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Member Biographies

MANNING, William (1763-1835), of Copped Hall, Totteridge, Herts. and Coombe Bank, nr. Sevenoaks, Kent.

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5 June 1821 - 1826
1826 - 1830

Family and Education

b. 1 Dec. 1763, o. surv. s. of William Manning, W.I. merchant, of 15 St. Mary Axe, London by Elizabeth, da. and h. of John Ruan of St. Kitts and Santa Cruz. *m.* (1) 23 Oct. 1786, Elizabeth (*d.* 29 Mar. 1789), da. of [Abel Smith](#)[†], banker, of Nottingham, 2da.; (2) 12 July 1792, Mary, da. of Henry Lannoy Hunter, barrister, of Beech Hill, Reading, Berks., 4s. 4da. *suc.* fa. 1791.

Offices Held

Dir. Bank of England 1792-1810, 1814-31, dep. gov. 1810-12, gov. 1812-14; agent for St. Vincent 1792-1806, Grenada 1825-31; pres. London Life Assurance 1817.

Vol. London and Westminster light horse 1797; capt. Bank of England vols. 1798, maj. 1801, lt.-col. 1803.

Biography

Manning's father, of a St. Kitts planter family, settled in London in the 1760s as a West India merchant. He himself was a partner in the family business successively with his father, his brother-in-law [Benjamin Vaughan](#)* and subsequently with Anderdon and Bosanquet. Through his mother, he inherited two parts of an estate on the Danish island of Santa Cruz and purchased the third. On coming into his inheritance, he became a director of the Bank of England and in 1793 a commissioner of Exchequer bills. He was brother-in-law (through his first marriage) of [Robert Smith](#)* and moved in Pitt's circle, being also friendly with Bishop Tomline and with Wilberforce.¹ In 1794 he entered Parliament on a vacancy, on the Mount Edgcumbe interest. Listed as a Treasury



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supporter in quest of a seat in 1796, he found one, with Pitt's help, on the Burrard interest at Lymington.²

Manning was described in 1806 as 'a man of most conciliating manners with a good head and a good heart. In politics he is decidedly in favour of government'.³ He promoted and signed the London merchants' loyal declaration to Pitt in December 1795, though in August 1796 he informed the Speaker that it was essential that Pitt should satisfy the House that peace negotiations were out of the question.⁴ In the House he had first featured as a member of the committee of West India merchants. On 4 May and 2 June 1795 he seconded Joseph Foster Barham's motions against the conduct of Jervis and Grey in Martinique, which infringed the rights of property; but he had voted thanks to them the year before for the conquest of the island and seconded Henry Dundas's vote of thanks to General Dundas for his West Indian conquests, 5 June 1795.

Manning next became involved in the West India merchants' lobby for a new wet docks at Wapping to remedy the deficiency of the port of London. On 3 Feb. 1796 he submitted their petition and plan to the House. Against opposition from the corporation of London, he secured a select committee and a bill, 18 Feb. On 16 Mar. he secured Pitt's goodwill for its second reading, the City having failed to provide a better plan, but gave it up that session, renewing the project on 30 Nov. 1796. The bill was again opposed, 9 Dec. 1796, 15 Feb. 1797, despite alterations to meet its critics. In June 1799 Manning was forced to swallow the London port improvement bill which situated new docks at the Isle of Dogs, though he made a token opposition to one clause, on which he twice divided the House. He secured government assurance that the West India merchants might subsequently pursue their own plan and on 21 Feb. 1800 introduced a new bill for wet docks at Wapping. Government helped him to thwart a City petition for counsel to renew their case against it, 10 Mar. He pointed out that the dock company's outlay of over £700,000 was for the general benefit, not merely for the West India merchants. This time he succeeded and between 1803 and 1806 secured further legislation to expand the docks.⁵

On 22 and 27 Mar. 1797, Manning first spoke as a Bank director, vindicating the Bank's conduct in the stoppage of cash payments and emphasizing its independence of, and services to, the government. On 30 May he held out hopes of a speedy resumption of payment in specie. He had subscribed £10,000 to the loyalty loan for 1797 like other directors and on 1 June asked the Speaker whether his interest disqualified him from voting for the subscribers' bonus. The Speaker's reply decided him not to vote. He joined the London merchants' censure of the naval mutiny.⁶ He supported Pitt's triple assessment, 18 Dec. 1797, 4 Jan. 1798, and voluntarily doubled his contribution.⁷ He gave up a motion to publicize such voluntary subscriptions to the war effort, 22 Feb. 1798. On 19 June he was in a minority, for Bankes's amendment on the sending of the militia to Ireland—he explained that he had reservations about the constitutionality of the measure. On 19 Feb. 1799 he was appointed a commissioner for the conference of both Houses on the Act of Union. On 11 Mar. 1800 he secured a committee of inquiry into the coal trade, in view of the high prices asked for it in London, and on 20 Nov. another, carrying his point that it should be select, which led to his bringing in a bill to regulate the coal trade, 11 Mar. 1801. He had to give it up, 12 May.

