
NOTES & QUERIES

FOR
SOMERSET AND DORSET

EDITED BY

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*"Attempt the end, and never stand to doubt;
Nothing's so hard, but search will find it out".*

HERRICK

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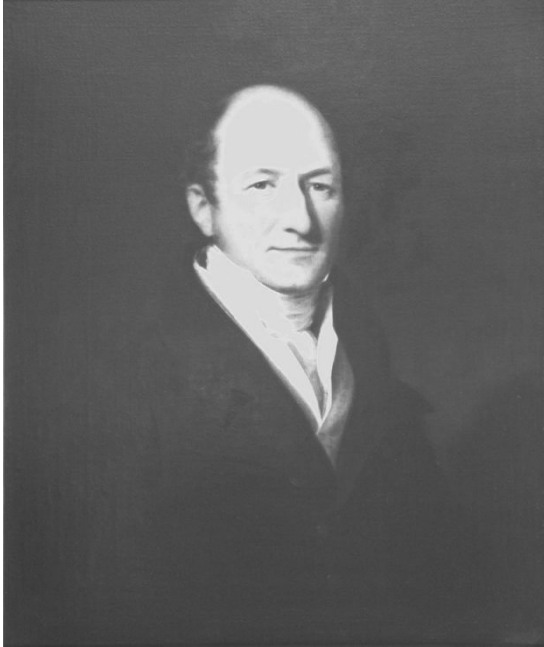
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6. NETHER STOWEY IN 1832: A SNAPSHOT OF THE POOR AND THE POOR LAWS IN ONE SOMERSET PARISH TAKEN BY THOMAS POOLE MAGISTRATE.



Tom Poole (© National Trust and Seamus McKenna)

Poverty in Georgian England

In 1800, in the parish of Over Stowey, the local parson recorded in his diary:

After dinner there was a Vestry to fix on persons to serve the Office of Surveyors of the Highways. But the poor of the Parish got intelligence of it and crouded upon us in such a manner that we scarce knew what to do. The Overseers are harassed to death and summoned everyday before a Justice, this will never do.¹

The Georgian poor alarmed farmers, gentry and politicians, deflecting them from the undisturbed enjoyment of money, property and power. Concern arose both from a Christian and

paternalistic desire to help the poor and from a fear of riot and disorder. Beyond riots there was another more mercenary reason for concern about the poor: the poor rate. Since Elizabethan times the poor rate had supported those in the parish who were unemployed or who did not earn enough to live. The rate was set by the parish in proportion to the rateable value of the occupiers' land and property.

Three main factors were causing the upward trend in the poor rates: a rise in population, the adoption of child allowances, and the exploitation of poor relief by farmers. The population was 5.2m in 1714, 6.2m in 1760, 10.5m 1815, and in 1831 had risen to 14m. This rise was not because of a fall in the death rate but was due to a rise in the birth rate as a result of couples marrying earlier in life. Rule suggests that this earlier marriage was related to poor families becoming purely wage earners on farms rather than small scale land occupiers.² The occupier might postpone marriage until he had saved enough for a small farm, or could inherit one, whereas the wage earner was on the same wage he would get for life and had nothing to wait for.

In addition to the rise in population the payment of child allowances from the poor rates was also a major cause of the increase in poor rate costs. Boyer's statistical analysis has indicated that some powerful farmers were employing labourers receiving allowances from the poor rate and then paying them less than the normal wage. In effect these farmers were being subsidised by the public purse.³

Higher wheat prices meant that the poor had to pay more for their bread and so the poor rates fluctuated year to year, mainly in synchrony with wheat prices. In 1795-1796, 1800-1801 and 1812-1813 rises in these prices occurred as a result of bad weather and the subsequent poor harvests, indeed the first two of these episodes were described as famine years in some parts.⁴ Wheat and other commodity prices were also affected by the wars with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. Reduced grain imports, bad news from the front and hoarding by speculators all sent grain prices up.⁵ In 1815 the war ended when Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, but peace brought an economic slump, and the poor were squeezed in a different way. In 1816,

300,000 soldiers and sailors returned home and a further 32,000 followed in 1817.⁶ This extra supply of labour depressed wages whilst at the same time the peace allowed increased wheat imports from the continent. This further reduced prices with the result that farmers' incomes fell, putting still further downward pressure on labourers' wages.

All these factors contributed to larger and larger expenditures on poor relief. The national cost of poor relief as reported by the parishes rose relentlessly from £0.6m in 1770, to £1.6m in 1776, and then £2m in 1786, £4.1m in 1803, £6.6m in 1812 and by 1815 it was just short of £6 million.⁷ It has been estimated that, in 1802-3, 8.1 per cent of the population of England and Wales was on permanent relief, with a further 3.3% on occasional relief.⁸ All together about a million people out of a total population of 8.9 million received some financial aid. The rises in the cost of poor relief was a constant concern of Parliament. Economic and welfare thinkers of the day such as Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo were also worried. Even the poets Robert Southey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote tracts on the subject but in their case it was the state of the poor which engaged their sympathy.⁹ Opinions on how to tackle poor relief ranged from complete abolition, leaving the poor with little support, through mild tinkering with existing practice to complete reform. Schemes for complete reform usually involved imposing national control to reduce costs.

With each crisis Parliament responded to public concern with more or less the same sequence of actions. A select committee of the House of Commons was chosen to direct an inquiry and parishes throughout England were asked to send in returns of their poor rate and details of their poor relief. This committee would then collect and summarise the returns, interrogate local worthies, take evidence from national experts and then publish a report. Following many of the reports, acts of parliament were passed which tried, with varying success, to mitigate the problem by permitting local changes to be made rather than by enforcing the new laws from the centre.

Between 1750 and 1834 there were no less than 44 of these parliamentary inquiries into the poor.¹⁰ Finally, in 1834, the much more far reaching and more repressive 'New Poor Law'

was ushered in by the Poor Law Amendment Act. This act too was preceded by an investigation and report: 'The Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the poor laws'.¹¹ In 1832 as part of the investigation 53 written questions (termed 'Rural' and 'Town Queries') were sent out to every parish in England and Wales and just over 10% of the parishes replied.¹² The questions were designed firstly to establish basic facts and figures about the parish lands and people, secondly to obtain facts about the parish poor and the operation of the poor laws and, thirdly, to ask for the opinions of the respondents as to the current practice and future modification of those laws. Several queries related to particular concerns of the parish ratepayers at the time such as vagrancy, bastardy, emigration and even the laziness of labourers.

The answers to the town and rural queries formed appendix B of the report and are a treasure trove of data. No formal analysis of all this data was performed by the Commissioners and as the Checklands observed 'Indeed it is hard to imagine what Nassau and the other Commissioners thought they were going to do with such a deluge of data in the age of the quill pen'.¹³ It is also now clear that the commissioners were in a great hurry to pass an act based on their opinion that the Old Poor Law was ruining the rural economy.¹⁴ This opinion had a weak factual basis¹⁵ as subsequent modern quantitative¹⁶ and statistical analysis¹⁷ of the data has shown.¹⁸ These analyses indicate strong regional variations in the operation of the Old Poor Law and in most part do not support the conclusion of the report that the Old Poor Law was ruining the rural economy. On the contrary poor relief particularly in winter was probably an efficient way of keeping enough able bodied labour in the parish to cover the increased labour demand of the summer months,¹⁹ however not all historians agree with this conclusion.²⁰

Poverty in Nether Stowey

Deep in the appendix of the 1834 report are the tabulated answers to the rural queries given by Nether Stowey and the rest of this article is specifically concerned with these

answers.²¹ The man who answered on behalf of Nether Stowey was Thomas Poole JP (1765-1837). Poole was a self educated farmer, tanner and lifelong friend of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Sir Humphry Davy.²² On the subject of the parish poor Poole was no ordinary respondent. At the national level he had been employed by John Rickman the secretary to the speaker of the House of Commons to make county and national abstracts and observations on, all the returns of expenditure on poor relief in the year 1802-3.²³ Poole had corresponded with Rickman for some time on the subject of the national poor laws. For example, on 23 March 1803 Rickman wrote 'I understand from Mr C [*Coleridge*] that you are working hard at the Poor Laws (that are to be) and I long to know the result of your speculations therein'.²⁴ At the parish level Poole was a generous benefactor in Nether Stowey, as Wordsworth observed:

During my residence at Alfoxden I used to see much of him, and had frequent occasions to admire the course of his life, especially his conduct to his labourers and poor neighbours. Their wishes he carefully encouraged, and weighed their faults in the scales of charity.²⁵

William Holland, vicar of Over Stowey, no great admirer of Poole, also grudgingly acknowledged that 'he does a great deal of good in attending poor people and being very generous and charitable to them on occasions'.²⁶

In writing his answers to the rural queries, Poole understood exactly how the returns would be analysed in Whitehall because, as we have seen, he had done the job himself whilst working for Rickman. He also probably knew from Rickman the thinking of the Poor Law Commissioners and how in his answers he could bolster the views he himself subscribed to whilst at the same time giving no support to those he opposed. The very full answers given by Poole give a fascinating and detailed snapshot of Nether Stowey in 1832, a year in which nationally, poor law expenditure had again reached £7m.²⁷ The answers begin with a factual description of the parish.

