

*Autobiographies:
From Men of all Ranks*



Adam Matthew Publications

— www.ampltd.co.uk —

Not this reason I purpose, when the Summer is come, to walk with a book in my pocket. What I read at my fire-side I forget, but what I read under a hedge or at the side of a pond, that pond and that hedge will always bring to my remembrance; and this is a sort of Memoria technica which I would recommend to you, did I not know that you have no occasion for it

“It is a duty on upright and credible men of all ranks, who have performed anything noble or praiseworthy, to record in their own writing, the events of their lives.” Benvenuto Cellini

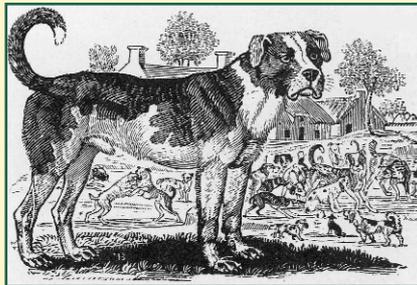
We can be grateful that the 48 men 'of all ranks' that feature in this first part took Cellini's words to heart and recorded the accomplishments as well as the minutiae of their lives. The result is a fascinating and multi-faceted portrait of life in Britain from 1760 to 1820.

The project covers both manuscript and rare printed autobiographies and readers will be able to examine the differences between the two sources.

All manner of men are represented, including apothecaries, artists, artisans, diplomats, farmers, journalists, mill workers, musicians, politicians, preachers, pugilists, soldiers, surgeons, writers, a stable boy and a fencing master.

Some notable inclusions are:

- Thomas Bewick's manuscript autobiography (Add Ms 41481) describing his upbringing, apprenticeship and subsequent career as a wood engraver and author of important works including: *A History of British Birds* (1797) and *A General History of Quadrupeds* (1790).
- William Cowper's manuscript memoirs (Add Ms 59868)



- *Manuscript and rare printed autobiographies*

- *Sources reflecting all classes, from mill workers to mill owners, and from prize fighters to diplomats*

- *Much on education, childhood, work, spiritual life, art, literature and politics.*



describing his religious experiences and writing at Olney and his collaboration with the Reverend John Newton.

- The printed memoirs of Dr Joseph Priestley (1806) detail his discoveries in chemistry, his metaphysical writings, his religious opinions and discoveries on human character.
- John McLeod's experiences as a ship's surgeon travelling to Korea, Africa and the West Indies are told in *Narrative of a Voyage* (1817) and *A Voyage to Africa* (1820), with much on slavery.
- Thomas Wright, Yorkshire cloth maker and wool manufacturer, gives a good picture of domestic life, religion and Methodist disturbances during the second half of the eighteenth century in his *Autobiography* (1864).

There are also manuscript autobiographies by Edward Gibbon, Warren Hastings, William Hogarth, Sir Hudson Lowe, James Northcote, James Stuart and John Wilkes - and rare printed accounts ranging from the working class memoirs of George Allen (*Machine Breaker*, 1831); the rise of the middle class Potter family (*From Ploughshare to Parliament*, 1908); to the *Life of Thomas Telford*, the great engineer.

This project will be of direct interest to anyone studying *Life-Writing* or *Autobiography* - and also to anyone studying the *Romantic era*. There are important sources for those interested in art, history, politics and literature.

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES FROM MEN OF ALL RANKS

Sources from the British Library, London

Part 1: Autobiographies, c.1760-1820