
NOTES & QUERIES

FOR
SOMERSET AND DORSET

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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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62. SIR JAMES THORNHILL AND THE DEBENTURE OF 1725. There is in the County Library in Dorchester a handwritten debenture dating from 1725. At that time debentures for payment for goods and services were more usually printed and numbered chits, as, for example, those of the Ordnance Office. This debenture is a payment to Sir James Thornhill (1675-1734), leading English artist of his day.

He was born in Melcombe Regis. Although he came from a well-known Dorset family who had for long owned the manors of Woolland and Thornhill, being the son of an eighth son, he had no expectations of inheriting the heavily entailed estates and all the more so as his father, who was something of ne'er-do-well, absconded to avoid debt shortly after his birth. Fortunately a great-uncle, Dr. Sydenham, the distinguished physician, brought him up to London and set him up in an apprenticeship with the painter Thomas Highmore, a distant relative and also from Dorset. His apprenticeship finished, he thrived and was the first English-born painter to win important contracts such as those for the painting of Greenwich and the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral in preference to the foreign artists who had hitherto dominated the English art world. In 1720 he became the first English artist to be knighted, was appointed Serjeant Painter to the King, and subsequently went on to be MP for his native town from 1722 to his death in 1734. It was a remarkable and rare progression for someone who had started life as an apprentice.

The language of the debenture is Latin. Oliver Cromwell had ruled that English was to be used in legal and governmental documents, but there was a reversion to Latin after the Restoration of 1660. In 1733 it was ruled that legal documents had all to be in English, though there are plenty of instances of Latin being used for other purposes after that. This document is in an abbreviated form of the language which makes for difficulty when translating a language that is so dependent for its meaning on its endings. The original document is well-preserved and on paper without a watermark.

Debentur: Jacobo Thornhill Militi Servienti Pictori Operum
Domini Regis de feodo sibi ad x libri per annum Debitum
libri solidi
pro Quarter anni finitum ad festum Natalis Domini
ii x Solvit per
Anno Regni Domini Georgii Regis xi Onslow

Seizures - Examinatur Recordum 3. Nov: 1725 Libro 8
(Thomas?) Onslow

Halifax

The translation is as follows:

There are owed to James Thornhill Knight Serjeant Painter of the
Works of His Majesty the King towards his fee of ten
pounds per annum, £ s
for the quarter of the year ending on the
birthday feast of our lord 2 10 paid
in the eleventh year of the reign of his
Majesty King George through Onslow

Seizures - Examined (and) recorded 3 Nov.: 1725 Book 8 (?)
(Thomas?) Onslow

Halifax

There are additionally two ticks and a W on the left, faint and difficult to ascribe a meaning to, but it is possible that the ticks mean the payment was checked by someone whose name began with a W, as was the case with the First Lord of the Treasury, Sir Robert Walpole.

On the reverse side is written:

Rec.d 23 Dec 1725	J. Thornhill	Witness
Leon.d Wood(down?)	Record. 3 Nov. 1725	

There are a number of things about this document that require a further explanation, the first of which is the term *Serjeant Painter*. A Serjeant in this context was an officer who owed service to the Crown personally. Thus there was also a Serjeant Trumpeter (£100 per annum), a Serjeant Chirurgeon (£369-13-4d. per annum) and even a Serjeant Plomber (*sic*). The task of the Serjeant Painter is laid out in the document appointing him, now in the Public Record Office. Nominally, he was responsible for :

Our Royal Palaces and Houses as to our great Wardrobe, to be painted and Gilded or Imbellished, and also Appertaining or belonging to our Office of the Revells and to Our Stables, and to our Navy's and Ships, Barges, Coaches, Litters, Waggon and close Carrs, Tents and Pavilions, Heralds coats, Trumpet Banners and also in anything belonging to the Solemnization of Burials or Funerals.

The office was an old one and had begun as the *King's Painter*, changed to *Serjeant Painter* in 1527. The first holder seems to have been Gilbert Prince who died in office in 1396. The last holder was James Stuart and the post was abolished in 1782. Thomas Highmore, who was in Office from 1703 to his death in 1720, was succeeded by his distant relative James Thornhill

who resigned it in favour of his son John Thornhill and who in turn resigned it in 1757 whence it passed on to his brother-in-law, William Hogarth. Clearly there was the expectation that the office could be passed on to a relative. The salary was £10 per annum, not an insignificant amount in those days, and paid quarterly, on the feasts of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, St. Michael the Archangel, the Annunciation, and the Nativity of Christ. The real benefit, however, lay in the contracts that came with the post and which clearly brought considerable profit to its holders. From April to Dec. 1709, for example, Thomas Highmore was paid £1,523-12-0 3/4d for work done on behalf of the Office of Works, mostly at Whitehall, St. James, Hampton Court and Kensington. The date on the debenture doesn't match up with the eleventh year of the reign of His Majesty King George. The eleventh year of the reign ran from 1st. Aug. 1724 to 31 July 1725. Thus Thornhill should have been paid in the run up to Christmas 1724 and was therefore being paid nearly a year late. This was certainly not the only time he had difficulty getting what the Crown owed him for there is, for instance, the petition presented to the Office of Works in 1727 seeking payment for the considerable sums owed him by the late King George I which he reminded the Office of Works about again 1732. Late payment was in fact hardly a matter of surprise.

The actual process of payment was done through the man whose signature appears on the document, Thomas Onslow, one of the four Tellers of the Treasury responsible for receipts and payments. It is counter-signed by the Auditor of the Exchequer, Lord Halifax, perhaps also being checked by whoever W was. The money came from one of the smaller accounts entitled *Seizures*, which explains the presence of this word on the debenture, an account which was supplied by moneys coming from confiscated goods. For example, in the accounts for Michaelmas 1725 there is recorded *Seizures of uncustomed and prohibited goods* £39,472-3-5d. On the right-hand side of the accounts are recorded the payments *Out of Seizures* including those *To fees and Salarys*. The debenture is then countersigned again on the reverse by Thornhill himself in the presence of a witness, and dated. More difficult to interpret is what is written on the last line after the date Nov. 1725. It perhaps refers to Book (*Libro*) 8 but it might also be a T and an s and therefore the abbreviation of Thomas, as in Thomas Onslow.

This document serves in its small way to illustrate the financial practices of the Treasury Department in the early eighteenth century. Whatever the reputation of contemporary politicians for corruption, it becomes apparent that the accounts were well kept and that a system of checks existed that in this instance was carried out punctiliously. On the other hand, it is yet one more example of the difficulties that servants of the Crown like Sir James Thornhill had in getting paid their due.

1. Hutchins, John *The Annals and Iconography of Dorsetshire and Dorset Worthies* Enlarged and Illustrated Edition arranged by A. M. Broadley, W. V. Daniell, London & W. Frost, Bridport, 1904) VII, p.92.
2. PRO E 403/2473.
3. Colvin, Howard *History of the King's Works* (HMSO, London, 1976) Vol.V pp.111-2.
4. PRO W 5/56 *Abstract of Accounts 1709-1726*.
5. *Calendar of Treasury Books*. (HMSO, 1897) Vol, 10, 1729-30 p.368 & Vol 11, 1731-34, p.357.
6. PRO T 30/6 *Income & Expenditure of Great Britain 1688-1880*. Vol. 6.

I would like to thank Professor Dickson of St. Catherine's College, Oxford, Dr. Huw Ridgeway, Head of History at Sherborne School and Mr. Aubrey Morley for their assistance with this article and in particular in the translation of the Latin.

JEREMY BARKER

63. FRIENDLY SOCIETIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY WESTON-SUPER-MARE: AFFILIATED ORDERS. The Foresters and Oddfellows are the best known 'affiliated orders', i.e. those with a central organisation to which country-wide branches were affiliated.¹ In Weston they were numerous and organised conspicuous public events which were often reported fully in the newspapers. The Weston branches of several orders were included in their Bristol districts so, confusingly, they were often accounted under Gloucestershire.

The first Weston branch of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity, established in 1843, was the Loyal Star in the West Lodge.² It began to attract newspaper reports in 1859 with a full account of the anniversary dinner held in the Assembly Rooms. This was attended by Sir John Hare, mayor of Bristol, and the Smyth Pigotts were noted as contributors to the widows' and orphans' fund.³ In 1860, the lodge held a Grand Archery Fête in a field adjoining the Town Hall, the archery judged by Rev. J. C. Pigot. Members marched through the town in regalia with a military band and then dined with Sir John Hare, on this occasion, in the chair.⁴

The Star in the West lodge prospered to become the dominant

local society. By 1869 its membership was about 100, this number doubling in the 1880s and climbing to reach 271 at the end of the century. By the 1870s there was usually a formal anniversary dinner at the Elm Tree Inn, attended by influential honorary members whose speeches were sometimes of topical interest, and the local secretary reported on the finances of the lodge, often mentioning membership numbers.⁵ In the later 1890s, the dinner was often replaced by a less formal 'smoking concert'.⁶

In 1877 it was decided to form a juvenile section, "to educate the young to the habits of thrift".⁷ When opened, it was for all boys, not only the sons of Oddfellows. Between the ages of 5 and 12, a subscription of 4d. a month and 1s. quarterly to the medical fund would secure them 3s. a week and medical attendance during sickness. At 12, subscriptions and benefits increased, and at 16 the boys could enter the adult lodge.⁸ Oddfellow womenfolk were not catered for in Weston until the Princess May Lodge was opened in May 1901, with a membership of 34 by the end of the year.⁹

The second and smaller branch of the Oddfellows, established in 1861, was the Loyal Cecil Pigott Lodge.¹⁰ Membership reached around 100 in 1893, and 133 by the end of the century.¹¹ Cecil Smyth Pigott was a child when the lodge was named after him, but later he frequently presided at its anniversary dinners which were held at the Three Queens.¹² These tended later to be dropped in favour of smoking concerts.¹³

The Ancient Order of Foresters arrived a little later in Weston, with Court Albert founded in 1853, followed in 1862 by Court Wyndham.¹⁴ The senior court had 134 members at the end of its first ten years and this number rose to a peak of 210 around 1890, then fell slightly.¹⁵ Court Wyndham had rather less than half as many members, with 92 towards the end of the century.¹⁶

By 1855 Court Albert was celebrating its anniversary at the Three Queens under the chairmanship of Joseph Stringfield, their surgeon.¹⁷ In 1861 they processed through the town with two military bands to a field for dancing and games: in 1862, after a joint *soirée* with the Oddfellows in aid of the Dispensary early in the year, they again cooperated in the summer both with the Oddfellows and the recently formed Court Wyndham for a procession and *fête*. On this, as on other occasions, some of the Foresters were on horseback, and the highlight of the

fête was a female tight-rope walker.¹⁸ Court Wyndham met for their early anniversaries at the White Lion, Stringfield again being in evidence and proposing the toast to Wyndham Lewis, the court's patron. Later anniversaries were at the Foresters' Hotel, sometimes with Cecil Smyth Pigott presiding.¹⁹

Before 1875, an affiliated order was not able to register as a friendly society in its entirety: its branches would have had to register as separate societies. This explains the curious outcome of an incident in 1862, when the secretary of the Star in the West lodge was accused of embezzlement and expelled. Prosecution against him failed because the lodge was not a properly registered society.²⁰ After legislation in 1875, the orders had more control over individual branches, particularly in requiring prudent financial organisation. Club nights became less popular because the cost of beer could no longer be subsidised from general funds, and less important as alternative entertainments became available. In 1876, for example, 400 Weston friendly society members went on an excursion to Teignmouth and Torquay; and a few years later 220 visited Cheltenham.²¹ Weston also attracted excursionists from other places. In 1875 when the Oddfellows' Annual Moveable Committee met in Newport, it was arranged that 250 delegates should come over to Weston, to be greeted by local Oddfellows and the pealing of church bells. Next year 900 Foresters from Herefordshire arrived in five steamers from Newport: and, later in the century, the Gloucester Conservative Benefit Society had its outing to Weston.²²

The Ancient Order of Druids appeared in Weston in 1860 when they founded the Wyndham Lodge. Support was given by the Canynge Lodge of Bristol, whose officers were met from the train by Weston representatives and the Naval Promenade Band (at the request of Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham Lewis): they then processed to the Plough Hotel for the inauguration.²³ A newspaper report named N A Cozens of Bristol as responsible for this initiative in Weston and, surprisingly, announced that only six months later he intended to found a new St. Thomas à Beckett Lodge at the Bristol Inn in Weston.²⁴ It was presumably this lodge which met at club rooms in the Bristol Inn to hear lectures on St. Thomas à Beckett and the Armada.²⁵ Perhaps founding two lodges weakened both, because the Chief Registrar's Report for 1887 listed no Druid lodges in Weston.

