

# **Memoirs of John Geard of Hitchin, Herts.**



[Inside cover: "E. J. Geard, 80 Park Drive, Port Elizabeth, S. Africa"  
Manuscript page numbers are in superscript]

## **Introduction**

### **Memoirs of John Geard of Hitchin, in the County of Hertford:**

With some account of his ancestors and Descendants, and other Relations, and also those of his Wife.

Comprehending, among other particulars, some anecdotes, relative to his hopeful conversion, call to the Ministry, settlement at Hitchin, various exercises of his mind, at different periods, and his trials and mercies. Vol. 1.

## **Preface**

As I have now entered upon the 58th year of my age, and therefore must expect my further continuance in this world to be comparatively short, I think it not improper to draw up some account of myself and my connections [unclear] which, possibly, may not only afford some information to those that may come after me, which would otherwise be destitute of, but I would hope may be, by the blessing of God, of some real advantage to them.

I have, for a number of years, kept a kind of a partial diary; but there are not only many things in that too minute and unimportant, at least I except to myself, but it is written, in a considerable measure, in shorthand, and therefore would be comparatively useless to others.

In this account, which I intend to write wholly in Long Hand, I neither mean to be so minute nor large.

April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1807.

# Memoir



*Montacute today*(Creative commons)

<sup>1</sup> I, John Geard, was born at Montacute, near Yeovil, in the County of Somerset on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March (old stile) 1750, about ten o'clock in the morning. I shall here give the best account I can of my ancestry.

## Ancestry

Thomas Geard, Son of Aaron Geard, of the Parish of Montacute, in the County of Somerset, Taylor, and of Joan his wife, was born August the 8<sup>th</sup> 1703, and was married in the Parish Church of Lufton, about a mile from Montacute, in or about the year 1727, to Martha Newton. <sup>2</sup>Samuel Geard, son of Thomas and Martha Geard, was born May the 31<sup>st</sup> 1728.

The foregoing were my ancestry on the male side. On the female side, I can trace my pedigree one generation farther back. It is as follows:

Robert Newton was born January the 24<sup>th</sup> 1674, and was married September the 30<sup>th</sup> 1695 to Mary Warren. Martha Newton, daughter of Robert Newton of Montacute, and of Mary his wife, was born in or about the year 1697, and was married in or about the year 1727 to Thomas Geard.

<sup>3</sup> The foregoing were my grandmother and her father.

My ancestry by my mother's side, as far as I can minutely trace it, is as follows:

John Taylor, son of William Taylor, of East Coker in the County of Somerset, Sailcloth maker, and of Emma his wife, was born January the 23<sup>rd</sup> 1699, and was married in or about the year 1724 to Mary Haggar.

Naomi Taylor, daughter of John Taylor, of East Coker, Sailcloth maker, and of Mary his wife, was born April the 17<sup>th</sup> 1732, and was married in or about <sup>4</sup>the beginning of the year 1739, to Samuel Geard of Montacute. The foregoing were my mother and her father.

The following is some account of the deaths of my ancestors.

Robert Newton, my father's grandfather, by his mother's side, died at Lambrook in the County of Somerset about five miles from Montacute, May the 23<sup>rd</sup> 1743.

Martha Geard, his daughter, and my grandmother by my father's side, died, November the 19<sup>th</sup> 1774, aged about 77 years.

Thomas Geard, my grandfather by my father's side, died in the night of March the 18<sup>th</sup> 1775, <sup>5</sup>aged 71 years.

Samuel Geard, my father, died August the 4<sup>th</sup> 1786, aged 58 years.

William Taylor, my mother's grandfather, died December the 6<sup>th</sup> 1732, aged 60 years. This was the same year in which my mother was born.

Mary Taylor, my mother's mother, died April the 4<sup>th</sup> 1739, aged 42 years.

John Taylor, my mother's father, died December the 4<sup>th</sup> 1774, aged 75 years. This was in less than a month from the death of my father's mother.

Naomi Geard, my mother, <sup>6</sup>died January the 13<sup>th</sup> 1777, aged 44 years.

## Family History

I shall here place some anecdotes which I have learned relative to my ancestors, both on my father's and mother's side.

