Thomas Hardy (1757–1804) is an English portraitist whose obscurity is in inverse relation to the fame of some of those whom he portrayed. Amongst his notable sitters were the political radical John Horne Tooke, Lady Georgiana Cavendish as a child, the composer Joseph Haydn and several other well-known actors and musicians of his day. Living as he did in a time of the flourishing of the public press, and in a culture of impeccable memoir-keeping, Hardy’s absence from most contemporary accounts is frustrating. Nonetheless, some significant material has recently emerged, shedding new light on Hardy’s career and his often-remarkable selection of sitters, especially the many musicians and actors whom he painted. He is, therefore, an especially significant artist for his depiction of creative figures in London during the 1790s, providing a remarkable record of the time.

The first challenge in seeking documents regarding Hardy is his unfortunate historical proximity to a better-known namesake, another Thomas Hardy (1752–1832), who was a shoemaker and co-founder of the radical London Corresponding Society. The vast majority of references to a ‘Thomas Hardy’ in sources from the 1790s refer to this latter Hardy, and some degree of confusion was thus inevitable. Even one of the most accessible sources containing some basic information on the painter Hardy – Ellis Waterhouse’s otherwise indispensable Dictionary of British 18th Century Painters in Oils and Crayons – states that he ‘was involved in radical politics’.¹ There is no evidence to suggest Hardy the painter was a radical in any of his views, least of all in his views on portraiture. Waterhouse has confused the artist with the shoemaker, but the mistake is partly understandable because Hardy the artist painted the reformist...
John Horne Tooke, who was associated with Hardy the radical, and the latter two were put on trial for high treason in 1794.

Another source of confusion is the varying references to a ‘J’, ‘W’ or ‘T’ Hardy in previous literature and still now in catalogues, all – at first glance – apparently referring to the same artist. John Chaloner Smith, in his monumental *British Mezzotinto Portraits* (1873-83) noted the link to Thomas Hardy the radical, and he also picked up on one such apparent error regarding initials in his biographical sketch of Hardy:

> T. HARDY practised both as painter and engraver, the latter chiefly in mezzotinto. Redgrave incorrectly gives J. as the initial of his Christian name, and does not mention his prints. It might have had something to say to the suppression of his full Christian name that a Thomas Hardy was tried at the same time as John Home Tooke, in 1794.²

As we shall see, Thomas did in fact have two artistic brothers, William and John, and a son possibly with the initials ‘C’ as well. The varying initials that have been applied mistakenly to Thomas Hardy have most likely has their roots in sibling confusion.

Sources relating to Hardy are scattered and often indirect, or only mention him in passing. The richest single source is, at first glance, an unlikely one: a handwritten annotation on an eighteenth-century book on mining. Although brief, if contains some valuable information that is not found elsewhere; thus verifying its reliability is paramount. The annotations are opposite the title page of a copy of *The Miners Guide* by William Hardy (1748) held at the Derby Local Library,³ and are by the nineteenth-
William Hardy (the author of the Miners Guide) was born as Brassington in the county of Derby. He was a miner and died about 1765. He worked many years at the Ecton copper mine, residing at Wetton. He married Mary Allen of Hope-Dale, in county of Stafford, and left issue John an engraver born 24 Jan. 1752 – William, a marble mason, of Matloch-Bank, ob. 1826, – Thomas, a portrait painter in London ob. 14 Sept. 1804, and one daughter, Mary, who died young.  

Bateman adds that Thomas painted ‘Horne Tooke’, ‘Dr Wm Osborn’, Lady Georgiana Cavendish, Philip Gale Esq., ‘Mm Gell’ (and the) Duchess of Cumberland. He also notes that John ‘engraved a portrait of Edmund Burke Esq’, and ‘A Venus de Medici’. 

Several of Bateman’s assertions hold true when compared with what little other material there is on Hardy’s family. Firstly, the records at the Royal Academy show that both a Thomas and a John Hardy studied at the schools. Thomas enrolled in the School of Painting on 31 December 1778, and the Register indicates that he was 21 in the June of that year. John enrolled as an engraver on 29 March 1781, with his age noted as 27 at last Christmas. An obituary in The Gentleman’s Magazine is consistent with Bateman’s account, stating that the artist Thomas Hardy died in the county of Stafford, ‘after a long illness’ on 14 September 1804. Stafford was where Hardy’s family had been during his youth, and there were presumably still relatives.
there. The parish registers of Matlock record the marriage of a William Hardy of Matlock to a Sarah Froggart of Matlock on 30 September 1792 and the burial of Sarah Hardy less than four years later on 4 January 1796. The same source confirms the burial of a William Hardy on 28 May 1826, aged 72. Hardy’s Will is extant, with his signature dated 7 May 1802. It gives his wife’s name as Ann, and indicates that he left all his possessions to her. Unfortunately, the Will provides little other information about his family or details of possessions.