Nether Stowey was a parish of 1,100 acres, of which 500 were arable and 540 pasture, the rest was presumably moor or

woodland. About half of the land was owned by the lord of the manor and the remaining half was 'a good deal divided'. Many cottages were owned by the person whose land they were on, but some labourers, particularly masons and carpenters, owned their own cottages and some of the better cottages had gardens. According to Poole some of the tradesman's cottages were often built 'on speculation'. This suggests that the builders knew that tradesmen were doing well, locally, and that if they put up cottages they could easily sell them. It appears that the great Georgian boom in speculative city building had its diminutive equivalent in Nether Stowey.

The total population of Nether Stowey, in 1831, was 778. There were 126 agricultural labourers, 50 of whom were between 10 and 20 years old. These labourers were mostly employed on piece rather than hourly rates and weekly wages were on average 9s a week in summer and 8s in winter if they were given free meat plus beer or cider by the farmer. If free sustenance was not given they were paid 18s a week in the summer when most work was needed and 9s for the rest of the year. For comparison the average winter wage in Somerset as a whole was also 9s²⁸ and for the whole of England and Wales the commonest winter wages were 9s or 10s a week.²⁹ So Stowey is typical in this respect. In Nether Stowey, married and single labourers were paid the same wage and Poole estimated that the average labourer could, with harvest work, earn £27 6s a year.

Women and children were also employed in agriculture and in summer women could earn from 3s to 5s a week and children under 16 from 1s to 3s a week. Their wages were similar in winter but then no beer or cider was provided. In July and August they picked whortleberries (bilberries) on the Quantock hills; this practice lasted a long time. Whortleberries were sold commercially in this district right into the 1960s. Poole also remarked that there was always employment for women and children at the silk mill in the adjoining parish of Over Stowey. This is well illustrated by the Nether Stowey vestry minutes of 13 July 1822, which record: 'Leachs girl to have clothing in order that she might be sent to Mr Wards manufactory at Marsh Mills'.³⁰ This manufactory is also referred to in written evidence supplied by a Mr Watts of Over Stowey in a report to

Parliament in 1843: 'from 1812 to 1834 I was employing several hundreds of female children and adults of this neighbourhood in throwing silk'.³¹ Throwing involved twisting threads together using a rotating wheel. The threads originated from posts about 30 yards away and a new length of untwisted threads was stretched across the space by a child taking them between wheel and posts.

According to Poole, in a typical labouring family, as specified by the questions in the rural queries, that is a father, wife and four children of 14, 11, 8 and 5 years of age, whereby the eldest a boy, the wife and children could contribute £14 6s annually to the family income. All included, the family had a total annual income of £41 12s. Poole then remarked, 'Almost all of our children, from 3 to 4 years old, attend a daily school until they are 9'. This was almost certainly written with great pride as in 1813 he had built the village school and continued to support it. It is worth noting that Poole stated it was not 'the' children but 'our' children, which is typical of Poole's affection for people and parish.³²

The rural queries also tackled the expenditure of the poor. It is difficult to compare these with modern prices but Porter suggests that the figures should be multiplied by 70-80 to get a modern equivalent price.³³ Rents on cottages in Nether Stowey varied from 10s to £2 10s per year. The queries did not request information on the prices of specific commodities, however we are lucky in Nether Stowey that we also have the diary of William Holland the rector of the neighbouring parish of Over Stowey. From this diary we can obtain some of the prices in the district in between 1800 and 1818: cabbage plants cost 2s per 100, a bag of potatoes 3s 6d, a bag of apples 1s 6d, beef 8d per pound, whole lamb 11s, roasting pig 3s 6d, two ducks 4s, 26 sole, an eel and some shrimps 1s, and herring 6d per dozen.³⁴ The period 1818 to 1832 was one of mild deflation, so these prices are probably also representative of 1832.³⁵ The price of salmon showed huge fluctuations. Holland remarks 'Salmon at Bridgewater at two shillings per pound, I remember it at fourpence and scarce ever above sixpence, tis strange this alteration in a few years'.³⁶ With the annual income of £41 12s quoted above, the poor of Stowey could, according to Poole,

subsist by eating bread, potatoes, pig-meat and occasional other animal food 'and the various necessities such as tea and sugar'. It is interesting to note that tea and sugar were by 1831 regarded as necessities for the poor, at least at Nether Stowey. In addition to this expenditure on rents and food, labourers in Stowey apparently still had enough to pay 20s to be members of the men's and women's friendly society which had been established by Poole himself in 1806.

If this was the life of those who could subsist on what they earned then what of those who could not? As we have seen the parish was responsible for its own poor, who were given relief from the poor rate levied on those who rented land or held property in the parish. This relief could come in many forms: allowances to supplement wages, payment in kind such as flour or bread, regular weekly payments, single payments for little crises such as no money for children's shoes and big emergencies such as death or injury. Help was either in the form of a grant or a loan. Instances of all of these can be found in the Nether Stowey vestry minute book from 1821 to 1864. For example, on 13 July 1822 we read 'agreed at a Vestry held this day for settling the Poor accounts, Thos Poole Esq President that mount Stephans Sho' have given him half towards a pair of shoes'.³⁷

There was always an attempt by the vestry to find work for the able bodied. In Nether Stowey the Surveyor of the Highways, one of a number of rotated parish offices, employed those out of work in mending the roads. When this paid work was not available there were generally four or five unemployed in the parish. Poole noted that in Nether Stowey labourers were not apportioned out to the occupiers by the parish. However labourers were sometimes assisted by the parish in paying their rents.

In the week before Poole completed his answers, 16 individuals were receiving relief, and assistance was given to 24 families. An allowance of a shilling or two per week was given to labourers who had two or three children incapable of work. In 1795 the justices of the peace at Speenhamland in Berkshire had published a scale in which allowances to the poor were proportionate to the current price of bread. This scale had been

adopted in other parts of the country, but there was a feeling in Parliament that it had led to an increase in the cost of the poor rate. Poole noted in his reply that in Nether Stowey reliefs and allowances were not given out according to any set scale. Poole says each case was considered on its own merits and, in response to another question, he noted 'As much attention as can be practicably useful is paid to the character of the applicant and causes of his distress'. The question about the moral character of the applicant highlights one common contemporary view that there were both deserving and undeserving poor.

At this time there was the feeling amongst the propertied classes that the system of allowances was making the poor lazy. Poole disagreed and in the questionnaire where it asked if labourers worked as hard as they had in former times, Poole replied 'I am not aware that they are worse: they are very good workmen now and will labour with admirable industry and energy when duly paid'. This is typical of Poole who always thought well of most local people and was highly respected by them. This was also the view of Mr Ward, the manufacturer of silk at Over Stowey, who stated:

What experience I have obtained has given me on the whole a very favourable opinion of them in comparison with those immediately above them: and considering the scantiness of their diet and their insufficiency of clothing, their health and strength of body, their activity of mind and contented cheerfulness are to my mind very surprising.³⁸

His neighbour, the vicar of Over Stowey, William Holland, thought differently and wrote in his diary for 29 Oct. 1799 'The Somersetshire people are of a large size and strong but in my opinion very slow and lazy and discontented and humoursome and very much given to eating and drinking'.³⁹ It is amusing to speculate on what Mr Ward may have thought of him.

Poor relief was divided into two main parts, outdoor relief in which the poor stayed in their own homes and indoor relief in which they were sent to the workhouse. According to Poole there was no workhouse in Stowey but there was a house in which some infirm poor lived who received a weekly allowance of money. He also stated how in Stowey the poor rate was not

used to add money allowances to wages. This answer probably reflects his wariness of the political agenda behind the question. The authors of the queries believed that allowances to supplement wages reduced the level of wages farmers were prepared to pay. In modern times Boyer has found some statistical evidence for the belief that allowances reduced the general level of wages.⁴⁰

As mentioned in the introduction, poor relief was doled out by the overseers of the poor who were individuals appointed by the parish vestry. Poole himself was the parish overseer in 1801 and in a letter to Coleridge he explained that he could not travel whilst he held this position.⁴¹ The vestry were occupants of the parish on whom the poor rate was levied to provide relief for the poor and as the name suggests meetings often took place in the parish's vestry room. Nether Stowey had an open vestry meeting which clergy and overseers had a duty to attend but all ratepayers were allowed to attend if they so wished. The vestry minute book shows that Thomas Poole often served as 'president' at the vestry meetings.⁴² Some parishes appointed a 'Select Vestry', a small committee of the wealthiest occupiers. The idea behind this was that, as the major contributors to the poor rate, they would be more severe on paupers and thus reduce the expenditure. In England only 10% (and in the West Country only 13%) of parishes replying to the queries had a select vestry, so in this respect Nether Stowey was typical in not having one.⁴³

A salaried assistant overseer to help the unpaid parish overseers could also be appointed under the 1818 and 1819 acts. In 1832, in the West Country as a whole, 18% of those parishes who replied had an assistant overseer. In England as a whole it was 21%.⁴⁴ According to Poole, there had been an assistant overseer of the poor for many years 'much to the advantage of the parish'. Nether Stowey was not alone in this, other parishes in the south and south west had done so, for example Chew Magna appointed its first assistant overseer in 1769.⁴⁵ The assistant overseer in Stowey received a salary of £10 10s and acted under the direction of the vestry and in emergencies under the direction of the voluntary overseers.