Affiliated orders frequently gave rise to break-away groups with confusingly similar names. One such was the United Ancient Order of Druids which was probably responsible for founding a lodge at the Foresters' Hotel in Weston in 1887. Members' subscriptions were from a minimum of 5¼d. a week and sick pay was 12s. with payments of £12 at death.²⁶ We have no information on the progress of this lodge but the Queen of the West Lodge, which opened in 1896 at the Spread Eagle Inn, Meadow Street, was clearly described as belonging to the United Ancient Order of Druids.²⁷ Druids took part in the friendly society church parade in 1896, but they do not seem to have organised conspicuous celebrations on their own.

The Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds, Ashton Unity, arrived in Weston in 1867 when they founded the Ernest Smyth Pigott Lodge at the Market House Inn. Ernest was the second son of the lord of the manor, who also became an honorary member. Initially 23 subscribing members enrolled, and this number rose to 40 in two months.²⁸ By its first anniversary dinner, the lodge had already joined in a combined societies fête, and its membership had grown to 75. George Onions, speaking at the dinner, said that he had started a lodge some unspecified time previously but it had only survived a few months.²⁹ The new lodge prospered with a membership exceeding 80 during the 1870s, but declining to around 65 in the next decade.³⁰ During these years, the lodge was active in joint friendly society events and held its own fête and gala. In 1869, for example, members processed in regalia with two bands to a field for races and singing contests for both sentimental and comic songs.³¹ Later anniversaries were celebrated at the Three Queens, sometimes with Cecil Smyth Pigott presiding as Ernest had already died.³²

Until 1871, it was claimed that there was no society in Weston specifically for women, so the Independent Order of Shepheresses, Bristol Unity, founded the Loyal Pride of the West Court at the Bunch of Grapes in Locking Road.³³ Thirty members were enrolled but the court may not have lasted long, possibly giving way to the Weston-super-Mare Female Friendly Society which dated from 1875. This society had been intended for the wives of Shepherds, but insufficient members had come forward: so the society had been thrown open to all females between 18 and 34. On payment of 18d. a month they could secure sick pay of 6s. a week and an £8 funeral benefit.³⁴

Unrelated to the Ashton Unity was the Ancient Order of Shepherds who called their branches 'sanctuaries' and were associated with the Foresters. In 1861 they founded Sanctuary Albert which met at the Three Queens Inn, as did Court Albert of the Foresters to which they were attached. But in 1886, this sanctuary could muster only 13 members.³⁵ An affiliated order which arrived in Weston late in the century was the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes who opened the Princess Alexandra Lodge around 1892. Their club rooms were in the Princess Alexandra Hotel, and by 1894 they already has about 90 members.³⁶ Another group were the Rechabites, but they are best considered together with similar temperance societies and with other types of society that are still to be discussed.

1. For general discussion of affiliated orders see P.H.J.H.Gosden, *Friendly Societies in England 1815 - 1875*, (1961). For information on local branches see *Report of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies for 1887, 1889*, (113) LXXI. Abbreviations and acknowledgments as in previous note, see *SDNQ*, XXXIV (March 1999), part 349.
2. Report on Bristol District of Oddfellows, *WG*, 21 Apr 1883. See also *Report of Chief Registrar, op cit.* note 1 above.
3. *WG*, 2 Jul 1859.
4. *WM*, 7 Jul 1860.
5. For reports of annual dinners see, for example, *WM*, 23 Jan 1869, 18 Jan 1890; *WG*, 22 Jan 1876, 22 Jan 1881, 17 Jan 1885, 18 Feb 1899.
6. See for example *WG*, 4 Feb 1893; *WM*, 25 Jan 1896.
7. *WM*, 5 May 1877.
8. *WM*, 24 Jul 1880. The number of Juvenile members reported at annual meetings ranged between 20 and 32: see *WM*, 16 Jan 1886; *WG*, 24 Jan 1891, 22 Apr 1893.
9. *WG*, 11 Jan & 1 Mar 1902.
10. Both sources cited in note 2 above.
11. Report of Oddfellows' Jubilee Dinner, *WG*, 22 Apr 1893. *WG*, 18 Feb 1899.
12. *WM*, 10 Jan 1880, 30 Jan 1886, 1 Feb 1890.
13. *WM*, 20 Feb 1892, 22 Feb 1896; *WG*, 4 Feb 1893, 23 Feb 1895, 10 Apr 1897.
14. *Directory of the Ancient Order of Foresters' Friendly Society*, 1868 - 69, p.37. *Ibid* 1891, pp.52 - 54
15. Numbers quoted in reports of meetings, e.g. *WM*, 2 May 1863, 25 Feb 1882, 23 Feb 1884, 20 Feb 1886, 17 Mar 1900.
16. *Directories op. cit.* note 14 above. Numbers also quoted in *WM*, 23 Feb 1884, 6 Mar 1886, 29 Feb 1896; *WG*, 11 Feb 1888, 14 Mar 1891.
17. *WG*, 13 Oct 1855.
18. *WG*, 25 May 1861; *WM*, 8 Feb, 12 Jul 1862.
19. *WM*, 14 Feb 1863, 6 Mar 1886; *WG*, 13 Feb 1864, 11 Feb 1888, 14 Mar 1891.
20. *WM*, 30 Aug 1862, 17 Jan 1863. Gosden, *op. cit.* note 1, p.188 cites a similar case.
21. *WG*, 13 Jul 1878, 19 Jun 1880.
22. *WM*, 24 Apr 1875, 3 Sep 1898; *WG*, 15 Jul 1876.
23. *WM*, 14 Jan 1860.
24. *Weston-Super-Mare Chronicle* 26 Jul & 16 Aug 1860.
25. *WM*, 8 Sep & 20 Oct 1860.
26. *WG*, 15 Jan 1887.
27. *WG*, 30 Nov 1895; *WM*, 15 Feb 1896.
28. *WM*, 17 Aug & 12 Oct 1867.
29. *WG*, 8 Aug & 31 Oct 1868.
30. *WM*, 18 Sep 1875, 16 Oct 1886, 29 Oct 1887; *WG*, 15 Jul 1876. *Report of Chief Registrar, op. cit.* note 1 above.

31. WM, 10 Jul 1869; WG, 16 Jul 1870, 15 Jul 1876.
32. WG, 3 Sep 1881; WM, 16 Sep 1882, 18 Oct 1884. See also some items in note 30 above.
33. WM, 22 Apr 1871.
34. WG, 21 Oct 1876.
35. *Report of Chief Registrar, op. cit.* note 1 above. WM, 20 Feb 1875.
36. WM, 20 Oct 1894. Buffaloes took part in the joint church parade in 1894, 1895 & 1896; and a smoking concert was reported in WM, 22 Oct 1898. The branch was listed in the 1893 RAOB *Buffaloe Directory*.

P. S. BROWN
DOROTHY N. BROWN

64. LIBERAL PARTY FORTUNES IN SOMERSET ELECTIONS 1885-1914. There has been much debate in recent years about the decline of the Liberal party and whether the process began in the late 19th century, in the period 1910—1914, or as a result of the first World War.¹ In truth, as far as Somerset is concerned, it would be more accurate to say that it was less a question of “decline”, but rather a failure to establish a firm enough basis to mount a consistent challenge to the strong Conservative position in the county. Only in two elections, 1885 and 1906, did the Liberals threaten or make a breakthrough. On both occasions, there was a falling off again in 1886 and 1910 respectively.

For a long period before 1885, Somerset was barren ground for the Liberals. William Pinney was the last Whig/Liberal County M.P., declining to fight, in 1852, to retain his seat. Henceforth the Conservatives monopolised the County seats, usually without having to face any electoral contests. The last one in West Somerset was in 1847, and in the East division, 1852. Indeed the Liberals managed only four subsequent challenges in the three County divisions before 1885:- two in 1868, one in 1880, (both years of large Liberal majorities nationally) and finally in a by-election in 1884. The extent of the Conservative supremacy can be indicated by their share of the vote on these occasions; 63.2% Mid Somerset 1868, 58.9% East Somerset 1868, 51.8% West Somerset 1880, and 55.6% in West Somerset 1884. The highest figure for any of the four Liberal candidates was 48.2% in 1880 when only 169 votes had separated Charles Dyke-Acland from the second placed Conservative. However by 1884, that figure had been widened again to a margin of 762. In 1874, the Liberals had been unable to mount any challenge at all, the six sitting Conservatives being returned unopposed.²

It is true that the Liberals made a better showing in Somerset's five Parliamentary boroughs, all of which returned Whig/Liberals at different times in the post 1832 period. However, Wells was disfranchised in 1867 because of its small size, Bridgwater, two years later for corruption, while Frome - newly created in 1832 with one member - disappeared in 1885. This left only the borough of Bath and Taunton to help maintain Liberal representation in an otherwise Conservative dominated county.

The Parliamentary Reform legislation of 1884-5 made two major changes, both of which had their effects on Somerset elections. The right to vote was extended to farm labourers and the three double member county divisions were replaced by seven single member constituencies:- North, Wells, Frome, East, South, Bridgwater and West. The borough of Taunton was reduced to a single member, but Bath was allowed to retain its two M.P.'s³ It was in the first General Election held under the new arrangements in November 1885, that the Liberals created an immediate "window of opportunity" for themselves by winning half of the ten available seats. They won four of the county divisions; Frome, East, South and West, in addition to one of the Bath seats.

Contests occurred in all nine constituencies and it would appear that there was a high turnout for almost 64,000 voters exercised their franchise throughout the county.⁴ It would seem, too, that many of the first time voters, the farm labourers, were attracted to the Liberals. This was not simply in gratitude for the recent franchise extension but, in particular, because of the so called "Three acres and a cow" proposal in Joseph Chamberlain's "Unauthorised Programme" which advocated the provision of smallholdings for rural labourers. In terms of the popular vote, the Liberals actually gained a slight majority: 32,829 votes (51.3%) against 31,155 (48.7%) for the Conservatives. Both the seats won and the votes cast augured well for future Liberal prospects in what had been a Conservative heartland.

Such hopes or expectations were totally dashed in less than a year, in the General Election of July 1886. This took place in the wake of the parliamentary defeat of Gladstone's 3rd Ministry over Irish Home Rule. The election was a complete disaster for the Liberal cause in Somerset. Its share of the vote dropped by

7.5% to 43.8%. It lost three of its recently won seats; Frome, West and Bath and conceded defeat in a further four:- Wells, East, Bridgwater and Taunton borough, by being unable to field any candidates. The Conservatives comfortably held both the North division and its seat in Bath. Therefore, only one seat, South Somerset, remained Liberal. The Conservatives, having won 56.2% of the votes cast, were in possession of the other nine.

There is little doubt that the Home Rule controversy had some impact on the Somerset results for two of its Liberal M.P.'s, Henry Hobhouse and E. R. Wodehouse, had defected from Gladstone over the issue. The former was returned unopposed as a Liberal Unionist in the East division and likewise, Wodehouse successfully defended his Bath seat in alliance with a Conservative candidate against two Gladstonian Liberals.

Some features of the results suggest explanations other than controversy over Home Rule. First, there was a decrease in the total vote which slumped to 34,890; the Conservatives polling 19,610, and the Liberals 15,280. This was partly caused, of course, by the unopposed returns in four constituencies.

