

## 6. Price wars and court cases (1866-1874)

Woodhouse's reason for quitting the studio at 7 Blackfriars' Road in April 1866 is not clear. It is possible that he already had such a course in mind when he brought Prout into the business a short time before. What is certain is that he now devoted his time to the chickens he kept on his seven-acre farm at West Winch.<sup>1</sup> As he later explained, 'I do buy and sell poultry in a large way', and 1866-1868 was evidently the period when 'I entirely got my living by dealing in poultry without any other source of income whatever.'<sup>2</sup>

Prout, meanwhile, settled down to running the studio in a businesslike manner. He showed no ambition to present himself as the People's Photographer and promptly increased some prices. He was more concerned to market himself as an all-round photographer with a range of products and services (though he did have his own cheap line):

Cartes de visite, six for 5s; Medallion Portraits, six for 2s 6d, or 4s 6d the dozen. Daguerreotypes, Oil Paintings, Positives on glass, &c., copied, enlarged and finished in oil, or water colours. Family groups and gentlemen's mansions taken by special arrangement. Agricultural implements and machinery of all kinds photographed. Children's portraits taken with shortest possible exposure.<sup>3</sup>

Not all photographers showed the same keenness to photograph children. They were more likely than adult subjects to fidget and spoil the picture, and some professionals charged more to make portraits of them. Prout, clearly, was alive to the problems they experienced during lengthy exposures and was anxious to reassure parents that he could minimise the difficulties.

He ran the same advertisement regularly for the rest of the year and on until December 1867. Then, in the New Year, a surprise announcement appeared:

Cartes de Visite for the million, only three shillings half-dozen. Back negatives same price at Woodhouse's, opposite Baptist chapel and British schools, Blackfriars' road, Lynn. Cartes coloured at 6d each. Copy the address.<sup>4</sup>

Woodhouse was back: he had knocked 40 per cent off carte prices, and 'Cartes for the million' was to be his new slogan (on carte mounts as well as in advertising). No mention was made of Prout, but, a week later, the reversion of the studio to its original principal was confirmed:

Notice. – Cartes de Visite. Any persons having had their portraits taken by Mr. Prout, late of Blackfriars' Road, Lynn, can have their Cartes off back negatives at 3s half-dozen by sending name and address, Mr. Wodehouse having Bought the Negatives, and taken possession of the business place late in Mr. Prout's occupation.<sup>5</sup>

It may be that Prout had been intended from the start to be a temporary holder of the studio, or it may be that Woodhouse had really planned to give up photography but had then found its attractions too great. Prout appears to have thought of the business as his own, and he had run it long enough to have at least two different styles of carte mount printed with his own name. (The later batch had added two lions and a set of ostrich plumes to the design, but though this was doubtless intended to suggest royal patronage, there is no reason to believe that he actually enjoyed it. It was not unusual for mount designs to hint at more than they could legitimately claim.) Now though, whatever hopes Prout had held for the business, and however the change had been brought about, Woodhouse was back in the driving seat.

Prout did not leave the area immediately and was still around in the spring.<sup>6</sup> His small family increased by a second and third infant while he was in the town,<sup>7</sup> and his wife's condition may have discouraged a hurried departure. But in due course he embarked on a new career, and it was one which lacked the cut-and-thrust atmosphere that may have been less congenial to him than to Woodhouse. For a while (though no exact dates can be assigned), he set himself up as 'Professor of Languages' in Lynn,<sup>8</sup> and by 1871 he had taken his family to Shoreham, in Sussex, where he was pursuing the occupation of 'Tutor (Classical)'.<sup>9</sup>

Woodhouse, however, had returned with a flourish. He had proclaimed that portraiture was now affordable by 'the millions' and had backed up his assertion with a dramatic price cut. He had also sought to add heroic overtones to his image. The appearance of 'Wodehouse' rather than 'Woodhouse' in his advertisement was no mistake. This was not his first use of this alternative and archaic form:<sup>10</sup> it was the spelling associated with Sir John Wodehouse, who had fought with distinction at the battle of Agincourt, and who had subsequently been granted the right to use the motto, 'Frappe forte Agincourt'. Sir John was buried at Kimberley, near Wymondham, and his descendants eventually became the Earls of Kimberley.<sup>11</sup> William Woodhouse may or may not have been related to Sir John, but he certainly aimed to be associated with his knightly splendour, and to this end he went beyond the occasional use of old-fashioned spelling. By the end of the 1860s, photographers were coming to recognise the marketing opportunity offered by the back of their carte mounts. In the earlier sixties, most (Woodhouse among them) had featured simply their name and studio address, but towards the end of the decade they began to opt for something a little more impressive. Woodhouse's solution – when he re-entered the market, or shortly after – was to add a badge, which featured a bare arm wielding a club (suggesting the heraldic 'wild man' of the Kimberleys), along with the motto, 'Frappe forte Agincourt'.<sup>12</sup>

Woodhouse's price cut did not provoke an immediate response from his competitors. For a few months there was little in the way of new initiatives. The Dexters ran a series of advertisements for their carte de visite views of the Sandringham Gates, obtainable '(post free) by enclosing seven stamps each'.<sup>13</sup> (The presence on their doorstep of a royal residence was of abiding interest to the people of Lynn, and these gates – along with other Sandringham scenes – provided a useful supplementary income to a number of the

town's photographers over the years.) Perhaps the most notable photographic event during the first half of 1868, however, was a legal action involving Edwin Bullock.