My great grandfather, Aaron Geard, was living at the time of the Glorious Revolution in 1688, and as the Prince of Orange, afterwards, the immortal King William the 3<sup>rd</sup> of England, who had landed from Holland at Torbay in Devonshire on November the 5<sup>th</sup> 1688, came with his army through Somersetshire on his way to London, to take possession of the British throne, on the abdication of it by his father-in-law, that contemptible tyrant, James the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Part, at least, of <sup>7</sup>William's army marched over a part of the ground that belongs to Montacute. They marched in the public road by the Park wall, which is still standing, in the night, and my great grandfather went up from his house (the Park wall being about half a mile from the village) and heard the kettle drums beat, as the soldiers marched on the lane side, he being on the park side of the wall.



*William of Orange* (Creative commons)

Whether the Prince of Orange marched at the same time exactly with these soldiers, or exactly the same way, I know not, but he came to Brimpton, <sup>8</sup>about two miles from Montacute towards London, and there he dined at the seat of Sir Philip Sydenham, and it being made known that he was to dine there, my great grandfather, as well as many others,

went over to Brimpton to have a sight of the Prince, which they were gratified with on his setting out from Brimpton for London, after dinner. Being comparatively a little man, and having a servant that could not be a very weak one, they saw the servant lift the Prince upon his horse, when he set off from Brimpton. Sir Philip was well paid by the Prince for his dinner, <sup>9</sup>for after the Prince got well seated upon the British throne, he settled two hundred pounds a year upon Sir Philip Sydenham, as long as he lived. This was a proof that the Prince was not like too many others, destitute of gratitude, as he did not forget Sir Philip and the dinner he gave him, as soon as his own purposes were answered: nor ought it to be forgotten that Sir Philip ran some risk in giving the Prince a dinner, as if the Prince had eventually failed and James had regained his power, Sir Philip would have stood the chance of losing all that he had, and his life into the bargain.

<sup>10</sup> This affair, however, turned out very well in the long run for Sir Philip, for as he was too fond of law, though he had several other estates besides Brimpton, and that is a pretty good one, he lawed them all away before he died, and had nothing to live upon, but the two hundred pounds a year which King William settled upon him.

Brimpton is now, and for many years has been in the possession of the Earl of Westmorland and his ancestors. I passed by Brimpton house, August the 19<sup>th</sup> 1806.

My grandfather Geard, when young, worked at his <sup>11</sup>father's business, that of a taylor, and I have heard him speak of their working for Sir Philip Sydenham, at Brimpton, so that it was many years after the Prince dined at his house, before Brimpton was lawed away; but however, it was gone before Sir Philip's death.

After my grandfather got up to man's estate, I believe he left off his father's business and turned his attention towards husbandry. He was an uncommonly strong man in his youth, being six foot high, or thereabout, and though not fat, yet large in proportion. He was a very industrious man, and chiefly by his own labor, he acquired some little property. My father was his only child <sup>12</sup>and he put him, when a boy, to learn the Girthwebb business. [*Note: a girth web secures the saddle to a horse*] Before my father got to man's estate, the Girthwebb business, where he learned it, was to be disposed of, and my grandfather agreed to take it. This treaty had like to have broken off by a very trivial circumstance. Everything was concluded on except one. My grandfather wanted a gun thrown in for nothing, and the person he was in treaty with would not part with the gun without some consideration for it. My grandfather seemed fixed and the treaty was broken off; nor did my grandfather mean to renew it. Thomas Wornell, who worked for the person with whom my grandfather was in treaty for the business, and who told <sup>13</sup>me the circumstance, went to my grandfather and reasoned with him upon the matter, and endeavoured to impress him with the consideration that, if everything else was right but the circumstance of the gun, surely that was not of importance enough to break off the treaty, and that as he had a son that had been learning the business, it was a pity to let the business slip from him for the sake of a gun. My grandfather reconsidered the matter, and agreed to take the business without the gun, or to pay what was demanded for the gun. My father was at that time about 15 years of age, so that that was about 63 years ago, and the <sup>14</sup>business has been in the family ever since, and, I hope, has been, and is likely to be of considerable advantage to some branches of it. On such trivial circumstances do comparatively great events and circumstances sometimes depend.

Thomas Wornell worked in the family from the time my grandfather took the business, to the time of his death, which was more than half a century. He was a worthy, good man, and

when he died had been a member of the Baptist church at Yeovil, about four miles from Montacute, 60 years or upwards.

My grandfather, during a part of his life, was <sup>15</sup>concerned with a neighbour, Mr. Parsons, in the timber business. He carried on the Girthwebb business till some years after I was born, and eventually gave it over to my father. He occupied some meadowland which he rented of Edward Philips Esq. as long as he lived.

