

# JOHN LOCKE AND SOMERSET<sup>1</sup>

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John Locke, one of the greatest philosophers of the early modern period, was born on 29 August 1632 in Wrington, about ten miles southwest of Bristol, in a house adjacent to the north side of All Saints' Church, where he was baptised that same day. The modest house, which belonged to his mother's family, survived into Victorian times.<sup>2</sup>

Locke's grandfather, Nicholas Locke, was brought up in Buckland Newton, Dorset, but moved to Pensford in Somerset, where he built up a flourishing business, collecting in, and shipping on, the woollen cloth woven in cottages throughout the west of England. He had a number of children, two girls, Frances and Anne, and four sons: John, born in 1606, did not follow his father into the cloth trade, but turned instead to the law; Peter (1607–86), initially a tanner, later earned a living as a landowner; Edward (1610–63); and Thomas (1612–64), who became a brewer in Bristol. All these children were said to have been 'persons of very exemplary lives'.<sup>3</sup>

John, the eldest of Nicholas Locke's sons, was 23 when, in July 1630, he married Agnes Keene, ten years his senior, and said to have been 'a most beautiful woman'. Her family was local to Wrington where various members owned land and houses. Her elder brother (who married her husband's sister Frances) took both her father's name, Edmund, and his trade of tanner; another brother, John, was an attorney. John and Agnes Locke had been married just over a year when their first child, John was born; their second, Peter, died in infancy; and their third, Thomas, was born in August 1637.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after his birth, Locke and his mother made the ten mile journey east to her marital home in, or near, Pensford. Just where it was is discussed in 'John Locke's Somerset Property'.<sup>5</sup> When he was about 14

Locke left Somerset for Westminster School in London, having been nominated by Alexander Popham, lord of the manor of Publow.<sup>6</sup> From there, in 1652, he won a scholarship which gave him a place as a Student at Christ Church Oxford.<sup>7</sup> During the years of his BA he was not 'any very hard student', but by 1658 when he graduated MA he had 'acquir'd the Reputation of Learning' and 'was then look'd upon as one of the most Learned and Ingenious young men in the Colledge'.<sup>8</sup>

In the spring of 1659 Locke, approaching 27, was encouraged to think of marriage by his father who urged him to make a point of being in Pensford that July: a certain widow, 'young, childless, handsome, with £200 per annum and £1000 in her purse may possibly occasion your stay heere'.<sup>9</sup> Locke did go to Pensford that summer; whether or not he met the widow is not known, but even if her money would have been sufficient for her and a new husband Oxford was far more attractive to him. Still with his Studentship, without any college responsibilities and not registered for any further degree, he was free to follow his own inclinations and interests. Besides which, rural Somerset life was no exchange for the sophistication, the 'learning [and] civility' of Oxford.<sup>10</sup> 'I am', Locke wrote back to his friends that summer, 'in the midst of a company of mortall that know noething but the price of corne and sheep [and] that can entertaine discourse of noething [but] fating of beast and dugging of ground'.<sup>11</sup> Remarks such as this show how far he felt his education had separated him from his original surroundings. They were common in the letters he wrote that year from 'zomerzet shire', as he called it. He referred to 'Barbarisme', and the 'clownery of the country'. 'I am', he told his friends, disparagingly rather than

approvingly, ‘in a country where art hath noe share in our words and actions, you can meet with noething here but what is the innocent product of Nature’, and referred to ‘bonny country girdles that have not one jot of dissimulation in them’. It was clear that the locals who had known him as a child saw what he had now become; though whether they took him as seriously as he did himself is not clear. He reported ‘being the prime Statesman of the place, and the Dictator of intelligence’. ‘You would laugh’, he said, presumably with humour but none too modestly for all that, ‘to see how attentive the gray-heads be to my reports ... how they besse them selves at my relations, and goe home and tell wonders and prophesye of next years affairs’.<sup>12</sup>

But the ending of a letter to one female friend perhaps shows that despite it all he still felt himself the clumsy country boy of his youth:

‘I am the same rough thing still that I was when I left you and I feare I shall grow worse in a country famous for rusticks. [W]hich however it may endanger that small stock of civility I am owner of yet it shall never impair that esteeme I have for you’.<sup>13</sup>

(He signalled that esteem by sending her the curiosity of some silver which had been coloured gold by the action of the heavily mineral spring water at Bath.)<sup>14</sup> In a later year another close female friend would record that Locke’s eventual easy, unconstrained manner was not ‘had naturally’ but acquired ‘from the company he kept’.<sup>15</sup>

Even though it had already supported him through six years of university study Locke’s Studentship did not come to an end with his MA: the average tenure of the Studentships was around 15 years. Their intention was to ensure a supply of educated parochial clergy, so as soon as a Student entered holy orders and took up a living away from Oxford, or as soon as he married, his tenure came to an end. There was, moreover, some inexorability in the progress from Student to clergyman. As he gained seniority through length of residence Locke would eventually have been expected to prepare for and take holy orders. As exceptions to these rules, the Crown could grant a dispensation from taking orders; and there were four special Faculty Studentships (awarded for the purpose of training in the law or medicine), which could only be held by laymen.