This was, in fact, his third time in court. In 1866, shortly after his return to Lynn, he had been charged with throwing water over Mr W. Cozens during a dispute about the right of way between two houses in St James' Street.<sup>14</sup> Then, a few weeks later, he had brought a man named Frost before the bench. Frost was an ostler at the Rummer, an inn close to Bullock's studio, and he was charged with assaulting the photographer 'by holding up his fists at him and threatening to strike him several times'.<sup>15</sup> The belligerent ostler had been reprimanded and ordered to pay costs of 14s 6d, and it was perhaps this 'second-time-lucky' legal victory that encouraged Bullock to take on a mightier adversary.

In June 1866, he had reached a five-year agreement with W. H. Smith, the newsagents. They were to advertise his work by displaying a framed set of photographs on their bookstall at Lynn railway station. Bullock supplied the frame and the pictures, and he contracted to pay Smith's 'at the rate of 20s per annum, payable yearly in advance'.<sup>16</sup> Now, less than two years later, the advertisement 'had been rendered altogether valueless from having been exposed to the weather'. Bullock decided to sue, in an attempt 'to recover the sum of £6 5s, the value of the photographic frame and specimens'. John Prout, who had apparently not yet left the neighbourhood, appeared as an expert witness. Described by Bullock's lawyer, Mr Beloe, as 'a great name in art', Prout was called on to confirm the value of the ruined display.

When Henry James, a ticket collector, was questioned about the failure to protect the frame from the rain, he agreed that W. H. Smith had no control over the station, 'which was exclusively under the direction of the station master'. This was an important detail, since the original agreement stated that the newsagents could be held to account only for matters that were actually under their control. Even more telling were the final lines of the contract:

When advertisers supply their own frames, while every care will be taken of them, Messrs. W. H. Smith and Sons are not responsible for loss or damage during the period of exhibition, or for the return of the frames at the termination of the order.

It further emerged, when Bullock was questioned, 'that he had not paid the defendants in advance, his reason for not doing so being that he had not been asked.' The judge declined to call the defendants and concluded that there was no case to answer, since 'the agreement put it out of the plaintiff's power to recover'. Adding that 'the defendants should have been paid in advance', he dismissed the case and awarded costs against Bullock.

Out of court and back in the market place, competition was about to become lively. Woodhouse, on his sudden return, had thrown down the gauntlet by cutting Prout's prices. Now the Dexters were ready to take it up.

Half Price! Carte de Visite portraits, not to be equalled, Six for 2s 6d, Back Negatives same price, at Messrs. Dexter and Son's, opposite the Athenaeum, Lynn.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, the announcement was robbed of its full impact. Perhaps it was coincidence, or perhaps the news of their intentions had leaked out. Whatever the explanation, Woodhouse was able to match their move in the very same issue of the local paper:

Half Price! Two Shillings and Sixpence for Half-dozen Cartes de Visite, – not to be equalled in Lynn or elsewhere. Woodhouse's Photographic Printing Depot.<sup>18</sup>

Both parties held their nerve and kept their fees at this level. There was one moment when Woodhouse, in a revised version of his 'Cartes for the Million' advertisement, appeared to raise his prices, quoting three shillings per half-dozen as the price for his cartes.<sup>19</sup> But this may have been a compositor's error, for the price swiftly reverted to two-and-six in the next issue of the paper.<sup>20</sup> However much Woodhouse and the Dexters were willing to slash their prices, though, Edwin Bullock had no intention of joining in.

St. James's Photographic Rooms, Lynn. E. Bullock, photographer and photographic publisher. In returning his sincere thanks to his numerous friends and patrons, begs most respectfully to inform them that, whilst declining to enter into a reckless competition of prices with inferior artists, it will be his constant desire to supply the very best class of work upon the lowest remunerating terms, consistent with a due attention to stability, and the perfection at which he aims: feeling sure that (as evidenced by his continually increasing business) a discerning public will always prefer quality to quantity.<sup>21</sup>

The use of 'perfection', 'discerning' and 'quality' can readily be seen as a bid to appeal to the upper end of the market. There is, though, a tetchiness about 'reckless competition' and 'inferior artists' that strengthens the growing sense that Bullock could be prickly. The conclusion of his advertisement was uncontroversial, reminding the public that he practised 'Landscape Copying, and all other branches of photography upon the shortest notice' and that 'Views of Ely Cathedral, Hunstanton, &c.', and a choice selection of Local Views' were always on sale. The cathedral series, also marketed for Bullock by Hills and Son of Ely, included a number of interior shots that skilfully handled the light and shadows of a gothic building and showed him to be a very able architectural photographer.

One of Bullock's out-of-studio ventures at this period was to attend the opening of Lynn's new Alexandra Dock in July 1869, and he secured a good position just opposite the point where the royal party, delivered by boat, stepped ashore to perform the ceremony.<sup>22</sup> While he and other photographers were recording the arrival of the Prince and Princess of Wales, however, a gang of burglars had arrived by train from London to target the empty houses of the many townsfolk who had gone to watch the event. The Lynn constabulary had fortunately been forewarned of the invasion and were waiting for

the villains. (Among those whose valuables were saved by timely police intervention was William Pridgeon's widowed mother, Maria.)<sup>23</sup>

Bullock continued to advertise his distaste for price-cutting throughout 1869, while Woodhouse and the Dexters held their carte prices at 2/6d for six. The price war had paused for the time being, but Woodhouse had already found himself facing hostility of quite another kind.

On the morning of Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December 1868 he was out at his West Winch chicken farm, washing his feet, when the police arrived to accuse him of receiving stolen goods.<sup>24</sup> Sergeant Borley and Constable Feek had been investigating the theft of chickens from two Middleton farmers and had arrested three labourers, David Kitteringham, John Chilvers and Henry Largen. Now they were after the men to whom the stolen birds had been sold.

