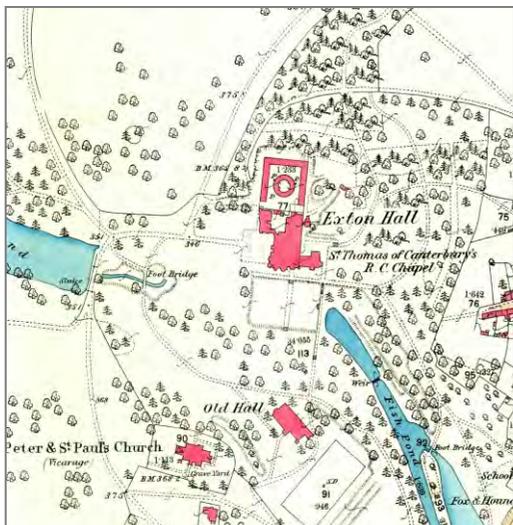


Fig. 8. Exton Park as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map of 1885, showing the Old Hall near the church and its replacement further north.

Fig. 9. The ruins of Exton Old Hall c1928 (Jack Hart Collection, RCM 2002.6.1094).



Fig. 10. Exton New Hall and its chapel from the south c1930 (Jack Hart Collection, RCM 2002.6.1122).

young men of his generation. Presumably, a fairly relaxed approach to estate management would have maintained his income at an appropriate level.

However, as with several other well-documented great landed estates in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, estate managers had to improve their returns in order to cope with the need to service the increasing burden of debt laid on these estates by their spendthrift owners (Thompson 1963, 36, 151). The Noel estates were no exception. Gerard Noel's debts sprang not only from his extravagant lifestyle in London, where he espoused Whig politics and the increasingly frenetic social life of the political classes, but also from unwise forays into banking. In 1792, he had been lured by the prospect of increasing his already sizeable fortune by becoming a partner in one of the many private banks appearing at the time in London to cater for affluent private customers. The bank, known initially as the London and Middlesex, and later, using his then surname, as Edwards Bank, had premises in Stratford Place, off Oxford Street and was financed by Noel and six of his partners. All these original investors, however, gradually fell by the wayside and by 1802 the bank was in serious difficulties (Noel 2004, 82–5). An approach was made by Alexander Davison, Admiral Nelson's friend and prize agent, who in pursuit of a socially acceptable venture, agreed to invest £100,000 in the bank, provided he was indemnified against unforeseen bank debts for two years. The bank, renamed Alexander Davison, Noel, Templar and Co, then moved to Pall Mall (Downer 2004, 242–3). Two of Davison's associates, William Leake, his attorney, and Henry Cutler, the manager of his prize agency, were installed as trustees, and Leake's long association with Sir Gerard and his estates began.

By July 1816 the bank had failed. Davison was in gaol for an unrelated matter, and his promised investment was not forthcoming. The remaining customers were taken on by a rival bank owned by Thomas Coutts and the partners avoided the publicity of bankruptcy. However, the bank still owed £120,000 and the original partners, of whom Gerard was unfortunately the last still living, were not absolved from their liabilities. He mortgaged his Rutland and Campden estates to Coutts to cover his share of the bank's debt. He also seems to have decided to put some of his own personal possessions into paying the debt and he arranged with Harry Phillips, and his newly formed auction house in New Bond Street, for a sale to be held over thirteen days, from 23rd April to 4th May 1816, to raise what money it could from the contents of Exton Hall. Accounts of the sale appeared in the local papers, as shown in Appendix 4. Perhaps he was also mindful that in view of his dire financial situation he might need to vacate the house for a new tenant. The sale included the furniture, plate and pictures in Exton Hall, the farm stock, and the contents of the stable including the coach and curricula and the horses. According to a press report on 18th May 1816 (*SM*, 25th May 1810, 3), the proceeds of the sale '*exceeded £10,000*'. The silver was sold for over 14s an ounce and the farm stock did particularly well in comparison with local market prices.

Gerard's Leicestershire estates, inherited from his father, Gerard Anne Edwards, were sold at the George Inn, Stamford, in September 1816, and other estates soon followed. The Rutland estate, centred on Exton, and the Gloucestershire estate at Chipping Campden were both covered by an entail (a limitation of the inheritance of property to certain heirs over a

number of generations) and remained in family ownership. However, in 1816 Gerard's life interest in the Exton estate was advertised for sale and negotiations with the Duke of Wellington were well advanced when William Leake and his partner, Henry Cutler, stepped in. They proceeded to put Gerard Noel's entailed estates, inherited from his uncle Henry, 6th Earl Gainsborough, in a Trust to pay the outstanding interest on his debt to Coutts (DE3214/205 1-2). The Trust deed was signed in November 1816, after which negotiations with the Duke of Wellington were finally terminated. The Trustees were William Middleton Noel, one of Sir Gerard's sons, Gerard's son-in-law, Stafford O'Brien of Blatherwycke in neighbouring Northamptonshire, and John Diaz Thompson, a Commissioner for the Navy, presumably an associate of Davison and Leake. Leake was appointed receiver, steward and agent to manage the estates in the Trust and to pay Sir Gerard £1,500 a year '*for his own personal use*' and £1,000 a year to William Middleton Noel who, as a partner, had also put money in the bank. According to William Leake's account in 1820, Sir Gerard was actually paid an allowance for his personal use of £1,200 a month (DE3214/4180). The remaining income from the lands and properties in the Trust was to be used to pay Sir Gerard's debts, including the interest at 5% on the mortgages, totalling £100,000, which he had outstanding with Coutts. William Leake, who devised the scheme, would also, in his capacity as manager, provide the incentive to improve the profitability of the Rutland estates and do what he could to increase Sir Gerard's income from rents.

William Leake, who played an important part in the lives of both Sir Gerard Noel and Richard Westbrook Baker was born in 1771, probably in London. He became a King's Bench Attorney and in 1818 secured one of the two Parliamentary seats for the rotten borough of St Michael's, or Mitchell, near Newlyn in Cornwall. In 1820, he was elected Member of Parliament for Malmesbury, Wiltshire, later returning to Mitchell until the Reform Act of 1832 when he left Parliament to concentrate on his legal practice. His London home was in Devonshire Street on the south side of Portland Place, a short distance from his friend and Gerard Noel's solicitor, William Bury. Leake retired from his legal practice in 1833 and moved to Upper Harley Street until he was able to purchase Mount Ararat in Wimbledon and move out of London. He was living in Hillingdon when he died in 1852 (www.historyofparliamentonline.org, accessed 10th May 2017).

William Leake had corresponded regularly with both Thomas Dain as the Exton estate's local steward and Richard Baker, whom he must have seen as Dain's successor. It may well have been Leake's influence that prevented Gerard Noel, after he had dismissed his next steward, William Dollin, from taking over the management of the estate himself, and that eventually secured the appointment of Baker to this position.

2 – Starting out on the Exton Estate

Richard Westbrook Baker began his career as an employee on the Exton estate in 1814. Up to the age of thirty when he became officially appointed to a salaried position as Gerard Noel's Land Agent or Steward, Baker was ambitious and worked extremely hard to be useful and get himself noticed, but he seems to have had little capital and probably only a very modest income to begin with as there are few recorded payments from Gerard Noel or the estate. In May 1828, a letter from William Dollin, the then Steward, mentions William Leake's instructions for the usual payment to Richard Baker and to Mr Dain, the late Steward of the estate, but there is no indication of the sums involved (DE3214/7030).

Richard Baker says, in a letter to his employer, that he was keen *'to glean agricultural knowledge and to impart that information to others as far as a very limited capital will admit'* (DE3214/7038). In 1857, he notes that *'in 1824 my services were further identified with the estate and more so in 1826'* (DE3214/7186). These were presumably the dates of his promotions but there is no indication in the correspondence that they resulted in an improved status or brought any financial reward.

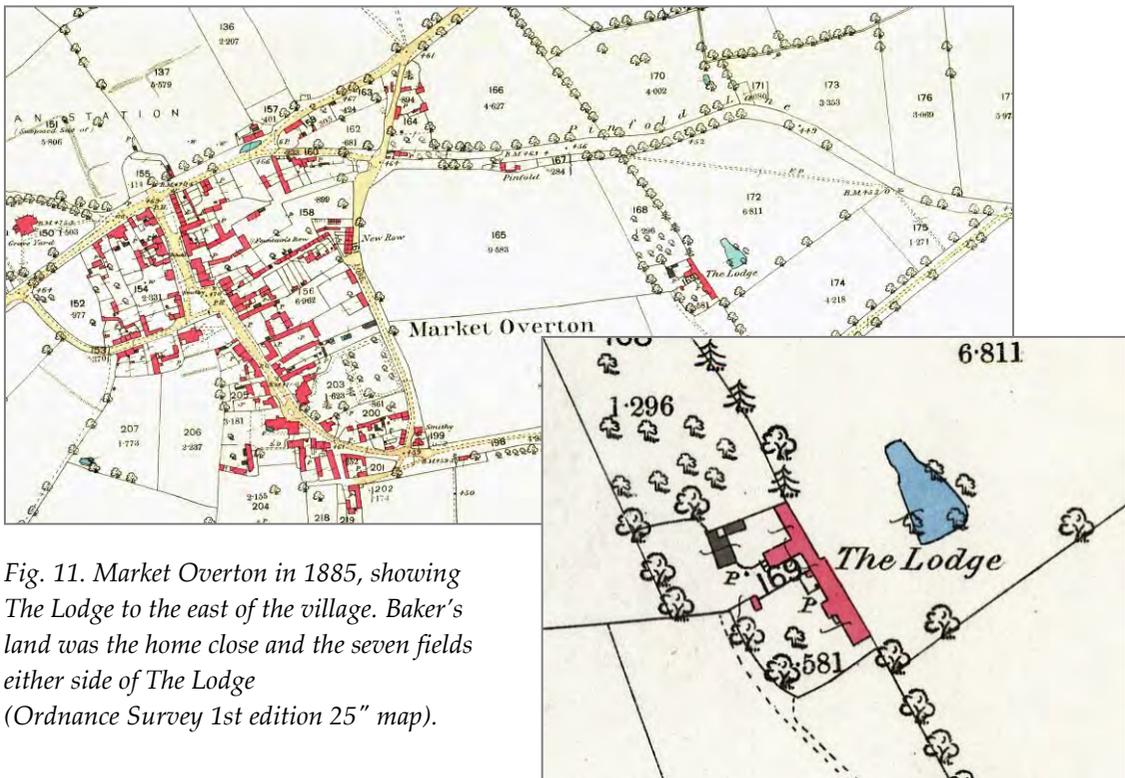


Fig. 11. Market Overton in 1885, showing The Lodge to the east of the village. Baker's land was the home close and the seven fields either side of The Lodge (Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map).

Life in Market Overton

Richard Baker may at first have lived with his mother and sisters at the Riding House in Oakham, getting to know the Exton estate, and its potentially well-disposed but unpredictable owner better. After his marriage to Ann, the daughter of Henry Hind Brown, a wealthy Melton currier, in Melton Mowbray Church on 6th December 1820, he set up house in Market Overton. Here he rented The Lodge from the estate, a substantial house with outbuildings and 37 acres of land on the southern edge of the village (figs. 11–12). He might have expected the farm to be provided by the estate, as was customary in some parts of the country (Richards 1981, 449), but this was not the case. The Exton estate rental books record the extent of his land at Market Overton and it is shown on the estate map of 1824 (fig. 13). His annual rent in 1830 for the Lodge was £70 and he paid £28 for land in Barrow (DE3214/5358/1–3), although by then he and his family were living in the Steward’s house in Cottesmore.



Fig. 2. The Lodge, Market Overton, in 2016 (photo: author).

His eldest children were born at The Lodge. They were Ann Caroline who was born in 1823, and his eldest son, Richard, who was born in 1825. His younger children were born in Cottesmore after he had been promoted to Steward in 1828 and moved into the Steward’s house there (*see pp41ff*).

He continued to act for Sir Gerard at the Lodge, organising his travel arrangements and addressing correspondence on estate business throughout the 1820s. In 1823 for example, he dealt with a request from Joseph Knighton of Brooke who wanted permission to plough a little meadow. Richard Baker replied that Sir Gerard had no objection, but understands ‘*you*



Fig. 13. Layton Cooke's estate map of 1824 from Exton Hall, showing part of Baker's land at The Lodge, Market Overton (north at the top).

will hollow drain the close in a husband like manner'. He then reported that Mr Knighton had said that he did not have the income to lay out money for improvements, and that the field was too flat to hollow drain in any case. Negotiating with tenants to try and extend drainage schemes was one area of farm improvement which was only successfully dealt with in Rutland when earthenware drainage pipes became widely and economically available.

Overseer of the Poor

In Market Overton, though, Baker was clearly not fully occupied on estate matters and in the meantime furthered his own education by taking on responsibilities in connection with the Vestry. The records of the Vestry meetings in the parish of Market Overton are among the few in the county to survive. For a short period in the early nineteenth century they document the work of a kind of parish parliament which consisted of nominated representatives who appointed and supervised the parish officials in the areas of local government for which the parish was responsible. These included raising local taxes and appointing local men to carry out parish duties. The Market Overton Vestry minutes, which survive from 1819 to 1836 (DE4993/20), show Richard Westbrook Baker as an active member of the group of local men who, in Market Overton, formed a sub-committee of the Vestry, the Select Vestry, which managed parish affairs on a day-to-day basis (Tate 1960, 18–23). From December 1819, he joined the sixteen members who met fortnightly. In March 1821, it was *'agreed that Mr Baker is a proper man to serve the office of Overseer of the Poor'*. He served in this position for the usual twelve months, when he was replaced by John Berridge. During this time, the Vestry decided on a new valuation of properties in the village and a review of the parish rates. The last valuation had been carried out in connection with the Enclosure Award between 1803 and 1807. The new valuation shows that Richard Baker's house, The Lodge, was valued at £7 10s. The two largest properties in village, the Rectory and the Hall, were valued at £20 each and most cottages at £2 or less. The new valuation took place in March 1821. In the back of the Vestry minute book is a complete list of ratepayers. There were 78 houses and cottages assessed, valued between £20 and £1, and four coal wharves in the village on the Melton to Oakham canal. Richard Baker was paying rates of £3 on one of these coal wharves, and when his daughter, Ann Caroline, was baptised in Market Overton in 1825 his occupation was given as *'coal merchant'*. An advertisement in the *Stamford Mercury* in 1823 shows he was still active in the coal trade at that time (SM 20th June 1823, 3) (fig. 14).

Maintaining the village poor took a sizeable proportion of the parish rates in the agricultural depression following the war in Europe. Market Overton was not the only village to have to deal with increasing numbers needing support from the parish. Most of these would

CHEAP COAL, for READY MONEY ONLY.
R. W. BAKER returns thanks to his friends for the great support they have given him, and begs to inform them and the public (notwithstanding the advance in the price of Coal upon the Oakham line), that he continues to sell at 21s. per Ton.
Market Overton Coal Wharf, June 15, 1823.

Fig. 14. Baker's advertisement for coal
(SM 20th June 1823, 3).

be men and women who were judged to be 'settled' in the parish and were thus entitled to 'parish relief' (for settlement qualifications see Tate 1960, 197–204), but some small amounts would have been handed out to those just passing through. In 1819, the minutes list the fourteen villagers who were entitled to parish support: single men like John Kettles received 5s a week, Thomas Preston with a wife and five children had 13s from the parish, and in January 1820 Thomas Rouse, with a wife and five children, was paid 10s. Rouse complained to the local magistrate, the Earl of Winchilsea, that this was not enough. By November when the Vestry was economising by reducing both the list of those entitled to relief and the amounts they were prepared to pay, Thomas Rouse received only 9s. In June 1821 Rouse was summoned by the Vestry to answer a complaint of idleness but defied the Vestry by not attending and was fined. In October that year and again in November a rate was levied at 6d in the pound for the relief of the poor and to pay the wages of those among the poor who had been found employment by the parish working on the roads. In November 1821, the minutes show that there were nineteen families eligible for poor relief but the Vestry decided that eleven of them would receive only coal, with no money to purchase necessities. By September 1822 the parish had run out of funds again and 1s a week was deducted from the amounts paid to labourers on the roads. They also doubled the rent the poor paid for houses owned and let by the parish, but the occupants were allowed some 'stubble' (probably wheat straw) to repair their thatch. The overseers provided an allowance of about 1cwt of coal annually to each household, but that was not enough to prevent people gathering furze and stealing wood from fences, for which the parish officials threatened prosecution. The parish invited residents to inform the overseers if they saw the offence taking place, the reward for which was half a guinea.

The problems arose partly from the enclosure of commons resulting in cottagers being deprived of a large part of their livelihoods, and partly from the agricultural depression following the wars in Europe resulting in lower prices for farm products, particularly grain. Even the use of the Corn Laws from 1815 to protect the market for wheat and barley from overseas trade seems to have made little difference: but without these laws the situation would have been worse. This matter is covered below in the discussion on the Petitions to Parliament (pp26–9). Farmers in Rutland, pressed to pay the rents set in years of high prices, found it difficult to find money to pay for labour. The underemployment of many cottagers seeking wages after enclosure brought many of the poorest to crisis point and to dependency on the parish of settlement as a last resort.

The parish of Market Overton had been enclosed between 1803, the date of the Act of Parliament authorising enclosure, and 1807 when the award was finalised (Ryder 2006, 66). As in many parishes undergoing forced enclosure, the lifestyle of many of the villagers will have changed radically. Arguments on the effect of enclosure on rural society are explored in

depth elsewhere (Snell 1985, chapter 4 *passim*) and the village of Market Overton would not have been immune to many of the changes discussed. Cottagers seem to have been the worst affected by enclosure. By losing their rights of common and a major part of their income, unable to feed themselves, gather fuel, or keep their animals on the land, they had to leave behind the possibility of self-sufficiency and were forced to work for wages to keep themselves and their families. Although they may have received, as their right, allocations in the award they would have found it difficult to pay their costs of enclosure from the small allotments of land they received, and it was usual for many of them to sell out. It was too early in the century for such a move to be documented in detail from records like the census returns, but the outmigration of agricultural workers from Market Overton in the second half of the nineteenth century has been researched by Cooper (2015). It may well be that in this earlier period of agricultural change there was similar outmigration, one of the common problems being the lack of alternative occupations in the county. Thus Market Overton too experienced a surge in the numbers of poor, unable to find work during a period of increasing agricultural distress when, with lower prices for farm crops and little expectation of reductions in rent, fewer farmers were able to make enough money from their land to pay for labour. This situation reduced the opportunities for agricultural labourers to find work, particularly in winter, and there was no alternative to parish relief. Baker was clearly moved by his work in the parish, particularly with the plight of poor agricultural workers. In 1830, in a printed address to the nation, for which he sought Sir Gerard Noel's support (DE3214/190/8), he made a strong case for improving parish administration, which he regarded as wasteful and ineffective in many areas. He argued for strong direction from the Vestry, for the value of the continuity of permanent appointments and salaries for key parish officials, and for the pressing need to deal properly with rural poverty.

New Farms after Enclosure

When it came to building new farms after enclosure on the Exton estate in Rutland, finance was probably the major constraint. We know that Gerard Noel was in deep financial difficulties after the collapse of his banking venture and his Trust was against any move to reduce the income from his remaining estates. His Steward Richard Baker was similarly constrained in his early years by lack of finance. Nevertheless, both Layton Cooke, the Trust's London surveyor, and Baker were surprised that enterprising farmers were not more ready to adapt their farming practices after enclosure when, for the first time, their holdings were outside the rigidly prescribed open field system and they could make what improvements they wanted. In 1824 Cooke remarked on this lack of progress, the resistance to working a sensible mixed farm with manures enhanced by over-wintered stock, particularly sheep, and a yard system for over-wintered cattle so the manures were not wasted by the elements. This latter arrangement would need new buildings, but tenants were loath to leave the village centres. Indeed, Cooke found there was a distinct pecking order in the rural communities. The nearer you lived to the centre the more respected you were. A man like James Burgess of Park Farm, a remote farm on the outskirts of Ridlington parish, was held up by Cooke as an

exemplary farmer. But, as Cooke said, living so far away from the centre, he was considered a lesser member of the community than the farmers in cramped run-down farms in the main street of Ridlington (DE3214/6892). Park Farm was an old and well-established farmstead with enclosed closes. Indeed, much of Ridlington was enclosed by agreement, probably mainly in the seventeenth century rather than by any Act of Parliament a century later (Ryder 2006, 66–7).

It was different in the villages enclosed by Act of Parliament in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In these former open-field villages, both Cooke in 1824, and Baker a decade later, noted how few families had moved their farms out of the village centres and built new farms on their recent allotments of land. Those that had, according to Baker, had done so in such a disorganised piecemeal fashion that there was continual annoyance to each other in the matter of disputed boundaries, straying livestock and damage to crops (DE3214/7038). In Exton, the enclosure award allowed for the building of a new road from Cottesmore to Barnsdale, by-passing the village to the west. This road had a number of new farms planned along its length but even by the 1830s many had only buildings and land and the new houses for families were built later.

The farm at the most northerly edge of this group was Hall Farm, leased from the estate in 1828 by Richard Baker. There are documents in the Exton archive which show buildings on the site and plans for a new house in 1832 (DE3214/4540). The farm consisted of 249 acres of good land and the crops listed in 1848 show it was a mixed farm growing wheat, barley and turnips as well as grass crops. The exception to this piecemeal process was a farm built in 1853 on the heathland between Cottesmore and Barrow. Warren Farm, Cottesmore, was built on the model farm principle, with livestock housing round a square yard and a water trough in the centre, making it much easier to manage the stock. It was built by J Halliday, a stonemason from Langham, but whether he built it for clients or as a speculative venture is not known (DE3214/237).

The Coal Wharves and the Melton to Oakham Canal

Richard Baker's coal wharf was on the Melton to Oakham canal on west side of the village between Market Overton and Teigh. The canal had been opened in 1802 mainly to carry coal from the Nottinghamshire and East Derbyshire coalfields to Oakham and the surrounding districts (Tew 1984, 7). This was brought by canal to Loughborough and thence to Leicester via the Soar navigation and onwards via the River Wreake to Melton Mowbray. The canal also carried bulky farm crops like grain, malt and flour to Leicester and the Midlands. From Melton, it ran via Edmondthorpe, Teigh and Ashwell to Oakham, crossing the road to Teigh at the bottom of the hill to the west of Market Overton where the wharves were located. The canal was laid out with passing places along its length for 14-foot-wide boats and a turning place, or 'winding pool', near the Market Overton wharves (fig. 15–16). The Market Overton wharves had been developed as a private enterprise by the Bennet family and leased to local businesses like Baker's. There were plans by the Canal Company to provide their own wharf there as late as 1841. In the meantime, as the Bennet wharves and warehouses were usually

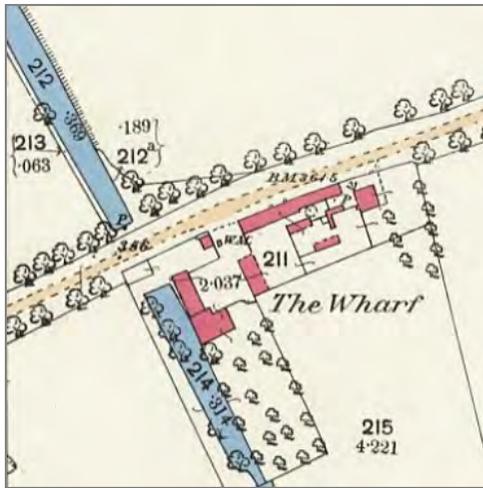


Fig. 15. Market Overton wharf in 1885
(Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map).



Fig. 16. Market Overton Canal Wharf
weigh-house (photo: Robert Ovens).

full, the Company leased a portion of land there as a public wharf (Tew 1984, 72). The Act authorising the building of the canal was passed by Parliament in 1794. It was supported enthusiastically by Gerard Noel who held shares in the Company. The Committee running the Oakham end of the company was chaired in its early stages by him, but interests elsewhere often took him away. In 1827, he delegated the role of attending the Annual General Meeting to Richard Baker. Baker was invited to take the chair and afterwards produced detailed minutes of the meeting for Sir Gerard's information (DE3214/7047). The meeting discussed problems with the water supply to the canal. This was a long-standing issue and the lack of a reasonable depth of water closed the canal in summer in many years (Tew 1984, 52–3). At the 1827 meeting it was decided to postpone the spring opening for six weeks for this reason. Reviewing expenses for the last year, cleaning the bottom of the canal had cost £628 16s 7d, which was over estimate, but useful 'strong rock' had been found which could be dug out and used elsewhere. New hawthorn 'quicks' costing £100 had been planted, the banks had been puddled and general repairs undertaken for £454 18s 11d, and new lock gates had been supplied for £78. It appeared from the report of the receipts that the canal was thriving. The 'up' tonnage was slightly down, but it was expected to go up to the usual levels in 1828. The 'down' tonnage in grain, flour, malt and other goods was charged, like coal, at 1d a ton. The trade in wheat in particular was thriving, having increased five times over the year, bringing in an annual income of about £2,000. This provided ample funds to pay salaries at the same rate as before and a dividend of £2 per share was proposed. The income from the rent of the wharves owned and set up by the canal company was £189 12s 5d. Richard Baker reported to Sir Gerard that he had been invited to join the Committee permanently but had been obliged to refuse as he was still a trader on the canal and that Mr Jones, the Oakham surgeon, had been taken on in his stead.

Richard Baker must have closed his business as a coal merchant by the beginning of the

1830s, because by then he had become a permanent member of the Canal committee. He was one of the few members who regularly attended meetings from 1831 onwards. The coming of the railways, particularly the opening of the Midland Railway line from Syston to Peterborough in 1848, meant that trade on the canal, still running in 1847, then came to an end (Tew 1984, 98). An Act of Parliament in July 1846 authorised the sale of the route of the canal to the Midland Railway Company. It was a complicated deal, but the Midland Railway appears to have paid some £15,500 for the route of the canal and its roads and bridges. At the time of the sale in 1846, Richard Baker owned twelve shares. Sir Gerard Noel had 28 among his assets when he died in 1838.

The Rutland Association and the Petitions to Parliament

Richard Baker was clearly moved by his work in the parish which he remembered in later life as giving him first-hand knowledge of rural society and the poverty of a large class of rural labourers. His work as Parish Overseer in Market Overton brought him experience of the effects, not only on the poor but on the whole of rural society, of the agricultural depression which followed the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars and the subsequent actions of the government to deal with the country's huge debt. Throughout his life, this period as a member of the Vestry informed his opinions on rural poverty, its causes and its consequences, and led to his efforts to make changes on the Noel estates, where he could, to improve rural society as a whole, but particularly the conditions of the labouring poor.

Both Richard Baker, and Layton Cooke who surveyed the Exton Estate in 1824, could see that the problem on many estates like Exton was that farmers who had benefited from the high cereal prices in the war years could be left with high rents beyond their reach in the post-war years. Cooke indeed commented directly on this in his survey and expected that a review would be needed of Exton rents in due course (DE3214/7057). Prices for farm crops fell back from the height they achieved during the war, making it difficult now for many farmers to pay rents which had been set to take account of improved farm incomes. The Corn Laws allowed for a tax on imported grain and provided some support for British farming, but this support was not sufficient to generate the necessary profits. The number of farmers who were able to pay for labour also fell with the prices after 1815, and winter work was difficult to provide. The poor rates kept increasing to the dismay of many farmers and landlords who were seeing their profits falling and the value of their properties tumbling. As a result, they were moved to try to persuade Parliament to take action to improve their situation. In many places, usually at county level, Associations were set up in rural areas throughout the country whose purpose was to discuss local conditions and to draw up petitions to be presented in Parliament by local Members in the hope that action would follow. A system was developed in the 1820s for ensuring that the numerous petitions presented were heard. Using a middleman to collect and evaluate the concerns of the county associations and to bring a digest before Parliament seemed a sensible course. The various associations sent their petitions in the first instance to George Webb Hall, Arthur Young's successor as Secretary at the Board of Agriculture. He became their self-appointed go-

between, with offices in Henderson's Hotel in Whitehall.

At this time, great numbers of petitions, at least 475 in the three years between 1820 and 1823 alone, were presented to parliament from all parts of the country, drawing attention to the many problems caused by high levels of taxation, the relatively low prices for farm products, and the problems caused by the devaluation of the currency as the government struggled to manage the debts it had incurred during the wars in Europe. The petitions also pointed out the failings of the old parish system for maintaining the transport infrastructure and providing support for the increasing numbers of poor people unable to find work in the towns and the countryside (DE3214/7758). There were also concerns about the imbalances caused by taxes on trade, particularly the Corn Laws which placed a tax on imported wheat to maintain the price of crops on the arable farms in England. The Corn Laws, whilst maintaining the profitability of arable farming, were also seen as a way of maintaining the standard of living of wealthy landowners living on rents at the expense of the urban poor. In many urban areas, the blocking of the import of cheaper foreign grain was thought to keep the price of bread artificially high (DE3214/7758; Thompson 1983, 134, 144; Ernle 1961, ch 12, *passim*). The issues were many and complex, but in 1822 Richard Baker's correspondence shows him to be actively involved in trying to bring together like-minded people in Rutland to form an Association to draw up and present to Parliament a petition from the county on the state of agriculture and rural distress. This was to be presented in the Commons by Sir Gerard Noel MP and in the Lords by Lord Exeter who, despite having the centre of his estate outside the county at Burghley, Stamford, nevertheless was the third largest landowner in Rutland. On 12th January 1822 Richard Baker called a meeting at the George Inn in Oakham to form a Rutland Association. Sir Gerard Noel was invited and wrote in his reply on 4th January stating: *'I shall be in Oakham tomorrow and will be glad to join you in forming an association'*, and he goes on: *'I consider it to be very much to your credit that you have advanced in such good time and in so judicious a manner upon this important subject'* (DE3214/7758/1). He also undertook to send the draft petition to William Leake MP, his attorney in London, for his comments. The Rutland Association was thus formed with Sir Gerard Noel in the chair and with Richard Baker acting as secretary. A notice to that effect was subsequently published in the *Stamford Mercury*. Richard Baker was an extremely competent young man and had already given his employer his views on farming on the estate in a seven-page letter in 1820. He was also well thought of by Noel's London advisers and clearly had their support as the Trust's local manager. But his organisation of the Rutland Petition was very much to his credit and would serve his purpose in his ambition to become the Steward on the Rutland estate.

There then followed much correspondence between Richard Baker and his advisers about the content of the petition, particularly with George Webb Hall who, from Henderson's Hotel, was chairman of what he rather grandly called a *'Committee of Management for the Agricultural Association in Great Britain'*, coordinating the petitions on agricultural distress from around the country. A contemporary admirer referred to him as the *'indefatigable Champion of Agricultural reform'*. Similar admirers could purchase a copy of his portrait, framed or unframed, which he made available for sale to his petitioners

(DE3214/7758/1–). William Leake MP wrote a draft for the Rutland Association which he sent to Richard Baker in early February. The draft petition which was printed both in the *Stamford Mercury*, and in London on 28th January 1822 in Evans and Ruffy's *Farmers Journal*, was probably ready for submission early in May. It is transcribed in Appendix 5.

Richard Baker received a letter from Webb Hall concerning spreading the word about possible action in Parliament, exhorting him to raise his contacts in Leicestershire. *'The Leicestershire men MUST be roused'*, he wrote, and, commenting on the Rutland effort: *'never in my experience from the commencement of the Association has any meeting come into the world so matured as yours'*. Although by the 1820s it had clearly become of little account, there had been a joint Leicestershire and Rutland Agricultural Association in about 1812. It was chaired by Gerard Noel and met alternately in Oakham and Melton (Clough 1981, 70, 76–7). It may have had the same political objectives as the Rutland Association in the 1820s, although much discussion also appears to have taken place about whether the Association should run an agricultural show. After the Leicestershire and Rutland Agricultural Association's show in Exton Park in 1812 (*see* p71), the idea of an annual event was never taken any further and the Association had disappeared by the time Baker became steward at Exton. Webb Hall however may have been reminded of its former existence when he tried to involve the Rutland petitioners in raising the interest of former Leicestershire members.

However, the good relationship between Richard Baker and Webb Hall in regard to the Rutland petition floundered and the Rutland Association withdrew from Webb Hall's organisation. Probably because Webb Hall needed funds to maintain his lifestyle in London society, he was likely to name and shame, even publishing in the farming press the names of organisers of any Association that had not paid a subscription to the Committee of Management. The naming of local secretaries in the press caused considerable resentment, not least because progress by his organisation in Parliament had been so slow and Webb Hall so ineffective when questions on the state of the countryside were raised. *The Farmers Magazine* was particularly critical of his efforts and in 1821 its correspondent wrote of Webb Hall's *'utter disregard to accuracy in calculation'* and whose mind *'seems to have received not a single idea more than he had two years ago'*, while *'his rashness and incapacity have injured the cause of petitioners and prevented them from obtaining that relief which, if more moderate claims had been preferred, might probably have been granted'*. Webb Hall's need for money, however, continued to upset his clients who in many cases were well aware of his shortcomings.

