

LEATHERHEAD  
& DISTRICT  
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



PROCEEDINGS VOL 5 No 6  
1993

## SECRETARIAL NOTES

The following Lectures and Visits were arranged during 1993:

January 21st	Lecture: "South-East England in Roman Times", by Charles Abdy.
February 19th	"The Society's Slides of Bookham", presented by Derek Renn.
March 19th	The 46th Annual General Meeting, followed by a talk on "The Dixon Family and Cherkley Court", by Geoff Hayward.
April 16th	Lecture: "The Water Mills of Surrey", by Derek Stidder.
May 12th	Visit to Albury Park and Saxon Church, organised by Honor Slingo.
May 15th	Joint visit with LCA to Crich Tramways Museum and Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire. Organised by Joan Kirby.
June 12th	Visit to Christ's Hospital, Horsham. Organised by Joyce Fuller.
July 2nd	Visit to Tenterden, organised by John Read.
July 17th	"Walk" round Bookham, led by Stephen Fortescue.
September 18th	Visit to Winchester, organised by David Ellis.
October 15th	Dallaway Lecture: "Brooklands Museum", by Morag Brown, the Director of the Museum.
November 19th	Lecture: "Explorations in Reigate", by David Williams.
December 17th	Christmas Miscellany, organised by Gordon Knowles.

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Number 5 of Volume 5 of the Proceedings was issued during the year.

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## FORTY-SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Held at the Letherhead Institute, 19 March 1993*

The Report of the Executive Committee and the Accounts for the year 1992 were adopted.  
The elected Officers of the Society are shown below.

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## OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR 1993

<i>President:</i>	S. E. D. FORTESCUE
<i>Past President:</i>	J. G. W. LEWARNE
<i>Vice-President:</i>	DR D. F. RENN, C.B.E., F.S.A.
<i>Chairman:</i>	LINDA HEATH
<i>Secretary/Membership Secretary:</i>	JOYCE FULLER
<i>Treasurer:</i>	C. V. M. LATHAM
<i>Editor:</i>	J. C. STUTTARD
<i>Museum Curator:</i>	JANET GOLDSMITH
<i>Museum Treasurer:</i>	J. R. BULL
<i>Sales Secretary:</i>	H. J. DAVIES
<i>Archaeology Secretary:</i>	E. A. CROSSLAND, I.S.O.
<i>Lecture Secretary:</i>	N. H. WEST, M.B.E.
<i>Librarian:</i>	F. J. KIRBY
<i>Record Secretary:</i>	J. R. CLUBE, O.B.E.
<i>Committee Members:</i>	D. B. ELLIS; H. G. KNOWLES

**Leatherhead and District Local History Society**

**PROCEEDINGS**

**Vol. 5, No. 6**

**1993**

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## OCCASIONAL NOTES

### CELEBRATIONS AT FETCHAM PARISH CHURCH

St Mary's church at Fetcham has been a centre of Christian worship since Saxon times and its 1,000th anniversary was marked in September this year by a special service of thanksgiving, celebrated by the Bishop of Dorking and the Rector, the Rev. David Baker. There was also a flower festival and a display showing the history of the church from early times. Commemorative plates and beakers, using artwork by the Fetcham artist, Betty Eldridge, were produced for the celebrations by the Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Disabled, at Dorincourt.

J. C. STUTTARD

### CENTENARY OF THE LEATHERHEAD METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist Church in Church Road was built a hundred years ago and the centenary was marked during 1993 by several services, a dinner, a musical production and a craft fair. The church was first opened for worship on 4th October 1893 and on the same day this year a communion service was held by the Rev. Ian Field. On the previous day, the Vice-President of the Methodist Conference was the guest preacher at a civic service; there was also a display illustrating the church's history and the Pilgrim Players put on a number of sketches.

J. C. STUTTARD

### ROMAN COINS FOUND

Two Roman coins have been brought into the Leatherhead Museum recently and their identification has been made with the help of the Guildford Museum.

1. A bronze 'as' (Roman penny) dated A.D. 97 in the reign of Nerva (A.D. 96–98). The obverse shows IMP CAES NERVA TRAIANO AUG GER DAC P.M. The inclusion GER (Germanicus) dates the coin to A.D. 97 when the Emperor obtained this title. Some of the lettering has been lost and the reverse side which would give more information has been filed flat possibly making it into a gaming counter ('shove ha'penny?').

Nerva became Emperor following the assassination of Domitian with whom he had served as Consul. Being a lawyer, he was not popular with the Army. To strengthen his position he adopted Trajan who became Emperor when Nerva died in A.D. 98.

This coin was found in a garden in Dilston Road, Leatherhead.

2. A silver denarius of Alexander Severus (A.D. 222–35). A closer dating is not possible. It was found on Mickleham Downs on the line of Stane Street, in such good condition that David Bruce has been able to cast a reproduction of it. The obverse of the coin shows the head of the Emperor facing right wearing a laurel wreath with the letters IMP SEV to the left of the head and XAND AUG to the right. The reverse has a figure of the goddess of the corn harvest, Annona. She stands erect facing forward with a plant in her right hand and an unknown object in her left. To the left of the figure are the letters ANNO and to the right NA AUG.

Alexander Severus was a grandson of Julia Maesa who brought about the restoration of the Severan dynasty with his election as Roman Emperor in A.D. 222 after the murder of his cousin, Elagabalus, by the Praetorian Guard.

E. A. CROSSLAND



**FETCHAM PARISH CHURCH**  
Photograph supplied by the Rev. David Baker



**ROMAN COINS FOUND AT LEATHERHEAD**  
Photograph by K. Wolverton

## LAWRIE SMITH, M.B.E.: AN APPRECIATION

Lawrie Smith, former Chairman of the Society, died on 22nd January 1993. He was elected Vice-Chairman in 1980 and succeeded Stephen Fortescue as Chairman from 1981–89 when he was made a Vice-President. Undoubtedly his most outstanding achievement as Chairman was the publication of the *History of Leatherhead*. Heavy expenditure was needed for this and it was largely Lawrie's able handling of the financing and part sponsoring by Esso of the book that ensured its publication.

It was Lawrie who arranged for the Society's books to be housed in the Leatherhead Institute Library, in exchange for which he organised the original rota of Society members to steward the lending library at the Institute. Lawrie will also be remembered by many of us for his expert carpentry and joinery not least in the Museum, where these skills were put to such good use.

LINDA HEATH

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*Errata: Procs, LDLHS 5 (5), 1992: p. 141, line 4 from bottom of page, for '1755' read '1759'; p. 143, line 12, for '£4,000' read '£400'.*

## COL. DRINKWATER BETHUNE (1762–1844) THORNCROFT MANOR, LEATHERHEAD

By J. R. CLUBE

**A**MONG the people of distinction who came to live in Leatherhead at some time in their lives, we must surely count Col. Drinkwater Bethune who on retirement came with his family to live in Thorncroft Manor in 1836, and who died there in 1844. His name may mean little today, but during his lifetime, and while he was living in Leatherhead, he was a respected military figure of national renown.

### Early Life

Born John Drinkwater, the son of a naval surgeon, he grew up in a period of world-wide military activity<sup>1</sup>. He began his military career in 1777 at the age of fifteen, when, living in Salford, he joined the 72nd, The Royal Manchester Volunteers. This unit was raised by the City of Manchester following the defeat of the British forces in Saratoga, North America, in 1777. It was presumed that the Regiment would go to North America: instead it was sent immediately to Gibraltar where an attack by Spanish forces was expected. The military commander of Gibraltar, Lt. Gen. Sir George Elliott, was given good support by the government of the day and was able to build up strong defences. Despite siege conditions, shortage of food, and disease, the garrison was able to survive, helped by the success of the Royal Navy in beating the blockade on occasion. Eventually the siege was lifted: it had lasted from 1779 to 1783.