My father, some time after he married, took a farm at Woodhouse in the Parish of Odcomb, a little distance from Montacute, which he continued for about 3 years, but this did him no good. I remember his leaving Woodhouse, but I do not remember his going there. During his continuance there my sister Martha was born, which was in the year <sup>16</sup>1755, when I was about 5 years old. It was upon my fathers leaving Woodhouse that my grandfather left off the Girthwebb business to him.

My father was a member of the Baptist church at Yeovil for many years, and for some years previous to his death a deacon.

As to my grandmother Geard's connections, her father Robert Newton lived for a number of years in one part of his life at Watford, in Hertfordshire. Since I came to Hitchin I have conversed with more than one at Watford who remembered his living there. He resided there about the time of my grandmother's <sup>17</sup>marrying. He removed into the West of England again, and resided there some years before his death. He lived some time, I believe, towards his latter end, at Lyme in Dorsetshire, about 7 miles from Montacute, where he possessed a small estate. This estate, after his death, came into the possession of his son Samuel Newton, who lived many years at Wandsworth, about 7 miles from London. He died worth something considerable, and left what he had, after the death of his second wife, whom I remember though I did not know him, to his only son Charles Newton. He was a <sup>18</sup>spendthrift, and though what he derived from his father eventually take it together, did not, I have understood, amount to less in value than five thousand pounds, he made shift, and his wife together, who was not a much better economist than himself, to get through the whole in a few years after he came to have the disposal of it. The last that he had to dispose of which he derived from his father was the estate at Lyme. This I purchased of him in the year 1777, and sold it again in 1797, after having possessed it about 20 years, for more than double what it originally cost. Indeed it cost me something considerable <sup>19</sup>after the original purchase, to secure my own life in it; but taking into consideration the clear rent it produced in the meanwhile, and the excess of this rent, over and above what all the money it had cost every way, would have produced, at common interest it produced more than double what it had cost, even taking into consideration what it cost to have my own life secured in it. <sup>20</sup>When it was sold, it should be recollected also, there were no more lives in it than there were when it was bought, namely two. When it was bought there were Charles Newton's life in it and my fathers. When it was sold there were Charles Newton's life in it and my own; and there are the same in it still, as far as I know, for Charles Newton, for ought I have heard to the contrary, is still living, as well as myself.

What my great-grandfather's father's first name was I know not, not do I remember that I have heard anything particular about him, except that he died at the age of 97, I believe at Boyscourt at Montacute.

My great-grandfather's brother, John Newton, I remember well, and I went from Bristol to Montacute in March, 1774, to preach his <sup>21</sup>funeral sermon, which I did on the 29<sup>th</sup> of that

month. He was buried in the churchyard on that day and I attended his funeral, and afterwards preached his funeral sermon at a private house in the village. He was 92 or 93 years of age, by which it appears he was born in the year 1681 or 1682, so that he was born before the Revolution.

I do not know when my great-grandfather Newton became a Baptist, but he was one, and was baptized at my grandfather Taylor's where many years afterwards, I was baptized myself, and where there was a convenient place for such a purpose, and there the people used to be baptized that <sup>22</sup>joined the church at Yeovil, before they had a Baptistery in their meeting house, which has now been the case for many years.

My great-grandfather died at Lambrook. The reason of his removing thither was his marrying Mary Pittard for his second wife, who lived there. I believe she had never been married before, and was considerably advanced in years when she married my great-grandfather. By what I have heard of her, she was a very pious woman. The following anecdote, if it does not prove her prudence, it proves her great deadness to this world, and that at <sup>23</sup>any rate she did not make that her God. She had a brother who was a man of considerable property, and who, being not likely to live long, made his will. She was present at the time of his making of it, and he addressed her to the following purport; "How much shall I set you down Mary - £300 0s. 0d.?" "O no, brother" said she, "£50. 0s. 0d. will do well enough for me". Mary might as well have taken it however, and done some good with it, for it was given to another relation who squandered it away. Her brother, I believe, was a bachelor, and consequently had neither wife nor child to leave his property to. <sup>24</sup>This, I apprehend, was before she was married to my great-grandfather. It appears that he died before her, August the 20<sup>th</sup> 1806. I was at Yeovil, and called upon Betty Murly, who lived with my great-grandmother-in-law, at the time when she married my great-grandfather, and learned from her that she was in the room when my great-grandfather died. She was then about 15 years of age, so that at the time above mentioned, when I saw her, she must be about 78. She was quite inform and confined to her bed, but sensible. It was religion, I understand, that brought my great