At least two possibilities seem to have been in the air as regards Locke’s hopes and intentions (neither of which involved going into the Church). Shortly after his BA, he had been admitted to Gray’s Inn in

London; and, though he had returned to Oxford, the idea of studying to become a lawyer seems still to have been a possibility, though not an attractive one.<sup>16</sup> Medicine was another and more attractive possibility. For some time Locke had been interested in medicine and, after his MA had begun ‘to Study in earnest, apply[ing] himself principally to Physick’.<sup>17</sup> When he was at home over the latter half of 1659 the question had evidently arisen of his entering into some sort of medical collaboration or practice with a local doctor, Dr Ayliffe Ivye; but he was no more enthusiastic about taking up life in Somerset than he had been about Gray’s. ‘I finde noe disappointment at all in the delay of your treaty with Dr I[vye]’, he wrote to his father from Oxford early the next year, ‘since I shall not willingly be drawne from thence’.<sup>18</sup> Instead Locke stayed in Oxford to pursue his interest in medicine there.<sup>19</sup>

He combined these studies with thinking and writing about various questions in political and moral theory,<sup>20</sup> and also, during the years from 1661, occupied various college positions, lecturer in Greek, lecturer in Rhetoric, and Censor in Moral Philosophy, and was tutor to various Christ Church undergraduates.<sup>21</sup>

Locke’s mother was taken ill and died in the autumn of 1654. His father had been subject to some recurrent ill-health (which possibly lay behind his considering a move to Stanton Drew, a move in which his son saw ‘many conveniences’).<sup>22</sup> When, in 1660, he fell ill again, perhaps during a visit from his son, it was hoped that it was just this old recurring complaint from which he had often recovered.<sup>23</sup> But things were evidently more serious, and, having made his will in the December, he died in February 1661.<sup>24</sup> Locke had no formal responsibilities under the will – his younger brother Thomas was executor, with his uncle Peter as an ‘overseer trustee and assistant’ – but he stayed on in Somerset after his father’s funeral until April.<sup>25</sup>

The two brothers, John and Thomas, inherited from their father an amount of property, land and dwellings in the Publow, Pensford, and Belluton area. It was because of this inheritance that Locke retained his connection with Somerset. Under the terms of the will they were not to come into full possession until four years after their father’s death, during which all rents and profits were to go towards ‘the payment of my debts’. Before this time had elapsed, however, Thomas died, in 1663, and Locke bought his property from his sister-in-law in March 1664, having come to Somerset perhaps for this purpose.<sup>26</sup>

In April 1665 he came into full possession of his property, and it was perhaps for that reason that he visited Somerset from Oxford that month.<sup>27</sup> After a careful survey he valued the property (described in detail in Woolhouse forthcoming) at £872.<sup>28</sup> So began in earnest his life as a Somerset landlord. In this part of his life, as in the others, he seems to have been firm (even when his close relations were concerned) but fair.<sup>29</sup> His characteristic quickness to think he might be being taken advantage of did not get the better of his wanting to do the right thing. 'I know', he said towards the end of his life, 'it is sometimes an inconvenience to tenants to pay their rent punctually at the quarter day therefor I am always willing to allow forbearance to those who are honest and responsible men and do not delay paying upon pretences only to delay time, according as suits their occasions'.<sup>30</sup>

He was next in Somerset almost exactly a year later, again in April. The house at Belluton, in which he had spent at least his later childhood, was not now available to him, having been rented out to one Robert Haroll. He stayed (both on this and later visits) at the home of one of his childhood friends, John Strachey, and his mother, Elizabeth Baber, at Sutton Court, a manor house three or four miles south west of Belluton.<sup>31</sup> An outbreak of the plague in the area led him, towards the end of the month, to return to Oxford sooner than he had intended. But he had had enough time to make some observations he had promised Robert Boyle, the chemist and experimental philosopher whom he had met in Oxford four or five years earlier.

Boyle had provided him with a barometer to measure the pressure in the Mendips lead mines. Unfortunately, as he told Boyle, he was 'able to do so little in the attempts I have made to serve you'. Access to the mine was not a matter of being lowered down a vertical shaft; rather, the miners climbed down, through cracks and faults in the rock. Yet the difficulty this made for carrying the barometer down was not all, and Locke gave a vivid picture of the difference between the mundane interests of the unsophisticated miners, (who 'could give me very little account of any thing, but what profit made them seek after'), and those of an educated experimental philosopher: 'the sight of my engine, and my desire of going down into some of their gruffs, gave them terrible apprehensions; and I could not persuade them but that I had some design'. The more Locke and Strachey said to allay their doubts served only to make 'them disbelieve all we told them; and do what we could, they would think us craftier fellows

than we were ... [T]he women too were alarmed, and think us still either projectors and conjurers'.<sup>32</sup> But Locke was able to gather some information about the need for a constant flow of fresh air into the mines, and he used this in *Respirationis Usus*, a medical manuscript he worked on in May and November.<sup>33</sup>

Locke also did some experiments on a hill near Sutton Court, at Stowey. He found that at the top the barometer's mercury had fallen about three eighths of an inch, and that in general, 'both going up and going down, I observed, that proportionably as I was higher or lower on the hill, the mercury fell or rose'. He suspected that besides the instrument readings, Boyle would have liked to know 'the perpendicular height of the place I made the experiment in', but he was not able to provide this.