The annual poor rates in Nether Stowey were about 2s 6d per pound of the rack rent (the open market rent). Poole noted that the rate had increased by 12% over the last year due to 'casualties' which he hoped would not occur again. This reply suggests that Poole was not anxious to bolster the idea that there had been a progressive rise in the poor rate over the years, perhaps fearing repressive national legislation against the poor. He noted 'The Cottages in which Labourers *'belonging to the Parish reside'* are exempt from Rates and such Labourers are sometimes assisted by the parish in paying their Rents'. These exemptions were common in the West Country. In Dorset, Hampshire, Wiltshire and West Sussex 94% of parishes frequently, or occasionally, exempted labouring families and poor parishioners from paying the poor rates; 71% of parishes paid or subsidised the house rents of such people.⁴⁶ In addition 'With the concurrence of the Justices' (of which Poole was one) the poor were excused from paying the assessments on the cottages where they lived, providing they did not occupy or own other property. This was how the poor rate was spent, but how was it collected?

The amount of money needed each year for poor relief was decided by the parishioners assembled in the vestry duly convened by the overseers of the poor. The calling of a vestry meeting to assess this was 'considered as a matter of grace on their part (*the overseers*) they being by law authorised to make assessments as money is wanted'. In 1831 the total poor rate collected in Nether Stowey was £345 per year, or 8s 10d per head of population, less than national average of 10s 1d.⁴⁷ The amount paid by each ratepayer was ascertained by an assessment made of every property by the unanimous consent of the occupiers. This sounds much more consultative than what occurred elsewhere, where ratepayers would often pack vestry meetings to protest at new valuations. At Bampton, Oxfordshire a dispute of this kind carried on for two years.⁴⁸ Of course nobody liked paying the poor rate and the Nether Stowey vestry minutes contain lists of those in arrears who were likely to be referred to the magistrates.

Some of the rural queries opened the way for the respondent to give their opinions and suggestions regarding the current and

future operation of the poor laws. Feeling himself somewhat of an authority on the subject Poole did not hesitate to comment. He asserted that discontinuing the 'family' allowances to the poor would be impracticable, in other words, they would starve. The commissioners asked 'Do you know of any cases in which the Clause of Mr Sturges Bourne's Act (59 Geo III c12, s29) enabling Relief to be made by way of Loan and has this been acted upon'. Poole replied

I know of no instance in which it has been formally acted upon but nothing is more common than Paupers who have a shilling or two a week being advanced a pound or two in anticipation of their pay to aid in discharging their rent or any other emergency.

Poole was of the opinion that if the allowance was not given to the father but rather if the parish took charge of the children, both employing and feeding them, then this would encourage early marriages and produce large families. Presumably he thought that having the father maintain responsibility for his family ensured probity of living. It is interesting to note Poole's view that this provision of the act had not been formally acted upon. This illustrates very well how these national poor law acts permitted actions at parish level but did not order or enforce them.

If the vestry, or the overseers, refused to give relief to a poor person then that person could appeal to the local magistrate whose decision was final. Poole wrote

In obvious cases the relief is at once allowed by the Vestry. When the vestry refuses, the Pauper summonses the Overseers and they abide by the recommendation of a bench of Magistrates.

Following these appeals, orders giving an allowance were rare in Nether Stowey. The commissioners then went on to enquire what would be the effect if the vestry decision was made final. Poole replied 'It would almost amount to the giving of no appeal at all; and in the meantime the Poor may perish'. The next question asked what would be the effect if magistrates were not allowed to order relief for those persons who refused to enter the workhouse or poor house. Poole thought this would

be an excellent provision except when the pauper depended wholly on pay from the parish and when, in cases of emergency, a prompt advance of money was required.

The queries also contained questions concerning the 'Emigration and Settlement' laws. As we have seen the Georgian parish was expected to look after its own parishioners from birth to death. This responsibility included relieving the poor in the parish, but only those poor who had a legal right to 'settlement'. No monies normally came from the county or national level. A person was deemed to possess a settlement in a parish if he fulfilled at least one of the following: birth in the parish, or if a bastard having a father settled there, being hired as a covenant servant for a year there, apprenticed there, renting a house there, or in the case of a girl marrying a husband settled there.⁴⁹

Those paying the poor rate were unwilling to give the right of 'belonging' to the parish or 'settlement' to incomers too easily. This often gave rise to squabbles between parishes as to their responsibility for a particular pauper. In Stowey there were 27 non parishioners including a 'Scotchman', a gardener and 'a poor Irish Vagrant woman who has fixed herself here, and has a weekly allowance from the parish'. This latter remark seems to indicate generosity on the part of the Nether Stowey authorities because they would not have been bound by law or custom to pay her. Asked to comment on the Settlement Law, Poole suggested that settlement should not be attainable by hiring, service or apprenticeship. However, renting a property at '£20 a year should confer settlement, purchasing a tenement of £60 value (instead of £30) should have the same effect'. Poole also thought it was a good idea that parishes should be able to raise a tax to help the poor who wish to leave the parish, but such a person should thereafter cease to have any claims on his place of settlement.

A particular cause of concern in parishes was who should pay for the upkeep of a bastard if the father could not be found. Poole made the problem clear. When asked if the bastardy laws should be restored, Poole stated

The Bastardy laws appear to be sufficient if duly enforced which is not often done. The Bastard should follow his mother's settlement: frauds are frequent, by surreptitiously introducing women with child belonging to one parish into another to lie in.

Poole did not reply to the question which asked both how many bastards had been supported in each of the last five years, and the total cost of that support. Perhaps the figures for Stowey were high and Poole thought they would add too much fuel to the flame of reform. One of the questions asked, if the allowance received by a woman for a bastard was enough to repay her for keeping it. Poole was of the opinion that it was not. A resolution recorded in the Nether Stowey vestry minute book for 30 March 1836 gives us some idea of the going rate 'Betty Cummins do receive 6d pr week from this time for her Bast'd child belonging to Robt West instead of 1/- per week as paid her up to this time'.⁵⁰ A recent analysis of all the answers for the whole country suggests that 1/- was rather on the mean side, the statistical mode payment was 18d, the lowest 12d and the highest 42d.⁵¹ However, the Stowey vestry, or Robert West, could well have been supporting Betty in other ways. Recently Lyle has shown quantitatively that the weekly relief paid countrywide for bastards was in direct proportion to the average regional winter wage, and amounted to the equivalent of a day's wage.⁵²

The first of two final problems tackled by the queries concerned the keeping of written parish accounts. The practice was notoriously variable as any local historian will know.⁵³ Poole suggested that the poor accounts for the parish should be published at least twice a year and that there should be a uniform method for keeping and publishing them. The second problem concerned 'Riots and Burnings' and the 53rd and last question requests information respecting the causes and consequences of the agricultural riots and burning of 1830 and 1831 (Captain Swing Riots). Poole stated that there were neither riots nor burnings in the Stowey neighbourhood and that he has no information on the subject. This again fits with Poole's probable intention of portraying that all was well in his bailiwick so as to enhance his reputation as a J.P. and to avoid

encouraging trenchant reforms which might damage the poor. However, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, in an earlier food crisis in 1801 the West Country had been involved. In a letter to Coleridge, Poole remarks ‘the men of Stogursey and the neighbouring parishes joined the people here and patrolled the country’. ‘They committed no violence . . . the people succeeded in lowering the price of provisions’, and ‘we see the people doing what the Government dared not do’.⁵⁴

With his answer to the last and 53rd question Poole must have laid down his pen with relief at an onerous task completed. Now, he could only await with trepidation the Act of Parliament soon to follow. As a liberal reformer and local benefactor he had probably trimmed his answers as much as he could to avoid an even harsher fate befalling the poor of his beloved Stowey.

