Widening circles in finance, philanthropy and the arts. A study of the life of John Julius Angerstein 1735-1823

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CHAPTER ONE – A ROYAL BASTARD?

I RUMOURS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Thomas Carlyle’s phrase ‘History a distillation of Rumour’ can certainly be applied to the early life of John Julius Angerstein. It is known that he was born in St Petersburg in 1735; the date is certain because Angerstein mentioned it to the diarist and Royal Academician Joseph Farington, who is one of the principal recorders of Angerstein’s activities. Two centuries later the part of Angerstein was played by the character actor Sir Guy Standing in the Hollywood film ‘Lloyd’s of London’; this was a work of historical fiction with attractive period detail, and much the same can be said of several of the versions of Angerstein’s supposed ancestry that have been put forward over the years. These tend to claim that his father was a British merchant named Andrew Thomson, who was resident in St Petersburg, and that he had a Russian royal mother. Thus in 1825, two years after Angerstein’s death Lady Williams Wynn wrote to her daughter Fanny about Andrew Thomson’s other, legitimate, son:

...What is still more comical is that in telling the story to our friend Hayman, I found her an intimate Acquaintance of the Gentleman, who gave me all his history. His father was a great Russian Merchant, who with the help of the late Empress Catherine was supposed to have enfantéed the late Mr Angerstein, & to have brought and settled him in England at his house... However it is certain that Catherine the Great was not Angerstein’s mother, because she was only six years older than he was; and his birth cannot have been misrepresented by the physically necessary decade or more because of what is known about the timing of his subsequent early business career in London. Catherine’s life has been studied in the greatest detail by historians, and the only reasonable interpretation of what Lady Williams Wynn wrote is that the word ‘enfanter’ is used in the sense ‘to produce’ rather than meaning ‘to give birth’. However at the time of Angerstein’s ‘production’ Catherine was closely controlled by Elizabeth Petrovna (who was Czarina from 1741 to 1762), and was poorly placed to do favours to anybody. It is tempting to leap upon the fact that at least one Angerstein family pedigree has his mother’s name given as Eve Pritzen or Prinzen and that there was a Baroness von Prinzen was one of Catherine’s mother’s ladies-in-waiting: arguably she might have wished to help Eve, who might have been a relative, by sending John Julius to London, but this can by no means be proved. Later the Baroness wrote about how close she had been to Princess Sophia (as Catherine originally was named), saying that the child:

Was born, grew up and was educated before my eyes: I witnessed her studies and her progress, I myself assisted her in the packing of her luggage before her departure for Russia. I enjoyed her confidence sufficiently to imagine that I knew her better than did anyone else...

In fact the person who would have had far greater scope for ‘producing’ Angerstein (in either sense of the word) was Elizabeth herself, since she was notoriously promiscuous and there were many rumours and much gossip about her supposed natural children. The book History of Parliament The Commons 1790-1820 refers in the entry for Angerstein’s son John to an ‘uncorroborated story’ that John Julius’s mother indeed was the Empress Elizabeth, giving as a reference an article in Notes and Queries. There a correspondent quotes an excerpt from a biography of Catherine the Great published in a magazine in 1836 which is described as ‘partly translated from the French of the Duchess d’Abrantes’. The Duchess was a prolific author, who published Catherine II in 1834, but that book did not contain what was included in the article about Elizabeth who, it was claimed:

Was the mother of several illegitimate children who were taken privately from the palace. One of these, the son of a very handsome Englishman, a Russia merchant, resident at St Petersburgh, was noted in England for his great munificence and noble person, and as a princely patron of the fine arts. His name will be long remembered as the founder of a gallery of paintings. The story goes that, when a babe, this gentleman was let down in a basket from a window in the Empress’s palace at St...
Petersburg, and endowed, by his imperial mother, with a fortune of 100,000 roubles of gold. This fortune was well-improved by his father who brought the princely boy up as a merchant...

The name of the writer of the magazine article is unknown, as is the origin of the report that the Master of Ceremonies at the Ranelagh pleasure gardens (which were in decline by 1800) had it from Russia that Angerstein was a nephew of the ‘Emperor of all the Russias’\(^8\). The author of a manuscript Angerstein family pedigree of circa 1910 provides yet another story, maintaining that the liaison was between Andrew Thomson and Czarina Anna Ivanova, and asserting that the name Angerstein was taken from the German Dr Henry Angerstein who attended the confinement of the Empress and took charge of the child\(^9\). However historians give no credence to children born either to Elizabeth or to Anna Ivanova, who was on the throne when Angerstein was born, and who has been described by one recent author as ‘evidently sterile’\(^10\). Indeed the rumours about Angerstein’s parentage are so all-pervasive that it is surprising that the one remaining potential royal mother (albeit without Andrew Thomson’s involvement) has not been suggested: this was Princess Anna Leopoldovna, who around the time of Angerstein’s birth was being groomed for a dynastic marriage to secure the succession after Anna Ivanova, but in the interim fell in love with a recently widowed young diplomat. The Czarina took immediate action, banishing the Princess’s head governess and making clear that the diplomat was persona non grata\(^11\); although there is no evidence of a child from this liaison, Anna’s fecundity at least is not in question; and the diplomat, Count Lynar, who never remarried, was later recorded by no less an authority than Catherine the Great as having had eighteen illegitimate children ‘all of whose wet-nurses he had put in the condition to nurse them’\(^12\). When Anna Ivanova died in 1740, Anna Leopoldovna became Regent to her baby son Ivan who briefly inherited the throne; and Lynar returned to Court and renewed the love affair only nine days after Anna Leopoldovna had given birth to her second (legitimate) child. It is physically possible, but quite unproven, that Anna Leopoldovna had a second child by Lynar in 1742 and, if so, tempting to link this event with the unknown date of the birth of John Julius’s nebulous brother Peter, who in 1827 was described by Angerstein’s son as ‘an officer in the English Army, died in India circa 1750 or 1755’\(^13\), but who can perhaps be identified with a man, appearing in the records alternatively as John Angerstein or Peter Augustine, and serving in the Bengal Army as a cadet in 1765, a lieutenant in 1767, a captain in 1770 and being drowned in 1772\(^14\). The validity of the family pedigree referred to above is further undermined by an examination of Geschichte der Medecin in Russland by Doctor and Professor Wilhelm Michael von Richter (Moscow 1817, reprinted Leipzig 1965), which is a remarkably detailed study of medicine in Russia by a very eminent man in practice there who gives the names of many of the principal doctors, surgeons and apothecaries of the period, but includes nobody named Angerstein. In 1827 Angerstein’s son John, who does not appear to have chosen to be very precise about his origins because the age of his father is given incorrectly on the memorial tablet in St Alfége’s church in Greenwich, said, in his application for a coat of arms, that his father was ‘son of George Angerstein MD, born in the Duchy of Coburg died at St Petersburg’. But John gave no name for his grandmother, even though her death at the age of 93 as Mrs Angerstein, mother of John Julius Angerstein, had been reported by the Gentleman’s Magazine in 1807 and, as mentioned above, her maiden name appears in a family pedigree as Pritzen or Prinzen\(^15\).

In 1770 Angerstein became a naturalised British subject and in the documentation (discussed below) he was described as ‘son of John Angerstein and Eve his wife born at Petersburgh [St Petersburg]’. It is perfectly possible that this is a simple statement of the truth; but if so nothing is known of John (or George, or Henry, or from yet another source Peter) Angerstein his father. Angerstein is a not uncommon German name, and there is an eponymous village containing attractive timber-framed houses just outside Göttingen, where the university was founded in 1734 by George II, then also Elector of Hanover. The Angersteins are said, in very remote times, to have descended from an Hungarian named Stefan Crachta, who was ennobled by the Emperor Frederick II and granted the manor of Angerstein, which remained in the possession of the family until the early 1600’s when it was sold due to the decline of the metal works there. One brother remained in Hanover and another moved to Sweden, becoming the first of a family prominent in the mining industry in that country\(^16\). Two seventeenth century German Angersteins were mint-masters\(^17\), and the younger, who was tantalisingly named Julius, was born in 1660. Another equally tantalising Angerstein, this time from the Swedish family and named Johan (1672-1720), corresponded, partly in English, with the Oxford scholar and naturalist Edward Lhuyd, mainly on topics connected with the mining industry: he visited several countries and one letter of 1706 to Lhuyd requested a reply care of a London merchant\(^18\). Half a century later ‘Mr Angerstein the Swede’, described as an expert in ‘natural philosophy, minerals, fossils and such like, travelled in the South of England’\(^19\). This was Reinhold Rücker Angerstein (1718-60): R R
Angerstein’s Illustrated Travel Diary 1753-1755 translated by Torsten and Peter Berg has recently been published by the Science Museum. But R R Angerstein makes no mention of meeting a relative when he visited the City of London, and there is nothing but a surname to link him with John Julius; and although the German and Swedish parish registers of the period include a number of Angersteins, none has been found that offers a likely father for him.