*Pages 25 & 26 are missing*

<sup>27</sup> ...home without the money he wanted to make of it. However, for many years before his death, he was in good circumstances, and when he died he left behind him property to the amount of thousands of pounds in value. He left £25. 0s. 0d. by his will towards the support of the ministry in the church to which he belonged, and also a silver cup, which he had bought in his life-time for the use of the Lord's Table. When any were baptized on his premises, he accommodated the candidates, as well as the minister, and for a number of years his house was a preaching place for ministers of different denominations. <sup>28</sup>It appears that the house he resided in was his father's before him, and it has now been in his family upwards of a century, as it appears to be possessed by his father in the year 1695, and how long before I know not. He left it by his will and also an orchard, and field etc. (?) belonging to it, to his son John Taylor, and upon the supposition of his dying without issue, my grandfather left these premises to his own right heirs for ever. In consequence of this, as my uncle did die without issue, in the year 1789, and as I was the eldest son of my mother, I became intitled to her share, which was a fourth part of the whole. It was eventually agreed to sell three <sup>29</sup>shares to my uncle Curtis, whose wife, one of my mother's sisters, was intitled to the other share, and now my uncle and aunt being both dead, it is inhabited and possessed by their son and my first cousin, William Curtis. I am glad it is owned and possessed by one of my grandfather's descendants, and I wish he may do as well in it as his

and my grandfather did, and be as useful as he was. He carries on the same business as my grandfather did, that of a sailcloth maker, and the place, take it all together, is perhaps as completely adapted to the purposes of that business as any place of the size in the County of Somerset.

<sup>30</sup> My grandfather had six children that I remember, all of whom lived to be married, namely Kezia, Sarah, John, Naomi, Ann and Ruth. They are all dead except Kezia, the oldest of all, and the first child that ever my grandfather had. She was born Jan. 3, 1725, and must therefore be now, if living, 82 years of age. I saw her last summer. She was weak in body, but her faculties held mercifully well. She is still living, as far as I know. She is the only own aunt I have in the world; nor have I any uncle.

## Family Graves

I shall now give some account <sup>31</sup> of the place of my father's sepulchres. The spot where the dust of my ancestors for more than one generation is deposited is called Five Ashes. It is thus called because there is a clump of trees in the public road near the gate that leads up to this spot. This clump of trees are all ash trees, and formerly were five in number, though now, strictly, there are but four.



*Five Ashes (centre), Odcombe, Somerset (Ordnance Survey)*

The Burying Ground is perhaps about half a furlong from this clump of trees, and is generally denominated Five Ashes from that circumstance. Such an one, and such an one are said to have been buried at Five Ashes. This spot was taken out of the corner of a field, and is perhaps a quarter of a mile from any house whatever, and the field of which <sup>32</sup> it is a part is in a high situation, and lies in the Parish of Odcomb. It is about a mile from Montacute. It was originally the property of a Mr Miller who was, I believe, the first pastor of the church at Yeovil. He was pastor of that church as far back as 1706, and how long before I know not. He was pastor of the same church in 1720 and it appears that he died in that or the following year. This Mr. Miller or his father had been a Captain in the Duke of Monmouth's army, at the time when he opposed King James the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and whose army was defeated by the King's army in King's Sedgemore in the same County. Somehow or other Captain Miller escaped with his life, not-with-standing so many were put to death by <sup>33</sup> that horrible tyrant James, and his not less horrible Judge Jefferies, for siding with Monmouth.

Captain Miller was, I think, the first pastor of Yeovil church, but I have some idea that his son succeeded him as pastor thereof, and whether it was he or his son that was pastor at the dates before mentioned, I know not for a certainty. However it was Captain Miller or his son who gave the spot of ground called Five Ashes for a Burying Ground, to the congregation that meet at Yeovil, in the first instance, though there has been some addition made to it, by the gift of Mr. William Kiddle, who then owned the ground connected with it, since my remembrance. Concerning Captain Miller, I have <sup>34</sup>heard an anecdote from my grandfather Geard, to the following purport:

After the Prince of Orange, William the third, was seated upon the British throne, he sent for Captain Miller, who at that time was a preacher, to London, and asked him who made him a minister? Mr. Miller replied, "He that led captivity captive and received gifts for men". Upon this the King told him if he would conform to the Church of England, he would take care to provide a living for him. Mr. Miller answered that he could not conscientiously do that, but that, if His Majesty would give him leave to go on in his own way, he should be much obliged to him. To which the King replied that ....