The success in withstanding the Spanish attack was seen in Britain as a major military and naval achievement. Drinkwater had kept a careful record of events throughout the siege, material which he used in his book *A History of the Siege of Gibraltar, 1779–1783*, published in London in 1785. He received permission to dedicate it to the King, by whom he was received. He was gratified to learn later that the copy presented to the King had been bound in the Royal Library at Buckingham House and showed signs that it had been very well used. As a Captain, aged 23, he had become immediately famous and his book a military classic.

In 1787 Drinkwater returned to Gibraltar, having now joined the 1st, or Royal Regiment of Foot. He moved with this Regiment to Toulon when it was briefly occupied by the British in 1793. When Napoleon drove the British out they moved first to Naples, and the following year occupied Corsica as a Protectorate.

### With the Viceroy's Staff in Corsica and Naples

Sir Gilbert Elliot, later the Earl of Minto, was appointed Viceroy of Corsica, and in 1795 invited Drinkwater to join his staff as Secretary of the Military Department and Deputy Judge Advocate. This was to lead to a life-long friendship with the Minto family and gave Drinkwater an entrée into the highest influential circles in the Mediterranean and later in London. The situation in Corsica deteriorated however to the point where, in September 1796, the London government ordered the evacuation of the island.<sup>2</sup>

In the weeks before the evacuation local levies and privateers were recruited and so many came forward that difficulties arose over paying them. Drinkwater was threatened with assassination at this time and his quarters were broken into. He records that Commodore

Nelson arrived off Bastia to cover the embarkation of troops and stores—"Ill-disposed kept in check by the Commodore's appearance". Drinkwater escaped in the vessel *Egmont* to Naples where he later joined up with Sir Gilbert Elliot and his staff.

In Naples the former Viceroy and his party were warmly received by the King. Drinkwater attended a Royal Hunting Party and dinner, "nothing could be more agreeable than the condescension and affability of the King . . ." He was equally impressed with the kindness and hospitality of the British Minister, Sir William Hamilton, who exhibited his collection of Etruscan and other vases. Drinkwater remarks that the collection was afterwards purchased by the British government "to be united with the other matchless and valuable Articles of Curiosity in the British Museum".

Drinkwater wrote at greater length about Lady Hamilton who although "past the Meridian of her Beauty was still very handsome". Tall, with luxuriant brown hair reaching almost to the floor, she wore a close white tunic dress. In honour of the guests she gave a performance of her "Attitudes"—poses of well-known classical statues. The guests sat at one end of the drawing room while Lady Hamilton and her assistants were concealed behind folding screens. "The statues she imitated were numerous: the Madonna was her best performance . . . and produced a strong sensation among the spectators. Her Exhibition of the Attitudes . . . much exceeded any description that could be given without the aid of a pencil".<sup>3</sup>

Before leaving Italy Sir Gilbert and his staff visited Pompeii, Herculaneum and Rome. Drinkwater accompanied Sir Gilbert when he was received by Pope Pius VI in December 1796.

### Friendship with Nelson

In 1797 Drinkwater accompanied the former Viceroy on his return to Britain. The vessel in which they sailed was the *Minerve*, commanded by Capt. Cockburn and flying the pennant of Commodore Nelson with whom they were already very well acquainted. After leaving Gibraltar Nelson was proceeding to rendezvous with the Fleet commanded by Admiral Sir John Jervis.

The *Minerve* joined the Fleet off Cape St Vincent on 13th February 1797, which gave Drinkwater the opportunity of witnessing a major naval battle. Before the action Nelson transferred his pennant to the vessel *Captain*; the Viceroy and his staff were transferred to the frigate *Lively* which acted as a repeating frigate (i.e. relaying communications) during the battle. Drinkwater was thus able to see the fleet manoeuvres and record the stages of the battle. Following its successful outcome Nelson visited *Lively*, and seeing Drinkwater invited him to his cabin. Drinkwater was able to question Nelson about the battle . . . "our intimacy was such that I felt no difficulty in drawing from him these details . . ."

Some time later Admiral Sir John Jervis published an account of the battle which, in the eyes of many, did not adequately reflect the skill of the men, the Admiral himself, and particularly Nelson. So Drinkwater was persuaded by other officers to publish his account—a *Narrative* with sketches. He did this anonymously thinking it might seem presumptuous of an Army Officer to report on a naval engagement. Drinkwater records that it was chiefly due to this account that Nelson was made Knight of the Bath.

Years later, in 1840, when Drinkwater was living at Thorncroft, he republished the *Narrative* in his own name, in aid of the Nelson Testimonial Fund.<sup>4</sup> He added to the title "and anecdotes



of Nelson before and after the battle”, and much explanatory detail. These anecdotes reveal the closeness of his friendship with Nelson. He tells, for instance, how he was sitting next to Lt. Hardy at lunch when a cry of “Man overboard” went up. All leapt from the table and Hardy lowered a boat to try to save the man. He was unsuccessful in the attempt but was drifting dangerously close to Spanish ships. At some risk Nelson gave orders to move *Minerve* to pick up the boat saying “By God I’ll not lose Hardy . . .”

Drinkwater records other conversations with Nelson on that occasion and after the publication of the anonymous version of the *Narrative* their friendship became even closer. He also records calling on Nelson in London later in 1797 shortly after Nelson had lost his arm at Santa Cruz. Drinkwater had just come from the Admiralty, and Nelson asked him if there was any news. Drinkwater replied there were rumours of fleet action with the Dutch. Nelson “started up in his peculiar energetic manner, not without Lady Nelson’s attempt to quiet him, and stretched out his unwounded arm. ‘Drinkwater’, he said, ‘I would give this other arm to be with (Admiral) Duncan at this moment.’”

### **Marriage**

It was during his service in Corsica that Drinkwater met his future wife. She was Eleanor Congalton who had come to Corsica in 1794 with Lady Elliot to whom she was companion. She returned to England with the family, via Gibraltar, after the evacuation of Corsica. Drinkwater remained in close touch with the family after they had reached England, and writes of a Masque which was performed by the Minto family at Roehampton in 1798 at which he assisted. The marriage took place at Putney Church on 6th June 1799.

### **Military Administrator**

By the time Drinkwater returned to Britain in 1797 he had gained considerable experience in civil administration in the Army. Sir Gilbert, now the Earl of Minto, introduced him to the Prime Minister, William Pitt, who persuaded him to undertake the sorting out of the Toulon and Corsica accounts.<sup>5</sup> Much of this work involved an unsuccessful attempt to secure prize money for those who had served there. Drinkwater accepted the work reluctantly as this employment put him on the half-pay list and led to his relinquishing the military for the civil department of the Army. He was in fact offered various overseas appointments but turned them down preferring to stay with his family. He served for some years on the Commission of Military Inquiry, finally as Chairman. In 1811 he was appointed a Comptroller of Army Accounts, a post he held until his retirement in 1836. He had long held an honorary appointment with the Duke of Kent’s household resulting in a close friendly relationship which ended only when the Duke died in 1821.<sup>6</sup> The Duke attended the baptism of his son Edward in 1812. Drinkwater kept his close contact with the Minto family also and became financial adviser to the 1st and 2nd Earls.