At Stowey too Locke visited an 'incrusted spring'. This, he noted, was at its most effective 'at a fall higher than my head' about 40 or 50 yards from its rise:

'there it sheaths every thing with stony cases, and makes the sides of the bank hard rock, and from thence all along its stream, it covers sticks, etc. with a crust; and some so candied I found above this fall, but not so frequent; whether the mixing of air with the water in the fall, contributes any thing to the effect, I cannot guess; but that the fall does, I suppose: for besides, that at the above-mentioned fall, it seems to operate most strongly, I observed, that though I could not find any thing incrusted within a good distance of the spring, yet that the moss above the spring was a little incrusted, (but not so firmly as at the other place) for the water in the winter, when the springs are full, runs out also at a hole two or three yards above the place, where now only it rises, and from thence falls perpendicularly into this lower spring, from whence it runs by an easy descent to the next fall. A gentleman, in whose field it rises, and by whose house it runs, told me upon enquiry, that he uses it both in his kitchen and brewhouse, without any sensible ill effects, he being pretty ancient, but healthy man, and long inhabitant of that place. It will bear soap, freezes quickly, and waters his grounds upon occasion, with advantage. All the ill effects of it, that he can guess, are, that his horses are usually short-breathed, which he imputes to the drinking of that water'.<sup>34</sup>

Locke noted elsewhere that the man he interviewed was 'Mr Jones of stowey who lived to above 90 years very healthy & died in the year 1692'.<sup>35</sup>

Though his uncle Peter had been collecting his rents for him for some years Locke was again in Somerset in April 1667, seeing to his business.<sup>36</sup> He asked Boyle whether there were any investigations he could make for him in the Mendips.<sup>37</sup> He stayed with Strachey at Sutton Court until the end of the month.<sup>38</sup> Then, rather than returning to Oxford, he went to London, to Exeter House in the Strand, the home of the Earl of Shaftesbury (as he was to become), then the Chancellor of the Exchequer under Charles II. Locke had met Shaftesbury the previous year in Oxford where they found ‘an uncommon Delight in the Company of each other’.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, so strong an impression did Locke make that Shaftesbury ‘desir’d Mr Locke that from that time he would look upon his house as his home; and that he would let him see him there in Town so soon as he could’.<sup>40</sup> At Exeter House, besides the ‘great men of those times’,<sup>41</sup> he could have expected to meet a wide variety of people connected with the administration of the country and the world of learning. An early benefit of Shaftesbury’s patronage was the granting of a royal dispensation which allowed Locke to retain his Studentship at Christ Church without the requirement to take holy orders.

Though money was allowed to him,<sup>42</sup> Locke was not at Exeter House as a paid employee. It was, though, presumably understood that he was to have responsibility for the education of Shaftesbury’s son, and that his developing knowledge and expertise as a physician would be called on. Increasingly, however, his life was determined by Shaftesbury’s political concerns.<sup>43</sup>

Since Locke moved to London Dr David Thomas, an Oxford friend with whom he collaborated in chemical experiments, had moved to Salisbury, where he now practised as a physician. This gave Locke even more reason to make visits to the West Country, but it was perhaps because of his work with Shaftesbury that the visits became less frequent. For it was not till October 1671, and then August or early September 1673, that he was again at Sutton Court.<sup>44</sup>

Between November 1675 and April 1679 Locke was in France. Though he naturally had some anxiety about his affairs in Somerset he seems to have failed to leave his uncle with a detailed rent roll.<sup>45</sup> Towards the end of his time abroad things were beginning to fall apart: ‘[S]om of your rents I cannot Gather’, Peter Locke warned him, ‘because I know not what it is som will not pay sopping I belive you are dead’.<sup>46</sup> One Edward Taylor who was engaged in mining for coal on part of Locke’s land would similarly not pay his rent except to Locke himself;

the legal situation with respect to some other tenancies needed some attention; and there were, said Peter Locke, many other things to go over.

But despite the urgency he felt, it was getting on for a year before he was able to get to Somerset to see to his affairs.<sup>47</sup> Four months after his return he had written to one of his friends in Paris ‘I had not thought I would be in London more than twenty days after my arrival, yet here I still am ... months later’; apart from anything else his two horses had been doing nothing more than ‘exercise their teeth’.<sup>48</sup> Having gone to Oxford shortly before Christmas, however, in early February (1680), he travelled west. He went first to Salisbury for a few days, to visit David Thomas, whom he had not seen since the autumn of 1671, and then to Somerset.<sup>49</sup> For some months his uncle Peter had felt himself ‘att the brinke of the Grave’ and had effectively handed his responsibilities over to his son-in-law William Stratton of Sutton.<sup>50</sup> During the nearly two months Locke spent attending to the affairs of his property he must have seen for himself that his uncle had not exaggerated the seriousness of the situation, for seven years’ back-rent was collected from some tenants.<sup>51</sup>