*Pp 35-38 missing*

### **The Foster Family**

<sup>39</sup>The son of John Foster had five brothers. Their names were John, Edward, Michael, Joseph and Richard. John was the oldest and Richard was the youngest. At the time of their father's death, they all lived at Preston, at the house lately occupied by Captain Hinde's family, and now by Mr. Earl.

Their individual property, at the time of their father's death, was but small. They all the six of them had but about enough to carry on the business of that farm, and they did all carry on the business there, by uniting their stock together. They were all, however, industrious men, <sup>40</sup>and they all gave solid evidence of their being pious, conscientious, Godly men. Living in the reigns of those Royal rascals, Charles the 2<sup>nd</sup> and James the 2<sup>nd</sup>, they were exposed to the iron rod of persecution. They, however, nobly and cheerfully risked the spoiling of their goods, and the loss of their liberty, for the sake of their consciences. They were several of them members of the church, and all of them members of the congregation of Protestant Dissenters, which for many years have met near Tylehouse Street in Hitchin. During some part of their time, they met where and as they could. <sup>41</sup>Mr. Wilson, the first pastor of this church, suffered imprisonment for the sake of a good conscience, in Hertford jail, and these worthy brothers nourished him there according to their capacity and opportunity. But had not James been obliged to abdicate that throne which he had too long disgraced, though he had been on it but a few years to all human appearance, they would have had nothing left to nourish Mr. Wilson, nor themselves neither. They had all been fined twenty pounds a month each for not going to church, till all they had in the world was confiscated. <sup>42</sup>However, their fines had not been literally exacted till the **Glorious Revolution** was effected by the **Immortal William the third**, who gave them as it were a receipt in full of all demands, and they never actually lost anything, except a few half crowns, which they used to make a present of to the Constable, when he came to give them notice of another twenty pound penalty being incurred. As to that abominable persecutor James, he was a kind of Royal Vagabond; after his abdication, to the day of his death. In this case, God remarkably punished the worker of iniquity, and let the righteous go free.



<sup>43</sup> In process of time, three of these brothers, John, Matthew and Joseph, married. Edward, Michael and Richard never married. After the respective marriages of the three brothers, before mentioned, they all, it appears, left Preston, and divided themselves into three branches, one single brother living with a married brother. John and Edward lived at Ickleford, Matthew and Michael lived at Little Wymondley, and Joseph and Richard lived at Hitchin. It does not appear that Joseph had any children, so that all the descendants of the original stock now living proceeded, medium of John and Matthew. It appears <sup>44</sup> also that each of the married brothers before the single brother who lived with him, and that after the death of the married brother took the particular charge of the family of that married brother with whom he had resided, as to those married brothers who had families were particularly noticed by them in their wills, and so were eventually benefitted by their deaths as well as by their lives.

This was the case as to Edward in respect of the family of John, and Michael as to the family of Matthew. As Joseph had no children, Richard divided his <sup>47</sup>property between both the families of John and Matthew. Richard was the youngest of the brothers, and he died the last. He died in 1742 or 1743.

It appears, not only that all these six brothers were industrious men, but that God wonderfully prospered them, even as to this world. They all died worth something considerable, though they had such small beginnings. It ought also not to be forgotten how God had appeared, both in Providence and grace, for some particularly of the descendants of those two worthy brothers, who alone had children. And may we not <sup>46</sup>consistently consider the Almighty as graciously stamping the seal of his approbation upon the characters and prayers of all these six venerable men, in his remarkable goodness, both in Providence and grace, towards so many of that posterity for which they all, as well as the immediate Progenitors, had so peculiar a concern?

### **The memory of the just is blessed.**

May all the living descendants, of either of the characters that have been noticed, be concerned to emulate the virtues, and share in the blessings of them all.

Having thus traced ...

*Pp 47-48 missing*

### **Genealogy of the Geard Family**

<sup>49</sup> .....Mary \*See below and Martha Geard, were born June the 15<sup>th</sup> 1790.

Martha Geard died and was buried at St Neots, I think, aged 52¼ years

(Mrs. Beddely) September 12<sup>th</sup> 1842.

Naomi Geard, was born August the 30<sup>th</sup> 1792.