However the search for a German or Swedish Angerstein line would be irrelevant if other stories which have persisted since the eighteenth century are correct. The diarist Joseph Farington referred in 1796 and again in 1803 to Angerstein simply as being the natural son of the Russia merchant Andrew Thomson but said nothing about his mother; and this story is easy to believe because it was Thomson who brought Angerstein to London about 1749; and from then on the Thomsons were Angerstein’s de facto, and perhaps also his de jure, family. Andrew Thomson, a young bachelor in St Petersburg, could well have had an affair with Eve Angerstein; and her husband (John?) could have been persuaded to give the resulting child his name. It is clear that the case that needs to be disproved before putting something more exotic in its place is that John Julius Angerstein was indeed the natural son of Eve Angerstein and Andrew Thomson. Nothing whatever is known about where Angerstein lived or what he did during the period before he went to London, but by about 1749 Andrew Thomson, recently married to Harriet Wright (a widow with a young daughter), had returned from St Petersburg to the head office of his business in the City of London. Angerstein was old enough for his baptism in commerce: the Thomsons would have had a home to give him, and so he too was brought to London and, as it transpired, never returned to the city of his birth. Certainly, once he reached the City, Angerstein was under the patronage of Andrew Thomson, who thus was the founding father of his circle and the instigator of a relationship between the Thomsons and the Angersteins which lasted for more than a century. Romantically it would be attractive if John Julius had had Romanov blood; or as an alternative the tracing of his descent from a ‘reputable Hanoverian family’ (as has also been asserted) would give the satisfaction of filling up the gaps in his background; but he behaved like, and was referred to as, an English Merchant and since there was never any suggestion that he had a foreign accent, it is likely that he was brought up in an English-speaking household. Perhaps it hardly matters whether Andrew Thomson was his father or in loco parentis. Harriet Wright, Harriet Thomson’s daughter from her first marriage, was only seven or eight years younger than her ‘step-brother’ John Julius, and they would have been brought up as siblings; whereas by contrast the five children that Andrew and Harriet Thomson later had together were all born in the 1750’s and were half a generation younger than Angerstein despite being his ‘half-sisters’ and ‘half-brother’.

II MERCHANT COMMUNITIES

Angerstein’s family and business relationships would soon connect him with several overlapping London merchant communities – Anglo-Russian, Anglo-Dutch, and Scottish-American – and the first with which he became familiar was the group of men whose business was trading with Russia. Andrew Thomson was the son of John Thomson, an Edinburgh banker, and he died in 1795 aged 84 so that he was about 24 when Angerstein was born. Socially his marriage to Harriet Wright nee Buncombe was a good one as she was her father’s heiress and the great-granddaughter of Edward Poulett, who was a member of the Somerset family of which the head was John, fourth Baron and first Earl Poulett. Andrew Thomson’s sister was the mother of Thomson Bonar who later married his cousin Anne Thomson, Andrew’s daughter. The Thomsons, the Bonars and a man named George Peters were in partnership in London in various combinations as Russia merchants; and as it was said that by 1815 the firm ‘had been for several generations engaged in the Russian trade and possessed an establishment as well in St Petersamburg’, it must have been set up in the two centres early in the eighteenth century. The Russia Company controlled British trade with Russia, and it was handled entirely by those who were ‘free’ of the company. ‘Freedom’ was available only to British subjects, and the Company was run by a Governor, Consuls and a Court of Assistants. The Company levied duties on all goods brought into Britain by freemen, and these sums were used to maintain the Company’s London headquarters, and for other purposes including, notably, providing escorts for the twice-yearly convoys which set out from the Thames to the Baltic. Trade at St Petersburg increased some thirteenfold between 1700 and 1792; and in 1804 Thomson Peters Bonar & Co handled imports plus exports amounting to more than 9 per cent of St Petersburg’s total international trade, a greater share than any other firm. Towards the end of the eighteenth century some 500 ships sailed each year from London to St Petersburg and back.
As well as being substantial merchants, Thomson and his partners had a significant position in the social life of St Petersburg. Sir James Harris, later created Earl of Malmesbury, was Ambassador to Russia from 1776 to 1783 and held open house at the Embassy in St Petersburg where 'members of the English merchant community such as Thomson, Bonar, Peters et al were frequent guests for dinner, while among the Russian guests was Count Simon Vorontsov, who often dined with Sir James two or three times a week'. In 1779 Count Simon became friendly with Lord Herbert, who was travelling in Russia and in 1781 the latter's father the Earl of Pembroke wrote to his son 'your Russia friend, young Mr Thomson...will, I hear, commit matrimony tomorrow at Salisbury'. [This was John Thomson, Andrew Thomson's eldest son]. In 1801 Count Simon wrote to Lord Grenville, describing Thomson Bonar as 'un ami bien rare, à qui je dois infiniment, et qui s'est chargé de toutes mes affaires'; and the firm's responsibility for Count Simon's affairs was to last all his life. In 1808 the Lord Herbert referred to above, who by this time had succeeded as Earl of Pembroke, married Count Simon's daughter and it was to her that J Thomson T Bonar (as the firm was by then named) wrote in 1832 about her father's funeral arrangements. By this time the firm's relationship with the Vorontsovs - Count Simon and his elder brother Count Alexander - had been sustained for some 70 years, a series of letters from 1764 onwards demonstrating this. The close association between the Vorontsovs and Thomson Bonar and his partners does not of itself make it any more likely that Angerstein had royal connections, but it does mean that he had, literally, friends at Court, because the Vorontsovs occupied positions of great influence over a long period. Illarion Vorontsov was the father of Michael (1714-1767), who became an officer in the entourage of the future Empress Elizabeth and played a conspicuous part in the coup which put her on the throne in 1741. He was personally responsible for the arrest of the Regent, Anna Leopoldovna and was made a Count, served as Chancellor of State and further reinforced his position by marrying the Empress's 'beloved' first cousin. Count Michael, however, did not build up financial resources unlike his brother Count Roman (1707-1783), who married the daughter of a wealthy merchant and acquired large estates; but Count Roman's wife died before she was 30 and Count Michael and his wife brought up the widower's five children, amongst whom were Alexander and Simon. At the age of 20 Count Alexander was appointed Russian Minister in London by Emperor Peter III (husband of Catherine the Great) but he served there only briefly and under Catherine became a Senator and President of the Board of Trade. He was compelled to resign in 1791, but was brought back to office by Emperor Alexander I, became Imperial Chancellor in 1802 and retired in 1805. Count Simon held diplomatic posts in Vienna and Venice before being appointed Minister in London in 1783, a post he held until he retired in 1806 (save for a short period when he was dismissed by Emperor Paul II and then restored to favour to the extent that he was offered – and refused – first the Vice-Chancellorship and then the Chancellorship of Russia under Emperor Alexander I). After his retirement Count Simon stayed in England and remained good friends with Thomson Bonar, whose house at Chislehurst was a 'favourite retreat of the Count and his small circle of intimates', a group which seems certain to have included Angerstein, who thus would have had links with the corridors of power in St Petersburg even though he had left there when in his teens.

In 1743 Jonas Hanway, later to be well-known as an author and a philanthropist, joined the Russia Company. He planned to take up residence in St Petersburg and join the English Factory (the group of Russia merchants in the city). He arrived in June 1743, went on an expedition to Persia and got back to Russia in January 1745. Although he wrote copiously on many topics, including his trip to Persia, he recorded little about the next five years which he spent at St Petersburg, though he did comment that many of the merchants were prosperous, occupied fine houses and were 'hospitable, not to say magnificent in their way of life'. The one merchant whom Hanway singled out as being good to him was Andrew Thomson's partner George Peters, and their friendship continued when both men had returned to London.

An entry in the Russia Company Court Minutes in May 1743 reads:

Mr George Peters came to the Court and desired his freedom of the Company by servitude to Messrs Henry and Peter Muilman and upon producing the indenture was granted him paying the usual fees.

Although this happened six years before Angerstein was put to work in Thomson & Peters's counting house, he would certainly soon have been in contact with the Muilman family, who were, like the Thomsons, building blocks of Angerstein's life in England, the Thomsons being the young bachelor's family and Henry Muilman later becoming his father-in-law.
The Muilmans were a Dutch family, said originally to have been of noble blood. By the time Henry was a young adult it was becoming clear that the financial centre of the world was shifting from Amsterdam to London. The Bank of England had been founded in 1694, the growing British National Debt offered investment opportunities for Dutch investors; and British shipping was capturing a greater and greater share of world trade. Peter Schout Muilman and his wife Maria (née Meulenaer) had five sons, and as a leading Amsterdam merchant it is not surprising that Muilman sent Henry, his eldest son, to set up in business in London. Henry became a naturalised British subject in 1720/1, and his lead was followed nine years later by his younger brother Peter. The London Muilmans became Russia merchants and important members of the Anglo-Dutch community centred on the Dutch Church in Austin Friars, where Henry was eventually buried.

Some time in 1723 Henry Muilman met Teresia Constancia Phillips, who was known as Con and who has an entry in the Dictionary of National Biography with her profession given as ‘courtesan’. She came from an old Welsh family and was born in January 1708/9: her father was an army officer who lost his post through some catastrophe and the family came to London in 1717 in great distress. After a spell of ill-treatment at home she ran away, and one day met the son of a nobleman who promptly seduced her and almost as promptly deserted her. She soon had financial problems and was advised that the way to avoid imprisonment for debt was to get married. She made an arranged marriage to a man who already had a wife and whom she never saw after their wedding night, and some months later met Henry Muilman. Initially she thought that Henry wanted a mistress, which she was quite prepared to become - he was probably quite a wealthy young man - and she was astonished when it became clear that he wanted to marry her. She told Henry her history and he settled her debts. She had been advised that her earlier, and now very inconvenient, marriage could be set aside at Doctors’ Commons (the ecclesiastical court) and, according to her account, Henry said he believed it was invalid; but he did not want to raise the matter because it would make her name public and be liable to harm his business. This assertion certainly rings true, because Henry was trying to encourage Dutch investors to use his services as an attorney, or agent, for their investments in the London market, which was recovering its poise following the upheaval caused a short time before by the South Sea Bubble.

In February 1723/4 the couple were married, the priest being the same one who had officiated at her first wedding and her age being just fifteen. Henry gradually told his friends the news, though he said nothing about the background of his wife. However the news reached the ears of Henry’s father and according to Con’s later account there was a confrontation:

‘Pray, Sir, what part of my character is it, which has so greatly offended you?’