However, it is also the case that in the five constituencies contested in both 1885 and 1886, the total vote had fallen from 38,430 by some 3540, a drop of 9.2%. This serves to confirm the view of T. A. Jenkins that the low turnout nationally, was less owing to public hostility to Home Rule but "evidence of the indifference of many British voters towards anything involving Ireland."⁵

However, since the Conservatives had increased their vote in those same five constituencies by only 1230, it was the slump in the Liberal vote, which was most significant. It was substantial; 23.8%, some 4770 votes less, including 795 in the one seat – South Somerset – which was held. Therefore, a slightly different explanation put forward by Roy Jenkins in his biography of Gladstone seems to fit the Somerset situation more exactly. This was that in concentrating upon Home Rule in 1886, Gladstone totally failed to make any moves to implement the "Three acres and a cow" proposal which had been so instrumental in persuading farm labourers to vote Liberal in 1885. Consequently, they turned away from the Liberals by abstaining in 1886. Nationally their vote in the counties fell from 1,113,693 to 534,508. Jenkins concludes

“This was a devastating price which Gladstone paid for first picking up Collings’s amendment as a useful tactical instrument and then doing absolutely nothing about it, neither himself deflecting his eye from Ireland nor encouraging Chamberlain to pursue a parallel policy on behalf of the rural labourer”⁶ (Jesse Colling’s amendment on January 27th, regretting the omission from the Queen’s Speech of any measures benefiting the rural labourer, had brought down the Conservative Government). In the county divisions of Frome, West and North Somerset the Liberal losses were 1090, 1079 and 1404 respectively.

It is worth mentioning, finally, that Thomas Dyke-Acland attributed his defeat in West Somerset to a much simpler fact. Writing to Gladstone - his friend since their University days at Oxford - he remarked “I think I could have held the seat ... if the time had not been so unfortunate - specially haymaking. Many of the working class were enthusiastic and many hesitating middle class men were satisfied with the position I took up.”⁷ Whatever the reason, the Liberals had lost a promising opportunity, presented in 1885, to make a significant impact on the Conservative supremacy in the county. It was another twenty five years before the chance recurred.

The elections in 1892, 1895 and 1900 showed considerable fluctuations in the Liberal performance. In 1892, when all nine constituencies were again contested, there were some encouraging features. They boosted their share of the vote up to 47.3%, and in the process won three seats; by holding South Somerset, regaining Frome and capturing North Somerset by the narrow margin of 19 after putting on over 1800 votes compared with 1886. However, it is noticeable that the total Liberal vote of 30,715 was still some 2000 fewer than that achieved in 1885, despite an increase of 1000 in the voters. The Conservatives with 34,275 votes (3,000 more than in 1885) were the comfortable victors in this area, having 52.7% of the votes cast.

The 1895 election, held after the failure of the 2nd Home Bill, Gladstone’s retirement and the brief Liberal ministry of Rosebery, saw the Liberals fall back again to the 1886 level with only one seat - South Somerset - being retained. They were unable even to offer any opposition in the Conservative held seats of Bridgwater, West and Taunton. The Conservatives

easily held Wells, East and Bath with increased majorities as well as regaining North and Frome, the two seats lost in 1892. The six contests inevitably meant a smaller total vote of 48,401, with the Conservatives increasing its share to 53.9% (26,071).

The "Khaki" election of 1900, held against the background of the Boer War, provided some crumbs of comfort for the Liberals. They held on to Frome - won back in a by-election in 1896 - with the highest ever vote of 5066, increased the majority in South Somerset and, overall, in the five constituencies where contests took place, pushed their share of the vote up to 49.0%. However this masked the fact that they could not force any contests in four other divisions, Wells, East, Bridgwater and West Somerset, because of a lack of candidates. The Conservatives kept control of North Somerset as well as the boroughs of Bath and Taunton, thus returning eight of the Somerset seats.

At the beginning of the 20th century then, the Conservatives were in a secure position with safe seats in the Wells, Bridgwater and West Somerset divisions, as well as both the boroughs of Bath and Taunton. The Liberal party had consistent support only in South Somerset and Frome, while East Somerset had been lost to Liberal Unionist and North had been Liberal for only three years from 1892-1895.

However, five years later, there was a remarkable transformation brought about by divisions in the Conservative government over Tariff Reform and an Opposition partly reunited in defence of traditional Liberal causes such as Free Trade, Education and anti Drink measures as well as promises of social reform. In Somerset, Hobhouse, the Liberal Unionist MP for the East division was forced to retire because of his strong Free Trade views and the Unionist cause was not helped either by the retirement of three other sitting MPs; E. H. Llewellyn (North), E. J. Stanley (Bridgwater) and E. R. Wodehouse (Bath).⁸

The results in Somerset, echoing the national trend produced a Liberal majority for the first time ever, for eight Liberal MPs were elected and only two Conservatives. This constituted an even larger breakthrough than in 1885, and achieved, moreover, in similar circumstances with all nine constituencies being contested. The turnout was high, for according to the figures, 78,861 out of a recorded total electorate of 87,911 cast their

vote.⁹ This worked out, across the divisions at an average of 87.4%. The latent Liberal support in the county, lying dormant since 1885, emerged so that their total vote was 42,099 - some 54.8%. This compares with 32,829 in 1885 and 30,715 in 1892, the other previous occasions when all constituencies were contested. Increases in the Liberal vote was apparent in all of them, ranging, in the county divisions contested in 1900, from 815 in South, 1231 in Frome to 2612 in North Somerset. In Bath, the Liberal candidates put on around 1500 votes. As a result South and Frome were held with increased majorities (1917 and 1745 respectively) while spectacular gains were made in the North, Wells, East, Bridgwater divisions as well as both Bath seats. Wells and Bridgwater, for example, had never before had a Liberal MP, on most occasions a Conservative being returned unopposed. The margin of the majorities varied, inevitably, from the smallest of 17 in Bridgwater to a massive 2,246 in the North division.

By contrast, the Conservatives held on to two seats only. In West Somerset the previous majority of 885 in 1892 had been cut to 372. In the borough of Taunton, the only constituency that saw an increase in their actual vote, the majority was reduced by a mere 24 votes. The Conservative total amounted to 34,762 or 45.2% of the vote and only about 500 more than the previous highest in 1892, whereas the total number of voters had increased by almost 12,000.

This second "window of opportunity" for the Liberals lasted four years until the General Election of January 1910, held after the rejection of the Government's Budget by the House of Lords. This was a "bigger" event than 1906 in two important respects. The electorate had risen by 3854 votes to 91,765 - a 4% increase, while the turnout of voters had also increased to 91%. This meant 6609 additional voters, an 8.6% increase on the 1906 figure, to a new high of 83,470. Two other key figures stand out. First, the Liberal vote declined by 2132 to 39,967 while the total Conservative vote increased by 8741 to 43,403, a quarter more than in 1906. The Conservatives had clearly been more successful in getting their supporters to the polls. They were probably keen to recover from the debacle of 1906 and determined to resist Lloyd George's taxation proposals while it appears some Liberal voters were disillusioned at the failure of a reforming Liberal Government to carry out its programme.

In consequence the Conservatives, with 52.1% of the vote, held West Somerset and Taunton with increased majorities and regained five of the 1906 losses: the three divisions of Wells, East and Bridgwater along with the two seats in Bath. By contrast the Liberals were reduced once again to three seats in the county; holding their safe seats of Frome and South Somerset, and also managing to retain North Somerset, despite a 1388 increase in the Conservative vote, by confining their own losses to 58.

The Liberals did not lose any more ground in the second election of that year, in December, over the proposed measures to curb the power of the Upper House. There was no change in the seats held by both sides, although there was one less contest. The Liberal share of the vote went up very slightly by 0.1% to 48% while the Conservatives declined by the same amount to 52%. The difference is easily accounted for by the Conservatives not having to vote in West Somerset, where there was no challenge to Sir Alexander Acland-Hood, who had been its MP since 1892. One key feature of the election was that the number of actual voters was some 3,297 less than in January, the Liberals losing slightly more (1838) than the Conservatives (1459). The overall turnout declined by 4.2% to 86.8%, for only 70,807 voted out of a registered electorate of 81,546 (discounting the 10,299 voters of West Somerset). This suggests that the voters were less interested in the constitutional quarrel between the Lords and Commons than the politicians were; a situation reminiscent of the 1886 election.

Three by-elections in 1911-12 provide the final pieces of statistical evidence on the state of the two parties. In the West Somerset by-election in July 1911, following the advancement of Acland-Hood to the peerage, there was the same turnout (91.7%) as in January 1910. Although the Conservatives held the seat, their majority was cut from 1066 to 604 with their share of the vote declining by 2.5%. The Liberal candidate gained 271 extra votes and his share of the vote increased to 46.8%. A few months later in November, however, disaster struck the Liberals, when they lost South Somerset - Liberal since 1885 - following the elevation of its MP, Sir Edward Strachey to the peerage. In a contest with a high turnout of 94.5%, the Liberal share of the vote slumped by 3.4% to 49.2%. The Conservatives managed to poll 561 extra votes and thus

gain a majority of 148. Finally, there was a by-election in Taunton in November 1912, after the sitting Conservative MP succeeded to his father's title as the 2nd Viscount Peel. The result showed little movement of opinion. In an increased turnout (91.5% as against 88.8% in December 1910), the Conservative held the seat, increasing his majority slightly. The shift in the share of the vote was 0.6%. By 1912 therefore, Liberal representation had been cut back to two seats, the same as in 1900. The Liberals, after 1885, were never going to find it easy to make progress in the county with its 19th century tradition of Conservative predominance. Nevertheless, potential support for Liberalism was clearly evident. Indeed, except for Taunton,¹⁰ every other constituency returned a Liberal MP at some stage; five in 1885 election, North Somerset in 1892, and even the Conservatives strongholds of Wells and Bridgwater in 1906. It may be idle to speculate on "what might have been" but it does appear that more consistent success might have been attained if the breakthroughs of 1885 and 1906 had been capitalized upon properly. The greatest danger for the Liberal party in Somerset was voters becoming disillusioned and showing this by abstentions, evident particularly in 1886. Over the whole period, the Liberal share of the vote was subject to constant fluctuations but clear evidence of actual decline is difficult to spot for, even after the 1910 elections, their share of the vote still remained quite high at 48.0%.

1. See, for example, G R Searle, *The Liberal Party Triumph and Disintegration, 1886-1929* (1992) and Paul Adeleman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party 1910-1931*, (1995).
2. All the election statistics have been calculated based on the results as given in F. H. MacCalmont, *Parliamentary Poll Book 1832-1910*, (1971), edition by J. R. Vincent and M. Stenton. In the case of Bath, a two-member constituency, the votes of the highest placed Conservative and Liberal have been combined to obtain an approximate figure of the number of voters.
3. For an invaluable description of the Somerset constituencies, see H. Pelling, *The Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910*, (1967), pp.146-153.
4. The total registered electorate of the three county divisions and the boroughs of Bath, Taunton and Frome before the 1885 changes was much smaller. According to the figures in MacCalmont *op.cit.* it numbered 38,149.
5. T A Jenkins, *Parliament, Party and Politics in Victorian Britain*, (1996), p.137.
6. Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone*, (1995), p. 557.
7. *Memoir and letters of Rt Hon Sir Thomas Dyke-Acland*, (1902), ed. by A H D Acland p.359.
8. Pelling *op.cit.* pp.151-2 from the *Somerset County Gazette*.
9. Figures for the sizes of the electorate in 1906 and 1910 are given in MacCalmont *op.cit.* part 2.
10. Intriguingly, Taunton appears to have been the only Somerset constituency, which had a Labour candidate. F. Smith polled 1085 votes in a by-election in Feb 1909, in the absence of a Liberal candidate, against the Conservative, the Hon W Peel on 1976 votes. A Liberal did contest the seat in the Jan and Dec 1910 elections.

