

A 4-6  
page  
record  
of each  
breed's  
early  
history

### Early Breeders

In the *History of Shorthorn Cattle* (1907), edited by James Sinclair, many references are made to the early breeders in County Durham. Sinclair noted that around the year 1730 John Bates of Aydon (grandfather of Thomas Bates (q.v.)) bought six cows and a white bull from Michael Dobison's brother who lived at The Isle, Sedgfield (Durham). Another breeder noted by Sinclair was a Mr. Milbank from Barningham who purchased stock from the Blacketts of Newby and who also bought the famed red and white Studley Bull (No. 626 in the Coates Herd-Book).

Others were John Maynard of Eryholme, George Cowling of Ricknall Grange (Darlington), John Hunter of Hurworth, etc.

From the middle years of the 18th century these breeders had developed first-class herds, principally based on indigenous stock to which they had added infusions of Longhorn, Kyloe (Highland) and, of course, Dutch imports. They laid a solid platform for the arrival of the Colling brothers in the 1780s.



*Robert and Charles Colling*

of Dishley Grange (Leicestershire) to observe his methods of in-line breeding with Longhorn cattle (q.v.). They then set about implementing some of Bakewell's ideas and, selecting the best stock available locally, their impetus quickly propelled the Shorthorn to the position of Britain's premier cattle breed.

Early on, on the advice of Charles, Robert purchased a yellow-red and white bull from John Hunter of Hurworth for 8 guineas (£8 8s.) - a bull which he later sold on to Charles for the same price. This was the famous Hubback, progenitor of much of the Colling breeding and cause of great controversy due to allegations that his dam contained 'Kyloe' blood.

### The Brothers Colling

The Colling brothers, Robert (1749-1820) and Charles (1750-1836), came from a long line of County Durham farmers and stockmen. Their father Charles (1721-1785), tenant of a farm at Ketton near Darlington (Durham), was a Shorthorn breeder who founded the Ketton herd with the purchase of a cow, Cherry, at Yarm Fair.

At the time that Charles succeeded his father in the Ketton tenancy in 1782 Robert was apprenticed as a grocer but he returned to join his younger brother in partnership and the following year (1783) he himself acquired a tenancy 2 km away at Barmpton. Around this time the Collings visited Robert Bakewell

#### *The Purchase of (Old) Favourite.*

Robert Colling remained a bachelor and Charles, though married to a former Miss Colpitts, had no children. Early accounts record that Mrs. Colling was as good a breeder as her husband and played an equal part in the development of the Ketton Herd. One wonders if their domestic situations had included families whether or not the Colling contribution to the Shorthorn breed could possibly have achieved the heights it did.

The legendary story is told of how in 1785 the trio paid a visit on horseback to John Maynard's farm at Eryholme with the singular aim of purchasing Maynard's cow, *Favourite* and her calf, *Young Strawberry*. Charles Colling had cast longing eyes on these animals and when the ladies withdrew he got straight down to business. In

what he thought was a knockout offer, he offered £35 for the pair. At first John Maynard was stunned by this enormous offer, but following a moment's reflection, he turned the offer down and couldn't be persuaded to change his mind.

When the Collings departed and Mrs. Maynard discovered that such a huge offer had been refused, she scolded him and trusted that he wouldn't refuse if another offer was made. The conversation had scarcely concluded when Mrs. Colling re-appeared on her horse, having herself just learned of what had earlier transpired. Determined to make the deal herself she declared to the Maynards, '*You must sell them to me!*'. This time the offer was accepted and the most famous cow in Shorthorn history moved from Eryholme to Ketton.