Drinkwater had an unexpected chance to apply his military skills when Volunteer Infantry units were set up in the face of a threat of French invasion. He applied unsuccessfully to be appointed Inspector of the Volunteer Corps. He was, however, invited to command the newly-raised “Ealing and Brentford Volunteers” in 1803 when he was living in Little Ealing, and was subsequently appointed Colonel with command of a Volunteer Brigade comprising units from other areas. His own unit was disbanded in 1806.<sup>7</sup> He had been a popular commander and a letter of thanks sent in the name of all ranks reads, in part “it is to your

Talents and Exertions that the Corps is indebted for the reputation . . . for the harmony it has enjoyed. Though we now withdraw to our private stations we shall ever retain a grateful sense of your numerous obligations . . .” He greatly valued a silver cup which was presented to him.<sup>8</sup>

### **Retirement**

Drinkwater was 74 when he retired from public service in 1836. Gilbert Bethune, his brother-in-law, died in the same year and the Bethune estate then passed to the six Drinkwater children<sup>9</sup> (there had been seven but a daughter Harriet Sophia had died in 1827 aged 19). The name ‘Drinkwater Bethune’ was then adopted. The family right to take the Bethune arms, less ‘the two Otter supporters which were Balfour’ was confirmed in 1837.<sup>10</sup>

This was the time when the family moved to Thorncroft, but why the Colonel chose Thorncroft as his next and final home is not known. The family had occupied various town houses over the years, living in Little Ealing until 1807 and Kensington until 1813, when 32 Fitzroy Square was bought. Summers were spent at a cottage in Elstree, but the family also visited Broadstairs, Dover, Portsmouth, Brighton and many other places. Indeed the degree of travel is quite striking. The Colonel or members of the family may well have passed through Leatherhead on occasion. There is, however, no apparent evidence of a previous connection with Leatherhead or with the Boulton family who owned Thorncroft. The explanation may simply be that Thorncroft became available for letting on the death of the previous occupant, James Trower, in April 1836, and that this event coincided with the Colonel’s retirement.

### **Family Matters**

At the time of the move the Colonel’s children were all adult, the youngest being in her twenties. There were three sons and three daughters. The eldest daughter, Eleanor Anne, was married to the Rev. W. E. Hadow and lived in Warwickshire. The sons, John Elliot, Charles Ramsay, and Edward were away from home. The two unmarried daughters, Mary Elizabeth and Georgina Augusta, were the only two to come to live at Thorncroft.

Of all the sons and daughters, Mary Elizabeth, born 1806, was the one most closely associated with Leatherhead. She clearly had a great love of her new home by the river and in 1839 published privately a poem entitled “The River Mole or Emlyn Stream”. Proceeds were to go to the fund for National Schools. The book contains several illustrations and has been annotated with comments by William Cotton her neighbour at the Priory.<sup>11</sup> A few months after her mother’s death in September 1848, Mary Elizabeth married Norman J. B. Uniacke, an officer of the Denbighshire Cavalry, of Mount Uniacke, Co. Cork.<sup>12</sup> They had four children. Mary died on 10th November 1863 and was buried in Leatherhead churchyard next to her parents.<sup>13</sup>

Mary’s younger sister, Georgina Augusta, married Henry Malden at Leatherhead church on 7th July 1843. One of their children was Henry Elliot Malden born in London, 8th May 1849. He became well-known as an antiquarian and writer and was the author of the *History of Surrey* published in 1900. H. E. Malden was a leading figure in the Surrey Archaeological Society to whose journal he contributed many articles. He was elected to the Council of that Society in 1896 and was secretary from 1916 to 1920.<sup>14</sup> He died in 1931. Did he inherit the reporting skills of his grandfather?



**COL. DRINKWATER BETHUNE**  
Attributed to Martin Archer Shee  
Courtesy of the British Library

The youngest son, Edward, was employed at the Admiralty. He died in 1839 aged 27. A tablet in Leatherhead Church commemorates his death and that of his sister Harriet Sophia, as well as those of the parents. The other two sons, John Elliot and Charles Ramsay both achieved success in their separate fields. They doubtless knew Leatherhead but they cannot be regarded as Leatherhead residents.

The eldest son, John Elliot, was born in 1801. A Cambridge graduate, he was called to the bar in 1827. He worked on a number of government commissions, and became Counsel to the Home Office from 1833 to 1837 engaged in drafting important legislation. He was appointed to the Supreme Council of India in 1848, founded a school in the name of Bethune in Calcutta, and died there in 1851.<sup>15</sup>

Correspondence in the British Library shows that John Elliot was in close personal touch with the celebrated mathematician Charles Babbage, at least between 1827 and 1834. Babbage was the inventor of the first type of calculator which he called the 'Difference Engine'. In 1827 (?) John Elliot wrote to Babbage "... my father is much obliged to you for the opportunity of seeing the Beast, but he does not feel quite well today and it is doubtful whether he will be able to go out tomorrow ..."<sup>16</sup> "The Beast" must surely be the 'Difference Engine', and it is reasonable to suppose that the Colonel saw it on another occasion.

The second son, Charles Ramsay, was born in 1802 and joined the Royal Navy in 1815 serving immediately with Admiral Cockburn whom his father had known in the Mediterranean. He sailed in the *Northumberland*, the vessel which accompanied Napoleon to St Helena.<sup>17</sup> In 1846 he married Frances Cecilia Staples and one of their sons, Sir Edward Cecil Bethune, was a General in the Great War. Charles was appointed Rear-Admiral in 1855 and formally retired from the Navy in 1870. For some years previously he had withdrawn from London and moved to the Bethune estates in Fife.<sup>18</sup> He died in London in 1884.

### **Life at Thorncroft Manor**

In the few years that Col. Drinkwater Bethune lived at Thorncroft Manor he had the pleasure of his family near at hand. John Elliot was still in London, Charles at the Admiralty part of the time, and Edward would have visited Leatherhead before his death in 1839. The Hadow grandchildren were staying at Thorncroft at the time of the 1841 Census, as were Mary and Georgina. An elegant engraving of 1842 shows Thorncroft and the Lodge with the caption "The Country Seat of Col. J. Drinkwater Bethune" (see colophon). One can imagine that apart from the death of Edward this was a period of comfortable retirement in beautiful surroundings.

For the last year of his life the Colonel was quite blind but remained active in mind nevertheless. When he died in 1844 aged 81, he was still re-assembling material for a revised edition of his History of the Siege. His widow Eleanor died at Chertsey in 1848 and both were buried in Leatherhead churchyard near the grave of the Rev. James Dallaway.

Between the siege of Gibraltar and the death of Charles in 1884 some hundred years had elapsed. During that time the Colonel had experienced 18th century warfare on land and sea, had been present at events of historical importance, and had held influential appointments in London. He had achieved considerable personal fame and his children had left their marks in varying ways. Although the connection with Leatherhead was brief

it was of considerable significance for the Colonel and his family and thus of great importance for Leatherhead. Indeed it would not be unreasonable to say that Colonel Drinkwater Bethune was probably the most prominent person to live in Leatherhead in the 19th century.

#### NOTES

1. Col. Drinkwater's life is described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the *National Biographical Archive*; also in *Gentleman's Magazine* (Apr. 1844), p. 431.
2. National Library of Scotland, Ms 1835, *Leading Incidents in the Life of Col. Drinkwater*.
3. *Ibid.*, Ms 1841, *Elba . . . Naples etc.*
4. *Narrative of the Battle of St Vincent with anecdotes of Nelson before and after that Battle*, Saunders & Otley, 1840.
5. National Army Museum, ACC. 8105-2.
6. National Register Archives, 10476, correspondence of 2nd Earl of Minto.
7. N.A.M. ACC. 7805-72, f. 281.
8. Col. Drinkwater's Will, PROB 11, 1988.
9. Gilbert Bethune's Will, Scottish Record Office, SC20/50/10.
10. *Burke's General Armory*, 1884.
11. *The River Mole or Emlyn Stream*, 1839, note, p. 28. For William Cotton see *Procs.*, LDLHS 5(5), 1992, pp. 140-5.
12. Jeremy Uniacke, family historian.
13. Stanley Parkes, Leatherhead Church.
14. S.A.S. records.
15. C. H. Drinkwater & W. G. D. Fletcher, *The Family of Drinkwater . . .* 1920.
16. B. L. Ms 37184, fs 102 & 214.
17. O'Byrne's *Naval Biographical Dictionary*, 1849.
18. M. F. Conolly, *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Men of Fife*, 1866.

#### Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges the help received from the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the Scottish Record Office, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, the National Register of Archives, the Lancashire Record Office, the Maritime Information Centre and the Surrey Archaeological Society. Valuable information on Babbage was provided by Dr M. Campbell-Kelly of Warwick University and Jim Roberts. The portrait on p. 157 is reproduced by courtesy of the British Library from the book at Note 15. This does not name the artist, but the Scottish National Portrait Gallery says that it is attributed to Martin Archer Shee.

# THE BUILDING OF YOUNG STREET

By E. A. CROSSLAND

ON the north-west corner of the Givons Grove roundabout a stone cairn records the work done by the Canadian Royal Engineers during the war in the construction of the western extension of the Leatherhead bypass left incomplete some years earlier. The inscription makes it clear that the road was named after the Engineers' Commanding Officer, thus contradicting the attribution sometimes made that the name derives from one of the main thoroughfares in Toronto called Yonge Street. The Commanding Officer referred to was Major E. J. Young (later to become a Colonel) and the road was opened on 25th May 1941 by Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister.

Since the narrow roads of Leatherhead were causing congestion to military traffic early in the war it was decided to employ the 2nd Road Construction Company of the Canadian Royal Engineers to complete the Leatherhead bypass. The Company had arrived in England from Toronto in June 1940 and they started work on what was to become Young Street at the end of the year; their headquarters was at Oxshott where the brickworks site was used as a workshop and equipment dump. Most of the large houses in the area (including Stoke D'Abernon and Cobham) were requisitioned for accommodation.

The building of Young Street was no easy task. It involved removing 145,000 cubic metres of chalk and flint to form the cutting up to Hawks Hill wide enough for a dual carriageway (though it was built and remained a single roadway), enlarging and strengthening the railway tunnel, bridging the river, and transporting the excavated material across the river to form the approaches to the bridge. The bridge itself had concrete abutments and wooden piers to support a wooden deck on steel girders across the 79 ft. gap. It was made stronger than would have been necessary for ordinary traffic in order to carry the weight of the heavy military equipment. West of the bridge, the tunnel under the Leatherhead to Dorking railway (originally serving only a country lane) needed major reconstruction without causing interruption to the trains. This entailed lowering the roadway and underpinning the brickwork of the 1867 archway. The road remained a single carriageway and so needed lights to regulate the traffic.

The bridge and the tunnel under the railway remained in use until 1978, although a new bridge had been built in 1976 which was not, however, connected to the road so that during the drought of that year there was a bridge with no road over a river with no water! The rebuilt road, undertaken by Surrey County Council engineers, was opened on 20th January 1978 by Paul Martin, the High Commissioner for Canada.

After completing Young Street, the 2nd Road Construction Company carried out between 1941 and 1944 many civil engineering tasks in Britain (including building the runway to Dunsfold airfield). They then went to France soon after D-day and gave similar support to the Allied armies. Following the unit's disbandment in July 1945 the Oxshott brickworks site reverted to its former use. It finally ceased production in the 1950s and was sold for housing. The claypit became flooded and is now an attractive nature reserve.

## NOTE

This account of Young Street is based on *The History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers* by Col. A. J. Kerry and Maj. W. A. McDill, and on information supplied by Mr & Mrs J. C. Elliott of Stoke D'Abernon.

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## THE BYRONS OF LEATHERHEAD

BY D. B. ELLIS

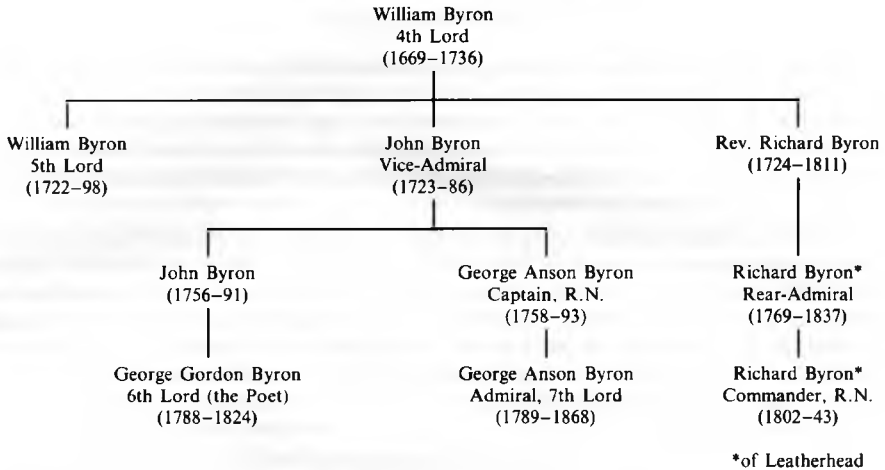
TO most people the name Byron suggests the poet, George Gordon, 6th Lord Byron (1788–1824). However, Byron Place, a cul-de-sac off Church Road in Leatherhead, was not named after the poet but after a kinsman of his, Rear-Admiral Richard Byron, C.B. (1769–1837), who is commemorated by a memorial tablet in Leatherhead Parish Church; another tablet above it commemorates his son, Commander Richard Byron (1802–43). The Admiral owned property in the town.

The Byrons, whose pedigree can be traced back to the Norman Conquest, were a colourful family whose history has been fully documented in *The House of Byron* by Violet W. Walker (1988). During the 18th and 19th centuries several of its members followed a naval career. The uncle of our Richard Byron, John Byron (1723–86), grandfather of the poet, became an Admiral and earned the soubriquet of “Foulweather Jack” because his service at sea always seemed to be dogged by tempestuous weather. His younger brother, the Rev. Richard Byron, married in 1768 and had three sons: Richard, the subject of this article, John (1771–1805) and Henry (1776–1821), who followed his father into Holy Orders.

Richard Byron entered the Navy as a midshipman in 1782 in the frigate *Andromache*, which was commanded by his cousin, George Anson Byron, and he was present at the relief of Gibraltar in 1783 (see p. 153 of this *Proceedings*). This was the year in which the War of American Independence came to an end; the United States had enlisted the support of France and Spain to overcome Britain’s command of the sea, and Spain had hoped to regain possession of Gibraltar. Ten years later Britain was again at war with France, and Byron, now a Lieutenant, served in the 90-gun warship *Impregnable* at the sea-battle known as the Glorious First of June (1794). Later he served in the 100-gun *Queen Charlotte* in the Channel, and as Flag-Lieutenant in the 74-gun *Tremendous*, based at the Cape of Good Hope. He rose to the rank of Commander in 1798. In 1801 he married Sarah Sykes, daughter of James Sykes of Leatherhead, a Navy Agent, and sister of John Sykes, also a naval officer. In the following year when the war with France came to an end with the Peace of Amiens, Byron was made a Captain on the retired list. During the years in which England was threatened with invasion by Napoleon, Captains were appointed in command of “Sea-fencibles”, a system of total control of the coastline, and Byron was recalled to service in command of the Lancashire coast in 1804 and of Anglesey in 1805–6.

In 1811 Captain Byron was recalled to service at sea in command of the new frigate *Belvidera*, which sailed to Canada and formed part of a force based at Halifax, monitoring the movements of French ships which were interfering with trading vessels in the West Atlantic. France had the tacit support of the United States and this turned into open alliance when the States declared war on Britain in 1812. Some American ships were planning to attack a British convoy and were intercepted by Byron in the *Belvidera*. A sharp action followed in which Byron was wounded and his ship damaged, but worse damage was inflicted on his American opponents, who failed to capture the convoy which was their target. In 1813 the *Belvidera* captured an American schooner whose commander, a Captain Southcomb, was seriously wounded in the action. Byron is reported to have behaved most generously to his injured enemy; “he took him on board the frigate until he died, and then had his body sent ashore with every mark of the respect due to a brave officer” (V. W.