BRIAN ELVINS

65. THE CELTIC ORIGIN OF THE NAME *TAUNTON*. Like many English towns, Taunton has a name of Celtic or partly Celtic origin. Everyone agrees that it means the *tun* ('settlement, farm') on the river Tone. Yet the meaning of the name *Tone* has been disputed. The name *Taunton* is attested from 722 onwards as *Tantun*; the name *Tone* is attested in 682 and 705 as *Tan*, in 854 as *Táán* and *Tán*, in 1243 as *Thon*.

The Swedish scholar Ekwall suggested two possible explanations here. In the first, he related the British river-name to Gaulish *Tanarus*. This occurs twice, as the name of a river in north Italy, and as an epithet of Jupiter, in both cases meaning 'the thunderer'. Ekwall related these forms to Latin *tonare* 'to thunder', and proposed that *Tone* might thus have meant 'thundering stream, roaring stream'. Alternatively, he thought it might be related to the Welsh word *tan* 'fire', noting that Creech Hill on the Tone was in 682 called *Cructan*. He explained this as perhaps meaning 'fire hill', that is, 'beacon hill'. The river would thus be named after the hill.¹ Ekwall's first opinion was accepted by Margaret Gelling in 1970, when she described Taunton as taking its name from the Tone, possibly meaning 'roaring stream'.²

Do Ekwall's explanations make sense in the light of later work on the Celtic languages? Let us first look at the explanation of *Tone* as 'thunderer'. If correct, the name of the Somerset river would be cognate with Old Irish *torann* 'thunder'; Welsh *taran* '(peal of) thunder'; Old Cornish *taran*, which occurs as a gloss on Latin *tonitruum* 'of claps of thunder'; Old Breton *taran*, glossing Latin *tonitru* 'with thunder' and Gaulish *Taranis*, the name of the thunder god.

Ekwall related these Celtic words beginning *tar-* and *tor-* to the Gaulish name *Tanarus* 'thunderer', discussed above. Unfortunately, *Tanarus* is now regarded as closer to Germanic forms represented by Modern English *thunder* and German *Donner* (which it clearly resembles).³ There is thus no case for taking *Tanarus* as a Celtic name at all. Because of this, the name of the Tone can hardly be related to Welsh *taran*, Old Cornish *taran*, and so on. The explanation of *Tone* as 'thunderer' given by Ekwall and Margaret Gelling must thus be rejected.

This leaves us with words for 'fire'. Here there can be less doubt. *Tan*, the ancient name of the Tone, would seem to mean 'fire', because this word (with long vowel) is the word for 'fire'

in early Welsh, Cornish and Breton.⁴ This explanation of the river-name was accepted long ago by Professor Max Förster of Munich and Professor Kenneth Jackson of Edinburgh.⁵

Competent scholars agree, then, that the name of the river Tone means 'fire'. *Taunton* therefore means 'settlement on the river called "fire"'. But why should the river have this name? We can reject Ekwall's speculations that the river took its name from Creech Hill, thought to be a fiery beacon. It is more likely the hill took its name from the river. If we look at other Celtic river-names, we find a better reason for *Tone* as deriving from a British name borrowed by the Anglo-Saxons when they conquered the Taunton region in the seventh century.

The name of the Tone is paralleled by that of the Tanad, which runs eastward through north Powys to join the Vyrnwy, a tributary of the Severn. Ekwall himself recognised that its name contains the element *tan* 'fire', and explained the name as 'brilliant river'.⁶ There is no difficulty in accepting this. Such a name would have parallels in Scotland. The name of the river Tennet has been related to Old Irish *teine* 'fire'.⁷ There is a river *Teinntidh* near Callander, its name related to Old Irish *teintide* 'fiery' from its rapid boiling course. Near Dornoch is a stream called *Eibhleag* in Gaelic, *Evelix* (with double plural) in English, derived from Old Irish *oiblech* 'sparkling, gleaming' (applied to embers or smouldering coals).⁸ These pure Scottish streams and rivers have English equivalents, such as the Skerne of County Durham and Skerne Beck of the East Riding of Yorkshire, the names of both apparently deriving from Old English *scir* 'bright, clear', but with *Sk-* from Scandinavian influence.⁹

The upshot of all this is that the meaning of *Tone* would seem to be 'fire(-river), fiery one, clear or sparkling one'. We thus need not accept a third etymology, proposed by Nicolaisen, which would relate the names of the rivers Tone, Tain, Tean and so on to an Indo-European root **ta-* 'flow', the name of the Tone simply meaning 'flowing one, river', like those of the Thames, Tamar, Taw, Tay, and many other rivers.¹⁰ Like many West Country rivers running down from moorland areas, the Tone possessed clean waters. Taunton therefore derives its name from the river Tone, apparently meaning 'fire(-river)', a river of sparkling or bright water.

1. E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, (1960), 461, 477.

2. Margaret Gelling, 'Taunton', in *The Names of Towns and Cities in Britain*, ed. W. F. H. Nicolaisen (1970), 179.
3. Joseph Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique de l'ancien irlandais: Lettres T-U* (1978), T-113.
4. Vendryes, T-50.
5. Cf. K. H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (1953), 342.
6. Ekwall, 459.
7. W. J. Watson, *The Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (1926), 475; R. J. Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru* (1938), 20-1.
8. Watson, 443; Thomas, 21.
9. Ekwall, 421.
10. Cf. A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-names of Roman Britain* (1979), 465.

ANDREW BREEZE

66. BRUTON ABBEY DISMANTLED. In "The Glory that was once Bruton Abbey, part 2" (*SDNQ*, XXXIV, pp. 56-61) it is noted that by 1786 it had been decided "to pull the building down, inviting anyone who wished to buy the stone by the cartload". Documents amongst the Hoare Papers in the Wiltshire Record Office¹ would suggest that not only was this the case, but also that the process of dismantling the Abbey building was highly organised. The following account sheet gives an indication of the work involved:²

1787 Sir Richard Hoare Bart To Jn. Clarke for Work on Bruton Abbey		£	s	d
May 12	To 3 days & 1/2 Two men taking down Ceiling Joist & Partition, Timb etc & Flooring	0	12	10
May 19	To 4 days 2 men taking up flooring and Partitions etc.	0	14	8
	To 13 New Ladder Bungs	1	1	1
June 2	To 4 days & 1/2 two men taking up Floors and Roofing etc.	0	16	6
June 9	To 6 days & 1/2 two men and Apprentice taking down the flooring under the head and roofing and windows etc	1	10	4
	To a new wheel Barrow to an old wheel	0	5	0
June 16	To 1 day 2 men taking down sashes and frames	0	3	8
June 18	To 1 day 1 man & Apprentice to Do, and taking down Mouldings etc.	0	2	10
	To 1/2 day 1 man to Do.	0	0	11
June 19	To 1/2 day 1 man taking down Joist.	0	0	11
June 20	To a new side and leg to a wheel Barrow	0	2	0
June 22	To 1 day 1 man taking down Joist etc.	0	1	10
June 30	To 6 days and 1/2 1 man taking down Beams and Joists.	0	11	11
		5	4	6

A small notebook of 24 pages in the same deposit, covering the years 1786 to 1788, gives details of purchasers, items and

cost. The following examples give an indication of the range:

		£	s	d
Ilchester Earl Redlynch				
1786				
Dec 7	4 and half Ton of stone Tiling @ 17/6	3	18	9
1787				
May 22	1535 of Ashler Stone @ 3d	19	3	9
Clarke Jn. Bruton				
1786				
Ap 16	4000 Plain tile @ 25/-	5	0	0
James Wm. Bruton				
1786				
Sept 11	To 1:3:18 of Iron @ 1 and half d.	1	6	9
Bull John Bruton				
1787				
Aug 20	To 30 load of walling stone @ 6d		15	0
Oct 6	To 4 load of Pickt		4	0
Oct 9	To 1 load of Walling stone			6
	To 1 load of Bars		2	0
Ashman Mary Bruton				
1787				
Sept 14	To Load of Stone			6
Oct 1	To Frame & Door		7	6
Sims Jn. Bruton				
1787				
May 22	To 236:0 Sup of Frames & Sashes @ 1/3	14	15	0
Ward Geo Bruton				
1787				
Mar 8	To 159 Perch of water frontstone with freestone window frames @ 1/2	9	5	6
	To 80:0 Cubs of old oak @ 1/-	4	7	0

In addition over 24 tons of lead was sold to 9 different purchasers. In all, accounts for 18 people are specified: of these 12 came from Bruton, 2 from Wincanton and 1 each from Redlynch, Wick, Kilmington and Sarum. The last 3 sides of the notebook give an overall account. Between June 23rd 1786 and May 15th 1788 the cost to Sir Richard Hoare of dismantling the Abbey was £550 13s 6d and the receipts between March 28th 1787 and May 14th 1788 amounted to £489 1s 8d.

It has long been believed by Brutonians that if anyone wishes to see the Abbey they only have to look around the town.

1. Hoare MSS, 383.
2. *Do.*, 383/143.

67. A SUCCESSFUL OPERATION FOR CANCER, 1799. Lady Susan Fox-Strangways, the eldest child of the 1st Earl of Ilchester, is best known for her run-away marriage to the handsome, talented, Irish actor, William O'Brien, but she was also remarkable in other ways. She not only underwent a successful operation for cancer, but in the fascinating *Journal*, which she kept for the last forty years of her long life, gives many details of her feelings during her illness and its treatment. Lady Susan was born on 12 February 1743 and grew up at Redlynch near Bruton, but was often in London at the home of her father's brother, Henry Fox, 1st Lord Holland. It was there at amateur theatricals that she met William O'Brien and married him on 7 April 1764, just after her 21st birthday. The marriage shocked her parents and all society and they were banished to America. Various occupations were offered to O'Brien but he could succeed at none and in 1770 they returned to England. They were still shunned by family and society and lived for a few years at Winterslow with Susan's cousin Stephen Fox, eldest son of her uncle Harry and his wife Mary. But on Stephen's death in 1775, they had to look to Susan's mother as their 'sole dependence'.

In the summer of 1774, however, while staying at Weymouth the O'Briens had seen and liked Stinsford House (then uninhabited and in bad repair), which was part of the huge Strangways estate in Dorset inherited by Susan's mother. Lady Ilchester liked the idea of their living there and improving the house, and, as a consequence, for the next 50 years they lived at Stinsford whenever their precarious income was sufficient for its upkeep: sometimes they could only be there for half the year and occasionally not at all. Every year throughout her *Journal* Lady Susan laments the insufficiency of their funds and their dependence first on her mother and, after her death, on her brother, Lord Ilchester. William O'Brien, often bored with country life, wasted a good deal of time and money in London trying, unsuccessfully, to become a barrister. There were frequent negotiations with Susan's influential friends and relations, notably Charles James Fox, to find a 'place' for O'Brien, but these came to nothing.

When living in Stinsford in March 1798, Susan confided to her *Journal* how 'low and uncomfortable' she felt. 'My spirits have grown so bad I can hardly command myself in company

or keep guard against the irritability I feel in my temper on every occasion'. She felt she had been 'too inert' about making enquiries about a place William might have had 'which would have been a very desirable thing for him'. Moreover she was 'vex'd and affronted and hurt at Charles Fox's sending back my picture after keeping it for so many years with an appearance of such affection for me'. In April she continued 'very ill' and 'vex'd about many things'. Matters improved slightly in May when they visited Susan's cousin Admiral Robert Digby at Minterne¹ and her brother at Melbury, where the Earl's second wife Maria Digby gave birth to their son Giles on 26 May.

At the end of May William O'Brien wrote to a medical friend Mr. A. Hawkins about Susan's trouble, 'a complaint and swelling I have had for some time in my breast'. Mr. Hawkins advised warm salt baths and leeches which latter she found a most disagreeable remedy. June and July passed in 'much the same triste manner'. In August her routine was varied by a visit from her favourite niece Eliza Talbot who had come from Wimborne where she had been 'racketting for two months with the Sheridans and Ogles', company which Susan considered 'very clever very flattering but very bad'.

