

INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet contains an extract from Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies. The pocket-sized Harris's List was published for about 30 years from 1757 onwards. It contained details of LONDON prostitutes, including their names, addresses and physical charms. The publication sold for half a crown, the equivalent of about £15 today.

Also included in this pamphlet is an account of the trial of LADY WORSLEY in 1782. Lady Worsley, who was rumoured to have had approximately 27 lovers, was one of the most notorious women of the day. Her husband, Sir Richard Worsley, eventually brought an action for criminal conversation against GEORGE BISSET, an officer in the Hampshire militia. Although Richard Worsley won the case, he was only awarded 1 shilling in damages, not the £20,000 he had hoped to gain.

HARRIS'S LIST OF COVENT GARDEN LADIES,
1773

*Mrs. Abbington, Southhampton Street,
Covent Garden*

*'Do not Venture where such danger lyes,
But shun the sight of her Victorious eyes.'*

Of all vices we detest ingratitude, and we are afraid this lady would accuse us on that head, if we did not acknowledge the favours we have received from her in her single state. About 13 years ago, Miss Barton did not keep her coach, but has often been glad to take her place even behind that of the celebrated Lucy Cooper, when coming from the hop at Mrs. Park's in Aldersgate Street, where she was famous for singing a song, and beating time with her elbow, like Mr. Shuter in Love for Love; this expedient has got her many a shilling, which the company have club'd to reward her in some ingenuity ... Mr. Abbington, her husband, sold her to Mr. — for 500L. and entered into articles never to molest him in the possession of her. The gentleman's death (by which she expected great things) freed him from the bargain, but they do not live together. She keeps an elegant house, and Mr. Jefferson is constantly with her. Her salary, though genteel, is not sufficient

to maintain her table and manner of living; but her amour with Mr. — sufficiently makes up the deficiency. She is remarked in the company for her compassion and good-nature. Can any of our readers suppose, from so humane a disposition, that she would suffer any gentleman to die with despair for her? No: we can assure them to the contrary; but then the approaches must be made the proper way; sighs and oaths and such stuff alone will not do; a little of them may be proper, and also to convince her you really are a gentleman.

N.B. *She measures gentility by the weight of the purse.*

Edward Thompson, on the death of Kitty Fisher,
from *The Court of Cupid* 1770

*Of St Peter 'twas said in the
days of the Jews,
In Judea no Fisher could
stand in his shoes:
But this I'll affirm, and I'm
with no drift:
That he, ne'er like St Kitty,
was put to the shift!
Nay, I'll bett Bishop
Warburton fifty to ten,
He never, like her, was the
Fisher of Men.*

Giacomo Casanova

The memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt

*I felt that it was fortunate for me that I had
Goudar, who introduced me to all the most
famous courtezans in London, above all
to the illustrious Kitty Fisher, who was just
beginning to be fashionable.*

*Excerpt from the transcript of the trial for Criminal
Conversation on Thursday, February 21, 1782
in the King's Bench, Westminster Hall before the Right
Hon. William, Earl of Mansfield*



The Right Hon. Sir RICHARD WORLSEY,
Bart. Plaintiff; AND
GEORGE MAURICE BISSET, Esq. Defendant

The Declaration stated, that the Defendant, on the 19th day of November, 1781, and on divers other days and times, between that day and the 24th of the same month, at Westminster, in the county of Middlesex, with force and arms, made an assault on Seymour, the Wife of the Plaintiff, and then and there debauched, deflowered, lay with, and carnally knew her, the said Seymour, to the Plaintiff's damage of 20,000.

Mr. Leversage questioned regarding a gathering at his home attended by both the Defendant and Lady Worsley.

Q. *Do you recollect who gave the first intimation for the company to depart? – Lady Worsley was for breaking up very early; she made the motion between twelve and one o'clock. Mrs. Leversage was afraid she did not*

like her company, by her wanting to break up so soon, and wished her to stay a little longer. She sat down again; and, to the best of my recollection, Captain Bisset looked at his watch, and said, Don't go yet. She sat down again and staid till near a quarter after one.

- Q. *What became of Lady Worsley after that? – I rang the bell for a servant to light them home; but no one coming, I took a candle, and opened the door myself, intending to light them home, as Sir Richard Worsley's house was nearly opposite. I went as far as within a few yards of Sir Richard's door and then Captain Bisset desired I would not trouble myself to go any further, so I wished them a good night, and returned to my house.*
- Q. *When did you next see or hear of them? – Between four and five o'clock in the morning, I heard a violent rapping at the door. I immediately got up and went to the window to see who it was; and I found it was one of Sir Richard Worsley's servant; he came with Sir Richard Worsley's compliments to desire Lady Worsley would come home. I told him that Lady Worsley was not at my house, and that I had not seen her since one o'clock. – About a quarter of an hour, or ten minutes after, I heard another knocking at the door. I went to the window, and found it was Sir Richard Worsley himself; he says, Leversage, where is Lady Worsley?*

After further questioning it was revealed that the Defendant and Lady Worsley had entered the Royal Hotel in the manner of husband and wife and remained for approximately a week.

Mr. Bearcroft, in answer to this evidence, did not attempt to make any defence in controversion of the charge exhibited against the Defendant, but was very ready to admit that the Plaintiff was entitled to a verdict. The only question which then remained, was upon the subject of damages; in mitigation of which only he would defend his client; and did not doubt to prove, to the satisfaction of the Jury, that Sir Richard not only acquiesced under repeated acts of his own dishonour with various persons, but even excited and encouraged it.

Mr. Bearcroft then stated, That he could not only prove this to be the fact, but that he could prove by the Affidavits of the Woman who attended the Bath at Maidstone, that the Plaintiff there had absolutely raised the Defendant upon his shoulder to view his naked Wife while bathing, and at the same time called to her, saying, SEYMOUR! SEYMOUR! *Bisset is looking at you*; and that she, on coming out after she had dressed herself, joined the Gentlemen; and they all went off together in a hearty laugh at the transaction which had passed.

This Woman, for three or four years, has been prostituted with a variety of people; that is extremely clear. In the year 1779 Lord Deerhurst knew Lady Worsley; she was very profligate, and no step was taken by Sir Richard to prevent her. He has mentioned a conversation that passed between him and Sir Richard, "That many young men had tried her without success; and that he might take his chance with her." But he says, once the Plaintiff found him in Lady Worsley's dressing-room at four o'clock in the morning; and he only says to him, "Deerhurst, how came you here?" And there is no further explanation or examination between them. Is it not extraordinary to find a Gentleman in his Lady's dressing-room at four o'clock in the morning, and nothing further said?

This is the evidence which they have given; and if upon that evidence you think the husband privy to, consenting, and encouraging this debauchery, he ought not to have your Verdict, then the only point for your consideration is, what Damages you will give.— You will consider your verdict, and give what Damages you think proper.

The Jury went out of court, and after debating near an hour returned with a Verdict for the Plaintiff, giving him only One Shilling Damages.

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