Charles Geard was born August the 8<sup>th</sup> 1795. Died December 1<sup>st</sup> 1850,

aged 55, at Port Elizabeth, South Africa; see testimonial in Port Elizabeth Telegraph, December 5<sup>th</sup>.

Elizabeth Geard died April the 19<sup>th</sup> 1784, aged 3 years.

Mary Geard died July the 24<sup>th</sup> 1791, aged one year.

Mary Bowyer, daughter of Edmund Bowyer, of the Parish of Sutton in the County of Bedford, Farmer, and of Elizabeth his wife, was born November the 17<sup>th</sup> 1780, and was married<sup>50</sup> November the 10<sup>th</sup> 1804, to Samuel Bradly Geard.

Samuel Bowyer Geard, son of Samuel Bradly Geard, and of Mary his wife, was born October the 27<sup>th</sup> 1805.

Edmund Geard, son of Samuel Bradly Geard, and of Mary his wife, was born May the 6<sup>th</sup> 1807.

John Bradly Geard, son of Samuel Bradly Geard, and of Mary his wife, was born April the 19<sup>th</sup> 1809.

N.B. As this grandson was named after me, and as I had a silver spoon that was marked with my name, which was made me a present of by my honored Mother's Uncle Haggard, soon after I was born, after having the<sup>51</sup> initials of his name and the year of his birth engraved on it, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1809, I made a present of the said spoon to my grandson John Bradly Geard.

Mary Geard, daughter of Samuel Bradly Geard and of Mary his wife, was born July the 9th 1811.

Elizabeth Geard, daughter of Samuel Bradly Geard, and of Mary his wife, was born August the 21<sup>st</sup> 1813, at the distance of two hundred years from her ancestor (mentioned in Page the 36<sup>th</sup> in the original book) namely John, son of John Foster, Salome Stammers Cole, daughter of Jabez Cole of the Parish of Graffham, in the County of Huntingdon, Farmer, and of Elizabeth his wife, was born July the 16<sup>th</sup> 1793, and was married in the Parish Church of Graffham in the County of Huntingdon, August the 12<sup>th</sup> 1815, to Ebenezer Geard of St. Neots, in the same County, Draper. Martha Geard, daughter of Samuel Bradly Geard and of Mary his wife, was born April the 10<sup>th</sup> 1815.

52 Ann Geard, daughter of Samuel Bradly Geard, and of Mary his wife, was born November the 5th 1816; and died July 11th 1836, in his twentieth year.

Thomas Geard, son of Ebenezer Geard, and of Salome Stammers Geard his wife, was born March the 3rd 1818.

Elizabeth Geard, daughter of Ebenezer Geard and of Salome Stammers Geard, his wife, was born September the 27th 1819.

John Geard, son of Ebenezer Geard, and of Salome Stammers Geard, his wife, was born April the 22nd 1821.

Emma Geard, daughter of Ebenezer Geard, and of Salome Stammers Geard, his wife, was born February the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1823.

Other children of Ebenezer and Salome Stammers Geard –

Martha Geard, born May the 6<sup>th</sup> 1825  
Frederick Geard, born January the 22<sup>nd</sup> 1827  
Mary Anne Geard, born June the 9<sup>th</sup> 1829  
Fanny Geard - November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1832  
<sup>53</sup> Children of Samuel and Martha Bedells –  
John Geard Bedells, born Jan. the 19<sup>th</sup> 1826  
Ebenezer Bedells, born Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> 1827

Charles King Bedells, born March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1832  
Children of John and Naomi Crawley –  
Elizabeth Crawley, born March 28<sup>th</sup> 1825  
Mary Crawley, born April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1827  
John Geard Crawley, born April 4<sup>th</sup> 1832  
Ann Crawley, born April 4<sup>th</sup> 1833  
Children of Charles and Frances Geard –  
John Geard, born August 7<sup>th</sup> 1823  
Fanny Geard, born April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1825  
Sarah Geard, born August 27<sup>th</sup> 1827  
Jesse Geard, born June 10<sup>th</sup> 1829  
Ann Geard, born March the 10<sup>th</sup> 1832  
Naomi Geard, born May 7<sup>th</sup> 1833.  
Charles Ebenezer Geard was born April 12<sup>th</sup> 1835  
William Geard, born February 14<sup>th</sup> 1837

### Family Anecdotes

<sup>54</sup> Before I proceed to notice particular circumstances that respect myself more immediately, I will here subjoin one more anecdote relative to my wife's ancestry, and another relative to my own.

