

DAVID PATERSON

# FAIR SEED-TIME



ROBERT EVANS,  
FRANCIS NEWDIGATE AND  
THE MAKING OF GEORGE ELIOT

'The importance of Robert Evans, George Eliot's father, for an understanding of her life and work has long been generally accepted, but David Paterson breathes new life into this general truth by exploring in detail Robert's working relationship with his employers, the Newdigates, and showing how illuminating traces of that relationship can be found throughout her fiction'.

**Dr. John Rignall, Emeritus Reader in English, University of Warwick**

'A really invaluable book for all Eliot scholars interested in the nitty gritty of her background – and for the growth of work in rural history, tracking the figure and role of the land agent in this period ... making a really convincing case for the parallels and shared ground between Robert Evans and George Eliot'.

**Ruth Livesey Professor of Nineteenth-Century Literature and Thought  
Department of English, Royal Holloway, University of London**

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**FAIR SEED-TIME** is a major re-interpretation of the historical background to the writings of George Eliot. It rejects several oft-repeated myths about the early 19th Century Midland world in which George Eliot grew up, emphasises the importance of a previously neglected character in that world, Francis Newdigate, and provides a detailed insight into the life of Eliot's father, Robert Evans. It shows how he rose socially throughout his life and how he played a significant role in the professional development of early 19th Century Land Agents. It provides detailed and carefully-argued evidence to illustrate how his life and work profoundly influenced George Eliot's novels, from which there are many quotations.

The author has delved into previously unread historical diaries and many other original and previously little used sources to bring alive the rapidly changing economic and social world of the early nineteenth century in general and north Warwickshire in particular. The result will be of interest both to general and local historians of this period, those concerned with the evolution of land agency as a profession, and to all students of literature, and especially George Eliot scholars, because of the fresh insights into her work.

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