Manning would not hear of allegations that the Bank profited at the expense of the public: 'the man who looked to profit, was unfit to be a director' (21 Mar. 1800). On 23 Apr. 1800 Pitt secured his endorsement for a parliamentary authorization to export bullion to the allies. He also supported Pitt's income tax against Tierney, 5 June. In the sessions of 1801 and 1802 he resisted the attacks on the Bank of the 'three Horatii', Richard Bateman Robson, John Nicholls and Thomas Jones, and on 9 Apr. 1802 justified the continuation of the stoppage of cash payments for the time being. He opposed the opening of malt distilleries, on behalf of the West India sugar planters, 14 Dec. 1801. He had opposed relief for the West India merchants of London, 2 Oct. 1799, but approved the loan to the Grenada planters, 30 Mar. 1803. On 31 Mar. 1802 he was in the minority for inquiry into the Prince of Wales's finances. He was appointed to the civil list committee on 2 Feb. 1804.

Manning said little in the House during Addington's ministry, but it is clear that his attachment was still primarily to Pitt, for he was in the latter's minority of 3 June 1803 and again on 25 Apr. 1804. He was listed a supporter of Pitt's second ministry, but inactive except on the slave trade question. In a previous isolated speech of 11 Apr. 1796 he had opposed a bill to improve the slaves' lot on the grounds that it might be left

to the colonial assemblies. On 30 May 1804 he disclaimed opposition to abolition, but called for a guarantee of compensation to the slave owners, rejected by 124 votes to 49. On 12 and 13 June he again failed in a bid to obtain a committee on compensation to accompany the bill. On 2 May 1806 he pointed out that the Spanish colonial coastguards winked at British imports on vessels carrying slaves. He renewed pressure for compensation, 10 June 1806, and was listed 'adverse' to abolition, but explained, 23 Feb. 1807, that he did not think it harmful. He had no plantation in the British colonies, only on Santa Cruz, where there had been no slaves imported since 1793. On 17 Mar. 1807 the House was counted out when he attempted to relate his own experience in the colonies.

Manning favoured the public payment of Pitt's debts, 3 Feb. 1806, though he was sure they could have been met by private subscription. He disliked squandering public money and recalled his voluntary contribution to the war effort. [George Rose*](#), however, reported that at the meeting of Pitt's friends the week before, he offered just £100 for the purpose.⁸ He was also in the majority in favour of the Grenville ministry's repeal of Pitt's Additional Force Act, 30 Apr. 1806, and it seems that he was prepared to support them, though he was a critic of the tax on private brewing, which they gave up. At the election of that year he exchanged Lymington for Evesham, an open constituency, where he stood on Lord Northwick's interest. He faced only one contest there, in 1807, when he headed the poll.⁹

Manning was as prepared to support the Portland ministry as its predecessor. On 10 Feb. 1808 he was a spokesman for the Bank against critics of its charges for managing the public debt, which, he pointed out, occupied half of its 800 clerks. He was, without soliciting it, a member of the select committee on distillation that session (having taken the chair in a previous one early in 1807) and, denying any bias, favoured distillation from sugar to save the West Indian colonies from ruin, 13 Apr., 3 June. He acquitted the Duke of York of corruption, but voted that he had been guilty of allowing an improper influence (that of his mistress) in army patronage, 20 Mar. 1809. He was in the majority for the address when Perceval's ministry met Parliament, 23 Jan. 1810, but for the inquiry into the Scheldt expedition on 26 Jan. and complained on 29 Jan. of the tendentious way in which the *Morning Chronicle* had published the division lists of the 23rd, as if those who voted for the address were opposed to the inquiry. But he rallied to ministers on it, 23 Feb., 30 Mar., being listed 'Government' by the Whigs.

Next in line for the chair of the Bank, he applied to be on the bullion committee of February 1810¹⁰ and he and Baring, another director, were appointed to it. On 20 Feb., at his second attempt in a week, he secured an inquiry into the demonopolization of marine insurance. He voted for Irish tithe reform, 13 Apr., for the release of the radical Gale Jones, 16 Apr., for sinecure reform, 17 May, and for parliamentary reform, 21 May 1810. He was a select committeeman and an advocate of commercial credit relief, 11 Mar. 1811. That session he opposed pressure for the resumption of cash payments by the Bank, 5 Apr., and criticized the bullion committee for exceeding its brief in recommending it, 8 May. He denied that the Bank profited from paper currency, adding that he himself held barely more Bank stock than was necessary to qualify him for his directorship, 15 May. He supported the legalization of bank-notes, denying that his private interest disqualified him from doing so, 9, 17 July. On 17 Mar. 1812 he resisted inquiry into the Bank's affairs—for the next two years he was governor. He again favoured sinecure reform, 4 May 1812, but was in the government minority against a more comprehensive administration, 21 May, and was listed a Treasury supporter after the ensuing election.