Locke took the opportunity of sending Shaftesbury a Cheddar cheese.<sup>52</sup> ‘We long to see you here’, Shaftesbury replied,

‘and hope you have almost ended your travels. Somersetshire, no doubt, will perfect your breeding; after France and Oxford, you could not go to a more proper place. My wife finds you profit much there, for you have recovered your skill in Cheddar cheese, and for a demonstration have sent us one of the best we have seen’.<sup>53</sup>

Locke returned to London in April,<sup>54</sup> and, despite Stratton’s expectations, did not revisit Somerset until 1683. In mid-June of that year he travelled from Oxford to meet Stratton in Cirencester;<sup>55</sup> and then, some weeks later, in early August, he was attending to the business of his property, in Somerset itself. Describing himself as ‘John Locke of Belton’ (rather than his more usual ‘John Locke of Christ Church Oxford’), he signed documents which gave William Stratton and Edward Clarke power of attorney with respect to his estates.<sup>56</sup>

Locke had perhaps first met Clarke, of Chipley Park, Nynehead, on his visit to Somerset in early 1680. A barrister about 18 years Locke’s junior, Clarke was married to Mary Jepp, a niece of John Strachey of Sutton Court. He and Locke became close and lasting friends. As a judge on the western assize

circuit, and a welcome visitor at Sutton Court, Clarke was well placed to keep an eye on Locke's property.<sup>57</sup>

Behind Locke's putting the management of his affairs on a more formal footing was the fact that shortly afterwards he exiled himself to Holland. His years of association with Shaftesbury (who had himself fled the country the previous year) had made him an object of some suspicion with regard to the plotting that had been taking place against King Charles and his brother James.

Hoping to make improvements to his house at Chipley his friend Clarke, nicknamed 'Somshire' in reference to his native county,<sup>58</sup> asked him to send from Holland 'some seeds to make a grove'; by some mistake Locke at first sent turnip seeds.<sup>59</sup> He later sent more of these, together with carrot, cabbage, and nasturtium seeds (a 'plentiful provision of belly timber', Clarke commented).<sup>60</sup> But lest Clarke and his wife be condemned to taking their summer walks 'in the Turnip grove',<sup>61</sup> he also sent seeds, plants, cuttings, and roots of lime and abel trees.<sup>62</sup> Locke had detailed views about how these should be planted:

'I desire you to make your walks broad enough, that is, let the bodies of the trees stand in two lines twenty foot in each side wider than the outside walls of your house, and then another row on the outside of those twenty further. On the front I think lime trees would do best, on the east side elms, and on the north witch elms, which is a better sort of trees than we commonly imagine'.<sup>63</sup>

Locke also arranged for some Friesland sheep to be shipped to Exeter for Chipley Park.<sup>64</sup>

Locke's own property received less care during the over four years he was out of the country. Stratton not only neglected to keep him informed about his affairs, but also, more seriously, neglected the affairs themselves. In 1686, when 'After A long silence' he told Locke that things had not been going well, Locke asked Clarke to intervene.<sup>65</sup> Clarke spent 'the Greatest part of ... 12. dayes' on a visit to Sutton Court, looking over the accounts. He found in particular that the situation with regard to Robert Haroll who occupied a house and much of Locke's land at Belluton 'hath been permitted to runn into greate confusion'. No account had been settled and agreed between Stratton and Haroll in all the time since Stratton had taken over Locke's business in 1680; and the property itself was in very poor repair:

'The thatch of the Barn is soe totally decayed that the Rayne beates through all parts of it, and if it bee

not speedily New-thatch'd all over, the Tymber of the Roofe will be much injured, and the Barn rendred alltogether uselesse'.

The stable too was 'much decayed', the well 'decayed and uselesse, and must bee sunke deeper', and some thatch on the house itself was 'verie Ruinouse'.<sup>66</sup>

Locke's immediate and exasperated response to Stratton's lazy negligence was to prescribe to him some rules he should follow, as not to let tenants get more than six months in arrears.<sup>67</sup> But he clearly found his property at Belluton and Pensford something of an unwanted worry.<sup>68</sup> So much so, that he wondered whether it might not be better if the Belluton estate which Haroll rented, were sold and 'reduced into money, than to yield no other income but trouble to me or my friends'.<sup>69</sup> But despite Stratton's lack of care (or perhaps in an attempt to get him to act differently) Locke decided that on condition of Stratton's looking after affairs properly he would settle that part of the freehold property of his Belluton estate which was rack-rented out and not on lease, on Stratton's son Peter, during his life and that of his sister Ann.<sup>70</sup> 'But if I find he manages it so ill that I make little or nothing of it, I shall think of disposing it some other way'.<sup>71</sup>

His proposal was that, the property having been settled on Stratton's son, Locke would continue to receive ('without any deduction for rates, taxes, reparations, or other charges whatsoever') throughout his life all the rents (whether Stratton collected them or not) that his 'whole estate in publoe pensford and Belton' yielded when Stratton took over his affairs in 1680; and that 'a reasonable rent' (23s p.a. was agreed upon) from the land settled on the son would be paid to Locke's heirs.<sup>72</sup>