Richard Baker, like many other secretaries, was pursued for what Webb Hall thought the Rutland Association owed by way of subscriptions. Fortunately, he was able to account for every penny raised in Rutland and was furious with Webb Hall, threatening him with action in court if he did not retract his accusations. The Rutland Association's membership of Webb Hall's organisation then ceased. Following this, adverse comments about Richard Baker's conduct were printed in the farming press. He wrote to Webb Hall in May 1823 threatening legal action: *'I am quite astonished at the rash and intemperate letter addressed to me by Ruffy and Evans'* (in their *Farmers Journal*) and vigorously defended himself against its accusations.

In 1827, although the Rutland Association had withdrawn from Webb Hall's organisation,

Baker was still hoping to persuade parliament of the need to take action over the state of the countryside. He wrote to William Leake MP to enlist his support. He had a petition ready for the Marquis of Exeter to present in the Lords *'filled with respectable signatures'*. Another petition to be presented by Gerard Noel in the Commons noted the *'increasing distress and loss of property, capital having been reduced by half'*. In Baker's view, the present Government could no longer be supported where returns from agriculture were now so low that, in many parishes, *'more than 10 or 20 agricultural labourers'* had to be employed on the roads or face destitution.

Appointment as Steward on the Exton Estate

By 1822, Richard Baker probably felt he had worked hard for his promotion on the Exton Estate. Gerard Noel might have expressed admiration for the speed with which he had built up his contacts in the pursuit of government help for the difficulties faced in the countryside after 1815, but Sir Gerard's correspondence shows that he had reservations about appointing him as his Steward. *'I have said and written enough to you long ago and many times ... that I should never appoint you my steward to prevent you from having the least expectation of such a thing'* (DE3214/7052).

In 1826, Thomas Dain, the then steward, died at the age of 49 and was buried at Exton on 28th October (Exton Parish Registers, DE3012). Richard Baker had been indicating that he was expecting to take over from him, but Gerard Noel chose William Dollin, a tenant on the estate in Langham, to take the post of Steward. William Dollin was a great letter writer and many of his letters to Sir Gerard on estate business survive in the Exton Archive. Whether Sir Gerard welcomed the almost daily letters from his Steward is not recorded. Dollin was clearly an elderly and rather querulous man, very conscious of his position and expecting his new post to be permanent. He was not wealthy though, and was dismayed at being expected to provide wine for Gerard Noel's dinners and other social occasions, and having to wait for his expenses to be reimbursed. Dollin appears to have disliked Richard Baker, no doubt having a strong suspicion that he was after his job. In June 1827, he wrote to Gerard Noel: *'Mr Baker is most unquestionably a very deceitful man and a dangerous person to confide in'* but that *'it is evident to me that a strong current of favourable feeling towards Mr Baker has possession of your mind so absolutely as to render opposition to it worse than useless'*. *'I know'*, he writes, *'that you have told him that he should never fill the office I hold, but as I know he is very designing and very ambitious and he never abandoned the hope'*.

William Dollin, to his furious resentment, was eventually sacked, leaving his position at Michaelmas 1828. In 1829, he returned the estate books to Sir Gerard after which *'all formal intercourse has ceased'*, but he was upset. Sir Gerard had appointed him as his Steward and expecting to be permanently provided for he had, he said, resigned from his *'former vocation'*. After Dollin's departure, Sir Gerard had ideas of managing as his own Steward but Richard Baker was already corresponding regularly with the manager of his Trust, the attorney William Leake, and the Trust's solicitor, John William Bury. In 1828, he achieved his ambition and was appointed Steward to Sir Gerard Noel. So began a period of consolidation and improvement on the Exton Estate which lasted until Baker's death in 1861.

3 – Exton Estate Steward 1828 to 1861

Richard Westbrook Baker took on the Stewardship of Sir Gerard Noel's Exton estate in 1828. Although he had expected to be appointed eighteen months earlier, following the death of Thomas Dain, it had been denied him by the appointment of William Dollin.

The Noel Estate in Rutland

The Noel estate in and around Rutland during Baker's time amounted to approximately 15,000 acres and comprised the villages of Exton, Horn, Cottesmore and Barrow as the main nucleus around Exton Hall and Park, with the populous and prosperous village of Langham to the west. Elsewhere in the county were the villages of Ridlington, Brooke and Braunston, property in Uppingham, part of Beaumont Chase, and land in Leighfield, Oakham (including Flitteris) and Barleythorpe. It also included property in Market Overton, Manton and Bisbrooke, as well as Launde and Pickwell, both just over the border with Leicestershire, Swayfield just over the county boundary in Lincolnshire, and Southorpe to the south of Stamford, now in Cambridgeshire. This relatively compact estate, much of which could be covered in a day on horseback, was almost entirely agricultural: *'there are no manufactures of any import in Rutland which attributes solely to the want of water and fuel, and not to any deficiency of inclination, of spirit or of capital'* wrote J N Brewer in 1813 (Matthews 1978, 81), and in 1828 its income of £23,716 was derived mainly from rents.

It was customary for the family of its principal holder at the time to live locally on the northern part of the estate, either in Exton Hall or in Catnose Lodge in Oakham. Gerard Noel who, as a young man, often spent time in Oakham where he built the magnificent Riding School was, after his succession to the Exton estate on the death of his uncle, firmly attached to Exton Hall. In 1816, when it seemed possible that at the very least the life interest in Exton Hall and its estate would have to be sold to the Duke of Wellington, he refused even to contemplate the plan put forward by his son Charles that he should move to the family's estate at Teston in Kent. The correspondence on this subject became increasingly heated but Gerard refused to give up Exton and for the remaining years of his life he lived where he had established his house and estate as the centre of his influence in the county (DE3214/4281, 4284; Noel 2004, 116). When Richard Baker came on the scene the crisis over Exton Hall and the estate had been solved by Sir Gerard's London lawyers. As noted in Chapter 2, in November 1816 they had set up a Trust for the repayment of his debts. In the matter of Sir Gerard's finances, Baker's role was subordinate to that of the Trust and its managers. However, he had a direct relationship with Sir Gerard at a local level and communicated with him regularly on estate business. They appeared, on the surface at least, to share many of the aims and objectives in local society, particularly where agricultural

improvement was concerned and in their regard for the state of the poor.

In the early nineteenth century becoming Agent or Steward on a particular estate, even if one had had a relationship with the owner since childhood, would probably have seemed a risky career path to take (Thompson 1963, 152–3, 158). There was no specific training available for such a role and in the normal way one might have expected Richard Baker to have undergone a period of apprenticeship. This might have included some experience of the nature of rural society, information on trade protection, and knowledge of the political context in which legislation on rural matters was discussed in this period. He might need to learn appropriate accounting methods and how to evaluate tenants, become familiar with the new agricultural machinery increasingly employed to raise productivity on farms, and get to know the necessary communications systems, particularly the roads, waterways and later the railways of the area. Baker seems to have had a bright enquiring mind and clearly managed to pick up the day-to-day knowledge he required very quickly. Sir Gerard probably selected him originally for his aptitude and a belief that he would do well, although occasionally, in his early years on the estate, he had claimed to be doubtful about his suitability as Steward (DE3214/7052/1).

The account of the Exton Hall fire in 1810 mentions a suite of rooms to accommodate a land agent and his office in the Hall (see Appendix 3). Richard Baker may have lived there for a time as some of his early correspondence is addressed from Exton Hall.

Farming Practice on the Exton Estate

In the early 1820s, whilst living in Market Overton, Richard Baker sent a detailed seven-page letter to his employer on the defects as he saw them of farming methods on the Exton estate. *'No man who knows what good farming is can say that Rutland is well cultivated'*, he wrote (DE3214/7036). This was also the opinion of Layton Cooke who had been appointed in 1824 by Noel's trustees to value and assess the estate. His report to the trustees on, in his opinion, the *'most magnificent estate in the kingdom by virtue of the superior quality of the soil and the Parliamentary influence attached'* (DE3214/6892) nevertheless found much to discourage him in the lack of progress with drainage, poor livestock management, particularly the lack of sheep on arable farms, and the changes which farmers had failed to adopt to accommodate them. There was a corresponding lack of attention to manures and their value. He noted also the poor maintenance of buildings and the continued use of old farmhouses and farm buildings in the villages, where, after enclosure, he expected to find new farms with their buildings nearer the centres of the new allocations of land brought about by the redistribution of the common fields. He noted other *'signs of the neglect and mismanagement'* on the estate and *'widespread general apathy'*. Some of this echoed the earlier *Reports to the Board of Agriculture* by Crutchley in 1794 and Parkinson in 1808, who also found a good deal to worry them in the way that Rutland was farmed, particularly the state of livestock keeping, the resulting poor quality of manures and the lack of alternative fertiliser use. In such circumstances, little could be done to raise rents and increase the income from the Rutland estates. In the early nineteenth century farming was virtually the only source of

wealth for country estates like Exton and, after the collapse of Sir Gerard Noel's banking interests and the sale of many of his properties, his rents provided most of the remaining income.

In 1828, when Richard Baker was appointed Steward, the Rutland estate needed to change quickly to improve the returns from agriculture, setting him the challenge he had clearly anticipated when he reviewed the state of farming in the area. Viewing the arable farming, he wrote: *'The ploughland, in most parts of Rutland has the appearance of being rooted over by some strong nosed Irish sows'*. He also noted the *'immense high hedges'* around ploughed fields leading to margins of four to six yards in width left uncultivated, and remarked that the poor crops fetched too little by way of return to make the employment of labour possible (DE3214/7030/1). Like Parkinson, Baker was scathing about the use of horse power on farms. Teams of inferior animals, four or five horses in length, were being used where he believed one pair of horses *'properly harnessed would do more work than four'*. He was also disappointed with the quality of the horses available locally. Parkinson (1808, 136–40) had also noted in 1808 that *'the horses which are bred in this county are the most unprofitable sort I ever saw for sale'*. Perhaps this is the reason why Baker, in the 1830s, eventually made 'Ploughman' and 'Ploughboy', two good quality Suffolk Punch stallions, available to the draught mares of local farmers to improve the quality of their working horses. The stallions could be viewed at his farm in Cottesmore and, for a small fee, would be walked to Rutland farms during the breeding season to serve the mares owned by tenant farmers. This, he believed, would gradually improve the quality of the horses used for farm work (DE3214/7776). He was disappointed by the attitude to livestock improvement on estate farms when a farmer purporting to be an *'improver'* kept a *'bad ugly mongrel bull'*. His own enthusiasm for breeding improved pedigree livestock was evident in his comment, *'let us endeavour to get into the breed of these shorthorns'*. He believed that their ability to mature quickly gave the farmer an opportunity to sell at one year old when *'the price would be good whether sold to a butcher or for breeding'*. He also noted the usefulness and value of sheep kept on arable farms, where, for winter keep, turnips and seed grass could be used. Baker would have known from Parkinson of the local use of the Norfolk system as a means to establish mixed farms, even in mainly arable areas. The resulting five-course rotation, which included fodder crops grown with the usual wheat, barley, peas and beans, provided the farmer with an increase in livestock, with marketable animals to improve his income and, by using clover leys and swedes or turnips as fodder crops, coupled with the manures from the stock, improved productivity from his arable fields. It was very much to the credit of Sir Gerard Noel's new Steward, who had both the interest and the skill to raise standards of farming, that the estate survived Noel's near bankruptcy in 1817 and, at his death in 1838, the estate was not insolvent as some believed. There was even a small surplus for his eldest son and heir, Charles, Lord Barham, to inherit.

The Noel Estate in Gloucestershire

Although, to begin with, Richard Baker had no responsibility for the Gloucestershire estate

at Chipping Campden, he will have been aware of the state of things in the area. In the 1820s, that estate was in the hands of Lord Barham, and he appointed John Hickman as his own Steward there. On both the Exton and Campden estates the tenants were pleading for a reduction in rents as a result of the lower prices for their crops and the agricultural depression which followed the war in Europe. Although there are well documented reductions in rents on several English estates in the 1820s (Thompson 1963, 134–5), and indeed the surveyor Layton Cooke had said a reduction after the high rents charged in the profitable years of the European Wars would be necessary (DE3214/7062). Sir Gerard Noel's Trustees now claimed it would bankrupt the Exton Estate Trust if even a 10% reduction were agreed (DE3214/7057). At Chipping Campden, however, there seems to have been more flexibility and Lord Barham did agree to some rent reductions where a good case was put forward.

The Historic Connection between Exton and Campden

Historically, the connection between the Noels' estates in Gloucestershire and Rutland goes back to the early seventeenth century. In 1609, Baptist Hicks, a wealthy London mercer who is thought to have originated from a family in north-east Gloucestershire, purchased a country estate centred on the manor of Chipping Campden. He decided to set the seal on his new country estate by building a magnificent house, set on the rising ground near the parish church. It was designed in the Jacobean style with the most up-to-date features of the best houses of the period. He was knighted in 1603, created Baron Hicks of Ilmington in 1620 and Viscount Campden in 1628. Unfortunately, during the Civil War, his great house was razed to the ground and very little of it survives.

Baptist Hicks accumulated property throughout most of his life, and the Exton estate in Rutland came as a result of the marriage of his eldest daughter, Juliana, to Edward Noel in 1605. Edward held a number of manors in Rutland, including Brooke where he had his manor house, and parts of Leicestershire. Having provided Juliana with a suitable dowry, Baptist added to his son-in-law's estate in Rutland by buying the manors of Exton, Horn and Whitwell from Lord Harington. When Baptist died in 1629 there was no male heir and his titles were remaindered to descend in the female line. His title of Viscount Campden passed to his son-in-law, Edward Noel, in the right of his wife. The Noels continued to live on their estates in Rutland using the Elizabethan house at Exton, built by the Haringtons, as their home, and the house and the park became the centre of their influence. In recognition of the family's long-standing loyalty to the Royalist cause Edward Noel was created Earl of Gainsborough in 1682.

The size of the Chipping Campden estate in the days of Sir Gerard Noel was around 3,000 acres, and it brought in an income of about £6,000 for Charles, Lord Barham, a relatively small income compared to the Exton estate (Noel 2004, 137).

With no prestigious house in Chipping Campden after the Civil War, the Noels maintained their principal seat at Exton Hall in Rutland, but the two estates each had their own steward. Although Exton was much loved by Gerard and his family, financial

problems, particularly on such a large but basically entirely agricultural estate, were inescapable, particularly after 1815 when prices for agricultural products dropped. This left many farmers unable to pay their rents, and their landlords finding difficulty in paying their taxes whilst at the same time watching the capital value of their properties fall. Richard Baker, as discussed above, worked in the aftermath of Gerard Noel's near bankruptcy in 1816 and the subsequent formation of his Trust, which was dedicated to paying his debts from the income from his estates. There were no quick profits to be made for either estate from coalmines, mineral deposits or water power to drive machinery; ironstone production did eventually benefit the Exton estate, but not until the early twentieth century. Consequently, the only way of increasing the estate's income was to improve the productivity of farms and to increase rents.

The Exton Estate Trust and William Leake

Sir Gerard Noel's Trustees, needing to pay off his debts by raising capital through selling property, found they could only raise money on the entailed estates at Chipping Campden and Exton by selling a life interest. In 1816, as we have seen, the Duke of Wellington was expressing an interest in acquiring the life interest in the Exton Estate, particularly if he could persuade Gerard's heir, Charles, Lord Barham, to extend the life interest for another generation (DE3214/4281, 4284; Noel 2004, 116). At the eleventh hour the formation of Sir Gerard's Trust saved Exton from being sold to Wellington (*ibid*, 116–7). The situation could have been difficult, particularly for Richard Baker in the 1820s, given Sir Gerard's increasingly erratic behaviour and his strong views which were conveyed in his many letters in an almost illegible hand. However, the regular correspondence between them in the Exton Archive illustrates Richard Baker's grasp of his master's affairs.

A more difficult problem might have arisen with the man charged by the Trust with managing the income from Sir Gerard's estates. This was William Leake, Alexander Davison's friend and the attorney for his and Sir Gerard's banking interests (*see* pp17–18). When the Trust was set up in November 1816 by the '*Deed of arrangement for the affairs of Sir Gerard Noel*' (DE3214/205/1–2), William Leake was appointed as the Receiver, Steward and Agent, with an annual salary. He was responsible for managing the Trust estates, collecting the rents and profits, and paying Sir Gerard his annual allowance. Sir Gerard also kept the advowsons (the right of appointment to church livings) and the sporting rights on the estate. From the beginning Richard Baker recognised that it was not local people like his predecessors Thomas Dain and William Dollin that he needed as friends, but the London managers of Sir Gerard's affairs. He seems to have enjoyed good relationships with both William Leake and Sir Gerard's solicitor, John William Bury. Leake was in close touch with Baker over the Rutland Petition to Parliament sent to Webb Hall for inclusion in Parliamentary business in 1822 and had corresponded regularly with him on estate business from the time he entered Sir Gerard's employ. Leake may well have been behind Baker's elevation to Steward in 1828 when, in Baker's own words, '*my duties with the estate were further increased*', and Sir Gerard was telling William Dollin that he would manage his estate himself

and be his own steward. In 1829, as a mark of William Leake's friendship, Richard Baker's family, now living in the Steward's house in Cottesmore, received a turbot, a lobster and Madeira wine for Christmas day. Baker had earlier sent John Bury, Sir Gerard's solicitor, a suckling pig and two hares. Bury's return gift is not recorded but there is a letter in the Exton Archive thanking Baker for the hares (DE3214/7057).

Baker's Other Roles in Public Life

As the Steward or land agent of a well-known and sizeable landed estate, like other estate managers in this period Richard Baker held an important role in the local community. His social position was enhanced as Sir Gerard's representative, and he had a part to play in local politics. He was an important link between the estate and its tenants and negotiated their rents. In addition to this he was farming in his own right on a substantial block of Exton estate land in Cottesmore, Exton and Barrow. He recognised Sir Gerard Noel as a member of the aristocracy and always treated him with due deference, but he was entitled to style himself a gentleman and circulated among the local gentry and the senior tenants rather than the smaller farmers on the estate.

Apart from the Steward's work in attempting to bring about an increase in productivity on the farms, like his predecessors Richard Baker also supported Sir Gerard's interest in his parliamentary seat as his political agent. This included arranging rallies at election time, and organising the entertainments after successful campaigns (Clark 1993, 122–3).

Gerard Noel had initially been promoted by his wife's family to become a Member of Parliament when, in 1784, he succeeded his uncle, Sir Horace Mann, as MP for the local Kent constituency of Maidstone (Noel 2004, 77–8). In 1788 another uncle, Tom Noel, died, thus leaving a vacancy for one of the two Shire members for Rutland. Gerard Noel was elected in his place and represented Rutland until his death in 1838, apart from the parliaments of 1808 and 1812 when his son, Charles Noel, was the representative.

In 1814, Thomas Dain, the Exton Steward, and John Hickman, the Chipping Campden Steward, were involved in a scheme to support Gerard Noel in his bid to remain as one of the two MPs for Rutland. Dain provided information to Hickman about twenty-four acres of freehold land in Whissendine to be sold at auction on 13th May 1814 (DE3214/6983). Although the Campden estate was well outside the Rutland constituency, the people of this distant part of the Noel estate still wanted to become involved with the parliamentary activity in which the family was engaged. They saw the acquisition of voting rights in Rutland as a means of supporting Gerard Noel and this, we now know, led to the unexpected distribution of small freehold pieces of land belonging to Campden residents.

The land in Whissendine belonged to the George Inn and it is located beside the Oakham to Melton road to the west of the village. Dain paid £1,145 for it on behalf of Sir Gerard Noel. His surveyor, a Mr Wilson of Empingham, having established the land as actually being 25 acres and 3 perches, laid it out in sixteen plots, fourteen of which were 1½ acres (1 acre 2 roods) and two of approximately 2 acres, all having road frontage, for a list of clients from Chipping Campden (DE3214/6983). This list only includes fifteen names, suggesting that the



Fig. 17. Plan of freehold land at Whissendine purchased in 1814 and divided into 16 small plots, showing how it was occupied in 1866 (DE3214/4590/1).



Fig. 18. Ridge and furrow surviving in the area of the Whissendine freehold plots, showing their approximate layout (RCM, RAF aerial survey 1947, sortie 2, image 2152).

sixteenth plot was unsold. The transfer of the freeholds was completed by Mr Burley, a solicitor in London, and the list of Campden names was sent to the 'Commissioners', presumably for registration for voting rights.

In the 1850s an account of the land held by the Exton Estate was drawn up in connection with the administration of Sir Gerard Noel's will following his death in 1838. It clearly shows that the land accounted for in Whissendine was for 'votes purchased' and valued at £150 (DE3214/4590/1). There are also letters in 1860 between Richard Westbrook Baker and James Keen, his Campden counterpart, saying that Baker had collected the rents from the Whissendine plots and was sending them for Keen to distribute to owners resident in Campden: 'Enclosed is a cheque to pay you 14 Freehold rents in the Whissendine old Field £61' (DE3214/274/3a) – some £4 6s 8d each. Baker says that he himself paid the fifteenth rent

direct to Henry Hollis, a Rutland owner, and again the sixteenth plot is not accounted for. We may suppose that the rent would be for grassland which would produce a small income if let annually to local graziers; it is not known if the land, where medieval ridge and furrow survived at least into the mid-twentieth century, comprised any individual fields at this time (fig. 18).

These so-called Whissendine freeholds are shown on a map of 1866 in the Exton estate archives (DE3214/4590/1) (fig. 17). Although some 52 years after they were established, it shows the sixteen plots as originally laid out and that all were now allocated. It also shows that a Wm Rimell probably now owned, or at least managed, seven of them. The Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map (Rutland sheet IV.8) shows one individual plot of 1.351 acres (= 1a 1r 16p) with a line of six terraced houses across its frontage (fig. 19).



Fig. 19. Terraced houses subsequently built on one of the Whissendine plots (Robert Ovens).

Together, the correspondence between Dain and Hickman in 1814 and the 1850s Whissendine survey enable us to solve the question posed by Clough (2010, 32–5) as to why a group of people from Chipping Campden and elsewhere are shown in the *Return of Owners of Land 1873* as owning small plots of land of almost identical size in Rutland. This subsequent research (Doe 2017, 4–6) clearly indicates that these plots were indeed set up for votes enabling Campden people to support Gerard Noel as the Rutland representative in Parliament, and confirms Clough's supposition that they must have been established before 1820.

In his discussion of his 'Chipping Campden Mystery', Clough was able to link eight or nine of this group, including William Rimell, to the plots in Whissendine. However, of the 27 plots listed, 26 were 1 acre 13 or 14 perches in area, somewhat smaller than the original plot size of 1 acre 2 roods, although Clough was able to find references in wills to some freehold parcels of that size. The stated total area of 29¼ acres is also larger. It is possible, though unlikely, that some are included by coincidence and have no relationship to the Chipping Campden group; it is also possible that, given that there are errors in the data originally

assembled for the 1873 Return, there are some duplicate entries, which would affect the overall area. The freeholds were still in existence in 1873, although the part they played in elections was probably relatively minor and the personnel had changed substantially since 1814. Further research may clarify the descent of the freeholds through the nineteenth century and help to explain the discrepancies noted above.

Votes created by the allotting of property to a person to give him the status of an elector were known as faggot votes. Other candidates used this system to increase their votes in elections or, if not able procure freeholds, they supplied leases, the terms of which enabled voting rights to be claimed. For example, the Heathcotes of Normanton also had freeholds in Langham for the same purpose (*Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 29th Oct 1841, 2). The system was exposed by the press after the 1841 election when the cry of 'Faggot votes' was heard from the crowd as the results of the election were announced (*SM* 16th July 1841, 2). Faggot voting was abolished by the Representation of the People Act in 1884, but previously enrolled faggot voters could retain their vote until death.

Richard Baker, who travelled regularly throughout the county on horseback, and between Cottesmore and London probably by coach, was ready to support Sir Gerard's interests in improving communications in Rutland. As we have seen Sir Gerard held a number of shares in the Oakham Canal Company and in the 1820s regularly chaired meetings of the Oakham Committee (*see* pp25–6).



Fig. 20. The Cottesmore toll house (Jack Hart Collection, RCM 2002.6.0963).

The turnpike road through Cottesmore was another of Richard Baker's interests. He chaired its Trust in the 1850s when it decided to spend £400 on the eighteen-mile length of the turnpike from Stamford to Oakham, and via Burley to Cottesmore where there were tollbars (fig. 20), and thence via Greetham to the Great North Road. This turnpike road was built under an Act of 1794, with a continuation passed in 1817 (Cossons 2003, 63). The Trust successfully managed the road and was said to be out of debt, with the initial investment paid off, by 1867.

The Rutland Steward and Sir Gerard Noel's Trust

In the case of the Noel estates the role of the Steward in the administration of the estates, as we have seen, was divided. On the one hand were the Trustees and their manager William Leake. On the other was Richard Baker in the role of the local Steward. The local Steward may usually have communicated his ideas for agricultural improvement, for example, to his London colleagues but it was he who had to be able to run the estate to provide the necessary financial return. In Richard Baker's case, it seems, many detailed decisions were discussed first with Sir Gerard. Only the most complicated, and those involving financial matters, were usually communicated to William Leake. Leake however seems to have taken a keen interest in Sir Gerard's Rutland estate, possibly because he enjoyed leaving London on occasions for a day in the country and often visited on the annual rent days where he met tenants face to face, informing Baker of his plans and apologising to him if he was delayed.

The correspondence between Sir Gerard and Baker and Leake in the 1820s shows that tenants were aware of Leake's role and could contact him direct if they were in difficulty. For example, James Burgess, the tenant of the 400 acre Park Farm in Ridlington, was mentioned in Layton Cooke's report in 1824 as an exemplary tenant with well-farmed crops and good livestock. He wrote direct to Leake in London in June 1830 (DE3214/7062). Although he had been farming at Park Farm on his own account for nine years, for six of those he had been unable to pay his rent. No one, he says '*pays their rent more cheerfully than I do*' but '*the last three or four years had been quite ruinous*' with labour to pay as well as national taxes and local levies. Leake was impressed and sympathetic. It would have confirmed to him the problems farmers faced during the agricultural depression, leading in the 1820s to the county petitions to Parliament as well as requests to him as Sir Gerard's Trustee to consider a reduction in rent. He was aware of James Burgess's general good conduct as one of Sir Gerard Noel's principal tenants and sent a note to Richard Baker asking '*what can be done for this poor man*'.

The question of rent reduction came up regularly. As Sir Gerard was often absent from the county, travelling to London or visiting other parts of his estates, it fell to Richard Baker to maintain and, if possible, advance Sir Gerard's standing in Rutland society, and to make sure that his standard of living was upheld as far as possible. He understood the views of William Leake whilst emphasising the fragile nature of Sir Gerard's financial affairs and his reluctance to accept any decrease in rents. In a letter of 1822 to Webb Hall in connection with the Petition to Parliament from the Rutland Association, Richard Baker confirmed that he was against the suggestion, put forward by Webb Hall, that landlords should reduce distress among tenant farmers by reducing rents. He claimed this could not be done '*without rendering the leading landowners themselves of being unable to bear their share of public burdens and to maintain establishments corresponding with the sphere they occupy in society*' (DE3214/5069).

It also fell to estate Stewards, both at Exton and elsewhere (Thompson 1963, 184–5), to try and deal with the social problems of rural society and to exert an element of social control on behalf of the estate, a topic covered in more detail in Chapter 6. Richard Baker was well aware of the potential for serious social problems to erupt on an estate where there was not enough work to employ the available labour. Layton Cooke had cited the example of Brooke where

1500 acres were being farmed but only four labourers were employed (DE3214/6892). The problem of poverty among the labouring classes was a major issue on most agricultural estates after 1815. This was particularly so on farms with cold clay land where wheat was the main cereal crop. Solutions were found in a variety of ways. On the Noel estates in Rutland and Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire the Stewards brought in a system of Spade Allotments to enable poor families to grow some of their own food on their own small allotments. The system was a popular and relatively cheap way of reconnecting cottagers with the land. Richard Baker also set up a much-needed Friendly Society in 1830, with a modest subscription, to provide poor families with some kind of insurance against downturns in fortune.

Travel in Rutland in the 1830s

As Steward on the Exton estate Richard Baker worked long days, most of which were probably spent on horseback. He did eventually acquire a carriage, but not until about 1840, and he was unlikely to have used it on estate business. The problems of travel were highlighted by the fate of Thomas Dain. Dain, who was Noel's agent until he died in October 1826, wrote to John Hickman, his counterpart in Chipping Campden, that he had been ill and had lost the use of his legs. He nevertheless continued with his work on the Exton estate, perhaps in a horse-drawn vehicle rather than on horseback, and in 1824 travelled to Campden to meet Hickman, a long journey for a sick man. His physical state was commented on by Layton Cooke in that year: in a letter to William Leake about Dain, who had not cooperated with Cooke's survey, he observes '*his mental faculties are strong but his bodily infirmities prevent many duties*' (DE3214/505/1).

Leases and Tenancies

As Steward Richard Baker had to manage the tenants on behalf of the landlord, showing knowledge of and interest in their farming activities, and produce accounts to show in detail whether or not the returns met the needs of the Trust. On the Noel estates, the Steward was involved discussions on tenancies and rents, held in general terms with both Sir Gerard and his Trustees. In matters like rents and tenancies, both Thomas Dain and Richard Baker appear to have worked closely with William Leake to maximise the returns from the farms on the estate, but Baker was unwilling to convert the annual tenancies to leases which Layton Cooke and most farming commentator of his day favoured.

Some of the problems identified by Cooke, the dilapidated buildings and lack of drainage for example, may have been partly the result of widespread confusion about questions over tenancies and the financing of improvements. Cooke clearly saw the value of leases as the means to clarify who shared the responsibilities for capital improvements, for new buildings, and drainage and fencing for example and whether such schemes should be paid for by the landlord or the tenant. Leases proposed by the estate seem to have been viewed with suspicion by Exton tenants, as price fluctuations, particularly in the grain market, could leave them with inadequate returns to cover their outgoings, including rents. On the other hand, the failure to convert to leases meant that little encouragement could be given to

tenants to invest in long-term projects on their farms, but it was not unusual. Thompson (1963, 230–1) has shown that on many other English estates a reversion to annual tenancies was the norm at the end of the war years (DE3214/6892/1).

On the Exton estate, Thomas Dain had maintained that annual tenancies allowed tenants to see themselves as part of their landlord's family, and in useful ways they competed with each other so that improvements took place in the spirit of competition and emulation. Richard Baker, who made no move to impose leases on tenants on the Exton estate, apparently understood this and appeared to favour annual tenancies. He was however more active in supporting the advantages of the system and was keen at every stage to support competition and improvements with prizes.

During a period of agricultural improvement in the 1830s, it was Richard Baker who brought reports of progress in this field to the attention of his employer from whom he obtained support for any initiative he might feel necessary, thus often incidentally enhancing Sir Gerard's reputation in the process. Rather than using leases to compel farmers to undertake improvements, Baker favoured the use of examples of good practice to spread information in the farming community on the Exton estate, and this involved the setting up of Ploughing Meetings and Agricultural Shows. Both of these are dealt with in more detail in later chapters. In 1838, he chaired the inaugural meeting of a Farmers and Graziers club at the George in Oakham. Its purpose was to hold meetings to stimulate discussions among members and to provide a library. Its headquarters in Oakham were purpose-built in 1839 and the building survives today as the Victoria Hall. With all this new emphasis on farm improvement in Rutland, Sir Gerard invariably found himself involved, taking the chair at meetings, providing prizes and generally making himself a visible presence at many farming events.

The Steward's House in Cottesmore

When Richard Westbrook Baker was appointed Steward to the Exton estate in 1828 he moved his family from their home at the Lodge, Market Overton, to the house in Cottesmore previously occupied by Thomas Dain. This house, much enlarged and improved by Baker, is now known as Cottesmore Grange (figs. 21–23). There is no house shown on the site of Cottesmore Grange on the Enclosure Award map of 1807 and it seems likely that the house the Bakers moved into had been recently built. Dain was living here when the survey of Gerard Noel's Rutland estate was in hand under Layton Cooke in 1824/5. He describes Dain's house as '*a neat residence*', but '*irregularities in front of the house must be levelled before it can be considered complete*', suggesting that the house was relatively new and the garden was still in the process of being laid out. The irregularities he mentions may be a reference to the large stone pit or quarry a short distance to the south of the house which survives today. Dain's house may survive in part as the rear portion of the present house, but it was probably no more than an ordinary village farmhouse. There is a date stone of 1811 on the Victorian front wing of Cottesmore Grange, perhaps indicating when the original house was built.

On taking over the Steward's farm in Cottesmore, Richard Baker began by rebuilding the



Fig. 21. Sir Gerard Noel's land in Cottesmore in 1807, the future site of Cottesmore Grange (map of the parish of Cottesmore with Barrow, 1807, Exton Hall).

