Author: Shaun Everett Copyright January 2012

TO MR WOMBWELL

THE CELEBRATED MENAGERIST

Concerning Celebrity

and Analysis of

Charles Clark's Verse of 1843

There is, perhaps, in everything of any consequence,
a secret history which it would be amusing to know,
could we have it authentically communicated.
James Boswell

The life of George Wombwell, the famous menagerist, has been cast both from facts and urban mythology. Indeed he is somewhat an enigma. With few facts we have repeatedly cast him in different lights. One as a successful Victorian entrepreneur. His successful travelling menageries numbered three at the time of his death in 1850. The myths though, cast him very differently. Some the villain and some the drunk to name but two myths. The truth is, we simply do not know enough to either substantiate or deny either claim.

What we do know is that George's popularity, and therefore his celebrity status, does provide us with hints about his true character provided we know where to look for such hints. It was with some surprise and much joy when I came across a broadsheet known simply as *To Mr Wombwell the Celebrated Menagerist,* an 'ode' or comical prose dated 1843.

This essay sets out to characterise Wombwell based on this previously little known broadsheet and provides an opportunity to establish our best contemporary opinion of Wombwell and his world of wild beasts and Victorian popular culture. Because this is the first time known to me that this broadsheet has been extensively interpreted, then my opinion and best guesses are to be considered opening gambit until Clark's work is further critiqued by other historians interested in this period of popular culture.

Celebrity Status

Wombwell must represent one of the earliest examples of modern celebrity albeit many years before the term celebrity became a 20th century media phenomenon. Prior to the notion of celebrity, Max Weber's treatise on 'status groups' was probably the default methodology for discussing social groups within sociology and social history. Weber theorised that sections of society could be differentiated on the basis of non-economical qualities such as honour, prestige or religion rather than pure class.[1] Weber's notion of status groups was also sub-divided into two further groups, one being the status group within the same social class and the other the status group that cuts across the social class.

It could be argued that Wombwell fulfils the parameters set out by Weber to not only be catagorised within a high status group, but also fit in either sub-division given his meagre upbringing and then his burgeoning wealth and fame by the time of his death in 1850. However, since Wombwell was never to be considered powerful in either economic or political terms, such social catagorisation has never been assigned to Wombwell. That may of course be the result of the very social status grouping that Weber proposed, since academia, a concrete social grouping in its own right, was not concerned with the efforts of the lowly cordwainer[2] that became an established Victorian gentleman of some repute.

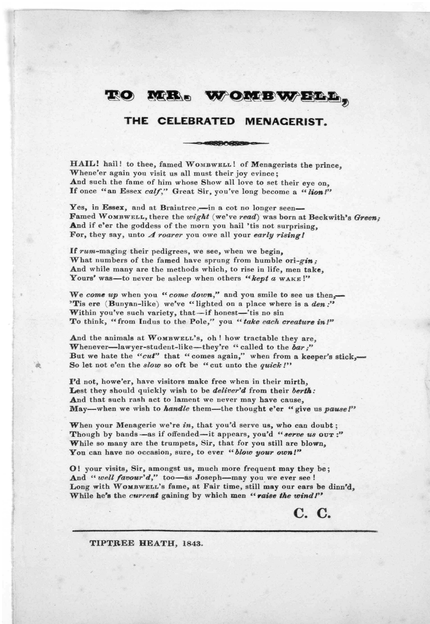
1 H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *Status, Class and Party* in *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* International Library of Sociology (Routledge 1998) pp180-105

2 It is recorded that Wombwell started out as a cordwainer although evidence has not yet emerged to substantiate the claim.