EXTRACT FROM BYRON FAMILY TREE



Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 217). The *Belvidera* was recalled to England later in 1813 and Byron was again placed on the retired list.

At the end of the war with France in 1815 Capt. Byron, with many other naval and military officers, was appointed Commander of the military Order of the Bath (C.B.) to mark (according to the official citation) the King's 'gracious sense of the valour, perseverance, and devotion manifested by the Officers of His Majesty's Forces by Sea and Land'. Byron remained a Captain until promoted to Rear-Admiral on 10th January 1837. This was less a mark of personal distinction than a device by the naval authorities to overcome a blockage in the system by which appointments were made strictly according to seniority; there were too many Captains who were too old for service but who, according to the existing rules, could not be passed over. The solution was to promote them to the rank of Rear-Admiral! Several such promotions were made at this time.

Richard and Sarah Byron had four sons: Richard, born 1802, who joined the Navy; James, born 1803, who entered the Army; John, born 1804, who became a clergyman and in 1830 married Mary, the eldest daughter of William Richardson of Leatherhead; and William, born 1805, who joined the East India Company. The younger Richard Byron became a Lieutenant in 1825 and served in the Mediterranean and the East Indies; he became a Commander in 1836 and was appointed to the command of the sloop *Champion* in 1841; he died at sea off Mazatlan, on the west coast of Mexico, on 23rd February 1843. The long voyage there would have involved sailing down the Atlantic Ocean, round Cape Horn and up the Pacific coast of South America. Commander Byron's mastery of seamanship must have been fully equal to his father's.

Admiral Byron died on 2nd September 1837, and his property in Leatherhead was divided between his widow and his son Richard. The Tithe Allocation of 1840, which is in the Surrey Record Office, shows eleven acres of land as being owned by Richard Byron, and this was



all let to tenants; part of it is within the present grounds of St John's School, and part of it is south of what is now Epsom Road. A further twelve acres, on the corner of what is now Epsom Road and Linden Road, belonged to Sarah Byron; this included the house, lawn, garden, stables and barns. The site of the house is now occupied by Linden Court, and behind this block of flats may be seen a brick wall, surmounted by two stone urns—possibly a relic of the Admiral's garden.

### Acknowledgements

Much of the preliminary research for this paper was carried out by the late Frank Benger and the late Geoffrey Gollin. Further information has been kindly provided by the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood; the City of Nottingham Leisure & Community Services (which administers Newstead Abbey, former home of the poet Byron); the National Maritime Museum; and the Surrey Record Office.

## WILLIAM COTTON AND HIS FAMILY IN LEATHERHEAD, 1823–39

By MAURICE EXWOOD

IN last year's *Proceedings* there was an account of William Cotton's coming to Leatherhead in 1823 and acquiring a small cottage which he made into a substantial dwelling. The Priory, where he housed his fine Collection of old-master paintings, drawings and objets d'art.<sup>1</sup> This article describes William Cotton's family and their wide circle of friends in Leatherhead during the sixteen years they lived here before moving to Devon in 1839.

### The Cotton Family

As the family tree shows, the Cottons,<sup>2</sup> from farming stock in Cambridgeshire, moved to London in the 18th century and made good by their association with the rich founders of a great art Collection: Robert Townson and Charles Rogers. The Cotton who lived in Leatherhead, William Cotton III, inherited the Townson-Rogers wealth. He was born in the City of London but the young family soon moved to Balham Hill House standing in 6¼ acres near the then fashionable Clapham Common.<sup>3</sup> Five more children were born before the mother died soon after William had started boarding school at Richmond, Surrey. He later read Classics and Theology at Oxford, graduating in 1814 (M.A., 1818). He visited cathedral towns and castles in southern England with his father and then started on his 'Grand Tour' in the summer of 1816. He was in Switzerland when he heard of his father's illness and rushed back to England, accompanied, according to Hamilton-Edwards, by Henry Austen, one of the elder brothers of Jane Austen, the novelist, arriving before his father's death in October 1816.

As eldest son and heir to substantial assets William found himself head of a family of three brothers and two sisters responsible for the completion of their education: the younger children were away at school, and his eldest brother was apprenticed to a cooper and rope maker; his eldest sister, Charlotte, probably ran the Balham Hill house which remained the family home for eight more years.

On his inheritance, William Cotton was able to lead a life of leisure, as well as meeting the financial needs of his family which burden was to drag on for many years. He resumed his 'Grand Tour' in 1818 visiting Florence, Rome and Naples. After his return he made the acquaintance of the curate-in-charge of Bodiam, Sussex,<sup>4</sup> whose daughter, Mary Ann, he married there in 1823, the service being taken by his newly-ordained cousin, the Rev. F. Borrodaile.<sup>5</sup> The honeymoon was in Brighton, no doubt very fashionable for the gentry, and they came back to Balham Hill but they soon looked round for new pastures and, travelling through Surrey, they found Link House in an idyllic position above the River Mole and saw the possibility of developing this into a grand house: so The Priory was created. As far as the author knows, neither William nor Mary Ann had any previous connection with Leatherhead.

The Cottons moved into their new home in 1824; Balham Hill House, the family residence for 27 years, was let for £325 p.a. They soon felt the need to travel, and in 1826, accompanied by Harriet, Mary Ann's sister, they visited Mary Ann's cousin the Scobells in Poltair, Cornwall.<sup>6</sup> It was no easy journey: they travelled in their own coach to Portsmouth (say two or three days) then coach and passengers were shipped in the steam packet to Plymouth and after a stay in the newly-opened, prestigious Royal Hotel they coached on to Penzance and Poltair (another four days). They stayed for four months.

The Priory was the Cotton's family home for fifteen years. William's two sisters did not marry till late so in 1827 he built a cottage in the grounds for them.<sup>7</sup> Charlotte eventually married William Hall, a doctor in Leatherhead, and Mary married a naval officer, Nathaniel Frederick Edwards. After their wedding in 1837 Mary and her husband moved to Devon where William and Mary Ann visited them the following year. In Devon, William took a great interest in the history of his mother's family, the Saverys,<sup>8</sup> and both he and his wife soon became enamoured of the county.

William's two younger brothers, John and Edward, remained a financial burden for years. John, though articled to a firm of Lincoln Inn's solicitors at the age of 25, does not appear to have qualified and he later made a name for himself as a bird artist, becoming a Fellow of the Zoological Society, and also writing poetry.<sup>9</sup> It seems unlikely that these activities enabled him to keep himself and his large family: he married about 1830 and had nine children when emigrating to Australia in 1843, where he successfully sheep farmed in a big way.<sup>10</sup> Edward, the youngest brother, enrolled as a 'Gentleman Commoner' at New College, Oxford when 23 but did not graduate. In his early thirties he married a French lady but they had no children. He seems to have been a feckless spendthrift, emigrating to Australia in 1841 where he set up in sheep farming, saved from bankruptcy only by his brother John when he arrived there two years later.