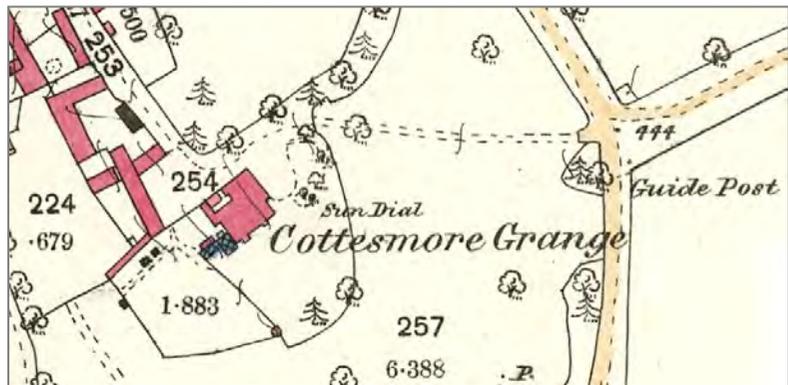


Fig. 22. Cottesmore Grange in 1885 (Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map).



Fig. 23. Left: The south-east elevation of Cottesmore Grange. Right: The north-east elevation: the second window from the right is the former office entrance (photographs: author 2012).

barns. There was, though, a haystack in the yard belonging to a coal trader on the canal, allowed to remain there by Dain's widow. The owner had been repeatedly asked to move it but had refused. In the end, after three years of argument, Richard Baker disposed of the now rotten hay and was promptly accused of theft by the owner. The matter had to be settled in court (DE3214/7424/1-2).

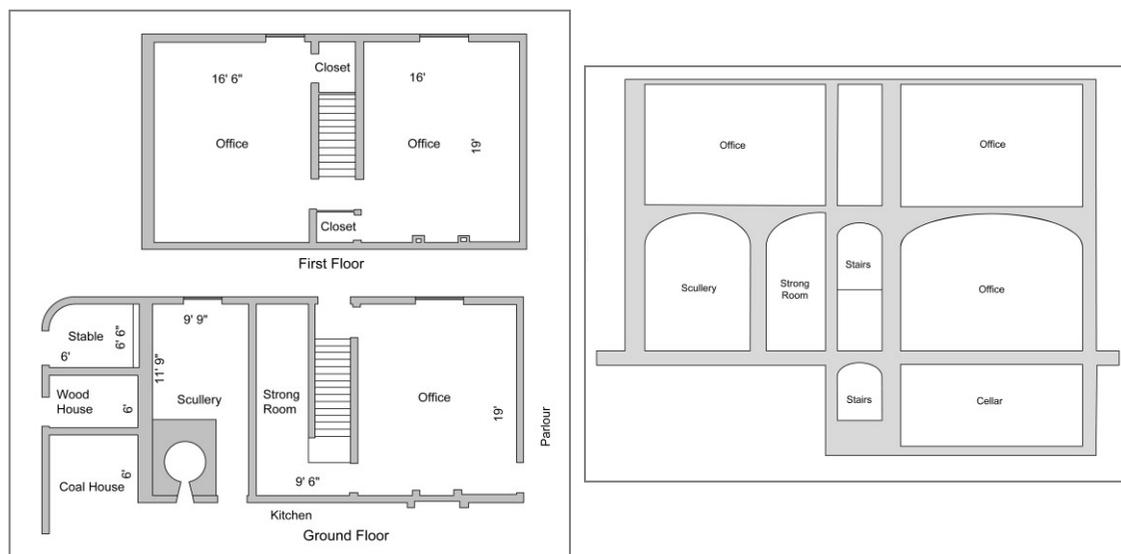


Fig. 24. Plan (left) and section showing the barrelled ceilings (right) of the new offices for Richard Westbrook Baker at his house in Cottesmore (Robert Ovens).

Baker's first improvement to the house was to build a new office to house the Exton Estate records in 1830. This was a two-roomed, two-storey building and was attached to the main house on its east side. It had an external door from the driveway for use by tenants and other visitors on estate business, and an internal door with access to the rest of the house. Because many of the estate records had been destroyed during the fire at Exton Hall in 1810, this new office was built to be fireproof, with a stone staircase to the upper floor and brick vaulted ceilings to the ground floor and basement (fig. 24). Ten years later Richard Baker, by now well established as agent to the Noels and with an important role to play both locally and among like-minded agricultural improvers from wider afield, extended the house again, building the spacious and impressive south wing. From the posters advertising the sale of the Baker's household effects in December 1863 (DE3214/7454), we know the new south wing of the house contained an entrance hall, drawing, dining and breakfast rooms, with a kitchen and laundry to the rear. The main rooms faced south onto the garden, and recent research, including dendrochronology, dates the wing to 1838 to 1840 (Cottesmore Hist & Archaeol Group 2016, 42-3).

Family connections

In 1828, when they moved to Cottesmore, Richard Baker's family consisted of his wife Ann,

his son Richard and his daughter Ann Caroline. Sarah Jane, his second daughter, was born there, in 1831, as were his two younger sons, William Henry in August 1832, and Edward George in 1836 (*see* the family tree, fig. 2).

Richard Baker's eldest son, Richard, died of scarlet fever at his grandmother's house (the Riding House) in Oakham on 22nd October 1833 (SM 25th Oct 1833, 3; DE3214/7077/4). There is a memorial tablet to him in Cottesmore church:

**TO THE MEMORY OF
RICHARD BAKER
ELDEST SON OF
RICHARD WESTBROOK BAKER AND ANN BAKER
DIED OCT^R 22ND 1833
AGED 8 YEARS**

Ann Caroline married John Startin, a merchant with the East India Company, in Cottesmore church in 1850 and moved away from home. Sarah Jane married Robert Charles Ransome in Cottesmore Church in 1854. He was the son of Robert Ransome, whose company in Ipswich manufactured agricultural machinery, and who was one of Richard Westbrook's oldest friends, often visiting Rutland to support events like ploughing meetings and agricultural shows. He was instrumental in manufacturing Baker's invention, the Rutland Plough, in his iron foundry in Ipswich in the 1830s. Sarah Jane died in 1856, but she and Robert Charles had a daughter, also baptised Sarah Jane, in 1855.

Richard Baker sent his two younger sons to Rugby School, William Henry in August 1846 and Edward George in August 1849. This was shortly after the retirement of the renowned Dr Arnold who set the standard for improvements in boys' public school education with a more up-to-date curriculum and better teaching during his headship from 1828 to 1842 (Kitson Clark 2013, 268–9). It was an interesting choice of school for the children from a rural background in Rutland and bypassed the local grammar schools at Oakham, Uppingham and Stamford, possibly no longer considered relevant for children destined for employment in business (*see* pp10–11). It was an indication of their father's status as a steward on an important landed estate and of his ability to find the funds to pay the fees that they went to what was considered by contemporaries to be an outstanding school.

William Henry was intended to follow his father into estate management and, before his father's death, was trained by him on the Exton estate. In 1850 Richard Westbrook believed that, in view of the unevenness of the rents, a new valuation was overdue and an adjustment of the rents was '*absolutely necessary*'. William Henry, a '*valuer and surveyor*', was entrusted with the task of reviewing the capabilities of the tenants and completing a terrier of the estate in the same form as that of his father in 1845. He was asked to have an opinion on the tenants' management of their farms, '*whether very good or very bad*' (DE3214/7186). There are several accounts in the archive of his ratings of the estate farmers who were either first or second class tenants with an annual assessment of the best tenant. He was instructed to keep in mind the price of wheat, barley and oats with the intention of standardising the rents.

He then moved to Chipping Campden to be the new Steward on the Gloucestershire

estates. There he married the niece of James Keene, his predecessor, and took on his father-in-law John Keen[e]'s farm at Westington (Doe 2011, 10–11). They had four children before Elizabeth died in May 1863. In Campden, William Henry appeared to be a great success both personally and professionally. Back in Rutland however his debts had mounted and the properties he had inherited from his father in 1861 in Exton and elsewhere were heavily mortgaged. He was declared bankrupt at the Court of Bankruptcy, Basinghall Street, London, in 1866, with his occupation given as 'lime burner' of 'Cottesmore, Rutlandshire' (*London Evening Standard*, 21st March 1866, 3). It has not been possible to establish the reason for his bankruptcy, but it was probably due to his inability to finance his mortgage payments. The Exton properties were sold to the Earl of Gainsborough for £5,500 and when other debts secured on his property had been paid the Receiver was left with £1,100. The Receiver in his bankruptcy was John Cave from Brambridge near Winchester. Monica Farquharson Cave, John Cave's daughter, met the newly widowed William Henry and, despite his impending bankruptcy, they were married at Twyford, Hampshire, on 21st January 1864. On Census night in 1871 they were living in Broadwater, Sussex. William Henry is listed in 1873 as owning 76a 1r 7p in Rutland and described as of 'Hastings' (Clough 2010, 38). He died in 1874, aged 42, and his death is recorded as being in the Hastings Registration District (Doe 2011, 10).

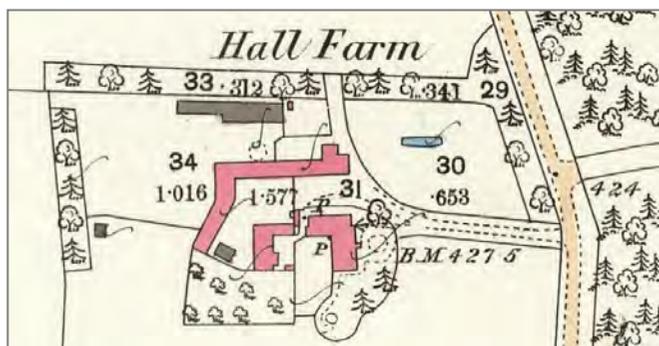


Fig. 25. Hall Farm, Exton, in 1885 (*Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map*).

In 1828, true to his determination to lead by example, Richard Baker had the foresight to take on the lease of Hall Farm, Exton, located on the main road between Cottesmore and Exton. With its land adjoining Cottesmore Grange at its northern end, he now had the ideal location on which to set up his Ploughing Meetings. It had level ground with good soil for the ploughing competition and other field demonstrations, his own house nearby in which to provide hospitality to entertain his friends and neighbours, and buildings in the farmyard at Hall Farm or Cottesmore Grange available to display his improved cattle, sheep and horses. Ploughing Meetings are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. There is a plan of Hall Farm in the Exton archive (DE3214/741 & 7456) (fig. 25).

4 – Improvements in the Management of Land

On the Exton estate, as elsewhere in the country, the decade 1830 to 1840 was significant for the way in which new markets for farm products were developed and for the scale of the improvements in farming techniques designed to increase productivity. By the time Queen Victoria had succeeded to the throne in 1837, Britain was already experiencing a marked increase in population. It had increased from just below 11 million in 1801 to 20.9 million in 1851.

Because of this and the migration of many people from the countryside into the towns, the need to produce sufficient food and distribute it successfully became a major issue. With it came the opportunity to increase farm profits from the new markets and, on an estate like Exton, where rents on farms were the major source of income, improvement in agricultural production was a worthwhile goal for landlord and tenant alike. On many estates, the question of who was to pay for improvements to farms was settled by issuing leases to clarify areas of financial responsibility between landlord and tenant, but according to Thompson (1963, 230), by no means all estates took this route.

Richard Baker, like his predecessor Thomas Dain, seemed unimpressed by leases as a means to foster improvements but, being much more pro-active than Dain, he saw the need to draw attention to new and improved farming techniques and to encourage farmers '*in the spirit of emulation*' to observe the best local practices. Richard Baker believed, like Layton Cooke, that new ideas were better introduced by encouraging tenants to examine examples to be found locally and by stimulating positive attitudes in discussion among tenant farmers on the estate, not with prescriptive orders in leases which often generated resistance and a negative attitude to anything new. He expected that this approach, which depended on meetings and discussions as well as demonstrations in the field, would, over time, result in farm improvement on the estate.

The annual ploughing matches he founded were ideal countryside events at which to demonstrate the new agricultural machines which were rapidly gaining reputations, both locally and nationally, for increased production and reduced labour costs on farms of all types. Livestock improvement (see chapter 5), as well as what Richard Baker termed the '*art of feeding*', were featured in exhibits at the annual winter livestock show in Oakham.

Farmers and Graziers Club

Farmers were, of course, already using the many opportunities to meet informally at events such as the cattle and corn markets in Oakham and Uppingham, the Ploughing Meetings at Cottesmore and elsewhere, and the Christmas livestock show. Richard Baker, however, wanted to go further and provide other opportunities for more formal gatherings. As a result,

he founded the Farmers and Graziers Club in Oakham, with a meeting room for talks and discussion, a library and a programme of events. On 11th June 1838 Baker and other interested farmers held the inaugural meeting of the Club at the George Inn, with Baker himself as chairman. Under his watchful eye, an Agricultural Hall with a meeting room and a library was built in Oakham in 1858, financed by subscriptions and donations, on land purchased from Lord Winchilsea. This substantial well-designed building is now known as the Victoria Hall, and is still an important venue in Oakham for a wide range of activities (fig. 26).



Fig. 26. The Victoria Hall, High Street, Oakham, originally built in 1858 as the Agricultural Hall.

Many of the more interesting proceedings of the Club and some of the farm visits were reported in the local and national press. In June 1841, for example, the *Farmers Magazine* reported that the Rutland Farmers and Graziers Club held a meeting to discuss plug drainage. The clayey land in Burley was selected an ideal location to demonstrate the system. A meeting of interested farmers assembled for the demonstration on Mr Robert Smith's farm, attended by Mr Pickering's foreman who was 'an experienced drainer'. Under his supervision a trench was dug and a 'plug' or 'rowl' (a tapered hollow length of wood, about four feet long) was inserted at one end and wrapped in clay. After punching the clay with a few holes, the plugs were withdrawn and moved along the trench to the next position where the process was repeated until the whole length of the trench had been completed. After back-filling, the system produced 'a free run of water as from the spout of a pump'. Of the farmers there, most were impressed. Other examples of the system, thought to be taken from an account of a demonstration in Gloucestershire, were discussed. Here the drainage had been installed in an area of over 100 acres and was still working perfectly after fifteen years. The cost of this drainage system was said to be 9 to 10 pence per acre. Mr Cheetham from

Farm mechanisation

Hambleton, one of the best known of the senior Exton tenants, declared that '*although he had at first been prejudiced against the plan yet he now thought it might answer and he should not only adopt it himself, but recommend others to do so*' (FM June 1841).

This primitive kind of drainage could be found in other parts of the country alongside the more usual drainage ditch which consisted of stone rubble covered with furze (gorse) and back-filled with earth. Such drainage systems often needed digging out after only a few years to restore the flow. Plug drainage was evidently thought to be more permanent and was in use in many parts of the country until 1843 when the earthenware cylindrical drainage pipe was invented. By 1848 a new method of making and firing such pipes had been patented and many Rutland brickworks began to produce them. This cheap and relatively easily installed system of land drainage was then adopted more widely on the Exton estate.

Other meetings of the Club, reported in the same issue of the *Farmers Magazine*, showed that it had discussed hedge cutting (a pointed top was better than a flat top) and the best rotation of crops for clay soils. A further meeting on crops for light soils was planned.

On rural estates like Exton the appearance of new machines on farms, intended to increase production and reduce labour costs, could add to the problems already created by rural poverty and underemployment (*see* Chapter 6). In some parts of the country a hungry and impoverished labour force turned to violent mob action, rioting, and the burning of stacks of hay and straw in and around barns and yards among farms and farm buildings. Landlords and their Stewards were aware of this potential problem of breakdown in rural society, particularly in view of the much-publicised Captain Swing riots in the south-east in the 1830s (Hobsbawm & Rudé 1969). Rutland, however, avoided the worst of the unrest. This was despite reports that amounts paid out to support the poor in many villages confirmed that under-employment of able men was widespread in the 1820s and 30s (DE3214/6982).

There was too little farm work in many villages, particularly in winter, to keep men off the parish poor rates. For example, as already noted, Layton Cooke expressed surprise at finding that although there were 1500 acres being farmed in Brooke, there was only work for four labourers, the rest of the able-bodied men having to rely on parish relief (DE3214/6892). In 1826, Richard Baker noted the sharp fall in the price of wheat from 61s 4d in January to 56s 6d in December and made the point that if farmers were not able to make a profit they would not be able to employ labour. He gave the example of Langham where 34 men were not able to find work on farms and '*are now employed on the roads*', costing the parish £11 per week (DE3214/11292).

Farm Mechanisation

Mechanisation of farming on the Exton estate had, Richard Baker believed, two main objectives, first to increase the yield of marketable grain crops, mainly wheat and barley, and secondly to reduce labour costs on farms by inventing labour-saving machines. The mechanisation of farming nationally had begun in the late seventeenth century with the work of Jethro Tull (1674–1740) (Ransome 1843, 5, 12, 100, 139) who by 1701 had invented a working seed drill (fig. 27). The machine delivered the seed through notches in a barrel and

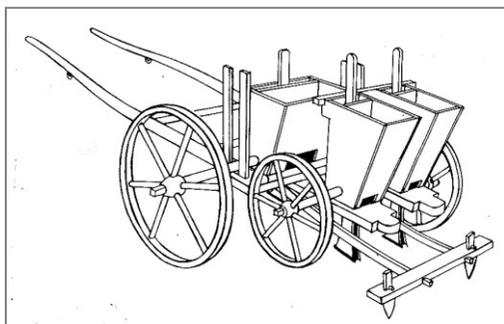


Fig. 27. Jethro Tull's seed drill (Wikipedia).

the drill, pulled by horses, was followed by a 'bush harrow' which left the seed lightly covered. This not only avoided the waste of broadcast seed but enabled the seed to come up in regularly spaced rows so the ground between them could be weeded with a hoe. For Tull, it was a short step to avoid the tedium of hand weeding by creating a horse-hoe, a specially adapted plough which was pulled through the soil by a horse to remove the weeds. In Tull's day much of England was still farmed in open field strips and there was

little incentive to adopt new methods, but by the end of the eighteenth century enclosed fields held in severalty were becoming more common.

However, by the 1830s, there was a greater need to improve profitability, and a wider range of machines to save labour, speed the processes of arable production and improve farming techniques on arable land were being invented, built, tried, manufactured and distributed at a national level by a number of companies, including the well-known firm of Ransomes of Ipswich. Richard Baker had a strong connection with this business. He was friendly with Robert Ransome, the eldest son of the firm's founder, who frequently came to Rutland to attend and support shows and other farming events. He was particularly interested in the allotment system and in 1830 he gave a prize for the best cultivated allotment. The family connection with Rutland continued with his sons and grandsons, and Robert Charles Ransome, Robert's son, married Sarah Jane Baker, Richard Westbrook's youngest daughter, at Cottesmore church on 24th October 1854.

Machinery Manufacturers

The Ransome company was founded in 1789 by Robert Ransome (1753–1830) who established the Orwell works in Ipswich to build his designs for agricultural machines. After his death in 1830, the company was run by his sons James and Robert junior. Concentrating, in the early days, on improving ploughs by using wrought iron instead of the traditional wood for the share and the frame, they discovered and patented a way of heat-treating cast iron so that the plough share was strong enough to survive in all kinds of terrain. In 1831, as noted below, Ransomes were selected to manufacture a plough to Richard Baker's design, widely known as the Rutland Plough (*FM*, 10 (1843) 252–3; Ransome 1843, 39).

Ransomes were not alone in the manufacture of more efficient ploughs and by the 1830s foundries had been set up widely in country towns across the country. These included Richard Hornsby & Sons of Spitalgate, Grantham, Lincolnshire, a growing iron and brass foundry business making agricultural machines, and Richard Garrett & Sons of Leiston, Suffolk, famous in the early nineteenth century for their seed drills and horse-hoes (Ransome 1843, 105–6), and later for their steam engines. There was also Joseph Cooke Grant in Wharf Road, Stamford, an agricultural machine maker. Further afield there was T Ivens of Lutterworth who

in 1846 advertised his business as an importer of foreign seeds, Italian ryegrass, Flemish and Dutch clovers and as 'agent for Ransome's ploughs, chaff engines and every other description of agricultural implements' (fig. 28). Locally, for example, there was William Bellairs, an enterprising blacksmith in Langham, who was building and demonstrating ploughs at events in Rutland (see p55). White's *Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland* (1846, 658) shows that by then it was also possible to purchase ploughs manufactured by Ransomes from Rice Davies, an ironmonger and their agent in High Street, Oakham.

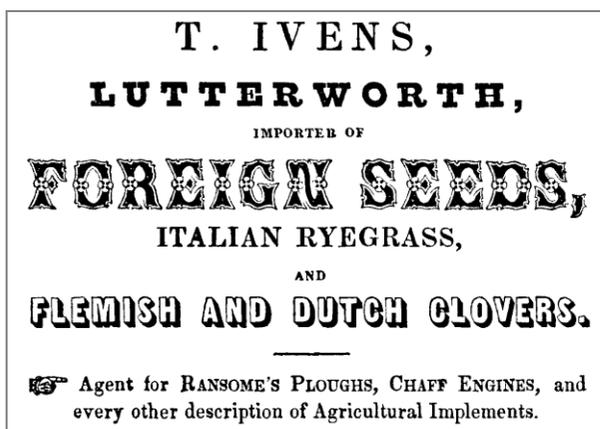


Fig. 28. The advertisement for T Ivens from White's 1846 directory for Leicestershire and Rutland (final page, unnumbered).

Farm Improvers

An early farm improver was Charles, Viscount Townsend (1674–1738), whose estate was at Raynham, Norfolk. Having retired there from political life in 1730, he transformed his poor Norfolk farmland from a waste of sandy warrens and marshy wetlands into one of the most productive estates in the country. He probably developed and certainly promoted the Norfolk four-course rotation. In this system, arable crops of wheat and barley, and occasionally rye, alternated in the ground with fodder crops of roots, which were mostly turnips, and grass in the form of either permanent pasture or grass ley which was often clover. The value of the resulting mixed farming systems, when fodder crops for livestock were grown alongside the more usual arable cash crops, led generally to a marked increase in the profitability of farms as meat consumption rose and the price of meat increased, particularly in London and other urban centres.

Farmers could increase their income through livestock sales, and animal husbandry, pursued with sheep and cattle overwintered either in the turnip fields or in barns, produced the manures to build up fertility in the soil. Root crops sown with drills like Tull's and weeded by machine were coming into widespread use in eastern counties of England. Lord Townsend at Raynham, for example, was sowing his turnips in rows and weeding them with a horse-hoe in the 1730s (Ernle 1961, 173–5). The system was, however, slow to be taken up in some areas, although it was adopted more enthusiastically among more enterprising farmers in Scotland.

Even in a relatively backward farming county like Rutland, by the beginning of the nineteenth century the *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Rutland* by Richard

Parkinson (1808) shows that the Norfolk rotation was commonly used in most areas, using roots and clover as the main fodder crops. It appears from Parkinson's account that except on the unsuitable heavy clays in parts of the county, particularly in the Welland valley area around Caldecott and Lyddington for example, almost all the farmers were growing turnips. Later they included Richard Baker who won a silver tankard in 1858, donated by Sir Gerard Noel and presented by the Rutland Agricultural Society, for the best cultivated 10 acres field of Swedish Turnips in Rutland. Although mixed farms were commonplace when Baker took over as Steward on the Exton Estate, the full potential had yet to be realised. Much work was needed to improve farming techniques in general and drainage and ploughing in particular, and to promote and retain better and more profitable breeds of livestock.

Parkinson's observations on farming in Rutland have already been mentioned and his views were not encouraging. As Steward on the 15,000 acres of the largest landed estate in the county, Baker knew the failings of the system and worked hard during his life to improve methods throughout the estate. Ploughing techniques were particularly questionable on Rutland farms as noted by Parkinson in 1808 and by Layton Cooke and Baker in the 1820s. Baker wrote that the ploughed land in the estate villages could be likened to the disturbance made by grubbing pigs. Parkinson had noted the large sizes and random distribution of the lumps and clods of earth after ploughing and the difficulties of working these down to provide a suitable seed bed.

Ploughing Meetings

Improved ploughs with metal rather than wooden parts were, however, only part of the story. According to Baker, farmers needed to be taught to plough by following the example of skilled men, and it was for this reason that one of his first actions when he had moved to Cottesmore as estate steward was to set up ploughing competitions to be held each year in the autumn.

Richard Baker and Sir Gerard Noel would have been greatly influenced and inspired by Thomas Coke, the foremost agricultural moderniser in England, and his contemporaries when they set up their Ploughing Meetings at Cottesmore. Thomas Coke (1762–1842), who was eventually created Earl of Leicester in 1837, had inherited the estate at Holkham in Norfolk, but the land was very poor acidic sandy soil and the only successful crop was rye. However, by using new methods of improvement, including marling (treating soil with lime-rich crumbly clay to reduce acidity), he was able, after nine years, to successfully grow good crops of wheat. Realising, like Baker, the value of stock-keeping to improve the land with manures, he began keeping Shorthorn cattle and Devon and Southdown sheep, breeds which did well on his poor sandy soils.

Coke was also a great communicator and his annual sheep-shearing gathering drew agricultural reformers from all over the country to view his farms and discuss farming matters. Originally, in 1778, there was a small gathering of like-minded people. Twenty years later hundreds of people attended from Britain, the Continent and America, and even the Russian Czar sent a representative. The Holkham sheep-shearing events became a destination for contemporary farmers, a valuable forum for discussion on all aspects of agriculture.



Fig. 29. Modern aerial view of Exton estate land between Cottesmore Grange and Hall Farm, Exton, used by Richard Westbrook Baker's Cottesmore ploughing meetings (Google Earth 2016).

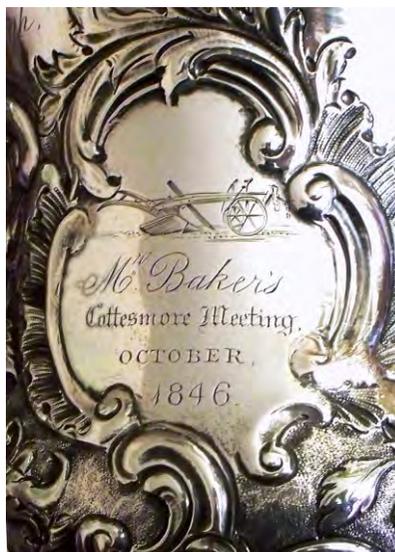


Fig. 30. The inscription and engraving of a plough on the cup won by John Turner at the Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting held at Empingham in 1846 (photograph: Ron Turner).

The first Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting was held in October 1828 on the land between Cottesmore Grange and Hall Farm, Exton (fig. 29). Baker rented this land from the estate and it was to be an annual event on this site for the next ten years. He had chosen his site well. The land was almost level between the two farms and there was enough for the competition to be moved each year. Eventually though, an alternative site was needed, and the event was moved in 1839 to farms mainly in the Uppingham area, although Baker continued to organise the event until 1847.

In order to increase publicity and perhaps encourage more Rutland farmers to attend, Richard Baker sought support from the local landowners and gentleman farmers and encouraged them to provide prizes. Over the years when he organised the ploughing meetings, the event accumulated many valuable prizes including a gold cup for the overall champion, fourteen cups given by Sir Gerard Noel, ten by the Earl of Gainsborough, Sir Gerard's son, eighteen by Sir Gilbert Heathcote of the neighbouring Normanton estate and fifteen medals presented by William Leake. One of the cups presented by Lord Gainsborough and won by John Turner in 1846 is still with his family in Canada (fig. 30; Appendix 8). There were also cash prizes which were awarded for success in the ploughing classes and to the winners of the farmers' and farm labourers' competitions. As shown in Appendix 6, by the time of the concluding meeting in 1847, 1,055 competitors had been judged. The cups and

medals distributed to the prize winners were valued at £768 8s. In the ploughing classes £444 8s had been paid out in prize money. The total cost of twenty years of competitions was £848 17s. The £21 remaining in 1847 when all had been paid was distributed among the unsuccessful competitors (DE3214/7809).



Fig. 31. Engraving of the Rutland Plough as illustrated by J A Ransome in his Implements of Agriculture (1843, 39), with a photograph of a similar plough in Rutland County Museum (Robert Ovens).

The Rutland Ploughing Meetings followed a set pattern. On the day of the event, usually held early in October, ploughing competitions began at 7.00am and several of Richard Baker's own ploughmen usually took part. In 1830, a Bedford plough was demonstrated at the event and in response Baker took it upon himself to better the Bedford's design. In 1831, he produced the Rutland Plough, a type of machine new to Rutland, made not with wood but with cast iron parts. His plough had a mechanism allowing it to be adapted for use in light soils and heavy clay. As already mentioned, it was manufactured by Ransomes of Ipswich (Ransome 1843, 39; Clough 1981, 71) (fig. 31) and featured regularly at the Cottesmore Ploughing meetings in the 1830s where it could be tried on a variety of soils. It was also demonstrated at the Royal Agricultural Society shows at Liverpool in 1841, where it won an inscribed silver tray, at Southampton in 1844 and at Lincoln ten years later.

The Labourers Friend Society, of which both Richard Baker and Sir Gerard Noel became members, published an account of the 1838 ploughing match, and the following is an extract: *At this meeting thirty-nine ploughs had entered, whereas upon a former occasion nine only were named, and the work very badly executed. Today's event was better than he [Richard Baker] had ever seen in Rutland, and a decided improvement had taken place in the last year: and such was the spirit of the ploughmen, that under the encouragement now afforded, he had no doubt there would be a*

Ploughing meetings

further improvement. He had endeavoured to give every facility to the introduction of good implements, which occasioned the excellent show they had seen this day, and he wished every person to judge of those implements from their real usefulness in farming operations. The draught of a plough, as well as the laying the work, was of consequence, and the experiments tried in the morning would show that a lightness of draught and lightness in the weight of a plough were different points, and he had much pleasure in finding that the Rutland plough (by Ransome) had an advantage over any other plough in the field by half a hundred' (DE3214/5069, 71).

The usual pattern of the day was to follow the morning ploughing events by a dinner held in Richard Baker's house at mid-day to which all the guests were invited and which was usually attended by Sir Gerard Noel. The prize-giving came in the afternoon, and the event concluded with a sale of rams from the host's flock of 'improved' sheep, based on the Leicester breed but named by him as 'Cottesmores'. Richard Baker's other livestock, particularly his herd of Shorthorn cattle, but also his 'improved' pigs and horses were also on display. To encourage the participation of smallholders and agricultural labourers, prizes were given for all manner of farm work, including shepherding, which included a prize for the highest percentage of living lambs per ewe, pig keeping, hedging, ditching, rick and stack building, and thatching, and for crops including corn, potatoes and root crops. There was a cup for the best farm, awarded in the following spring, to an exemplary tenant farmer, encouraging competition and rewarding farm improvement, including the provision of work for farm labourers through the winter. In 1833 this cup, donated by Sir Gilbert Heathcote, was won, not entirely unexpectedly, by Baker himself for the exemplary state of his farm in Cottesmore.

Richard Baker continued to host these meetings annually, providing hospitality in his home in Cottesmore and dinner for his guests in his house, until 1839. The Rutland event then moved to the Uppingham area with dinners at the Falcon, by which time the number of ploughs competing had risen from nine at the beginning in 1828 up to 59 at the Glaston meeting in 1840, increasing to 115 at the final meeting organised by Baker at Oakham in 1847. By this time it was clearly a very popular Rutland event although the numbers of competitors will have made it hard work for the judges (DE3214/7809) (see Appendix 6).

Ploughing meetings and similar countryside events were seen then as now as an excellent way of bringing together a wide cross section of the rural community to see at first hand the skills of ploughmen and other rural craftsmen, as well as the improved breeds of livestock, particularly the sheep, and to get some idea of the work that goes on in the local farming community.

In February 1845, Richard Baker, ever mindful of testing new ideas, presented a fork to the Royal Agricultural Society of England, along with a 'communication' which included: *'In many districts, the agricultural labourer has difficulty in finding employment; therefore, it is advisable to attempt many experiments, with a view to ascertain how far that object can be accomplished; and I am of opinion, that in some cases digging, with a proper tool, can be brought into use so as to afford profitable employment. The fork sent to the Society has been approved for this purpose; and I subjoin the terms of a premium offered in the bill of our Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting; namely, a premium of 5 sovereigns will be given for the most approved statement on the comparative merits between*

ploughing and digging' (FM, new ser, IX (1845), 97).

Mr Parkes, the consulting engineer to the Society, compared Baker's fork, which weighed 9lb, with another fork presented by a Mr Dixon, which weighed 8lb 2oz. He concurred 'with several of the members present' that 'the forks exhibited were very heavy, and would require very strong men to use them', but that 'the operation described was one that demanded the use of a strong tool'. He concluded that 'the cost of the work ... was fully double that' of ploughing. There is no record of any such comparison between digging and ploughing at Richard Baker's Ploughing Meetings, but only hand digging was allowed on the Exton Estate allotments.