Woodhouse was arrested for receiving, as was William Ellis, a porter of Guanock Terrace, and all five men appeared before the Rev. J. Freeman on December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Ellis was charged with receiving ten fowls and Woodhouse with receiving 29, 'well knowing them to have been stolen'.<sup>25</sup> The magistrate took a very dim view of the case and refused bail, remanding the accused in custody until January 4<sup>th</sup>. As a result, Woodhouse spent a miserable Christmas imprisoned in Swaffham gaol.

Fortunately, he did not have to stay there for quite as long as originally stipulated, since Freeman heard 'The Extensive Fowl Stealing Case'<sup>26</sup> more fully before the end of the month. It was a long and complicated hearing that stretched over two days, and it offered Woodhouse little comfort. Much of the time was devoted to reconstructing the activities of Kitteringham, Chilvers and Largen, whose guilt seemed hardly in question, but whose dealings were complicated. There seemed little doubt that both Ellis and Woodhouse had indeed bought the alleged number of tenpenny chickens. Ellis had subsequently become suspicious and 'went and shot them into the fleet'.<sup>27</sup> Woodhouse vehemently protested his innocence, but he had been found with a number of identifiable birds on his property and had, so the police claimed, acted in a guilty manner when questioned. The five men were committed to trial at Swaffham Quarter Sessions, but this time the magistrate was less inclined to keep Woodhouse behind bars, and the photographer was released on bail of £100 pounds in his own name and £50 put up by each of two sureties.

Free again – albeit for what might be only a short while – Woodhouse fired off a letter to the editor of the *Lynn Advertiser*, offering arguments that he claimed were 'conclusive in establishing my entire innocence of the scandalous charge made against me by the police.'<sup>28</sup> He pointed out that Mr Mawby (the true owner of the chickens) had been unwilling to give any evidence against him; he emphasised that Mawby's bailiff, William Pointer, had been present at the time of his arrest and had supported his own account of what was said and done on that occasion; he observed that the thieves had said he was unaware that they were selling him stolen birds; and he insisted there were contradictions in the evidence given by the two policemen.

The fowl-stealing cases came to court a fortnight later. Kitteringham, Chilvers and Largen pleaded guilty to a series of thefts; Kitteringham was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude (the heaviest sentence to be handed out that day)<sup>29</sup>, and the others were each sentenced to twelve months' hard labour. Woodhouse was, of course, already well aware of the seriousness of the charge against him and the possible consequences of being found guilty, but these sentences must have reinforced his awareness. Ellis was next to be tried, and he was acquitted on the grounds that there was no evidence that he knew he was buying stolen property. This may have cheered Woodhouse a little, but the police seemed hostile to him in a way that hadn't been apparent in the case of Ellis.

According to Sergeant Borley, Woodhouse had been evasive about his recent chicken-buying and had 'turned pale and looked confused, turning to his wife and making motion to her with his head'.<sup>30</sup> Woodhouse, however, claimed he had said 'he would do all he could to further the ends of justice and sift the matter out'.<sup>31</sup> Neither policeman remembered him saying that, but William Pointer, who had been brought along to identify his employer's chickens, corroborated Woodhouse's account of events. It was clear that the thieves had given Woodhouse a plausible account of why they had chickens to sell, and it was argued that, at ten pence a head, the birds were not bought at a suspiciously cheap price. Furthermore, no attempt had been made to hide the chickens, which were allowed to run about in full view of passers by. Having then heard the testimony of a string of character witnesses, the jury retired and 'after a short consultation acquitted the prisoner, who left the dock amidst the congratulations of his friends.'<sup>32</sup>

It seems to have been a fair verdict. Woodhouse had certainly bought unwisely. But a man caught washing his feet by a police raid, while the stolen goods are on public display, seems hardly to fit the image of a Napoleon of crime.

It may be that Woodhouse felt it necessary to reassert his status as a respectable poultry farmer in a practical way. This could explain his flurry of successes at livestock shows in the months and years immediately following his vindication in court. Within weeks he won second prize for Dorkings (a breed of chicken thought to have been introduced to Britain by the Romans) at the Lynn Poultry Show,<sup>33</sup> followed in the autumn by being highly commended for his ornamental birds at the Long Sutton Agricultural Show in Lincolnshire.<sup>34</sup> Then he started to exhibit further afield. His Black Spanish hens won second prize at Northampton in 1871,<sup>35</sup> were commended at Colchester in 1872,<sup>36</sup> and came second at the Bath and West of England Exhibition in 1873.<sup>37</sup> A pair of hens of unspecified breed were highly commended in Croydon in 1875,<sup>38</sup> and, by way of showing versatility, he won a prize for a pair of pigeons in the Manchester area in 1874.<sup>39</sup> Woodhouse was determined to hold his head high in the bird-rearing world.

But back in the new year of 1869, while Woodhouse was recovering from his wretched Christmas and a trial that had attracted much local notice, the town's other photographers were engaged in more conventional activities.

The Dexters were holding their carte prices at 2/6d per half-dozen, and they had formally taken their firstborn into the business, as advertisements for 'Messrs Dexter & Son'

revealed.<sup>40</sup> A year older than Walter and two years older than Alice, William John Dexter had now turned 21 and was formally a member of the firm, though he had probably been active in the family studio for some time.