The Cottons decided to move to Devon in 1838, acquiring the lease of Highland House (with 16 acres of land) in Ivybridge not far from Plymouth. Mary Ann's father had recently died and they perhaps now felt free to move to a county where William had close family interests. The move to Devon took place in 1839 and it must have been a considerable undertaking to transfer the valuable Collection and the other contents of The Priory so far across the country before there were railways. It seems that John and Edward followed them to Devon: at least one of John's children was born in Ivybridge and both brothers sailed to Australia from Plymouth. The Cottons continued their social and cultural pursuits in their new surroundings and visited London at least once a year. The last reported journey

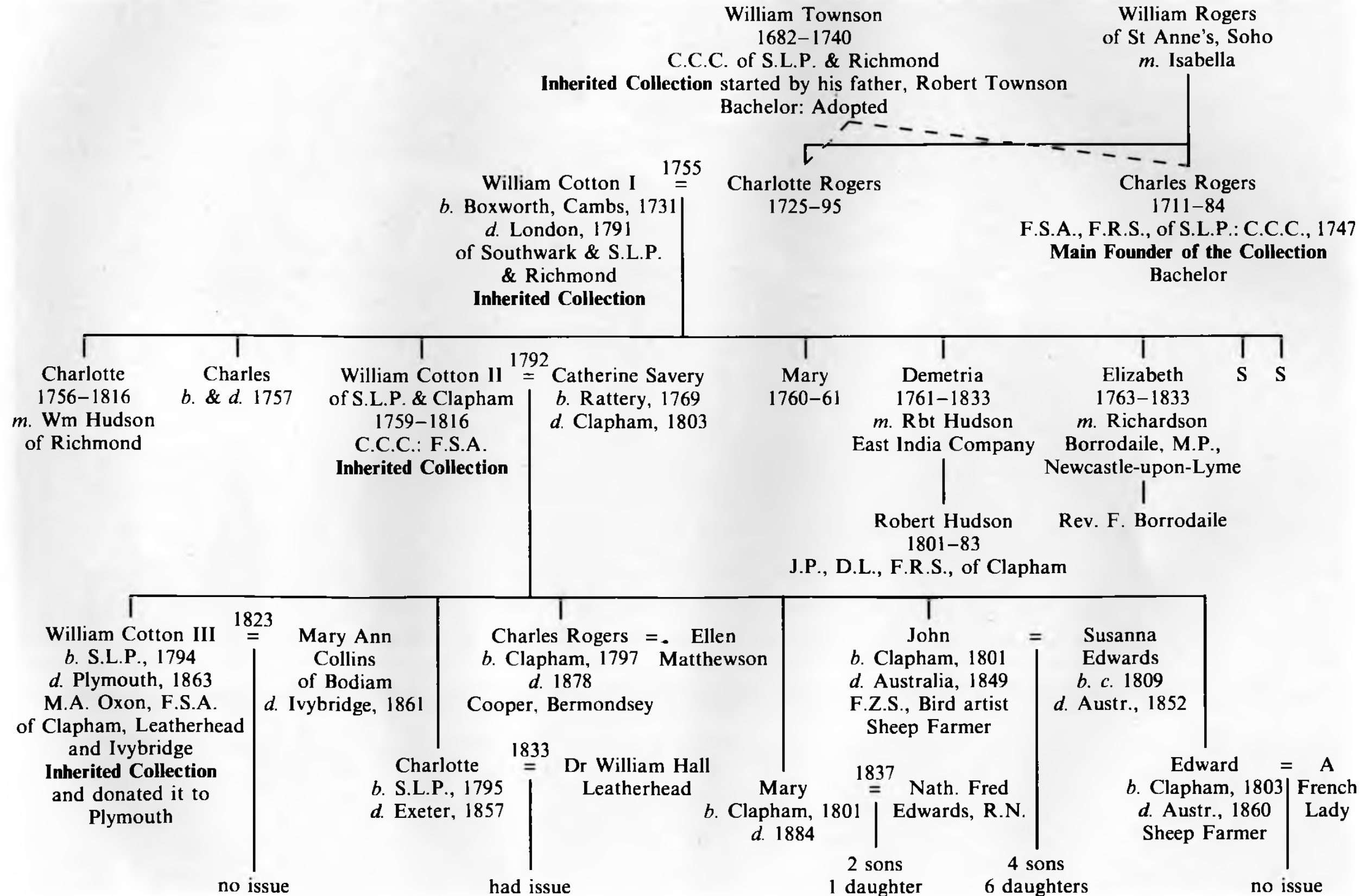


**WILLIAM COTTON AND HIS WIFE IN THE LIBRARY AT THE PRIORY, LEATHERHEAD**  
Artist unknown. Reproduced by kind permission of J. G. L. Jackson, a descendant of John Cotton, William's brother,  
from a photograph lent to the Society by the Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery

## THE COTTON FAMILY & RELATIONSHIP WITH TOWNSON/ROGERS FAMILY

Key: S.L.P. = 3 St Lawrence, Pountney Lane, City of London C.C.C. = Chief Clerk of The Certificates Inwards, Customs House, London

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was in 1860 when they stayed with William's cousin, Robert Hudson, at Clapham, visiting art galleries and seeing Holman Hunt's 'The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple' which was first exhibited that year. Mary Ann died in 1861 and William then moved to Plymouth where he died two years later.

The Cottons kept in close touch with their relations. William's aunt Demetria married a naval Captain, Robert Hudson of the East India Company whose son, another Robert, went to Oxford with Edward Cotton and is described by Hamilton-Edwards as J.P., D.L., F.R.S. He reluctantly acted as John Cotton's agent in the latter's fruitless attempt to exploit the export of Australian bird feathers.<sup>11</sup> Another of William's aunts, Elizabeth, married Richardson Borrodaile, Tory M.P. for Newcastle-upon-Lyme (1826–31) who was one of the executors named in the will of William Cotton's father. It was one of their sons who married William and Mary Ann. The other executor was William Savery, William Cotton's uncle, who lived in Croydon with his widowed sister, Mrs Newberry. The Cottons used occasionally to visit them.

#### **William Cotton's Circle in Leatherhead**

William Cotton and his wife, Mary Ann, certainly seemed to have enjoyed life when, newly married, they settled in their new home, The Priory, in Leatherhead. They had entered into the social life of the area even earlier: whilst lodging at Mickleham, awaiting completion of The Priory, Mary Ann's sister and William's cousin, Borrodaile, came to stay with them and the party visited the Epsom Spring Meeting. After moving into The Priory they went to the races at Hampton making up or joining a party of family and friends and members of Society. They often travelled to London staying with friends or relations. Here they went to concerts or the opera where they heard the celebrities of the day: Mlle Caradon, Mme Malibran and Mlle Sontag, sometimes being invited to meet them behind the stage. They also attended functions like the Artists Benevolent Fund dinner, with the Earl of Liverpool as principal guest, meeting there many well-known artists like Sir Thomas Lawrence, President of the Royal Academy, Sir William Allan, John Burnett, the engraver and the famous painter and etcher, Sir David Wilkie.<sup>12</sup>

The Cottons got on well with their neighbours in Leatherhead. They seem to have been included in the social activities of the owners of the large estates close to where they lived. Nearby was the Vicarage where the Rev. James Dallaway, the distinguished antiquary and author, had lived since becoming Vicar of Leatherhead in 1804. He proved to be a kindred spirit to William Cotton and the two formed a close friendship (see 1992 *Proceedings*, pp. 143–5). Cotton was very sad when his friend died in 1834.

Cotton quickly formed a close friendship with Col. Drinkwater Bethune when he took over Thorncroft Manor from James Trower in 1836.<sup>13</sup> The Colonel's youngest son married into the Staples family, the bride's father being a boyhood friend of William Cotton from his Balham Hill days and since the Staples often stayed at The Priory it seems likely that the young couple met there. The Cotton and Drinkwater Bethune families co-operated closely on the production and publication of a long poem *The River Mole or the Emlyn Stream* by M. D. B., that is, Mary the daughter of the Colonel. The illustrations are by Miss M. A. Scobell (possibly a daughter of the Scobells of Poltair in Cornwall), William Cotton's brother John and William himself who also did the copious notes.

At Elm Bank House<sup>14</sup> nearly opposite The Priory lived W. S. Clarke a Director of the East India Company and of Trinity House. His daughter was married to Col. Willoughby Moore, who, so Cotton tells us, was kicked by a horse in Leatherhead, breaking his leg and leaving him lame, which prevented him from jumping into a boat when his transport to the Crimean War caught fire, so he perished. This sorry story was probably related at one of their meetings. Clarke's younger daughter married another neighbour, Thomas Dickens who lived at Vale Lodge.<sup>15</sup> He left her a large fortune and she later married J. Guthrie, Vicar of Calne (visited by the Cottons when they were living in Devon).