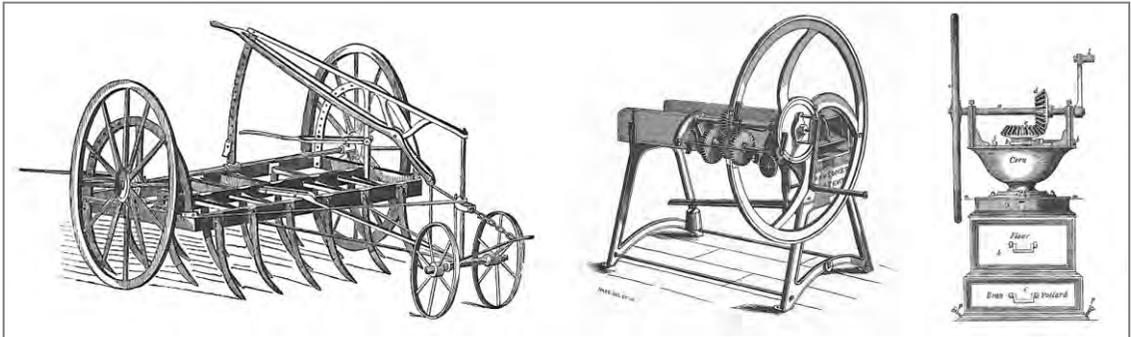


Fig. 32. Agricultural implements tested at Cottesmore in 1843: Biddell's extirpating harrow (left), Ransome's patent chaff cutter (centre) and Herbert's duplex flour mill (right), all illustrated in Ransome's *Implement of Agriculture* (1843, 73, 191 and 237 respectively).

Trial of Agricultural Implements

In 1843 Richard Baker hosted an 'interesting trial' of agricultural implements on his Cottesmore land which was reported in detail by the *Farmers Magazine* (2nd ser **10** (1843), 405). It took place on 13th October during a week of local Ploughing Meetings elsewhere in the area. At Cottesmore 'Mr Baker gave a most excellent review of implements in work to a large party of the most influential practical agriculturists of the neighbourhood'. They met at 10am to test a paring plough on oat stubble which was very dry and hard, the machine in question having been made by William Bellairs. Next some hard, dry wheat stubble was broken up by the Rutland plough. It was then rolled and Biddell's extirpating harrow (fig. 32, left) or scarifier passed over it until it became a fine tilth suitable for sowing the seed. Various ploughs were then tested including versions of the Rutland plough, a plough from William Bellairs, a Bedford plough and others. After luncheon, the party returned to consider chaff cutters. A new patent machine made by Ransomes, which could be set to alter the length of the chaff and could be powered by two horses, was judged the best (fig. 32, centre). Three flour mills were then tested, including Herbert's patent duplex flour mill (fig. 32, right), an invention thought likely to 'come into extensive use by Cottagers'. More fieldwork using the ploughs and the extirpator ended the day, 'the most perfect and satisfactory the party assembled had ever witnessed'.

The last autumn ploughing meeting on the Exton estate farms in Rutland took place in 1847, following which Richard Baker retired as organiser. At a dinner in the Agricultural



Fig. 33. The magnificent silver replica of the Rutland Plough presented to Baker at the final ploughing meeting in 1847 (Alfred R Morrison).

Hall in Oakham, a list of the prize-winners over the last twenty years was read out. A testimonial to Baker 'as an acknowledgement of the benefits conferred upon agriculture by your exertions to improve the art of ploughing' was then presented by Samuel Cheetham. It was a 'magnificent silver replica' of the Rutland plough made especially by Benjamin Smith of Duke St, Lincolns Inn Fields, London, and was a very fitting gift. It must have given great pleasure to the recipient and at his death in 1861 it was listed among his heirlooms (*LJ*, 22nd Oct 1842, 2) (see Appendix 9) (fig. 33).

Steam Ploughing

That, however, was by no means the end of the story. Richard Baker could still see the need for local gatherings of farmers to observe and discuss new techniques and new machines. New machines continued to be developed, particularly after the introduction of steam engines, some of which were designed to be self-propelled. Ploughing with a steam engine had seemed initially to be a matter of pulling a conventional plough across a field, with the engine replacing the horse. It soon became clear, however, that the weight of the engine caused too much damaging compaction of the soil. With the invention and manufacture of strong steel cable, a system for moving the plough at a distance was developed, the equipment for which was invented by John Fowler of Leeds (Orwin & Wetham 1964, 104–6). Fowler claimed to have sold ten sets of his adaptations (Fussell 1985, 84), which were demonstrated for the first time in Rutland at a ploughing meeting in 1857, held on Mr Wortley's farm in Ridlington. The event was attended by over 600 interested observers, including Richard Baker and his wife, and the details were reported in the *Leicester Journal*

(9th Oct 1857, 7). A drawing of the event was published in the *Illustrated London News* (17th Oct 1857, 1) (fig. 34) and prints were later distributed locally. It showed the new ploughing technique on a 25-acre field, using a stationary steam engine. This pulled a specially adapted plough backwards and forwards across the field via a system of steel cables and pulleys. This system was said to be able to cultivate about one and a half acres per hour using about $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt of coal to power the boiler. The cost, according to Fowler, was about 5s to 8s an acre. For those who already had a portable steam engine the cost of adapting it to use Fowler's system was £250 to £270.

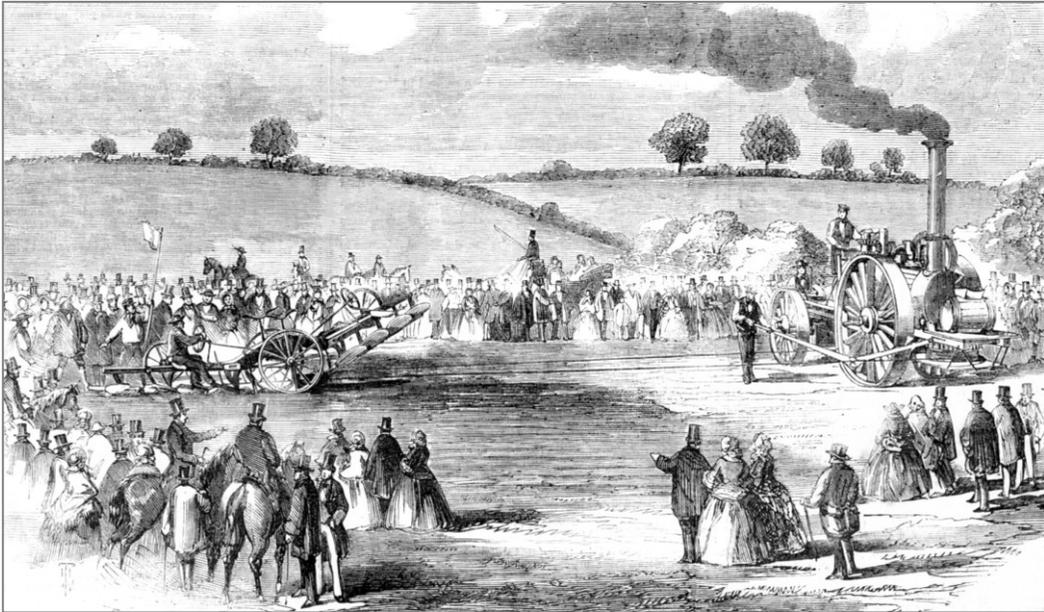


Fig. 34. The demonstration of Richard Fowler's steam ploughing engines which took place at Mr Wortley's land at Ridlington in 1857 (Illustrated London News, 17th October 1857, 1).

Although this demonstration of an entirely new system into the world of competitive ploughing was an unusual and striking event exciting much local comment, conventional autumn ploughing meetings continued and, in a similar format, were widely adopted all over the country. They are still today invaluable seasonal events giving people in the countryside opportunities to meet and discuss new ideas in farming and rural life. In addition to his widely admired and well supported Ploughing Meetings, in 1831 Richard Baker became involved in another kind of show with premiums awarded not for the cultivation of the land but to raise the standard of farm livestock, as recounted in the next chapter.

The Royal Agricultural Society

Local ploughing matches were useful in demonstrating advances in mechanisation to local farmers and agricultural societies. Summer shows and winter fatstock exhibitions were a

great success in showing what could be done by the better breeding and feeding of livestock. However, a movement had been growing for an organisation dedicated, like the old Board of Agriculture, to disseminating information about agricultural improvements on a national scale. This Board, under the direction of Sir John Sinclair, its president, and with Arthur Young its secretary until his death in 1820, published annual reports on the state of agriculture in various parts of the kingdom from 1793 to 1822. This movement led to the formation of the Agricultural Society of England in 1838 as a '*society for the improvement of agriculture in England and Wales*'. Its Charter of Incorporation in 1840 enabled the Society to use the '*Royal*' prefix from then on.

The justification for the Society was, according to a leader in the *Mark Lane Express and Agricultural Journal*, written by William Shaw, the editor, the explosion in population currently putting the food supply under strain (Goddard 1988, 13–14). Richard Baker also corresponded with William Shaw on this matter (DE3214/7779). At a meeting on 9th May 1838, attended by many influential people, the supporters were addressed by Robert Peel (Prime Minister 1834–35 and 1841–46). In a further meeting on 27th June 1838, the Constitution was agreed, with Earl Spencer appointed as President and William Shaw as Secretary. The Rules were then formulated and it was agreed that the annual meeting of the Society should take place in different parts of the country each year. At each meeting premiums were to be awarded '*to encourage the best and most advantageous mode in which farms may be cultivated in the neighboring [sic] districts and to give prizes to the owners of livestock best calculated to produce a profit in their respective localities*'

Richard Baker was an enthusiastic member of the Society from its inception and the schedules of the annual shows, from the first in 1839 through to the 1850s, are among his papers. '*Roderick Random*', his prolific prize-winning Shorthorn bull, was exhibited in the first show at Oxford, but by then he had sold it, in April 1839, for 200 guineas to George Carrington of Great Missenden (DE3214/7773). Richard Baker's own entries (DE3214/7794) were all females, but none of them won prizes. He was elected to the Council and contributed to the discussions before the Liverpool Show in 1841, after which he became a Life Governor. He was invited to the Council dinner held in Southampton before the show there in 1844 (DE3214/7794).

For the rest of his life he maintained a lively interest in the activities of the Society, contributing on occasions by letter to its Journal. In 1843, the Journal included his essay on the *Cultivation of Small Allotments of land in Rutland, a collection of the facts relative to the capabilities and cultivation of the soil*, following the submission of his handwritten report (*RASE Journal* 20 (1859), 96–7; DE3214/5070). It begins with his communication to Sir Gerard Noel in 1830 proposing various changes to the system of parish relief and the allocation of gardens with cottages let to tenants on the estate. It then continues with the development of the allotment system in Rutland and the rules adopted at its inception, with comments on the annual judging and the award of prizes outlined. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

5 – Livestock Improvement in Rutland

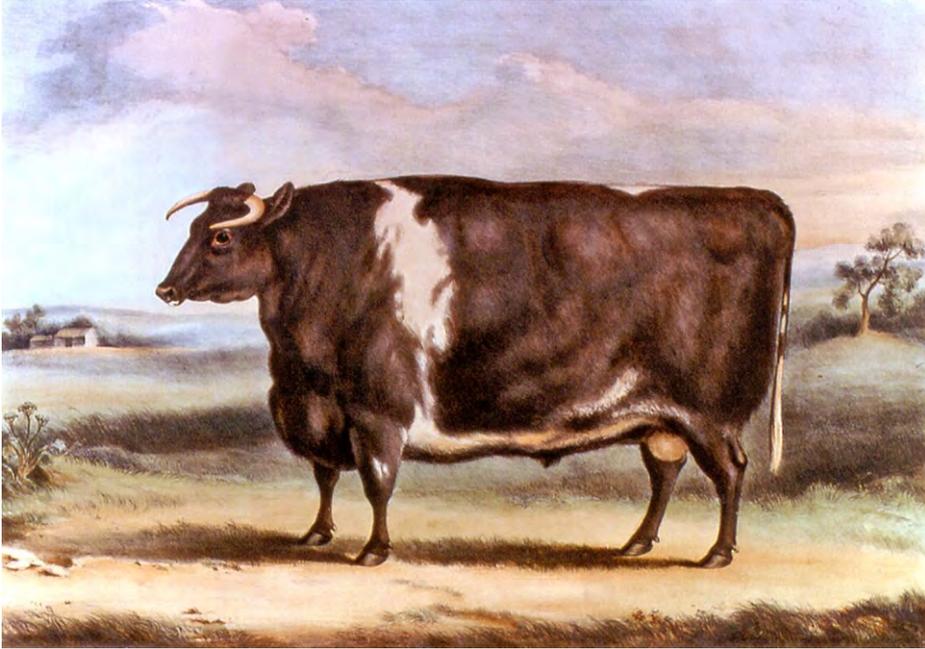


Fig. 35. Chromolithograph of a painting by W H Davis of a prize-winning shorthorn ox bred by Richard Westbrook Baker in 1860, printed by C Moody of Holborn, London (RCM 1980.72.2).

Livestock Breeding and Feeding

In the late eighteenth century, new and improved systems for the breeding and the feeding of livestock, particularly cattle and sheep, were being developed in response to the demands of the market. The butchers in the new and growing industrial towns were demanding more meat to sell and were becoming more particular about the best-selling cuts. Cattle, which were no longer widely used as draught animals, could be improved by selective breeding to develop conformation more likely to carry muscle in the areas required by the butcher. The London market was particularly important to country districts from Rutland southwards, which were within range of livestock moving on the hoof. In order to stimulate interest in the breeding and feeding of animals reared for meat, the Smithfield Club was founded in 1798 as an association of 'Noblemen, Gentlemen and Practical Farmers to encourage ... the effectual early and economic feeding of animals for the London market'. Its objective was to promote the new breeds of cattle by showing them to London butchers. It held an annual show with animals coming to London from all over the country. In 1844 the *Farmers Magazine* reported

Livestock improvers

that the average weight of the cattle at the show had doubled since its inception. Champions in the various sections had their portraits painted, often by W H Davis of Chelsea, the well-known animal painter (eg figs. 35 & 41). According to his own account he was appointed animal painter to William IV in 1837, the year the King died. Prints were engraved, usually as the artist's main source of income, from his portraits of prize-winning cattle, sheep and pigs, and some became the centrefolds of the *Illustrated London News*. Others were bought by the *Farmers Magazine* and occupied pride of place, along with notes on livestock pedigrees, in the January edition each year.

Fig. 36. Engraving of Robert Bakewell from a painting by John Boulton (Wikipedia)



Livestock Improvers



Fig. 37. A shorthorn family, bull, cow and calf, all typical of the breed, from a painting by Edward Corbet (The Blackbrook Gallery).

The most famous 'improver' of livestock in the late eighteenth century was Robert Bakewell (1725–95) of Dishley Grange near Loughborough (fig. 36), later succeeded by Robert Fowler of Rollright, Oxfordshire. Among other farm improvements they took the dual purpose Longhorn breed of cattle to 'improve' as a fatstock animal. Under Robert Bakewell's system, the desirable characteristics of the breed were identified and pursued by a practice of line breeding using correct animals and their close relatives. This method could be an expensive and very long-term project, requiring all inferior genetic material to be culled. It was not always a viable route to improvement for less wealthy farmers. Robert Bakewell's herd of Longhorn cattle was indeed 'improved' by creating a faster-finishing lighter-boned but heavier butcher's animal, but in so doing the milking ability of the cows was compromised, possibly by their increased fatness. This did not suit farmers in the Midlands with Longhorn herds, whose main business depended on dairying and producing butter and cheese. In addition, by the end of the eighteenth century the Leicestershire Longhorn cattle were beginning to show signs of 'inbreeding depression'. That and the fact that improved Longhorns were actually quite slow

to mature meant that in the first half of the nineteenth century cattle breeders like Richard Baker were turning towards the Shorthorn breeds. Their aim was the improvement of the breed to attain good butcher's animals (fig. 37).



Fig. 38. Engraving of Charles Colling's 'Durham Ox' from a painting by John Boulton (Wikipedia).



Fig. 39. 'Comet', the famous shorthorn bull bred by Charles Colling, from a painting by Thomas Bretland (The Blackbrook Gallery).

In the early nineteenth century, the main interest in Shorthorn or Durham cattle breeding was in the north-east, in the Darlington area, where the most famous of the early breeders, the Colling brothers, Charles and Robert, farmed. Charles Colling had visited Robert Bakewell at Dishley as a young man and went home to Darlington to try the Dishley system on his own herd of cattle at Ketton Hall Farm. He and his older brother James at nearby Barmpton became masters in the art of producing Shorthorn cattle using Robert Bakewell's system of inbreeding. In 1796, they bred 'Durham Ox' (fig. 38), a descendant of their famous bull 'Hubback'. The ox having come into the hands of a showman, John Day, a Lincolnshire stockman, it travelled the country in a specially built wagon from 1801 to 1810. This showed the breed's characteristics, particularly its conformation, to a wide range of farmers and potential breeders throughout England, including spending time in London around the Smithfield Show in 1802 (Orwin & Wetham 1964, 11–15; Stanley 1995, *passim*).

Most of Charles Colling's magnificent herd was sold in 1810, and breeders from all over the country competed for the purchase of his bulls and the females from his most famous cow families. His stock bull, 'Comet', sold for the then astonishing price of £1,000. It was purchased by a consortium of five breeders, each of whom had a portrait of the bull painted by Thomas Weaver (Weaver 2017, 109) (fig. 39). In 1818 and again, before his death in 1820, his brother's herd was also sold, distributing the Colling stock over a wide area. It gave breeders in England and Scotland, including the Earl of Exeter of Burghley House, Stamford, Lincolnshire, and Charles Champion of Blyth, Nottinghamshire, an opportunity to buy foundation stock from the most successful Colling bloodlines (Sinclair 1907, *passim*).

The first serious attempt to breed pure Shorthorn cattle in the Rutland area followed the purchase of pedigree cattle by the Earl of Exeter and the setting up of his herd of Shorthorns on his farm in Burghley Park, Stamford, in the first decade of the nineteenth century. To judge

from the pedigrees of his cattle, later recorded in *Coates's Herd Book* (Strafford 1847), he appears to have worked closely with Charles Champion using Champion's bulls based on Colling bloodlines to build up his herd. Richard Baker was an enthusiastic supporter of the new breed and shortly after 1820, when he was settled on the farm and land at the Lodge, Market Overton, it was to the Earl of Exeter's herd at Burghley that Baker went to acquire stock to start his own herd of 'improved' Shorthorn or Durham cattle. As noted in Chapter 2, at this time he had 37 acres in fields around the Lodge and a further 38 acres in nearby Barrow for his herd.

Baker's Foundation Stock

Richard Baker's successful purchase of foundation stock meant that by December 1823 he was able to advertise his bull, 'Eclipse', to serve local cows. The practice of letting or renting out the best examples of male cattle and sheep was well established among pedigree breeders in Leicestershire and elsewhere. This was partly as a result of support for the practice by Robert Bakewell who was interested not only in the income it brought to the farm but also in the resulting progeny which he sometimes bought back and used as a means to improve his own stock. Baker's advertisement in the *Stamford Mercury* on 19th and 26th December 1823 (fig. 40) notes the bull's breeding. He was directly descended from Charles Colling's bull 'Comet' and carried some of the best Colling blood lines. 'Blyth Comet', Charles Champion's bull, was out of a heifer he had purchased at the 1810 sale. She was sired by 'Comet' and in calf to her sire, a good example of successful line breeding (Sinclair 1907, 849).

Market Overton Lodge, Dec. 17, 1823.
ECLIPSE will serve Cows at Mr. BAKER'S, MARKET
OVERTON LODGE, at 10s. 6d. a Cow. Any person
keeping a bull calf by Eclipse, must pay, when the calf
is six months old, Five Guineas extra.
Eclipse was got by Meteor, out of Innocence, by Old
Windsor; her dam by Windsor. Meteor (late Captain),
who received the two year-old premium, and the pre-
mium when three years old against all ages, and the
sweepstakes, at Doncaster, was got by Blyth Comet,
whose sire was sold at the Ketton sale for 1000 guineas,
afterwards 1500 guineas was refused for him. Comet
was by Favourite, and Windsor by Favourite.
Straw for Cows at 1s. 6d. per week.
P.S. Eclipse is own brother to the ox belonging to
the Marquis of Exeter, which beat all England, and
obtained the premium at the Smithfield Club Cattle
Show on the 12th inst.

Fig. 40. An advertisement for the services of R W Baker's bull 'Eclipse' (*Stamford Mercury*, 19th December 1823, 1).

Eclipse's services seemed expensive. Richard Baker charged farmers 10s 6d per cow and 5 guineas extra for a live calf at six months old. If the cows stayed over at his farm he made a charge for straw. His purchase of 'Eclipse' from the Earl of Exeter and the selling of his services may have been a way of recouping some of the initial outlay as well as being part of his mission to improve the cattle in Rutland which, according to Crutchley (1794, 16), were 'in general bad ones'. These were mainly Irish or Welsh hill cattle bought in to run on as stores

(cattle reared for beef). Crutchley also stated that there was very little dairying so there was little interest at that time in breeding stock.

Having made an income from his first stock bull, Richard Baker also seems to have leased other Burghley Estate bulls to improve his own stock. One of these, 'Emperor', was calved in 1821, a half-brother to Eclipse by 'Meteor'. 'Emperor' was bred by Lord Exeter but his pedigree in *Coates's Herd Book* shows he was mainly from Charles Champion's stock. Richard Baker also used 'Aid [sic] de Camp', another well-known champion bull, bred by Charles Champion in 1820.

Richard Baker's main female line was started by 'Exeter', a cow by 'Meteor' born in 1820 and purchased from Lord Exeter. She was served in 1822 by 'Eclipse' and produced 'Baroness', one of Richard Baker's most useful females. In 1829 'Baroness' was served by 'Emperor' to produce 'Gainsborough', Richard Baker's most successful bull. He was a very handsome red and white animal who had great success in the show ring. Other females bought or bred by Richard Baker in the 1820s included 'Burleigh' [sic], calved in 1822, who in 1829, was mated to 'Aid de Camp' and produced 'Watts', the mother of a prize-winning Smithfield heifer and herself the winner of four first prizes at shows. He also bred 'Graceful', a heifer by 'Aid de Camp' who, after being mated with 'Gainsborough', produced 'The Kicker', an outstanding bull calf born in 1833. Later renamed 'Roderick Random', he became one of Richard Baker's most successful show animals (DE3214/7436). He began his showing career as the best bull under eighteen months at the Rutland Show in 1834. He won the bull premium at the Lincolnshire Agricultural Society Spring Show in 1836, first prize at the Grantham show in 1837, at the Rutland show in 1836 and 1837 and the Bourne show in 1838, the Rutland Show again in 1839 and the bull premium for Rutland the same year. In all 'Roderick Random' won nine first prizes in his showing career. In 1839, he was sold to Mr Carrington of Great Missenden, Baker's friend and fellow livestock enthusiast, after a long correspondence (DE3214/7773). He would have had to forfeit the bull premium he had won in Oakham that spring.

However, Richard Baker's greatest success in the show ring, and by far the most prestigious award, came in December 1837 when the daughter of 'Gainsborough', 'The Neat One', out of 'Watts', won the Smithfield championship and the Gold Medal for the best exhibit in all classes, and the medal was among her owner's prized possessions. She had already won at the Grantham Agricultural Association Show in October 1836, when she was under two years old, the Waltham and North Leicestershire show in October 1837, and at the Rutland Show the following month (FM 1839, 411–12). She was a very imposing and well-proportioned heifer, and was painted in oils by W H Davis to commemorate her Smithfield success. Her portrait (fig. 41) was in Richard Baker's house when he died in 1861. It passed with other heirlooms to his son Edward. The original oil painting has survived and is now in private hands in Rutland.

Baker's Livestock Prizes

In 1839, the *Farmers Magazine* published a 'List of Prizes Obtained for Animals Bred and Exhibited by R. W. Baker Esq' (FM June 1839, 411–12). This list, which consists of over seventy prizes,



Fig. 41. 'The Neat One', from a painting by W H Davis (private ownership).

makes interesting reading, especially when read in conjunction with the list in his obituary of silverware and medals he accumulated during his lifetime (DE3214/329/27) (see Chapter 7). All manner of prizes are included in the list, which is not restricted to those awarded for livestock. For instance, it is headed by the silver cup he was awarded in September 1831 at the Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting by Sir Gilbert Heathcote, along with a first prize of £10, for the best cultivated farm in Rutland. At the same meeting, another silver cup, also presented by Sir Gilbert, was for the first prize plough. All the known items of silverware and medals presented to and won by Richard Baker in his lifetime are included in Appendix 8.

Like many breeders of pedigree cattle, Richard Baker was sufficiently commercially minded to be clearly moving towards improvement in the increased size and weight of his cattle and the production of good butcher's meat. He understood the importance of the rapid conversion of foodstuffs. These included grass and traditional grain feeds as well as the new root crops grown widely in Rutland by the 1820s. He claimed that his Shorthorns matured fast and many were ready for sale to the butcher at twelve months old. As the number of his cattle grew he built up a very successful herd, particularly when he was able to use the land and buildings at Hall Farm, Exton. Among his papers there is interesting correspondence (DE3214/7773) with fellow breeders on the advantages of using crossing-out stock or outbreeding (introducing unrelated genetic material into a breeding line) to improve the herd, rather than line, or in-breeding, a subject which usually generated a fair amount of heat, as it does today, in discussion among cattle breeders of this period. Baker also believed that one of the best ways to spread the word on the superiority of certain cattle breeds was to evoke 'the spirit of emulation' by taking the best animals to compete against other similar animals at agricultural shows.

Agricultural Shows and the Spirit of Emulation

In a note on the Rutland Agricultural Society show in the 1830s Richard Baker writes of the ‘*spirit of emulation which unites in the valuable and excellent cause of improvement of breeding livestock in the immediate neighbourhood*’ (DE3214/7777/1–2). His connection with the livestock show in Oakham is well known, but he transported his best livestock widely, attending Smithfield in London each year in December and entering his best cattle and sheep annually at Waltham and Bourne. The schedules of shows he attended are among his papers. Livestock schedules, as now, allowed for cattle and sheep to be shown in different classes according to their age, sex and breed. Using the example of Smithfield, Baker also promoted the idea in local shows that show animals should be accompanied by a certificate indicating how the animal was bred, by whom and how it had been fed. He thought feeding was as important as breeding, as, in this way, he believed different breeding and fattening regimes could be compared. He spoke out on several occasions against the practice of buying in cattle from some distance, feeding them excessively to show condition and then selling them on as very fat cattle (DE3214/388/26).

Breeding Records

Richard Baker kept detailed records of the breeding of all his cows and bulls. *Coates’s Herd Book of Shorthorn Cattle*, the first proper record of a cattle breed, was published annually from 1822 and almost all of Baker’s pedigree stock, male and female, is recorded there (see Strafford 1847). In the dispute with the Waltham Show Society in 1841–42 described below Baker was accused of not being able to prove the age of his exhibit with the correct paperwork, but it is a mystery that this important paperwork was missing. Everything points to him being absolutely meticulous with his cattle records. The catalogue of his dispersal sale in 1840 has detailed notes on the breeding of every animal he sold which agree in all respects with their entries in *Coates’s Herd Book*.

Richard Baker was well known to his contemporaries as a successful breeder of Shorthorn cattle and Leicester sheep and it is interesting to read in his correspondence the opinions of the farmers with whom he did business. He was selling breeding stock, both bulls and cows, in the mid-1830s to farms distributed across the East Midlands, for example, to Mr Majoribanks, who kept a successful herd of Shorthorn cattle at Bushey Grove near Watford in Hertfordshire (Sinclair 1907, 244), and to Mr Fordham at Melton Bury near Royston. Majoribanks had purchased ‘*Red Rover*’ by Lord Exeter’s sire ‘*Prince*’, one of the first bulls bred and sold by Richard Baker. His new owner had hoped to be able to lease his services to local cattle breeders but, owing to lack of interest, wanted to sell him back. Richard Baker, not wanting his bull back, offered as a goodwill gesture to send him three heifers in calf from his own herd and was prepared to deliver them the sixty miles to Mr Majoribanks’ farm.

In 1835, Mr Fordham purchased ‘*Ellen*’, a light roan cow, for £25 and a dark red half-bred cow for £20. As was usual, they walked or were driven from Cottesmore to their new home. Richard Baker was told, ‘*I will thank you to send them off by a careful man*’ and was instructed to

Improving sheep

pay the man £2 to drive these animals to his farm near Royston via Huntingdon. He also asked Richard Baker if he was prepared to sell the dark red heifer which he [Baker] intended to show and a young light roan bull 'of which you think so highly'.

Improving Sheep



Fig. 42. Two Leicester rams, as favoured by Robert Bakewell, from a painting by Thomas Bretland (*The Blackbrook Gallery*).



Fig. 43. Three Leicester rams bred by Robert Smith of Burley on the Hill, from an original painting by W H Davis (*FM*, 3.XIV, September 1846, pl. II).

Richard Baker was also interested in improving sheep, the income from which depended on the quality of the carcass and also the size and quality of the fleece. These aspects had been successfully developed by Robert Bakewell at Dishley Grange and his new Leicester sheep, bred from Longwools, were popular throughout the Midlands (fig. 42). Baker noted this, and his own flock was bred on Dishley lines but he called them 'Cottesmores' (fig. 43). His rams were sought after by Rutland breeders and by other breeders at sales elsewhere. He took rams annually to the Knipton Fair, near Grantham, and made friends there with George Brereton of Fritcham, near Kings Lynn, Norfolk, with whom he corresponded. In September 1835 Richard Baker invited George Brereton to visit his farm in Cottesmore for the ram show and sale (DE3214/7457/1831–7), probably at the Ploughing Meeting on 17th September. Brereton was advised to take the noon coach from the Duke's Head in Kings Lynn to Stamford, from where he must have been collected for the last leg of his journey to Cottesmore. There he was invited to stay the night and to dine 'when he will meet intelligent people', including Sir Gerard Noel. Baker offered him three sheep for 40 guineas and the hire of a tup for 15 guineas, delivered to his farm, but this deal was not to be discussed with his 'home customers'. In December 1835, recalling his visit to Rutland, and having been to Richard Baker's farm, George Brereton wrote that [Baker] had 'very good stock of every description'. He was also, he said, pleased with his manner: 'no rip, noise nor bustle, no damned silly form or ceremony in the house' (DE3214/7437/1835). The following summer, in June 1836, he wrote that he was interested in purchasing a young bull and had seen among Baker's stock

a 'young Durham stock of red and white colour'. George Brereton wanted a 'thoroughbred Durham', not a cross-breed, and did not want one that was too white. He thought that Richard Baker was a 'damned straight forward fellow with the least humbug about him of any tup breeder', but he added 'your tups have a family complaint, they are very deficient in the rump' (DE3214/7426/2). As this would have been a serious deficiency in the most saleable part of the carcass, he was probably not invited to Cottesmore again!

The Russian Connection

Nevertheless, in spite of this criticism, Richard Baker's reputation as a sheep breeder was to spread further afield and in 1835 he was in correspondence with Benjamin Hickson in St Petersburg about the problems encountered by farmers in Russia (DE3214/7439). Hickson had been given Baker's address by a William Pigge of Heacham who, trading with the Baltic ports through Lynn, had connections in Russia and knew of Baker's reputation in Norfolk as a keeper of improved livestock. Hickson gave details of Russian agriculture which he clearly thought to be in need of improvement: 'farming or the absence of farming property, so called' where 'everything is imperfectly executed as there is little knowledge and bad farming implements and a miserable system of rye, oats and fallow being the unvarying rotation'. In October 1835, he approached Baker in a letter sent via Mr Pigge in Lynn with a 'proposition for furnishing the Russian Nobility with long wool sheep'. Apparently, one of the most profitable farming enterprises in Russia at the time was the sale of wool from large flocks of sheep, on estates the land extent of which, he reported, was often greater 'than an English County, even Yorkshire'. There was also a growing interest in sheep breeding and improvement. According to Hickson the Russian nobility want 'a superior class of your [Baker's] new Leicester Sheep not only to preserve in pure flocks but for improving several of the native breeds'. He had orders for several hundred such sheep. A parallel cloth making industry was also growing.

Hickson, who reported that 'Russia was essentially a new Country presenting inexhaustible resources for agricultural enterprise', seemed to be looking after the British settlers in St Petersburg 'numbering 2,400 residents'. He was clearly interested in farming and the improvement of Russian agriculture. He writes of 'establishing a kind of Model farm for introducing the improved British System of Rural Economy...' with 'a repository of corn and grass seeds, the best implements and machines as well as the best breeds of cattle' for which he needed a manager: 'a first rate man the type of Mr [Thomas] Coke, with the same sort of zeal taking the lead in agricultural improvements' (see Chapter 4). Thomas Coke was seen as the foremost moderniser in England, providing the model for Hickson and his followers who were set on improving farming on the great corn lands of Russia which offered so much potential.

The job description was, according to Pigge, sent to Baker in the hope that he could recommend a capable young man to take on this challenge. Some of Hickson's and Pigge's letters have survived in the Exton Archive but, sadly, Baker's replies have not come to light. This Russian connection in the 1830s probably explains the contribution made by the Tsar of Russia to Baker's testimonial silver presentation in 1847 (see Chapter 7) (DE3214/7439 and 7773).

Another enthusiastic livestock breeder who knew Richard Baker well was Clarke Hillyard of Thorplands, Northampton, the author of *A Survey of Practical Farming and Grazing* in 1837, and who seems to have become friendly with Baker through regular meetings at the Smithfield show. He wrote to Baker in 1838 accusing him of being a 'prize monopoliser' and 'quite a crack breeder of shorthorns' (DE3214/7095). Clarke Hillyard particularly liked his Smithfield exhibit in 1833. When Baker came to reduce his herd in March 1840, the catalogue shows that he had indeed been, in Clarke Hilliard's words, a 'prize monopoliser'. Since 1831, he had won 90 prizes, 25 of them at the Rutland Show, ether by his stock directly or by the progeny of his bulls.