Clarke did not presume to judge whether Stratton deserved this kindness from Locke, but he thought the arrangement, as an inducement to Stratton to collect the rents, would very much conduce to Locke's peace of mind.<sup>73</sup> It was, he thought, 'the only way whereby you can be master of your estate, and make the most of it during your own life and with the least trouble'.<sup>74</sup>

Locke had some second thoughts about settling the property absolutely on Stratton's children without a power of revocation; but he saw that Stratton would have good reason to object if 'after he has [paid] such a rent without defalcation of taxes for some years I may resume my estate, and leave him not only unrewarded, but out of purse'. He finally proposed that he could revoke if ever any part of the

agreed rent were six months behind, and that if he revoked for some reason other than some fault on Stratton's part, Stratton might seek compensation.<sup>75</sup>

Stratton's second wife objected that the arrangement, so favourable to his children by his first wife, might prove to be detrimental to the children he had had by her; Stratton might, after all, end up paying more to Locke than he was able to collect in. So Stratton suggested he should not be personally liable for the whole of Locke's rents, but only for 'about £40 yearly' in respect of the rack-rents. He was not to be liable in this way for any of the rents from land and property which was on a life-lease, 'for that I hope will be paid one time or another'.<sup>76</sup>

Unfortunately, even after the making of this arrangement, Clarke continued to report to Locke that Stratton's management, specifically the collection of debts from Robert Haroll, was still not up to the mark, and Locke had to write him some 'sharp loyns'.<sup>77</sup>

In February 1689, following the invasion of England by William of Orange, and the flight of James II from the country, Locke returned from Holland. It was perhaps mainly for the purpose of reviewing things with him that William Stratton was in London in April; but Stratton also wanted Locke to use his influence to get him a surveyor's place ('or any other Creditable office of profit') in the Custom House in Bristol.<sup>78</sup>

In fact, for whatever reason, Stratton moved to Bristol in 1691, where Locke (in August 1692, on his first visit to the west country since he returned to England, and on what proved to be his last) went to see him. He no longer wanted to look after Locke's affairs and wanted to settle his accounts with him.<sup>79</sup> Yet despite being (so Clarke reported) 'hotly bent upon' tying things up, he continued to see to Locke's interests until his death in 1695.<sup>80</sup> It took some time for Locke to work through and satisfy himself about the papers and accounts sent him by Stratton's widow – who felt his meticulous care was born of suspicion of her husband's honesty. She felt too that the ten pounds she turned out to owe Locke should be waived, given her personal circumstances and the fact that her husband 'spent so much time and money in your business without chargeing any thing to you'.<sup>81</sup>

Unsatisfactory as Stratton had been (even with guidance and prompting from Clarke) Locke was at a loss, after more than 15 years, to know quite how to replace him. Not only had 'Death ... taken away all my old friends and acquaintance' in the area, but

also 'my long absence out of the country has scarce left me soe much as the names of any body remaining in Publoe pensford or Stanton to whom I could now apply my self to desire their assistance'.<sup>82</sup> Not knowing 'who else to address my self too', Locke solicited the help of a Stanton Drew man, Cornelius Lyde; only the previous year Locke had written to him asking for the measurements of Hautville's Quoit, part of the Early Bronze Age complex near Stanton Drew, which John Aubrey, the antiquary, had asked him for.<sup>83</sup>

To help him with his business would, Locke perhaps rather optimistically said, 'cost you but very litle trouble'.<sup>84</sup> Describing the situation Locke said that his

'litle estate ... is a great part of it in your own parish and all of it almost under your eye. The greatest part if not all of it is let already for some time by leases signed, soe that all the trouble it will give you is only to receive the rents'.

Lyde agreed, and asked Locke to send him details of tenants and rents.<sup>85</sup> Within a few months Locke evidently felt confident enough about him to give him the power of attorney, but he did not always find his accounts easy to follow.<sup>86</sup> After two or three years he rewrote an account Lyde had sent, according to 'a plain and easy method wherein any error will presently be made to appear'. This method, Locke said, was 'that which is found easiest and therefore generally made use of in all accounts', but Lyde thought it was 'not made in that order which is Common with merchants'.<sup>87</sup> Locke left it to Lyde to decide the matter, and in fact sent him another, a 'much simpler method ... the shortest and plainest method [which] can be used'.<sup>88</sup>

'Cornelius Lyde Esquire' was a man of some local consequence – a JP, a Commissioner for the 1689–91 land tax, and himself a smallish landowner (with an income of £300 p.a.).<sup>89</sup> His work for Locke was evidently not a matter of paid service, but one of the performance of favours.<sup>90</sup> A piece of plate for Mrs Lyde, and a copy of his *Further Considerations concerning Raising the Value of Money* are the only material recognition on record of the obligation Locke felt to him.<sup>91</sup> But Lyde felt free to ask for, and Locke enthusiastically willing to grant, favours in return. On two occasions (1695, 1701) he asked Locke to use his influence (in fact with the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench) in getting him off a short list of possible candidates for sheriff for Somerset ('it wold be to hard upon me haveing but a small Estate and A greate famile').<sup>92</sup> Lyde was

appointed a country commissioner for the Land Tax introduced in 1695, a post which Locke and Clarke thought he would 'doe ill to decline': 'you may be soe usefull to the Government and your country and neighbourhood', Lyde was advised. If he had been disinclined towards this public service, he was careful to appear otherwise, and at pains to let Locke know that he was spending time and taking trouble over it.<sup>93</sup> He also sought advice and assistance from Locke for one of his many sons, Samuel, who was studying medicine in Holland, and who eventually set up in practice in England.<sup>94</sup>