‘Why, I am told you were a common whore before you married my son.’

Henry’s father resolved to separate them even if it cost £50,000 and talked of disinheriting his son.

Thereafter relations between Henry and Con fluctuated wildly. At one stage he was going to prosecute her for nullity, and on another occasion she pointed a pistol at him and he accused her of trying to murder him. (Later Henry argued more diplomatically in favour of their breaking up because his father, who had already sent his brother Peter to London, might turn him out of the family firm altogether. He would then probably have to leave London and go to Holland or the East Indies). Eventually however she did agree to an annulment and Henry undertook to pay her £200 per annum; but no sooner had this been more or less settled than she became mistress to another man, which caused Henry to stop paying the £200 and reopened the old sores. However after this near-disastrous youthful indiscretion, Henry made an eminently respectable and advantageous marriage in October 1728 to Anne Darnall, daughter of one of the lawyers to whom he had earlier gone for advice. Anne’s father was Sir John Darnall, who lived in a ‘magnificent’ house in Petersham, Surrey, and her mother was daughter of Sir Thomas Jenner, yet another lawyer, a Baron of the Exchequer and a Justice of the Common Pleas. Later Henry and his family were faced with the embarrassing publication of a book by Con, which went through several editions between 1748 and 1761 and put her side of the story in considerable detail. She herself had numerous adventures, including time spent in prison, and eventually settled in Jamaica in 1754, marrying twice there and dying in 1765.

Henry proved to be sufficiently successful to be able, by 1748, to buy a country estate in Essex complete with a park and a private chapel. Dagenhams, or Dagnams, was in the area now called Harold Wood and had been built on the site of an earlier house, where Samuel Pepys had stayed in 1655 and called it in his diary on 15th July ‘a most noble and pretty house that ever, for the bigness, I saw’. It was enlarged in the 1730s and a print made in Henry Muilman’s time shows the front of a house with a pillared door and forty-eight windows so that it was a very substantial property. For some years after their marriage, however, Henry
and Anne lived in the City of London; and their three children, and Henry’s brother Peter’s two, were all christened in St Botolph’s, Bishopsgate. Peter’s wife Mary came from a successful merchant family; her mother Mary Chiswell was an heiress and her father Richard Chiswell traded with and travelled in Turkey, was an MP, a Director of the Bank of England and bought Debden Hall near Saffron Walden in Essex. The elder of Peter and Mary Muilman’s children, born in 1734, and thus Angerstein’s contemporary, was named Richard, but later he was usually known as Richard Muilman Trench Chiswell or simply as Trench Chiswell, anglicizing himself by using two names from his mother’s family. Richard’s wife Mary was not from a merchant family (but nonetheless had a dowry of £10,000) but was the daughter of a man of learning. Her father James Jurin was taught by Newton at Cambridge and after a spell of teaching studied medicine and became first a Fellow and then the Secretary of the Royal Society. In 1725 he was appointed one of the first two physicians to Guy’s Hospital, later becoming a Governor and being appointed President of the College of Physicians just before his death. The Hospital was built in accordance with the terms of its founder’s will, and it was said of Thomas Guy that:

...by the execution of the pernicious South Sea scheme, Mr Guy got more money within the space of three months than what the erecting, furnishing and endowing his hospital amounted to.

Like the rest of his family Peter Muilman bought an Essex estate: his was Kirby Hall, near Castle Hedingham and it was described as ‘very commodious but not magnificent’ in a 1769 book called History of Essex of which Peter himself was either the author or the sponsor. A print of Kirby Hall in the book shows an attractive country house but not a mansion like Dagenhams. It was perhaps Dutch family pride which caused Peter to have a silver medal struck in 1774: on one side was a picture of Kirby Hall and the family coat of arms and on the other side profile portraits of himself and Mary and the legend ‘living in lawfull wedlock 40 years’.

There is no record of Henry and Anne Muilman’s elder daughter Mary save her birth, but their youngest child Anna, born in 1733, grew to adulthood and married first Charles Crokatt and then John Julius Angerstein. Anna’s only brother was Peter Darnall Muilman, who was christened in 1730: he was apprenticed to his father as a Russia merchant and he appears in a group portrait of around 1750 by Thomas Gainsborough with Charles Crokatt and another man. Little is known about what happened to him: two surviving documents comprise a sheet showing debts of over £15,000 left owing in 1759 ‘on his going a Way’ and another dated 1772 referring to Henry ‘having lost his only son’.

The City of London was like a wheel, with spokes extending to all parts of the trading world and with its hub at the Royal Exchange. The first Royal Exchange had been destroyed in the Fire of London, and its replacement stood throughout Angerstein’s lifetime until that it was burned down in 1838, so that today’s building is the third of the name on the same site. A print entitled An Elevation, Plan and History of the Royal Exchange of London, which was engraved about 1750, describes it as ‘the most beautiful, strong and stately Building of its kind in Europe’ and the print shows the building as having a hollow arcaded rectangular courtyard approximately 40 yards by 30 yards fronting on to Cornhill:

in which more business is transacted, than in any other Place of this Compass, in the known World...Traffic is carried on here from 12 till 2 every day in the Year, except Sundays and some few Holidays.

Robert Hawker was born in 1753: he was a clergyman with a parish near Plymouth, who made regular visits to London and preached to large congregations, as well as producing Works which were published in ten volumes. On one of his trips to London he was persuaded by a friend to visit the Royal Exchange, and subsequently he wrote a tract about the spiritual conclusions that he drew from what he had seen:

...On our arrival, my mind was wonderfully arrested with all I saw and heard. The place, though spacious, was full of persons; and earnestness was strongly pictured upon every countenance. The clamour of voices to an ear unaccustomed as mine was, was almost deafening; and though, no doubt, perfectly intelligible to one another, yet seemed to remind me of what I had read of Babel: but what, at first view made the greatest impression on my mind was, that one general feature marked every character, whether buyer or seller – I mean the unwearied perseverance, uniformly distinguishing all, to accomplish the object of their distinct pursuits. Here were no vacant countenances...Everyone appeared alive, zealous and indefatigable...I had not long surveyed the group of characters which passed and repassed before me in the Exchange, before it struck me that I discovered many faces carrying with them the aspect of disappointment...Whether from the want of buyers with some, of the reduced price to the sellers with others; whether bad accounts of foreign
markets or failures in home consumption, I had no ability to discover the causes; but I really ventured, from what I saw, to conclude, that by far the majority of the meeting did not find things corresponding to their wishes; and the barter which took place among them left but few to call their exchanges royal. I remarked a great number of advertisements hung in frames, or pasted on boards, on the walls of the Royal Exchange, - many of them containing a sorrowful want: whether from their being considered as commonplace things, or whether form the imperious demands which every man's separate concern made up on him, it appears that their tales of woe were not much regarded. Alas! I said, here is but little time for charity, of any description, to put in her claim...  

Although of a later period, Hawker's words paint a picture of the business milieu in which Angerstein moved: men involved in every kind of business – the Thomsons, Muilmans, Crokatts and hundreds of others – would have gone from their counting-houses and coffee-houses to congregate in the Royal Exchange during the hours of trading: the floor was divided by convention into 'walks', so that if, for example, a merchant wanted to buy rice he would go to the south west corner of the building where the Carolina merchants were to be found, among them, no doubt, Charles Crokatt and his father James.

Like the Thomsons, the Crokatts came originally from Edinburgh, and several members of the family went to South Carolina in the early part of the eighteenth century. James Crokatt became one of the principal merchants in Charles Town (later Charleston), and married Esther Gaillard, who came from one of the leading Huguenot families in South Carolina: the first of their children, Charles, was born in 1730. James's career as 'an excellent example of the rising merchant class' has been summarised by George C Rogers Jr: James Crokatt, a Scotsman, was an Indian trader...and owner of Crokatt's Bridge, a wharf extending from Bay Street into the Cooper River. He served the city in several capacities, helped to found the Masons, made a fortune, and then, in 1739, retired to England, where after 1749 he served the colony as agent, being appointed after his successful efforts to secure the bounty on indigo. His son-in-law John Nutt continued these commercial associations with Charleston until the end of the century.

In Charles Town men such as Crokatt were to be applauded, a writer to a local paper putting it: The success of a Crokatt..., but a few years here in the Mercantile Way...with many other such instances, proves more in Favor of Carolina, than all the Pamphlets that were ever wrote about. However when James returned to London there was clearly jealousy in some quarters and he was described as 'a Scotch Jew Lately come from So. Carolina' (which was a tribute to his financial acumen rather than a comment on his religion as he was patently not Jewish); but strangely he earns a footnote to history not by what he did by what he did not do. About 1744 John Lauren, a Charles Town saddler, sent his son Henry to London to be trained in business by Crokatt; the young man, some six years older than James's son Charles, lived with the family and proved to be adept at business. In 1747 Henry Laurens returned home to find that his father had just died; and lack of communication together with the need to settle his affairs in Charles Town meant that Henry failed to return to London in time to take up the offer of a partnership which James Crokatt had made. Therefore instead of a life in the City, Henry returned to South Carolina, became a successful merchant and used this as a springboard into politics, becoming President of the Continental Congress in 1775. Later he was sent on a mission to the Netherlands, captured by a British ship, brought to London, imprisoned in the Tower for more than a year and finally exchanged for Lord Cornwallis who had surrendered after the Battle of Yorktown.