Where the title of the broadsheet refers to *celebrated* we can substitute *celebrity* to argue the point on a contemporary basis of understanding. Another clue to Wombwell's celebrity staus is to be found in his will. Not a statement as such, but the will had been witnessed and proved by Charles (Chas) Richardson together with his clerk. Chas Richardson was a well known firm of solicitors to the famous and his practise was based at 28 Golden Square[3]. Richardson's father had been an owner of a Hotel and Coffee House in the Piazza in Covent Garden, frequented no doubt by many from the theatre and the literary professions[4]. Wombwell's association with the Richardson's would therefore not have been coincidental. It would have been normal practise to utilise those facilities in and around the area that Wombwell would frequent when in London. Golden Square of course, is situated in the very heart of Soho.

The Broadsheet

Figure 1 shows a facsimile of an 'Ode' to George Wombwell, labelled *Tiptree Heath* and dated 1843. This scarce copy of a verse dedicated as it was, gives us an opportunity to characterise George Wombwell as it may have been seen by *C.C* the stated author. Today, we know this author to be Charles Clark(1806- 1880) a local celebrity in his own right. Known affectionately as *The Bard of Totham,* Clark lived in Totham Great Hall, Essex as a tenant farmer and then later in Heybridge near Maldon, Essex[5]. Clark both wrote and printed his own works together with the reprinting of many texts from earlier centuries on his own portable printing press and at his own cost, often referring to himself as an amateur[6].



TO MR. WOMBWELL,

THE CELEBRATED MENAGERIST.

HAIL! hail! to thee, famed WOMBWELL! of Menagerists the prince,
Whene'er again you visit us all must their joy evince;
And such the fame of him whose Show all love to set their eye on,
If once "an Essex *calf*," Great Sir, you've long become a "*lion!*"

Yes, in Essex, and at Braintree,—in a cot no longer seen—
Famed WOMBWELL, there the *wight* (we've *read*) was born at Beckwith's *Green;*
And if e'er the goddess of the morn you hail 'tis not surprising,
For, they say, unto *A roarer* you owe all your *early rising!*

If *rum*-maging their pedigrees, we see, when we begin,
What numbers of the famed have sprung from humble ori-*gin;*
And while many are the methods which, to rise in life, men take,
Yours' was—to never be asleep when others "*kept a* WAKE!"

We *come up* when you "*come down,*" and you smile to see us then,—
'Tis ere (Bunyan-like) we've "lighted on a place where is a *den:*"
Within you've such variety, that—if honest—'tis no sin
To think, "from Indus to the Pole," you "*take each creature in!*"

And the animals at WOMBWELL's, oh! how tractable they are,
Whenever—lawyer-student-like—they're "called to the *bar;*"
But we hate the "*cut*" that "comes again," when from a keeper's stick,—
So let not e'en the *slow* so oft be "cut unto the *quick!*"

I'd not, howe'er, have visitors make free when in their mirth,
Lest they should quickly wish to be *deliver'd* from their *berth:*
And that such rash act to lament we never may have cause,
May—when we wish to *handle* them—the thought e'er "give us *pause!*"

When your Menagerie we're *in*, that you'd serve us, who can doubt;
Though by bands—as if offended—it appears, you'd "*serve us* OUT:"
While so many are the trumpets, Sir, that for you still are blown,
You can have no occasion, sure, to ever "*blow your own!*"

O! your visits, Sir, amongst us, much more frequent may they be;
And "*well favour'd,*" too—as Joseph—may you we ever see!
Long with WOMBWELL's fame, at Fair time, still may our ears be dinn'd,
While he's the *current* gaining by which men "*raise the wind!*"

C. C.

TIPTREE HEATH, 1843.

Figure 1: Facsimile of Clark's 1843 verse

Clark's style mimics that of Thomas Hood(1799-1845), at the time a well known exponent of punning. Charles Lamb(1175-1824) the contemporary essayist and lover of puns, in a short essay outlined puns thus:

> *A* ***pun*** *is not bound by the laws which limit nicer wit. It is a pistol let off at the ear; not a feather to tickle the intellect.*[7]

Hood's volume *Odes and Addresses to Great People* (1825), of which much was published in periodicals such as *Punch*, shows many similarities to Clark's work and it is likely that Clark used Hood's examples as his creative inspiration. Indeed Clark was said to have expressly copied Hood with his own version of *Epsom Races* (a retitled copy of Clark's previously published *Tiptree Races*) in which he had signed it *Thomas Hood the Younger*. Walter Jerrold, in his 1907 biography of Hood, had dubbed Clark's work *a very poor imitation*[8]. Clark's propensity to copy others is not in doubt and thus most of his verse was seen as a minor contribution to Victorian popular culture. As will be seen though, his verse on George Wombwell does provide a better insight into the famous menagerist.