Edwin Bullock was continuing to work at building a distinguished reputation. Naturally enough, when ‘a loan collection of first-class Photographic Views and Portraits’<sup>41</sup> was projected for the Athenaeum’s museum in 1869, he was keen to exhibit. In fact, he was quite possibly the only currently practising Lynn professional to be represented. William Pridgeon, by now probably retired from photography, lent some pictures. The local views and enlarged and coloured cartes that he supplied may have been his own, but it turned out that Pridgeon had also become something of a collector: his architectural images by the Bisson brothers and his studies from life by Henry Peach Robinson were evidence that he had acquired photographs by some of the day’s most esteemed practitioners. Edwin’s older brother Henry – or, more precisely, the London partnership of Dolamore and Bullock – supplied photographic copies of modern paintings (including Holman Hunt’s *The Light of the World*), while Burgess and Grimwood of Norwich exhibited autotypes (carbon-based prints) of drawings in the Louvre. Pictures by Francis Bedford and Francis Frith – both eminent travel photographers – were also on show. So Edwin Bullock could reasonably feel that his pictures were hanging in good company and he must have been gratified when the *Lynn Advertiser* praised his ‘series of very excellent views of Ely Cathedral and of Lynn buildings and antiquities.’<sup>42</sup> (That sense of gratification may well have prompted his presentation to the museum of a picture of the town’s Corporation Cup later in the year.)<sup>43</sup>

Unfortunately, the timing of the exhibition was poor. Running from February 22<sup>nd</sup> to March 6<sup>th</sup>, it had to compete with a number of other draws. That year’s mart was unusually successful, with Kelsall’s Waxworks proving particularly popular, and with much interest shown in the ‘marionettes, fat and spotted people, peep-shows, bazaars and steam roundabouts’;<sup>44</sup> a three-day Wesleyan bazaar was run on an unusually grand scale; the town’s first poultry, pigeon, fancy bird and dog show was such a success that it was already predicted to become an annual event; and a regularly changing programme of productions at the theatre included *Othello*, *The Duel in the Snow*, *The Field of the Cloth of Gold* and *A Sheep in Wolf’s Clothing*. The exhibition ‘does not appear to be a very remunerative speculation,’ lamented the *Norfolk Chronicle*, ‘as the rival attractions are so numerous,’<sup>45</sup> but the *Norfolk News* was able to confirm that, during the final days of the exhibition, the photographs were ‘beginning to attract a larger share of attention’.<sup>46</sup> The paper expressed the earnest hope ‘that the promoters of this pleasing exhibition will meet with sufficient support to at least hold the institution free from loss.’

It was around this time that Robert Wright moved to 125 London Road. The date remains uncertain, as Wright was not in the habit of placing advertisements in the press and confined himself to being listed in trade directories. He was still at Providence Street in 1868, when details for the next year’s directory were collected,<sup>47</sup> but he was at his new address by the spring of 1871. His main occupation was photographer, but he had not given up his retail business, for the census described the premises as a ‘fancy shop’.<sup>48</sup>

Cartes from the early days at London Road show an adequately furnished studio. There was a wall with a very plain dado and choice of backcloths, each showing a painted view through a painted window. A dark wooden chair with turned finials was used for seated subjects, who could steady their pose by leaning an elbow on a round-topped table which rose on a single ball-turned column from three gracefully curved feet, and which could be made to look a little different when covered by a patterned cloth. Standing subjects could rest an arm on a plinth, which looked solid enough, but which could be easily slid in and out of position as needed. A head-rest was still available for extra steadying, and, unlike some photographers, Wright did not feel obliged to hide its base by drawing the bottom of a curtain across it. He was also rather fond of including a table-top arrangement on which perched a variety of stuffed birds. Most, if not all, of these items had been brought from the old premises round the corner in Providence Street and they would see service well into the 1870s, by which time more up-to-the-minute photographers were introducing heavily upholstered furniture or simulating open-air settings. There was, however, something idiosyncratically individual about some of Wright's painted backcloths. In showing views through windows they were conventional enough and expressed the taste of the later 1860s, but the painting sometimes has a naïve quality which suggests home production rather than the work of a specialist backcloth supplier. In one, an improbably angled stile dominates a rustic scene which is lit from at least two different directions;<sup>49</sup> in another, the open window gives directly onto an alarmingly choppy sea where sailing boats pitch and toss under stormy clouds.<sup>50</sup>

It was an unpretentious studio, though a touch of class was suggested by the style of one of Wright's carte mounts, which incorporated a crown of ostrich plumes and two heraldic lions into its design, while a slightly later mount promoted his artistic status by depicting a camera, an easel, an artist's palette and a brush-wielding cherub.

If Robert Wright had naturally found his customer base, William Woodhouse had actively sought his out. Woodhouse also served the less affluent segment of the community, but, in his case, this was a matter of deliberately formulated marketing policy. His studio may have been a little better equipped than Wright's – though it must be stressed that surviving cartes may provide only limited evidence of a photographer's resources. He could set his subjects in a studious setting, with painted books housed in a massive painted bookcase, as well as before a balustrade or beside an open French window. His taste ran more to (apparently) real flowers than dead birds. He had a useful plinth that bore different decoration on different faces, so he could display the geometrically beaded and moulded side in one portrait,<sup>51</sup> and opt for a more vigorous effect – with curlicues, flowers and a satyr-like head – in another.<sup>52</sup> Like Wright, however, he did not always disguise his head-rest, and he would be prepared to use furnishings from the 1860s well into the next decade.