1. J. Ayers, *Paupers and pig killers. The diary of William Holland a Somerset parson 1799-1818* (1984), 47.
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MARTIN MCDONAGH

7. THE LONGEVITY OF GREENVILLE COLLINS'S CHARTS OF THE DORSET COAST, 1693-c.1800. In 1681 Captain Greenville Collins (1644-1694) was appointed by King Charles the Second to survey the coast of Great Britain.¹ His work was the first attempt at a national hydrographic survey of Home Waters, and was eventually published in 1693 as *Great Britain's coasting pilot* (referred to hereafter as *Pilot*).² This article considers the areas Collins surveyed on the Dorset coast and the possible reasons why he may have chosen some locations to survey in more detail than others. It also explores how Collins's charts were used and perceived during the century after they were published.

Collins's survey did not cover the whole of the British coast by any means, but the Dorset coastline did receive some attention. Collins only included one large scale chart of part of the Dorset coast, covering the area from Chesil Beach to Lulworth Cove. The rest of the Dorset coast can be seen on two general small scale charts of the English Channel in his *Pilot*.³ He also included views of the Dorset coast, all of which contain a perspective of Portland, which are all very general and give little indication of any man-made structures. To supplement this he wrote descriptions of the harbours of 'Pool', Lulworth, Portland, Weymouth and 'Lime' (Lyme-Regis) in the sailing directions which accompany the published surveys.⁴ An extract from the general chart of the English Channel dedicated 'To the Right Honourable The Lords Commissioners for Executing the Office of Lord High Admiral of England This Mapp is most humbly Dedicated and Presented by Capt Greenville Collins' showing the whole coast of Dorset is included as illustration 1. However, this general chart dedicated to their Lordships was only published in the first edition of Collins's *Pilot*⁵ and did not

appear in the (second) 1723 edition,⁶ perhaps because it was not considered to be of sufficient navigational value.

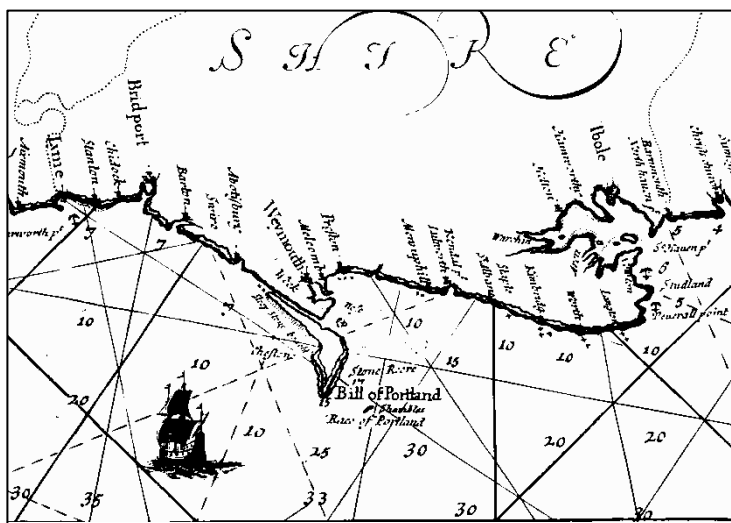


Illustration 1: An extract of the Dorset coast from Collins's general chart of the English Channel (Pilot, 1693 edition, private collection)

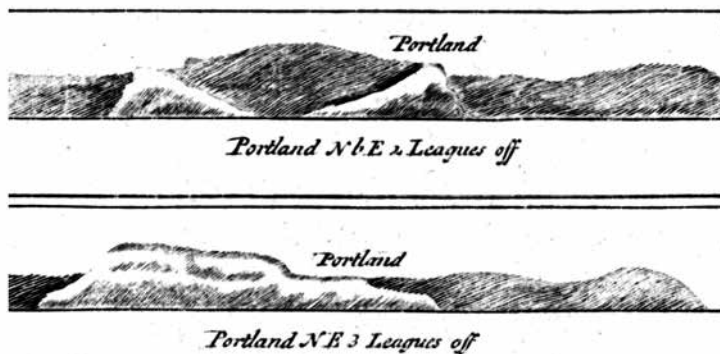


Illustration 2: An extract of the Dorset coast from Collins's coastal views showing two different perspectives of Portland (Pilot, 1693 edition, private collection)

Illustration 3 outlines the limits of Collins's published charts in his *Pilot* of 1693, across the south coast of England. His chart scheming was rather *ad hoc*, with some areas surveyed in greater detail than others. There are some notable gaps. For instance, why did he survey Portland in such detail but only included Poole in the sailing directions⁷ and not survey it? Perhaps the minor ports along the coast were not considered as important to survey in greater detail, or maybe the general charts of the English Channel provided enough information, therefore negating the need for smaller scale charts of particular harbours.⁸

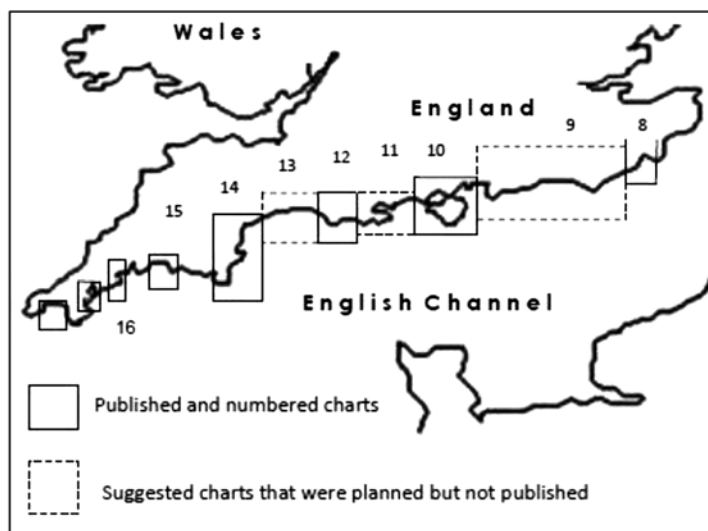


Illustration 3: Diagram showing the coverage of Collins's surveys along the south coast of England (Emma Down)

Part of the answer lies in the sailing directions prepared by Collins. Under the description of 'Pool', Collins wrote 'I have not as yet survey'd *Pool* Harbour, but 'tis intended God-willing', suggesting that he deliberately left some ports to come back and survey later.⁹ This is reflected in Collins's numbering of his charts in his *Pilot*. The numbers assigned to the charts for the south coast of England are not consecutive, as shown in

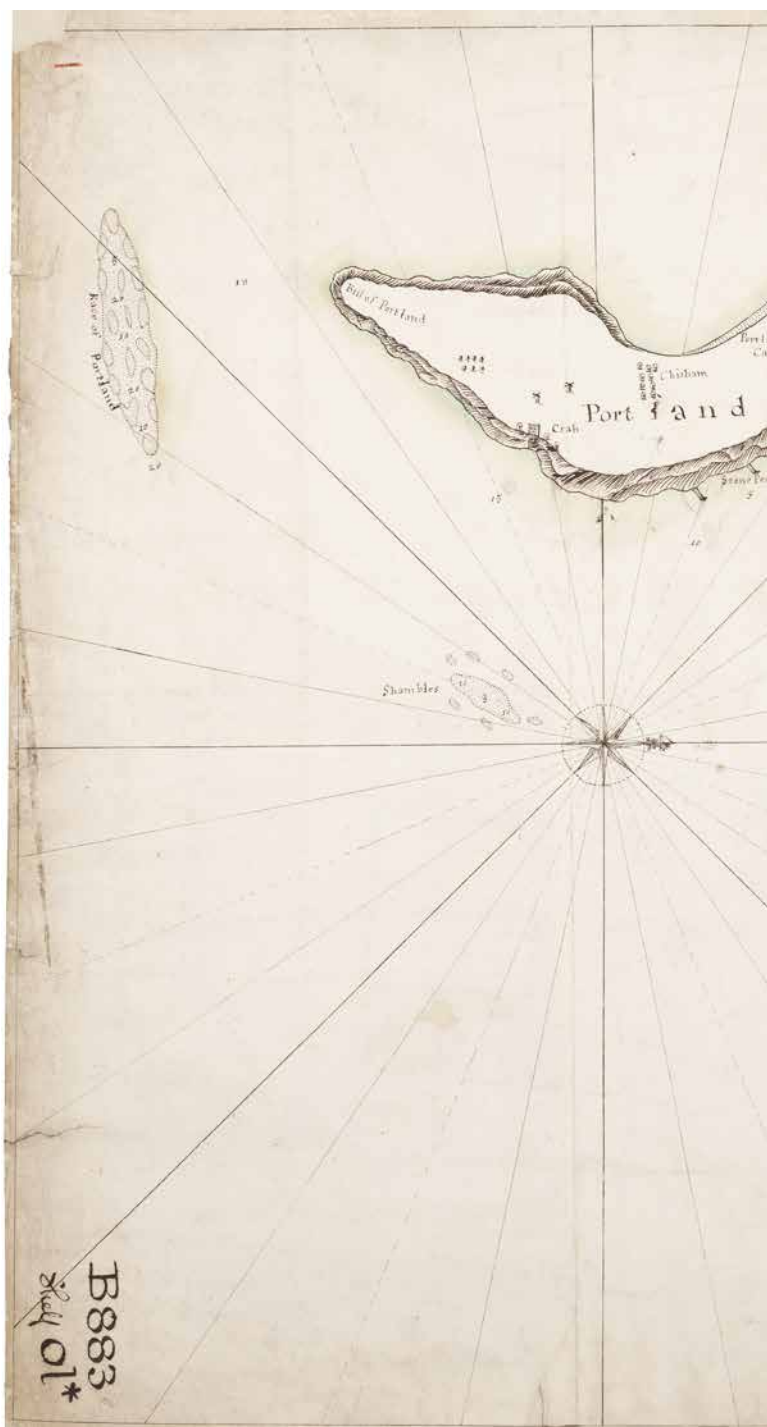


Illustration 4: Collins's original manuscript fair sheet of Portlan

illustration 3, indicating that Collins probably left the numbers to fill in at a later date; chart 11, if it was ever published, would have covered Poole. Unfortunately Collins was never able to complete his survey, for a number of reasons, before his death in 1694.¹⁰