Livestock Inspection on the Farm and the Lease of Male Animals



Fig. 44. A Suffolk Punch stallion. R W Baker had one such travelling in Rutland called *Ploughman* (The Blackbrook Gallery).

One of the great advantages of Richard Baker's annual Ploughing Meetings was that local farmers attending had the opportunity to inspect his livestock, including his bulls, rams and boars, and his Suffolk Punch stallions (fig. 44), all of which were available to hire to improve local stock. As we have seen with 'Eclipse', his bulls were particularly important to him in his efforts to improve local cattle. His most widely used bulls after he had moved to Cottesmore in 1828, were 'Gainsborough' who was calved in 1829 and died in 1834, and his son 'Roderick Random' (alias 'The Kicker') who was calved in 1833. Richard Baker records each cow served in his Bull Books, often with a note of the outcome. Both bulls were used extensively by local farmers and occasionally travelled further afield into Lincolnshire. When 'Gainsborough' was young, Richard Baker's Bull Book shows he served cows at 4s a time This went up to 10s when his reputation was established and by 1833–34 he was serving well over 100 cows per year (DE3214/351/4). 'Roderick Random' was also used on local cattle and was the subject of a lengthy correspondence between Richard Baker and George Carrington, a fellow Shorthorn breeder in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire (DE3214/7773/1). In 1838 Carrington seems to have been determined to acquire 'The Kicker' and expected to discuss the matter with Baker at Smithfield, hoping to convince him that the bull would be used on first rate stock. Richard Baker's point that he was doing more good used on local cows in Rutland was thought to be more 'honorable

than profitable'. George Carrington believed that if Baker could see the exceptional cow from which he promised the first bull calf by 'Roderick Random' he would be convinced. Eventually, they agreed terms and 'Roderick Random' was to be dispatched, on foot, on 1st April 1839 for 200 guineas in ready money. Baker retained the right to send four cows or heifers to him at Missenden to be served every year free of charge.

Transporting Livestock

How these cattle would travel was not discussed but among Baker's papers there is interesting material about how, in the early years before the railways, stock was moved for showing in London. Although it was perfectly possible for ordinary butcher's cattle to walk from Rutland to London, show animals destined for one of the big London events were not expected to walk there and risk losing condition. In 1834, Richard Baker hired a team of horses from Hunt's in Stamford to transport his show animal in a wagon to the Smithfield showground. The team was to arrive at the farm in Cottesmore at 4am on the Monday morning and they promised to deliver the animal to the showground early on the Wednesday morning. The cost to Richard Baker was £9. Other stock was moved in horse-drawn wagons from Oakham to London in the same way. Mr Stimson's sheep were mentioned as needing to be brought to Stamford to start their journey, and an ox from Mr Smith of Burley, who went on to win a first prize in his class, also travelled to London in a horse-drawn wagon from Hunt's (DE3214/7437) (*cf* fig. 45). He may have used the same system for the shows at Lincoln, Grantham and Bourne but he probably walked his show animals to Waltham, no great distance from Cottesmore, and into Oakham for the fatstock show there.

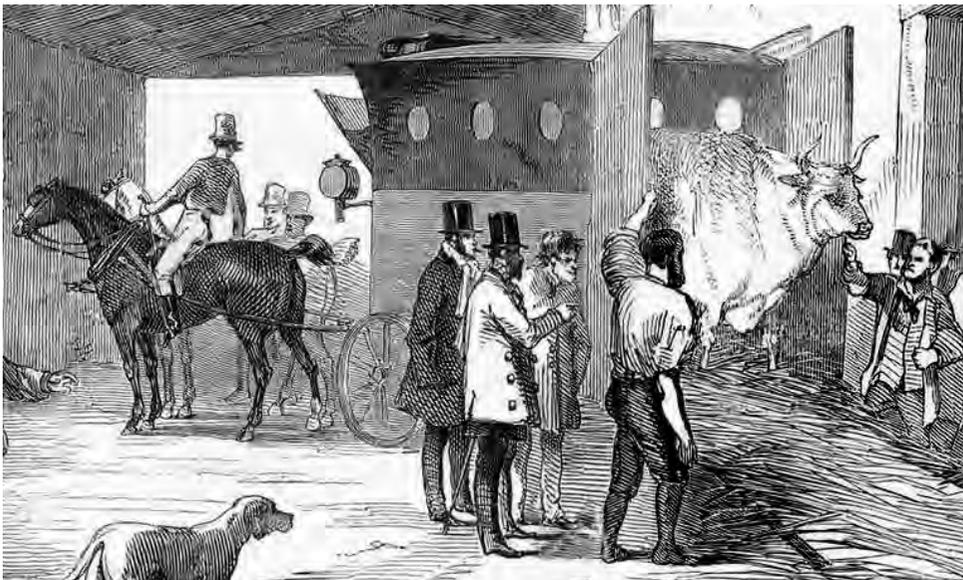


Fig. 45. Fat cattle arriving at the Baker Street Horse Bazaar, London, for the Smithfield Club Show, December 1846 (Illustrated London News, 12th December 1846, 8).

By 1850, the railway line between London and Peterborough had been built and with the line from Peterborough to Syston via Oakham already open in 1848, it became possible to travel from Rutland to London by rail and to send livestock the same way. In 1854, a cattle truck from Oakham to Peterborough cost 13s and Richard Baker hired two horse boxes for the remainder of the journey for £1 8s 6d. The cattle were accompanied by his chief cowman, Edward Buckle, and two others at 3d each and their destination was Fenchurch Street station. The cattle travelled on sawdust bedding as the station forbade the use of straw (DE3214/7773).

The Leicestershire and Rutland Agricultural Association

Richard Baker's widely admired Ploughing Meetings focused on methods of cultivation which could be applied widely to farmland in Rutland, and in the early 1830s there was no corresponding occasion where the expert breeding and feeding of livestock could be demonstrated. However, there had been a precedent before Richard Baker became Sir Gerard Noel's Steward. It had been an outdoor event in Exton Park which was both a ploughing meeting and a livestock show.

In 1788, an organisation called the Leicestershire and Rutland Agricultural Association was formed, perhaps, like its successor the Rutland Association in 1822, to draw the attention of Parliament to the social and economic problems of the countryside. But it also saw a role in promoting a wool show in Leicester and an outdoor summer agricultural show. This probably started off as an annual event. The schedule of the 1806 show is reported by Parkinson (1808, 176–9). In 1811, the society planned to put on a spring show at Oakham supported by Sir Gerard Noel and his then Steward, Thomas Dain. Dain, after discussion with Sir Gerard, proposed that the site was moved from Oakham to Exton Park where there was a large field suitable for ploughing competitions and sufficient space in the park to erect pens for the livestock show (DE3214/6978). Dain was pessimistic about the success of such a venture as '*only Mr Eaton's sheep are likely to come and a plough or two*'. He was, however, proved wrong. The show, which had to be postponed in 1811 owing to Sir Gerard Noel's indisposition, was advertised in the *Leicester Journal* on 2nd February 1812 and it eventually took place on Thursday 12th March. The day's events and the results of the prize winners were also reported in the *Leicester Journal*. The main attraction had been the ploughing competition for which there were sixteen entries. Cattle, sheep and pigs were displayed in pens in the Park and there was a threshing machine to admire, powered by a windmill and erected on the site by Mr Wilson of Leicester. This horizontal windmill, patented by Mr Long, a Leicester surgeon, was reported to have '*won a gold medal from this society three years back*', so these meetings may have been taking place for some time. '*At about three o'clock, upward of one hundred and fifty gentlemen and agriculturists sat down to an excellent dinner in the Great Hall, at Exton, provided by Colonel Noel, with the true spirit of English Hospitality.*' After the dinner, the judges announced their adjudication of premiums, followed by speeches and toasts, and '*Col Noel's excellent band ... played several pieces of music*' (LJ 20th March 1812, 3).

This event had initially escaped the notice of Richard Parkinson who, in his *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Rutland* of 1808 had written, '*There are no agricultural societies*

in this county, which is much to be regretted, as they are a very great spur to emulation in all farming improvements'. However, he did correct himself in a later passage and as noted above gave a detailed account of the Leicestershire and Rutland's Association's show in Exton Park in 1806 (Parkinson 1808, 176–9). After the 1812 show the Leicester and Rutland Association seems to have faded out. The Exton show seems to have been its last annual event and by the time Richard Baker became Exton Estate Steward in 1828 the meetings of the Association was no longer reported in the *Leicester Journal*. Although, in his 1820 letter to Sir Gerard Noel on the state of farming in Rutland, Baker followed Parkinson in regretting the lack of a local show, he will have been aware that agricultural shows had been held in Exton Park. When Baker set about raising interest for an annual show in Oakham it was with a specific purpose in mind (DE3214/7777). In 1835, he wrote that the Rutland Agricultural Society '*originated under the impression that much good would arise from a public exhibition of livestock once a year in Oakham*' and that '*the premiums offered by such a society never failed to do good*' (DE3214/7038). Richard Baker was considered to be an excellent showman and believed attending shows to be one of the best ways of communicating to other farmers the art of breeding successful '*improved*' animals, both cattle and sheep.

The Rutland Agricultural Society and Show

In 1831 Richard Baker was involved, with other interested farmers, in setting up a new agricultural society in Rutland. The history of the foundation of the Rutland Agricultural Society has been covered in detail by T H McK Clough (Clough 1981). This new venture came about as part of the drive to establish a better market in Oakham for both corn and livestock. In 1831 Richard Baker was part of a group of 33 farmers and tradesmen meeting at the Crown Inn in Oakham on 9th September to discuss '*the best means of improving the corn market*' and '*encouraging a Cattle Market*' in the town. The main improvement to be made at this time was the abolition of the Town Tolls, and the next market, on Monday 19th October, was a great success. Looking ahead to a similarly successful Christmas market in Oakham, there was a discussion about awarding premiums for the best cattle shown on the day for the market to be held on Monday 5th December 1831. A meeting at the George Inn, with Samuel Cheetham in the chair, set out the schedule and premiums for the '*Society for promoting the interest of the New Market established in Oakham*'. Sir Gerard Noel was invited to be the president of the new society and Richard Baker, along with John Painter of Burley and Valentine Baines of Brooke, were show stewards for 1831. Sir Gerard Noel offered the use of his Riding School in Catmose Street, built by him in 1794–95 as a space in which his Rutland Fencible Cavalry regiment could train. It was an ideal place for an indoor livestock show, with cattle tied in stalls, each beast accompanied by its card giving the name of its owner and breeder and how it had been fed. The attendance at this first Christmas show '*very much exceeded the most sanguine expectations*'.

After two more successful shows in 1832 and 1833, the new society abandoned its original lengthy and cumbersome title in favour of the '*Rutland Agricultural Society*', and held its '*anniversary*' show in Oakham in 1834. It was reported in the *Leicester Journal* and was clearly

another very successful event. At the dinner Sir Gerard Noel left the meeting and handed over the role as president to 'General Johnson' – Lt-Gen William Augustus Johnson of Witham-on-the-Hill, Lincolnshire (see p85) (Needham 2017, 298). Wanting to thank them for their efforts, he asked for the names of the show committee and it became evident that the show was run very much on an informal basis by its members without a designated show committee.

Alerted by this to potential problems with the organisation of the show, the following year, in 1835, Richard Baker published a printed pamphlet directed to the President, Vice-Presidents and members of the Rutland Agricultural Society. In it he pointed out that Rutland is an almost purely agricultural county in which '*1910 labourers were employed in agriculture with only 12 employed in manufacture*'. As a farmer with a long-established interest in breeding livestock Baker believed a livestock show once a year in Oakham was desirable '*to address both the breeding of good stock and to educate people in the art of feeding*'. As already mentioned he thought it was not good practice to purchase cattle or sheep, bring them into Rutland from a distance and feed them '*to an extraordinary level of fatness*' for the show ring. Exhibitors at Oakham had to provide evidence that their exhibit had been their property for the last six months. He reiterated the importance of certificates with each exhibit noting its owner and breeder and its feeding regime. It was also expected that all exhibitors should have paid 5s to become members of the Society. He addressed the problem of the non-existent show committee, the election of which by the membership he thought was '*absolutely necessary*' to manage the show. He proposed a committee of ten, nominated by the membership, to draw up rules, prepare a schedule and decide the premiums (DE3214/7777).

On the subject of the schedule, Richard Baker based his remarks on the existing schedule for 1834. He stated again the established rules that all exhibitors had to adhere to. In the revised schedule of 1835, classes were proposed for animals under various specified feeding regimes, there were classes for cattle under five years old whose feed had been unrestricted, cattle denied corn feed from February to August and hence fed wholly on grass during the summer months, and cattle fed throughout only on grass. With this kind of information on feeding for all livestock entries, Richard Baker believed that useful comparisons could be made between the different breeds of cattle, sheep and pigs, indicating how their mature size and their rate of growth could be determined both by their breeding and by their feeding regime. This would be of interest to spectators and above all to livestock farmers who could observe the superiority of different cattle breeds for particular purposes. He also devised the form of certificate which had to be attached to each animal's pen (DE3214/7813).

All stock had to be in the Riding School by 7am on the day of the show and the '*Ordinary*', or celebratory meal, would take place at 3pm in the Crown Hotel to end the day. Prizes were to be awarded in future for cattle in milk as well as fatstock, and there were to be more classes for equine breeding stock, particularly mares and foals, and, to encourage small farmers to enter, prizes for crops, including wheat, barley, oats and root crops.

In 1836 Sir Gerard Noel, unable to be present at the Oakham show as he was in Kent, wrote to Richard Baker with his regrets and sent £10 as a donation to the Society '*which I consider such a benefit to the county and for which the county is so much indebted to you*'.

The Bull Premium

In addition to premiums awarded at the main Christmas show, there was provision in March or April, at the beginning of the breeding season, for a competition to award premiums for male animals – bulls, boars and stallions – of particularly noteworthy quality to serve female stock at a reasonable fee on Rutland farms. This was an important aspect of the work of the Rutland Agricultural Society show committee, namely to spread the use of the best quality sires throughout the farming community. In 1835, the bull premium was won by Richard Baker's bull 'Gainsborough'. Cows usually went to him at Cottesmore and the 10s fee was entered in Richard Baker's Bull Book (DE3214/7421). The winner of the stallion premium, not Richard Baker's horse on this occasion, was required to go to the Uppingham and Oakham markets during the season and usually stood in his owner's stable yard on Sundays. During the week, the stallion and his groom would travel to visit local mares (fig. 46). Unfortunately, there is no record of any later premiums offered by the Society in this way.



Fig. 46. A travelling stallion and his groom setting out in Cambridgeshire (The Blackbrook Gallery).

The Rutland Agricultural Society's Christmas show was a success and continues as an annual event today, but now it is held in the summer as an outdoor event. Initial attempts to hold a separate show in September had failed in Richard Baker's day and for many years the show continued primarily as a winter fatstock show held in December (*MLE* 1848, 3).

Waltham Agricultural Society

We know from the above that Baker showed his stock locally (fig. 47) at Waltham and at Bourne, and schedules for both shows are among his papers. Successful showing can often lead to bitter personal rivalries and it is clear from the press reports on the meetings of the Waltham Agricultural Society from 1840 to 1842 that Richard Baker had his enemies as well as his friends among livestock breeders. In the Waltham Show cattle classes on 27th September 1841 Baker entered a red steer as being under three years old. The animal won its class and the £3 prize money was handed over. There was, however, an objection and Baker was asked to appear before the show committee in the following winter. The steer in question was calved in the spring of 1839 and had been shown at the December fatstock show in Oakham as being



Fig. 47. A prize-winning short-horn heifer in 1841, bred in Leicestershire and contemporary with R W Baker's 'The Neat One' (The Blackbrook Gallery).

under two years old. It was still under two when it was entered again in the Oakham Show in 1840, but the Oakham stewards asked him to withdraw it. This he did, as it avoided a prize being awarded twice to the same animal. Richard Baker believed that it was this entirely correct withdrawal that had caused confusion over the animal's age. Various attempts were made to allow Baker to verify the breeding of this steer, but as he had just held his main reduction sale and his paperwork was in some confusion, his detractors were able to take advantage and claim that his evidence as to the age of the steer was not satisfactory. As a result, at a meeting in Waltham in March 1842, the committee expelled him from the Waltham Show Society. This case, vigorously pursued against Baker by Mr Thomas Healy of Ashwell, seems to have been an attempt to destroy his reputation. His letter to *The Times* on 20th April 1842, under the heading '*The Waltham Agricultural Society. Statement of Mr Baker*', was his spirited response. In his conclusion he stated:

I trust that all who read this paper will rise from the perusal of it with the conviction that I have not misstated the age of the steer; that the apparent inconsistency of it having been exhibited at Oakham, in December 1839, as then under one year and six months, is explained by the correspondence which took place in the year following, when it was distinctly admitted that the animal was then qualified to be exhibited as being at the time under two years old; that I have shown the fallacy of the statement made in the stewards report, that I produced to them documents made up for the purpose; and, lastly that the assertion that I have withheld a particular book, called "the herd book", has no foundation whatever in fact.

According to the *Stamford Mercury* (SM 2nd Dec 1842, 2) the 'notorious red steer' made one final appearance. He was entered for the Rutland Show in December 1842. However his winning prize of £15 was withheld, unsurprisingly in the circumstances but much to Baker's annoyance. The Waltham expulsion and this last disgrace seems to have made little difference to Richard Baker's standing in Rutland. He was invited to judge the cattle at the Rutland show in 1848 (MLE 1848, 4) and continued to exhibit annually at Smithfield, being particularly successful at his last Smithfield in 1860 from where he returned in triumph with his third Gold Medal, his first having been with his heifer in 1837 and his second in 1845.

6 – Rural Society on the Noel Estates

Poverty among Agricultural Workers

By the beginning of the nineteenth century parliamentary surveys and other contemporary sources identified poverty among agricultural workers as the main reason for the social problems in the countryside (Burchardt 2002, 3).

As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the main reasons for widespread poverty was considered to be the forced enclosure of villages, depriving the cottagers of the means of subsistence on the open fields and commons, and forcing many small farmers, cottagers and squatters into a wage-earning economy. However, the period after 1815 saw widespread agricultural depression as grain prices fell. At the same time, outgoings, especially rents, were slow to take account of the reduced incomes of farmers on the Exton estate and elsewhere. The result was that labour on farms became unaffordable and agricultural labourers were thrown out of work or only employed in busy times such as harvest. On the Exton Estate, for the rest of the year, work was difficult to find. There is no clear and definitive picture among historians of the effect of enclosure on rural society generally, but in *The Midland Peasant* W G Hoskins surveyed the effect on villagers in a south Leicestershire community where he identified the main sufferers as the poor, the collapse of the peasant economy forcing many into wage-earning when there was a chronic shortage of employment (Hoskins 1957, 267–72; Snell 1985, ch 4).

The General Enclosure Acts in 1836 and 1845 made it possible for landowners to enclose land without reference to Parliament as long as a majority of them, in value and in number, agreed to do so. The Act of 1845 and later amendments attempted to provide better protection for the interests of small proprietors and the public. By this time almost all of Rutland had been enclosed. The exceptions were Thorpe by Water, Barrowden and the Luffenhams, where enclosure of the open fields was resisted until 1881 (Ryder 2006, 55).

Whereas in the past cottagers may have been able to grow their own potatoes and vegetables and keep a cow on the commons, in many cases they were now deprived of all but wage-earning for subsistence. For many their standard of living was dramatically reduced. In 1824 weekly wages fell from 15s to 13s and by 1833 they had dropped to 10s. A greater problem, though, was probably under-employment and many were out of work from November to March (Hoskins 1957, 262–7). As Richard Baker wrote in 1834, '*Enclosures leave the common man without even common right*' (noted by the anonymous author of a tract published in 1834, DE3214/5069). Some poor peasant farmers may have joined the exodus from the countryside to the towns in search of work, but for those who remained wage-earning on the land, particularly in Rutland with few alternative occupations and no large industrial towns nearby, farm labour was the only possible source of income, after which

necessity dictated the parish fund for poor relief.

Richard Baker noted that tenant farmers were also affected. The high prices available in the war years enabled landlords to charge relatively high rents. With the collapse of prices at the end of the war, many tenants pleaded for a reduction in rent. This would have been supported by Layton Cooke. In his survey of the Exton estate in 1824 he had noted the high rents set when farming was enjoying those high prices and warned the Trustees that matters could not continue (DE3214/6892). On the Chipping Campden estate Lord Barham was able to reduce rents when he saw good reason, but on the Rutland estates Richard Baker was told by Noel's Trustees that even a modest reduction would bankrupt the Trust. As a result, there was a move to amalgamate farms and some old tenants were '*set adrift*'. Baker discusses this question in his account of the state of agriculture in 1820 (DE3214/7038).

Richard Baker had had first-hand experience of the issues facing the poor as parish overseer in Market Overton in 1821. He believed that the happiness and well-being of the poor greatly contributed to the happiness of all other people and, like many of his contemporaries, he believed that problem was due to the continued low prices of agricultural produce which resulted in greater unemployment of labourers.

William Cobbett, who visited Leicestershire in his Midland Tour in 1830, noted not only the beauties of the landscape around Melton and Leicester, but the extreme poverty in the villages, where the parson's house, '*large and in the midst of pleasure gardens*', contrasted sharply with the '*hovels made of mud and straw; bits of glass or of old off cast windows ... the bits of chairs and stools, the wretched boards tacked together to form a table; the floor of pebble, broken brick or the bare ground ... the rags on the backs of the wretched inhabitants*'. He saw the dangers of allowing a large underclass of hungry and hopeless individuals, brought about through unemployment, to develop in the rural areas (Cobbett 1853, 266).

In 1830–31 rioting in rural areas did indeed take place although not in Rutland. The notorious Captain Swing riots in southern counties took place, mainly but not exclusively, in newly enclosed areas (Snell 1985, 222–3). These riots were focused on the introduction of threshing machines and the loss of desperately needed winter employment, but it was a lesson to all rural employers that a contented workforce was as necessary in rural areas as in the towns. The fact that rioting was going on elsewhere and not necessarily in the immediate neighbourhood made no difference to the landowners concerned. It was a pervasive cultural belief based on the reported experience of rioting and rick burning that the rural poor could become dangerously disaffected (Burchardt 2002, 70–1).

Cow Pastures

In an attempt to improve the lives of rural labourers, both before and after enclosure, some estates allocated land in their villages to be kept as pasture where cottagers were able to rent sufficient land to graze their cows. The laying out of cow pastures, noted with approval by Arthur Young in Rutland and Lincolnshire, was one way to provide help to poor agricultural labourers. Some of the Exton estate villages had cow pastures, and the rents paid for a holding there appear in the estate rentals. In order for this system to work a considerable

acreage was needed to provide summer grazing for cottagers' cows and the means of making hay for winter keep. Eventually the practical difficulties of providing grazing for everyone who qualified meant that the system was abandoned.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the provision of cow pastures in eastern counties, especially in Rutland and Lincolnshire, was still common. James Gourlay, sent by the Board of Agriculture to the area, reported back enthusiastically, noting the lower parish rates in the parishes where they were provided. In his report on agriculture in Rutland to the Board of Agriculture in 1808 Richard Parkinson gives an account of the cow pastures which survived at that date. He was particularly impressed by those on the Earl of Winchilsea's estate at Burley on the Hill (Parkinson 1808, 101–04). He notes that in that part of the county the Poor Rates were generally relatively low because in many parishes the poor had acquired '*small portions of land, sufficient to keep one or two cows*'.

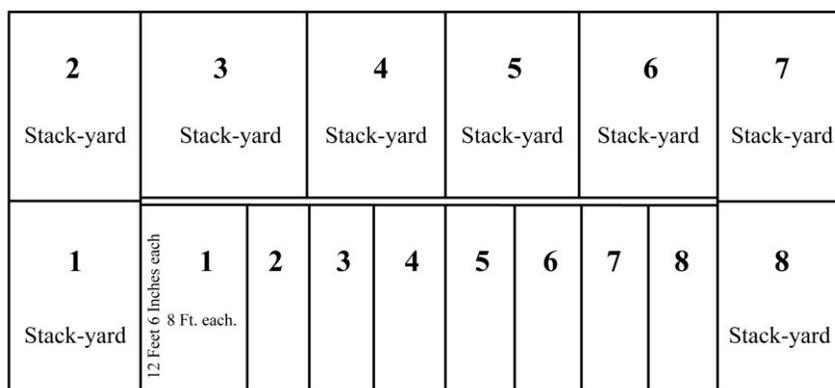


Fig. 48. Diagram of a hovel for the Burley cow pastures, divided by 'studd partitions' (after Parkinson 1808, 101).

The most impressive example of this was in Hambleton parish where 114 acres of village land had been given over to 91 cottagers' cows, for which the villagers were each paying 30s a year in rent. In the neighbouring village of Egleton, 35 acres were given over to cow pastures for 28 cows, again at 30s a year. Greetham also had a village cow pasture of 67 acres for 29 cattle. In Greetham, as in most villages, the rule was that all the stock had to be removed at Michaelmas (29th September) for the winter and no stock was allowed on the land until it had dried out in the spring, usually on May Day. Only at Burley does Parkinson record that regular provision was made for winter keep. His diagram (fig. 48) and description (Parkinson 1808, 101) illustrate the system used. The 24-acre cow pasture there was split into two closes, one grazed in summer, the other used to make hay. There was a 'hovel' built between the two closes, providing stalls for cattle in winter and barn storage for the hay, a satisfactory practical solution for the villagers and their cattle.

Other Rutland villages, mainly on the Exton Estate, also had established cow pastures after enclosure. Parkinson mentions the ones he saw, or heard of, in Ketton, Langham, Lyndon and Whissendine, and at Empingham on the Normanton Estate owned by the Heathcotes. There

Cow pastures

were probably several others, perhaps including Cottesmore. Here, on the estate map of 1805, there was an enclosure called Cottage Pasture divided into ten small plots of a little over an acre each (DE3214/146/15) which in all probability were used as grazing for village cows.

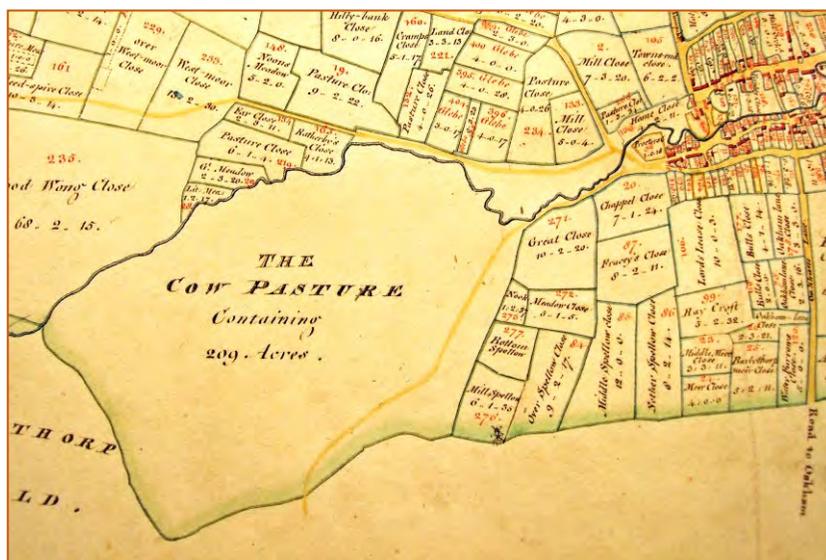


Fig. 49. The Langham cow pasture as it appears on a survey and map of Langham, 1760 (Exton Hall).

In the early years of Richard Baker's connection with the Exton estate, there were still several cow pastures recorded in the rentals for which cottagers paid one to two guineas annually. The largest of the Exton estate cow commons was in Langham where there was grazing for 64 cows held in common, with the equivalent of about one acre each, let to cottagers (DE3214/4903/1–12). In 1817, for example, the rental shows that Robert Johnson held a house and homestead for which he paid £4 annual rent, a one-acre close for which he paid £2 15s, and the right to put a cow on the village cow common for which he paid £1 15s a year. Similarly, Alice Miller had a house, a close and three cow commons for which she paid £15 12s. The cows would be grazed together in an unfenced area of pasture, allocated for a cottager's cow pasture when the village was enclosed. The site appears on maps of the village in 1760 (fig. 49), but when Layton Cooke's map of the estate was made in 1824 a part of the Langham cow common had already been enclosed. A field in Langham still bears the name Cow Pasture (Cox 1994, 93) but as in most areas in Rutland all visible trace of its earlier usage has disappeared.

When Richard Baker became Steward in 1828, the practice of allocating cow pastures to cottagers had declined but the estate would have supported the principle of giving poor agricultural labourers a stake in the land and the means to better themselves and improve their diet by growing some of their own food.

Cow pastures were not popular with everyone. Farmers, for example, saw their provision as likely to be a distraction from farm work and estate owners will have thought the amount

of land needed wasteful. Nevertheless they usually had the advantage of giving labourers a stake in their village fields and reducing expenditure on poor relief. It was also generally thought beneficial that their children had access to fresh milk. This was becoming increasingly scarce, even in the countryside, particularly in arable areas. It was against this background that Richard Baker and his employer tried to find practical but more economical ways of restoring some measure of self-sufficiency to the labouring poor.

In Rutland, the state of agricultural labour was probably similar to that in other parts of the East Midlands where the poor could be found dying in ditches with only grass in their stomachs (DE3214/5069).

Richard Baker, who in his time as a young man in Market Overton had been directly involved with the work of the parish, was scathing about the inefficiencies of the parish system of local government and believed that the senior officers, the Overseers of the Poor and Overseers of the Highways, should be professional men whose positions were salaried. This, among other thoughts, appeared in a strongly worded letter he wrote to arouse the interest and support of his employer Sir Gerard Noel, which he printed and distributed as an *Address to the Landowners of England* in 1830, outlining his views on the best ways to deal with rural poverty (DE3214/7767). He approached this problem on two platforms. The first was to set up a Friendly Society or Club to provide agricultural labourers with some financial insurance against hardship. This, when he planned it, would be '*a society which will afford relief in sickness, and a refuge from the evils of poverty and dependence in old age*' (DE3214/ 66/9/1–2). The second was to set up an organisation to provide small parcels of land, or spade allotments, to provide a stake in the land. These small holdings, to be worked by hand, were to enable labourers to grow their own bread, corn, potatoes and vegetables.

The Rutland Friendly Society

As early as 1794 Crutchley (1794, 23) knew of '*several friendly societies in the county, encouraged by gentlemen*', and Parkinson (1808, 164) mentions with approval several places in the county where '*gentlemen*' had set up similar organisations to help the poor. Thus, if Richard Baker were to set up a new Rutland Friendly Society, it would not be particularly unusual. However, he seems to have been well aware of the reputations of some of the older Friendly Societies and similar organisations, disparaging them as '*feasting societies, old and rotten*'. They had been founded initially with the intention of doing good for their members but some had lapsed into becoming social clubs, spending their subscriptions on dinners and drinking and in some cases ending up bankrupt with losses for all their members.

Richard Baker therefore took time to consider his own venture into this field, taking advice widely before settling on a constitution and rules. He corresponded with the local clergy and with the Rev John Hodgson of Sittingbourne, Kent, to whom he agreed to send the rules of the new Rutland society for approval. Initially he may have intended to base his Rutland society on Hodgson's Kent Friendly Society founded in 1830. After consideration though, Baker's Rutland society was based on the Alfreton District Friendly and Provident Society for the Benefit of the Working Class, founded by the Jessop family at the nearby

Butterley Ironworks. He obtained copies of the rules and procedures adopted in Alfreton and then adapted the wording so that they were appropriate for Rutland. He named the members of the committee, with Sir Gerard Noel as chairman and himself as secretary, and, after printing by J Daniells of Uppingham, he sent the rules to the Rev John Hodgson for comment and approval. After this they were submitted to the Rutland magistrates to approve their legal status. An advertisement announcing the foundation of Rutland General Friendly Institution and inviting subscriptions was then placed in the *Stamford Mercury* at a cost of 10s (*SM*, 22nd June 1832, 3) (fig. 50).

Proposals for establishing a FRIENDLY INSTITUTION upon the IMPROVED PRINCIPLE, and in conformity with the Act 10 Geo. 4.

THE COTTESMORE and COUNTY of RUTLAND General FRIENDLY INSTITUTION will be established in the present year, 1832, for the purpose of raising from time to time, by subscriptions of the Members thereof, or by voluntary contributions or by donations, a Stock or Fund, for the mutual relief and maintenance of all and every the ordinary Members or Depositors thereof, their Wives, or Children, or other Relations, by assuring certain payments in Sickness, certain sums payable on Death, certain annuities in Old Age, and certain sums as Endowments for Children, according to tables calculated by way of average, and in strict conformity with the statute.