James Crokatt soon found that his appointment as London Agent for South Carolina conflicted with his private business and he was also caught up in the local political cross-fire, so that he was probably glad to be able to resign in 1757. In about 1750 James bought Luxborough Hall, near Chigwell, yet another Essex mansion: it had been built by Robert Knight, Cashier to the South Sea Company before the bursting of the Bubble. Knight absconded in 1721 and was not allowed to return to England until 1742 when he again lived at Luxborough until his death in 1744: his son, also Robert, was MP for Grimsby from 1734 to 1737 and again from 1762 to 1768. James Crokatt paid £19,500 for Luxborough and spent £10,000 more on repairs and furnishings. A visitor from South Carolina spent a weekend at the new estate and after a dinner for twenty-five commented in a letter that Crokatt had 'Grandour enough for his Money'. In 1752 his son Charles married Anna Muilman, who had a dowry of £10,000, at St George's, Mayfair, and in due course the couple had six children, four of whom grew to adulthood as Angerstein's step-children - Anna Peterella, born in 1753 and James, Henry and Emilia christened respectively in 1755, 1759 and 1761. In 1760 the firm of James Crokatt & Co became James and Charles Crokatt, but Charles had little interest or aptitude for trade, and one may wonder what would have happened to him if he had had Henry Laurens as a mentor. A
possible activity for the sons of successful fathers was becoming an MP (as Angerstein’s son would do one day), and Charles Crokatt thought about standing for Fowey in 1761; but when he actually stood in 1765, he was unsuccessful. He borrowed £12,000 from his father-in-law Henry Muilman in 1764 and by April 1769 he was in such financial difficulties that ‘from distress of mind he cut his throat’.

Early in 1770 there was a meeting of Charles Crokatt’s creditors at which Angerstein, who was both a personal and a business creditor, put forward proposals on behalf of Anna Crokatt, who was the administratrix of her late husband’s tangled affairs, and who was left a widow at 36 with responsibility for four children. Next to Angerstein’s name in the list of creditors was that of his friend William Lock: much later it was said that Lock had lent Charles Crokatt £20,000 without security and had lost it all, while in his will made six years later James wrote:

I gave my son about £10,000 at his marriage, and settled £10,000 by marriage contract payable at his death or mine, which I have since paid...And I have lost a large sum by his failure.

III MANNERS, MORALS AND THE ARTS

By the mid-1750s Angerstein’s activities, both family and commercial, were under the umbrella of Andrew Thomson. He and Thomson Bonar, the Muilman brothers and James Crokatt would all have called themselves merchants, as would Angerstein throughout his life: he did not retire even partially from business until 1811 when he was 76 years old. But there were other men – his own son would be one – who could not or did not choose to match their fathers’s business skills and looked to become gentleman, living off assets built up by earlier generations and spending their time, not in a counting-house or on the Royal Exchange but given over to social and cultural pursuits. Early in his time in the City Angerstein became friendly with William Lock, who was just such a man; and he was soon affected by Lock’s great interest in the arts. Far in the future one of William Lock’s sons would marry a Thomson, one of his daughters would marry Angerstein’s son, and his other daughter would be the wife of one of Angerstein’s executors.

The Locks came originally from Hampshire and there was a tendency (ignored below), particularly in the late eighteenth century, for some family members to spell themselves Locke, a custom which may have arisen from a belief – perhaps a hope, and seemingly quite unproven – that there was a connection with the great philosopher of that name. Several of the Hampshire Locks moved to London, one named John, who was born in 1689, almost certainly being the man of that name who was ‘a gentleman well versed in all parts of Polite Literature, and who was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1741/2’. John’s uncle Daniel Lock was described as a broker and had sons named Daniel, William (the father of Angerstein’s friend) and John. The last of these was caught up in a tragedy outside Paris in September 1723 when three English visitors and two servants was held up by six men who robbed and murdered them; and John, who was travelling the other way, was also murdered. The younger Daniel, born about 1685, was clearly a highly cultured man. He was educated at St Paul’s School and Trinity College, Cambridge, and spent much of the period between 1709 and 1714 in Italy in the company of John Talman, later the first Director of the Society of Antiquaries, and William Kent, who became a celebrated architect and landscape gardener. Most unusually for an Englishman he became a member of the Academy of Arcadia, which was set up in 1690 for the cultivation of poetry and music and included the cream of Roman society. There is a very fine bust of Daniel Lock by Louis Francois Roubiliac in the Ante-Chapel of Trinity College with a Latin inscription referring to his great love of architecture, sculpture, painting, music and all the fine arts. His portrait was painted by Hogarth and in it he is shown seated holding what may be the plan of a country house, though there is no record of any buildings designed by him.

The third of the brothers, William, was born in 1687 and was a successful businessman. It seems probable that he was the ‘William Lock of London, Merchant’ to whom one of the plates in a history of Winchester Cathedral was dedicated. He did business in the shares of the South Sea Company at the time of the Bubble, acting on behalf of several of the directors and became one of the two MPs for Great Grimsby in 1741, subsequently being returned unopposed at the elections of 1747 and 1754. His parliamentary career did not result from his skill as a representative of the electors, but because he was acceptable to the families, notably the Claytons, who controlled the borough, where there were strong South Sea connections. He cannot fail to have known Robert Knight the younger through business and politics and may have been the link between the latter and James Crokatt over Luxborough Hall.
Even with Clayton support it would have cost Lock a significant amount to be an MP, but he no doubt calculated that it cost enabled him to be counted among those:

Who get themselves elected, only in the way of their trade; the contracts, the jobs, the subscriptions, the loans, the remittances &c, &c, with which a Minister can benefit them... 75

The Earl of Egmont wrote:

Lock is a personal acquaintance of mine and though a broker's son and particular, yet a man of honour I can depend on. A little civility and some kindness in subscriptions will do a great deal with him... 76

There is no record of his making any impact in the House of Commons, but that was not why he was an MP.

In February 1754 William Lock became a Fellow of the Royal Society, this identification being certain since he is described as being MP for Grimsby as well as ‘a gentleman of great merit, well versed in various branches of polite literature’ 78. The Royal Society contained among its fellows the most eminent scientists of the day, and also included amateurs like the Locks who did no more than listen to papers at the Society’s meetings. But it was a considerable honour to become an FRS, and only a dozen or so were elected each year.

William Lock MP never married, yet in 1755 he made a will in favour of:

...William Lock of Cavendish Square, now residing with Mary Wood, but who from his birth till very lately was called and known by the name of Wood 78.

From this it seems clear that the man who had just become become William Lock was (perhaps like his friend John Julius Angerstein) a natural son. The only William Wood traced as being christened in London in 1732 to a mother called Mary appears in the register of St Botolph's Aldersgate with his father given as Richard Wood. Richard and Mary also had three other children christened in the same church, Richard in 1725, Ann in 1730 and Robert in 1734. William Lock MP was about 45 years old when William Wood was born, and, if the above analysis is correct, Mary Wood's husband was alive at the time and initially gave the child his name. Although William Lock MP made his will when William was 23, he had clearly taken responsibility for the boy's education several years before. Nothing is known about his schooling, but when he was about 18 the young man visited Europe, no doubt provided with introductions and guidance by his uncle Daniel. Just how grand William's tour was is unclear, but it certainly included visits to Venice, Rome and Vienna. There has been continuing interest among art historians about William's visit to Venice, because when he was there he met the artist Richard Wilson. Born in 1717, Wilson trained as a portrait painter, and as such was well-regarded when he went to Italy; but by the time he left some years later, he was becoming one of the foremost water-colour landscape artists of the day. William Lock gave Wilson, who was far from well off at the time, a lift in his chaise from Venice to Rome, and the route the travellers probably took can be deduced from the watercolours that Wilson did on the way, since several of them entered Lock's collection 79. While the party were in Rome, Wilson painted Lock's portrait, but this cannot now be traced. William Lock came to own over two hundred Wilson drawings and his collection was eventually sold at Sotheby's in 1821. In Rome in 1750 he and the sculptor Joseph Wilton became 'inseparable companions’ 80, and his Tour must have encouraged him in his connoisseurship and in the patronage which came to embrace a number of artists. By the mid-1750s Angerstein had spent several years in a City counting-house while Lock had had a broad and privileged education, and yet the two young men had begun a lifetime friendship. Just how they first met is not known, but by 1756, when Angerstein began business on his own account, William Lock knew him well enough, and had a sufficient opinion of his abilities, to become his surety 81.

In 1738 there had been an unsuccessful attempt to interest the Royal Society in a ‘Proposal for the Encouragement of Arts and Sciences’ 82; the idea then lapsed for more than a decade until a man named William Shipley began to canvass for support for a scheme for ‘promoting of improvements in the liberal arts and sciences, manufactures, etc’ 83. Shipley eventually found backers in Lord Romney and the latter’s relative Lord Folkestone, and opened a book for the signatures of supporters of the foundation of such a society. In March 1754 eleven men, including Shipley and the two peers, held a meeting at Rawthnell's Coffee-House at which The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce came into being. (This long title was popularly shortened to the Society of Arts; and as the Royal Society of Arts, often further abbreviated to RSA, it continues actively to this day). The meeting was held despite the fact that Shipley had been unable to find more than a disappointing level of interest in the idea of creating a premium society: William Lock MP’s name does not appear in the book of supporters’ signatures, but those of his son William, who was twenty-two and John Julius Angerstein, who was only nineteen, do 84. It was enlightened
of William Lock to sign, if not particularly surprising given his family background, but it is remarkable that
the teenage Angerstein’s first documented action should be in support of such a society. It was clear from his
youth onwards that Angerstein, though learning to be a merchant, was not going to be content to become
simply a businessman.

There were several meetings of the Society of Arts during 1754, and in February 1755 officers were
appointed: at this stage there were only 17 members, but the number grew to 81 in the next two months,
and included William Lock who was elected in March on the proposal of Lord Romney. Perhaps because he was
three years younger that Lock, Angerstein did not join the Society until April 1758 (being proposed by Israel
Wilkes, brother of the much more famous John) but from then on he subscribed continuously until his death
almost 65 years later. Lock’s membership was more irregular since he declined paying his subscription in
1758 but was re-elected in 1761 and thereafter was a member until 1772 after which ‘Abroad’ was marked
against his name in the subscription book for 1773 and 1774.