In connection with the payment of rents Lyde raised a question which, at various levels, had concerned Locke since his return from Holland. Coins were not, as now, merely official fiduciary tokens; rather, they took their value from the amount of precious metal in them, so that with the stamp of the Royal Mint on them they were authenticated amounts of valuable metal (primarily silver) of a certain degree of fineness. In the course of circulation over the years many coins had become devalued, sometimes by as much as half their official weight, by 'clipping', the illegal cutting-off of strips of metal from the edges (a practice which the introduction of some milled coins in 1663 made more difficult). Clipped coins usually passed at their denominated face value (though foreign trade was compromised because foreigners would not accept them), but it began more and more to be recognised that something needed to be done. According to Lady Masham, Locke saw this before others:

'what loss our Nation suffer'd by the Slowness with which men were made Sensible, what must be the Remedy to our Disease, in the Debasing and Clipping of our Coyn might, had [Locke] been hearken'd to, have hade much earlier cure'.<sup>95</sup>

One commonly suggested solution to the problem was a reminting in which the new coins would be 'raised' (as it was described) by their nominal denominations being put at a value above that of the metal they contained. In Locke's view, the idea of 'raising the coin' had not been thought through and he was against a recoinage at a devalued rate. What the idea amounts to, he said, is calling something 'a crown now, which before, by the law, was but part of a crown'. His basic thought was that what is paid in rent or for goods is essentially a certain quantity of silver (though a quantity which, by virtue of having been officially coined, has been guaranteed as being of a certain weight and degree of fineness).

'If anyone thinks a shilling, or a crown in name, has its value from the denomination, and not from the quantity of silver in it, let it be tried; and hereafter let a penny be called a shilling, or a shilling be called a crown. I believe nobody would be content to receive his debts or rents in such money'.

As a consequence of a devalued recoinage, landlords would be robbed of a percentage of their rents and all creditors of a percentage of what they were owed; similarly, a recoined crown would simply not buy as much as an old one did.<sup>96</sup>

Both in published and unpublished writings, and with the help of his friend Clarke, who became MP for Taunton in 1690, Locke sought to influence official thinking and action on this matter. Though he could conceive of a time when things might be so serious that clipped coins would not exchange with standard weight ones, he seems to have thought at first that this could be avoided by keeping up the legal pressure against coin clipping.

As he came to see, however, he was wrong about this; coin clipping continued unabated in the 1690s, and simple domestic exchanges began to be threatened. As Lyde pointed out to Locke, when he undertook to collect his rents he would inevitably be offered badly devalued coinage which was most prevelant amongst the rural poor. Locke did not blame Lyde for not being keen 'to get mony into your hands whilst it is in this pickle'; he left it to Lyde to 'doe with my tenants as you doe with your own to presse payment or to forbear as you shall think it most convenient'.<sup>97</sup>

By early 1696 Lyde thought he should delay the collection of rents in the expectation of a recoinage, when 'wee shall have good moneys'.<sup>98</sup> But Locke, with his informed knowledge of current thinking in Parliament, was not so optimistic and did not 'see when there will be an end of the bad money' (adding in his cautious way, 'but this I say only to you as my private opinion, which I would not have you mention again from me, but that you may make what use of it you shall think fit in your own affairs').<sup>99</sup> He preferred that Stratton should collect the rent in debased coins, so long as it 'will be received of you again in Bristoll by any good man who will give you bills for it to be paid in London. For else great arears may prove as dangerous as the money we receive here in London'.<sup>100</sup>

Locke added some advice as to the value at which Stratton should accept guineas.<sup>101</sup> The shortage of standard-weight silver money had led to a dramatic increase in the price of golden guineas (from under

23 shillings to around 30) and Parliament was attempting to control their value by legal means.<sup>102</sup> Locke continued to be concerned with these questions both at the level of national policy (with his Parliamentary friends such as Clarke) and at the more local level as a Somerset landlord (with Lyde), until a recoinage was completed.<sup>103</sup>

When Locke first thought of making a settlement on Stratton's children by his first wife, a daughter of Peter Locke, he recognised that he had another first cousin, the son of Peter Locke's other daughter, Ann, the wife of an Exeter shopkeeper, Jeremy King. But though Peter King was thus a relation as equally close as Peter and Ann Stratton, Locke said that to him 'I have very little obligation'.<sup>104</sup> By 1698, however, Locke had become close to Peter King, now a young man in his late 20s, who had recently been called to the Bar.<sup>105</sup> When only 22 he had published a book on the early Church, and had intended to become a clergyman; but having some caution about the established Church he turned away from this, no doubt with Locke's approval, to study law instead. His career would blossom, with a knighthood in 1708 and appointment as Lord Chancellor in 1725.