In August the King, 'in good health and spirits', came to Weymouth and, as her friend Mrs. Damer² was in great favour in court circles, she was hopeful that something might be done for them. Meanwhile she saw Mr. Hawkins several more times, who repeated his advice of the warm sea baths; she complied, but 'without the smallest expectation of benefit'. In October Mr. Damer called on the O'Briens with a very kind message from Lord Dorchester offering Mr. O'Brien to be paymaster of the Dorset Regiment, but he at length declined largely because of her state of health.

Thereafter Susan's cousin Colonel Stephen Digby³ was 'most kind and friendly to us both in all respects' and pressed them 'to come to him at Richmond Park and obviates all the difficulties that are in the way of our removal from this place'. Lady Susan, therefore, consulted with Mr. Hawkins again with 'more particular questions' about her condition; as a result she wrote:

"I see plainly that he thinks my case pretty serious – and little by little prepares my mind for the proposals he thinks will be made me if I go to London for advice though he does not make it himself and does not

profess himself an advocate for operations of the knife when they can be avoided – I feel so averse to anything of that kind and so little confidence in the success of such experiments that I think it must be great sufferings and not apprehension only that will ever make me consent to such proceeding.”

On 23 October Lord and Lady Ilchester called on Susan, pressing her to go to London for advice and offering the use of their house in Burlington Street. She was still reluctant to leave Stinsford and stayed there throughout November, when she heard from Mrs. Drax of a Mrs. Hobson who had effected ‘a surprising cure of a complaint in the breast in her family’:

This influenced Mr. O’Brien very much to go. I was the more inclin’d to try her as I understood her methods were gentle and would not occasion much suffering – I feel more willing to consult a Quack than a Surgeon who has but one thing to propose – and that too terrible to bear the thoughts of. How foolish this is! To prefer ignorance and an old women’s nonsense to Science, Skill and good Sense – Yet I cannot help it – I cannot look at my complaint fairly as what it probably is – but still dream on and flatter myself that the well-inform’d are mistaken and that the ignorant will perform wonders – I hate myself for such folly, yet without this old woman I should never have been persuaded to go to London.”

The O’Briens finally went to London on 8 December, Susan with ‘little hope that anything can be done for me’:

“My sister’s case who had the best advice is too much impress’d on my mind to leave me any expectation of doing better – but Mr. O’Brien has confidence and hope where I have none — I cannot help leaving my dear home with the worst presentments as there is no guessing when once in London what one may be persuaded to do; I think one is always talk’d out of one’s senses once there.”

Perhaps this last sentence refers also to her elopement, the one great indiscretion of her life. They arrived at Colonel Digby’s house in Richmond Park on 11 December and on the 14th went to London to see Mrs. Hobson who told her that her complaint was not bad and that her medicines would soon effect a cure. Neither Mr. Hawkins nor Sir Walter Farquhar⁴ whom she also consulted were against her trying them; however they seemed to do little good and she ended another year ‘between hope and fear, though for the first time in my life on account of any bodily complaint of my own – My mind has often been suffering but my health has supported me – Now that is going and I fear by a most cruel road’.

At Richmond Park during January and February 1799 she found herself considered an invalid and spent her time by the

fireside or on journeys to London to see medical people. The longer she used Mrs. Hobson's remedies without effect 'the more my hopes decline and the more impatient I grow to return to my home again though nothing can be kinder than Colonel Digby and his amiable family to us'. When she talked again to Mr. Hawkins he talked of 'active surgeons and active methods. I know well enough what he means for all his tenderness and delicacy of expression'. She was unable to make a decision herself and resolved to wait until her brother and sister came to town and be guided by them. They seemed to have arrived by Easter Monday, 25 March, when there was a large party at Lord Porchester's house, 'everything well appointed and handsome ... how happy a match Kitty's turns out I feel great pleasure in witnessing it both for my sister's and her own sakes.⁵ That night the O'Briens were staying at a cheap and not very salubrious hotel in Jermyn Street.

The next day they dined with Susan's brother, the Earl, in Burlington Street and in the evening she went to her sister Harriet who had just arrived in London. Harriet was 'as kind as possible about everything' and pressed her to see Dr. Sayer Walker⁶ who duly examined her the next day and advised her:

"Not to consult with any new person then as he saw appearances which might mislead and which he thought might proceed from the medicines I had used as much as from any increase of the complaint. He recommended going into the country after a few months' rest I might consult again. I thought this very odd advice and it did not satisfy me though I liked it as it seemed at least to give me a little respite".

The following day she saw Mr. Hawkins again and he entirely disapproved of her deferring the operation and leaving London, so the following day, 29 March, Mr. O'Brien wrote to Mr. Blicke⁷, the surgeon, and on 31 March he examined Susan. His opinion was that only an operation would be efficacious and that:

"It may be performed with safety and good hope of success. This advice is shocking and unfits me for everything – could not even go to Mrs. J. Pitts in the evening though she expected me and I love her more than most people. All my ideas are absorbed in surgeon's knives, wounds and sufferings. God give me courage to bear my fate".

On 3 April Sir William Farquhar, Mr. Hawkins and Mr. Blicke consulted together:

"After a great deal of talking and examination [they] have decided *the fate*: that I must have my Breast cut or expect the swelling which they consider as a cancer to increase and occasion me greater suffering

than the operation which Mr. Blicke says will be without difficulty. That is to say without difficulty for him – But for me! Thus am I dashed from the hopes of Mrs. Hobson's cures to the worst state of suffering mortality or a dreadful operation. I hate Mr. Blicke (certainly most unjustly) for his opinion but I like him for his decision, clearness and steadiness. It gives confidence."

On 5 April Susan returned to Richmond where she had a 'melancholy parting' from her brother 'who is very kind and feels for me very much'. Colonel Digby, who lost his first wife Lucy, Susan's younger sister, from a similar complaint in 1787, 'declines all discussion on the subject says he cannot bear details'. On 9 April Mr. O'Brien 'went to London as melancholy as myself on the embarrassing and miserable errand to find a house for me to end my life in', while Susan at Richmond employed herself as much as she could in 'arranging everything I have here with me for Mr. O'Brien in case of a long illness or death,' and making preparations for leaving Richmond after a stay of four months, 'a charming place and a most friendly reception always to be remembered with affection and gratitude'.

The O'Briens arrived at the Bath Hotel in London on 15 April and Susan found it ten times worse than that in Jermyn Street – 'the bed dirty and the room like a pig-sty'. The next day a Mr. Stott, who had recommended it to O'Brien, came to see her, but she 'took quite an antipathy to him and his odious impertinent behaviour'. On 17 April the O'Briens were able to move from the Bath Hotel to the town house of Mr. Tighe, a Somerset friend and neighbour who lived at New Park next to the Ilchester estates; 'unfurnished and inconvenient as it is it is as yet a Paradise compared to the Bath Hotel'. On 19 April Susan's sister, Harriet, visited her and was 'a great comfort to me by her kindness, advice and information'. Mr. Damer also called, but Susan could hardly speak to him and when he went away felt as if taking leave of him for ever. Mr. Blicke called and fixed 22 April for the operation. On the 19th Susan dined at Burlington Street and 'had occasion to enter so much into the details of my situation and the preparation necessary that it almost kills me – it is like arranging my own funeral'.

The next two days passed with 'more tranquillity than I could have expected to feel', while she made all the arrangements she could think of for Mr. O'Brien, and drove in the park with Harriet who assured her that they all looked on Mr. O'Brien as

one of themselves and that he could 'expect every sort of attention and assistance from her', if she died.

On 22 April she awoke after a better night than she had expected and felt 'exactly like a person preparing for execution – perfectly free from pain with a sort of hardened, irritated feeling not to be described – Providence will support me through this day'. Mr. Blicke insisted that she be blindfolded for the operation, presumably so she would not be frightened by the sight of the instruments though he told her that 'he could not answer for doing his duty if he was to see the countenance and looks of his patient in such a situation'. The outcome was as 'favourable as possible'. Mr. Blicke, assisted by Sir Walter Farquhar and Mr. Hawkins, performed it 'with the greatest skill, humanity and tenderness', and a week later Susan was 'strong enough to hold a pen' and recall her feelings:

"Likening them to those of a condemned but innocent man going to his execution for religious or political reasons, a head of self-confidence or exaltation in doing what you ought what your friends approve and respect you for doing well, a haughty indescribable indifference about life or death, and a determination of going through any part well that you had undertaken."

By June she was 'airing daily with her sister' and preparing to leave London after being in Mr. Tighe's house for six weeks. On the 10th she went to Richmond which was in 'great beauty' and on the 17th she was home in Stinsford:

"A pleasure I did not much hope ever to have again, nor did many of my friends, whose joy at my return is very flattering as well as very convincing to me that my case was pretty generally considered desperate."

For the rest of June and July she stayed quietly at home, her strength gradually increasing and feeling 'in most respects quite well'.

On 30 and 31 July she was at Blandford Races, and 'bore the fatigue very well – I thought it best to go to this meeting where I should see all my acquaintances and having once been in public and very well people would not think any more of my illness and operation'. Remarkably, she lived for another 26 years, mostly at Stinsford, where Thomas Hardy's grandfather knew her. Calling on her in December 1824, Lord William Russell found her 'a charming, wonderful, gay old lady ... who keeps us all alive by anecdotes of our grandmothers and their sweethearts, she is a prodigy, and a most amusing prodigy'.⁸

1. Robert Digby was the 3rd son of Susan's father's sister, Charlotte. He had bought Minterne in 1765. He served as Admiral of the Blue on the American Station and married Eleanor Elliot, daughter of the Governor of New York (Winston S. Churchill, *Memories and Adventures* (1989).
 2. This may have been Mrs. John Damer, the sculptress Anne Conway, but it is more likely to have been Mrs. Lionel Damer, the wife of the 3rd brother.
 3. Stephen Digby was the 5th son of Susan's aunt Charlotte. He was Equerry to George III and Deputy Ranger at Richmond Park. He married his cousin Lucy, Susan's younger sister in 1771. After Lucy's death he had been very friendly with Fanny Burney when she was Deputy Mistress of the Wardrobe to the Queen, and Fanny seems to have expected a closer relationship. He, however, chose beauty above brains and married Charlotte Gunning. He was said to be the only person who could soothe the King in his madness, Fanny's nickname for him was Mr. Fairly and for Miss Gunning, Miss Fuselier (*The Locks of Norbury*, The Duchess of Sermoneta (1940).
 4. Sir Walter Farquhar, 1738-1819, had a thriving practice in London.
 5. Lord Porchester, eldest son of the Earl of Carnarvon, married Susan's niece Kitty, the only surviving child of her sister Harriet Acland in 1796. It was this marriage that brought the Acland estate in Somerset and Devon to the Herbert family.
 6. Sayer Walker, 1748-1826, physician and accoucheur.
 7. Charles Blicke, 1745-1818, Governor of the College of Surgeons in 1801; knighted in 1803.
 8. Letters from Lord William Russell to Lady Holland 6 Dec. 1824 and 3 Jan. 1825, quoted in Georgiana Blakiston's *Lord William Russell and his wife* (1972).
- [All quotations are from Lady Susan's *Journal* (B.L. Add. MSS. 51359), except for 8n.]

SUSAN RANDS

68. THE LOST VILLAGE OF EARNSHILL & THE HILL CALLED DUUN METEN IN ISLE ABBOTTS. The purpose of this article is to suggest that the Saxon manor of Earnshill and the village and church disappeared completely during or soon after the Black Death, but their site is not represented by the present-day Earnshill House and its surrounding estate. It is suggested that the ancient settlement was bounded by the Rivers Earn (now called Fivehead River) and Isle and that its eastern limit was the confluence of the rivers. Its western limit lay along Islemoor Road, marked by the above mentioned hill, which is about one and a quarter miles from the church. The name Earnshill persisted and was ultimately given to Earnshill House, built in 1725 by a forbear of Mr. Richard Combe, the present owner.