Further information about Hardy and his family is provided in the diaries of the Royal Academician Joseph Farington. Farington’s Dairies contain fleeting but intriguing references to Thomas and his family, and especially noteworthy is the following passage from 29 June 1805:

Mrs Hardy, widow of Hardy, Portrait Painter[,] called this afternoon to solicit the place of Housekeeper to the Academy. Her Husband was born in Derbyshire & was pupil to Wright of Derby. He died aged 47 in consequence of a cold caught at the Academy while painting Copies of the Portraits of the King & Queen for Lawrence. — She is 44 years old.

This entry confirms Hardy’s death, and also provides some insight into the circumstances of his ill-health. This is the only reference known to date indicating Hardy’s training with Wright of Derby. There is some circumstantial evidence to support Farington’s assertion that Hardy was connected with Wright, which I shall return to shortly. Farington indicates that Hardy had at least two children, a daughter and a son. The entry for 6 December 1805 reads: ‘Fuseli spoke of the ill behaviour of
Mrs. Hardy, the Academy House Keeper[,] to her daughter’. And some years later, Farington writes, ‘A Son of Mrs. Hardy, late Housekeeper to the Academy[,] called to ask my opinion of a picture said to be by Wilson. I told Him it was not by Wilson’. In terms of information about his wife Ann, there is only the rather biased material that came from an evidently unimpressed Fuseli, who told fellow painter William Beechey that: ‘Mrs Hardy was housekeeper to a Mr. Whitworth at the time Hardy married Her, & that Her bad temper shortened His life’. Fuseli eventually had Mrs Hardy resign. Intriguingly, the Academy Exhibition catalogues list a ‘C. Hardy’, miniature painter, who exhibited between 1806 and 1810, including portraits of ‘The Late Mr. T. Hardy’ in 1806 and ‘Mr J. Hardy’ in 1807. This must certainly be the son of one of the Hardy brothers, quite likely Thomas or John.

Farrington’s comment that Hardy trained with Wright of Derby finds further support, albeit circumstantial. Hardy engraved a drawing owned by Wright: the print ‘A Banditti Made Prisoner’ was published by William Richardson in June 1805. Below the title is inscribed ‘From an original drawing of Mr Mortimer’s, in the possession of Mr Wright of Derby’. The copy was most likely made while Wright was still alive, so it would date from 1797 or earlier. There is also some stylistic links between the two artists. A feature of Wright’s style is apparent in Hardy’s work, namely the use of a diffuse lighting on the face, and the highlighting of the collar and edge of the coats worn by his sitters. Wright’s portrait of Samuel Ward (from the early 1790s) displays this pastel-like effect well, and similarity to Hardy’s portraits is quite evident.

Hardy’s early career and training appears to have received assistance from a man of some considerable influence, a point that also explains how he came to paint
Georgiana Cavendish: he was most likely supported by the Duke of Devonshire in his Royal Academy training, and was resident at the Duke’s estate at Chatsworth in 1783-4, during which he was repairing wall paintings.\(^{18}\) The Hardy family’s links to the Duke and Chatsworth are further demonstrated by William Hardy’s painting ‘A Boy Playing Marbles’, which used a Chatsworth page boy as its model, and was exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1784.\(^{19}\)

The addresses given for Thomas Hardy in the Royal Academy Exhibition catalogues provide useful information regarding the artist’s career in London. Hardy lived at 1778, Portland Street, West London, from 1779–1780, ‘At Mr. Snibson’s, Portland Road’; 1783, ‘At the Duke of Devonshire’s, Chatsworth; 1786-1787, 23 Great Pulteney Street; 1788-1794, 4 Great Marlborough Street; 1796-1803, 92 Norton Street, Portland Road’.\(^{20}\) Considering the importance for portrait painters to having a fashionable address, we can assume that Hardy lived at the best premises he could.\(^{21}\)

The earliest address recorded is in Portland Street, although no street number is given. Portland Street was home to the print seller Nathaniel Smith (1738–1809) in the late 1760s and early 1770s.\(^{22}\) Great Pulteney Street is described as ‘never fashionable’ in the Survey; Hardy nonetheless lived in an early eighteenth-century house that was part of a set (23-27) that ‘seem[s] to have been among the finest houses in the street’.\(^{23}\) Hardy’s house appears to have had its own stable, with access opening on to the rear lane. Number 23 was four stories high, three windows width and with a basement.

