

FRANK MILNER

George Stubbs

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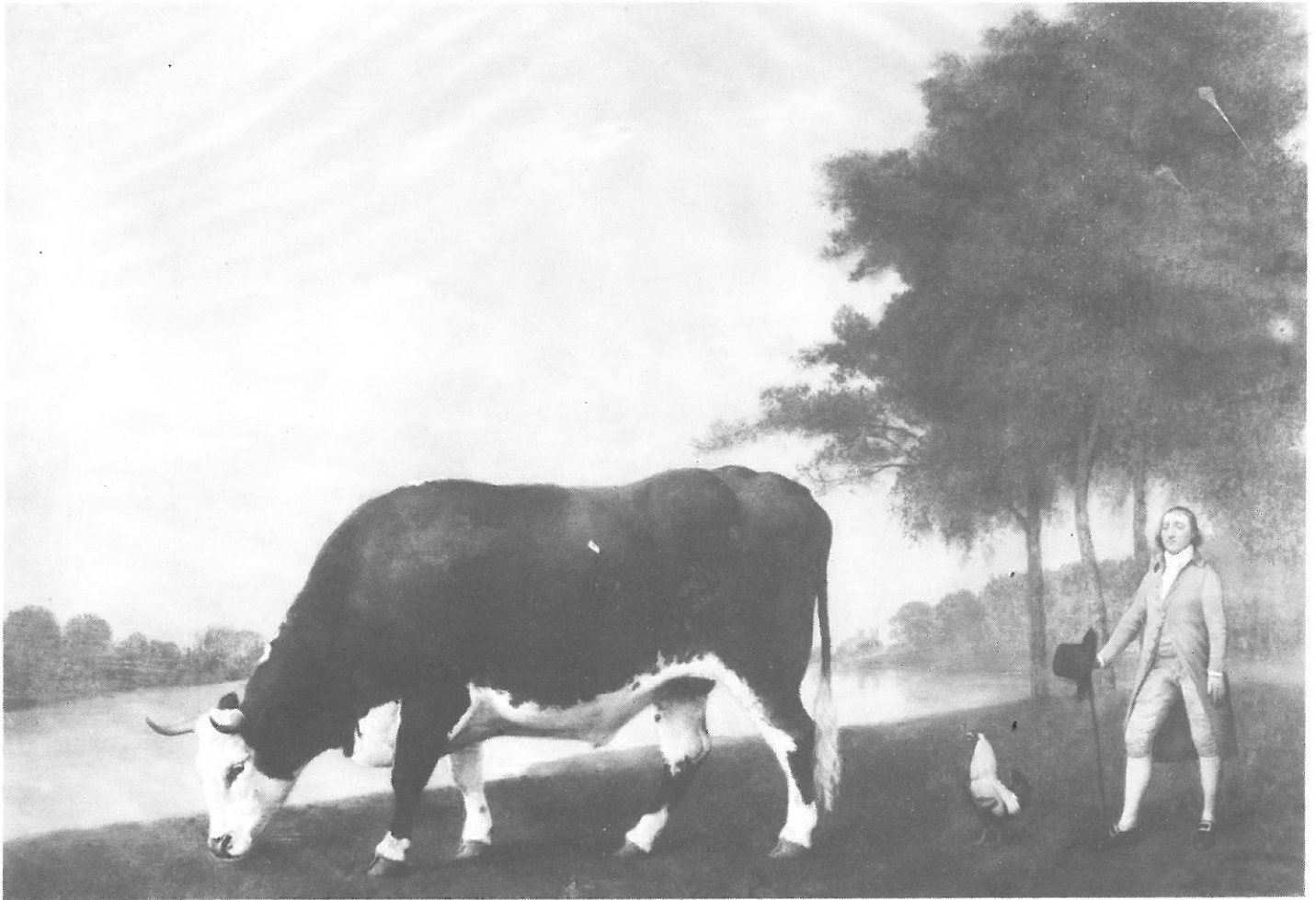
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The Lincolnshire Ox

*Oil on panel 26¾ × 39 ins.
1790*

Walker Art Gallery

The Lincolnshire Ox was a prize Hereford bred at Gedney in Lincolnshire by John Bough in November 1782, and owned by John Gibbons of Long Sutton, Lincolnshire. Having reached a prodigious size by being fed solely on grass, it was taken to London where, from February 1790 until slaughtered in April 1791, it was on show to paying spectators. Stubbs was commissioned in March 1790 by Mr. Gibbons to paint the ox and received 42½ guineas for the work. In the portrait he includes the ox's owner and a fighting cock which, was probably owned by Mr. Gibbons and won him the ox in a cockfight with side wagers. The setting has been suggested as Hyde Park where the beast was stabled for a while, but the distant view of Westminster Abbey makes Green Park a more likely venue.

The background to the curiosity shown in the ox and it continuing to be a spectacle in London for over a year, was the widespread contemporary interest in agricultural improvements. Even though the Lincolnshire Ox was an exceptional animal, its weight of over a ton

was a dramatic improvement on the average 400 lb. meat yield of cattle a century before. It was living proof of breeding progress.