It is interesting that Collins chose the area of Portland and Weymouth as the first place along the Dorset coast to depict in more detail, see illustration 4 in the centre pages.¹¹ This may have been due to the stone industry at Portland and the large amount of shipping that frequented the harbour to move the stone along the coast. A survey of this area would have been very beneficial to shipping, and reflective of the rationale behind Collins's *Pilot*, the intent of which was 'to give Directions to Mariners to sail along the Coast of *Great-Britain*, and how to carry a Ship into any Harbour, River, Port, Road, Bay, or Creek with safety, and how to avoid all Danger known'.¹² It also provided mariners with a detailed description of The Shambles and other dangers, such as Portland Race, to avoid when entering Portland Road.¹³

It is also significant that the survey is dedicated to George St Lo (1658-1718),¹⁴ see illustration 5. The St Lo family originated from Wiltshire, but George's father settled in Dorset at Little Fontmel.¹⁵ George had been a captain in the Royal Navy, but had been forced to end his career through injury by the time Collins published his *Pilot*.¹⁶ He was, however, a subscriber to Collins's *Pilot* and therefore supported its publication.¹⁷ After his Naval career he took on many administrative and political posts, later becoming the parliamentary representative for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis between 1701-1705.¹⁸ By dedicating this chart to St Lo, Collins could have been acknowledging some form of patronage, or recognition of some other connection between the two men. The cartouche also depicts a rural farming scene, most likely from the local area, partially derived from cartouches (such as appears in the map of Durham) in volume five of Joan Blaeu's *Atlas major*, published in Amsterdam in 1662; see illustration 6.



Illustration 5: Cartouche on Collins's published survey of Portland with dedication to George St Lo (Pilot, 1693 edition, private collection)



Illustration 6: Cartouche depicting a farming scene (Pilot, 1693 edition, private collection)

At the time of its publication Collins's *Pilot* was not always well received.¹⁹ Despite this, the publication went through more than a dozen editions during the eighteenth century and was used by mariners, both merchant and naval.²⁰ Evidence for its use by mariners can be seen in the remark books of Royal Navy ships sailing along the south coast of England during the second half of the eighteenth century, in which Collins's sailing directions are often referred to as the authority for sailing in and out of ports and harbours.²¹ For example, in the remark book of H.M.S. *Wasp* by Commander George Talbot and W. Horten,

from 29 July 1763 to 6 April 1764 the sailing directions for Plymouth simply state ‘See Collins for the best Directions’, which is testament to the accuracy and longevity of his work, undertaken in the 1680s.²²

However, Collins’s description of the Dorset coast does not seem to receive such praise, with mariners often taking the time to add their own descriptions of the coastline, rather than referring to Collins. In the remark book of H.M.S. *Wasp*, which praised Collins’s description of Plymouth, Talbot and Horten dismiss Collins’s mark for avoiding The Shambles in favour of another: ‘Waymouth castle is the mark by Collins and is a very good one but the Church stands higher on the land is plainer to be seen and carry you a Little more to the eastward of the Shambles’.²³ Similarly, John Coston, Master of H.M. Cutter *Ranger* added more detail in his remarks compiled from 8 December 1787 to 24 October 1788: ‘in running for Portland road to keep clear of the Et [east] End the mark is Wyke Church which stands inland above Weymouth open with the NE [north east] end of Portland when the Folley Barn is on with the NE [north east] End then you are on the shoalest part of them’.²⁴ Although not critical of Collins’s sailing directions, it does indicate that mariners did not rely solely on his chart and used other navigational aids alongside his sailing directions.

The same is true of Brownsea Island. Collins did not specifically refer to the island in his sailing directions, but he did mention that ‘Pool is a Bar-Haven’.²⁵ In the extract below John Wilby, lieutenant of H.M.S. *Expedition* refers to Collins’s ‘drafts’ as being of some use in navigating around Brownsea Island in August 1786, but also states the need for a pilot, suggesting that Collins’s sailing directions were not sufficient alone. This is an interesting statement, as Collins had died before he could conduct a survey of Poole harbour. Perhaps Wilby was referring to another ‘draft’, by someone other than Collins, which had been inserted into a later edition of Collins’s *Pilot*:

[Column heading] Best directions for Sailing into or out of Ports
and for avoiding Dangers

Barr Harbour. Dangerous of Access without a Pilot; being upon the Barr only 10 or 11 feet at low water and sometimes shifts. Marks for Sailing in refer to Collins Drafts.

[Column Heading] Marks for Anchoring

Good Roadstead and sheltered from all Winds. There are 4 Heads and 4 Ebbs in the 24 hours, the first at 9 the last at ½ past 11. At the Barr flows regular 9 full and Change.

[Column Heading] Provisions and Refreshments

To be had from the Contractor at Poole about 3 Miles distance from the Roadstead.

[Column Heading] Trade, Shipping etc

Newfoundland Fisherry.²⁶

Where Collins's sailing directions were more scant, such as for the area of Swanage and Studland, mariners had to find their own 'marks' for navigating, which they often recorded in their remark books. John Dykes, master aboard H.M.S. *Winchelsea*, recorded this for Swanage Bay on 28 April 1787:

[*Column heading*] Best Directions for Sailing into or out of Ports and for Avoiding Dangers

Swanage Bay is tolerable good anchorage. The wind anyway to the Westward of SW [south west]. You must not go too far in the ground being hurt by rubbish and Ballast thrown overboard. You will lay in 7 or 8 fathoms very clear and very good holding ground.

Be careful in haroling into the bay round Peveral Point or ledge and come no nearer than 5 fathoms. The mark to know when you are past it is to open the Church Tower (which is low and has a window in it) to the Northward of the Parsonage House then you are past the Ledge.

[*Column heading*] Marks for Anchoring

Peverel point SWBS [South West by South] and Old Harry NE [North East] in 7 fms [fathoms] fine sand off shore about ½ a Mile.²⁷

Similar remarks were made by John Wilby, lieutenant of H.M.S. *Expedition*, for Studland Bay on 2 August 1786:

[*Column heading*] Best directions for Sailing into or out of Ports and for avoiding Dangers

Good anchorage in Westerly Winds for small vessels in 6 fathms [fathoms] about 5 Leags [leagues] WSW [west south west] from the Needles. The Dangers from thence is Christchurch Ledge but so close in shore that vessels seldom go near it. The Church open on either side of the Head will take you clear of it, and keep the Church above the Land.

[*Column heading*] Marks for Anchoring

Old Harry SbW [South by West] The Hummocks above the Village of Studland.²⁸

The same is also true for Lulworth Bay. Collins wrote a very brief description of the bay: 'Four Leagues to the westward of Peverly Point is a small Cove called Lulworth, where small vessels may Ride',²⁹ whereas John Dykes, master of H.M.S. *Winchelsea*, wrote a much more lengthy description in April 1787:

[*Column heading*] Best Directions for sailing into, or out of Ports and for Avoiding Dangers

A small bay about half way between St Albans and Weymouth under a castle of that name. There is east and west Lulworth both of them well be care and shelter costers [coasters]. East Lulworth is the safest for Kings ships to anchor in. You will be open from Se [south east] to WSW [west south west], it is good chalky bottom clear of rocks and regular soundings from 20 to 8 or 6 fathoms. The marks to know where to anchor is a Gentleman's house w^h you will see coming in from sea. You will open it down a valey that leads to Mill Bay where you have opened the House right with the valey you are in good anchoring ground. The coast is clear and bold all along with regular soundings. This place is famous for smuggling and the wind from SE [south east], North to West make landing tolerable easy.

[*Column heading*] Marks for Anchoring

The Bill of Portland WBS [West by South] 4 or 5 Leagues. St Albans Point SEBS [South east by South] 3 or 4 Leagues in 11 fathm [fathoms].