Bishop Ralph, in his register for 1353, records that the population of the ancient settlement was so much reduced by plague that the survivors, if any, could no longer support the church and its incumbent. He transferred the parish to Curry Rivel and that church was required to offer the sacrament at Earnshill three times a week and on the principal church festivals and, if three days elapsed when no sacrament was offered, the church of Curry Rivel was to pay a half mark and all expenses to the church at Wells and 40d. to the archdeacon of Taunton.

This record, however, gives no indication of the whereabouts of Earnshill. The disappearance of the village is referred to by Aston and Burrow,¹ but they too did not give its whereabouts, except that it was 'near Curry Rivel'.

Collinson² was mistaken in saying that Earnshill House and its estate formerly belonged to Muchelney Abbey. There seems to be no record of this: it was the land between the rivers that belonged to Muchelney, as shown below. Collinson was clearly referring to the present site because it is the present house that he described. Doubts about the history and legal standing of the estate surrounding the present house arise also from an indenture of 1679 citing another of 1673,³ in the form of a mortgage of the estate from Henry Walrond of Isle Brewers to Sir John Lowther of Lowther as security for borrowing £3,500. Throughout these documents the property is referred to as 'the Mannor or reputed Mannor or Capital Messuage and Farme of Yearneshill *alias* Ironshill'. Field names are given which are still in use and identify the land as that around the house. A further doubt about the location of the ancient site arises from Somerset Monuments Record No. 53489. This says there are earthworks adjoining the present house, which are represented as being those of the ancient village, but Mr. Combe has said (*priv. comm.*) that he is not aware of any earthworks on his land.

The early history of Isle Abbots and of Earnshill comes from the charters of Kynewulf⁴ (762) and Edgar⁵ (c. 966), from Domesday Book (1086) and from a perambulation of the royal forest of Neroche⁶ (1300). Kynewulf granted eight hides to Muchelney Abbey, but the bounds as described are ambiguous, and no settlement name is given. The charter tells us only that the land lay between the rivers Earn and Isle and that the western boundary was marked by a hill called Duun Meten, a pre-English name that has been lost. The hill is described as 'from the west', presumably because it is only when seen *from* the west that it presents a visible escarpment. The hill is a good boundary landmark: at 42m. high it is the highest point in the neighbourhood and it closes the gap between the rivers, except for the water meadows at each end. When seen from the east, e.g. from Northalls Farm in Isle Abbots at ST 349204, it rises so gently that it is barely noticeable as a hill.

There is a tiny hamlet called Badbury on the east side of the

hill. The name, Badbury, means Badda's hill or fort, and a number of examples are given in Ekwall's, *Dictionary of English Place-names*. The only landscape feature that would justify giving a hill-name to this low-lying hamlet is that it lies immediately at the foot of the Duun Meten, so the name, Badbury (or one of its variants), must originally have applied to the hill and was perpetuated by the hamlet after it had been lost as the name of the hill. Ekwall thought it was remarkable that Badbury refers in at least three cases to pre-historic camps and said, 'This may suggest that Badda was a legendary hero who was associated with ancient camps.' There is, however, no visible evidence that this Somerset Badbury was ever fortified, but its summit would be a suitable position for a lookout.

Reverting to the description of the bounds, it is ambiguous because it may mean that the rivers were the boundaries or that the land was a discrete area lying somewhere between the rivers but not bounded by them. Turner⁷ caused further confusion by proposing that the pre-English hill name was the hill on which the iron age camp of Neroche stands and that the hill name is now represented by Dommett, a nearby hamlet, but this is 6 miles or so from Isle Abbotts. Jackson⁸ did not dissent from Turner's interpretation but seems to have left the question open, and Finberg⁹ and Whitelock¹⁰ followed Turner. The matter is put beyond doubt, however, by Edgar's charter, which granted what is clearly the same land as that granted by Kynewulf, but with addition of two hides. According to DB, this extra hidage disappeared some time after 966 and before 1066, and the original figure of eight hides was restored; and the two hides gained and the two hides lost must have been the same land, because without it the bounds of both charters coincide almost exactly with each other and the present-day boundaries of Isle Abbotts. The charter of 966, unlike the earlier one, does mention the settlement name of Yli, but Grundy¹¹ added the name Isle Abbotts to his interpretation of this charter.

That Turner did not notice that the two charters granted the same land is perhaps not surprising, because Edgar's charter gave more landmarks, which were a lot more detailed than but different from those of Kynewulf. In 762, for example, we are told only that the land lay between the rivers, but in 966 we have 'down to the Earn', 'along the Earn to the Isle', 'up the

Isle to Eschford' (Ashford), the starting point. This leaves no doubt about the location of the charter land in relation to the rivers and establishes also that the eastern limit of the charter land was at the confluence of the rivers. The present-day bounds of Isle Abbots, however, do not extend eastwards beyond Islemoor Road. So the land cut off (about 180 acres – say 1½ hides) must have lain between Islemoor Road and the confluence. This is the site proposed as the location of the ancient manor and settlement of Earnshill.

In addition, we are told in 762 that the western boundary was marked by Duun Meten, but in 966 this hill was not mentioned. Instead, we have a much more precise boundary – a track called Cleywey. This still exists (but the name has been lost) except for a length that was mostly destroyed when RNAS Merryfield was developed. Today from Ashford a short length is incorporated into the modern highway system and is part of Ashford Lane (up to the perimeter to the airfield). It then continued north across the airfield (where it came to be known as Beigo Lane and is mostly destroyed) and traversed the lower slope of Duun Meten on the west side of the hill (where it came to be known as Hill Lane), to a ford across the Earn, called in 966 Cytan Ford. The ford is no longer used but is still visible, where there is a field bridge formed by railway sleepers. A lot of the old track, well formed about 20' wide with an earth bank on each side, still exists, but is so overgrown that it is only accessible here and there. It must have been an important track in earlier times and for many years, since it joined two fords (over the Isle and the Earn), and was probably a through route.

There are two DB entries for Earnshill¹² (Erneshele and Ernesel) totalling 1½ hides. Both parts were held in 1066 by Leofing, but one part was held by him from the king and the other from Roger de Courcelle. The two parts were held separately (by Wulfward and Gerard), but the king still held one and Roger was still overlord of the other, so it seems that by then they were avowedly separate manors. By the time of the Black Death they had become a single parish, called Earnshill.

The above evidence does not prove beyond doubt that the Saxon manors and ancient settlement of Earnshill and the ancient parish of that name occupied the 1½ hides lost by Isle Abbots between 966 and 1066, although this evidence is very

persuasive. The question is put beyond doubt, however, by the perambulation of 1300,¹³ which describes the eastern limit of the royal forest in the following terms: 'By water [Earn] as far as Quakinkebrugg' [probably an early bridge replacing or supplementing Cytan Ford, where the boundary crossed the Earn] and continued 'along the same water as far as Ernulle', but on the southern bank of the Earn. The landmark Ernulle, as was usual with the old landmarks, indicates a radical change of direction, which must have been towards the south – along the Isle – to return to the starting point in Donyatt; and it must have continued along the northern bank of the Isle, because there is no suggestion that the boundary crossed the river at Ernulle and then proceeded along its southern bank. Nor is there any provision at Ernulle for a crossing of the Isle and apparently no record of one. Furthermore, there is no landmark between Ernulle and Stockenebrugg (now Ilford Bridge on the Isle), to indicate a river crossing or other radical change.

Etymology of Earnshill

Ekwall's treatment of the name is somewhat confusing. In his *English River Names* (1928), he explained Earn as 'the old name apparently of the stream that comes from Staple Fitzpaine and joins the Isle north-east of Isle Abbots. As the stream must have given the name to Earnshill, which is on the Isle below the junction with the Earn, the latter name would seem to have been originally applied to the stream formed by the junction of the Isle and the Earn'; and further: 'A back-formation from Earnshill is improbable in view of the early appearance of Earn'. It is not surprising that he changed his view and, in his *Dictionary of English Place-names*, said merely that Earnshill means 'Hill on the R. Earn'. Unfortunately, this too is unacceptable because Earnshill House (if that is what he was referring to) is on the Isle, not the Earn. A derivation from OE *healh* is suggested below.

The first element of the name clearly refers to the river, and in DB forms Erneshele and Ernesel and the form Erneshelle (1194 Assize Rolls); the river name is in the genitive singular, Ernes, signifying 'of the Earn', rather than Ekwall's 'on the Earn'. The second element could be construed as the modern form of OE *hyll*, but there do not seem to be any OE spellings in 'y'. Both Smith in his *English Place-name Elements* (1987) and Ekwall present *healh* as the southern form of the northern

halh and both, they say, are very common in place-names and both developed many shades of meaning around the general sense of a 'nook, corner of land, water meadow' (Smith) and 'nook, recess, remote valley and land in a corner formed by a bend' (Ekwall). Ekwall says the meaning is difficult to establish in any particular case, but this 'general sense' is certainly applicable to the land proposed here as the ancient site of Earnshill.

He also says that the form of the second element varies widely. The nominative *healh* appears as both 'heale' and 'hele' in the dative singular (the 'h' being lost in inflected forms), and (*aet*) *hele* (in Somerset, 897) is offered as a paradigm. So, the early spellings consist of *Ernes* ('of the Earn') and *hele* (dative singular) of *healh* and imply 'at the hele'. Thus, the two elements translate literally as 'at the hele of the Earn, i.e. at the nook, etc., enclosed by the Earn and Isle. This translation could imply the whole of the 1½ hides comprising the ancient manors and village, but that would not be satisfactory as a landmark because it does not indicate a specific point.

1. Aston and Burrow, *Archaeology of Somerset* (1982), p. 130.
2. Collinson, *History of Somerset* (1791), vol. I.
3. SRO DD/SAS C/77 (1).
4. *Som. Rec. Soc.* 'Cartulary of Muchelney Abbey', XIV, 47, 48 (1899).
5. *Ibidem*.
6. Sixsmith, *Staple Fitzpaine and the Forest of Neroche* (1958).
7. Turner, *Bulletin of Board of Celtic Studies* IT, 'Some Somerset Place-names with Celtic Elements' (1952), 113 *et seq.*
8. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (1953), 320 2n.
9. Finberg, *The Early Charters of Wessex* (1964)
10. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents* (1953), Vol. I, 459.
11. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset* (1934), 136.
12. Thorn, *Domesday Book Somerset* (1980), 21.70; 46.20.
13. Sixsmith, *op. cit.*

[This article was originally submitted as two separate articles, 'The Lost Village of Earnshill' and 'A Hill that is called Duun Meten'. These overlapped significantly, particularly in the region of Duun Meten itself, and the author and the editor felt that these could be merged satisfactorily under this present article. All details provided by the author, but without the duplication, have been retained].

ENOCH ELLERINGTON

69. RUSSELL OF WEYMOUTH (XXXII, 666). Some amplification of the earlier generations in Story-Maskelyne's genealogy may be acceptable. As a witness before an Exchequer commission at Weymouth on 30 December 1633, Henry Russell, merchant, gave his age as 71.¹ He was therefore born in or about 1572, and he was buried at Melcombe Regis on 20 Feb 1643.² His will,³ signed eleven days earlier 'sick in body', confirms the

names of his sons as Henry, Stephen and Joseph, but does not mention a daughter Christian, nor any children of his son Henry. His description of Elizabeth as 'my now wife' implies that there had been a previous marriage. One of the overseers of the will, Samuel Mico, was described as 'my son in law', which must mean stepson, since Mico was married to the daughter of an alderman of London, Henry Andrews. Elizabeth Russell, therefore, was the widow of one Richard Mico, a Somerset man. Her maiden name was Allen, but beyond this nothing about her origins is known.⁴ Henry Russell bequeathed modest portions to a daughter, Joan Hyatt, to two grandchildren, Peter Neale and Anne Nelson, and to a niece, Elizabeth Corsalis. His widow was to retain for her life 'that part of the house where I now dwell', the remainder (in the occupation of Mrs. Maynard) being left to his son Henry. Unspecified property in Wootton Glanville was to be divided equally between Henry, Stephen, and Joseph's two sons, the elder of whom, another Joseph, was to inherit a windmill. Joseph's three daughters (unnamed) were to receive £20 each.