The aims of the Society, which Angerstein supported for so long, were:
To promote art, industry, commerce, and invention, by granting rewards and premiums for
meritorious discoveries and inventions, for success in the various branches of the fine arts, for
increasing the economic resources of the kingdom by the import of new or little known materials of
industry, or for developing those resources by novel or improved methods.

One of the things which the Society undertook in 1760 was to mount a public exhibition of paintings, which
included works by Reynolds, Wilson and many other leading artists of the day; and it was directly as a result
of this exhibition and those which followed it that the Royal Academy was later founded. However the first
premiums offered by the Society were for drawings done by boys and girls under sixteen because ‘the Art of
Drawing is absolutely necessary in many employments, trades and manufactures’; and for the discovery of
cobalt in Britain and the cultivation of madder. Both Angerstein, making his way in the City, and Lock, with
his artistic tastes, would have found plenty to interest themselves in among the projects which the Society
aimed to develop. But what perhaps came as a surprise to them, and also to the other initiators, was the sheer
social success of the Society, which suddenly blossomed and had nearly 2,000 members by 1760. When the
Society was ten years old it had over 100 peers as members, including six future Prime Ministers - Portland,
Rockingham, Bute, Shelburne, North and Pitt the Elder. Among a roll call of famous names of the period
may be noted Sir Joseph Banks the explorer, naturalist and later President of the Royal Society; Sir Francis
Baring the banker, Chairman of the East India Company and future business associate of Angerstein; James
Boswell; Dr Johnson; Charles Burney the author, musician and father of Fanny Burney, who later was a
close family friend of both the Locks and the Angersteins; James, Thomas and Patrick Coutts the bankers;
Benjamin Franklin; David Garrick the actor; Edward Gibbon the author; Jonas Hanway the Russia merchant
and philanthropist; John Thornton of the Clapham Evangelical family; Horace Walpole the author; John
Wilkes the politician (proposed, like Angerstein, by his brother Israel); a clutch of artists including Cipriani,
Cosway, Hogarth, Reynolds and West; several Lord Mayors; and many others ranging from Thomas
Chippendale to the Archbishop of York. Angerstein, through his membership of the Society of Arts, and
Lock, in the same way and through his family’s scientific connections together with his uncle Daniel’s
artistic leanings, had, despite their youth and the question marks over their origins, potential access to a very
wide circle that included many of the most interesting and important men of the day.

William Lock MP died in 1761, and his son became a wealthy young man. There is no record of William
ever have been active in business: he seems to have had few money making instincts, but rather to have been
like the father of the heroine of Fanny Burney’s Cecilia:
In whom a spirit of elegance had supplanted the rapacity of wealth, had spent his time as a private
country-gentleman, satisfied, without increasing his store, to live upon what he inherited from the
labour of his predecessors.

Unlike Cecilia’s father, however, he did have a taste for London and planned to build a house in the newly
laid-out Portman Square. In January 1767 he married Frederica Augusta Schaub at St Marylebone Parish
Church, when he was twice the age of his seventeen year old bride, whose family had influential connections
far removed from the merchant community and different again from the membership of the Society of Arts.

Lukas Schaub, or Sir Luke Schaub as he became, the father of Frederica Augusta, was born in Basle in
1690 and educated at the university there. In about 1711 he started work for the British Minister to
Switzerland, Abraham Stanyan, who returned to England in 1713: Schaub followed him and became
secretary to Lord Cobham, who was briefly Envoy to Vienna in 1714-15. Lord Cobham clearly thought well
of the young Schaub, who was left in charge of the embassy when Cobham returned to London. In 1716 Schaub was attached to the mission at Copenhagen, and in 1717 James Stanhope, shortly to become Earl Stanhope, applied for a pension of £200 a year for him in recognition of the services he had rendered to the state. This seems a remarkable commentary on Schaub’s abilities since he was only 27 and not even a British citizen. Later he was sent to Hanover and seems to have developed some sort of confidential relationship with George I, who was also Elector of Hanover and this perhaps explains why, later, both of Schaub’s daughters had royal godparents.

In 1720, Schaub became a British subject. Following Stanhope’s death, he became the close friend of Lord Carteret who, remarkably, considered him to be the best person to represent British interests in Paris, and Schaub was therefore knighted in October 1720 before being sent to France the next year. No doubt it was during his time in Paris that Schaub had his picture painted by Rigaud, one of the most fashionable and successful portrait painters in France. However political jealousies soon led to Schaub’s downfall, and later he was sent on other seemingly unsuccessful missions, but in spite of these setbacks he was able to maintain his royal friendships, which also came to include King George II and Queen Caroline. Sir Luke showed the kind of patriotic feeling for his adopted country that Angerstein would later display, and in 1745 recruited a battalion of several hundred men from the Swiss colony in London for the king’s service; while in 1751 he and another man recruited infantry and artillerymen in Switzerland for the East India Company.

Sir Luke Schaub’s wife Marguerite came from a Huguenot family: they had two daughters Amelia Henrietta, christened in 1741 and Frederica Augusta, christened in 1750. Amelia Henrietta was named after her godmothers Princess Amelia, second daughter of George II; and Henrietta, Duchess of Newcastle, wife of the future Prime Minister and daughter of Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough. There was also no shortage of connections in high places when Frederica Augusta came to be christened, since her godparents were Frederick, Prince of Wales and father of George III; Augusta, Princess of Wales; and Anne, Viscountess Cobham, the widow of Sir Luke’s old patron.

In the summer of 1750, a few weeks after Frederica’s christening, Lady Schaub visited Lady Cobham at her home the Manor House, Stoke Poges. At this time Thomas Gray was 33 and a little earlier had given Horace Walpole a copy of a poem he had written, now known everywhere as the Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard. Gray, who was a scholarly and retiring man, did not intend the poem for publication, but copies began to circulate. In due course one reached Lady Cobham, and, to her great surprise, she learnt that the churchyard in question was a short distance from her home, and that Gray was at that very moment staying with his widowed mother and her sister who lived in the village. Lady Cobham was determined to meet Gray, and concocted a reason for her ward Henrietta Speed and Lady Schaub to visit him. He was unavailable, but conventional politeness required him to return the call: he duly did so and became a regular visitor to the Manor House. He wrote an amusing poem about the visit by Lady Schaub and Henrietta Speed called A Long Story, describing Lady Schaub as having come ‘cap-a-pee from France’: the most celebrated edition had a delightful illustration showing Gray being escorted to a hiding-place with the two ladies sailing through the air in hot pursuit.

Sir Luke made a fine collection of pictures – he has been described as ‘the Angerstein of his time’ and shortly after his death they were disposed of in a three day sale in April 1758. The 181 lots realised what was described as the ‘prodigious price for those days’ of £7,784. Horace Walpole was somewhat disparaging about the pictures, but he conceded that the collection included ‘some fine small ones, and a parcel of Flemish, good in their way’: he failed to justify his assertion that the collection was ‘indubitably not worth £4,000’. The names of many of the greatest artists appear in the list of pictures sold, including Bruegel, Claude, Correggio, Poussin, Raphael, Teniers and van Dyck. Horace Walpole also told the story that Frederick, Prince of Wales had once offered Sir Luke £12,000 for his collection, with the latter being allowed to keep the pictures for his lifetime; but Sir Luke, knowing the Prince well enough to be sure that the money would never be forthcoming, ‘artfully excused himself’ saying he loved pictures so much that he knew he would throw away the money. The auction did not include the picture of Sir Luke by Rigaud, and neither Angerstein nor Lock appear among the buyers so perhaps the difference between the Prince’s offer and the price realised for the pictures sold implies that Lady Schaub kept some of the paintings, and perhaps a part of William Lock’s art collection came to him as a result of his marriage to Frederica Augusta. Angerstein’s close friend and lasting influence was thus married into a family of Swiss/French origins which was both cultured and well-connected. In 1799 Fanny Burney wrote saying that ‘the dear King will see my Fredy with real pleasure, from old remembrances’, on the occasion of a royal Drawing Room that she
planned to attend. Surely nobody else there would have been able to claim to be named after, and to be the
goddaughter of, both of the King's parents.

William Lock could well have met Joshua Reynolds in Italy, since they were both in Rome at the same
time; and he and Angerstein no doubt saw Reynolds's work at the 1760 Exhibition at the Society of Arts and
the later exhibitions at Spring Gardens. There is a small portrait of Angerstein of unknown provenance
dating from 175598 and ten years later the thirty year old bachelor had himself painted by Reynolds, who by
this time was the most successful portrait artist in London, being knighted in 1769 shortly after he became
the Founder President of the Royal Academy. Angerstein appears in Reynolds's list of sitters for June July
and August 176599 and in the painter's ledger in October, having paid the considerable sum of 50 guineas
for his portrait100. The picture remained in the family until 1896 and is now in the City Art Museum Saint
Louis. Angerstein is shown half-length looking almost directly out from the canvas, and wearing what was
called Vandyk costume. He is perhaps slightly embarrassed at the fancy dress and does not have a wig,
though his mid-brown hair is receding on top and curling over his ears.