Manning was spokesman for the Bank in the House only once (8 Dec. 1812) for the remainder of his term as governor. The father of Cardinal Manning, he opposed Catholic relief on 2 Mar. and 11 May 1813, but was neutral on 24 May. It was a subject on which he subsequently wavered, voting for in 1815, against in 1816 and for in 1817. In 1813 he spent over £40,000 on the purchase of Coombe Bank from [Lord Frederick Campbell*](#).¹¹ He re-emerged in debate in 1815, opposing a premature resumption of cash payments, 10 Feb., 9 Mar. He voted against the corn bill, 10 Mar., and was in the opposition majority on the Duke of Cumberland's establishment, 3 July. That day and on 13, 16 Feb. and 29 Mar. 1816 he repelled allegations of Bank profiteering, insisting that the Bank charged the public only eight pence in £100 for its services. Nor would he commit the Bank as to the timing of its resumption of cash payments, 1, 3 May 1816. He voted against ministers on the property tax and Admiralty salaries, 18, 20 Mar. 1816, but with them on the civil list, 24 May, and the public revenue bill, 17 June (by pair) and

20 June. On 19 June, in criticism of the slave registry bill, he read a fatuous letter he had just received from a planter stating that he *now* slept with pistols at his bedside.

In the session of 1817, Manning was in the government majorities of 7 and 17 Feb., opposed inquiry into Bank affairs, 19 Feb. and reproached Burdett for bringing in masses of reform petitions with no knowledge of their contents, 3 Mar. He refused to countenance any measures against alien investors in Bank stock, 7 May. He voted with ministers on the operation of the suspension of habeas corpus, 10 Feb., 5 Mar. 1818, but against them on the ducal marriage grant, 15 Apr. That session his speeches were confined to Bank affairs, opposing resumption, but not an inquiry into it (4 Mar.) and justifying its procedure in cases of forgery. He was appointed to the secret committee on the Bank in 1819, but not, he insisted, in an official capacity. The Bank did not take sides on the question of resumption, but had been acting on the assumption that it was imminent (2 Feb.). He concurred in the cash payments bill, 5 Apr., but on 24 May objected to the schedule for resumption and on 14 June pressed for the speedy repayment by government of half its £10 million debt to the Bank. This motion was defeated by 166 votes to 21. He persisted in the view that the Bank should have the right to decide the timetable for resuming cash payments, 25 June.

Manning, who subsequently developed Australian interests, called for a fair hearing for Governor Macquarie in debate, 23 Mar. 1819. On 8 Apr., bringing up the report of the Camelford election committee, he declared that evidence of bribery was not proven and moved for a new writ. It was carried by 103 votes to 15. He opposed the Penryn bribery bill, 12 May, and voted against the extension of the franchise there, 22 June: but his partner's son, John Lavicount Anderdon had been a candidate there in 1818. He voted against public lotteries, 4 May. He supported ministers against Tierney's censure motion, 18 May. His only known gesture during the next session was to vote against the seizure of arms bill, 14 Dec. 1819.

Manning had resumed his seat for Lymington on the same interest in 1818, but intended to retire in 1820. At some stage he had refused a baronetcy. A year later he resumed his seat. He later suffered from the depression in West Indian trade and went bankrupt in 1831.¹² He died 17 Apr. 1835.

Ref Volumes: 1790-1820



Authors: P. A. Symonds / R. G. Thorne

Notes

1. *Caribbeana*, i. 293; E. S. Purcell, *Life of Cardinal Manning*, i. 7; *Life of Wilberforce* (1838), i. 330.
2. PRO 30/8/173, ff. 290-1; 196, ff. 98, 247, 248.
3. Spencer mss, W. to J. Preedy, 2 Nov. 1806.
4. *Morning Chron.* 28 Nov. 1795; Sidmouth mss, Manning to Addington, 20 Aug. 1796.
5. PRO 30/8/155, f. 230; Broodbank, *Hist. Port of London*, ch. vii.
6. *Oracle*, 8 June 1797.
7. Pellew, *Sidmouth*, i. 198.
8. *Rose Diaries*, ii. 238, 239.
9. Spencer mss, W. to J. Preedy, 2 Nov. 1806; Madresfield mss, Manning to Beauchamp, 30 Apr. 1807.
10. PRO 30/9/15, Manning to Abbot, 16 Feb. [1810].
11. *Farington*, vii. 210.
12. PRO 30/9/16, Manning to Colchester, 23 Feb. 1820; *Caribbeana*, i. 242; *Wilberforce Pprs.* 158.

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