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3 Chas Richardson was also involved in the development of the Norland Estate, which covers such fine areas of London including The Royal Crescent, Kensington and much of what is now known as Holland Park.

4 On Richardson Senior's death in 1827, the Coffee House passed to another of his sons, Walter.

5 Clark's writings can be found under the names Malthus Merryfellow, Snarly Charly, Doggrel Drydog, Quintin Queerfellow and The Bard of Totham.

6 An illustration and description of the press was published in *Mechanics' Magazine, Museum, Register, Journal and Gazette*, No. 276 Nov 22nd 1828

7 Charles Lamb, *That the Worst Puns are the Best* reprinted in *The Essays of Elia* (Moxon, London 1833) p241

8 Walter Jerrold, *Thomas Hood: His Life and Times* (Haskell House, 1907) p250

Decoding the content in Charles Clark's Broadsheet

It is clear Hood was the main influence on style, but Clark's library was known to have been in excess of 2500 volumes. He had therefore many examples of writing to draw on for this and the several dozen verses he created and distributed[9]. He was therefore *well read* for a farmer and amateur printer. Although the pun is by far the commonest way that Clark delivers his satire, it is more the literary sources he utilises that provides us clues as to Wombwell's character. In this section I will consider the verse one element at a time to elaborate.

First Verse:

Hail! Hail! To thee, famed WOMBWELL! of Menagerists the prince,
Whene'er again you visit us all must their joy evince;
And such the fame of him whose Show all love to set their eyes on,
If once "an Essex calf," Great Sir, you've long become a "lion!"

The term *Essex calf* has appeared several times in history prior to1843 and alludes to Essex people being rather foolish. One of the first publications that mentions the *kalfe* was in 1573 in Edward Long John Scott's *Letter-box of Gabriel Harvey.*

'*Foes must be frende, quoth an Essex kalfe*.'[10]

It probably refers to the ancient breeding of calves in Essex as being the best in the world[11]. It was probably popularised though, as a representation of an Essex man when it appeared in the Restoration comedy *The Rovers* (aka *The Banish'd Cavaliers*) in 1677. In one scene the character Blunt mistakes a prostitute for a young girl that he believes has fallen in love with him. His companion Belville whilst both were attending a Naples carnival(Act II, scene I) utters the following line:

'yet they are Whores, tho this Essex Calf [Blunt] *believe them persons of quality'*

This metamorphosis from a well bred beast to a person of dubious intellect is not easily explained yet it clearly happened some time during the17th century or before and must have some basis in literature and /or popular culture.

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9 S*ales Catalogue* Essex Records Office, reference Sale/B5415 and Essex Records Office, *Letters and Papers of Charles Clark of Great Totham Press,* reference D/DU 668

10 George Latimer Apperson, *Dictionary of Proverbs,* Marin Mansor(ed.), Stephen Curtis(ed.) (Wordsworth, Ware 2006) p176

11 Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* Vol 1 (Nichols, London 1811) p340

Essex allegedly produced calves *of the fattest, fairest and finest* whereby a *Cumberland Cow could be bought for the price of an Essex calf.*

Clark further transposes *calf* to *lion* suggesting that Wombwell was neither foolish nor beastly, but rather suggests that he was a champion. By 1843, Wombwell was a wealthy businessman in a Victorian society where the exotic beast served as a constant reminder of the success of the British Empire. Wombwell played a part in this by taking exotic beasts to all parts of the UK. This simple play on words serves both Clark's humour and his honour to his subject[12]. It is likely that a Tiptree audience, in the Essex countryside, would be amused.