A Meeting will be held in the School-Room, COTTESMORE, on THURSDAY, JUNE 28th, 1832, at Four o'clock in the afternoon, to appoint a Committee, and to transact other business relating to the proposed Institution, when the attendance of the friends of the plan is requested.—Signed, on the part of the Meeting present,
H. NEVILE, Chairman.
School-room, Cottesmore, June 19, 1832.

County of Rutland General Friendly Institution.

—At the annual meeting of this institution, (established at Cottesmore in 1832,) held at the school-room, Cottesmore, on the 3d Inst., it appeared that since its formation, 254 members had been admitted; that in the last year endowments had been paid, and for relief in sickness, amounting to 97l. 14s.; that the funds had increased 109l. 6s. 10½d.; and that the property of this useful society now amounts to 1162l. 5s. 6½d.; of which sum 1025l. 3s. was deposited in the Bank of England, 131l. 16s. 10½d. in Stamford Savings Bank, and 5l. 5s. 8d. was in the treasurer's hands.

Fig. 50 (left). Advertisement proposing the establishment of a Cottesmore and Rutland General Friendly Institution (*SM*, 22nd June 1832, 3).

Fig. 51 (above). Report of the Annual Meeting of the Friendly Institution (*SM*, 11th June 1841).

The Rutland General Friendly Institution was set up in Cottesmore in 1832, meeting every month in the schoolroom to take subscriptions, which were to be made according to a table in the rules and depended on age. People who made the small regular payments would be guaranteed a modest income if they were unable to find work or became sick. The Institution would also provide members with a small amount towards their burial. Other financial benefits included supporting women in childbirth and there were allowances for working men unable to earn a living through sickness or accident.

In July 1833, a meeting took place in the Falcon hotel in Uppingham to set up a branch in the town to serve working people in the southern half of the county. A committee was established and there was agreement to meet at the National School on the first Tuesday of the month to receive subscriptions. At the Annual General Meeting held in Cottesmore in 1841 it was clear that the new Institution had been a success and was poised to grow rapidly. By 1836, 181 members had been enrolled from 20 different parishes and the Society had accumulated £432. Ten years after its inception 254 members had been admitted (*SM*, 11th June 1841, 3) (fig. 51).

White's trade directory for Leicestershire & Rutland of 1846 shows the numbers were still increasing and records 346 members drawn from 28 parishes. By 1855 the Institution had

capital worth £2,544 and by 1877 it held over £3,000 in funds (White 1846, 671).

The success of organisations like this probably owed much to the deep distrust of state intervention and the social stigma of pauperism. This was made worse by the provisions of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act (*sv* Wikipedia 1834) which superseded the old parish system of poor relief with the creation of poor law unions and the building of regional workhouses. Under the Act there was no system of outdoor relief like that provided by the parish where men and women lived at home and were provided with small weekly sums of money. If people were able to work, that work had to be undertaken in the workhouse. This did not of course address the problem of under-employment and the seasonal nature of farm work among farm labourers. To avoid the stigma of the workhouse, labourers, no longer cared for by their parishes, needed the kind of security the small subscriptions to a Friendly Society could provide.

The Spade Allotment System on the Exton Estate

The second of Richard Baker's proposals for improving the lives of poor agricultural workers was to set up an organisation to provide many of them with small parcels of land, or spade allotments, to be worked by hand. His approach to this was outlined in his *Address to Landowners* in 1830. The allotments were to be set out in the villages on land provided either by the landlord or the church and were to be cultivated in accordance with strict rules laid down at the outset by Baker (transcribed in Appendix 7). Plots were to be no more than three roods or less than one and a half roods in extent and be divided into three equal cropping areas. One third was to be used for grain, usually wheat or barley for bread making, one third for potatoes, and the remainder for carrots, peas and cabbages or other green vegetables. The tenants would hold the plot for a year, beginning sometime in the growing season between April and October, pay a rent comparable with that for local farmland, pay tithes and other parish dues, and agree to abide by the Rules.

Allotments were not always popular with farmers. They needed their farm workers to be available when needed, particularly at harvest time and to be fit enough for a hard day's work, rather than be exhausted by work on their own plot. They were also worried by the potential independence of their workers once they had acquired some land of their own. In order to counter this, Baker had drawn up what he hoped were the best provisions to make sure the interests of farmers were protected by the appropriate rules. Tenants were not allowed to work on their allotments after 6am or before 6pm on weekdays, unless with permission, making sure that they would be available for work during the day. No one was allowed to cultivate their allotment on a Sunday and attendance at a place of worship was compulsory.

During his life Richard Baker became well known for his liking for using prizes and competitions to stimulate improved standards. The allotments were subjected to the same kind of regime as his agricultural society. From the beginning he planned an annual inspection and prize-giving of village allotments to take place in July or August. On the day of the inspection, the party of three judges and observers travelled in a carriage, or possibly a waggonette hired for the day. They visited the allotments in the villages in the southern part

of the Exton estate in the morning, returning to Exton Hall for dinner. In the afternoon, they travelled round the northern villages and ended with refreshments at Richard Baker's house. The *Stamford Mercury* usually reported the event and listed the judges and the prize-winners, as also might the *Farmers Magazine*, for example in 1836 in an article which was repeated in the *Labourers Friend Magazine* (1836, 210–13),

Richard Baker wrote many letters in connection with setting out the allotments, using his contacts to get sites in each village on the estate. He began to arrange the setting out of the plots in 1830, starting with Cottesmore, where there were 26 plots on a field to the west of the Market Overton road (fig. 52). Next was Barrow where there were 11 plots, followed by Exton where there were 66, by far the greatest number. The earliest allotment sites in the south of the county were at Ridlington where there were 19 plots (fig. 53), and at Uppingham he persuaded the rector, the Rev J G Dimock, to allocate church land for 27 allotments (fig. 54). He persuaded Sir Gerard Noel to provide Exton estate land at the other end of the town so allotment holders could have plots as close as possible to their homes.

The Exton Estate allotments came to the attention of the Royal Agricultural Society of England and in 1843 they asked for a report. Baker's handwritten document (fig. 55; DE3214/5070) includes a detailed history of the allotment system on the Exton estate in Rutland from the formation of the rules in 1830 to the more recent inspections, an explanation of the working of the system, and plans of all the allotments. It was submitted to the President and Members of the Society later in 1843, by which time a total of 149 individual allotments had been established.

The system clearly worked well and the allotments, and more particularly the system adopted by Richard Baker to manage them, led to other fields of allotments being established in Exton estate villages. The *Farmers Magazine*, in a comment on allotments in 1856, noted their success in Rutland where Baker's organisation had by then established 218 plots in twelve separate fields, all tenanted and under cultivation (*FM* 1856, 232). In the same year, an article in the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England* commented favourably on the system devised by Richard Baker, 'to which he has adhered with great success and now can show more than 200 of the best cultivated allotments in England'. It seems that the annual inspection and prize-giving, an integral part of Baker's system, was showing good results (*Journ Roy Agric Soc Eng* 1856, 96–7).

Other Allotment Schemes

Neither Richard Baker's Friendly Society, nor the allotment system he promoted, was entirely new in 1830. In addition to providing a leading role in establishing cow pastures for poor cottagers, by 1807 Lord Winchilsea's Burley estate in Rutland had also experimented with allotments. Parkinson mentions the three acres Lord Winchilsea had taken from a bean field and divided into 24 gardens which he let at 5s per year. He made the same arrangement with a 3½ acre close in Hambleton, divided into fourteen gardens and rented at 5s per year (Parkinson 1808, 104).

Although the Gloucestershire estate was run separately by Lord Barham, Sir Gerard

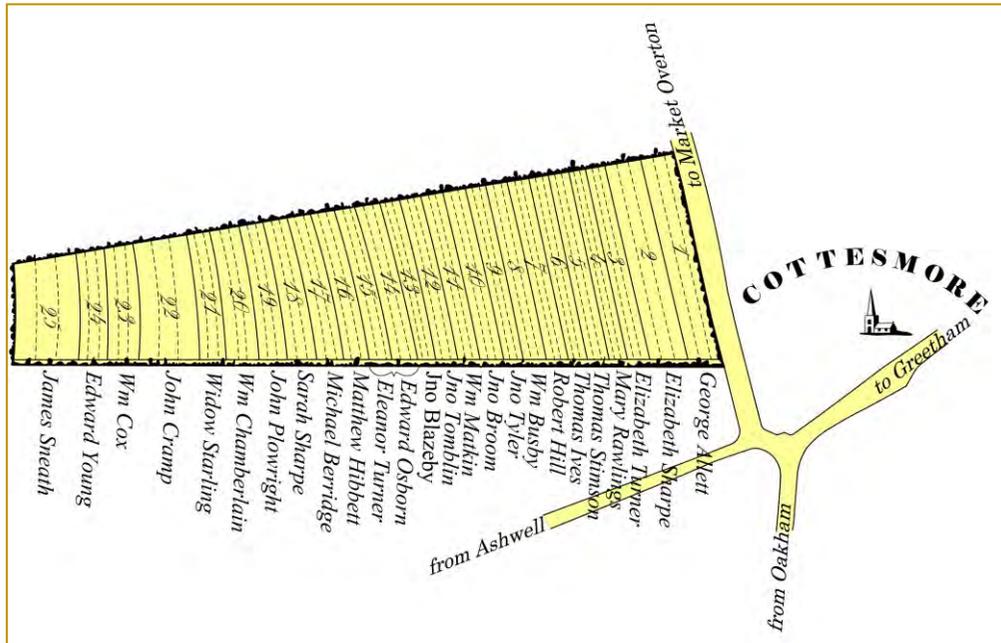


Fig. 52. Plan of the Cottismore allotments (redrawn from DE3214/5070).

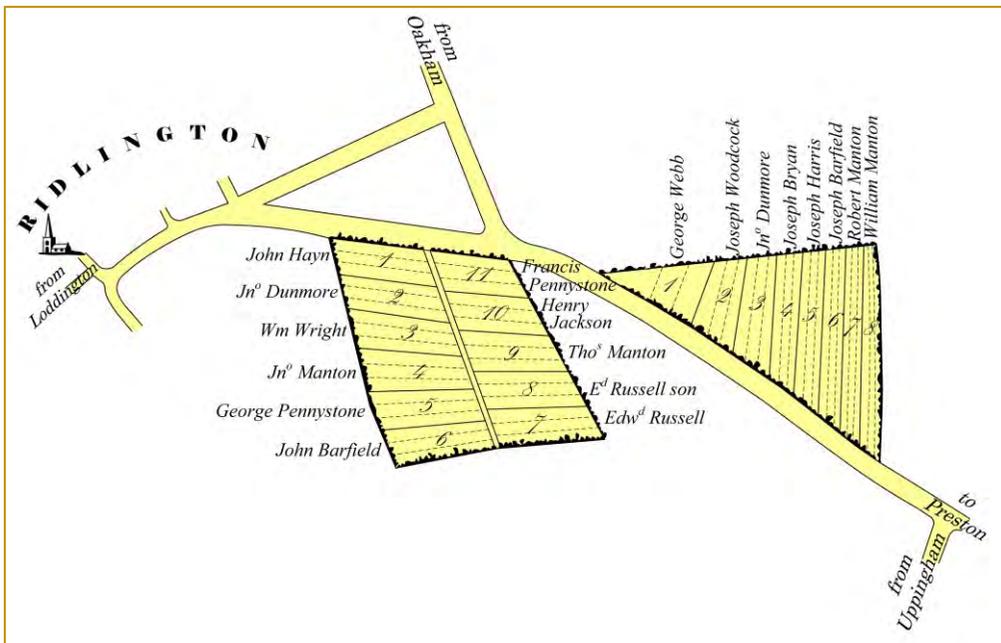


Fig. 53. Plan of the Ridlington allotments (redrawn from DE3214/5070).

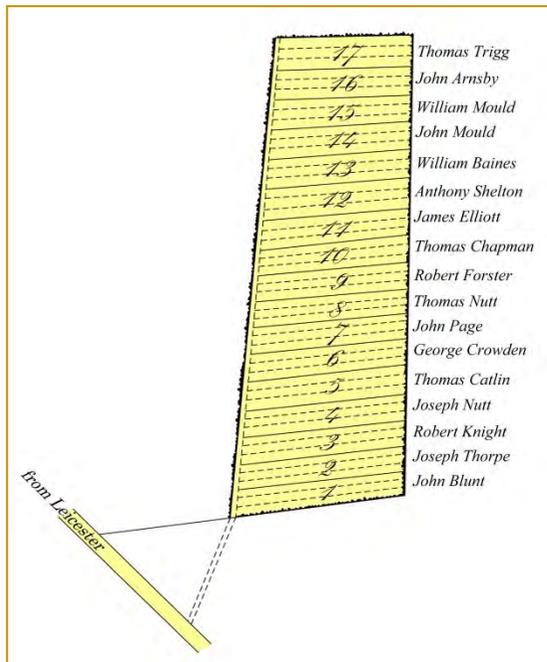


Fig. 54. Plan of the Uppingham allotments (redrawn from DE3214/5070).

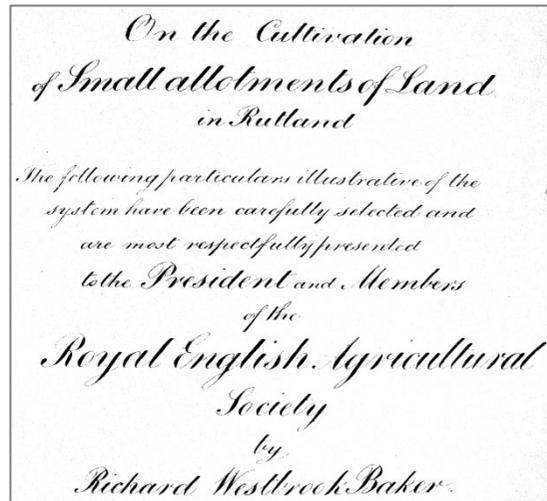


Fig. 55. Title page of R W Baker's 'Cultivation of Small Allotments' report for the Royal Agricultural Society (DE3214/5070).

Noel's eldest son, Richard Baker would also have been aware of the move by the steward, John Hickman, to establish spade allotments in Chipping Campden under the instructions of Lord Barham. They had been provided possibly from about 1817 and certainly by 1820. Their beginnings are interesting. John Hickman had been asked in 1819 to sound out the local farmers and their workers for their thoughts on the political situation, and their opinion on the radical ideas of some farmers. This was probably a response to the widely-reported riots in Manchester and the measures taken there by the magistrates (DE3214/49/16/1-49). The riots and the use of the local Yeomanry by the magistrates to have the speakers arrested had resulted in what became known as the Peterloo Massacre (*sv* Wikipedia 1819). This caused great outrage, rapidly spreading throughout the country. It seems likely that fear of similar rural uprisings in Chipping Campden was foremost in Lord Barham's mind when, in the very early years of the movement, he set up allotments in the township (*pers comm*, Judith Ellis of CADHAS).

The Labourers Friend Society

Richard Baker's allotment system on the Exton estate drew widespread approval and was publicised both locally and further afield by the Labourers Friend Society. It seems likely that the popularity of allotments in Rutland, as elsewhere, depended partly on the feeling or need for connection with the land by country people, separated from it by the new farming methods brought about by enclosure of their villages (Burchardt 2002, 76). Both Richard

Baker and Sir Gerard Noel agreed that poverty among agricultural labourers needed to be addressed in ways which did not undermine the independence of poor families nor put undue burdens on the parish rates. Allotments gave the poor a chance to better themselves by work on their own land to grow food for their families. The support of allotments by the Labourers Friend Society was based on a belief in the transformative effects of a properly run allotment system on rural society in a period of economic hardship and social unrest (Burchardt 2002, 86–7). In 1835, the *Stamford Mercury* (31st July 1835, 4), reporting on the annual judging of the allotments, noted *'[for the] Improvement in the condition of labourers especially when there is so much discontent among the labouring and poorer agricultural classes, benevolent and practical schemes like Mr Baker's do more to keep the lower orders peaceable, contented and industrious'*.

Even as early as 1819, before the Captain Swing riots in the early 1830s, it seems to have been Lord Barham's nervousness following the rioting among industrial workers in Manchester which prompted the setting up of more allotments in Chipping Campden. In Rutland, the speech by General W A Johnson at the Rutland Agricultural Society dinner in 1834 raised awareness of potential problems with incendiarism and fires nearer to home. General Johnson held estates at Witham on the Hill, Lincolnshire. He was a direct descendant of the Venerable Robert Johnson, the founder of Oakham and Uppingham Schools and Hospitals, and was Hereditary Trustee of that foundation until his death (Needham 2017, 298). He was also a magistrate and had opinions on how rural unrest, particularly incendiarism, could be handled. He believed that there should be a *'strict, rigid and large investigation into all the circumstance when a fire occurred and every person at all liable to suspicion should be made to give an account of himself'*. However, going to the heart of the problem, he maintained what was really needed was to feed the poor *'and put the diabolical crime out of the head of the poor man by filling his belly'*. He pointed out that many agricultural labourers were able to live reasonably well if they were in employment. The trouble arose among the unemployed workers who, under the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, were denied Poor Law support. If they were physically able to work but could find no employment they and their families had to go into the workhouse where work of some kind, often on the roads, was provided. The ending of parish outdoor relief was, he pointed out, an unintended result of the Act of 1834.

Allotments went to the heart of one of the main sources of unrest in farming districts, particularly under-employment of labourers in the winter months. Richard Baker, recognising this, made it a condition of the annual prize for the best farm on the estate, where, as well as fieldwork, good husbandry and the quality and profitability of stock, the provision of winter work for labourers was high on the list of objectives. The riots in the 1830s further south had targeted the hated threshing machines. They were protests against farmers who neglected to provide winter work, or who saw advantages to them, but not to their workforce, in mechanisation. The provision of allotments which gave labourers some independence in the face of a lack of wage-earning opportunities helped to settle potentially rebellious rural communities and was widely believed to have transformative effects on rural society as a whole.

7 – A Foremost Agriculturalist of his Day



Fig. 56. Twelve of the medals presented to R W Baker, mounted in a glazed frame (RCM 1982.66).

Successes

When Richard Baker died in January 1861 he was widely viewed in Rutland as a '*foremost agriculturalist of his day*', as recorded in his testimonial in the *Stamford Mercury* (22nd Aug 1862, 7, transcribed in Appendix 9). Mr Healy, a farmer from Lincolnshire and a judge at the 1834 Rutland Agricultural Show, praised Richard Baker in his speech at the show dinner. He said that Mr Baker, in the course of his work as Steward on the Exton estate, had converted rural Rutland within a few years '*from a desert to almost a paradise*' by the application of his ideas for improvement and the willing support of Sir Gerard Noel (*LJ*, 5th Dec 1834, 2). This was no small feat. Finding, as he did in 1820, that '*no man who knows what good farming is can say that Rutland is well cultivated*', he set about changing farming practices on the Exton estate in order to support more profitable farming, aiming to increase the income of the estate through rises in rent. His main showpiece was his annual Ploughing Meeting, a very popular event and much admired by his contemporaries as the cornerstone of his plans for agricultural change. There, on his farm in Cottesmore, skilful ploughing – the basis he believed of all farm work – could be taught by practical example, and the best ploughmen rewarded with appropriate prizes. It was at such meetings, as we have seen, that he introduced and arranged for demonstrations of new machines, which, after ploughing,



Fig. 57. Selection of medals presented to R W Baker:

- a) Silver medal, Smithfield Club, best beast extra stock, Christmas 1834 (RCM 1982.66.4);
- b) Gold medal, Rutland Agricultural Society, breeder of best beast in show yard, December 1838;
- c) Silver medal, Mr Baker's Cottesmore meeting, owner of first prize plough 3rd class, September 1834.



Fig. 58. Silver goblet awarded to R W Baker, owner of 1st prize plough, Class 2, Cottesmore Meeting, September 1831 (RCM 1995.35.1).



Fig. 59. Silver tankard awarded to R W Baker, best cultivated 10 acres of Swedish turnips, Rutland Agricultural Society, 1858 (RCM 1993.23.1).



Fig. 60. Silver salver awarded to R W Baker, breeder and feeder of 1st prize shorthorn ox, Class 1, Oakham Show, December 1831.

Executor of Sir Gerard Noel's Will

prepared the seedbed, sowed the seed, and weeded. Finally, there were new harvesting equipment and threshing machines to show to complete the process.

In 1857, in a note to Charles Noel, Sir Gerard's son and heir, Richard Baker wrote of his connection with the Exton estate from his first appointment in 1814 to his position in 1828 '*when those duties were increased in importance*' and he became Gerard Noel's Steward. He goes on, '*from that period great improvements have been effected upon the whole estate in Buildings, Drainage, more convenient holdings, Planting and in general Cultivation etc and it is admitted on all sides that in the ten years prior to the decease of the late Sir Gerard Noel Noel Bart in 1838 the position of the tenantry was greatly advanced*' (DE3214/7186). This was Baker's own opinion of the improvements he brought about on the farms of the Exton Estate, but it was a widely held view in Rutland that his work as an '*eminent agriculturalist*' had brought about great changes for the better. The crops grown on the Exton estate in 1856, in addition to the fallows, were wheat, barley and oats, beans, potatoes, mangolds, turnips and cabbages, grass for grazing and grass for hay. With these crops in rotation on Rutland farms he was able to promote livestock farming alongside arable crops, giving tenants an alternative market for their produce. He was also a successful farmer in his own right. The 1851 census shows that in addition to all his duties on the estate and in the community, he was farming 250 acres with the help of thirteen men. As a farmer and breeder, he won many medals and prizes for his livestock at local shows and at the Smithfield Show in London, his ploughmen won him silverware and medals in the ploughing competitions, and he also won a prize for his Swedish turnips (figs. 56–60). A catalogue of his memorabilia is given in Appendix 8.

Executor of Sir Gerard Noel's Will

On 22nd February 1838 Sir Gerard Noel Noel, Baronet, of Exton Park died, aged 78. He was buried on 7th March in the family vault in Exton Church. His will was read by his local solicitor, William Thompson of Barnfield, Stamford. Richard Baker was named as Sir Gerard's sole executor and he proved the will in London in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 28th April 1838.

In several respects, the death of Sir Gerard Noel was a watershed in Richard Baker's life. Much of the work he had done to improve farming in the Exton estate villages had been carried out with Sir Gerard's active support. His attitude towards the poor and the efforts he made, where he could, to improve their lives was supported enthusiastically by Sir Gerard who, with his own long-held political beliefs in supporting Whig social causes, gave his time and interest to his Steward wholeheartedly in this area. Baker must have missed his employer when he died. There must have been a very singular and unusual trust between them for him to be left in sole charge of carrying out Sir Gerard's wishes.

As sole executor to a man with a history of chaotic financial dealings and whose final years at Exton had been marked by eccentric and even unprovoked belligerent behaviour (causing one young man, after a fracas, to write to his grandfather in Stamford, '*everyone knows Sir Gerard is cracked*' (Noel 2004, 134–5)), Richard Baker had the huge task in sorting out the finances of the estate. Even though many of his peripheral holdings had been sold in

his lifetime to raise money, Sir Gerard Noel still held properties in London and elsewhere in the country. These included the landed estates at Exton in Rutland and Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire, all of which he had to manage and divide according to Sir Gerard's will. There was also his extensive family to consider. Sir Gerard and his first wife Diana Middleton, who had died in 1823, had eighteen children, some of them married with complicated financial arrangements for dowries and other marriage settlements. Sir Gerard's principal heir was his eldest son Charles, Lord Barham, who was to be granted the restored title of Earl of Gainsborough in 1841. In 1838 he believed his father's estate was insolvent although Richard Baker was not convinced. There were certainly grounds for believing that when all the money due from arrears of rent, overpaid bank charges and other items were calculated, there could have been several thousand pounds for Sir Gerard's heir (DE3214/4489). Charles ordered his solicitors, Messrs Bridges and Marsh in London, to set up an audit of the Noel estates, the finances of which, in Sir Gerard's day, had been in the hands of William Leake, his attorney and the manager of his Trust, and his solicitor John William Bury in Devonshire Street, London. Several years later Lord Gainsborough, still believing he faced '*absolute ruin*', ordered '*a decided retrenchment of expenditure*' on all his land. By the 1850s, the indebtedness of the new Earl was serious and Baker wrote to his fellow Steward in Campden, James Keen, '*what a sad way Lord Campden is with respect to his debts, something must be done or he will come to a stand*'. There were discussions between Richard Baker and James Keen on the necessity of raising money by selling properties on the Campden estate. By 1855 Baker was writing '*I think Campden will be sold*', and a valuation was carried out with the assistance of his son William Henry, who was living in Campden and married to Elizabeth, James Keen's niece.

John William Bury, Sir Gerard's solicitor, was well known to Baker as a family friend. However, in connection with the will, he caused months of delays in drawing up a valuation of Sir Gerard's properties and drove Richard Baker to distraction with his lack of urgency over the accounts. The London lawyers involved in this process, Bury and Leake, with Messrs Bridges and Marsh, Charles's solicitors, eventually lost patience with each other over the protracted process and the difficulty of settling the accounts. In 1853 John Bridges made it plain that '*he wants NOT to be responsible for looking through William Leake's accounts*' (DE3214/4494). Apparently, the problems over Sir Gerard's will caused the relationships between the attorneys and solicitors involved to break down in acrimony and disagreement in 1853.

With the solicitors representing both parties in London, Baker, whose business lay with both, always seemed to be travelling, initially, at least, by coach. In March 1838, he went to London on the night mail and '*returned by night also*' (DE3214/349/5). He clearly made many such journeys. In January 1840, he recorded the cost of these journeys to London, '*all done at night*', as £26 10s, '*besides my own horses*'. The Syston to Peterborough line on the Midland Railway, with its station at Oakham, opened in 1848, creating a link to London via Peterborough. This provided an alternative and less tiring mode of travel, although there is no evidence that Baker used it. In connection with Sir Gerard Noel's will, Baker recorded

that he dealt with 300 letters and 1000 meetings, and '*travelled thousands of miles*'. There was, he says, '*much soothing needed*' when Isabella, the third Lady Noel, left Exton for Gerard's heir, Charles Lord Barham and his family, to move in (DE3214/4489).

Richard Baker's Finances

Although always appearing to live well, it seems unlikely that when Richard Westbrook Baker started work in Rutland in 1814 he had much money of his own. The debts owed by his father and his mother's plea to Sir Gerard seem to confirm that he would get little financial support from his immediate family. His salary as Steward was £300 per annum, probably rather below the usual rate for an estate of this size and a fraction of what many agents with similar responsibilities were being paid elsewhere (Thompson 1963, 161–2).

He actually appeared to own very little in the way of property until after his marriage, when his prospects seemed to pick up. He had married well. Ann Hind Brown, whom he married on 6th December 1820 in Melton Mowbray parish church, was the eldest of the seven daughters of a wealthy Melton currier (leather dresser). Henry Hind Brown was a very successful businessman. He had built a new house in Melton which, in more recent times, became the War Memorial Hospital, one of the first of the substantial houses to be built in Melton on the south side of the river. It was built in the style of the prestigious country houses of the Jacobean period and stood in five acres of parkland. Hind Brown died in 1837 and his will (TNA PROB11 1881/1–2) shows that much of his property, including his two workshops, one in Melton and the other in Grantham, were left to Henry and Robert, his two sons, but his '*plate*' and the proceeds of the sale of his other properties in Melton, Burton Lazars and Nether Broughton as well as the share he held in the Melton to Oakham Canal, were to be sold to provide an inheritance for his seven daughters. They were each to receive £2,000. Some plate, already given to Ann on her marriage, was to be included in the value of her share, but nonetheless the money will have provided a substantial and useful inheritance for Ann, her husband Richard Westbrook and their family.

Richard Thompson, Baker's Stamford solicitor, presented an account in 1836 which includes evidence that Baker was beginning to invest in property (DE3214/7438). By that time, he had purchased Langham Hall with four acres of adjacent land from Henry Barfoot for £4,500 (fig. 62). In 1858 he built a brewery on this land (figs. 63–64) in partnership with his son, Edward George, who inherited it on his father's death. It was sold following the death of Edward in 1875, but continued in production under various ownerships including Henry Parry. After Parry's death in 1911 the brewery was purchased by his head brewer, George Ruddle, becoming the well-known Ruddle's Brewery.

The Langham Tithe Apportionment schedule of 1841 (fig. 62; ROLLR Ti/R24/1) shows that by then Baker also owned a further 73 acres of land to the south of Burley Lane. A barn on this land (fig. 61) has a date-stone with 'RWB 1838'. This appears to be a much earlier barn which he had probably updated and extended in 1838.

Richard Baker also purchased property in Jermyn Terrace, a Georgian terrace in High Street, Oakham, from James Bullivant. He subsequently acquired farms in Glaston and in

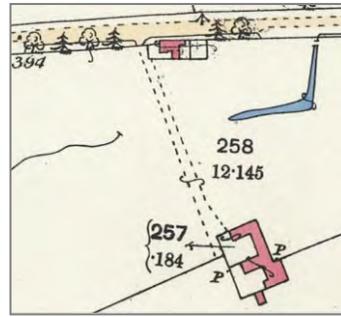


Fig. 61. R W Baker's barns, dated 1838, at Langham (Langham Village History Group), and as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map of 1885.



Fig. 62. R W Baker's land in Langham, shown in orange, after the 1841 Tithe Apportionment for Langham (ROLLR Ti/R24/1). His barn, with his initials and dated 1838, lies at the point marked X (LVHG).



Fig. 63. Langham Hall and brewery in 1904 (Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" map).



Fig. 64. A group of workers at Parry's Langham Brewery in 1895 (LVHG).

Exton, which were later mortgaged by his eldest son, William Henry, who inherited them on the death of his father in 1861.

In 1835 Richard Baker contacted Richard Thompson, asking if he knew of any property which might be suitable for investment. William Thompson, Richard Thompson's son, subsequently wrote to Baker, advising him of an estate in Newborough, lying in the Fens to the north-east of Peterborough, at that time in Northamptonshire but now in Cambridgeshire. He said that the estate might provide a mortgagee with a useful capital asset because the owner was reputedly a dissipated young man who was likely to default on his loan. Baker took this opportunity, and it appears that the owner did default on his loan, for Baker's will shows that he owned the estate at his death and that the investment it represented was bequeathed to Richard Thompson.

Richard Baker, Sir Gerard Noel and the Exton Estate

Richard Baker was a good steward on the Exton estate and, by making sure that his employer was seen to be supporting him, he was also able to enhance Sir Gerard's reputation locally by ensuring that he took the role of Chairman or President of the many local organisations they set up.

In the decade before Sir Gerard Noel's death, Richard Baker seemed to be full of energy and enthusiasm for new ways of doing things and was supported in all his ventures by his employer. For example, he set up the Rutland Friendly Society to support the poor in Rutland at a meeting in 1832 chaired by Sir Gerard. Also, his liking for prizes to encourage improvements in many aspects in agriculture led to him founding an annual Agricultural Show in Oakham in 1831, where both improvements in the breeding and feeding of livestock could be demonstrated in Sir Gerard's spacious Riding School.

This flurry of activity in the 1830s, before his employer's death in 1838, saw Richard Baker at his best as a devoted servant of Sir Gerard and his family. He was skilled and intelligent, and possessed a profound knowledge of the countryside and farming. He was able to see opportunities to advance the methods of farming on the estate, leaving a lasting example of good practice to future generations. Although he carried on as an exemplary estate Steward under Lord Gainsborough, Sir Gerard's heir, he seemed to have lost some of his energy for promoting innovation. Most of his prize herd of pedigree Shorthorns were sold in 1840 along with other livestock and much of his farm equipment. Although he tried to re-establish his famous herd, the days of his great successes in the show ring were, to some extent, in the past. In 1854, with the immediate problems of the executorship behind him, Richard Baker travelled to Lynch Court in Herefordshire to purchase more pedigree cattle, this time from the Rev J R Smythies' herd of pedigree Herefords. This new venture seems not to have been as promising as he hoped and he was unable to repeat the successes in the show ring he had achieved with his Shorthorns. He continued to show some of his remaining Shorthorns locally and at Smithfield, where his medal tally in 1845 was impressive and in his last Smithfield in 1860 he won another gold medal. The remaining Shorthorns still in his Rutland herd were bequeathed, after his death in 1861, to his son

William Henry. He also had winnings in the show ring, for he won the class for the best ox at the Birmingham fatstock show in 1862. The herd was eventually dispersed altogether in 1863.

Testimonial

Richard Baker had many admirers for his approach to farming generally and for his work on the Exton estate in particular. In November 1840, a meeting was convened at the George Inn in Oakham to set up a public subscription for a testimonial as a mark of respect to '*Richard Westbrook Baker*', the '*Farmers Friend*' for '*his unwearied exertion in the cause of Agriculture and for protecting British Husbandry generally*'. A general committee of twenty-five was set up and chaired by Samuel Cheetham of Hambleton to organise the subscriptions. Lists of subscribers were published in the *Stamford Mercury*, the second of which was on 22nd January 1841. Subscriptions closed on Monday 15th March and the total subscribed was announced as '*upwards of £370* (SM, 19th March 1841).