Although Angerstein later commissioned two more family portraits from Sir Joshua, built up a collection
of other works by him and was eventually a mourner at his funeral, there is no record in Life and Times of
Sir Joshua Reynolds of Angerstein as a personal friend101 though the two men met socially from time to
time102. Dr Johnson is another who has been described as 'on the list of his friendships'103 but Angerstein is
absent from Boswell. William Lock, on the other hand, who never had his portrait painted by Reynolds, is
referred to in an entry for 1771 in Life and Times as an old friend104. Dr Johnson called Lock 'an ingenious
critic'; but the comment was in relation to poetry, though Boswell's own description, which was a widely
held one, was that Lock was a man:

Whose knowledge and taste in the fine arts is universally celebrated; with whose elegance of
manners the writer of the present work has felt himself much impressed...105

William Lock was immersed in cultured pursuits and Angerstein was learning from his friend's taste and
experience. Lock was also investing in property: the third Earl of Kerry fell in love with a married woman
twenty years older than himself and after her divorce they got married and 'sold every acre of land which had
been in our family since Henry the Second's time'106, soon dissipating most of the proceeds. Lock did two
transactions with the Earl and bought substantial areas in County Kerry. But Lock's father had laid down in
his will that money should be used for the purchase of estates in England. So a private Act of Parliament had
to be obtained in 1770 to permit investment in Ireland107 and in March 1772 the properties were transferred
to trustees, one of whom was Angerstein. This proved to be a long trusteeship since Lock still held his Irish
estates when he died nearly forty years later.

IV FAMILY LIFE AND COUNTRY HOUSES

The death of Charles Crokatt may have been the reason why Angerstein at last decided to commit himself
and apply for naturalization. He may or may not have lost financially from his involvement in Crokatt's
affairs, but romantically he gained since he and Anna must soon have thought of marriage and of children;
and perhaps they decided that any family that they had should be British-born. Naturalisation required an
Act of Parliament, and Angerstein's, which was 10 Geo III cap 19 (private), received the Royal Assent on
16th March 1770. The Act recorded that:

John Julius Angerstein son of John Angerstein and Eve his wife born at Petersburgh out of your
Majesty's allegiance having constantly professed the true protestant religion and given testimony of
his loyalty and fidelity to your Majesty and the good of this Kingdom of Great Britain...is hereby
from henceforth naturalized...[with property rights like any British-born citizen]...Provided...the said
John Julius Angerstein shall not hereby be enabled to be of the Privy Council or a member of either
house of parliament or to take any office or place of trust either civil or military or to have any grant
of lands...from the Crown to himself...108

On 31st May 1771, having allowed a decent period of widowhood to elapse, John Julius and Anna were
married at St Peter-le-Poer in Old Broad Street, little more than a stone's throw from the Dutch Church in
Austin Friars and hardly further from Cornhill and the Royal Exchange.

Early in 1772 Henry Muilman, Anna's father, who was over 70, became anxious to put his affairs in order
and in March he made his will; while later the same month he did three legal transactions, the effect of
which was kept secret from all of his family save his wife. Then on 5th May he died 'suddenly as he was sitting in his chair' and was buried four days later in the Dutch Church, where there was a flat stone inscribed with the initials H M in the middle of the south aisle until the church was destroyed in World War II. His will appointed his wife, a friend named Richard Neave, Angerstein, and his elder grandson James Crokatt as his executors; but the result of the deals he had done six months before was that he did not own Dagenhams, having sold the whole estate to Neave. Had he lived, everything would have gone on as before save that he would, secretly, have been Neave's tenant. The will provided for his wife, but left nothing at all to his daughter Anna Angerstein even though she was pregnant at the time of his death. This must have been because he felt that she was well provided for by John Julius, since the will laid down that the bequests to Anna's sons James and Henry Crokatt were conditional upon their having 'behaved well' to their mother and grandmother until attaining 21: if they did the former would receive £10,000 and the latter £4,000, while Anna Peterella and Emilia Crokatt were to receive £3,000 each. Only if all four grandchildren died without issue would Anna Angerstein benefit. Since Neave paid some £24,000 for Dagenhams (with part set aside to provide an annuity for Henry's widow) the estate must have represented the great bulk of Henry's assets. When his widow eventually died in 1789, her estate was left 'share and share alike' to her granddaughters Anna Peterella and Emilia, with, again, no bequest to Anna Angerstein, who was thus by no means an heiress in spite of the substantial scale upon which her father had seemingly lived in his Essex mansion. In 1772 Anna's cousin Richard Muilman inherited Debden Hall and a fortune of £120,000; and the Angersteins no doubt would have found it difficult at this stage to match his standard of living, though quite possibly they had no wish to do so.

William and Frederica Lock had their first three children in quick succession and all were christened at St Mary's, St Marylebone. The eldest was William (1767) and the next was Charles, who was born in January 1769 but not christened for nearly a year, which suggests that his parents were visiting Frederica's Swiss family and were probably abroad when Charles Crokatt committed suicide and radically damaged their finances. Their reaction to the disaster seems to have been to give up the Portman Square house and sell a quantity of pictures. George Lock was christened in June 1771 and some time thereafter the family went abroad again: they were staying near Geneva in October 1772, and while they were there became good friends with Dr John Moore, who, with his family, were later close both to the Locks and the Angersteins. John Moore was a surgeon by training, and was employed by the Duchess of Argyll to take charge of her son the Duke of Hamilton during an extended Grand Tour which lasted from 1772 to 1776. The Locks had planned to arrive in April, and there was some delay so that the house they had taken was empty when the Duchess of Northumberland arrived: she stayed there for three weeks and was sufficiently impressed to describe it in her diary as 'my beloved Coligny'. Eventually the Locks did arrive and in October 1772 Dr Moore wrote to the Duchess:

... I do not know whether Mr Lock has the honour of being known to your Grace - this Gentleman with his Family came lately from London, and are settled for the winter at a very Elegant House within a few miles of Geneva where He lives in a very genteel manner. I am fond of accompanying the Duke to this Family because Mr Lock is one of the most agreeable and most accomplished Gentlemen I ever knew, and his Lady extremely amiable...

The Duchess expected Dr Moore to devote all his time to tutoring the Duke, and complained to one of the Duke's trustees when this did not happen. Moore explained himself:

...Mr Lock, a man of Great Fortune, and one of the most amiable and accomplished Gentlemen I ever knew, came here with his Family and took a house in the Country near Mr Upton's. Both of these Gentlemen shewed every attention to the Duke; he was fond of their Company and upon the most intimate footing in their Families. Their Ladies were both with Child and nearly about the same time gone. When the period approached Mr Upton Informed me of what Dr Hunter has wrote, and both he and Mr Lock desired in the most earnest manner that I would attend on that occasion. They took pains to obviate every objection, telling me that their Ladies had perfect confidence in me and a dread of any other... In short I could not Refuse, and as the Ladies had very expeditious Recoverys and fine children, I believe they have the highest sense of the service I did them...Nothing would have made me yield to their request but the many civilities they had show'd to the Duke and me...

The Uptons referred to were Clotworthy and his wife Elizabeth née Boughton, who had been at school with Frederica. The Uptons' son was born in April 1773 and the Locks' daughter Augusta therefore at much
the same time. Another friendship dating from this time was with Hon. William Hervey: he was born, like Lock, in 1732 and his three elder brothers were successively Earls of Bristol. In September 1773 he went to Geneva, where, among other visitors were ‘the Nevilles, Uptons, Locks, Sir J and Lady Anstruther, D Hamilton and Mr Moore…’

The Locks were back from their travels in time for the christening of their second daughter Amelia in March 1776; this took place at St Mary's, St Marylebone like her brothers' ceremonies. The friendship between the Locks and the Uptons continued: in 1776 Clotworthy Upton was created Lord Templetown, the peerage apparently being awarded in order to strengthen the Government vote in the House of Lords. Amongst the other Geneva acquaintances Hon. William Hervey kept in touch: he visited Norbury in June 1780 and on the occasion met ‘Mrs Angustine (sic), wife of a Russian now a principal insurer in London and two daughters…’

Harvey was no doubt confused by the presence of one of the Crokatt step-children, since the Angersteins had only one daughter: she was christened in June 1772 at St Peter-le-Poer and given the name Juliana, but she seems always to have been known as Julia, signing her name thus in the only one of her letters that has survived. In November 1773 the Angersteins' second child, John, was christened, this time at St Benet Fink, Threadneedle Street. As well as his own children Angerstein had his step-family to consider and in September 1772 James Crokatt, who was about 17, was apprenticed for five years, one of his masters being John Francis Rivaz. Emilia Crokatt, who was always Angerstein's special favourite, had ceased to be the baby of her mother's first family and was now like an aunt to John and Julia.

The Locks seemingly recovered well enough from the Crokatt disaster to permit themselves an expansive lifestyle, and perhaps they decided to try and recreate their Swiss idyll in England by finding a suitable country estate on which to settle down. Possibly drawn to look to the south-west of London by reason of his family's Hampshire roots, William Lock found a property, not in that county but over the border in Surrey. This was Norbury, in the parish of Mickleham, 2½ miles north of Dorking and close to Box Hill: the total area was some 500 acres. The owner had cut down many of the walnut trees on the estate, but there were still plenty of fine trees left - yew, box, oak, beech, elm and many other varieties and the views were superb. But the house was inadequate and was set down near the river Mole, which bounded the estate, and the Locks decided to build a new house in a different position. They were in England in April 1774, and then went to Italy, leaving Angerstein, in whom they must have had complete faith, to finalise the purchase for them. This again involved an Act of Parliament, since the property left by William Lock MP was entailed, and the entail had to be broken to find the purchase price of some £12,400. Once this had been done, Norbury was vested in trustees, one of whom again was Angerstein. Thomas Sandby was the first Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy and, according to a later account:

…Mr Lock wrote from Rome to Sandby to build him a house in a particular part of his ground which he mentioned. Sandby executed it, sent him a ground plan, elevation, and drawings of the views from several windows…

There was another family far removed from the merchant community with whom Angerstein had a connection via the Thomsons, and which may have served to show the ambitious young man another side of life outside the society provided by those who lived and worked in the City of London. The Boones were originally from the west country and Thomas Boone, of Mount Boone, Dartmouth, was an ‘uncannily successful merchant’ who was MP for Dartmouth in 1646-1653 and again in 1654 and 1659. During the Protectorate he was sent on diplomatic missions to Russia and Sweden. He was a friend of Cromwell’s, and was to have been one of the judges of Charles I but did not attend. When he died in 1678 ‘his ghost was alleged to haunt the beach below his house, plaiting ropes of sand for the Devil’.