No Russell appears on the subsidy list for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis for 1596.⁵ But within the next twenty years Henry Russell had won for himself such a position in the municipality as to be named one of the original aldermen in the charter of 1617. He served as mayor in 1625-6 and as bailiff in 1635-6, though repeatedly defeated in mayoral elections.⁶

In the national records there are several references to successful privateering ventures undertaken by Henry Russell in partnership with two other Dorset merchants, John Gardiner and John Blachford. They set out the *Content* of Weymouth (40 tons) in 1628 at the cost of £387 9s. 9d. under letters of marque. She captured the *Jago* of Lisbon (140 tons) with a cargo valued at £10,000, including 507 chests of sugar, 16 chests and one butt of Brazil tobacco, 2 tons of molasses and 13 vessels of green ginger.⁷ Blachford withdrew from the syndicate soon afterwards, not without acrimony,⁸ but Russell and Gardiner seem to have renamed their prize the *Henry and John*, and sent her out again under the captaincy of Russell's eldest son.⁹ Henry Russell II was also a witness before the Exchequer special commission in 1633, when he was aged 36 and described as a master mariner.¹⁰ Freeman of Weymouth by patrimony in 1617, he had married Christian Knight in Melcombe Regis on 7 July

1619.¹¹ There is no positive evidence of children by this marriage, but in 1662 Christian Russell was living in a small house in Melcombe Regis.¹² She may have been Henry II's impoverished widow. A codicil to his father's will had provided: 'In case my sonne Henry ... shall not come home from the East Indies the house wherein I now dwell shall abyde and remayne with my sonne Steven'. However, the only Stephen Russell assessed for hearth-tax in Dorset after the Restoration lived far away in Hinton Martell, where his ancestors had paid subsidy and served in the militia throughout the 16th century.¹³ Of the three brothers, only Joseph can be placed in Dorset in 1662. He may have been living in Dorchester, having let the Wootton Glanville property.¹⁴

As Rupert Willoughby remarks, Russell is one of the commonest surnames in South Dorset. To the descendants of the medieval clusters identified by Gladys Scott Thomson¹⁵ must be added the use of the name by immigrants, such as the Norman Robert Russell in Dorchester in 1525.¹⁶ One family, established in Corscombe in the 16th century, also produced a father and son named Henry in Stuart times.¹⁷ They achieved some prominence in the civil war. The father, who may have married Elizabeth Guppy at South Perrott in 1617, advanced £10 to Parliament and enabled his son to serve as a trooper under Sir Walter Erle with horse and arms. Sequestrator of royalist estates in the Dorchester division, he lost £100 12s. in the service when the Cavaliers captured Wareham in 1644. He was to receive £50 from the county treasurer for his extraordinary care, pains and expences 'when he shall be enabled'.¹⁸ Henry Russell junior is said to have served under Sir Walter Erle as a trooper, and was later commissioned captain of horse.¹⁹ Both father and son were living in Corscombe after the Restoration, the former in one of the largest houses in the village, with 6 hearths. He died on 31 March 1677, bequeathing to his widow Elizabeth a life interest in Guppy's Mill Close, Pynams Cross Mead, and Mudford Mill, as well as goods and chattels. His sons were Henry, Ezekiel (baptised 4 July 1624), and Jeremiah (baptised 12 July 1629). Ezekiel had a son Edward, and Henry had four children, one of them another Henry (born in 1649).²⁰ I suggest that the possibility of a connection with the Russells who later established themselves so close at hand at Beaminster merits further investigation.

1. Public Record Office, Exchequer 134/9&10 Charles I, Hilary 39.
2. Dorset Record Office, Melcombe Regis St. Mary parish register.
3. PRO, Probate 11/208, f. 18.
4. G.W. Marshall, *Le Neve's Knights* M(Harleian Society, viii: London, 1873), 190. Story-Maskelyne placed this marriage in the wrong generation, as can be shown from the entry for Mico in the Society of Genealogists, Boyd's London Citizens, 3787. Mico married into a leading London family in 1634, and hence is unlikely to have been Russell's son-in-law in the modern sense. An alderman of London under the Protectorate, he stood unsuccessfully for Weymouth in 1660 (B.D. Henning, *The House of Commons 1660-1690* (London, 1983), i. 223), received the honour of knighthood in 1664, and died two years later.
5. T.L. Stoate, *Dorset Tudor Subsidies*, 105.
6. J. Hutchins, *Dorset* (1861-70), ii. 438, 451; M. Weinstock, *Weymouth Minute Book*, 35, 41, 43, 45, 50.
7. PRO, Exchequer 112/173/13; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1628-9*, pp. 305, 423 *Weymouth Minute Book*, 15.
8. *Cal. SP. Dom. 1628-9*, pp. 397, 471; *Acts of the Privy Council 1628-9*, pp. 243, 244; *1629-30*, p. 168.
9. *Cal. SP. Dom. 1629-31*, p. 470.
10. PRO, E134/9&10 Charles I, Hilary 39.
11. Dorset RO, par. reg.
12. C.A.F. Meekings, *Dorset Hearth Tax Assessments 1662-4*, p. 16.
13. PRO, Probates 11/208, f. 18; *Hearth Tax*, 28; *Tudor Subsidies* 114; Stoate, *Dorset Tudor Muster Rolls*, 97, 157.
14. *Hearth Tax*, 3, 55.
15. G. Scott Thomson, *Two Centuries of Family History* (London, 1930), pp. 328-34.
16. *Tudor Subsidies*, 107.
17. *Muster Rolls*, 14; *Tudor Subsidies*, 38.
18. Society of Genealogists, R.G. Bartelot, Corscombe parish register transcripts; C.H. Mayo, *The Minute-Books of the Dorset Standing Committee 1646-50* (Exeter, 1902), pp. 3, 176, 320; A.R. Bayley, *The Great Civil War in Dorset* (Taunton, 1910), p. 134.
19. *Dorset Standing Committee*, 267, 377. However no Russell appears on the payroll of Erle's troop in the Dorset section of the Commonwealth Exchequer papers (PRO, SP28/128).
20. *Hearth Tax*, 88; Corscombe par. reg.; PRO, Probate 11/354, f. 280.

JOHN FERRIS

70. BRINLEY SKINNER. The Parish Register of 1764 records that:

‘Brinley Skinner died 11th Dec. buried 23rd Dec.’

This simple entry hides that fact that here was one of the wealthiest persons ever to take up residence in the village. Skinner came from a family of six brothers and three sisters. His great-grandfather Robert Brinley, a London merchant, was also a one time resident of Ryme Intrinseca. the link with the Skinners of Dewlish came with the marriage of his grandmother Sussanah to John Skinner, an Italian merchant.

Like his father and grandfather before him Brinley developed an Italian connection, as a merchant residing in Venice, and later as English consul in Leghorn. At the time of his death he was an estate owner in Devon and Shropshire, and possessed

property in Bath.

Skinner died a bachelor, thus having no heirs, had put in to his tenure agreement, the lives of his nephew John Paltock and niece Eleanor Boddington. (Copyhold for three lives was a common form of manorial tenure.) According to Hutchins, Skinner held the freehold of 142 acres in Ryme, and as was the custom in the 18th and 19th c. freeholders could sell their holdings or buy extensions as suited their purpose. In Skinner's case he directed that immediately after his death.

... there be taken from the ready money that I shall leave the sum of one hundred pounds and that forthwith to be employed in the purchase of another life after mine is fallen in the Ryme estates by putting in the life of my niece Eleanor Hodges if she be living at the time of my death and in default thereof the life of Oliver Cromwell son of my cousin Mary Cromwell shall be put into these Ryme estates in lieu thereof ...

Mary was married to Thomas Cromwell the great-grandson of the Protector. There is no record of Oliver ever having become a copyholder in Ryme, the succession remaining the Paltock family.

Legacy of Brinley Skinner (Prob 11 904)

Legacys of things and money belonging to me Brinley Skinner Esquire as are there in my house at Ryme or my house in Chandos Square opposite St. Johns Chapple at Bath and are accordingly to be disposed of by my Executor or Executress my Diamond Ring and Pearl Neckcloth Tassells together with all my plate the plate box and what may be contained in the drawers thereof I bequeath for the life of my niece Eleanor Boddington to her use and after her death to my niece Eleanor Hodges for her use during her life and after her death to my niece Anna Paltock during her life to her use and after her death to the use of the life then subsisting on my Ryme Estates and in the possession of them to be preserved in my house there as long as the succession therein remaineth to the heirs of those lives I or my Executor or Executress shall put into those Estates, my large Gold Striking Watch I leave to my niece Eleanor Hodges and if she die before me then I leave said watch to my niece Anna Paltock, my Pinchbeck pocket watch I leave to my nephew John Paltock and if he die before me then to my nephew his brother Robert Paltock and so also I bequeath my Gold Shirt Sleeve buttons and my Goldheaded Cane my three Book Cases full of Books printed or manuscripts and all others I shall not otherwise dispose of I leave to be preserved in my large house at Ryme as a library for the use of those lives which shall enjoy it that either I have or may put into that Estate or my Executor or Executress may as by my directions after my death put there into and in like manner as my books so I leave all the household goods furniture linen and every individual contained in my house at Ryme at the time of my death and whatever else in utensils any ways belonging to farming that shall then be found on the Estates and in like manner as my Books I leave my Pistolls Gun Sword Hanger and Tack Boots as a

monument of me in my Ryme large house. All the furniture of every kind whatever that shall be in my house at Bath at the time of my death (excepting such I have or may express particularly to be otherwise disposed of) I bequeath to my niece Anna Paltock. All my Gold or Silvered Cloaths of every kind and fine and coarse laces I bequeath to my niece Eleanor Boddington provided she sell such part as may raise Ten Pounds for cloathing tenn poor people of her chusing at Endfield immediately after my death she so surviving me. My nephew John Paltock shall take possession of my Ryme Estates and houses with all stock of cattle of every kind thereon which shall belong to me and by virtue of the Bond of resignation signed by his parents during his minority and of a second signed also by himself for his life several years afterwards put into the Estates then purchased of Elizabeth and Dorothy Jeffrey and Henry Little that his life should so only stand in Trust for the purposes assigned in my last Will pursuant thereto I bequeath an Annuity of fforty pounds to be paid in quarterly payments of Ten pounds at each Quarter Day by him my nephew John Paltock to my sister Anna Paltock his mother during her natural life and for which all the Estates shall be subjected to secure a faithfull and punctual payment as long as she lives And in the case of death of my said nephew before me then my niece Eleanor Boddington who likewise hath given Bonds of the same purport shall take possession of the said Estates at Ryme and every thing as bequeathed to my said nephew John Paltock but with like charge of fforty pounds Annuity so payable to my sister Anna Paltock during her life and the Estates so lyable for securing such payments. All my plain cloths linnen and all other kinds of plain apparell I leave to my two nephews John and Robert Paltock to be fairly and equally divided between them (or to the survivor if either of them dye before me) by my Executor or Executress. To the servants living with me at the time of my death I leave to each a years wages beyond what wages shall be then due to them and also to each a gold mourning ring. I desire to be buried in the most private manner in Ryme Churchyard or where else I dye with a monument and inscription according to what I shall leave behind me aamongst my papers to be performed with great plainness & neatness. Six poor labouring men of Ryme or of the parish where I dye are to carry me to the grave and to have five shillings each for that labour and each of them a coat waist coat and leather breeches of warm coarse grey cloth to be delivered them the Sunday month after my burial or as soon after as possible. To the Parson and Clerk where I am buried I bequeath a Gold Ring to each besides the usual burial fees. The Easter Day following that of my death to one hundred of the poorest Men and Women or Children of the Parish of Dewlish I leave one shilling each but if Betty Caster be alive at the time of my death of that five pounds, twenty shillings to her and four pounds to be divided amongst the aforesaid 100 poor desiring either of the Messrs Grundy there to chuse the poor and distribute it the Lady Day next after my death. I leave to Twenty Sober Honest families at Tiverton in Devonshire twenty shillings each Ten whereof belonging to the Church and the other Ten dissenters, to be distributed by Mr. Richard Enchinarch or one of his sons which shall chuse them but not join the said twenty pounds to the poor Rates. To Ten of the poorest objects at Ryme in Dorsetshire I bequeath twenty shillings each which to be chosen by the Curate and the Ordinary Memembers of the Church Vestry at Ryme and for them to distribute Ten shillings thereof to each the Lady Day Evening after my decease and the other Ten shillings thereof to each the Christmas Day next ensuing. To Ten of

the poorest objects at Aston in Shropshire I bequeath Twenty shillings each to be chosen by Executor or Executress who will advise with the Tenant who shall live at Aston shall at the time of my death one of the Ten shall be old Rebecca Chaltan who attended me at Aston if she be then living.