He had been repeating his 'Cartes for the Million' advertisement throughout 1869, but early in the next year, with the embarrassment of the chicken trial consigned to history, he was ready for a fresh offensive in the carte de visite price war. It may be that Edwin Bullock had just decided that the pressure had relaxed. The notice in which he scorned

‘reckless competition’ had all this time continued to appear in the *Lynn News*, and it was not until January 1870 that he replaced it with a briefer and more temperate statement:

E. Bullock, Photographer and Photographic Publisher. First-class Photography in every branch of the art. An extensive assortment of local and other views always on sale.<sup>53</sup>

Then, a week after the publication of Bullock’s less combative notice, the new Woodhouse announcement appeared:

W. Woodhouse’s Cartes de Visite are now to be had at 2s the six, and not to be equalled in Lynn, regardless of price. Cartes coloured equal to half a guinea for 6d. W.W. defies competition: – Observe the address, opposite Baptist chapel and British schools.<sup>54</sup>

The claim ‘not to be equalled in Lynn’ was, incidentally quite restrained by Woodhouse standards. Never one to be knowingly understated, he went so far on another occasion as to claim, ‘Vignettes not equalled in Lynn, nor surpassed in the World.’<sup>55</sup>

The new price for six cartes represented a 20 per cent cut, but Woodhouse had a further idea to try out, and a new advertisement followed almost immediately:

Portrait Club, for Life-size Portraits, in Water and Oil, by weekly payments of One Shilling, and as soon as enough is paid in the Club for one, a Draw will take place. – W. Woodhouse, Blackfriars’ Road, Lynn.<sup>56</sup>

It was an interesting application of the ‘mutual benefit’ concept to portraiture, giving humbler customers the chance to own the sort of large-scale and hand-coloured products that normally only the affluent could consider. Whether it held attractions for Woodhouse’s usual customer base is, however, another matter. A notice that appeared in the paper a few weeks later gave an idea of the total costs involved:

Life Size Portraits, in Water or Oil, framed fit for Drawing-room, from 35s to £5.5s.6d each. – See specimens at W. Woodhouse’s, Blackfriars’ Road, Lynn.<sup>57</sup>

At the cheapest rate, if 35 people (or multiples of 35 people) joined the scheme, it would be nearly nine months before everyone had taken a turn, and fewer participants would lengthen the waiting time. (That assumes the draw was used simply to determine the order of turns, that members were committed to keeping up payments for the full 35 weeks, and that success was followed by a period of ineligibility until everyone had received a picture.) Such a scheme could hardly have recommended itself to the typical Woodhouse client. Scraping together two shillings for a special occasion – and having spare copies for family members – was a much more realistic proposition than saving one shilling every week for the best part of a year. It seems, therefore, that Woodhouse was seeking to reach new sections of the market. It was, though, a difficult scheme, relying either on people remaining members after their name had been drawn, or on a steady

supply of new members to replace those who were leaving. The risk, though, was borne more by the members than the organiser, who was committed to producing portraits only when funds were sufficient to cover the costs.

This burst of activity from Woodhouse – particularly the reduction in carte prices – may have been intended as a throwing down of the gauntlet. If so, nobody picked it up. Bullock refrained from placing a new retaliatory advertisement, and the Dexters held their prices at 2/6 for six.<sup>58</sup> In fact, for some of the time at least, Woodhouse's competitors had other things on their minds.

Edwin Bullock had another court action to contend with. He was suing William Seaman, a Lynn grocer, who had approached him in November 1869 for tuition in photography. A course of six lessons was agreed on.

But the plaintiff averred that he distinctly told the defendant that he would not pretend to make a photographer of him, as that would depend upon the amount of brains and perseverance he had. (Laughter.) His Honor (sic): 'No doubt.' It was also agreed that the defendant had only received one lesson.<sup>59</sup>

The ostensible reason for non-completion of the course was that Seaman had moved to Wisbech, where he had set up in business as an earthenware dealer. But bad feeling had also arisen between the two men, and 'some unpleasant correspondence had passed between the litigants'. Bullock had been paid nothing, and he now sought to recover the £2 2s that the course would have cost. Asked whether he was willing to take the five remaining lessons, Seaman said he would prefer to have the matter settled by the court. The judge was about to find in the plaintiff's favour and require Seaman to pay 6/6d – the cost of the one lesson he had taken – when Bullock intervened.

He said he was entitled to his full fee, according to agreement, as, though only one lesson was given, he had 'exposed his systems' to the defendant, whose fault alone it was that he had not received the entire six lessons.

He further pointed out that, when it became clear that Seaman would be taking no more lessons, he had given him a book on photographic processing. But he was not to prevail.

His Honour taking a different view of the case, gave judgement for one lesson only, 6s 6d.<sup>60</sup>

Bullock had won his case, but had been awarded only a fraction of the sum he was seeking. His disappointment must have been made all the more acute when he did the arithmetic: 6s 6d was actually less than one sixth of the alleged total value of the course.

The Dexters, too, had other matters than Woodhouse's prices and schemes to claim their attention. Their second son, Walter Sothern, had come of age and (as indicated by a change of business name to 'Messrs Dexter & Sons') had been taken into the family

business.<sup>61</sup> He was now to become the third Lynn photographer in eighteen months to appear in court.