The presentation took place at Baker's house in Cottesmore on 12th June 1841 and the testimonial consisted of '*magnificent articles of plate to the value of nearly £400*'. Contributions towards the cost came from '*upwards of 1000 of the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, Agriculturalists, Tradesmen, Artisans, and Labourers of Rutland and other Counties*' including the Emperor [Tsar] of Russia and 311 small subscribers including agricultural labourers in Rutland and several from the Campden estate in Gloucestershire. The event was introduced by Samuel Cheetham who, in his speech describing the collection as a '*testimonial of respect to R. W. Baker, Esq*', noted '*that you, Sir, are a patron of rural pursuits in general, as is abundantly shown by the improved condition of the land over which your influence has been and still continues to be judiciously exercised*', and noted particularly that '*farm labourers are, of all other classes, the most deeply interested in the welfare of Agriculture, and I rejoice exceedingly that that very useful class of persons have had an opportunity of testifying their respect to you, Sir, for the benefits conferred upon them by the allotment system*'. He goes on to comment more widely on the benefits '*which have arisen to society from your judicious breeding, rearing, and general treatment of cattle*' and to mention his success '*at the many exhibitions of Agricultural Societies*'. Baker replied that he accepted '*this magnificent honour*' and '*superb gift*' with a grateful heart, and said that it would be handed down as heirlooms to his children's children. After the presentation, an '*elegant entertainment*' was provided and a '*convivial evening*' ended at about 11 o'clock.

The silverware presented to Richard Baker consisted of a candelabrum with seven lights, a soup tureen and ladle, four corner dishes with covers, and a venison dish; each article having Richard Westbrook Baker's coat of arms engraved on it, with his crest, a greyhound's head, forming a handle for each cover (SM, 18th June 1841).

The coat of arms (fig. 64) is illustrated in Burke's *Heraldic Illustrations* (1845, pl LXIX), and described as '*Ermine [stoat fur], on a fesse, invected [a scalloped band], between two greyhounds, current [running], sable, a garb [wheatsheaf], or, between two fleurs-de-lis, argent*'. The crest consists of a greyhound's head between six ears of wheat (fig. 65, and Appendix 8), and the motto is *Non sibi, sed patriae* [Not for oneself, but for one's country].



Fig. 65. R W Baker's coat of arms (left, from Burke 1845, pl LXIX) and crest (right, modelled in silver as the handle of a serving dish lid) (Alfred R Morrison).

The early 1840s were years of contrast in Richard Baker's life. Socially he was a respected member of the Rutland community, and in 1842 '*Richard Westbrook Baker Esq*' was appointed Sheriff of Rutland (*London Gazette*, 4th Feb 1842, 285–6), a great honour for someone from his background, indicating, like the presentation of his recent testimonial, how far he had come, in his twenty-seven years on the Exton estate, in the high opinion, respect and affection of his peers. His appointment as Sheriff must have represented a pinnacle of his achievements, but it is unfortunate that it came to him shortly after his expulsion by the Waltham Show committee and the subsequent anonymous letters sent to him and his employer.

Undeserved Unpleasantness

Show success had brought Richard Baker into conflict with other competitors and, in 1841, the local and the national press made much of his expulsion from Waltham Show Society which has been covered in detail in Chapter 5. This, at the time, had threatened his reputation at least in the rarefied world of pedigree show cattle. It had not however interrupted the planned testimonial presented in June 1841 on which a more permanent reputation depended. Even his reputation in the showing world seems eventually to have been little affected. He was still invited to judge cattle classes at the Rutland Show and he continued to win medals at Smithfield.

Despite his testimonial demonstrating that he had many friends and admirers, it was perhaps only to be expected that Richard Baker also had enemies in the wider society who made many unsupported claims against him. A letter (DE3214/7438/1–15), from T J Strachan, undated but no doubt written after the Waltham Show scandal, suggests that '*Dick*' was '*precious green*' to be caught cheating when, as a show steward himself on numerous occasions, he should have '*learned neatness in that line of business*'. By the 1840s, and perhaps

feeling the need to enhance his status as Sheriff of Rutland in 1842–43, Richard Baker had purchased a carriage. It was derided by the writer as showing off and '*altogether too much in the circumstances*', having lost, as the writer put it, '*all chance of being Sir Richard and known for the future as Dirty Dick*'. He was also ridiculed for his special dress waistcoat on which he displayed the medals won at shows, by then '*almost covered*' and no doubt clanking as he circulated at evening events. This spiteful letter was in an envelope addressed to '*Mrs Baker*'. Richard probably intended to destroy it, but it survives among his papers.

Anonymous damaging letters were sent separately to Charles Noel, Lord Gainsborough, and to Lady Gainsborough at their address in Cavendish Square, London, probably in 1842. One of these letters also survives in the Exton archive (DE3214/7112/1–3). It expresses surprise that the Earl was still employing such a dubious character, and accuses Richard Baker of financial impropriety and of forging documents in the case of the Waltham Show dispute. It suggests that having done it once he was likely to be able to do it again, if he wished, with estate documents. It also suggests that by improper means he had made two good fortunes out of Sir Gerard Noel and that he was on his way to making a third out of his present employer, Lord Gainsborough. No evidence is given and it seems to be yet another spiteful attack based on a reading of the Waltham evidence in *The Times*, which had inaccurately reported Richard Baker's expulsion as being from the Rutland Show.

Contents of the Baker Family Home

The Bakers continued to live in the house in Cottesmore and to farm the adjoining Hall Farm until Richard's death in 1861. His widow Ann and his eldest son William Henry kept the house on until Ann Baker moved to a house in Northgate Street, Oakham in 1863 (1871 Census). Their household furniture and equipment in Cottesmore was sold in December 1863 by D S Royce at the Oakham Auction Mart in Northgate Street. It included a '*brilliant toned horizontal grand piano forte by Mott*', a smaller piccolo piano, probably an upright, and '*Bradford's patent washing and mangling machine*' in the laundry, as well as oak and mahogany furniture in the principal rooms, including a walnut revolving smoking chair in morocco (leather). In the bedrooms were goose-down feather bedding, hair wool and straw mattresses, wool blankets and Marseille counterpanes, four-post 'Arabian' beds with damask, chintz and other hangings, French 'stump' beds, Japanese hip and sponge baths and a set of mahogany bed steps with night convenience.

Richard Baker's Death and Funeral

The press reported the death of Richard Baker at his home in Cottesmore on 30th January 1861. In December, he had been in London at the Smithfield Show. In January, he set out for Chipping Campden and wrote on 9th January to Lord Campden from the Crown Inn in Leamington on estate business, including information about the valuation of the Campden Estate in which his son William Henry, as the new Campden Steward, was involved (DE3214/7196). Two people from Leamington, one a servant at the Crown Inn, witnessed his will there on 19th January 1861. He must somehow have managed to return to Cottesmore

where he died. A last codicil to his will was signed on the day of his death witnessed by Ann Baker, his wife or possibly his unmarried step-sister of the same name, and Eliza Turner, a servant in his household. He was buried in the family grave in Cottesmore churchyard near the north side of the tower alongside two of his children; Richard, who died in 1833, and Sarah Jane who died in 1856 (fig. 66).



Fig. 66. The Baker family graves in Cottesmore churchyard (Robert Ovens).

His memorials, which were made by Halliday of Greetham and installed in 1869, '*... consist of two highly coped tombs, the ridges finishing with bold rolls crossing one another at right angles, forming the symbol of the cross. Both tombs are supported on a raised platform, which form a solid base to each*' (SM, 17th Sept 1869, 4). The inscriptions, which are deeply engraved in plain letters, are placed on the coped sides of each tombstone. His wife, who died in 1886, was added later. His eldest son, Richard, who died in 1833 and who is buried in this grave, is not recorded on the memorial. However, there is a plaque to his memory in the church (*see p44*).

**IN MEMORY OF
RICHARD WESTBROOK BAKER OF COTTESMORE
WHO DIED JANUARY 30TH 1861
AGED 63 YEARS**

**ANN WIDOW OF RICHARD WESTBROOK BAKER
DIED JULY 12TH 1886 AGED 91 YEARS
EDWARD GEORGE SON OF THE ABOVE
DIED FEB^R 20TH 1875 AGED 39 YEARS**

**IN MEMORY OF SARAH JANE
SECOND DAUGHTER OF RICHARD WESTBROOK BAKER
AND WIFE OF ROBERT CHARLES RANSOME OF IPSWICH
DIED FEBRUARY 4TH 1856 AGED 26 YEARS**

The funeral at Cottesmore was described in detail in the *Stamford Mercury* on 8th February (SM 8th Feb 1861, 3). 'The village on Wednesday presented an extraordinary scene, between 2000 and 3000 persons' lined the route of the walking cortège from Cottesmore Grange, at the east end of the village, to the church. The procession included family members, his widow, his remaining children and their spouses, the Ransome family from Ipswich including his son-in-law Charles Ransome, and local farmers including Mr Burgess of Ridlington. It also included his household, farm servants and his employees from the Langham brewery. Lord Campden and other members of the Noel family also attended together with several of the local clergy with whom Richard Baker had had dealings over the years (see Appendix 10).

Richard Baker's Will

Richard Baker's will was read shortly after his funeral. It had originally been written in the 1830s by his solicitor, Richard Thompson, but it had no doubt been revised many times since, the last version being dated 19th January 1861, with a codicil added on the day of his death, as noted above.

Thompson, as his executor, declared that his effects were valued under £12,000. His main beneficiaries were his two sons, his elder son William Henry, who inherited his property and land, and Edward George who inherited the Brewery in Langham. William Henry was by this time in serious debt and had already mortgaged his property in Glaston to Richard Thompson and his Exton farms to various financiers in Stamford. The Oakham properties were also mortgaged and William, unable to keep up the payments, was bankrupted in 1866 (DE3214/7449).



Fig. 67. *Edward George Baker, Richard Westbrook Baker's younger son (RCM 1995.35).*

Edward Baker (fig. 67), described in his father's will as a common brewer, inherited not just the site of the Langham brewery but all the fixtures and fittings, plant, utensils and stock of the brewery business. From this business, he was charged with paying £1,000 within six months to the Trustees who managed the marriage settlement of Ann Caroline, his elder sister, and an annuity of £100 to Ann, Richard Baker's widow, who also inherited all the furniture and other contents of their house in Cottesmore. He also left £100 each to his sister Sarah Isabella Bingham, to Ann Baker, his half-sister living in Hoddesden, Hertfordshire, and to his son-in-law Charles Ransome. His valuables, his plate, his paintings and prints he left to Edward, who at the time was probably living

in Langham Hall with his wife and young family. The plate had been either won as prizes, or presented as a testimonial in 1841. He also mentions his silver plough and the inkstand presented to him in 1847, his '*silver punchbowl and ladle on the sideboard, my own and family portraits and my Prints and Paintings of cattle*'. These were to be left to Edward to be passed down the family as heirlooms, and indeed some are known to remain even now in the possession of his descendants whilst others have entered the collections of the Rutland County Museum, itself housed in Sir Gerard Noel's former riding school. None of the family portraits have yet come to light but there is an oil painting by Davis of his Smithfield prize heifer in 1837 which is in local private hands. The portrait of Richard Baker himself has disappeared and recent research has made no progress towards finding it.

Without his portrait, the character and personality of Richard Westbrook Baker have to be celebrated by examining the documents which survive him, recording his work during a long and fruitful life and illustrating the difference he made to farming in Rutland in general and the villages on the Exton estate in particular before his death in 1861. His character, as perceived by contemporaries, was summed-up in the last paragraph of his obituary in the *Leicestershire Mercury* (2nd Feb 1861, 6), where he was described as '*Easy of access, kind to the poor, friendly and well-disposed to all, carrying out his benevolent projects with the industry and application of a man of business, Mr. Baker will long be remembered, and his loss felt, in the county of Rutland, and many other parts of England where his fame has gone before him.*'



Fig. 68. Detail of the presentation model of the Rutland Plough (Alfred R Morrison).

Appendix 1 – Catherine Baker’s letter to Gerard Noel

*Letter from Catherine Baker, The Riding House, Oakham, to Sir Gerard Noel Noel esquire,
Argyle Street, Oxford Street, London*

Date-stamped 3rd February 1813

Transcribed from DE3214/10769/2

[Page 1]

It is not my wish to intrude myself my dear Heavenly Benefactor upon your valuable time, but I have been extremely anxious to write to you ever since the unfortunate loss of the Macedonian, to ask if you had heard from my dear Boy, & if you thought they were likely to return to England. If you have not heard from him you of course saw by the Papers he was one of the wounded, a letter we received from the Purser, I will copy for you to see. I fear you will consider my letter a very tedious one, as I have several things to beg you will hear, in the first place I humbly beg you will accept the warmest & most heart-felt thanks of me, Mr Baker & the whole of my children, for the generous humane & liberal attention you honor me with during my long & tedious illness. Indeed I have sufferd much, I am sorry to say I am still very far from being in health, & I am certain had it not been for you, I should not have been in this world, may God shower down upon you all the Blessings I would give you, was it in my power, & then I am sure your happiness would be in the extreme – all Mr Jones now recommends is supporting myself with good strong things, take the air daily & keep up my spirits, the little chaise is a great comfort to me, but the roads are against it at this season of the year. I hope you will not want it at presant. I was disappointed we had not the honor of your company previous to your going out of the country, I am so unacquainted with the news of this place, that you had left Exton nearly a month before I heard of it, surely we shall have that favor on your return, my Boy came from Bury at Xms [Christmas], & we have an excellent character with him for you to see my family is indeed very large, & I hope my dear Sir you will honor him with a thought now you are in Town. If we could obtain a situation for him in the Admiralty, or in Navy Office so as he could provide for himself (for you know we are so poor we cannot assist him) tho’ he is my Eldest son, but I am of an oppinion if he is so fortunate as to meet with a situation, he will exert every nerve to merit it – the principal business is to get him upon an Establishment then he would be safe for life, as his Brother William is, times indeed are very bad with me in some respects, but worse indeed they would be, was I deprived of your generous aid & assistance, the poor hundred pounds is come & gone, & before it arrived Stimpson the Grocer employ’d Mr Bullivant, also Mr Mould - so a few more pounds were added to their Bills, & the latter person is not all *[Page 2]* paid yet, for we were indebted to Mr Bullivant a sum which he demanded & was paid it – a great sum went to the Butcher & Miller G. V. & we wish’d the poor hundred could have been spent out to just £50 more, but it appears it is my fate to be always in distress, try all I can, for on Friday came to hand a letter from Mr Forkington, which I will copy for you to see, I sent Catherine to ask Mr Ades what was to be done, he said after seeing you, he mentiond what had pass’d to Mr Costall, since which he desired him to proceed against us, but Ades declined it, saying he considerd it a cruel thing, he recommended me to write to you immediately. I sent Richard last night with a note to Costall but he unfortunately was from home. I said you was the only friend in the world I could

Appendix 1 – Catherine Baker's letter

apply to, & as you was not at Exton I hoped he would wait the result of your answer, to my letter, but if he was determind to ruin Mr Baker & family go to Prison he must, for we had not three pounds in the house, or did we expect a sixpence before lady day, & if it was not settled now, he should then have five pounds, I hope you will honor me with a letter. Dear Mary is very ill again, she is extremely weak & low, I was obliged to send for Mr Jones, oh was it not for you, I & my dear children might all expire, Catherine had a narrow escape on Sunday, a spark caught her gown & burnt a great part of it off – also her Petticoates. I must now conclude begging you will pardon this intrusion, & believe me my dr Sir as I realy am your grateful & humble servant till the hour of my death

[signed] Cth [Catherine] Baker

Oakham 2 Feby 1813

PS One thing more I must beg to say, tho I cannot express all I feel for the accommodation I experience, by having a servant, for I am not able to do any thing labourious, if I put my hands in water they are as bad as ever so had it not been for your generous heart Catherine must have been quite a Drudge. the girl I had from now Martinmas to old cost 12 s & the one I have got I am to give £4, 10s – for the year – I would have taken one by the week, but they would not come on that condition, I hope & trust you will not consider me extravagant, I wish I could do without one the Board is felt in these hard times – I have returned the cask that contained the good beer, & I cannot find a word to say for it – but Edward has found the comfort of it, as well as myself – for he is a fine Boy –

[Page 3]

[Letter from Mr J Forkington to Mr Richard Baker referred to by Catherine Baker at the top of page 2]:

Mr Richard Baker,

If the sum of £10, 3s you owe Mr Costall of Mt Overton is not immediately paid me with 3s 6d for this letter, a writ will be sent out against you for the recovery thereof, I am Yrs t [truly], J Forkington
Jany 28 1813

Stamford

[Letter from the Purser of the ship Macedonian that Catherine refers to at the top of page 1]

Castle Cary Somerset 25 Decbr [December] 1812

Sir,

By the time you receive this you will here of the capture of H M S Macedonian but I have the pleasure to inform you that I left your son well on the 15 Novr last on Board the American Frigate, he received a slight wound in the arm during the action, but was quite recoverd when I left him. They are to be sent home immediately. I have not time to give you any further particulars, as I wish to write to all the officers friends by this post,

Yours very truly Jno Speed

late Purser

HMS Macedonian

I was put on Board a merchant ship & arrived here this day.

Bristol.

Appendix 2 – William Baker’s letter to Gerard Noel

Letter from William Baker to Sir Gerard Noel Bart. M.P.

London, Saturday October 20th 1816

Transcribed from DE3214/10772

[Page 1]

My dear Sir,

I have taken the liberty of enclosing a letter for my brother to you – I know I have your forgiveness. On enquiry I find “Evelyn Gascoigne” is still “Dy [Deputy] master attendant” at Madras – his salary is about £1200 p-annum; should the “master attendant” retire or die it is not likely he would succeed, thats considered a distinct appointment & in all probability some individual would be sent from this country

[Page 2]

to fill the vacancy – may I ask, if you have taken any steps respecting the sailor.* I know the kind feeling you take in his welfare; by the bye I hear he has taken to himself a wife; thats all I know about his marriage. I hope the lady has some means of keeping him or I fear it will be but a sorry contract – I think I have some channel by which I cou’d strengthen your application to the Admiralty to get him made Lieut – but I should like to have a statement this services as briefly put together

[Page 3]

as he cou’d with his particulars of being sent out to the East Indies & whether he was sent with a promise of promotion, or an expectation of such, & how his expectation was grounded & why he returned home & by whose order he came home without it –

I know not his address or I would not trouble you; except that I think it would be better, & indeed I had rather that you saw his statement, & approved it & tho’ I should be exceedingly sorry to intrude too much on your time, & your kindness, yet I think by your deserving him he would be more particular in his statement.

[Page 4]

I am most happy to learn by a letter from my brother that you are enjoying most excellent health. I am in expectation of the pleasure of paying him a visit next month – pray accept with mine Mrs Baker’s best compts [compliments] & with great respect allow me to say I am most faithfully yours

Willm Baker

To

Sir Gerard Noel Bart. M.P.

* This refers to William’s half-brother Joseph. It is now known that just as some of Richard Westbrook’s descendants now live in Australia (inf. Fiona Olney-Fraser), so too do some of Joseph’s (inf. Graeme Baker).

Appendix 3 – Fire at Exton Hall, 24th May 1810

Transcribed from *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, Wednesday 30th May 1810
(also in *Stamford Mercury*, Friday 25th May 1810, page 3)

FIRE AT EXTON-HALL – About five o'clock on Wednesday morning, a fire was discovered to have broke out in the extensive mansion of Gerard Noel Noel, Esq. in Exton Park, Rutland, which raged with great violence till nine o'clock, and destroyed one-half of the house, together with the furniture, pictures, books, and other property, to the amount, it is believed of at least 20,000l. The cause of the conflagration is not accurately ascertained; but the fire is supposed to have arisen from some embers of a wood fire in the drawing-room having fallen beyond the hearth stone, and communicated to the flooring of the room. Dr. Jordan, of Oakham, and his Lady had spent the previous evening with Colonel Noel, and the party retired to rest about one o'clock; soon after the whole household was in bed. About five in the morning two of the maid servants were awakened by an oppressive smell of fire; and one of them immediately ran to Dr. Jordan's room and acquainted him with her fears that the house was on fire. The Doctor immediately went to the drawing-room, which he found in flames; and having ordered Colonel Noel to be called (who was with some difficulty awakened), he proceeded without delay to the evidence-room; and it was principally owing to the presence of mind which dictated this early care, that the valuable documents relating to the family estates, and a number of books and papers of consequence were preserved; for scarcely, were they rescued from the room, when the ceiling fell in, from the operation of the fire in the apartment above, and the whole area was filled with flames.

The family being aroused, the two engines belonging to the house were soon brought to bear on the fire, a third engine was promptly obtained from the seat of the Earl of Winchelsea, at Burley, and a fourth from Empingham. By means of these, and the active aid of numbers of the Colonel's tenants at Exton and the neighbourhood (whose anxiety and exertions on this occasion are at once an honour to themselves, and to the landlord and friend who inspired them), the flames were got under by nine o'clock, after having destroyed all the apartments situated East of the gothic hall, namely, the dining-room, drawing-room, two library-rooms, and Lady Mary Noel's, Col. Noel's, and two other bedrooms (formerly the chapel), together with half the first gallery, the evidence-room, and land-steward's apartments. The flames were stopped by the gable next the large hall on one side, and by the still-room on the other. When the fire was first discovered, and afterwards, the wind fortunately blew hard from the North-west: had it been in a contrary direction, the whole house must have been burnt. In the confusion and hurry of the fire, Colonel Noel recollected that he had 2000l's worth of bank-bills in his bed-room, which he immediately sought for, and fortunately was in time to rescue from the burning apartment.

Not a single article of furniture, book, or picture was saved from any of the rooms destroyed. Amongst the pictures lost was a landscape worth 1000 guineas: also the celebrated Venus, by Titian; Diogenes breaking his cup, by Salvator Rosa; the Woodman, the Fisher Boy, the Peasant Children and Ass, and some others, by Gainsborough; several fine pictures of Teniers; a valuable one by Reubens; and many exquisite Flemish and Italian pieces. All the pictures had been just repaired and cleaned by Mr. Hill, who completed his task and left the house on his return to

London only the evening before the fire.

Some valuable pictures fortunately hung in that part of the house which is saved. The public as well as the proprietor have to regret the loss of many more valuable books, and several portfolios of beautiful drawings and prints. The library was a particularly extensive and complete one, – the work of many years' care and superior taste in collecting. Some books, which were fortunately out of the library, are at present deposited in Exton church; with many other artefacts which were taken from that part of the house which has fortunately escaped the conflagration. The engines continued to play on the burning ruins without intermission until Thursday morning.

**Appendix 4 – Sir Gerard Noel Noel's Sale at Exton Hall
by Phillips of Bond Street, London, 23rd April to 4th May 1816**

Announcement of Sale, transcribed from the Stamford Mercury, Friday 12th April 1816, page 3

AUCTION SALE, at EXTON HALL, Rutland,
By Mr. H. PHILLIPS.

Is, in consequence of a death in the family of Sir G. Noel, POSTPONED until TUESDAY the 23d of APRIL inst. - Catalogues, price 3s. may now be had.

ARRANGEMENT OF SALE

On the First Day - Tuesday 23rd of April - will be sold, from Lot 1 to 151, including the Contents of Chambers and Domestic Apartments from No. 1 to No. 13, being Household Furniture

Page 5 to 11

On the Second Day - Wednesday 24th of April - will be sold, from Lot 152 to 297, including the Contents of the Kitchen and Rooms from No. 14 to No. 21, being Household Furniture

Page 12 to 19

On the Third Day - Thursday 25th of April - will be sold, from Lot 298 to 456, the Contents of the Drawing, Dining, and other Rooms, from No. 22 to No. 36, Vauxhall Glasses, &c

Page 20 to 27

On the Fourth Day - Friday 26th of April - will be sold, from Lot 457 to 631, the Contents of the Principal Chamber, Domestic Offices, and Out-houses, from No. 37 to No. 43, Gardening Implements, and Dead Farming Stock

Page 28 to 34

On the Fifth Day - Saturday 27th of April - will be sold, from Lot 632 to 760, which includes the Live Stock of Horses, Cows, Sheep, Pigs, Donkies; and the Coach, Curricule, &c. &c

Page 35 to 39

Appendix 4 – Sir Gerard Noel's sale

On the Sixth Day - Monday 29th of April - will be sold, from Lot 1 to 258, the Cellar of Choice Wines, Spirits and Ale, &c

Page 40 to 48

On the Seventh Day - Thursday 30th of April - will be sold, from Lot 761 to 908, comprising Part of the Household Linen, Damask, Silk, and other Hangings. Military Clothing, &c

Page 49 to 55

On the Eighth Day - Wednesday 1st of May - will be sold, from Lot 909 to 1060, the Damask and other Linen, Coins, Bijoutry, Fire Arms, &c

Page 56 to 62

On the Ninth Day - Thursday 2nd of May - will be sold, from Lot 1 to 151, Part of the Plate, China, and Glass Ware.

Page 63 to 69

On the Tenth Day - Friday the 3rd of May - will be sold, from Lot 152 to 274, the Remainder of the Plate, China.

Page 70 to 74

On the Eleventh Day - Saturday 4th of May - will be sold, from Lot 1061 to 1312, the Pictures, Prints, Maps, and Miscellanies.

Page 75 to the end

Account of the sale, transcribed from the Leicester Chronicle, Saturday 18th May 1816, page 4

The sale at Exton terminated on Saturday last, after a continuance of eleven days, during which the whole fashion of the surrounding counties attended, who evinced, by their liberality of bidding, an anxiety to possess a gem from the residence of true hospitality and ancient nobility. The crowd was so excessive, notwithstanding the constraint of admission only by catalogues, that hundreds were precluded. The wine, plate, pictures, and china, attracted the greatest concourse of fashion, - and produced excessive prices. The plate fetched from one guinea to fourteen shillings an ounce; wine nearly five pounds per dozen: the live farming stock experienced a considerable rise, the prices exceeding any produce by auction, or at markets, for the last two years. Among the visitors were the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Winchilsea, the Lonsdale and Lowther families. The principal purchasers were Earl Harrington, Lords Brownlow and Lonsdale, Sir C. Kent, Generals Grosvenor, and Reynardson, Messrs. Heselridge, Hassell, O'Briens, Pares, Mannering, and many visitors from London. The amount of the sale we should calculate exceeded ten thousand pounds.

Appendix 5

The Rutland Agricultural Association's Petition to Parliament 1822

To the Honorable the Commons of the United Kingdom of *Great Britain and Ireland*,
in Parliament assembled;
The humble Petition of the several Owners and Occupiers of Land in the COUNTY of RUTLAND,
whose names are hereunto subscribed,
SHEWETH,

That by virtue of various Laws and Statutes of this realm now in force, they believe to the number of one hundred and upwards, the skill, capital, and labour of the Merchants and Manufacturers residing and carrying on their business in this country, are protected by certain duties and prohibitions from the import of all foreign goods manufactured in foreign countries, while almost all the productions of other countries which can be grown in the United Kingdom, are permitted to be imported into this country, without payment of duty whatever, or at very low and inadequate duties; whereby your Petitioners are compelled to purchase at a monopoly price, and to sell all their productions at an unequal competition with poorer countries; which, with the payment of all direct and indirect taxes, consequent on a residence and occupation in the United Kingdom, has reduced your Petitioners in their circumstances and condition, and must, as long as this system is continued, prevent your Petitioners from receiving the due returns, which skill, capital, and industry, employed in Agriculture, ought to yield to the Cultivators of the Soil, and without which the lands of these islands cannot be cultivated with advantage to the State, or with profit to the Occupiers. Your Petitioners therefore pray that a repeal of the taxes most detrimental to Agriculture, or at least a great reduction in their amount, be forthwith granted. That your Petitioners seek not in envy to pull down and destroy laws so wise and salutary, and by which the Merchants and Manufacturers of this country have surpassed those of the whole world; but your Petitioners do humbly seek in justice to be admitted to a fair and equal participation of such laws; therefore your Petitioners most humbly pray, that all the productions of the soil of the United Kingdom may in future be protected from imports of similar commodities, duty free, from foreign countries, in as simpler manner as the Merchants and Manufacturers of the United Kingdom are, by the Navigation Act and other Statutes, protected in their shipping and manufactories from foreign competition, at least so far as our foreign relations may admit. And whereas many landed Proprietors, in order to fulfil their engagements in supporting the late war, to which they pledged their lives and fortunes in many Addresses at various periods during the contest, when political events occasioned County Meetings to be convened, have been obliged to mortgage their estates and have incurred pecuniary difficulties, which they are proud to acknowledge, as evincing the sincerity of their hearts: your Petitioners feel that themselves and all such persons are peculiarly entitled to the protection of the House (and perhaps all property whatever has some claim to be guarded against the effects of the present exigencies), because partly proceeding from certain legislative enactments passed since the Peace. And whereas the value of that property has hereby been so reduced as to be in danger of being totally lost to them

under the existing laws concerning debtor and creditor, and before any measures of relief upon the consideration of the Agricultural Petitions, even if any be taken, can have time for competent operation: your Petitioners therefore pray for a short Bill to be speedily passed, suspending parts of all such laws for a limited time as permit and direct the seizure of mortgaged property to pay the incumbrances upon it, but so as to secure to the creditor his just claims on the debtor for interest, and ultimately for principal. And that in the same manner, and for the same reasons, land-lords should be restrained by the said Bill from selling up their tenants in all cases produced by the urgency of the times, and not resulting from other and irrelevant circumstances: it appearing to us that it would be cruel and unjust, on the part of the Government, not to save from being dispossessed of their freehold property, during artificial distress, all such as have borne the burden and heat of the day in their several characters of Yeomen Volunteers, and as persons otherwise subscribing and supporting king and country, when called upon to do so, under the confidence of the State: or otherwise to take such measures as may serve to secure to your Petitioners, and to all such whose cause they feel to be interwoven with their own, the relief for which they pray, and to which they humbly represent them and themselves to be entitled.

R. W. BAKER

Secretary to the Rutland Agricultural Association.

The committee members who signed the petition were:

John Morris, Luffenham

Valentine Baines, Brooke

Amos Butt, Langham

Thomas Woods, Braunston

Francis Robinson, Oakham

John Bunting, Teigh

Thomas Reeve, Uppingham

John Berridge, Barrow

W. Pilkington, Cottesmore

John Painter, Burley

Sources

Evans and Ruffy's *Farmers Journal and Agricultural Advertiser*, 28th January 1822, p31.

Stamford Mercury, Friday 18th January 1822, p2.

Appendix 7 – The Small Allotment System in Rutland

RULES AND REGULATIONS

*For Letting and Managing the Allotments in the County of Rutland,
ESTABLISHED BY RICHARD WESTBROOK BAKER, ESQ., OF COTTESMORE, 1830*

1. That the land shall only be let for one year, and possession given on the 6th day of April or to the 11th of October in each year.
2. That no more than ten shillings is to be the rent per rood, including all town dues, and so in proportion for a larger quantity.
3. That the Rent be paid into the hands of the Rev. or Mr. , at any time in the course of the year, viz., on or before the 6th day of April or the 11th of October, as the entry may be, in each year.
4. That the land be occupied in the following manner, viz:— one-third, and no more, with potatoes; one-third cabbages, peas, beans, onions, carrots, or any green crop; one-third, and no more, with wheat, barley, or any kind of grain.
5. That if any occupier is found neglectful in the cultivation of his land, he shall not be permitted to hold it more than one year.
6. That no occupier will be suffered to relet his land.
7. That no occupier will be allowed to plough his land, but cultivate it solely by spade or fork husbandry.
8. That no occupier who is at work for any employer, shall be allowed to work upon his land after six o'clock in the morning, or before six in the evening, without permission from his master.
9. That each occupier shall keep his own allotment of fence in good repair.
10. Any occupier who shall be detected in any act of dishonesty, shall forfeit his land the following Lady-day or Michaelmas.
11. It is expected that every occupier shall attend *some place of worship*, at least once in every Sunday, and should he neglect to do so, without sufficient cause, after being warned, he shall be deprived of his land.
12. No occupier will be allowed to trespass upon another's land, in going to and from his own allotment.
13. That no occupier shall work thereon on a Sunday.
14. That if any occupier, who is an habitual drunkard, or frequenter of public-houses, shall, after having been reprov'd, still persist in the same, he shall be deprived of his land.
15. The potato crop to be manured with the whole of the manure arising from the cropping, and as much more as it is convenient to provide.
16. No person to occupy more than three roods, nor less than three half-roods, which will be equally divided into three parts upon entry.

17. That no person not paying rent for his dwelling-house, shall be allowed to occupy any land under these rules.
18. That the tenant in possession be obliged to set his wheat crop, if his entry was at Lady-day (though under a notice to quit), which is to be valued by the churchwardens and overseers to the in-coming tenant on the 6th of April, who shall be allowed to enter upon two-thirds of the land on the 14th of February.

Observations upon the Rules and Regulations

Rule 2. Ten shillings per rood, including town dues; this must also include tithes or rent-charge; a fixed money payment in lieu of the former, as well as the latter, must in all cases be arranged to prevent an increase and decrease.

Rule 3. In the several parishes I recommend the clergymen, churchwardens, and overseers, to hire the land, and of course be accountable for rents to the owner, rates, and rent-charge, &c. Some clergyman or parishioner would willingly, I am sure, receive the rent at different periods of the year, when offered.

