

## **John and Elizabeth Hankey.**

John Hankey (1741-1792) was a member of a wealthy family of merchants, bankers and haberdashers.

The family fortunes began with Samuel Hankey (1640-1686) arrived in London from Cheshire in 1657; in July of that year, he was bound for seven years as apprentice to Thomas Bigge, Haberdasher. In 1664 he set up in business on his own account. By 1674 Hankey had established a partnership with John Houblon, known as Houblon & Hankey, traders to Jamaica, Antigua and the Leeward Islands. In 1683 he took on his nephew Henry Hankey (son of his brother Thomas) as an apprentice, later partner. In 1687, he was listed as one of the “goldsmiths keeping running cashes” or current cash accounts for his customers – that is, a banker. The business continued to prosper under a succession of family members as partners. Many of these had were Aldermen, Member of Parliament and often Knights.

Not all, however: Richard Hankey (1759-1817) was a partner in the family bank and bought a seat as a Member of Parliament, though there is no record of any parliamentary activity on his part. He was “a gentleman highly spoken of, as a man of polished manners and most liberal sentiments” and was (~1784-1794) President of the Anacreontic Society, a musical and drinking society which met fortnightly in the ballroom of the Crown and Anchor in the Strand. Their meetings began with a two-hour concert by visiting musicians (including Haydn in 1791) and then after supper the Society’s song *To Anacreon in Heaven* was performed, followed by more informal singing, including songs of the “greatest levity and vulgar obscenity”. The tune of *To Anacreon in Heaven* became popular on both sides of the Atlantic, and is the tune of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. By 1803 Richard Hankey had withdrawn from the banking house, having gone “so far in extravagance that” his brother Joseph Chaplin Hankey “turned him out of the partnership and gave peace and security to that house which has never been disturbed since”.

### **John Hankey (1741-1792)**

As a young man, John Hankey entered the family firm in Fenchurch Street. Alongside its main business of banking, in the middle of the eighteenth century the firm was also actively trading in the West Indies.

Into the picture at this stage comes Pieter Simond; of Dutch origin, he was born in 1691 in Groot Drakenstein, South Africa, the son of the founding minister of the Huguenot settlement in the Cape. In 1702 his family had returned to Holland, and he served as an apprentice with the mercantile house of Fizeaux and Co until 1708. In 1713 he came over to London with a letter of introduction from Fizeaux and Co to Henry Hankey, and so began a happy and profitable relationship between the two families. Simond was naturalized in 1717 and became known as Peter. He set up his home in Nicholas Lane, just a stone’s throw from Fenchurch Street, and began trading principally in sugar from Santo Domingo, Grenada and Carolina.

Over a period of more than fifty years the Hankey and Simond families became close friends and were engaged in joint enterprises for West Indian trade. In 1758 John Hankey was apprenticed to Peter Simond, merchant of Austin Friars, for a premium of £700. It was agreed in 1764 that John Hankey, then aged 23, should go into partnership with Peter Simond and merge the West Indian side of the Hankey firm, and on Peter Simond's death his business should pass to the Hankey family. (John, son, John Peter Hankey, was adopted by Peter Simond in the latter's will.)

This partnership thrived and Simond & Hankey soon had three ships sailing the Atlantic. had properties and mortgages in Grenada, Jamaica and Antigua, and acted on behalf of those willing to lend money on mortgages in these islands.

Peter Simond died on 23 Nov 1785 at Bishopsgate Street aged 94, leaving his estate equally to his daughter Lady St John of Bletsoe, his son-in-law Sir John Trevelyan and to John Hankey as his adopted son.

John Hankey did not bring back into Thomas Hankey & Co the West Indian trade which had been built up; Thomas Hankey & Co was a substantial bank at this time and it may not have seemed practical to merge the two businesses at a time when feeling against slavery was mounting, although partners of Hankey & Co owned the Arcadia estate in Jamaica.

### **Elizabeth Thomson (1751-1785)**

John Hankey married Elizabeth Thomson on 9<sup>th</sup>. September 1769. Elizabeth was the daughter of Andrew Thomson, a merchant in the Russian trade.

In addition to legitimate offspring (three daughters and a son), Andrew Thomson also fathered several illegitimate children, including John Julius Angerstein (1735-1823). John Julius was born in St. Petersburg; at twenty-one he was introduced to Lloyd's, and became an underwriter. He amassed a fortune partly from income generated by his large slave estates in Grenada and partly from his career in the City of London. He was active as a philanthropist. He was a collector of fine art and a patron of artists, particularly Lawrence and Reynolds. After his death, 38 paintings from his collection, were acquired by the government to form the basis of the new National Gallery.

John and Elizabeth had four sons: John Peter and Thomson, both of whom joined the family firm of West India merchants, Simond and Hankey, Frederick, who initially joined the company but left to join the army, later being Secretary to the Governor of Malta and KCMG, and Charles, about whom nothing is known.

In October 1781 Elizabeth went to live in a furnished house in Brighthelmstone (now Brighton) for reasons of her health, while John remained in London, attending to the business and suffering from gout. While there she met Lieut.-Col. Marwood Turner van Straubenzee, whose regiment was stationed nearby, and they began an affair. On about 20<sup>th</sup> January 1782 Elizabeth and Turner eloped to Worthing and then to Dorking where they lived as man and wife, Elizabeth being known as Mrs.

Straubenzee. John sued Elizabeth for divorce on the grounds of her adultery and this was granted on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1783. This divorce – which at that time required an Act of Parliament as well as a trial – became quite notorious; a 38-page pamphlet “*The Very Interesting and Remarkable Trial of Mrs. Elizabeth Hankey ... Wife of John Hankey Esq. ... for Adultery ... with Turner Straubenzee, Esq.*”, containing details of all the evidence, went on sale for one shilling. After the divorce, Elizabeth and Turner went to India, where they married in August 1783, and where she died in 1785 having borne Turner a son who died an infant. Turner went on to marry twice more.

A D U L T E R Y.

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THE VERY  
INTERESTING AND REMARKABLE  
T R I A L  
O F  
MRS. ELIZABETH HANKEY,  
(Formerly ELIZABETH THOMSON, daughter of ANDREW  
THOMSON, of the City of London, Esq.)  
Wife of JOHN HANKEY, Esq. (Son of Sir THOMAS  
HANKEY, Knt.)  
FOR  
A D U L T E R Y,  
At BRIGHTHELMSTONE, WORTHING, and HORSHAM, in  
Suffex; at DORKING, in Surrey; and at OSBURN'S  
HOTEL, in the ADELPHI;  
WITH  
TURNER STRAUBENZEE, Esq.  
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL of his MAJESTY'S Fifty-second  
Regiment of Foot.

In this TRIAL is given *verbatim*, the Articles exhibited by the injured Husband against his adulterous Wife, (which renders it both perfect and complete) with the DEPOSITIONS *entire*, of GEORGE CLEWLOW, Esq. Captain of the Fifty-second Regiment of Foot, Mr. MORLOY, Master of the King's-Head Inn, at Dorking. Mr. HILLS, Tanner, Mr. JOHN, Cook to the

