

Chapter 2

1765-1769 Owned by Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas

Broderick (more correctly spelt 'Brodrick' although in later life he spelt his name with the 'e' ¹). Strictly speaking the owner was his son, Edward Brodrick, since Thomas had given it to him as an advancement of his inheritance (Appendix A)

In which we learn about the building of the house, our role in the song 'Rule Britannia' and a brief reference in Voltaire's novel 'Candide', how a Welshman's ear started a war, a naked swimming Vice-Admiral, and saving England from French invasion, amongst other things.

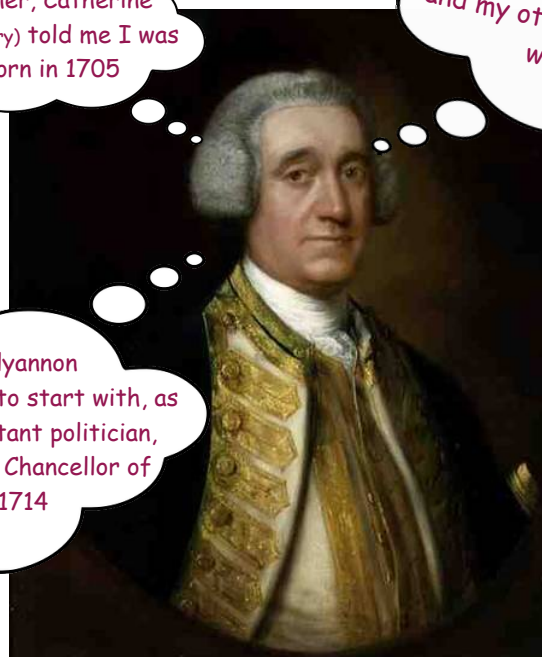
Thomas Brodrick opened the front door to his newly constructed residence, Grove House, and held it open for his wife Mary (nee Parnell). Standing in the entrance they both admired the winding Regency staircase with the mahogany banister, the various mirrors and the carefully constructed Adams style plasterwork; 3 of the 4 internal doors would open onto various day rooms, equally well designed and decorated, and the fourth to a corridor leading to yet more rooms.

It was August 19th 1767 (Appendix A) and the 63 year old Thomas gazed at his reflection in one of the mirrors, casting his mind back to some of the events of his life ²....

My mother, Catherine (nee Barry) told me I was born in 1705

My eldest half brother, St John was 20, and my other brother, Alan, was 3 when I was born

I lived at Ballyannon Castle in County Cork to start with, as father was an important politician, even becoming Lord Chancellor of Ireland in 1714



Portrait of Vice Admiral Brodrick by Thomas Gainsborough ³

From 1713 I spent time at Peper Harrow, a substantial estate in Surrey, which father purchased

The following year was very sad because my mother died. She was 49 and I was only 9

My father, Alan, became the 1st Viscount Midleton on 15th August 1717 ⁴

Father died on the 29th August 1728 in Cork ⁴ at the ripe old age of 72. Sadly my elder brother St John also died that same year, which meant brother Alan became 2nd Viscount Midleton

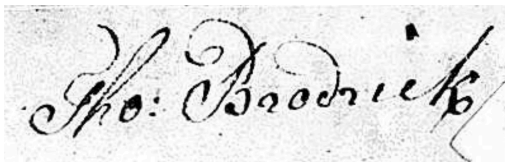


Alan Broderick
1st Viscount Midleton

The average life expectancy in England at this time was about 39-40 years old. It was assumed that if a man or a woman reached the age of 30, they would probably only live for another 20 years ⁵

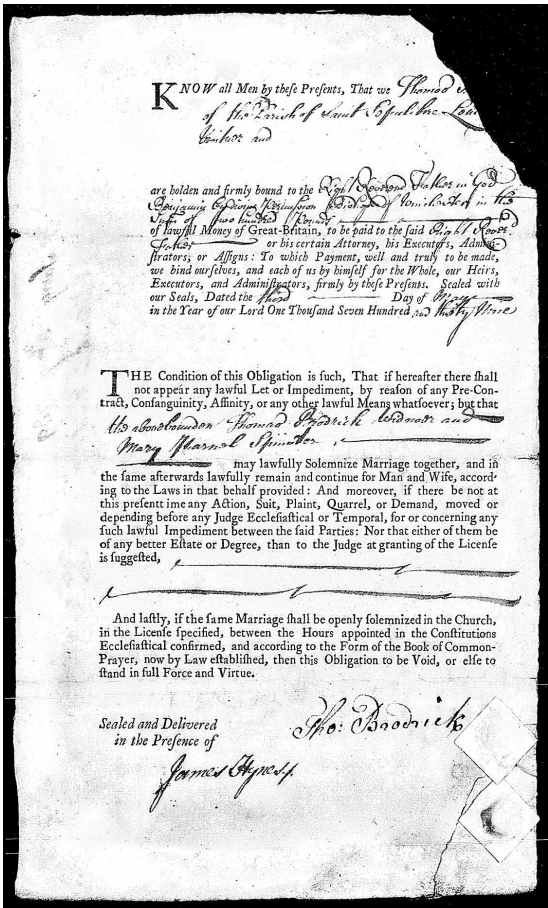
Thomas married Mary Parnell (1714-?) on the 3rd May 1739 at Saint Sepulchre, London ²

At this time, Thomas had been married for 36 years and had worked hard; this house he had commissioned was a quality place befitting a man of status, which he had become.