Sometime in 1787 or early 1788 Hardy moved north to Great Marlborough Street and remained there for six or seven years. This was a particularly productive period for
the artist, as during this time he exhibited some 20 paintings at the Royal Academy Exhibitions or the exhibitions for the Society of Artists, including his portraits of the musicians Joseph Haydn, Johann Peter Salomon and Wilhelm Cramer. Little information survives on the housing in Great Marlborough Street, as many of the original dwellings were demolished. Records show that by mid-century there was a mix of tradespeople and ‘gentlemen’. From Horwood’s map, it can be seen that Hardy lived in one of the houses at the far-east end of the street. There are no surviving records on his house, but it would seem to have been less impressive that his previous abode, and might reflect the fact that the Great Pulteney Street address was beyond his means.

Trades were well represented in the street, with several booksellers, print sellers and stationers resident in the late 1790s. Fellow portrait engraver William Bromely (1769-1842), a productive and successful artist, lived at no.29 and engraved the works of leading artists for David Hume’s History of England (1792–1806). Hardy lived a few doors along from the public house the ‘Coach and Horses’, and adjacent to Little Gelding’s Close that encompassed Poland Street. There was a musical presence in the area; Sébastien Erard the harp and piano manufacturer, lived in number 18 from 1794, and just half a dozen doors south, on Poland Street, lived the famous singer Elizabeth Billington, from 1788–1792. Poland Street was in the 1780s and 1790s home to several artists, notably Thomas Rowlandson (1757–1827) and William Blake (1757–1827). Richard Horwood’s Map of London (1792-99) shows Hardy’s location at 92 Norton Street, and suggests a rather modest dwelling with no rear yard, that could be taken as a further indication of declining fortunes. Hardy exhibited four paintings at the Royal Academy during his time here, including his last portrait of a musician to
be exhibited, *Dr Arnold* (1796). Norton Street had another engraver alongside Hardy: James Malton lived at number 17 from 1794 until his death in 1803. Malton was an architectural draughtsman and author, who exhibited frequently at the Royal Academy and published *A Descriptive View of Dublin* in 1797.27

Taken collectively, the evidence of Hardy’s abodes indicates that he lived shoulder-to-shoulder with tradesmen and artists, and never made it to the more luxurious streets inhabited by the likes of Reynolds and Romney. Nonetheless, his connection with the Duke of Devonshire may well have facilitated him coming to paint leading figures in Derbyshire, such as Lady Hastings (nee Miss Parnell Abney). It is difficult to place Hardy with any more certainty than as being any more or less than part of the multitude of versatile artists making a living through painting, engraving and copying others’ works.

The Royal Academy Exhibition and Society of Artists catalogues provides a starting point for a list of Hardy’s output in oils. He exhibited 31 paintings at the Royal Academy exhibitions (from 1778 to 1798), and four at the Society of Artists exhibitions (in 1790). There are only three ‘fancy’ paintings, the rest being portraits, including several of children. The most notable feature of Hardy’s output is the high percentage of sitters who were either actors or musicians. Actors include John Moody, Robert Baddeley, Richard Barrymore, and musicians include Joseph Hayden, Ignace Pleyel, Muzio Clementi, J. P. Salomon and Wilhelm Cramer. His portraits of musicians are a remarkable record of the vibrant music scene in London during the first half of the 1790s. These portraits of musicians were all published as prints by the
music seller John Bland or his successor Francis Linley. This suggests a close relationship between the commerce of music and the creation of portraits.

Oil portraits known to be by Hardy in public or institutional collections are: Lady Georgina Cavendish, at Hardwick Hall (in the Devonshire Collection); John Frederick Sackville, after Reynolds, at Knole, Kent; Robbert Baddeley, Garrick Club London; Brass Crosby, Lord Mayor, at the Guildhall Art Gallery, London; John Hoorne Tooke and Wilhelm Cramer, at the National Portrait Gallery, London; Johann Peter Salomon, William Shield and Franz Joseph Haydn, all at the Royal College of Music, London; William Augustus Bowles as an American Indian chief, at Upton House, Warwickshire. Paintings in private collections include Lady Hastings (nee Miss Parnell Abney), Mrs Geelrisik, Mr Hyatt and Mrs Hyatt, Mrs A. Hope (Magdelen Vanderpoll) and Archibald Hope of Amsterdam. Bateman, in the annotation discussed earlier, also noted portraits of Philip Gale Esq., ‘M’ Gell’ and the Duchess of Cumberland, although it is unclear from his annotation whether he thought the latter two were one and the same, which they were in fact not. An oil portrait of John Reeves, after Hardy, is at the National Portrait Gallery.