[*Column heading*] Fortifications

A small battery at East Lulworth made by the inhabitance [inhabitants] nearly to prevent the Castle from being plundered. The Castle is the seat of a Mr Wild a Catholic and there are few seats superior to it in England.³⁰

As time progressed other charts and sailing directions were produced of the Dorset coast which superseded Collins's work, for example James Avery's chart from St Albans to Arundel, published in 1721 and Thomas Badeslade's chart from Lyme Regis to Swanage, published 1725.³¹ Despite this Collins's *Pilot* was the standard reference work until later surveys undertaken in the 1780s by Lieutenant Murdoch Mackenzie junior were published.³² This is testament to his achievements and his *Pilot* was still being used in the 1790s and early 19th century.

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2. G. Collins, *Great Britain's Coasting Pilot* (1693).
3. Collins, *Pilot* (1693), plates 4-7.
4. Collins, *Pilot* (1693), 4-5.
5. Collins, *Pilot* (1693), plates 4-7.
6. Collins, *Pilot* (1723). This is the first modified reprint of the 1693 edition, in which several charts were replaced by more recent ones produced by other surveyors.
7. Collins, *Pilot* (1693), 4-5.
8. Collins, *Pilot* (1693) plates 4-7.
9. Collins, *Pilot* (1693), 4-5.
10. E. Baigent, 'Collins, Greenville', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography at www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5938.
11. The original fair sheet manuscript of this survey is preserved in the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office Archive (hereafter U.K.H.O.) under reference B883. The manuscript depicts all the navigational features of the published chart, but the cartouche is not present.
12. Collins, *Pilot* (1753), 'The preface to the Reader'.
13. Collins, *Pilot* (1693), plate 12.
14. P. MacDougall, 'St Lo, George', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (O.D.N.B.) at www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24519.
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16. MacDougall, 'St Lo, George', O.D.N.B..
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 22. U.K.H.O., M.P. 29, Item 18, pp. 146-167.
 23. U.K.H.O., M.P. 29, Item 18, pp. 147-148.
 24. U.K.H.O., M.P. 95, Item 37, pp. 304-306.
 25. Collins, *Pilot* (1693), p. 4.
 26. U.K.H.O., M.P. 93, Item 52, pp. 387-388.
 27. U.K.H.O., M.P. 32, Item 16, p. 99.
 28. U.K.H.O., M.P. 93, Item 52, pp. 385-386.
 29. Collins, *Pilot*, (1693), p. 4.
 30. U.K.H.O., M.P. 32, Item 16, pp. 91-92.
 31. Robinson, *Marine Cartography*, 169.
 32. Robinson, *Marine Cartography*, 178-9.

ADRIAN WEBB AND EMMA DOWN

8. SIR EDWARD HEXT (c.1550-1624) AND HIS ALMSHOUSES. Hext’s Almshouses in West Street, Somerton, originally completed in 1626, bear witness to the benevolence of a considerable man – a wealthy landowner, magistrate, and MP, with a great concern for the poor. He died in 1624 before they were finished, but they gave a home to eight men, chosen by his widow Dyonisia, or Denise (and later by her successors) – four from Somerton, two from High or Low Ham, and two from Langport. The constitution, drawn up by his widow with some advice, said they had to be over fifty, say daily prayers, and attend divine service. They were given two shillings a week, a coat at Christmas and an allowance of coal (‘Mendipp coles’).¹ The building is made from shaped blue lias stone, with Ham stone surrounds for the doors, windows and inset seats in double niches. At the rear, now much altered, are four large tapering chimneys. A stone slab insert on the front wall bears the Hext coat of arms (a tower between three battleaxes) and the inscription ‘He hath dispersed abroad and given to the poor, his benevolence remaineth forever’.



Hext's Almshouse (Author)

The houses² were extensively remodelled in 1883, when the internal spaces were cut down from 8 to 4, and the doors of the even numbers were bricked up.³ Another overhaul took place in 1967, when the sculleries at the back were replaced by new kitchens and bathrooms. More houses for the elderly were later added in a courtyard to the rear.⁴

Sir Edward was close to the Phelips family of Montacute⁵ (he made Sir Robert Phelips one of the trustees of a deed of endowment in 1622) and to the Wadhams of Ilton. He was one of the two overseers of Nicholas Wadham's will. When Dorothy Wadham wrote to her half-brother John, Lord Petre, in Feb. 1609/10, that she was minded to employ the architect/mason William Arnold to design and build Wadham College, she said he had been recommended by Sir Edward Phelips. She added that Sir Edward Hext had come to see her at Edge, near Branscombe, 'to the hazard of his helthe, being verie yll', and she had briefed him fully about the situation.⁶ A document drawn up in the same month, an agreement to build the college, names Sir Edward as one of the three sponsors, and Arnold as the architect.⁷ In a long letter to Lord Petre in March 1610, Sir Edward wrote that King James had approved of the plan, and that he, Sir Edward, had given Arnold five pounds for

it, and praises him as 'so wonderfully sought, being in deede the absolutest and honestest workeman in England'.⁸ This makes one wonder whether Arnold had already worked for Hext on his house at Low Ham, on the small church beside it, or later on the almshouses. Unfortunately the house no longer exists, and there are no masons' marks to be found either in the church or on the almshouses.

Sir Edward, described as 'a wealthy Elizabethan magnate',⁹ was born around 1550 and came to the area from Pickwell in Devon in 1596 when he bought an estate at Low Ham¹⁰ and built a house there 'thought one of the best in the West of England'.¹¹ He was a Middle Temple lawyer by profession, and had a life tenancy on chambers there. He married first, Agnes Hunton, and then Dyonisia Stonhouse. With his second wife he had a daughter, Elizabeth. In 1597, towards the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, he was briefly MP for Taunton; he became an M.P. again for the same constituency in 1604 under the new king (when he was knighted), and served for seven years. But he frequently suffered from bouts of ill health. He made at least 19 speeches in this Parliament, moving a motion against hissing, after his first speech was badly received. He served on many committees. Often it was because his legal knowledge was useful in untangling legislative issues. But the leading authority says: 'Hext remained preoccupied with issues of poverty and social regulation'. Some of the matters he dealt with were: the release of poor debtors, the relief of prisoners and the poor, and the regulation of alehouses. He was much less prominent in later sessions, 'probably due to his declining health', and 'he evidently fell out with the Speaker, Sir Edward Phelips'. He was granted unconditional leave of absence in March 1606. And again in March 1610 he was given licence to depart 'being very sick' and took no further part in Westminster politics.¹²

He was Sheriff of Somerset in 1607. He was also an examining magistrate, and from 1607 until the year of his death in 1624, there are numerous records of his work on the bench at the Quarter Sessions.¹³ One extraordinary case he heard in November 1618 was of a conspiracy by four men to kidnap young women to be taken abroad to the colonies; one Owens

Evans was ‘endeavouring to press maidens to be sent to the Bermudas and Virginia’. Forty women were said to have fled Ottery. Hext had Evans arrested, who first claimed to be doing it in his Majesty’s name, but then confessed that this was a lie.¹⁴

It is clear that Hext was concerned about the problem of homelessness, and about local traders. He gave money to build a covered market cross at Somerton, and wrote to the local vicar in 1615 and 1616 to persuade others to contribute. He said he did not want the butchers to get their meat wet, or too hot in the summer – he says ‘I did (out of mine own love of the country) build them a fair shambles . . . which cost me £50’. He was worried that corn traders and wool merchants could not sell their wares in the rain, and says in the letter that he had spent £200 in making a covered corn market. He asked the vicar to note the names of contributors, who would in turn be given a free pitch.¹⁵



A close-up of Hext’s effigy in Low Ham church (Author)

At the end of his life, he wrote that he was 'so weak and feeble as I dare not go out of my parlour from the fire' and that he was coughing all night long.¹⁶ He died in February 1624. He had settled the inheritance of his lands, and left over £300 in bequests in his will. He was buried in Low Ham church, or the 'Church-in-the-Field' beneath a monument he had already had made. His wife joined him there nine years later. Before she died she herself set up a generous scheme to pay for young apprentices to be attached to tradesmen like tailors, blacksmith and shoemakers.¹⁷ The inscription over the tomb is almost the same as that over the front of the almshouses, except that it has been put into the plural. He is in armour with his feet resting on a dog. A notice in the church (which says he acquired Low Ham from Henry, Lord Compton, in 1588) states that he began building the little church in 1620, 'or more likely rebuilding'. Another notice states that a rector in the time of Elizabeth the First, Adrian Schael, wrote of an older church existing in his time, probably Norman. One of the bells dates from before 1350. The style of the windows is not Jacobean, but imitation Gothic. Pevsner stated 'it is one of the most instructive cases of early Gothicism in England'.¹⁸ It is unlike the work of William Arnold. It probably owes much more to Hext's grandson, George Stawell, who restored it in 1668 after the civil war, and to his younger brother, Ralph Stawell, who has an equally impressive monument on the south side of the nave. The church is Grade I listed.