### **Sheridan, and his Grand-daughters**

Cotton tells a delightful anecdote about Dallaway and Sheridan, the well-known playwright who rented (and later bought) the Polesden Lacey estate soon after his second marriage in 1795. Dallaway was invited to dine at Polesden and stay the night. He enjoyed the dinner, but his night rest was disturbed by the noise of packing plates and dishes. In the morning he found the house deserted. It seems that Sheridan had brought the dinner and servants from his London home and went back there during the night, leaving Dallaway stranded. Let's hope he had a fine morning for the three mile walk back to Leatherhead!

Cotton himself made the acquaintance of Sheridan's famous grand-daughters.<sup>16</sup> Their father Thomas Sheridan, the only son of the playwright's first marriage, held a government post in the Cape Colony where he died and their mother on return to England lived with her six children in Hampton Court Palace by the grace of William IV. Her three daughters Helen Selina, Caroline and Jane Georgina, grew up to become famed for their beauty, wit and literary achievements. The eldest, Helen Selina, married a naval Commander, Price Blackwood, and they lived for a time in a cottage at Thames Ditton. Some years hence, when Blackwood had become a Captain and had inherited land in Ireland, they lived at Bookham Lodge.<sup>17</sup> This would appear to have been between 1835 (when Blackwood had returned from a visit to India and the China Seas) and 1839 when Helen Selina had gone to Italy for health reasons.

Cotton reports that in 1836 whilst staying in Richmond he and his wife met the Misses Terry of Esher Lodge and with them went to Hampton races. Caroline and Jane Georgina were also there and on being introduced to the Cottons probably told them of their sister living near them, for soon after this Cotton reports that the Blackwoods dined at The Priory. Cotton adds that Sheridan's grand-daughters were 'wild and gay and got up to all sorts of tricks' and hints that local gossip had it that Mrs Norton (Caroline) and Lady Seymour (Jane Georgina) disguised themselves as gypsies and wandered round the lanes extracting pence from people for telling their fortunes. Friends of the Cottons, Col. and Mrs Llewelyn, were so accosted, and were suspicious of the delicate hand held out for the money. Cotton adds that the story got into print "possibly in *Tim's Excursions Round Dorking*". It seems quite possible that this escapade took place when the younger sisters met their elder sister at Bookham Lodge.

### **The Barclays of Bury Hill**

In 1836, the Cottons met the Barclays of Bury Hill near Dorking, famed for its fine gardens.<sup>18</sup> William reports finding the drawing room there full of large cases of seeds and plants. He was shown the gardens and conservatories. Robert Barclay was particularly proud

of a Mexican tree named after him, the *Maurandia Barclayana*, which was about to flower for the first time in England. Later, Robert visited The Priory and brought with him a superb rose which flourished in Cotton's conservatory. The Cottons visited Robert Barclay's son, Charles, at Betchworth Castle and William attended a dinner in 1837 at the Epsom grandstand<sup>19</sup> on Charles' retirement as M.P. for West Surrey<sup>20</sup> and the introduction of the new member, James Perceval. Admiral Sir Graham Moore (who, Cotton says, had escorted the Portuguese Royal Family to Brazil and was later Commander-in-Chief at Plymouth) 'rose to return thanks for the Navy and stood for ten minutes without uttering a word'. William was sitting close to him, but those sitting at the end of the table thought he was speaking all the time and when he sat down 'there was a general burst of applause'.

### Other Friends and Acquaintances

William Cotton's *Reminiscences* and his *Correspondence* refer to many other people in various walks of life whom he and his family knew. These included Edward Cresy, the architect of The Priory; the 6th Earl of Egmont, formerly James Perceval, M.P., whom Cotton met at Epsom as already related; the Earl of Morley, whom Cotton met at Saltram House outside Plymouth; and Richard Sharp, M.P., known as 'Conversation Sharp', the owner of Fredley cottage opposite Juniper Hall where the Cottons stayed for three weeks in 1823.

### NOTES

1. Maurice Exwood, 'William Cotton and The Priory, Leatherhead', *Procs., LDLHS*, 5 (5), 1992, pp. 140-5.
2. Biographical details are mostly taken from:
  - (a) William Cotton, *Reminiscences of My Life*, 1861. Ms now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
  - (b) George Mackaness, *The Correspondence of John Cotton*, 1953. Some of the information given in its introduction is incorrect.
  - (c) G. Hamilton-Edwards, *The Leisured Connoisseur*, 1954.
  - (d) Florence A. Stanbury, *The Story of the Cottonian Collection*, Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery, 1992.
3. A three-bay house of 3½ storeys. Illustrated in the *Connoisseur* and *Reminiscences*, where a plan is included.
4. In 1831, Cotton published *A Graphical and Historical Sketch of Bodiam Castle*.
5. The son of Richardson Borrodaile (M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme) and Elizabeth, sister of William Cotton II.
6. Whilst in Cornwall, Cotton studied and lectured on the Stone Circles and Cromlechs, and published his studies in 1827, his first effort at publishing.
7. When Cotton endowed his Leatherhead property to the Ivybridge church in 1852 two separate lots were involved, according to the solicitor's accounts (information from Charles Hankin, Ivybridge, 1992).
8. In 1850, Cotton published *A Graphic and Historical Sketch of the Antiquities of Totnes* which includes details of the Savery family.
9. In 1835, John Cotton published *The Resident Songbirds of Great Britain* with 17 coloured plates by himself.
10. The family of 13, including two servants, took four months to reach Melbourne. John Cotton's letters to his brother William between 1823 and 1849, published in 1953, give a good insight into Australian pioneering (see Note 2b above).
11. See letters No. 42, John to William and No. 1, William to John, in *Correspondence* (Note 2b above).
12. All mentioned in D. N. B.
13. Surprisingly, the *Connoisseur* does not mention James Trower, nor Cotton's other neighbour, Col. William Spicer of The Mansion.
14. Elm Bank House, on the corner of Downs Lane and the Dorking Road, was sold for development in the 1920s.

15. Vale Lodge had been rebuilt c. 1780; the Dickens family lived there until 1840.
16. The 'Three Graces' as the three grand-daughters of Sheridan were sometimes known were: *Helen Selina* (1807–67), married when 18 to Price Blackwood, later to become Lord Dufferin. She was a poetess and playwright. *Caroline Elizabeth Sarah* (1808–72) married G. C. Norton, brother of Lord Grantley. *Jane Georgina* (after 1808–84) married E. A. Seymour, later 12th Duke of Somerset. Helen is recorded as saying to Disraeli, who was persuaded by his son to visit the sisters, 'Georgy is the beauty, Carry's the wit and I ought to be good but I am not'. Biographies of the sisters are given in the introduction to *Songs, Poems and Verse by Helen, Lady Dufferin* by her son, the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, 1894.
17. Cotton does not name the cottage, saying only that Helen lived in Fetcham at the time. Her son, later Marquess of Dufferin & Ava, refers to it as a pretty cottage named Bookham Lodge in Stoke parish, and there seems to have been some confusion in which parish it lay. See S. E. D. Fortescue, *Peoples & Places*, 1978.
18. Robert Barclay (1751–1830) of the Scottish Quaker family (D. N. B.) was joint owner of the Anchor Brewery, Southwark, settling in Bury Hill in 1803 and there developed his hobby of importing and propagating exotic plants.
19. Epsom's first grandstand was opened to the public in 1829, though unfinished. The Grandstand Association soon tried to increase revenue by letting it out; see David Hume, *Epsom Racecourse*, 1973.
20. Charles Barclay had earlier been M.P. for Southwark (1815–18) and Dundalk (1826–30); see B. D. Henning, *History of Parliament: The Commons, 1660–1890*, 1983.