On May 18<sup>th</sup> 1870, merchant John Holmes and fishmonger Thomas Sampher had agreed to a rowing race, each betting £3 10s on himself. They asked Walter Dexter to act as stakeholder, and he accepted a total of £7 from them. The race was to be over a mile, with Holmes being given a forty-yard start. In the event, Sampher took off too soon, but Holmes nevertheless crossed the line first. Holmes was now claiming the full £7 from Dexter, who had returned only his original stake money. It was quickly established, however, that Mr Wilson, the race referee, had complained to Dexter of the improper start, and this was enough for the judge to intervene:

As the referee did not approve of the start, the race was void; and under these circumstances, if the defendant had done anything else than return the stakes to each of the combatants he would have done very wrong.<sup>62</sup>

Without calling on Dexter to give evidence, the judge dismissed the case and found Holmes liable for the costs of the witnesses. Dexter had had rather a better day in court than Bullock. (He also appears to have been spared the full wrath of Holmes, who, the moment the case was over, attacked Sampher and was promptly referred to the magistrates' court on a charge of assault.)

The census of 1871 provides an opportunity to review the Lynn photographic sector at the time. Bullock, the Dexters, Wright and Woodhouse were all recorded. Bullock was with his wife and four small children in St James' Street, and was described as a photographer employing one boy.<sup>63</sup> Sarah was carrying their fifth child, Thomas Brame, who was himself to become a photographer. The Dexters were at Blackfriars' Street, where the parents, both sons and Alice, the daughter, were all working as photographers.<sup>64</sup> Robert Wright and Hannah Wright were in London Road,<sup>65</sup> and Jasper, the future photographer of the family, was still only nine years' old.<sup>66</sup> Woodhouse and his wife, Ann, were in West Winch, where he was listed not as a photographer, but as a farmer of seven acres.<sup>67</sup> Unlike his main competitors, he did not live over the shop, and he was described by the occupation associated with his home address. Two nephews were living with the couple: Victor Manders, aged 15, and Arthur Manders, 13. Victor was entered as an assistant on the farm, but he was later to move into a very different occupation.

There were four others who were also described as photographers, but who have not been found in any other records of the trade in Lynn.

William L. Smith, aged 15, was a son of the Mayor's Officer and living with his family in Sedgeford Lane.<sup>68</sup> He was listed as a photographer's apprentice, and his age suggests he was the 'boy' employed by Bullock. There is no clear evidence that there ever was a formal apprenticeship programme for photography, but the term was often used to describe young trainees. How long Smith stayed with Bullock is unknown, but the

business was not for him in the long term. Ten years later he was in London Road, married with two young children, and running a butcher's shop.<sup>69</sup>

Thomas Linay (the son of a Lynn linen draper) was a photographer's assistant, aged 37, who was lodging at 30 Blackfriars' Street.<sup>70</sup> Despite his proximity to the Dexters' studio he seems unlikely to have worked for them. They already had five members of the family in the trade. Since Bullock mentioned only one employee, a boy, to the census enumerator, Linay probably worked for Woodhouse or Wright. (Woodhouse certainly needed help. He had both poultry and photography businesses to run and couldn't be in two places at once.) Whoever employed him, Linay is likely to have spent at least some of his time attending to the finishing and colouring of photographs. That was an area to which he would have brought some skill, since in 1861 he had been employed as a print colourer,<sup>71</sup> and as a youth he had described himself as an artist.<sup>72</sup> He later became a commercial traveller in supplies for chemist shops.<sup>73</sup>

Alexander Jennings was a young man of 20, who had grown up in Lynn and who was living with his mother in Wood Street.<sup>74</sup> His father was away at sea. He described himself as a photographer, but whether he had set up his own studio or was employed by one of the established professionals is not known. In later years however, after moving further north, he did go on to make something of a career in the business. He was probably the Alexander Jennings who briefly ran studios in Bingley and Burnley; he was certainly the Alexander Jennings who was working as a photographer in Skipton in 1881<sup>75</sup> and Keighley in 1891.<sup>76</sup> He settled in Keighley, but eventually gave up his studio and became a commercial traveller.<sup>77</sup>

The fourth of these single-mention photographers was James Codman, a 31-year old native of Norwich, who was staying at the Dog and Duck Inn in Pilot Street.<sup>78</sup> He may have been trying to establish a studio in the town, but it is more likely at this stage of his career that he was making a living as an itinerant. There were family precedents for both photography and travelling. While James was visiting Lynn, his brother, John, was working as a photographer in Norwich,<sup>79</sup> and John's estranged wife, Rebecca, was operating as a travelling 'photographist' 30 miles away at North Elmham fair.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, James himself was not new to life on the road: in 1861 he had been lodging at an inn in Brandon, Suffolk, and earning a living as a 'gymnastic performer'.<sup>81</sup>

Having tried his hand at photography James seems to have stayed with it. Within a few years he was working in Great Yarmouth: an 1875 trade directory shows him running a studio there on White Horse Plain,<sup>82</sup> and a carte mount, also from the 1870s, locates him at 'Bland's Buildings, Cemetary (sic) Road, and on the Beach'. This period of relatively settled location did not bring complete respectability, for twice in 1875 James was fined for being drunk and disorderly.<sup>83</sup> (A colourful way of life was perhaps a family trait: brother John had, in 1874, been obliged to announce in the *Peterborough Advertiser* that 'I will not be answerable for any Debt or Debts my wife, Rebecca Codman, may incur from this date.'<sup>84</sup>) James moved on from Yarmouth, but was still a photographer when he died of a heart attack in 1879, whilst dragging a boat up the beach at Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex.<sup>85</sup>

Shortly after the census was taken, there was an attempt by yet another photographer to open a Lynn studio. His name was not recorded, but his proposed premises caught the attention of the paving commissioners, who discussed 'a wooden building which had been erected at the back of a house in London Road for the purpose of a photographic studio. There was plenty of wood in it to do damage in case of fire.'<sup>86</sup> The committee's surveyor, however, was not especially anxious, pointing out that, 'with regard to any damage which might occur through fire, the owner had protected his neighbours by a nine-inch brick wall.' Fire was a common occurrence, and the concern, it seems, was less with the chance of it breaking out than with the likelihood of it spreading.