Second Verse

Yes, in Essex, and at Braintree,---in a cot no longer seen---
Famed Wombwell, there the wight (we've read) was born at Beckwith Green;
And if e'er the godess of the morn hail 'tis not surprising.
For, they say, unto A roarer you owe all your early rising!

This is the only time I have seen a contemporary reference to Wombwell's birthplace. He had always been thought to be of Wendon Lofts near Saffron Walden in Essex. So far there are no official records I have seen that qualify Wombwell's baptism. This new information may prove useful in tracing the missing records. Beckwith Green is certainly an ancient area of Braintree in Essex. It is mentioned in manorial records for the Braintree and Bocking area prior to Wombwell's birth (1777)[13].

Wight comes from the Old English word *wiht* that meant a living being or creature, but has since come to mean spritely (from sprite) which might also infer active or nimble.

The reference to *godess of the dawn* is a direct reference to *Aurora* from Roman mythology according to which, every morning she was seen flying across the sky announcing the arrival of the sun.

Aurora, now fair daughter of the dawn,
Sprinkles with rosy light the dewy lawn. In pearly car with silvery lustre bright,
Slowly she rises o'er the rear of night..."[14]

This play on words, in similar style to Hood whereby *Aurora = A Roarer* tells us Wombwell was likely an early riser as a small child. However, Roaring was also the common name of an ailment of some race horses at the time. Those horses that were referred to as roarers uttered peculiar sounds when briskly trotted or galloped[15]. It could be that Clark is also referring to Wombwell's propensity for horses and horse sales.

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12 John Taylor, *Wit and Mirth* in which '*essex calves called lions*' (1628) p79. This resource is unseen, but is referenced as in note 10 The full title is: *Wit and Mirth*: *chargeably collected out of taverns, ordinaries, innes, bowling-greenes and allyes, ale-houses, tobacco-shops, highwayes, and water-passages made up and fashioned into clinches, bulls, quirkes, yerkes, quips and jerkes.*
13 D/DVf/12 Essex Record Office Level: Category Estate and Family records. Dates of Creation 22 July 1756 Scope and Content Copy of Will: refers to land residing at Beckwith Green in Braintree.

14 Rose Lawrence (ed), Homer:*Cameos from the antique; or, The cabinet of mythology,* Alexander Pope (Tran), (Evan, Chegwin, Hall, Liverpool 1831) p46

15 William Youatt, *The Horse: with a treatise on draught* (Baldwin and Craddock, 1831) from the Library of Useful Knowledge, Farmers Series p160

Horses were the workhorses of the early menageries. All the animal wagons were drawn by teams of at least 4 horses. During parades through towns this was often doubled to eight for spectacular effect. Clark may also have been informed that the baby Wombwell was not only restless but maybe a sufferer of some ailment such as whooping cough which might imitate the *roaring* horse. These insights into George's early life, if they are accurate, could indicate more than a cursory knowledge of Wombwell which Clark would have had to obtain from George's close relations.

Third Verse

If rum-aging their pedigree, we see, when we begin,
What numbers of the famed have sprung from humble ori-gin,
And while many are the methods which, to rise in life, men take,
Yours' was – to never be asleep when others "kept a WAKE!

Rum and *gin* might refer to the idea that George's liked of alcoholic beverage. There is no actual evidence of course, but it is something which was noted by the editor of *The Every-Day Book* in which he describes Wombwell:

'He is undersized in mind as well as form,
"a weazen, sharp-faced man," with a skin reddened by more than natural spirits'

Figure2: The Earl of Darlington Fox-Hunting with the Raby Pack: Drawing Cover 1805 Oil on canvas support: 705 x 908 mm frame: 807 x 1012 x 69 mm Tate Collection

in his description of the Bartholomew Fair 1825[16]. Hone additionally describes Wombwell as the *Wicked Wombwell and his fellow brutes*[17]. Clearly there was no love lost between the two men after their apparent brief encounter. There is an everlasting myth that travelling folk are heavy drinkers. That may be true, but Hone's comments are more likely to be affected by his viewpoint regarding the alleged lion baiting with dogs in Warwick during1825 according to a written report[18]. The period between 1800 and 1835 saw 11 Bills concerning cruelty to animals debated in the British Parliament. Nine were defeated with little resistance, but cruelty towards cattle and horses was eventually outlawed in 1822. This was followed in 1835 by the outlawing of bear baiting and dog fighting[19].