Thomas Broderick's signature from the marriage certificate, 1739

Edward, their son, was now 21 years old ², and could stand on his own two feet as far as Thomas was concerned; Grove House was for himself and Mary to enjoy, although in truth he had advanced the deeds to the house to Edward already as part of his inheritance (Appendix A).



Thomas Broderick's marriage certificate, 3rd May 1739 ²

Thomas opened the right hand door facing him, opposite to the front door, into the Drawing room. As he stepped into the spacious windowed room overlooking the landscaped garden, the warm sunshine struck his face and he turned to look at one of his uncles' paintings ⁴ depicting a naval battle off Algiers. This took him back to his own career in the Navy which he had joined at the age of 17 on the 13th January 1723 ^{1,6}



The song 'Rule Britannia' was written in 1740 to celebrate this victory ⁹

He remembered the battle at Porto Bello (now in Panama) in 1739, when Admiral Vernon had captured this 90-man Spanish colonial garrison, using just 6 ships.

As a lieutenant he had proudly commanded the landing party and ensuing ceremonial parade ⁷.

Vernon's attack on the Castillo del Hierro ("Iron Castle"), Portobello 21 November 1739. By Samuel Scott ⁸

The War of Jenkins' Ear
The story goes, that an ear was produced at the bar of the House of Commons (although no documentary evidence can be found to corroborate that the ear was actually produced). This ear had been removed from Robert Jenkins, a merchant seaman captain, by the Spanish coast guards in 1731, 'along with jeering at our king'. Britain went slightly crazy in its demand for reprisals (which was whipped up by commercial concerns about access to markets in Spanish America). War was declared on Spain in October 1739. The attack on the Iron Castle was one of the few victories in this campaign. ¹⁰

Further expeditions to Cartagena (now in Colombia) as a Commander and Cuba had followed, along with an expedition to the Leeward Islands (North East Caribbean) between 1744-8 as a Captain ⁶.

Thomas blanched at the next memory of poor Admiral John Byng at the start of the 7 Years War. He recalled that in the summer of 1756, when he had been a Commander in Chief, he had been sent to Minorca in the Mediterranean with reinforcements for Admiral Byng, who had been unsuccessful in his attempts to defend the former British held island from French attack.

Despite the Ministry not appearing to recognise the strategic importance of the island and the difficulties that the Admiral had faced, and therefore not providing him with adequate resources, he was sent home under arrest for his failures. Thomas had been summoned to be part of the ensuing court martial, which found him guilty 'of failing to "do his utmost" to prevent Minorca falling to the French'. ¹¹

What came to be known as the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) began as a conflict between Great Britain and France in 1754, when the British sought to expand into territory claimed by the French in North America. The taking of Minorca really sparked it off. This was a global conflict, a struggle for global primacy between Britain and France, which also had a major impact on the Spanish Empire ¹²

Thomas remembered how they all pleaded for clemency when the Admiralty insisted on the death penalty. They had all been 'distressed of mind' in this matter, considering that Byng had been guilty of an error of judgement only. But poor old Byng was summarily executed on the 14th March 1757. ¹¹

Any of them could have suffered the same fate. Life could be tough!

The episode provoked the French writer Voltaire's famous remark, in his novel Candide, that in England 'it is thought good to kill an admiral from time to time to encourage the others'. (il est bon de tuer de temps en temps un amiral pour encourager les autres). ¹¹



The execution of Admiral Byng, 1757 ¹¹

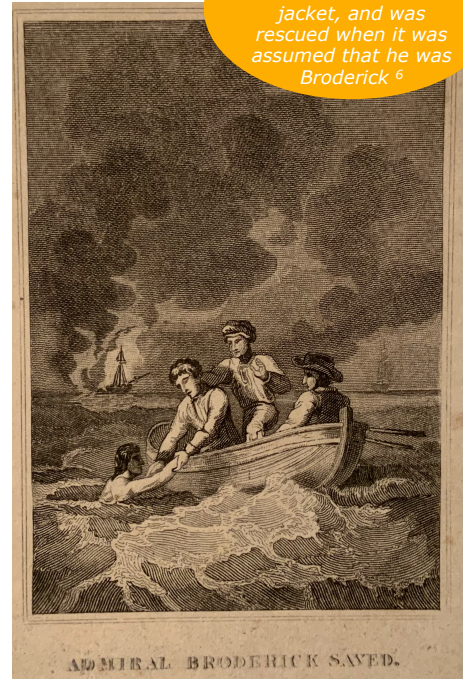
It had not all been plain sailing; by September 1757 he had been promoted to Rear-Admiral, and had sailed with the fleet on the 8th along with 4 other admirals in what turned out to be a failed expedition against Rochefort, France ¹³.

Thomas also recalled the 13th April 1758 when he was the Rear admiral commanding the Prince George off Lisbon in Portugal. The whole ship had been destroyed at sea by fire.