Back among the town's long-standing studios, a kind of truce seems to have settled. Woodhouse ran a few repeat adverts for life-size portraits and the portrait club, but they tailed off before 1870 came to an end. He kept his carte prices at two shillings for six throughout 1871, 1872 and 1873, and his competitors declined to mount a counter-offensive. They would have their own announcements to make in the early 70s, but they were neither publicly waging nor publicly scorning a price war. Nevertheless, Woodhouse had not entirely cornered the cut-price market. From the evidence of his carte mounts, it appears that Robert Wright had, without any press fanfare, been charging two shillings for half-a-dozen cartes since the early days at his London Road studio.

The price wars, then, were temporarily in abeyance. But the flurry of court cases involving Lynn photographers had not quite ended, though in this instance the photographer had now given up studio work. In November 1874 William Pridgeon's political progress had been marked by a new triumph. He had been re-elected councillor for the Middle Ward with 517 votes, which constituted not only a decisive majority but also more votes than were cast for any other candidate in the municipal elections as a whole.<sup>87</sup> He had little time, however, to savour his success.

Just over a fortnight later he appeared at the Lynn Petty Sessions on a charge of unlawfully assaulting and beating his wife, and his civic prominence gave the trial interest both locally and beyond. 'The Court was crowded to excess during the hearing of the case', the *Essex Standard* told its readers,<sup>88</sup> and the *Daily News* remarked on 'the case exciting great interest from the position of the parties'.<sup>89</sup> Much was made of Pridgeon's prominence: 'Mr. Councillor William Read Pridgeon' (*Essex Standard*);<sup>90</sup> 'elected by an overwhelming majority' (*Bradford Observer*);<sup>91</sup> 'jeweller and town councillor' (*Londonderry Journal*);<sup>92</sup> 'a prominent member of the Town Council for the borough, and a wealthy jeweller' (*Daily News*).<sup>93</sup>

Pridgeon admitted the charge: 'I plead guilty. I did strike my wife, which I deeply regret, but it was done under the deepest provocation.'<sup>94</sup> His barrister, Mr Reeve, then argued that, since his client had pleaded guilty, the court should proceed at once to passing sentence without the need for any evidence to be heard. Mr Wilkin, acting for Harriett Pridgeon, argued that since her husband had 'pleaded provocation he must go into evidence'. Prolonged and heated wrangling ensued, and Reeve was clearly anxious that as few details as possible should be laid before the court: 'Mr. Pridgeon was not a man to

run away. But many cases happened in men's lives when they had private quarrels in which a man would rather pay the highest fine than have one's dirty linen washed in public.'

As it turned out, neither party was called to the witness box, but their lawyers managed to slip into the proceedings such assertions as they thought might help them. Reeve assured the bench that 'if witnesses had been present at the assault they would not have failed to take notice of Mrs. Pridgeon's terrible language', claiming that his client 'had put up with this sort of thing for 25 years'. Wilkin denied provocation, described the assault as 'a most brutal one', and claimed his client's 'face was a mass of jelly when she went to the surgeon after it'. He added that the 'poor woman has been beaten for 25 years, and she can stand it no longer.' (The couple, incidentally, had been married for 27 years.)<sup>95</sup>

Eventually, it was agreed that the case should be adjourned to allow negotiation for 'a separation and the settlement on Mrs. Pridgeon of a sum suitable to her station and position in life', and the 'complainant and defendant then left the court, followed by a large crowd'. The Chairman had congratulated the couple on the decision to discuss a deed of separation, but the editor of *Reynolds's Newspaper* was less enthusiastic about the outcome:

Had the law which is so clamorously demanded by some of our contemporaries, authorising the administration of the lash to wife-beaters, come into operation, we should strenuously insist that Mr. Councillor Pridgeon be duly scourged.<sup>96</sup>

Harriett Pridgeon's advisers were not prepared to come to easy terms: the adjournment had to be extended twice before agreement was reached, and it was nearly Christmas before the court was told that 'satisfactory terms of separation had been agreed upon'.<sup>97</sup> The summons was 'withdrawn without infliction of a fine or other penalty', but Pridgeon was to pay court costs and the fees of the surgeon who had attended his wife after the assault. Harriet agreed to withdraw the claim that he 'had been in the habit of assaulting his wife in a very cruel manner for upward of twenty-five years,' and the magistrates 'then formally consented to the case being struck out'.

Pridgeon was free to resume his political career without a criminal record, but the twice-delayed proceedings suggest his wife's lawyers had at least turned his embarrassment to her financial advantage. Seven years later she was described in the 1881 census as 'annuitant',<sup>98</sup> and in 1901, a year after Pridgeon's death, she was still recorded as 'living on own means'.<sup>99</sup> Damage limitation had been achieved, but it had, at least, come at a price.

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<sup>1</sup> 1871 census: RG10, piece 1861, folio 61, page 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Lynn Advertiser*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1869.

<sup>3</sup> *Lynn Advertiser*, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1866.

<sup>4</sup> *Lynn Advertiser*, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1868.

<sup>5</sup> *Lynn Advertiser*, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1868.

<sup>6</sup> *Norfolk Chronicle*, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1868.

<sup>7</sup> 1871 census: RG10, piece 1093, folio 37, page 17.