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16 William Hone, *The every-day book, or, The guide to the year* (Hone, London 1825) pp1199-1200

17 Hone, Vol II (Hone, London 1837) pp1195 – 96

18 *The Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1825 pp173-4

19 Rod Preece, *Awe for the tiger, love for the lamb: a chronicle of sensibility to animals* (UBC Press, Vancouver 2002) p 222

The blood sports of hunting, etc. were always in the public eye. In the 1827 edition of the *Day Book*, Hone had dedicated Volume II to The Earl of Darlington. Darlington had, after Hone's famous libel trials in 1817, donated £105 towards Hone's costs[20][21]. Hone was obviously grateful and in his dedication refers to Lord Darlington as the *encourager of the old country sports* which of course includes the blood sports. It is quite possible that in 1825, Hone was still repaying his favour even if by way of libelling Wombwell, during a period when the blood sports were once again under scrutiny by Parliament. By deflecting attention away from hunting to George's alleged lion baiting by dogs, would have been one way of deflecting attention away from hunting. Clearly Hone, even after his near misses with Parliament and the courts, would not have considered Wombwell effective at defending himself against such outrageous claims made in his *Day Book*. The plight of the travelling man in the eyes of the establishment is not an easy one.

The rest of the verse seem to relate to Wombwell's lead over his competitors. Clark's humour is put to good use in suggesting that his competitors were asleep compared to George when it came to business. This is born out by the fact that Wombwell had three thriving travelling menageries by 1843.

Fourth Verse

We come up when you "come down and you smile to see us then,---
'Tis ere (Bunyan-like) we've "lighted on a place where is a den:"
within you've such variety, that-- if honest-- 'tis no sin
To think, "from Indus to the Pole," you "take each creature in!"

Tis and *lighted on a place where is* [was] *a den* both appear in John Bunyon's *Pilgrim's Progress* so and this is Clark's probable source. The reference to *den* is actually in the opening paragraph[22].

As I walked through the wilderness of this world,
I lighted on a certain place where was a den,
and laid me down in that place to sleep,
and as I slept I dreamed a dream.

Bunyon had been confined in Bedford Jail on and off for a period of 12 years for exercising his ministry contrary to the statutes then in force. In Restoration England preaching in other than an Anglican church was deemed illegal. The *den* to which Bunyon refers, was the jail in Bedford where he penned this allegorical novel. Bunyan throughout his preaching life had also become a target for slander and libel and was accused of being a witch amongst other things.

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20 Frederick W. Hackwood , *William Hone: His Life and Times* (Unwin, London 1912) p179

21 Hone, Vol II (Hone, London 1837) Dedication

22 John Bunyan, *The pilgrim's progress* (Barrett, London 1795)

The *den* that Clark refers to of course, is more likely to be the menagerie cages in which lie the lions and tigers and exclaims *tis no sin* to keep such animals detained [Bunyan-like] for the pleasure of the audience.

Not wishing to be outdone by the eminence of Hood and others, Clark swiftly moves on to Alexander Pope within the same verse [23]. Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard,* published in 1717, has the line *Indus to the Pole* thus:

Then share thy pain, allow that sad relief;
Ah, more than share it, give me all thy grief.
Heav'n first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
Some banish'd lover, or some captive maid;
They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,
Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires;
The virgin's wish without her fears impart,
Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart,
Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,
And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.

This implies that Wombwell has a large and varied range of exotic animals on display. Whether the usage of Eloisa's distress at being separated from her lover Abelard has any other significance is not clear, although the separation maintains the notion of imprisonment as per Bunyan.