Several of Hardy’s portraits were engraved by others. His portrait of the musician Pleyel was engraved by William Nutter and published by John Bland in May 1793, and his portrait of the impresario Salomon was engraved by one of the Facius brothers and also published by Bland, in December 1792. Hardy’s portrait of William Augustus Bowles was engraved as a mezzotint by Joseph Grozer in March 1791, and published by Hardy himself. The John Horne Tooke portrait was engraved by Ankor Smith in 1791. Benjamin Smith engraved his portrait of the actor Barrymore, and a
stipple engraving was published by John Thompson in January 1804. (By this stage Hardy may well have been too ill to engrave the portrait himself.) Having noted these examples, Hardy nonetheless copied the works of others more than his own were copied.

Hardy also engraved a portrait of the judge Sir Henry Gould, after his own oil painting. The print was published in 1794 by Hugh Richards. Evan’s catalogue of engraved portraits gives simply ‘Hardy’ as the artist for an engraving by Nutter of the diplomat ‘Daniel Dumarosque’ [sic].\(^3\) Hardy’s work in mezzotint, as recorded in Chaloner Smith and supplemented by Russell in his *English Mezzotint Portraits* (1926), includes three portraits after Beechey, one each after Reynolds and James Cranke, and four after his own originals.

Hardy’s portrait of the famous radical John Horne Tooke, while not necessarily his best, is typical of his output. Hardy’s portraits in this smaller format of the ‘head’ show a high degree of conformity in type of pose and expression of the sitter. The portrait was an early acquisition of the National Portrait Gallery in London, purchased in May 1857.\(^4\) The dimensions (approximately 75 x 62 cm) represent the smallest and cheapest of the three commonly used standard fixed sizes at the time, known as a ‘head’. The other two sizes were the half-length (127 x 102 cm) and the full-length (239 x 147 cm).\(^5\) This smaller size is hardly suitable for the grand historicising portrait, and is more geared towards a less ostentatious and intimate representation of the sitter. Horne Tooke is shown apparently leaning against a ledge with his right arm from the waist up; his body turned is somewhat but his head less so. This positioning allows for a nearly full-facial view, but also gives some sense of what the profile
might be. His head is slightly tilted, and there is a hint of a smile affected through the corners of the up-turned mouth. Horne Tooke wears a wig, a necktie with patterned lacy ruffles. The necktie and wrist cuffs are handled with a particularly light and effective touch by Hardy, and this adroit technique appears to have been one of his strengths, as it is evident in several other portraits. Lighting comes from the upper-left of the portrait, and there is particular emphasis on the forehead. The left side of the collar and upper shoulders are highlighted in a soft pastel-like manner, another recurring feature of Hardy’s oil portraits.

[1 John Horne Tooke by Thomas Hardy (1757-1804), 1791. Oil on canvas, 75 x 62cm. National Portrait Gallery, London]

The overall impression given by the portrait is of a handsome and active middle-aged man. More importantly, considering the likely function of the portrait, it shows Horne Tooke as an urbane gentleman, attentively leaning forward with his right arm passively placed on a ledge. In other words, he is presented not a dangerous revolutionary, but as a man of intellect and moderation. To this extent, Hardy fulfilled his likely brief well. Tooke, nonetheless, ended up in the Tower of London on trial for treason in 1794, but was eventually acquitted.

The recurring characteristics found in his portraits need not, perhaps, be taken as proof of a complete lack of imagination on behalf of the artist, but rather as a measure of how the marketplace was dictating the final product. Nonetheless, Hardy does seem to epitomise the common criticism of English portraiture as being of the same sitter with different wigs. Hardy could certainly paint more formal portraits in a
grander style, as displayed in his portrait of the wealthy judge Sir Henry Gould. Gould is shown three-quarter length, fully adorned in legal regalia, seated besides a desk with books and papers, quill in hand. The typical backdrops of a pilaster and drape are present, the latter drawn back to reveal a window looking out to a cloudy vista. Hardy had used a similar arrangement with another three-quarter-length portrait, that of the barrister and writer John Reeves (1752–1829). Painted ca. 1792 and published as a print in 1793, this painting also shows a drape drawn back to reveal, in this case, volumes of books on a shelf.