Christopher Boone was born in Taunton and was of the same family: he moved to Lee Place, a large house in the village of Lee south east of London, and became a successful merchant trading with Spain and the East Indies. He was one of the 24 commissioners of the East India Company confirmed by Charles II in 1660; and, according to Samuel Pepys, narrowly avoided being committed to the Tower of London over a matter of parliamentary privilege, though he and three other men were ‘called in, upon their knees, to the bar of the House’ in 1668. John Evelyn knew Christopher and Mary Boone well and thought very highly of them, referring Lee Place as:

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A most pretty place which he has adorned with all manner of curiosities, especially carvings of Mr [Grinling] Gibbons...The whole house is a cabinet of all elegancies...An excellent pendule-clock inclosed in the curious flower-work of Mr Gibbons...Above all his Lady's Cabinet, adorned on the fret, ceiling and chimney-piece with Mr Gib's 'best carving...Some of Streeter's best paintings and many curiosities of gold and silver. Besides the gardens are exactly kept and the whole place very agreeable and well-watered. The Owners good and worthy neighbours and he has builded and endowed an Hospital for eight poor people with a pretty chapel and all accommodations...My excellent neighbour...  

Christopher Boone died in 1686 leaving the bulk of his estate, including Lee Place, to his wife; and subsequently it was inherited by Thomas Boone who died in 1748 having been predeceased by his wife and their only child. Thomas's brother Charles became Governor of Bombay and on his return a Director of the East India Company and an MP. The third brother Joseph went out to South Carolina in 1696 when he was about seventeen years old, and built up a large estate; he was prominent in the politics of the day, and was sent to London in 1704 on behalf of a group of Dissenters who felt that their religious freedoms were being eroded. He drew up a petition supported by London merchants and other men including Daniel Defoe who in 1705 produced a pamphlet called *Party-Tyranny, or an Occasional Bill in Miniature; as now Practiced in Carolina. Humbly offered to the Consideration of both Houses of Parliament.* Joseph was in London until 1709 and was again there from 1715-1720 as the Province's Agent, the post which James Crokatt would fill thirty years later. Charles's eldest son was named Daniel, who was an MP and Groom of the Bedchamber to Frederick, Prince of Wales from 1746-1751 and so is sure to have known Sir Luke Schaub. Following the death of his wife Charles remarried and had sons Charles II, born in 1728, and Thomas II, born about 1730; and after the deaths of their uncle Thomas's natural daughter and their uncle Joseph's widow, they inherited both Lee Place and Joseph's property in South Carolina. Thomas II went out to South Carolina in 1752 as coheiress to a 6800 acre estate, returned two years later and went again in 1758: towards the end of 1759 he was appointed Governor of New Jersey and then in 1761 was promoted to become Governor of South Carolina. He was, however, immediately at odds politically and stayed in office only till 1764, after which he returned to London and later was appointed to a post in the Customs. By 1796 he was Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Custom-House. Although he held no other public office he was a man of influence and in 1778 was invited to be a member of the peace commission led by Lord Carlisle that was sent to negotiate with Congress: Boone refused, saying it was a 'Measure against his Opinion and without any Prospect of Utility'. He was quite correct: the mission was a complete failure as Horace Walpole had also foreseen when he wrote that Lord Carlisle, whom he knew well, was 'very fit to make a treaty that will not be made'. Boone's South Carolina plantations were confiscated in 1782 and the eventual compensation he received for his losses amounted to just over half the £41,000 he had claimed.

Charles Boone II was educated at Eton and Cambridge like his brother Thomas II: he was a contemporary and school friend of George, 3rd Earl of Orford and was an MP in the Orford interest from 1757 until 1784. In 1762 the Earl was unsuccessful when he tried to get the post of Secretary of South Carolina for Boone but in 1768 Charles married Harriet Wright of Roehampton, who was Andrew Thomson's step-daughter and thus Angerstein's 'step-sister' and childhood companion. Selwyn described Harriet as 'a squint-eyed, chitten-faced citizen with about £5,000 fortune' but Sir Lewis Namier pointed out quite justifiably that the famous portrait by Reynolds of Harriet Boone and her daughter Harriet 'naturally does not answer Selwyn's description'. Precisely which members of the family occupied Lee Place and when is less than clear: Thomas I laid down in his will that his natural daughter should live at Lee Place and not be interfered with by any of the family, but she was living at the time of her death in Old Bond Street. Daniel Boone, Thomas I's son by his first wife had no children and Lee Place came to Charles II; but the latter's first marriage brought him an interest of in Barking Hall, Suffolk, and he lived there for a time, though, probably as a result of Theodosia's death, that estate later became the property of the Earls of Ashburnham. Presumably Charles II and Harriet then lived at Lee Place, though from about 1796 they made their home in London. At one period Thomas II had a London house in Nassau Street, but both he and
Charles II were buried in the family vault in Lee Church. Ultimately Lee Place property, complete with the
Grinling Gibbons carvings and with roof girders 'solid oak trees roughly squared by the adze', formed part
of the very substantial inheritance of Charles and Harriet's only surviving child, who was also named
Harriet. Lee Place was eventually sold and it was pulled down in 1825\(^{146}\), though there are still Boone's
Almshouses (rebuilt on a new site save for the Chapel, which is said to have been designed by Sir
Christopher Wren), Boone Street and Boones Road as reminders of the family. The Boones must have
known the Crokatts well through their mutual interests in the affairs of South Carolina and could possibly
also have been friendly with the Locks' friends the Uptons since they were very distantly connected:
Thomas Boone of Dartmouth married the daughter of John Upton MP who represented the senior branch of
that family, while a younger branch had gone to Ireland and were the forbearers of Viscount Templetown. He,
too, had wide connections, being Clerk Comptroller to the Princess Dowager of Wales from 1761-1772,
while in 1770 he was one of the grantees of the Upton Patent which consisted of 20,000 acres in Otsego
County in the west of New York State\(^{147}\). It is strange that Daniel Boone MP was no more than very
distantly connected with the American pioneer Daniel Boone (1734-1820) if they were related at all, while
the often misspelt Crokatts had no connection with the other folk hero Davy Crockett (1786-1836).

The Boones, like the Locks, were examples of the wider world of culture, good living and influence to
which the ambitious young Angerstein no doubt aspired. His young 'stepsister' had married a wealthy MP
with a fine house, still no doubt full of 'all manner of curiosities'; and furthermore her brother-in-law had
been a Royal Governor, and her husband was the confidant of one Earl and the brother-in-law of another.
The chapel and the almshouses were a living example of the family's good works (even though the latter
were run by the Merchant Taylors' Company). Angerstein was not content that his wife and young family
should spend all their time in London and was thinking of acquiring a country property not too far from the
City. Richard Neave had not been satisfied with the house he had bought from Henry Mulman at
Dagenhams and, like the Locks at Norbury, had built a new mansion on a different part of the estate. Neave
used an architect named George Gibson, who also built him an office in Old Broad Street and a town house
in the West End, and who was the son of another architect of the same name who had built Stone House,
Loampit Hill, Lewisham; and around 1771 the younger Gibson built himself a 'little box' adjoining his
father's villa\(^{148}\). Since he was on the spot, it could have been Gibson who drew Angerstein's attention to the
fact that Sir Gregory Page had 41 acres in Blackheath available to lease for the creation of a country estate.
Angerstein took a 99 year lease from June 1774 at £85 a year\(^{149}\) and commissioned Gibson to build him a
house, which was, and is, called Woodlands. The site was an attractive one and was only a mile and a half
across Blackheath from Lee Place.

The elder George Gibson had travelled in Italy and studied architecture in Rome and at one time was
employed by Queen Caroline. The younger George also travelled in Italy before commencing practice, but
he was too much a man of taste to be effective: it was said that:

> He would rather sip his claret, drink his Madeira, chat about art and music and take sniff with gusto,
> than ascend ladders, tramp scaffolds to see how bricklayers filled in their work or try the scantlings of
> wall plates...\(^{150}\)

But whatever his inadequacies, George Gibson succeeded in creating 'an elegant neo-classical villa'\(^{151}\) for
the Angersteins. Gibson was also responsible for the rebuilding of St Mary's, the Lewisham parish church.
However the Angersteins' plans were considerably less ambitious than the Locks', for whom Norbury was
home, which they left chiefly for the London season; whereas Woodlands was a country villa for a
businessman spending his working life in the City of London. Woodlands originally was a relatively modest
house, though it took a considerable time to build. Angerstein appears in the rate records as having a house
in Crooms Hill, across Greenwich Park from Woodlands, from March 1775 until the summer of 1776,
though he also paid a small rate for Woodlands for the six months from Lady Day 1774, the full rate of £85
for the next half year and thereafter similar amounts for the rest of the century\(^{152}\). The first engraving of
Woodlands shows it to be a neat square villa with stuccoed walls: the entrance was on the east side and
consisted of an open portico, on either side of which was a niche which contained statues after the classical,
one being the Young Apollo and the other the Dancing Faun. Above them were sculptured roundels,
between which was a semi-circular window that provided the only light for the rooms facing east (save some
attic windows). The south front had a lesser entrance - perhaps a garden door - with two ground floor
windows on each side of it plus five windows on the first floor, and a single attic window above. Though
there may have been relatively few rooms, they were 'large, light and lofty', and there were 'imposing doors
of solid mahogany with finely carved lintels. The cellars were 'enormous, with low vaulted roofs, thick
walls and bricked recesses that make one think of the wine vaults of the middle ages. Woodlands must always have had attractive sloping grounds, which became more extensive over the years as additional land was acquired. The earliest description of the 'charming little villa' remarks that:

The situation is delightfully picturesque, and commands a delightful but distant view of the Thames.
The gardens, which are not very extensive, communicate with a small paddock, and the whole has a very neat and agreeable, if not an elegant appearance.