The line *take each creature in* also comes from Pope. In this case Pope's *Essay on Man*[24]. Clark changes the line from *every creature* to *each creature* to suit. In both *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Essay of Man* the notion of the importance that man should attach to God is evident, the former text being a direct Christian allegory. This may be co-incidental, but it is worth noting any reference to Christian or moral philosophy provides further support to Wombwell the good person rather than the *brute* as had been inferred by Hone.

Fifth Verse

'And the animals at WOMBWELL'S, oh! How tractable they are,
Whenever---lawyer-student-like--- they're "called to the bar;"
But we hate the "cut" that "comes again," when from a keeper's stick,---
So let not e'en the slow so oft be "cut unto the quick!"

The reference to the *ba*r is Clark's humorous take on the cages in which reside the animals during the show. Even though Clark infers that Wombwell's beasts are under control, the keeper might sometimes resort to the use of the *stick*. This is the most negative part of Clark's broadsheet and might highlight his reservations as to animal discipline in the travelling menagerie. Any beast or human for that matter, who has been figuratively *cut to the quick* feels inner pain as intense as if the quick had been pierced. It could be that Clark believed that the audience might also feel the emotional pain during any show. Modern day sensibilities would concur with such notion of cruelty to animals and the demise of menageries and animals in circuses was somewhat accelerated during the first half of the twentieth century, due to a rise in similar criticism.

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23 Rev H.F.Carey(Ed) *The poetical works of Alexander Pope with a biographical notice of the author* (London 1839) p34
24 Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man* (Tegg, London 1811) p114 Work originally published in 1734

Sixth Verse

I'd not, howe'er, have visitors make free when in their mirth,
Lest they should quickly wish to be deliver'd from their berth,
And that such rash act to lament we never may be cause,
May—when we wish to handle them-- the thought e'er "give us pause!

This is probably the most difficult of verses. I am not sure if Clark is referring to the animals or the audience when he mentions *visitors*. Does he mean the audience to a show or exotic animals that have come from abroad? An audience getting unruly whilst a young animal is being handled might not be desirous. Such ill discipline, although surely common, would not be tolerated by a caring keeper and anyone acting such could easily be ejected from the Menagerie. Clark we hear, would not allow such behaviour and so is he saying it regularly occurs in Wombwell's menagerie shows?

Any such *act* of unruliness would cause regret he suggests. Audience discipline is imperative in Clark's view. Audience handling of some animals must have been common. They (audience) might wish to reflect on their behaviour given that lions and tigers could easily lash out with their *pause*!

give us pause is a famous line from Hamlet:

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect,
That makes calamity of so long life:[25]

The *mortal coil* might mean the snake as well as the turmoil of life in Shakespeare's verse and it may be that Clark was alluding to the handling of snakes in the menagerie during a show whilst in other parts of the audience onlookers got unruly. Maybe the occasional crack of the stick across some onlooker's knuckles might not go amiss we might hear. As Hamlet continues:

for who would bear the whips and scorns of time...

Seventh Verse

'When your Menagerie we're in, that you'd serve us, who can doubt;
Though by bands –as if offended-- it appears, you'd "serve us OUT:"
While so many are the trumpets, Sir, that for you still are blown,
You can have no occasion, sure, to ever "blown your own!"

Here and in verse eight, Clark engages with the famous Wombwell's Menagerie Band. Clark infers that the band might play loud at the end of the show to *serve us OUT.* i.e. quickly remove an audience, presumably to allow the next one to enter the booth. Good business sense!

25 Thomas Caldecott (ed), William Shakespeare: *Hamlet, and As you like it: A specimen of a new edition of Shakespeare* (Murray, London 1822) p68

The menagerie band was a great asset to attract all classes of audience and probably became the most important agent towards the development of popular entertainment which eventually manifested itself as the music hall act in later decades of the nineteenth century[26].