#### Acknowledgements

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## THE EPSOM AND LEATHERHEAD RAILWAY, 1856–59

By H. J. DAVIES

THE local railway service began with a shareholders' revolt.

An independent company, the Epsom and Leatherhead Railway Company, [E & L], had been established in 1856 after several meetings, one at least at The Swan Hotel, Leatherhead, by a mixed group of local and other gentlemen, several of whom became its Board of Directors.<sup>1</sup> The Company obtained authority to build the 3½ mile line by its own Act of Parliament in July of that year in the face of determined opposition from the powerful London, Brighton and South Coast Railway (the 'Brighton Company' as it was commonly called).<sup>2</sup> The latter Company had taken over the line from Croydon to Epsom and opened it in 1847 to its Epsom Town station (in Upper High Street), principally to serve racegoers but had come no further south-west.

The building of the line between Epsom and Leatherhead proceeded very slowly indeed, the first 'sod' being cut in June 1857 in a field beside the Kingston Road turnpike.<sup>3</sup> In that same month some of the same Directors, but not all, formed a second independent company, the Wimbledon and Dorking Railway Company, [W & D], with the same Chairman, Thomas Grissell of Norbury Park. In spite of opposition from the other major company in the south, the London and South Western Railway Company (the 'South Western'), Parliament sanctioned this too but only from Wimbledon to Epsom.<sup>4</sup> By the late autumn of 1858 the E & L had built a single line from a terminus in Kingston Road, Leatherhead, to Epsom



with a halt at Ashted where trains were to stop by request.<sup>5</sup> The W & D was also well ahead with a double line from Wimbledon Junction (now Raynes Park) although no connection had yet been made at Epsom.

On 4th November 1858 an arrangement was signed by the E & L and the Brighton Company for the working of the line by the latter Company with an option to purchase it.<sup>6</sup> On the 22nd December 1858 the Board of Trade Inspector visited the E & L line and reported on its construction and the arrangement with the Brighton Company. He was, however, unable to recommend the opening because the connection with the Brighton Company's line at Epsom Town station was unsafe and because there was as yet no turntable at Leatherhead on which the Brighton Company's tender locomotives could be turned.<sup>7</sup> The E & L and the Brighton Company reluctantly complied with his requirements. A further Inspector came down on 20th January 1859 and reported that there was no objection to the line opening. He had been informed by the Brighton's traffic manager that that Company was to work the single line with a 'staff' (wooden batten) system.<sup>8</sup>

Twelve days later, on 1st February, the line opened, worked not by the Brighton but by the South Western! What had happened.

Thomas Grissell learnt of opposition from certain shareholders to the arrangement which he and the Board had made with the Brighton Company and called a Special General Meeting of the E & L Company for Saturday 29th January 1859 at its headquarters at 28 George Street SW1. When he asked the meeting to endorse the Board's decision an amendment was moved by Sir Walter Farquhar of Polesden Lacey, who was a shareholder but not a Director of the E & L. He substituted a counter proposal that the arrangement should be made with the South Western Company taking the view that the shareholders were not bound legally or morally by the acts of the Board. The amendment was put to the vote and won by a show of 14 hands to 8. A poll was demanded, the proxy votes included, and the amendment carried by 322 votes to 221. The Board had indicated that it would resign if this was the result and most of its members left within a week or two. So the South Western Company began to work the line three days later on Tuesday 1st February 1859.<sup>9</sup>

Why did the shareholders vote against their Board of Directors?

When Farquhar moved his amendment he was confident that he could win in spite of Grissell's advocacy of the Board's actions. Although a shareholder, he had kept his distance while Grissell, his Norbury Park neighbour, was building his two railways and trying to find an operator.<sup>10</sup> In November 1858 he appeared at a meeting of the E & L Board, trying to persuade it to get better terms in negotiations with the Brighton Company.<sup>11</sup> After this Grissell and his Board gradually lost control of events while Farquhar was secretly negotiating with the South Western Board.<sup>12</sup> In the end Grissell was forced to call the Special Meeting of the Shareholders on January 29th before the line opened instead of waiting for the Annual Meeting in late February to endorse the Board's actions. Farquhar had done his homework well: he came to the meeting not only with a majority of voters present but a bag full of proxy votes. In addition, he had in his hand a Resolution from the Board of Directors of the South Western, passed two days previously, on 27th January, offering potentially better terms for the E & L Railway than those from the Brighton!<sup>13</sup> Add to this his cogent argument that local people preferred a shorter journey to Waterloo than the longer one to a crowded London Bridge and he had to win.<sup>14</sup>

This might be explanation enough but how can the behaviour of the two larger Companies be explained? Did they want the E & L or not? The answer is 'No' and 'Yes'. The Mole Valley Dorking Gap was a strategic route which was never developed to the extent that might have been expected. Many plans were made for railways to the South Coast, Brighton and Portsmouth,<sup>15</sup> through what was the only major gap in the North Downs between Farnham and the Darent Valley.<sup>16</sup> There were two snags: there were no large towns in the Weald, south of the Gap, or at the north of the Gap, and the mileage was greater to both Brighton and Portsmouth. The route became the borderline between the two systems, the Brighton and the South Western, and neither could develop it without fighting the other. In 1858 these two Companies had expended a great deal of their time and energies fighting for control of the direct entry to Portsmouth under the facade of one of their interminable Agreements.<sup>17</sup> The South Western won the Direct route into Portsmouth via Guildford early in January 1859 after a dramatic struggle. It immediately forgot about the current Agreement putting limits on territorial aggrandisement which the Brighton was deemed to have already broken. To avoid the development of a rival route to Portsmouth it seized the working of the E & L Railway from the weakened Brighton Company. Consciously or not, Farquhar, his shareholders and local inhabitants, were pawns in a larger game.

Six months later Brighton Company trains also began to run from Epsom to Leatherhead but that is another story!

#### NOTES

1. Herapath, *Railway Journal*, A1056, 1081, 1104 (1855); Minutes of Directors ("Board") and General Meetings of E & L R Company 1856-63; Item of 23rd August 1856, PRO RAIL 197/1.
2. 19 & 20 Vic c xcii; Evidence for Bill 1856 before House of Commons Committee PRO RAIL 1066/915.
3. *Surrey Standard*, 6th June 1857 in Society records, LX612; E & L Board 189.
4. Act 27.7.1857; Evidence before House of Commons Select Committee, House of Lords Record Library and before House of Lords Committee, PRO RAIL 1066/2948.
5. E & L R Terrier of Estates, PRO RAIL 414/525, p. 155.
6. LBSCR Board Minutes, 4th November 1858, p. 101, PRO RAIL 414/71.
7. Board of Trade Report 5054, 22nd December 1858, PRO MT6 17/91.
8. Board of Trade 141, 20th January 1859, PRO/MT6 19/10.
9. E & L Board 405; E & L Minutes of Special Meeting on 29.1.1859. Herapath, *Railway Journal*, M236 1859 (Note: Votes given as in E & L Minutes; Herapath records 13 to 5. Former is to be preferred).
10. House of Lords Journal 88, pp. 262 and 307, House of Lords Record Library. (A Lords Amendment struck out Farquhar's name from the list of subscribers to the E & L Bill at his request, 7th July 1856.)
11. E & L Board 376.
12. LSWR Board Minute 292, 20th January 1859, PRO RAIL 411/4.
13. LSWR Board 306, 27th January 1859.
14. Herapath M236, 1859. (There was no Victoria Station at this date.)
15. Deposited Plans QS6/8ff. S.R.O., Kingston.
16. The Guildford gap was narrow and required a tunnel.
17. R. A. Williams, LSWR, Vol. 1, 141ff, 1968; J. T. Howard Turner, LBSCR, Vol. 2, 79ff, 1978.



THORNCROFT MANOR, SEAT OF COL. DRINKWATER BETHUNE  
A contemporary engraving (Society Records)

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