Much later, as Woodlands became more central to the Angersteins' daily life, the house was extended and a large west wing and a smaller east wing were built, and there were also a stable-block and a riding-school; but all of these additions have now vanished, leaving the house itself somewhat more like its original form, though today the entrance is through a porch on the south side.

One of the features of Woodlands that several visitors commented on was the conservatory, though it may have been added some time after the house was built. Initially Angerstein seems to have specialised in Cape heaths, which were difficult to grow but nonetheless were popular as a result of botanical exploration in South Africa in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Later:

The collection...consisted of the choicest and newest plants from China, New Holland, the Cape of Good Hope, and from other countries whose productions were fit for a conservatory...The floor of the conservatory was paved with large flat stones, and a very large oblong clump ran through about half of the middle part of the house, but not in a straight line...so that one end of the house could not be seen from the other, and it appeared as if [one was] walking in an evergreen flowery wood, the end of the house not being seen till come on all at once, which made it appear three times the length it really was...Several species of Leptospermum, Melaleuca, Callistemon, Acacia and Casuarina flowered there for the first time [in Europe]...

Woodlands may indeed initially have been relatively simply equipped: the earliest commentary describes it as 'respectably fitted up' but not 'remarkable for containing any objects of virtu'. However, if a story that appeared in 1860 is true, there was a collection of silver there. The article read:

A gentleman of fortune named Angerstein lost a large quantity of valuable plate. His butler was soon on the track of the thieves (who had brought a coach to carry the plate) and enquired at the first turnpike gate whether any vehicle had recently passed. The gate-keeper stated that a hackney-coach had shortly before gone through; and though he was surprised at its passing early in the morning, he had not noticed the 'number' on the coach. A servant girl, hearing the conversation, volunteered her statement that she saw the coach pass by, and its number was '45'. As the girl could not read, they were surprised at her knowing the 'number'. She stated that she knew it well, as being the same number that she had seen about the walls everywhere, which she knew was '45'. This allusion of the girl's was in reference to the 'Wilkes' disturbances...

The graffiti must have been very long-lasting since it referred to the 45th number of the North Briton, which was banned in 1763. The article went on:

Mr A's butler went at once to London and found the driver of the hackney coach number 45, who...drove him to the place where the plate was deposited, and it was all recovered.

The Angersteins probably had ambitious plans for the education of their young son John, though the only reference to his schooling is by Sir John Thomas Stanley who was several years older and yet included 'Angerstein' among the names of his schoolfellows at Loughborough House, Brixton, where there was:

...a school for very young children on a scale of show and expense exceeding any others then existing. The occupation of a nobleman's villa for the purpose, the purchase of a service of plate for the use of the scholars, the providing beds for each of them separately, with the conversion of an extensive walled garden into a playground had their effect, and he [the headmaster] soon had eighty or ninety boys of the higher classes of society placed under his care...

There is no doubt about the education of William and Frederica Lock's three sons, William the younger, Charles and George: all went to Cheam, and each in succession was Head Boy. When George was appointed, the headmaster wrote to William Lock that:

Without such youths as you have sent me, I fear all my own endeavours might have been inefficual, but with them my authority is regarded, my instructions are listened to.

Several cabinet ministers in the early part of the nineteenth century had been contemporaries of the Locks at Cheam, and one in particular was a friend, Nicholas Vansittart (later Lord Bexley) who was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1812 to 1823. The surprising tone of the letter to William Lock is explained by the fact...
The elder William Gilpin was not only an exceptional headmaster but an influential art critic, who was particularly concerned with the picturesque: he knew William Lock well and they corresponded regularly on art theory. Gilpin wrote several books in which he commented on what he had seen during tours which he made in different parts of Britain. In 1775 he made a tour of the west of England, though the published version did not appear till 1798: included is a description of Norbury Park, with the comment that "nothing in these parts is so well worth a traveller's attention", although to William Gilpin the house itself 'pretends only to comfort and convenience; except in the drawing room, which is an object of great curiosity'. What Lock had done was to commission a Painted Room, which Gilpin described:

The whole room represents a bower or arbour, admitting a fictitious sky through a large oval at the top, and covered at the angles with trellis-work, interwoven with honey-suckles, vines, clustering grapes and flowering creepers of various kinds. The sides of the room are divided by slight painted pilasters, appearing to support the trellis roof; and open to four views. That towards the south is real, consisting of the vale inclosed by Box-hill and the hills of Norbury, and Dorking...The other three are artificial. Two of them, which are the two end-views, cover the whole sides from the ceiling to the base. The scene presented on the west wall, is taken from the lakes of Cumberland...A large portion of the lake, under a splendid calm, is spread before the eye, surrounded by mountains...The other grand landscape occupies the eastern wall...The foreground...some beautiful trees...The distance...a stream discharges itself into the sea. The north side of the room, opposite to the windows, offers two more landscapes...a continuation of the scene exhibited on the western wall, which they unite with the landscape on the east...The light also, and other particulars coincide. The season represented is autumn. The time of the day is about an hour before the sun sets...Rainy clouds...hang heavy in the north...In the north-east angle, a ray of sunshine, breaking through the gloom, gilds a castled cliff...As the sun is setting on the western side of the room...when the natural hour corresponds with the hour represented, there is a coincidence of artificial and natural light. The union too...is still farther assisted by a few straggling trees, which are planted before the windows, with a view to connect the picture with the country.

William Lock employed a team of artists on his ambitious project: the walls were painted by George Barret, who was a successful landscape painter; the ceiling by Pastorini, an Italian artist who lived in London; the figures by Cipriani; and the animals by William Gilpin's brother Sawrey. William Lock was an accomplished artist himself, but did none of the work, though the small girl shown at the foot of one of the paintings of statues is said to be his daughter Amelia, born in 1776. The Painted Room survives today, as does Barret's preliminary watercolour study for it. The source of William Lock's inspiration for the project is not recorded, but Cipriani had previously painted 'a continuous landscape in which there are foreground scenes' in a room at Standlynch, later named Trafalgar House, in Wiltshire; and Claude, the most sought-after painter of the age, had been responsible for a "magnificent salon at Rome" where the four walls formed a composition which was 'one intire connected prospect'. William Gilpin wrote to William Lock in 1781 about the distraction caused 'where a torrent bubbles in the foreground' on Barret's west wall and made a similar complaint about "standing so near a torrent, & not hearing it roar" nearly five years later; but eventually honour was satisfied and Gilpin praised Barret's treatment of the offending area.

Not all the visitors to Norbury admired the Painted Room; and when Joseph Farington saw it in 1803 he wrote:

We saw the room which Barret painted. The Lake Scene, (an evening) is very ingeniously executed, much superior to the other parts. The Whole has a crowded effect; but perhaps appeared more so from the room having so many Chairs, Tables, Harpsichord, workbaskets, books &c - there was scarcely room to move & the pictures on the walls could not be seen but with difficulty.

However Nikolaus Pevsner, writing two centuries after the Painted Room was created, clearly was entranced, saying that the pictures:

Blend perfectly with the real landscape of exactly the same scale and mellowness framed by the windows. It would be difficult to find a better example anywhere of the late C18 Englishman's delight in nature, in landscape rather than in bricks and mortar.

The same authority called Woodlands 'once an excellent villa', but the situation today is much different to what it was when John Julius Angerstein and George Gibson set to work. The grounds have gone (save...
for a town garden) and the ambience is urban, whereas the author of Public Characters of 1803-1804, who called Woodlands Angerstein’s ‘summer residence’, wrote:

...The gardens communicate with a paddock, and command the beautiful prospect of Westcomb-park, Shooter's Hill, and the Thames. Any description would afford but a very faint image of a spot which exhibits, within a few miles distance from the metropolis, as many rural graces as can be found in the deepest recesses of the country. The grounds display that engaging irregularity which discovers a harmony both in art and nature, that produces the happiest effect; and the conservatory, in particular, has a claim upon our admiration, as well from the magnificent yet simple construction of the building, as from the delicacy, richness, and variety of the plants which adorn the interior. The writer of this article has been informed that the proprietor of these enchanting pleasure-grounds, and their accompaniments, was fortunate enough to engage one of the first gardeners in England, one calculated rather to cherish than thwart the good taste of his employer; but it has rarely happened that a practical gardener possesses such a fund of good sense, as well as good taste, as David Stewart, while to these is subjoined much real science, and a knowledge of whatever has been written or achieved in his art.

The conservatory has long vanished, as have the two statues, while David Stewart is now remembered chiefly as the mentor of Robert Sweet, whose description of the management of the Woodlands conservatory was given earlier. It perhaps requires an even greater leap of the imagination to picture ‘yonder WOODLANDS’ as the poet Thomas Noble saw it when he took a morning walk in the spring of 1804:

...Thro' every break, between the hillocks, streams
Reflected radiance form the silvery Thames,
Or some swift vessel shews its snowy sails
Quick glancing past. The beech and lofty oak,
The azure fir proud of its pendant robes,
And the fair ash bending its graceful form.
Together blend their luxury of shade,
Sprinkled with fluctuant lustre from the rays
That pierce, half checked, amid the infant leaves...