Peter King was already beginning to do things which would have been done by a dutiful (and trusted) son: from dispatching books, through giving legal and financial advice, to making investments (sometimes in his, King's, own name).<sup>106</sup> Eventually he was making regular visits to the West Country on the assize circuit and, liaising with Cornelius Lyde, keeping a close eye on Locke's Somerset interests.<sup>107</sup> Despite having earlier felt 'very little obligation' to him Locke eventually recognised him along with Peter Stratton, as a co-heir.

Locke died on 28 October 1704 at Oates, the Masham's family home near High Laver in Essex. He had not been to Somerset since 1692 but he remembered it in his will:

*'Item I give to the poor of the parish of Publoe in the County of Somersett forty shillings Item I give to the poor of the Parish of St. Thomas in Pensford in the same County forty shillings and I do hereby order and appoint that my Executors [sic] hereinafter named [i.e. Peter King] shall during his natural life and no longer sett apart the summe of ten pounds per annum for the releife and assistance of such industrious poor people inhabitants of the said Parishes of Publoe and St. Thomas and of the adjoining tithing of Beluton alias Belton and in such manner as He shall thinke fitt but more especially*

*for the binding out Apprentices born within the said Parishes of Publoe and St. Thomas and tithing of Beluton ... to such honest art vocation or Trade as He in his discretion shall thinke most meet and proper'.<sup>108</sup>*

Locke did not, however, include anything in his will about his lands. These, so King told his cousin Peter Stratton, Locke 'suffered ... to descend according to the course of the law to his heirs, which are you and me'.<sup>109</sup>

Just which these lands were is discussed in 'John Locke's Somerset Property'.<sup>110</sup>

## Endnotes

The following abbreviations are used: BL: British Library; dB: de Beer; L: Locke's correspondence as enumerated in dB. Unless indicated otherwise (e.g. BL) all manuscripts are from the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

- <sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Glyn Bartlett, and Bill Sheils for invaluable help, and to the Leverhulme Foundation for the financial support of an Emeritus Fellowship (2002–2004), which enabled library visits and the purchase of microfilms. Quotations from L54, L59, L66, L70, L77, L79, L80, L88, L91, L511, L869, L960, L1944, L1948, L1959, L1960, L2072, L2382, L2390 (i.e. from vols. 1 (1976), 2 (1976), 3 (1978), 5 (1979) of dB) are by permission of Oxford University Press.
- <sup>2</sup> Bourne, vol. 1, 12.
- <sup>3</sup> Bourne, vol. 1, 2, Masham, 171, dB, vol. 1, endpaper.
- <sup>4</sup> Bourne, vol. 1, 4, 12.
- <sup>5</sup> Woolhouse, forthcoming.
- <sup>6</sup> BL Add. MS 4222, fols. 224-6, Cranston, 17, Bourne, vol. 1, 16-17.
- <sup>7</sup> Woolhouse 2007, 14–15.
- <sup>8</sup> Masham, 172.
- <sup>9</sup> L54.
- <sup>10</sup> L68.
- <sup>11</sup> L68.
- <sup>12</sup> L88, L66, L77, L80, L79, L82.
- <sup>13</sup> L70.
- <sup>14</sup> Woolhouse 2007, 77.
- <sup>15</sup> Masham, 189.
- <sup>16</sup> Woolhouse 2007, 33.
- <sup>17</sup> Woolhouse 2007, 30, Masham, 173.