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8 Vera Perrott, *Victoria's Lynn, Boom & Prosperity*, p30, (Seaford: Vista Books, 1995).  
9 Ibid.  
10 White's *Directory of Norfolk*, 1864.  
11 *Handbook for Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire*, (London: John Murray, 1870)  
12 E.g. True's Yard Museum, accession number KLNTY2020.177b.  
13 *Lynn Advertiser*, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1868.  
14 *Norfolk News*, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1866.  
15 *Lynn Advertiser*, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1867.  
16 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1868 (also reported in the *Lynn Advertiser* of the same date).  
17 *Lynn Advertiser*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1868.  
18 Ibid.  
19 *Lynn Advertiser*, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1868.  
20 *Lynn Advertiser*, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1868.  
21 *Lynn News*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1869.  
22 True's Yard Museum, accession number KLNTY2020.134.  
23 Rosemary & Stan Rodliffe, *Glimpses of Fiddaman's Lynn* (Bristol: Rodliffe Associates, 2000).  
24 The account of this event has been compiled from reports in the *Lynn Advertiser* (26<sup>th</sup> December 1868 and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> January 1869) and the *Norfolk Chronicle* (26<sup>th</sup> December 1868 and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> January 1869). Sources of actual quotations are identified in subsequent notes.  
25 *Lynn Advertiser*, 26<sup>th</sup> December 1868.  
26 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1869.  
27 *Lynn Advertiser*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1869.  
28 *Lynn Advertiser*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1869.  
29 Swaffham Court Calendar of Prisoners for Trial, 1869. TNA, series HO140, piece 7.  
30 *Lynn Advertiser*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1869.  
31 *Lynn Advertiser*, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1869.  
32 Ibid.  
33 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1869.  
34 *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1869.  
35 *Northampton Mercury*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1871. *Manchester Courier*, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1874. *Croydon Advertiser*, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1875.  
36 *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1872.  
37 *Western Times*, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1873.  
38 *Croydon Advertiser*, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1875.  
39 *Croydon Advertiser*, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1875.  
40 *Lynn Advertiser*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1868 and 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1869  
41 *Lynn Advertiser*, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1869.  
42 Ibid.  
43 *Norfolk News*, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1869.  
44 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1869.  
45 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1869.  
46 *Norfolk News*, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1869.  
47 Kelly's *Directory of Norfolk*, 1869.  
48 1871 census: RG10, piece 1865, folio 44, page 11.  
49 E.g. True's Yard Museum, accession number KLNTY2020.636.  
50 E.g. True's Yard Museum, accession number KLNTY2020.639.  
51 E.g. True's Yard Museum, accession number KLNTY2020.171.  
52 E.g. True's Yard Museum, accession number KLNTY2020.179.  
53 *Lynn News*, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1870.  
54 *Lynn Advertiser*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1870.  
55 Ron Cosens, *Photographica World*, number 107, page 34. (Ware: Photographic Collectors Club of Great Britain, 2004).  
56 *Lynn Advertiser*, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1870.  
57 *Lynn Advertiser*, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1870.  
58 *Lynn Advertiser*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1870.

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59 *Norfolk News*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 1870.  
60 *Lynn News*, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1870.  
61 *Lynn Advertiser*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1870.  
62 *Lynn Advertiser*, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1870.  
63 1871 census: RG10, piece 1864, folio 114, page 4.  
64 1871 census: RG10, piece 1864, folio 5, page 3.  
65 1871 census: RG10, piece 1865, folio 44, page 11.  
66 Civil Registration index of births, Dec 1861, volume 4b, page 342.  
67 1871 census: RG10, piece 1861, folio 61, page 14.  
68 1871 census: RG10, piece 1864, folio 101, page 20.  
69 1881 census: RG11, piece 2001, folio 37, page 9.  
70 1871 census: RG10, piece 1864, folio 6, page 5.  
71 1861 census: RG10, piece 1251, folio 27, page 12.  
72 1851 census: HO107, piece 1501, folio 442, page 16.  
73 1881 census: RG11, piece 3628, folio 2, page 3.  
74 1871 census: RG10, piece 1864, folio 125, page 25.  
75 1881 census: RG11, piece 4309, folio 105, page 33.  
76 1891 census index.  
77 1911 census: RG14, TNA reference: RG14PN26092 RG78PN1508 RD492 SD2 ED28 SN101.  
78 1871 census: RG10, piece 1863, folio 28, page 8.  
79 1871 census: RG10, piece 1812, folio 95, page 28.  
80 Pauline Shaw, *Fairground Ancestors* website,  
http://members.shaw.ca/pauline777/TravellersUK.html  
81 1861 census: RG10, piece 1264, folio 14, page 21.  
82 Kelly's *Directory of Norfolk*, 1875.  
83 *Norfolk News*, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1875, and 17<sup>th</sup> July 1875.  
84 *Peterborough Advertiser*, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1874.  
85 *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1879.  
86 *Lynn Advertiser*, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1872.  
87 *Lincoln, Rutland & Stamford Mercury*, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1874.  
88 *Essex Standard*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1874.  
89 *Daily News*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1874.  
90 *Essex Standard*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1874.  
91 *Bradford Observer*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1874.  
92 *Londonderry Journal*, 25<sup>th</sup> November 1874.  
93 *Daily News*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1874.  
94 Ibid. (Also the source of all subsequent unattributed quotations from the day's hearing).  
95 Wedding reported in *Suffolk Chronicle*, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1847.  
96 *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1874.  
97 *Bury and Norwich Post*, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1874. (Also used for all direct quotation in this paragraph)  
98 1881 census: RG11, piece 1998, folio 61, page 13.  
99 1901 census: RG13, *Family Search* transcript.