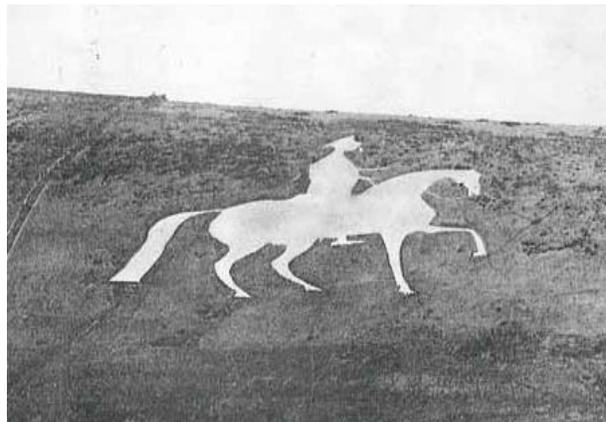
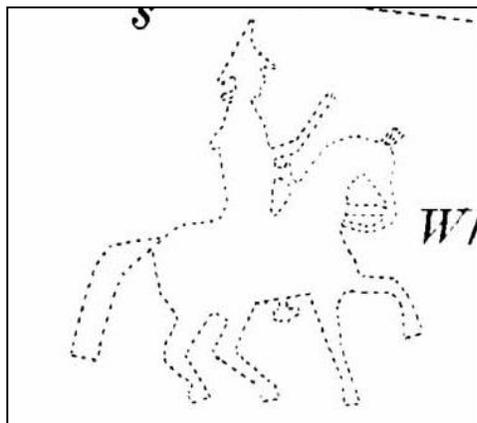


## THE OSMINGTON WHITE HORSE by Terry Pook (2016)

After our January talk by Andy Skinner about chalk hill figures I found some information about the origin of the Osmington Horse from the November 2011 edition of the Dorset Life Magazine which had an article about a group of people who were responsible for its creation. It is a representation 280 feet long and 320 feet high of a horse and its rider cut out of the chalk on the side of the hill. The figure, cut in 1808, represents King George III on his grey charger, Adonis. The King visited Weymouth on several occasions between 1789 and 1805 and would ride along the top of the hill on which the horse is carved.



The people involved with carving the monument were John Wood, a Weymouth bookseller, Robert Serrell Wood, who owned the land, James Hamilton, a Weymouth architect and John Rainier (1742-1814), a London stockbroker who funded the project. The shape of the horse surveyed between 1860 and 1870 as depicted on the larger scale Ordnance Survey map was designed by James Hamilton, the architect in charge of planning the figure. He was required to use his architectural prowess for the design, as the curvature of the hill meant it was not simply a case of cutting a horse shape. Could this James Hamilton have been the source of the name 'Hamilton House' at Blechynden in Southampton while it was being lived in by John, the son of John who financed the hill figure? He did design a Hamilton House at Wyke so the Rainiers must have been aware of his work.



John Rainier was the younger brother of Peter Rainier, an admiral who amassed a huge fortune during his time in the navy and died a wealthy man. In his Will he gave £25,000 to help reduce the national debt, the remainder going to his younger brother, John but why John financed the White Horse is still a mystery. Perhaps John paid for the carving as some kind of memorial or maybe his legacy was conditional on providing a sea mark. Whatever the reason I am sure that his brother would have appreciated the gesture, after all, the monument is best seen from Weymouth bay and John's two sons both entered the navy so would have seen the monument as they sailed down the channel and it would have been an interesting talking point among their fellow officers. John died just six years later and the White Horse was then described as a 'seamark' on Admiralty charts, further strengthening this maritime connection.