That had been devastating, with 485 of his crew drowned or burned to death. He had narrowly escaped drowning himself; having noted that the barge into which he was being guided was overfull and was therefore likely to capsize (which turned out to be exactly what happened) he had stripped off all of his clothes and jumped into the sea. Swimming about for an hour or so he had eventually been rescued by a merchants' boat - but it had been a dangerous escape ^{14, 1}.

On the 14th February in the following year he had been promoted again, to his highest rank, Vice Admiral ¹⁶, and served under Admiral Boscawen (who lived just along the road in Surrey, at Hatchlands).

A seaman had the presence of mind to don the admiral's jacket, and was rescued when it was assumed that he was Broderick ⁶



Steel engraving ca1850. Admiral Broderick Saved (Owned by Kit Malia)



The signs supposedly put up by the Spanish at Cadiz, 1759 ¹⁵

That had really been when he saved the day. This was still during the 7 Years War and the French had planned to invade England in 1759 by transporting their army in their ships. 12 of these were scheduled to be brought round to Brest for the task and Boscawen was tasked with blockading them. The French fleet became split up at the Battle of Lagos on August 19th and 5 (in some accounts 8) of the ships headed for Cadiz, where Thomas himself had so successfully blockaded them that even the Spaniards, friendly to the French, could not help themselves at ridiculing them. Soon afterwards the French navy was defeated ¹⁵.

Thomas smiled at his reflection in the mirror over the drawing room fireplace, at his part in putting a stop to the French invasion - a fitting end to his naval career ¹⁶. His actions had been viewed very favourably by the government and he had received a good financial reward, enabling him to have his new residence, Grove House, and the estate constructed. He had experienced a good and varied career, full of adventure. All of that time in the Caribbean, and other times in the Mediterranean too. But now he was looking forward to spending time here.

And what a transformation had taken place since he had purchased the 18^{1/2} acre site from the Hon. Sir George Howard on the 21st June 1765. The original 4 cottages that had stood here since before 1339 had already been pulled down and it was on these that his new villa had been constructed, along with its offices and outbuildings ⁶.

In addition he had purchased a further 53^{1/2} acres of land lying on both sides of the Dorking road, and some small pieces on the north side of the Guildford road, which included the site of the Parsonage barn (where Rayleigh House stands today), a cottage called 'Ingrams', and another house, formerly owned by John and Henry Lee (numbers 28 and 30 in the High Street?) ¹⁷.

He also owned the White Hart Inn (where Grove Cottages are sited today), which had to be a bonus.

He had married Mary Parnell ¹⁸ on the 3rd May 1739, when she was 25 years old - almost 27 years ago at St Sepulchre in London ². To be honest he had not been home that much with his stellar career in the Navy. Their last house, Grosvenor House, was in the Knightsbridge Green area in London and had been a substantial property, with 4 rooms on each floor with marble fireplaces, a stable wing and outbuildings and a large garden laid out with gravel walks 'grass plats, seats, espalier hedges, wilderness and shrubbery, all enclosed with a brick wall and well planted with fruit trees in great perfection' ¹⁹ - but not nearly as grand as the Grove estate. He hoped they would be content here in the country during his retirement.

Hopefully both Mary and Thomas did enjoy their sumptuous new estate, because he was soon to fall ill. It has been reported that he eventually retired to the peace of his family's estate, Peper Harow, near Godalming in Surrey, where he lived in a gardener's cottage ⁷ - perhaps because he was ill.



Peper Harow Mansion House ²²



St Nicholas Church, Peper Harow ²²

Thomas died on the 1st January 1769 of cancer in the face and was buried in the little churchyard adjoining the estate ⁷. There is a memorial to him in the chancel of the church 'Vice Admiral of the Reds', (in the days when the British Navy was divided into three squadrons, Red, White and Blue) ⁷.

There is no information about what Mary did after his death. But it is recorded that their son Edward Brodrick, who had been living at number 12 Sackville Street, London since 1766 ²⁰, mortgaged the house, then described as 'a newly erected capital messuage', and on the 18th October sold it to Sir Alexander Grant ²¹.

Given that Bookham Grove had already been put in Edward's name on the 21st June 1765 and he had been 'admitted' to the property on the 19th August 1767 (Appendix A), this indicates it took 2 years to construct the property.

21st June 1765
Thomas paid £3000
for the property
worth some £6-7
million at 2019 values
²³

It is unlikely that Edward lived at Bookham Grove and that indeed Thomas himself did, as described in the narrative above, because

Edward sold it immediately upon his fathers' death.

Also note that whilst it is noted that Edward lived at 12 Sackville Street until 1776 , this is probably inaccurate, since Edward is noted as a person of note and is given the title of Admiral - and an Admiral Edward Broderick cannot be found in the history books. So it is much more likely that the person who was actually living at 12 Sackville Street between 1766-1776 was Admiral Thomas Brodrick. This ties in totally with the date of moving into Bookham Grove.

Edward's will was proved in April 1782 and he was living at Great Portland Street in London at the time ²⁴.

References and Notes

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