- 18 L91.
- 19 Woolhouse 2007, 34–5.
- 20 Woolhouse 2007, 38–43, 49–52.
- 21 Woolhouse 2007, 47, 50, 53.
- 22 L59.
- 23 Woolhouse 2007, 38, 43.
- 24 Woolhouse 2007, 43.
- 25 Woolhouse 2007, 47.
- 26 MSS Locke c.26, fols. 17, 19, 21; f.12, pp. 1, 3.
- 27 MS Locke f.12, p. 6.
- 28 MSS Locke f.12, pp. 5–6, c.26, fol. 34; (F) and (ST) – see Woolhouse forthcoming – were valued at £636 and £236 respectively. An inventory he made of his father’s goods shortly after his death includes ‘1 chattle lease for 2 lives £400’ (MS Locke c.25, fol. 7). Presumably this was the lease for (P) (see Woolhouse forthcoming), the two lives being those of Locke and his brother.
- 29 L296.
- 30 L2072.
- 31 L193, MS Locke f.12, p. 7.
- 32 Boyle, vol. 5, 686–8 (L197).
- 33 Dewhurst.
- 34 Boyle, vol. 5, 686–8 (L197).
- 35 Stewart, 24.
- 36 MSS Locke c.26, fols. 5, 11, 12, f.12, pp. 9, 12, MS Film 79, pp. 11–14, L206.
- 37 L224.
- 38 Woolhouse 2007, 77.
- 39 Masham, 176.
- 40 Masham, 177; Woolhouse 2007, 70–8.
- 41 Shaftesbury, 330.
- 42 Milton and Milton, 5, n.4.
- 43 Woolhouse 2007, 88–118.
- 44 L259, L260, L276.
- 45 L443, L403.
- 46 L511.
- 47 L503, Woolhouse 2007, 158.
- 48 Ollion, 32 (L492).
- 49 MS Locke f.4, pp. 10–19, Woolhouse 2007, 159–60.
- 50 L511, L869; see also MS Locke c.26, fol. 68.
- 51 MS Locke f.4, pp. 19–50.
- 52 MS Locke f.4, pp. 43, 165.
- 53 King, 37 (L532).
- 54 MS Locke f.4, pp. 50, 77.
- 55 MS Locke f.7, p. 111, L755, L767.
- 56 MSS Locke f.7, pp. 121, 122–4, c.19, fol. 22, b.8/11 (dB, vol. 2, 599).
- 57 L863, L1174.
- 58 L960, L903.
- 59 Rand 1927, 102 (L774).
- 60 Rand 1927, 284 (L1086); L806, L808, L809, L872, L1080, L1083, L1086.
- 61 Rand 1927, 102 (L774).
- 62 L808, L813, L817, L822, L875, L924, L1080.
- 63 Rand 1927, 107 (L776); also L808, L872. Ashcraft, 423–4 notoriously takes this talk of trees and walks to be code for the insurrectionary plans of the Earl of Argyll and the Duke of Monmouth against King James; but the limes were planted and remain to this day.
- 64 L924, L976, L981, L989, L999, L1020, L1030.
- 65 MS Locke c.19, fol. 24 (L848).
- 66 L869.
- 67 L936.
- 68 L1026, L1030, L1050, L1086.
- 69 Rand 1927, 167 (L872).
- 70 L897, L901, L924.
- 71 Rand 1927, 184 (L897).
- 72 MS Locke c.19, fol. 37 (L936), Rand 1927, 198–200 (L924), L936, Rand 1927, 184 (L897), L954.
- 73 L901.
- 74 Rand 1927, 199 (L924).
- 75 Rand 1927, 194 (L906).
- 76 MS Locke c.19, fol. 39 (L952), L954. This would be the rent from (as described in Woolhouse forthcoming) (P1/P7) ‘Buck hill and all that Belong to that teniment’, and from what he had just (August 1687) let to David Haroll, (F1) ‘the tenement at Belton’, (P10) the furzes let to Nathaniel Summers. It thus excluded ‘Old doun [ST1] Thomas Summers [Henleys Grove, P5] Gullock [Nineworthys, ST2], Smith [Hummerbrooke, F11] Shatter [Potters House, ST4] nor Kemp [?Lockiers, ST6] nor any of your ould rents nor leased out ground, for that I hope will be paid one time or another’.
- 77 L1174, MS Locke c.19, fol. 45 (L1258).
- 78 MS Locke c.19, fol. 40 (L1129).
- 79 L1484, L1537, MS Locke f.10, p. 102.
- 80 Rand 1927, 313 (L1406), L1944.
- 81 L1957, L1963, L2010, L2020, L2081, L2097, L2137, L2152, L2177, L2203, L2247, L2265, L2283, L2625, L2283.
- 82 L1944.
- 83 L1944; L1714, L1738, L1739.
- 84 L1944.
- 85 L1947, L1948, L1960.
- 86 L2015.
- 87 MS Locke c.26 fol. 81v (L2372), L2382.
- 88 L2390.
- 89 L1558, L1603, dB, vol. 4, p. 653, L3034.
- 90 L2293, L2679.

- <sup>91</sup> L3310, L3330, L2108.  
<sup>92</sup> L1959, L1960, L2015, L2032, L2039, L2118A, L2125, L3034; see also L3035, L3038, L3040, L3042.  
<sup>93</sup> dB, vol. 6, 20, L2208, L2226, L2230.  
<sup>94</sup> L2062, L2072, L2108, L2118A, L2295, L2302, L2307, L2313, L2332, L2382, L2390, L2449, L2456, L2463, L2582, L2679.  
<sup>95</sup> Masham, 185–6.  
<sup>96</sup> Locke 1691, 81, 83, 87, 88.  
<sup>97</sup> L1948, L1960.  
<sup>98</sup> L2008.  
<sup>99</sup> L2015.  
<sup>100</sup> L2016.  
<sup>101</sup> L2025, L2032, L2039.  
<sup>102</sup> Woolhouse 2007, 355, 363–4.  
<sup>103</sup> L2051, L2056, L2062, L2072, L2226, L2230, L2293.  
<sup>104</sup> Rand 1927, 184 (L897).  
<sup>105</sup> Woolhouse 2007, 414.  
<sup>106</sup> Woolhouse 2007, 414.  
<sup>107</sup> L2548, L2676, L2756, L2773, L2797, L2852, L2856, L2966, L2968, L2993, L2998, L3183, L3364, L3367, L3369, L3459, L3592, L3594.  
<sup>108</sup> MS Locke b.5/14.  
<sup>109</sup> dB, vol. 8, 427; Peter King to Peter Stratton, 4 November 1704 (Campbell, 583, n.  
<sup>110</sup> Woolhouse forthcoming.

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