O! your visits, Sir, amongst us, much more frequent may they be;
And "well favour'd," too ---as Joseph--- may you we ever see!
Long with WOMBWELL's fame, at Fair time, still may our ears be dinn'd,
While he's the current gaining by which men "raise the wind".

In verse eight Clark refers to *Joseph.* George's band director in 1843 was Joseph Nicholds and it is most likely that Clark is referring to him here. Nicholds was thought to have been in Wombwell's band for a period of about 21 years[27]. Whether Joseph was *well favour'd* e.g. of healthy appearance but somewhat mature, we shall never know, but Clark suggests such[28].

This reference is taken from the biblical story of Joseph and is likely to have been taken by Clark from yet another of John Bunyon's texts, in this case the scriptural poems:

And now when two years' time was fully past,
And Joseph from confinement not releast,

It came to pass that Pharaoh dream'd, and

He seemed by a river-side to stand,

Whence he seven fat ***well-favour'd*** *kine beheld,*

Come up and grazed in the neighbouring field.

And after them there came up seven more,

Lean and ill-favour'd, and did soon devour

The seven fat kine which came up just before...[29]

Nicholds had left the band by 1844 according to a report in *The Musical World* noting his performance of *Triumph of Zion*, one of his own compositions, in Wolverhampton having been billed as *formerly director of Wombwell's band*[30].

26 Trevor Herbert, *The British brass band: a musical and social history* (Oxford University press, 2000) p22

27 George Sage, *An Old Staffordshire Musician*, Birmingham Daily Post, 19 August 1870 The newspaper report states that Nicholds had left Wombwell by 1844.

28 Samuel Aysough, *Shakespeare, An index to the remarkable passages and words made use of by Shakespeare* (Stockdale, London 1791) p1724 Shakespeare uses the phrase three times: *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *King Lear* and *Much Ado About Nothing* and in all cases it refers to the notion of appearance according to age.

29 George Offor (Ed), *The Works of John Bunyan: Experimental, doctrinal, and practical*, Vol II, (Blackie, Glasgow, 1861) p402 although Clark would have had a copy of Bunyon's Scriptural Poems after 1701.

30 *Musical World*, No. 39 Vol. XIX, 26th September 1844 p320

It may be possible that Clark was aware of Nicholds impending departure and took it upon himself to comment.

Long with WOMBWELL's fame, at Fair time, still may our ears be dinn'd,
While he's the current gaining by which men "raise the wind".

Being *current,* although it may have referred to the air current in wind instruments, might also imply the forthcoming departure of Nicholds and it is also possible that Nicholds was able to *raise the wind* in more ways than we might first understand. Might it be that Nicholds was in some way swindling the menagerie?

Raising the wind was a popular Theatres Royal farce in which appears one Jeremy Diddler a swindler and confidence trickster[31]. It was a hugely popular farce and is thought to be where the term *diddle* to represent swindle was likely born. Clark, sailing quite close to the wind, refers to *gain* in the same line as appears *raise the wind* and is powerful evidence for such a crime. Nicholds we know, ended up in the workhouse and died a pauper in 1860. We also know though, that he was obviously a gifted musician having composed several oratorios during his lifetime[32].

Conclusions

Since Webber's treatise on *status groups* the idea of celebrity has been further defined in the post-modern age. For instance, Fred Inglis in his book *A Short History of Celebrity* discusses *high status groups* in terms of *Renown*, whereby *Renown* brought honour to the office that a person held (e.g. Cleric, Judge, etc.) and not to the individual[33]. For instance, Queen Elizabeth I is *renown* as being the monarch and it is the monarch who's fame is conferred on her by the people. Her performances (processions, visits, etc.), however spectacular, are as a direct result of holding the office of monarch. Inglis explains that the archaic idea of *Renown* has been largely replaced by *Celebrity* via the mechanism of the individualisation of fame and in terms of a new spectacle.