This succession came about because the Hexts' only daughter Elizabeth, after a first marriage to Sir Joseph Killigrew, married Sir John Stawell K.B. of Cothelstone Manor.¹⁹ There is an extant portrait of her, dated 1636, to be seen at Hinton Ampner house.²⁰ She and Sir John had many children, one of whom, Ralph, was created Baron Stawell. He died in 1689, followed three years later by his son John, the second Baron Stawell, who died aged 24 heavily in debt. He it was who pulled down 'a great part of the old seat built by Sir Edward Hext'. Fragments of the old Hext house can be found in the adjacent farm buildings, around the doors and windows, but it is clear that the Stawells set about building an enormous house in the latter part of the seventeenth century. It was

depicted a century later as having five bays and being two and a half storeys high.²¹ When it fell down shortly after 1779 the ruins measured nearly 130 yards long and 30 yards wide. By that time it had passed through the hands of Edith Phelips of Montacute (1723), and her daughter Edith, who married a Mildmay in 1744. Two big arches were removed to the Mildmay estate at Hazlegrove.

The land surrounding the 'Church-in-the-Field' bears witness to the collapse of this piece of Stawell extravagance. On a rising incline, great grooves and hollows, ridges and lines, are evident. There are traces of a rabbit warren, and terraces for a landscaped garden. And besides all that, beneath the field there is a Roman villa, in which was discovered a beautiful mosaic floor showing Aeneas and Dido. The renowned archaeologist Mick Aston has looked at all the early maps, and at the site, and at aerial photographs. He identified springs, and leats which brought water down off the hillside. One of his conclusions was that 'no clear plan of the mansion of 1588-92 can be made out from the 1970 air photograph, but its general alignment seems to have been north-west/south-east with its front facing south-west, perhaps with gardens beyond'.²²

So, alas, the two extant buildings associated with Hext offer no clues about their designers or builders. But they point to the benevolence of a wealthy and capable man, a leading figure in the county of Somerset, who responded generously to the society of his time.

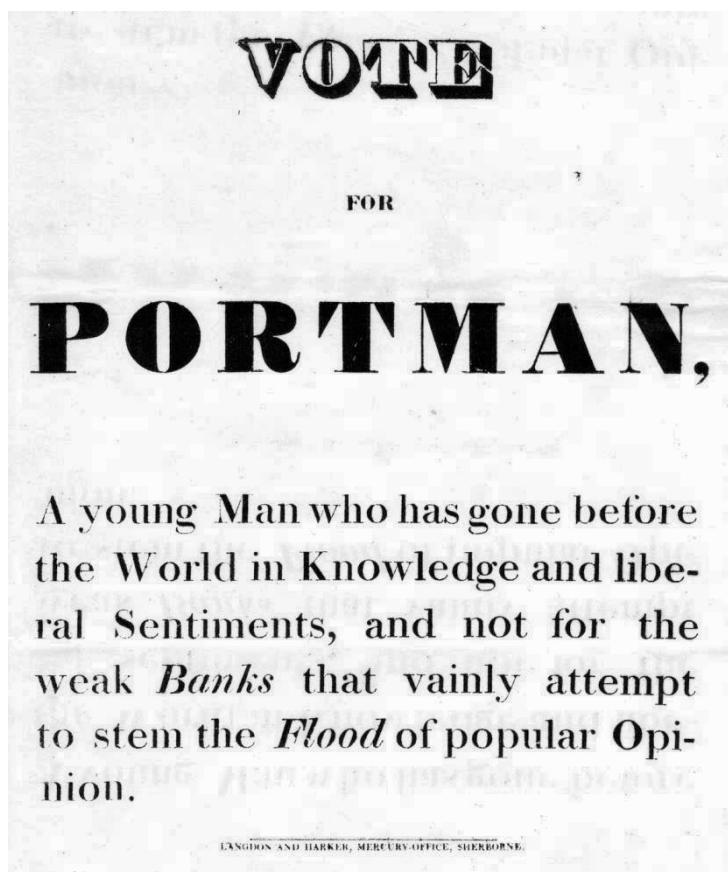
1. Somerset Heritage Centre (S.H.C.), DD/CM 47 Almshouse orders and constitution, 1 Oct. 1635, consisting of 17 clauses governing the choice of pensioners, the trustees, the method of choice, the finances, the necessity of going to church and the penalties for not doing so, and the requirement to keep the ledgers in a strong chest with three locks.
2. Listed by English Heritage Grade II*, ST 4828.
3. S.H.C., D/Psom/17/5/1 Copy of scheme for the regulation of the charity, 22 May 1883.
4. S.H.C., A/BBW Papers relating to Hext's Almshouses, 1954-1975.
5. Several original letters exist between them, and are to be found in the Phelips papers, e.g. DD/PH/219/32 Edward Hext at Netherham, to Sir Robert Phelips, 20 Jan. 1623.
6. Essex Record Office, Petre Papers, D/DP Q13/3/7 dated 10 Feb. 1609/10 and quoted in N. Briggs, 'The Foundation of Wadham College, Oxford' in *Oxoniensa* 21 (1956).
7. S.H.C., D/DP Q13/3/8 dated 27 Feb. 1609/10.
8. S.H.C., D/DP Q13/3/11.

9. M.J. Taylor, ed., *The story of Somerton* (1953).
10. For a history of the estate see R.W. Dunning, ed., *The Poldens and the Levels V.C.H. Somerset* 8, 75
11. Revd J. Collinson, *History of Somerset* 3 (1791), 445
12. J.P. Ferris and P. Hunneyball, *The history of Parliament online 1604-1629*.
13. S.H.C., Q/SR/2, starting October 1607, through to Q/SR/45, over two hundred cases in which he played a part as a magistrate - examinations, petitions, bastardy orders, confessions and settlement examinations.
14. 'Kidnapping Maidens to be sold in Virginia, 1618' in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 6:1 (July 1898); original texts of Sir Edward's report to the Privy Council in the Domestic Correspondence of James the First, Vol. 103 nos. 42 and 87.
15. S.H.C., DD/CH S/2802 box 113. Letter dated 2 Dec. 1615 and acknowledgment of receipts of Feb. 1615/16.
16. S.H.C., DD/PH/224/12 Hext to Sir Robert Phelips, 19 Jan 1623. A long letter, neatly and courteously written.
17. S.H.C., D/P/ham.h/19/3/1-2 Lists of apprentices and masters, 1632 to 1696.
18. N. Pevsner, *The buildings of England South and West Somerset* (1958), 223.
19. Sir John Stawell (1600-1662), three times M.P. for Somerset, was a staunch Royalist, who was expelled from the Commons and imprisoned during the Commonwealth.
20. Portrait of Elizabeth Hext, Lady Stawell (d.1657), by Gilbert Jackson, in the collection of the National Trust at Hinton Ampner, Hampshire.
21. S.H.C., DD/MI 9; DD/MKG 22 and also illustrated in Aston's article (see below).
22. M. Aston 'Gardens and earthworks at Hardington and Low Ham, Somerset' in *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* 122 (1978), 17-26.

PETER HILL

9. THREE UNDATED SOMERSET AND DORSET ELECTION DOCUMENTS. In a private collection of mainly 19th-century election leaflets, squibs and posters predominantly relating to Somerset, with a few Dorset items, are three undated documents. The majority of the collection dates from the 1820s to the 1850s, but three undated items cannot easily be dated, mainly due to the longevity of the printers who produced them and/or the longevity of the people mentioned in the documents.

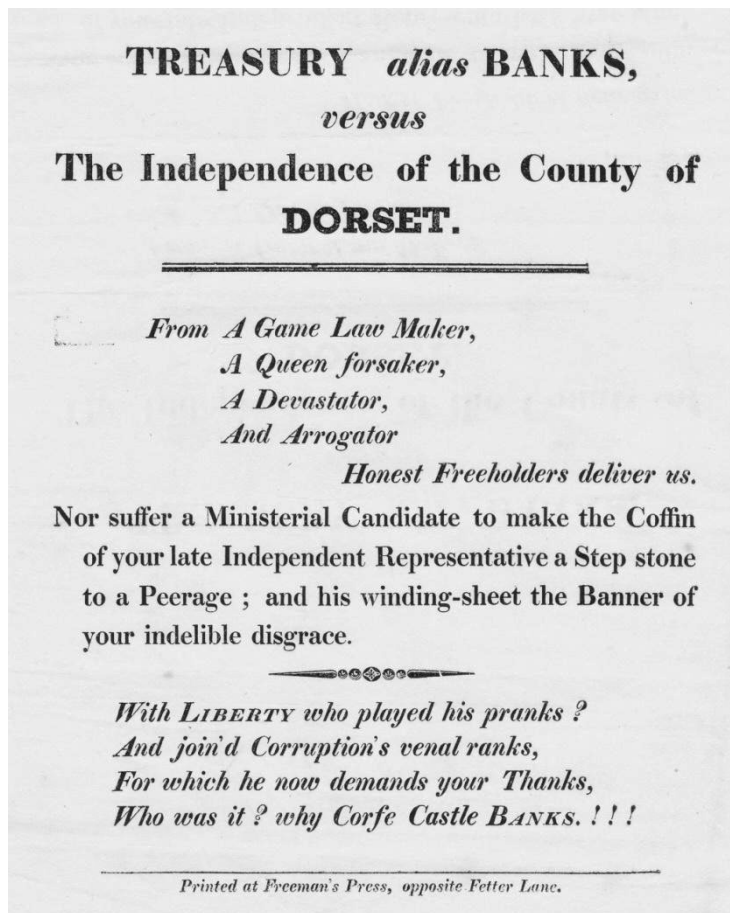
The first, and possibly the earliest, is a small poster, measuring 227 x 275mm, which solicits votes for Edward Berkeley Portman II (1799-1888) and was printed by Langdon and Harker of the Mercury Office, Sherborne. There is no watermark in the paper to help date this item which is reproduced opposite.