While in the capital, the beast was exhibited at the Lyceum in the Strand, and for a while at the Duke of Gloucester's riding stables in Hyde Park. This latter royal interest earned it the appellation of "The Royal Lincolnshire Ox". It was sold for £262:0:0, and the purchasers continued to exhibit parts of the beast, as the handbill reproduced below shows. Attempts to have the skin stuffed were foiled. Mr. Gibbons would not relinquish his rights to the horns and hooves of the animal – one of each was given to the Walker Art Gallery with sundry other documents relating to the Ox's exhibition and slaughter when the painting was bequeathed to the collection by a descendant of the original owner in 1941.

George Townly Stubbs was paid 100 guineas for engraving the print of the painting. This was published by subscription at half a guinea a print and approximately 500 prints were run off. The subscription list which was also bequeathed to the Walker included members of the royal family, the Duke of Orleans, several members of the British aristocracy and a host of lesser squirearchy.

AT THE
LYCEUM,
 In the STRAND,

Will be shewn to the Public for a few days, at
One Shilling each Person,

THE
Royal Lincolnshire Ox,

(Removed from the DUKE of GLOUCESTER'S Riding
 House, in HYDE PARK)

Was carried 120 Miles in a Machine drawn by
 Eight Horses.

THIS uncommon Animal was bred at GEDNEY,
 in the county of LINCOLN, in November, 1782, and
 fed (without oil-cake) by Mr. JOHN GIBBONS,
 of Long Sutton, in the said county: all judges agree,
 that he is much the LARGEST & FATTEST ever
 seen in England; being 19 hands high, and 3 feet 4
 inches across the hips; his beef and tallow are com-
 puted to weigh 2800lb.—He is so remarkably docile,
 that great numbers of Ladies view him every day.

It being the particular desire of several Gentlemen
 of distinction to have the *Likeness* of this *Noble Ani-
 mal*, handed down to posterity, a subscription is o-
 pened, for a print of the *OX*, from a painting of Mr.
 STUBBS, at *Half a Guinea*.

N. B. Subscriptions taken in at the LYCEUM;
 and a TICKET given that will always admit the
 Subscriber and a Lady, to see the *OX*.

By Permission.

WILL be exhibited in the Cross
 Chamber, on TUESDAY and
 WEDNESDAY, the third and
 fourth of this Instant, a conspi-
 cuous PART of the late Royal
 LINCOLNSHIRE OX,
 which was slaughtered at the Ly-
 ceum in LONDON, after being
 exhibited ONE YEAR and TWO
 MONTHS.

Admittance ONE Shilling.

Subscribers to the Print, Gratis.

May 2, 1791.

TO BE SEEN,
 At the LYCEUM,
 In the STRAND:
 THAT most WONDERFUL of all Animals which has so much
 engaged the Attention of Naturalists for Ages past,
The RHINOCEROS,

WHO is more compact in his formation and stronger made than the ELEPHANT,
 and has an impenetrable COAT OF MAIL, a formidable HORN on his Nose
 and other singularities which have attracted the Observant, the Wise and the Great,
 Time immemorial; therefore in this enlightened Age, when the Works of the Great
 Creator, as to their Perfections and Variations, are so deservedly admired, it is pre-
 ferred a fight of this formidable Beast in Armour, which forms so conspicuous a Link
 in Creation's Chain, will please every rational Beholder. Admittance One Shilling;
 A L S O,

Three Stupendous Ostriches,

Lately arrived from the Coast of Barbary

"Whole like Earth bears not on her spacious Face,
 "Alone in Nature stands the Wonderous Race,"

These Birds exceed in magnitude and texture of Plumage all the feather'd Tribe in
 the whole Creation, one of them measures upwards of eight Feet high, although but
 a young One, in the Memory of Man three such extraordinary Birds have not been seen
 together in this Kingdom, neither is there another of the Kind in England.

Admittance only Six-Pence each Person

And last, though not the least,

Is the ROYAL
Lincolnshire O X,

Which is allowed by the best Judges to be the LARGEST and FATTEST ever
 seen in this or any other Country, he is Nineteen Hands high and three Feet four
 Inches across the Hips, in short, this Living Mountain strikes every Beholder with
 Wonder. This Animal has apparently acquired these Superiorities by his own Sagi-
 dity, his food is Hay, which he Dips in Water that stands within his reach, before he
 eats it, This act of Rationality in the Brute is pleasing, its Effects are obvious, and
 may prove Instruction to the Feeders of Cattle. Admittance One Shilling each Person

ABOVE Handbills advertising the exhibition of The Lincolnshire Ox at the
 Lyceum in The Strand and announcing the proposed publication
 of the print by George Townly Stubbs. (The Rhinoceros advertised
 as on show was also painted by Stubbs.) 1790

BELOW Subscription ticket for the print of the Lincolnshire Ox. The ticket
 was probably engraved by George Townly Stubbs.

LEFT Handbill advertising display of part of The Lincolnshire Ox.



LINCOLNSHIRE OX
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N. 14 New Bond Street
Printed J. C. 22