Rule 4. The rotation of cropping fixed upon will divide the working operations, and be found *yearly to produce* valuable commodities for the service of a family, and will keep the LAND ALWAYS in a proper state for a new entry or a new tenant, and will most assuredly add to its productive powers.

Rule 11. This is of the utmost importance, and, wheresoever the scheme is acted upon, I trust *this rule* will meet with attention. I must notice, that I know many large farmers who hire their weekly labourers conditionally: if they fail to go to some place of worship once on the Sunday, are no longer employed, others forfeit one shilling of their week's wages. I need not observe, that this checks many evils, and is most assuredly *a practice that can do no harm*.

Rule 15. The potatoe [*sic*] crop, from being manured, has an advantage, and leaves the land forward in preparation for the wheat.

Rule 16. Not to occupy more than three roods, three half-roods is most approved, and does away with the necessity of additional premises, as the storing and thrashing of the crop is not more difficult than what their dwellings and means will generally afford for those purposes. If a parish can obtain two pieces of *good land*, one at each end of the town, it will be an advantage to the husbandman, being nearer his allotment.

Farmers might have leave of their landlords to re-let a field or small portion of their farm upon this system.

To all parishes, I say, land *can* be obtained *for the purpose*, if the *leading persons will exert* themselves, under the impression and consideration that the *labourers are our fellow-creatures*, and how we should wish them to act towards us, if Providence had given them the pre-eminence of station in this life.

The Annual Examination at the end of July, in each year, or early in August, and the prizes awarded have had the most beneficial effect.

Appendix 8 – Items relating to Richard Westbrook Baker at Rutland County Museum and elsewhere

This appendix is based on:

1. A list of items and related correspondence provided by Rutland County Museum.
2. *List of Prizes Obtained for Animals Bred and Exhibited by R. W Baker, Esq. (Farmers Magazine June 1839, No.6, Vol II, New Series, 411–12).*
3. Items listed in Richard Westbrook Baker's will (ROLLR: Leicester District Probate Registry 1861, 224), and his testimonial in the *Stamford Mercury* (22nd Aug 1862, 7) (see Appendix 9).
4. Items described in correspondence with Richard Westbrook Baker's descendants in Australia.

Chromolithographs in the Rutland County Museum collection

1. Improved Short Horn Heifer in 1837. Bred by Richard Westbrook Baker. Original painting by W H Davis, Church Street, Chelsea. Printed by C Hullmandel (RCM 1980.27.1). Caption:

*Painted from the life and Drawn on Stone by W. H. Davis
Animal Painter to the Queen Dowager, Church Street, Chelsea*

IMPROVED SHORT-HORNED HEIFER

*Bred and Fed by RICHARD WESTBROOK BAKER, Esq. of Cottesmore, Rutland
This Heifer in 1836 won the First Prize (6th Class) Grantham Agricultural Society,
[This Heifer] in 1837 [won] the First Prize (5th Class) Rutland Agricultural Society
And at Smithfield in 1837 when 3 years and 5 months old the First Prize (6th Class) Silver Medal.
Also, the Silver Medal and Gold Medal as best beast in any class.
Bought & Slaughtered by Mr Tho^s Mylam Morton, 10 Great Bell Alley, near The Bank, London
Dead Weight 152 stone 3 lbs*

Purchased for Rutland County Museum by the Friends of RCM.

Cleaned, repaired and framed 1980. Printed as a postcard for sale by the museum.

The heifer was 'The Neat One'; the original oil painting (fig. 41) was in private ownership in Rutland in 2017. It was also illustrated as an engraving in the *Farmer's Magazine*, March 1838.

2. Short Horn Ox in 1860. Bred by Richard Westbrook Baker. Painted by W. H. Davis, Church Street, Chelsea. Printed by C. Moody, 257 Holborn, London (RCM 1980.72.2). Caption:

*Published by W. H. Davis, 9 Upper Church Street, Chelsea
SHORT HORN OX. 3 YEARS AND 3 MONTHS OLD*

*Bred and Fed by RICHARD WESTBROOK BAKER, Esq. of Cottesmore, Rutland
1860 Rutland Agricultural Society First Prize Second Class
1860 Rutland Agricultural Society First Prize First Class
1860 Smithfield Club First Prize Tenth Class
1860 Smithfield Club Silver Medal as Breeder
1860 Smithfield Club Gold Medal as Best Beast in any Class*

Purchased for Rutland County Museum by the Friends of RCM.

Cleaned, repaired and framed in 1980 (fig. 35).

Photographs in the Rutland County Museum collection

Photograph Album and loose photographs (RCM 1995.35.2–5), including images of Edward George Baker (son of RWB) and his wife Ann Baker. Also, a brass oval framed image of Edward George Baker aged 11 years. Donated in 1995 by R W Baker's great-great-grand-daughter.

Medals

RWB was presented with fifteen medals in his lifetime. They include a collection of twelve medals mounted in a glazed frame (fig. 56) donated in 1982 to Rutland County Museum by V R Blundell, a great-grandson of RWB and grandson of Edward George Baker (RCM 1982.66.1–12).

Detailed descriptions of medals in the Rutland County Museum collection (in date order)

1833 Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting

A **silver medal** presented by William Leake in 1833 (1982.66.7).

Inscribed: '*Presented by WILL^M LEAKE ESQ to R W BAKER owner of the First Prize Plough 3rd Class' and 'Mr Baker's COTTESMORE MEETING September 1833'.*

1833 Smithfield Club Show

A **silver medal** presented by the Smithfield Club in 1833 (1982.66.6).

Inscribed: '*BREEDER R W Baker Esqr Cottesmore Stamford' and 'SMITHFIELD CLUB Prize Ox Class I Christmas 1833'.*

1834 Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting

A **silver medal** presented by William Leake in 1834 (1982.66.10) (fig.57c).

Inscribed: '*Presented by WILL^M LEAKE ESQ^{RE} to R W BAKER ESQ^{RE} Owner of the FIRST PRIZE PLOUGH 3rd Class' and 'Mr Baker's COTTESMORE MEETING September 1834'.*

1834 Smithfield Club Show

A **silver medal** presented by the Smithfield Club in 1834 (1982.66.4) (fig.57a).

Inscribed: '*R W Baker Esqr Cottesmore STAMFORD' and 'SMITHFIELD CLUB Best Beast Extra Stock Christmas 1834'.*

1837 Smithfield Club Show

A **gold medal** presented by the Smithfield Club in 1837 (1982.66.5).

Inscribed: '*BREEDER R W Baker Esqr Cottesmore Rutland' and 'SMITHFIELD CLUB Best Beast in any Class Christmas 1837'.*

1837 Smithfield Club Show

A **silver medal** presented by the Smithfield Club in 1837 (1982.66.9).

Inscribed: '*BREEDER R W Baker Esqr Cottesmore Rutland' and 'SMITHFIELD CLUB Prize Cow Class VI Christmas 1837'.*

1838 Rutland Agricultural Society Show

A **gold medal** presented by the Rutland Agricultural Society in 1838 (OAKRM 1982.66.8) (fig.57b).

Inscribed: '*BREEDER R W Baker Esqr of the best beast in the SHOW YARD' and 'RUTLAND Agricultural Society December 3rd and 4th 1838'.*

1841 Rutland Ploughing Meeting

A **medal in ivory with a silver band surround** presented by William Leake in 1841 (1982.66.11).

Appendix 8 – Items relating to R W Baker

Inscribed: 'ALBERT' and 'VICTORIA' and heads of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, and 'Presented by Will^m Leake Esq^{re} to R W BAKER ESQ^{RE} Owner of the FIRST PRIZE PLOUGH Class 3 1841'.

1845 Smithfield Club Show

A **gold medal** presented by the Smithfield Club in 1845 (1982.66.2).

Inscribed: 'Charles Duke of Richmond KG President of the Smithfield Club', 'W. WYON R.A.' and 'John Charles Earl Spencer President 1825–1845'. Along the edge: 'MR R W BAKER COTTESMORE OAKHAM RUTLAND - AS EXHIBITOR BEST STEER OR OX IN CLASS 18[45]'.

1845 Smithfield Club Show

A **silver medal** presented by the Smithfield Club in 1845 (1982.66.1).

Inscribed: 'Charles Duke of Richmond KG President of the Smithfield Club', 'W. WYON, R.A.' and 'John Charles Earl Spencer President 1825–1845'. Along the edge: 'Baker Cottesmore Oakham Rutland As Breeder of Best Beast in Class X 18[45]'

1845 Smithfield Club Show

A **silver medal** presented by the Smithfield Club in 1845 (1982.66.3).

Inscribed: 'Charles Duke of Richmond KG President of the Smithfield Club', 'W. WYON, R.A.' and 'John Charles Earl Spencer President 1825–1845'. Along the edge: 'RICHARD WESTBROOK BAKER COTTESMORE OAKHAM RUTLAND - AS BREEDER BEST STEER CLASS XX 18[45]'.

1857 Rutland Ploughing Meeting

A **silver medal** presented at the Rutland Ploughing Meeting in 1857 (1982.66.12).

Inscribed: 'Presented to R W BAKER ESQ^{RE} Owner of the First Prize Plough Class 2' and 'RUTLAND Ploughing Meeting Uppingham 1857'

Medals not in Rutland County Museum (locations and inscriptions not known)

1860 Smithfield Club Show, 14th December 1860

Gold medal for the best steer or ox in the show; **silver medal** as breeder of the best steer or ox in the show; **silver medal** as breeder of a cross-bred ox.

(RWB died on 30th January 1861 at his house in Cottesmore).

Silverware

R W Baker was presented with many items of silverware in his lifetime. In his will, his valuables were left to Edward George, his youngest son, to be passed down the family as heirlooms.

Many of them went to Australia with Annie Brain (*née* Baker), Edward George's daughter. The family story is that much of this silver was sold by her son to make ends meet during the depression of the 1930s, but some items remain in the family.

Silver in the Rutland County Museum collection

1831 Oakham Fatstock Show

A George III reeded circular **silver salver** on three bracket feet, the base a disc with the rim soldered on, impressed with broad frieze of floral patterns, with later fitted case (RCM 1993.23.2) (fig.60).

Inscribed in the centre: 'To R. W. Baker, breeder and feeder of the shorthorn ox; class 1, 1st prize. Oakham show, Dec. 5, 1831.'

Made by I. H. and hallmarked for London, 1831.

Purchased for RCM from Christies South Kensington, London, sale of silver and plate, 20th July

1993, lot 159, by the Friends of RCM.

1831 Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting

A **silver goblet** (RCM 1995.35.1) (fig. 58).

Inscribed: 'Mr. Baker's Cottesmore Meeting, Sept., 1831' and 'TO Mr. R. W. Baker, owner of the plough in class 2. 1st prize. Presented by Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Bart., M.P.'

Hallmarked CP (Charles Price), London, 1819.

Donated in 1995 by a great-great-grand-daughter of R W Baker.

1834 Rutland Agricultural Society Show

A **silver tray** (RCM 1997.27).

Inscribed 'Rutlandshire Agricultural Society, 1834, to R. W. Baker. Second prize ox, 1st class.'

Hallmarked GS (George Smith), London 1814.

Donated in 1997 by a great-great-grand-daughter of R W Baker.

1858 Rutland Agricultural Society Show

A George III gilt-lined **lidded baluster tankard** decorated with arabesques, with moulded body band and rim, double scroll handle with heart shaped terminal, domed hinged cover with openwork thumb piece (RCM 1993.23.1) (fig. 59).

Inscribed: 'Rutland Agricultural Society, 1858. Presented by the Hon. Gerard Noel, M.P. to R. W. Baker, Esq., for the best cultivated 10 acres of Swedish Turnips in the county of Rutland.'

Made by Samuel Godbehere and hallmarked for 1791. Inscribed by Edward Wigan, 1858.

Purchased for RCM in 1993 from Christies South Kensington, London, sale of silver and plate, 20th July 1993, lot 158, funded by the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of RCM.

*Silverware not in Rutland County Museum
(location unknown unless otherwise stated):*

1831 Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting

A **silver cup**, the Owner's Prize Cup (fig. 69).

Inscribed: 'Mr Baker's COTTESMORE MEETING September 1831'.

Noted in Baker's Ploughing Meeting results list, but not in his will or obituary.

The ploughman / ploughboy was Edward Young.

Now in private ownership in Australia

Fig. 69.



1832 Oakham Show

A **silver teapot** inscribed: *To R. W. Baker, 1st prize ox, 1st class, Oakham Show, 1832*

Known to be in the possession c1995 of the great-great-grand-daughter of R W Baker.

1832 Oakham Show

A **silver sugar basin** inscribed: *To R. W. Baker, 1st prize bull, Oakham Show, 1832.*

Likely to have been lot 160 in Christie's South Kensington sale of silver and plate, 10th July 1993.

1832 Oakham Show

A **silver cream jug** inscribed: *Premium for the best bull, Oakham show, April 2d, 1832.*

1832 Oakham Show

A **silver fish-slice** inscribed: *To R. W. Baker, 1st prize pig, Oakham Show, 1832.*

1832 Oakham Show

Two **silver gravy spoons**, one inscribed: *To R. W. Baker. Ox sweepstakes, open to all England. Oakham*

Appendix 8 – Items relating to R W Baker

show, 1832, the other inscribed: To R. W. Baker. Second prize cow. Oakham show, 1832.

1833 Rutland Agricultural Society

A **silver coffee pot** inscribed: *Rutland Agricultural, Society, 1833, to R. W. Baker, Esq., for the best ox, 1st class.*

1833 Smithfield Club

A **silver cake basket** inscribed: *Smithfield Club, 1833. To R. W. Baker, for the best ox; 1st prize, 1st class.*

1837 Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting

A **silver cup**, the Owner's Prize Cup, presented to R W Baker.

Noted in Baker's Ploughing Meeting results list, but not in his will or obituary.

The ploughman / ploughboy was Eli Newbold.

1838 Bourne Agricultural Society

A **silver castor stand** inscribed: *Bourne Agricultural Society. To R. W. Baker, for 1st prize bull, Sept., 1838.*

1839 Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting

A **silver cup** inscribed: *Mr. Baker's Cottesmore Meeting, Sept., 1839.*

1841 Royal Agricultural Society

A **silver tray** inscribed: *From the Royal Agricultural Society of England to R, W. Baker, Esq. Prize Plough. Liverpool Meeting, 1841.*

1841 Testimonial

A **service of plate** 'of the value of nearly £400' was presented to R W Baker on 12th June 1841 (see Appendix 9):

Inscribed: *To Richard Westbrook Baker, Esq., this testimonial of his unwearied exertions in the cause of agriculture and for protecting British husbandry generally, was presented June 12, 1841, from upwards of 1000 of the Nobility, Clergy, Gentry, Agriculturists, Tradesmen, Artisans, and Labourers of Rutland and other Counties.*

This service of plate '... each article having Mr. Baker's arms splendidly engraved upon it, and his crest (a greyhound's head) forming a handle for each cover' (SM, 18th June 1841, 2) consisted of:

A **candelabrum with seven lights**

A **soup tureen**

A **ladle**

Four **corner dishes with covers**, one of which is now in private ownership in Australia (figs. 65, 70)

A **venison dish**



Fig. 70. Silver corner dish with R W Baker's greyhound and wheat sheaf crest forming a handle (photo: Alfred R Morrison).

1847 Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting

Presented at Baker’s concluding ploughing meeting:

A model of the **Rutland Plough**, in silver (figs. 33, 68).

Inscribed on a plaque: *The Rutland plough, of which the above is an exact model, was originally made by the Messrs. Ransome, of Ipswich, expressly for and according to the suggestion of R. W. Baker, Esq.,*

Inscribed on another plaque: *This Tribute of Respect was presented to Richard Westbrook Baker on the 20th and concluding Anniversary of the Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting held at Oakham Oct. 6, 1847, in grateful testimony of the many advantages conferred upon agriculture by his indefatigable zeal to promote and improve the art of ploughing.*

Now in private ownership in Australia.

A **silver inkstand** inscribed: *Purchased for Richard Westbrook Baker, Esq., with the surplus money arising from the funds raised for the silver plough with which he was presented on the 20th and concluding anniversary of the Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting. Oct., 1847.*

Known to be in the possession c1995 of a great-great-grand-daughter of R W Baker.

Other items noted in R W Baker’s Will

His punch bowl and ladle, his own and other family portraits, his prints and paintings of cattle.

Locations all unknown, except for the painting by W H Davis of ‘The Neat One’ (fig. 41 and p110).

Other related items

1846 Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting

A **silver cup** inscribed: *‘Mr Baker’s Cottesmore Meeting October 1846’*, with an engraving of a Rutland Plough. Also inscribed *‘To John Turner A Farmers son of Rutlandshire First Prize’* and *‘Presented by the Earl of Gainsborough’*. John was the 16-year-old son of James Turner, a blacksmith of Market Overton. There were 16 competitors in his class and he had to plough half-an-acre in less than four hours with a plough drawn by two horses.

In the possession of John Turner’s descendants in Canada in 2018.

Information and photographs (fig. 30 and 71) kindly provided by Ron Turner.



Fig. 71.

Appendix 9 – Richard Westbrook Baker’s testimonial

Transcribed from the Stamford Mercury, Friday 22nd August 1862, page 7

An Eminent Agriculturist – The late Mr. Baker, as a breeder of first-class cattle, was remarkably successful. He took extraordinary interest in the working of the Rutland allotment system and ploughing society, and indeed in everything that was calculated to promote the interest of all in his adopted county. He was a Magistrate for the county of Leicester, a Life Governor of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, a Commissioner of Land-tax, &c. We give below a list of the testimonials awarded to him for his eminent services in the cause of agriculture, and a list of the

gold and silver medals for stock exhibited by him at the shows of various agricultural societies. A service of plate contains the following inscription: “To Richard Westbrook Baker, Esq., this testimonial of his valuable services in the cause of agriculture and for advocating protection to British husbandry generally, presented June, 1841, from upwards of one thousand of the nobility, clergy, gentry, agriculturists, tradesmen, artisans, and labourers of Rutland and other counties.” “This service of plate consists of candelabra, soup tureen, ladle, four corner dishes with covers, and venison dish.” Family crest, with motto – “Non sibi sed patriae” (Not for himself, but for his country). The above were engraved on the three faces of the tripod. – A magnificent model of a Rutland plough, in silver, contains the following: “The Rutland plough, of which the above is an exact model, was originally made by the Messrs. Ransome, of Ipswich, expressly for and according to the suggestion of R. W. Baker, Esq., on the 20th and concluding anniversary of the Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting held at Oakham Oct. 6, 1847, in grateful testimony of the many advantages conferred upon agriculture by his indefatigable zeal to promote and improve the art of ploughing.” – A silver tankard has this inscription: “Rutland Agricultural Society, 1868. Presented by the Hon. Gerard Noel, M.P. to R. W. Baker, Esq., for the best cultivated 10 acres of Swedish Turnips in the county of Rutland.” – On a silver tray: “From the Royal Agricultural Society of England to R. W. Baker, Esq. Prize Plough. Liverpool Meeting, 1841.” – On a silver cup: “Mr. Baker’s Cottesmore Meeting, Sept., 1831. To Mr. R. W. Baker, owner of the plough in class 2. 1st prize. Presented by Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Bart., M.P.’ – On another silver cup: “Mr. Baker’s Cottesmore Meeting, Sept., 1839.” – On a silver tray: “Rutlandshire Agricultural Society, 1834, to R. W. Baker. Second prize ox, 1st class.” – On a silver fish-slice: “To R. W. Baker, 1st prize pig, Oakham Show, 1832.” – On a silver teapot: “To R. W. Baker, 1st prize ox, 1st class, Oakham Show, 1832.” – On a silver coffee-pot: “Rutland Agricultural, Society, 1833, to R. W. Baker, Esq., for the best ox, 1st class.” – On a silver sugar basin To R. W. Baker, 1st prize bull, Oakham Show, 1832.” – On a silver cream jug: “Premium for the best bull, Oakham show, April 2nd, 1832.” – On a silver gravy spoon: “To R. W. Baker. Ox sweepstakes, open to all England. Oakham show, 1832.” – On another silver gravy spoon: “To R. W. Baker. Second prize cow. Oakham show, 1832” – On a silver cake basket: “Smithfield Club, 1833. To R. W. Baker, for the best ox ; 1st prize, 1st class.” – On a silver waiter: “To R. W. Baker, breeder and feeder of the shorthorn ox; class 1, 1st prize. Oakham show, Dec. 5, 1831.” – On a silver inkstand: “Purchased for Richard Westbrook Baker, Esq., with the surplus money arising from the fund raised for the silver plough with which he was presented on the 20th and concluding anniversary of the Cottesmore Ploughing Meeting, Oct., 1847.” – On a silver castor stand: “Bourne Agricultural Society. To R. W. Baker, for 1st prize bull, Sept., 1838.” Deceased was awarded a gold medal by the Smithfield Club in 1845 as exhibiter of the best steer or ox in the; classes; a gold medal by the same club, in 1837, as the breeder of the best beast in any class; and a gold medal by the Rutland Agricultural Society, in 1838, as the breeder of the best beast. He had also nine silver medals awarded to him, viz , by the Smithfield Club, in 1845, as the breeder of the best beast in class 10; by the same club, in the same year, as the breeder of the best steer in class 20; by the same club, in 1834, for the best beast shown as extra stock; by the same club, in 1833, for the prize ox in class 1; by Wm. Leake, Esq., in 1833, as the owner of the first prize plough at the Cottesmore meeting; by the same gentleman, in 1834, as the owner of the first prize plough at the Cottesmore meeting; by the Smithfield Club, in 1837, as the breeder of the prize cow in class 6; by Wm. Leake, Esq., as the owner of the first prize plough in 1841; and by the Ploughing Meeting at Uppingham, in 1857, as

the owner of the first prize plough. Mr. Baker died on the 30th January, 1861, and his remains were interred in the family vault in Cottesmore church yard. At the time of his death he had some very promising cattle, which have since taken prizes. According to Burke's Landed Gentry, Richard Westbrook Baker, of Cottesmore and Langham, was the eldest son, by second marriage, of Rd. Baker, Esq., son of Wm. Baker, Esq., M.D., and married Dec. 16, 1820, Ann daughter of Henry Hind Brown, Esq., of Melton Mowbray. In the middle of the 15th century [sic] the ancestors of this family resided at Aylesbury, at which period the greater number of them became the followers of the celebrated George Fox, the Quaker, and with him suffered imprisonment, by order of Cromwell.

Appendix 10 – Richard Westbrook Baker's Funeral

*Transcribed from the Stamford Mercury, 8th February 1861, page 4 **

RUTLAND. - The remains of Rd. Westbrook Baker, Esq., whose death took place on the 30th ult. as stated last week, were deposited in the family vault in Cottesmore church-yard on Wednesday last, by the side of those of two of his children, viz., Richard, his eldest son, who died Oct. 22d, 1833, aged 8 years, of fever [at his grand-mother's house whilst] at Oakham Grammar-school, and Sarah Jane, his second daughter, and wife of Mr. C. H. [recte Robert Charles] Ransome, of Ipswich who died at Cottesmore Feb. 4, 1856. The village on Wednesday presented an extraordinary scene, between 2000 and 3000 persons having assembled there as a mark of respect to the memory of deceased. The funeral (walking) procession extended from the house (at the east end of the village) to the church, a distance of about 300 yards: it left deceased's residence in the following order - Four mutes, clerk, the Rev. S. Miles (Curate) and Mr. M. W. Jackson (family surgeon), undertakers, coffin borne by 16 carriers and 10 pall bearers), Mr. William Baker and Mrs. Startin (son and daughter of deceased) Mr. and Mrs. Edw. G. Baker (son and daughter-in-law), Mr. Startin (son-in-law) and Mrs. Baker, the Rev. — [Richard] Baker (nephew) and Mr. C. H. [recte R. C.] Ransome, Mr. Frisby and Mr. [Robert] Ransome, sen., Lord Campden, the Hon. and Rev. A. G. Stuart (Rector), the Hon. Hy. Noel, the Hon. Gerard J Noel, M.P., the Hon. Roden Noel, the Rev. R. Lovett, Mr. Burgess (Ridlington), deceased's household servants, the employees at Langham brewery, tenantry, the Earl of Gainsborough's tenantry, &c. On the corpse arriving at the church, which became densely crowded, the funeral service was impressively read by the Rector, and on the coffin being deposited in the vault, about three yards from the north-west corner of the church, many amongst the great assembly were seen to weep. The funeral was very satisfactorily performed by Mr. Geo. Hollis, of Regent House, Stamford, the coffin being made by Mr. Hy. Hollis of Cottesmore, the brass-plate containing this inscription "Richard Westbrook Baker, died January 30th, 1861 aged 63 years."

* *Certain corrections to errors in names given in the original text are shown in [brackets].*

Bibliography, Sources and Abbreviations

Abbreviations

CADHAS	Campden & District Historical & Archaeological Society
MLE	<i>Mark Lane Express & Agricultural Journal</i>
FM	<i>The Farmers Magazine</i>
HRO	Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies
LJ	<i>Leicester Journal</i>
RASE	Royal Agricultural Society of England
RLHRS	Rutland Local History & Record Society
ROLLR	Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland
SM	<i>Stamford Mercury</i>
TNA	The National Archives

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The most extensively used source has, of course, been the Exton Archive (DE3214) at ROLLR. Not only does it include the Exton estate records of the usual kind for Richard Westbrook Baker's time as Steward, there is additionally a great deal of his personal correspondence and documents relating to his business outside that of the estate. This is a direct consequence of one of the first actions that Baker took on being appointed steward, namely to build a new estate office on the east side of his house (see p43 and fig. 24). From then on, he used the new office for his own as well as estate records.

After his death in 1861, the estate office remained in Cottesmore for a number of years before the contents were moved into the stables at Exton Hall when the house was sold. The archive, including Baker's own correspondence, remained here until 1987 when it was transferred by Lord Gainsborough to the Leicestershire Record Office, now ROLLR. Thereafter there were repeated attempts to obtain grant funding to catalogue the collection, the most recent being the *Rutland's Phoenix* project which resulted in a magnificent online catalogue produced by Rachel Marsay. A publication to mark the launch includes much useful information on the content of the Archive (Marsay 2013).

Other records consulted at ROLLR include the minutes of Market Overton Select Vestry (DE4993) and wills. Resources consulted elsewhere include the database of artefacts and ephemera relating to Richard Westbrook Baker at RCM; Chipping Campden local history material (CADHAS); Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies for material relating to Baker's early life; the Royal Agricultural Society of England's library (for stock breeding and general research) at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire (now closed); and animal portraits at the Blackbrook Gallery, Coalville, Leicestershire (<https://www.blackbrookgallery.co.uk>).

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Rutland Local History & Record Society publications

The Society publishes an annual journal, *Rutland Record*, a series of Occasional Publications, and the Rutland Record Series of research reports, of which this is No 6. *Rutland Record* is an A4 publication of 40-48pp, issued free to paid-up members; it normally contains a selection of historical and archaeological articles and the annual reports of local organisations whose work is connected with the heritage of the historic county. Occasional Publications are published at irregular intervals, and are usually dedicated to a single subject; most are A4 in format and they vary in length. The Rutland Record Series are more substantial research publications normally on a single subject or theme relating to the county of Rutland. Most early titles are now out of print, but many are available to consult free of charge on the Society's website. All available publications can be purchased in person at the Rutland County Museum, ordered from the Society by post (enclosing a cheque to include p&p), or ordered on-line. Full details, including lists of contents, can be found on the Society's website, www.rutlandhistory.org.

Occasional Publications

7. *The 1712 Land Tax Assessments and the 1710 Poll Book for Rutland*, ed T H McK Clough (2005). Introduction by Dennis Mills; commentary on this Land Tax survival and the 1710 poll book, parish transcripts (by the Village Studies Group for Rutland), detailed indexes of names and trades (**now only £1.00**, p&p £2.00).
8. *Common Right and Private Interest: Rutland's Common Fields and their Enclosure*, by Ian E Ryder (2006). How Rutland's enclosures evolved, with historical background, case studies of Greetham, Lyddington, Caldecott & Uppingham, and Thorpe-by-Water, gazetteer with details of Enclosure Acts, indexes (**now only £1.00**, p&p £2.00).
9. *Who Owned Rutland in 1873? Rutland Entries in Return of Owners of Land 1873*, by T H McK Clough (2010). Transcript of the 564 entries. Introduction describing the landowners, where they came from and what they did, with notes. Special sections on Lyddington and on links with Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire (£7.50, members £6.00, p&p £2.00).
10. *Medieval Property Transactions in Rutland: abstracts of feet of fines 1197-1509*, by Bridget Wells-Furby (2013). Introduction, discussion including an assessment of women named in the fines, and a detailed calendar of all 355 Rutland feet of fines, fully indexed £10.00, members £8.00, p&p £2.50).
11. *John Barber's Oakham Castle and its Archaeology*, by Elaine Jones & Robert Ovens (2014). Illustrated account of John Barber's archaeological work at Oakham Castle in the 1950s and his notes on the Great Hall, with recent annotations about the finds and records of other work (£8.00, members £6.00, p&p £2.00).
12. *Oakham Lordship in 1787: a map and survey of Lord Winchelsea's Oakham estate*, by T H McK Clough (2016). Evaluation and discussion of this important pre-enclosure map of the town, with a transcript of the accompanying field books revealing the occupiers of many town properties. Map reproductions in full colour (£10.00, members £7.50, p&p £2.50).

Rutland Record Series

The following are out of print but second-hand copies can sometimes be found:

1. *Tudor Rutland: The County Community under Henry VIII*, ed Julian Cornwall (1980).
2. *The Weather Journals of a Rutland Squire*, ed John Kington (1988).
3. *Stained Glass in Rutland Churches*, by Paul Sharpling (1997).
4. *Time in Rutland: a history and gazetteer of the bells, scratch dials, sundials and clocks of Rutland*, by Robert Ovens & Sheila Sleath (2002).

The following is also out of print but available to consult on the Society's website free of charge:

5. *The Heritage of Rutland Water*, ed Robert Ovens & Sheila Sleath (2nd impression 2008). A Heritage Lottery Fund supported project to study and fully record the area of Rutland Water.

Postage & packing charges shown are for inland UK. Orders for publications, enclosing a cheque to include p&p payable to RLHRS, should be sent to: The Honorary Editor, RLHRS, c/o Rutland County Museum, Catmose Street, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6HW. Publications can also be ordered on-line.

The Rutland Local History & Record Society

Registered Charity No 700273

The Rutland Local History & Record Society originated in the 1930s. It promotes all aspects of the history and archaeology of the historic county of Rutland and its immediate area. It does this by holding regular meetings and lectures (arranged jointly with the Friends of the Rutland County Museum & Oakham Castle), and special events. These include an annual full-day meeting in a Rutland village, and archaeological fieldwalking. It has a small library of local history material, housed at the Rutland County Museum in Oakham, which complements the holdings of the museum and can be consulted by arrangement.

The Society also monitors local planning applications, commenting on them when appropriate, and sponsors the annual George Phillips and Tony Traylen Awards for new-build or restoration projects which make the best contribution to the historic environment of the county.

The Society's publications range from its annual journal, the *Rutland Record*, to research reports such as *The Heritage of Rutland Water*, the culmination of a three-year project supported by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. Information about the Society's publications, including those that can be consulted free on-line, can be found on its website. In-print titles can be ordered from the Society or on-line. They are also stocked at the Rutland County Museum and at local bookshops.

Membership is concentrated in Rutland and the immediate area, but also includes people from across the UK and abroad who have an interest in the county and its history or archaeology. Institutional members include academic libraries in Britain, Australia and the USA.

Further details about the RLHRS and its activities are available through the Society's website, or by post. The Society will do its best to answer enquiries about Rutland and its history, or to find someone who may be able to help.

Website and contact: www.rutlandhistory.org.

Address: Rutland County Museum, Catmose Street, Oakham, Rutland,
LE15 6HW, UK.



Richard Westbrook Baker

Richard Westbrook Baker was the most important and influential improver of agriculture in Rutland in the early nineteenth century.

He was born in Baldock, Hertfordshire in 1797. By 1810 his family had moved to Oakham, where they were living in Sir Gerard Noel's Riding School in Catmose Street. Sir Gerard was the owner of the Exton estate and it was not surprising that on leaving school Baker looked to him for employment, eventually becoming his estate Steward in 1828. He continued in this post until he died in 1861.

Leading by example during this period of rapid agricultural change, he helped to establish the Rutland Agricultural Society and became a foremost livestock breeder, particularly of Shorthorn cattle. He won many medals and prizes at agricultural shows and provided male animals for farmers to improve their own stock. He designed the Rutland Plough, and for arable farmers he set up annual ploughing meetings to encourage, educate and reward good practice, as well as to demonstrate new machinery. In order to counter the effects of agricultural improvement on rural poverty he introduced spade allotments in estate villages and founded a Friendly Society to help farm labourers during periods of hardship. As a mark of respect, he was presented with a service of silver in 1841, and with a silver model of the Rutland Plough in 1847.

Richard Westbrook Baker had a profound effect on many aspects of rural life in Rutland, and this book is a celebration of his achievements.

ISBN 978-0-907464-58-7



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