Where once everything was lived, social relationships in the modern world are more mediated by images and thus everything can be represented from a distance, claims Guy Debord in his text *The Society of Spectacle* from 1967[34]. These representations are all part of the new spectacle. Brought about by the rise of mass circulation newspapers, celebrity began to thrive in the *glitter of publicity* as Inglis explains it[35].

31 James Kenney , *Raising the wind: a farce, in two act* (Cumberland, London 1835)

32 Frederick Boase, *Modern English Biography* Vol II (Netherton and Worth, 1897) '*NICHOLDS*, *Joseph*, b. near Birmingham; wrote three oratorios, one of which, Babylon, was published posthumously, the others, Miriam and The Redemption are still in manuscript; published Sacred music, a selection of psalm and hymn tunes '

33 Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton University 2010) p4

34 Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Rebel Press, London 1983) Ken Knab (Trans.) p7

35 Fred Inglish p9

Taking the theatre of the late eighteenth century as our starting point, what manifests as celebrity, both on and off the stage (e.g Sarah Siddens and David Garrick), extended itself by the turn of the century to encompass the rise of the travelling showman and their entertainment booths such as Wombwell's at *Bartelmy Fair*[36]. The travelling menagerie became a self contained spectacle in its own right and many stories and anecdotes, more than often put about by the showman themselves, heightening their individual fame (or infamy) as the century progressed.

Clark the amateur, in his bid to imitate the likes of Hood, produced the Wombwell broadsheet that must have been based on some detailed knowledge as well as some on hearsay. It is certainly not something that could have been produced without some insight into Wombwell's extended family life. Clark lived in Great Totham and then in Heybridge, both in Essex and close to the river Blackwater. It is known that many of the Wombwell family settled in or near to Maldon[37]. It is highly likely that Clark would have known some of the family and that stories and anecdotes would have been passed around due to George's celebrity status. The Menagerie also visited the town of Maldon and other towns in this part of Essex on a regular basis. Heybridge, at the tidal reach of the Blackwater, was connected by trade to Braintree with its burgeoning wool industry. Many families would have migrated from Braintree to Heybridge and Maldon and beyond. It is likely that the Maldon Wombwell's had their origins from within these resettling families.

Kurt Koenigsberger, in his text *The Novel and the Menagerie* has Clark's broadsheet *'addressed to him while exhibiting at Maldon Fair in 1838*[38]. This puts the 1843 edition as a reprint, but it also reinforces the geographic ties between Clark and his subject. Exactly why it was *presented* to Wombwell is not known, but the verse does have many aspects of a performance piece. It may have been some anniversary. 1838 is 35 years from when George was first thought to have started collecting exotic beasts for instance.

Whatever the case, the decoding of Clark's work has been useful in determining both aspects of Wombwell's life and the running of the famous menagerie. Koenigsberger pointed out how popular the menagerie had become by its attending *wakes,* thinking Clark in the line *"kept a WAKE,* actually referred to the traditional holidays, prominent in the industrial revolution in the northern part of Britain[39]. Koenigsberger though, is possibly not familiar with the local dialects of England and is unfamiliar with the term *wakes* being the pronunciation of weeks. i.e. Works weeks=Wakes weeks, the weeks that factories shut down for annual maintenance. In Essex, works weeks were common, but not to my knowledge were they ever referred to as *wakes weeks*.

If I have decoded Clark's work incorrectly, then it shall stand as an opening argument rather than as a mistake. There is however, no one single history. There are just differing viewpoints. The foregoing is my viewpoint. I have attempted to credit authors where credit is due and consider the rest as my own ideas. If, like Montaigne, due to my poor memory, I have forgotten any credits then for all such plagerisms I apologise.

36 Bartholemew Fair, an annual event in Smithfields, London to 1855. George Wombwell was a regular attendant at the fair.
37 A contingent of the Wombwell family were engaged in the Oyster fishing industry throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century based in Maldon and Tollesbury, Essex.
38 Kurt Koenigsberger, *The Novel and the Menagerie* (Ohio State University, Columbus 2007) p257
39 Kurt Koenigsberger, p135

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