A reproduction of the 'Vote for Portman' poster. The original measures 227 x 275mm. (Private collection)

Portman was involved with elections in 1823, 1826 and 1830,¹ and according to the British Book Trades Index (hereafter referred to as BBTI) C. Langdon and J. Harker are not recorded.² However, several examples of a Langdon and Harker imprint can be found from 1820 to 1825, including the printing in 1823 of Roberts' *History of Lyme-Regis, Dorset, from the earliest periods to the present day*.³ Local newspapers show that Harker was in business with John Penny in 1825. Does this document refer to the 1823 election?

The second document can be described as a squibb, or satirical or sarcastic writing, which is reproduced below. Is the reference to 'BANKS' referring to the Lord of the Treasury in 1830, George Banks (1787-1856) who was member of parliament for Corfe Castle (mentioned at the end of the document) from 1816 to 1823 and again from 1826 to 1832?⁴

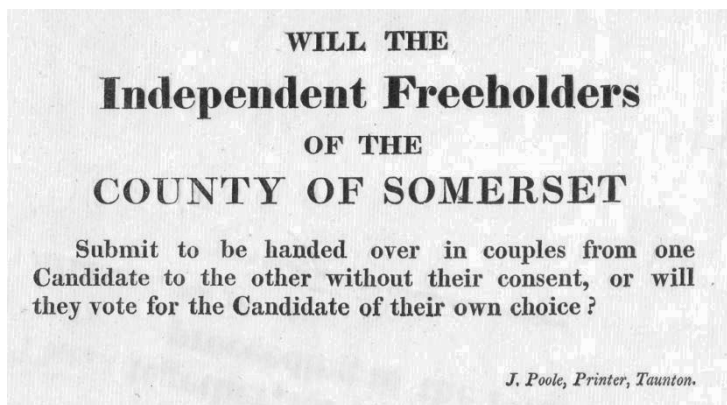


A reproduction of the 'Treasury alias Banks, versus the Independence of the County of Dorset' poster. The original measures 201 x 270mm. (Private collection)

Or does it refer to Henry Banks (1757-1834) who was member of Parliament for Corfe Castle from 1780 until 1826?⁵ It is more likely to have been the former Banks as evidence from newspapers from the early 1830s reflects the language used in the document. The theme of the 'Independence of the County of Dorset' is one that appeared at the time of the 1831 county election, when one newspaper described 'Gentleman of Liberal and Independent Principles, well known in this County'.⁶ Another account later that year mentions the 'Independent Freeholders of the County of DORSET'.⁷

The document was printed at Freeman's Press, opposite Fetter Lane. This is possibly Daniel Freeman, who is known to have been in business from 1829 to 1832, although he was described as an insolvent debtor in June 1830. All of which suggests this particular document may date from the 1831 county election.

The final document is harder to date due to the longevity of the printer, 'J. Poole' of Taunton. BBTI states a John Poole of Fore Street, Taunton was in business from 1778 to 1822 and another man of the same name before 1830. He worked as a printer, publisher, bookseller, bookbinder and as an agent for the Atlas Insurance Company.



*A reproduction of the notice to the 'Independent freeholders of the county of Somerset'. The original measures 211 x 127mm.
(Private collection)*

As for John Poole's longevity, his business in Fore Street, Taunton had been taken over by Frederick May before October 1837⁸ and Poole died on 3 Feb. 1841 after working as a bookseller and printer at Taunton for 'more than half a century'.⁹ During that half century the italic style he used in the document reproduced above 'J. Poole, Printer, Taunton.' is identical to that used by him in 1818.¹⁰ However, as this (and the other documents reproduced here) do not have any watermarks it is difficult to identify an exact date the notice to the 'Independent Freeholders' was printed. The language used can be found in use in newspapers from the late 1780s onwards but more specifically in 1821 and 1831.¹¹ Information relating to the exact dates of the documents reproduced will be very welcome.

1. See the History of Parliament website for further details of the election at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/portman-edward-1799-1888> (accessed 19 January 2016).
2. The British Book Trades Index is available at <http://bbti.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>.
3. G. Roberts, *The history of Lyme-Regis, Dorset, from the earliest periods to the present day* (1823).
4. <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/bankes-george-1787-1856>.
5. <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/bankes-henry-1757-1834>.
6. *Sherborne Mercury*, 19 Sep. 1831.
7. *Sherborne Mercury*, 3 Oct. 1831.
8. *Dorset County Chronicle*, 19 Oct. 1837.
9. *Taunton Courier*, 10 Feb. 1841.
10. J. Webster, *Elements of chemistry* (1818).
11. For an example from 1821 see *Taunton Courier*, and *Western Advertiser*, 1 Aug. 1821 and from 1831 see *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 28 Apr. 1831.

A.J.W.

NOTES

CROWCOMBE MISCELLANY. This title appears on a two-volume manuscript commonplace book purchased during 2015 by the Bodleian Library for £3,500 from the bookseller Samuel Gedge. It contains poetry and riddles compiled by Elizabeth Bernard (1731-1805), daughter of Thomas Carew (1702-1766) of Crowcombe Court, and wife of James Bernard (1734-1811).

She collected poems written by herself and her circle of literary friends, who included Coplestone Warre Bampfylde (1720-1791) of Hestercombe and a published poet Edward Drewe (c.1749-1793), probably related to Elizabeth through her mother Mary Drewe (d.1738).

DAVID BROMWICH

REPLIES AND RESPONSES

PARADISE IN GLASTONBURY. In endnote 3 to 'Jesus at Glastonbury' in *SDNQ* 383 p.8 there is reference to the name 'Paradise' being established by 1576. The name was in use before this, occurring in the last Obedientaries' accounts for Glastonbury Abbey in 1539. The account of Brother John Exeter, Keeper of the Anniversary of Walter Monington, refers to '1 close of meadow & pasture in Paradyce lately of Katherine Swallow' for a rent of 40s. The close is later defined as 8 acres. Four other persons also rented 5, 6, 2½ and 5 acres there for rents of 15s., 16s., 10s. and 15s.¹ The implication is that Paradise, or parts of it, had long been in the abbey's possession. Indeed, 'Paradys' occurs in the feodary of Abbot Walter Monington of 1342, which was based on records from the 12th and 13th centuries. There the holdings are 'six messuages with appurtenances in the vill of Glaston by military service and an annual rent of 6d'. Editorial notes on this passage include 'This term [Paradise] is applied to the garden of a monastic house, here it seems to include tenements, etc. in the town of Glastonbury, a large field between the town and the [railway] station bears this name today'.² A total of 26½ acres could not have been in the town itself, but was within the town's jurisdiction. The original six portions of Paradise, had, with time, been amalgamated into five with adjusted rents. Paradise is shown on John Davidge's map of 1799 as being a large area of land north-west of the abbey precinct to the west of Northload Street and north of Benedict Street.³ The name lingers on in Paradise Road off Northload Street, just within the A39 by-pass.

1. The National Archives, SC 6/Henry VIII 3118, m.17.

2. F.W. Weaver (ed.), *A feodary of Glastonbury Abbey*, Somerset Record Society 26 (1910), xlv, 53.
3. Bristol Record Office, 08539 John Davidge, surveyor of Ansford, *A plan of Glastonbury and Meare belonging to Mr. George Cox* (1799).

COLIN J. BRETT.

WEBSITE

A new page is shortly to be opened on the SDNQ website entitled 'Historic Somerset and Dorset'. This page will include photographs of interesting locations within the two counties. Contributions are welcome and must have been taken by the contributor (vintage photos cannot be included). Photographs should be accompanied by a short explanatory caption and not lengthy text. Lesser-known sites of historical interest and instances of conservation work are but two suggestions for subject matter (subjects should feature locations rather than people). Items for consideration for inclusion on the website should be sent to editors@sdnq.org.uk.

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