Witness my hand and seal to these my Legacys this 2nd. Day of August 1759.
Signed: Brinley Skinner.

Brinley Skinner was one of the last to be interred in the nave of St. Hippolytus Church, and in accordance with his wishes, a memorial tablet was placed on the wall overlooking his place of rest, bearing the following inscription:

In hopes of a resurrection,
here lyeth BRINLEY SKINNER, esq.,
who dyed lamented by all,
but more especially his friends,
the 11th. December, 1764,
aged 68.

His soul he gave to God,
His body to the grave
and
His fame to posterity.

I pray
stop and stay,
compare and weigh
with me ; as you
I was, as me you'll be.

His family arms that surmounts the tablet are:

Quarterly, 1 and 4, Sable, a chevron or between three griffins heads erased argent ; 2 and 3, Per pale sable and or, a chevron between three escallops counterchanged.

N. G. WILKINS

DRO, PE/RYN-RE 1/3 Ryme Intrinseca
Parish Register 1709-1787.

Hutchins, *History of Dorset*, Vol ii p. 609,
Skinners of Dewlish.

Hutchins, Vol iv, p. 491,
Ryme Intrinseca.

PRO, Registered Copy Wills 1383-1858,
Prob 11 904, Brinley Skinner.

PARADISE FOR SALE

DORSET - 8 miles DORCHESTER

In the valley of the River Piddle

KIDDLES FARM. PIDDLTRENTHIDE
A SMALL MIXED FARM WITH SMALL PERIOD
FARMHOUSE
DINING/LIVING ROOM WITH INGLENOOK
SITTING ROOM, KITCHEN, 3 BED ROOMS.
BATHROOM

- Adv. in Country Life.

Had I the shillings, pounds and pence,
I'd pull up stakes and hie me hence;
I'd buy that small mixed farm in Dorset.
Which has an inglenook; and faucet -
Kiddles Farm,
Piddletrenthide,
In the valley of the River Piddle.

I'd quit these vehement environs
Of diesel fumes and horns and sirens,
This manic, fulminating ruction
Of demolition and construction,
For Kiddles Farm,
Piddletrenthide,
In the valley of the River Piddle.

Yes, quit for quietude seraphic
Con Edison's embrangled traffic,
To sit reflecting that the skylark,
Which once was Shelley's, now is my lark,
At Kiddles Farm,
Piddletrenthide,
In the valley of the River Piddle.

I'm sure the gods could not but bless
The man who lives at that address,
And revenue agents would wash their hands
And cease to forward their demands
To Kiddles Farm,
Piddletrenthide,
In the valley of the River Piddle.

Oh the fiddles I'd fiddle,
 The riddles I'd riddle,
 The skittles I'd scatter,
 The winks I would tiddle!
 Then hey diddle diddle!
 I'd jump from the griddle
 And live out my days
 To the end from the middle
 On Kiddles Farm,
 Piddletrenthide,
 In the valley of the River Piddle.

Ogden Nash

This appears in *Candy is Dandy: the best of Ogden Nash*, published by Andre Deutsch Ltd, at £9.99. We are grateful to the publishers for permission to reproduce this poem.

This poem was drawn to our attention by the late Dr. John Harvey who came across it while working as the archivist of Winchester College. It was published in the 'Western Gazette' in 1959, and the correspondent, General Sir Henry C. Jackson of West House Piddletrenthide, added this observation:- 'The recent sale of Kiddles Farm has brought to an end a long tenancy. The two brothers, Mr. P. Symes and Mr. R. Symes, the well known sheep farmers, are, through their mother, the direct descendants of the Kiddle family, who have been tenants of this farm for nearly 400 years. Almost all the time as tenants of Winchester College, who acquired the property from Henry VIII. I am glad to say that the Messrs Symes are continuing to live in Piddletrenthide, and the name of the Kiddle family will be remembered by the name of the farm and 'Kiddles Bottom' on the Ordnance Map.'

BOOK REVIEWS

Tom Mayberry, *The Vale of Taunton Past* (Phillimore, 1998. Pp. xii + 132, 171 illus. and 2 maps, £14.99). In this latest account of Taunton's history, the author has wisely chosen not to restrict his work to the town itself, but has extended its scope so as to include the whole of the region of Taunton Deane: peculiarly appropriate, for historically and geographically this same area would be as familiar to Tauntonians today as it would be to the inhabitants ten centuries ago, when the Bishop of Winchester first acquired this complex estate.

Mr. Mayberry has lived in Taunton Deane for most of his life and his knowledge of the subject and his love of this region alike are self-evident, tinged only by a sense of pessimism in

his closing paragraph. He has adopted generally a chronological approach from 'Origins' to 'Towards the Millennium', which allows this informative and highly readable book to be followed in sequence. The illustrations are profuse and relevant to the appropriate chapter. Some are familiar, but many will be new, and future readers will surely bless Tom Mayberry for bringing both text and illustrations right up-to-date.

Proof reading is impeccable, but pagination in the list of contents is sadly adrift.

D. M. M. S.

Derek Shorrocks (ed.), *Bishop Still's Visitation 1594 and The 'Smale Booke' of the Clerk of the Peace 1593-5* (Somerset Record Society, vol. 84, 1998. Pp. 193, £15 & £1.25 p. & p.). In its conception this is one of the most original local record society publications. For the editor, appreciating the significance of the coincidental survival of similar records of both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in Somerset for 1593-5, has produced a comparative study of the highest standards of scholarship which is an invaluable source both of particular details and overall interpretation: the fact that diocese and county are co-terminous adds completeness to the project.

The reader is presented with two texts: a visitation comprising the presentments of churchwardens on matters religious and moral pertaining both to clergy and laity in their parishes together with the decisions of the bishop and his judge; and the record of indictments and presentments of the jurors of the hundreds kept by the clerk of the peace at Quarter Sessions, dealing with petty criminal causes and administrative matters alike. Interestingly the distinction between sin and crime is somewhat blurred as both jurisdictions deal with matters of recusancy, ale house licensing and bastardy, although often approaching them from slightly different perspectives. The texts, too, make fascinating reading, full of the vivid vignettes which so readily enliven historical studies.

It is in the introduction, however, that the real significance of this volume lies. For it provides a masterly exposition of the fiendishly complicated procedures and format of the texts, in particular the visitation book with its decisions in heavily contracted Latin phrases which has discouraged all but the most

pertinacious researcher from making significant use of such sources. In a restrained and authoritative way the editor discusses the sources, always offering practical and logical explanations for historical and archival puzzles in the manner for which he has been noted throughout his long career as an archivist.

This achievement is made all the greater because this volume, virtually from its inception, has been produced against a run of poor health which has required him to draw deep on the strengths of determination and sheer doggedness with which he is renowned. He will not thank the reviewer for mentioning this, but it is pertinent to a full appreciation of this volume. Derek Shorrocks has produced a quintessential local record society volume: it covers the *whole* county and as such will be of lasting value to all Somerset historians, but it offers more as an essential *vade-mecum* for those wishing to use these sources in other counties.

S. D. H.

Evans M., *The Place of the Rural Blacksmith in Parish Life, 1500-1900* (Som. & Dorset Family Hist. Soc., 1998, pp. 122, illus., £8.75). This was a dissertation submitted for the M.A. in Local History at Bristol University in 1997. The work has a strong genealogical emphasis, and after a short introduction to the work of the blacksmith, and an account of the local records in Somerset and Dorset which relate to that work, the author lists names which have been identified in Directories, Militia Lists and Census returns. Few University theses transfer well into reading matter for the general public, but this is an exception. It is a pleasantly written study which will prove valuable to genealogists and to general readers of local history.

Blad A. J., *Samuel Crane, 1746-1815. Dorset Farmer* (privately produced and available from Ottaker's Bookshop, Dorchester and The Wareham Wren Bookshop, 1999, pp. 44, illus., £4.95). This is based on the diaries of Samuel Crane the Farm Manager at Bloxworth. His entries cover a three year period at the end of the eighteenth century. The farming practice at the time and the general work of the farm are described in some detail, together with prices and names of the farm workers

involved. This is an excellent, well-balanced little study which fleshes out the rather more prosaic and business-like diary entries.

Legg R., *Portland Encyclopedia* (Dorset Publishing Co., 1999, pp. 158, illus., £9.95). An A to Z of Portland which covers every conceivable topic which might be related to Portland. The entries are the usual mix of fact and eccentric interpretation which we have come to expect from Rodney Legg. He has included John Lee, a convicted murderer who spent twenty-two years in prison there, and Lovell-Gregg, the Hurricane pilot who fought in the air over Portland during W.W.II. But, however extreme his selection might seem, Portlanders and visitors will appreciate such a handy pocket volume.

G. J. D.

QUERIES

A MILITARY FUNERAL. Towards the end of the year 1798 the Regiment of Somerset Provisional Cavalry was ordered into winter quarters in Weymouth. At the end of June 1799 tragedy struck the Regiment. In a letter, date 25 June, Lt. Col. T. S. Jolliffe explained how.

Major Balch was standing close by my side last evening, about 7 o'clock, and conversing with me in front of the parade, apparently in his usual state of health, when he suddenly fell prostrate and expired instantly.

It was decided that the major's body should be sent to his home in Somerset, which meant that the cortege would proceed right across Dorset. The beginning of the journey was described in Lord Hylton's book *The Somerset Fencible Cavalry*.

His body was escorted beyond Dorchester by the whole Squadron. The procession was exceedingly slow. A company of near 100 of the Shropshire Militia led as an advanced Guard with their arms reversed, then followed their full Band of Music near 40, and the Trumpeters of our Regiment playing the Dead March, the Clergymen of Weymouth in a post-chaise. Then the Major's charger covered with black cloth, his boots and spurs lain across the Saddle, led by 2 dismounted Dragoons with Napkins affixed to the bridle.

The arrival of the cortege in Sherborne was described in the *Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury* (8 July 1799).

Thursday (4 July) the remains of the much lamented Major Balch were brought from Weymouth into this town on their way to St. Audries, Somerset, to which place they proceeded next morning. The Sherborne Loyal Volunteers met the body on its approach to the town with reversed arms, etc., and attended it to the Antelope Inn where it lay in state. The manner in which the Sherborne Volunteers performed the evolutions customary on these mournful occasions did them great credit, and gave general satisfaction; and part of the Somerset Provisional Cavalry, to which the Major belonged, also attending, the whole formed a truly respectable appearance.

But what happened then? There is presumably some Somerset source which describes the rest of the journey and the funeral. If there is, I would appreciate it if someone would provide me with details – George Lanning, 6 Faircross Court, Wilton Drive, Weymouth, DT4 0DE.

CECILE OF THE HAY. Richard Locke of Burnham, writing about local history some two centuries ago, mentioned that the manor house of the reputed Manor of Huntspill named Huntspill de Lattay (or la Hay) was famous for being the residence of the above person. Mr. J. Lamb of 7 Church Road, West Huntspill, Highbridge, TA9 3RN (tel. 01278 783218), has so far been unable to trace any reference to this person, who may come from the 14th, 15th or early 16th century, and would appreciate any help that can be given.

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