Various engravings after Hardy’s own oil portraits in the newly fashionable medium of stipple show a competent hand, but his mezzotints of the paintings of others appear to be his most notable work from a technical stance. In these, such as his engraving after Reynolds of John Frederick, Duke of Dorset, we find a rich chiaroscuro and verisimilitude to the varieties of the original models, which departs from his usual limited formulas. (Pl 2) Stylistically, Hardy’s own oil portraits appear to have remained almost unerringly formulaic in the positioning of the sitter, expression and lighting. Taken collectively, his smaller-scale portraits suggest that he was working within a conservative market of print collectors who wanted likenesses according to an accepted formulae rather than highly individualistic images.

Scarcely any accounts of the contemporary reception of Hardy’s work appear to exist. His Royal Academy portraits do not appear to have attracted much attention in the critical press at the time, but two of his portraits exhibited at the Society of Artists Exhibition did elicit a favourable response from the reviewer for *The St. James’s Chronicle; or British Evening Post*, of 18 May 1790: ‘Two very good portraits; clear, well-coloured, and the touch broad and masterly’. The notorious critic Anthony Pasquin (1754–1818; pseudonym for John Williams) was less generous, in his critical catalogue of the 1796 Royal Academy Exhibition, where Hardy exhibited his portrait of Samuel Arnold: ‘A good likeness of the original, but deficient in mellowness. This eminent composer is attired in his doctorial robes, and looks as if in the act a letting off a pun’.

For music and theatre historians, Hardy’s portraits of musicians and actors are a rich source of iconography, making him perhaps the most important single artist from the perspective of portraiture of the creative arts in late eighteenth century London. His connection to musicians appears to have been through the music seller John Bland, but his link to actors is not known at this stage. Understanding Hardy’s role in the highly competitive commercial world of music and stage in London could shed much light on the part played by portraiture – especially printed portraits – in London’s vibrant and often ruthless creative world.
It is a pleasure to thank the many people who assisted me in preparing this article. Firstly, Charles Noble, Curator (Fine Art & Loans), The Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth, for providing valuable material on Hardy’s connections with the Devonshire estate and for clarifying some of the identities of Hardy’s possible sitters. Andrew Potter and Elizabeth King, Royal Academy Library, provided me with details of Thomas and John Hardy at the Academy. Marcus Risdell at the Garrick Club, responded with helpful material on the portrait of the actor Baddeley. Staff at the Heinz Archive and Library, National Portrait Gallery, were of great assistance in providing information on paintings by Hardy at the Gallery and finding additional material in their records. Emma Floyd, Librarian at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, was extremely helpful in guiding me towards useful sources. Sheila O’Connell, Department of Prints and Drawing at the British Museum, offered her expert knowledge on Hardy’s mezzotint and stipple prints. Alex Kidson (Liverpool Museum) and Elizabeth Barker (Mead Art Museum, Amherst College) kindly responded to my inquiries regarding Wright of Derby. Roger Flindall provided valuable information regarding local history sources relating to the Hardy family, as well as helpful observations on the inscription in the Miner’s Guide. Natalie Nugent and Erin Johnson-Hill read drafts of this article and offered many useful comments.


3 William Hardy, *The Miner’s Guide: Or, Compleat Miner*, Sheffield, Francis Lister, 1748. For more on William Hardy, see Jim Rieuwerts, ‘William Hardy, Author Of


Bateman, hand-written inscription in W. Hardy, *op cit.*


Andrew Potter, Personal Communication, 13 November 2009.


Joseph Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. Kathryn Cave (New Haven:
Yale University Press, 1982), volume 7, p2582.


19 Ibid. A letter in the collection at Chatsworth, from the great, great grandson of the boy in the painting, identifies him as John Lewis March, christened Gio Luigi Marchi.


21 These addresses are also confirmed by details on various prints that Hardy himself published, such as his prints of John Moody, 12 June 1794 and John Reeves (4 Great Marlborough Street), and a print after Beechey’s portrait of Prince William of Gloucester, 1 July 1802 (92 Norton Street). William, his brother, is listed as being at 14 Old Burlington Road in 1785. This was on the Duke of Devonshire’s estate in London.

22 Hardy’s locations and the dates given in the Royal Academy can be cross-referenced against other sources on London and the trades at the time. Information on the location and dates of printers, booksellers and engravers consulted for this research can be located at the *British Book Trade Index*, now online at <http://www.bbti.bham.ac.uk>. Details of locations, residents and architectural descriptions are in the F. H. W. Sheppard, *Survey of London*, London: Athlone Press for the Greater London Council, 1975, vols. 31 and 32, and *The Parish of St James*.


24 Ibid., vols. 31-32.


31 These portraits are listed in the catalogue at the Heizne Archive, National Portrait Gallery, London.


36 Hardy’s own mezzotint was published by Hugh Richards in March 1794.


40 *A Critical Guide to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy for 1786*, London, 1786, 
p13.