While my wife's great grandfather, Matthew Foster, lived with his five brothers at Preston, and which was during the persecuting times, their house used to be an asylum for persecuted ministers. There used sometimes to be several of them there together, and they had their appointed seasons for meeting. One way in which they spent their time when they met, was by conference together about the meaning of particular passages of <sup>55</sup>scripture, and a text was fixed on at one meeting to be conferred about at the next. Among the persecuted ministers who met there, no-one was more frequent, perhaps, than good John Bunyan, and he used to take opportunities to preach in a dale in Wain Wood, which is a little above the house in the wood, which was not only convenient for privacy, but because it was capable of containing a great number of people; and as the word of the Lord was precious in those days, many people used to embrace opportunities to hear the celebrated dreamer in that dale. There is a chimney corner in the house in the wood which I have had pointed out to me, as the place <sup>56</sup>where this distinguished preacher used to sit.



*John Bunyan*

Upon a particular occasion, Mr Bunyan, when he was at the house of the six brothers at Preston, was asked what was the meaning of those difficult passages in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, verses 19<sup>th</sup> .... “Nor the earnest expectation of the creature, waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. ...?” To which question he made this cautious and shrewd reply: “All that I can say in answer to that question is, that the Scripture is wiser than I” - which was as good as saying that he did not know the meaning, and this was much wiser in him than it would have been to have attempted to explain, what he did <sup>57</sup>not understand, and thus darken counsel, by words without knowledge.

The other anecdote is this: My grandfather Taylor, some time after the death of my grandmother, paid his addresses to a person who lived at Stoke under Hamden, about five miles from East Coker where he lived, and about a mile or a mile and half from Montacute. The nearest way from Stoke to Coker is not through Montacute, but over Hamden Hill. On Hamden Hill there were then and are still, deep stone quarries. One of those stone quarries was very near the public road, and very improperly left without any wall to protect travelers that might <sup>58</sup>wander too near it. My grandfather, in going home one night from Stoke, when it was excessively dark, was particularly struck by his horse’s stopping all at once, as he was on Hamden Hill. It immediately occurred to him that he might possibly be near the stone quarry. He therefore wisely avoided trying to push his horse forward. It being exceedingly dark, and recollecting that he had heard of its being so dark as for a person not to be able to see his hand, he thought he would try that experiment, and lifting up his hand, he found it was so dark that he could not see it. He immediately concluded that his wisest way would be to leave his horse entirely to his own <sup>59</sup>liberty, and let him take his own course. He accordingly did so, and the horse drew back and, under the superintendence of an overruling kind Providence, safely carried him to his own home. The next morning, he thought he would take a ride over and investigate the circumstance which had so puzzled and alarmed him the preceding night. He could in the position he had been in, by the footsteps of the horse: and he found that the last footstep was just upon the edge of the quarry, and that if the animal had moved one step further, both the horse and his rider would have been precipitated into the quarry as deep, perhaps, as Hitchin church and tower is high, <sup>60</sup>if it may not be added, spire, weather-cock and all. “Whoso is wise and will observe those things even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord”. Psalm 107: 43.

I shall only add here that my grandfather did not marry this person, but he did about 7 years after the death of my grandmother marry a second wife, whom I remember, and who survived him several years. She died in 1784.

*Bottom of P60 torn out through to bottom of P62.*

## **Providential Deliverance and Later Conversion**

... contentedly go without.... In the year 1762, I was placed under <sup>63</sup>the care of Mr William Newton of Milborne Port about 12 miles from Montacute, on the road from thence towards London, and in the same County of Somerset. He was a pious good man, and a good school master, and I retained a veneration for him whilst living, and I revere his memory, now he is dead. He died, I believe, in the year 1807, aged about 79 years. He used to pray with his scholars, and was concerned for their spiritual as well as temporal welfare.



*Cottage in Milborne Port (Google maps)*

One circumstance took place, while I was at school with him, which I have never forgotten, and never ought to forget. His brother, Mr. Samuel Newton, who was then a dissenting minister at Norwich, having lately <sup>64</sup>married Dr. Woods' daughter, to whom he was at that time an assistant at Norwich, (and by whom he had Mr. Samuel Newton, at this time an independent minister at Witham in Essex), his father being of the same denomination, came with his wife to Milborne Port, with a horse and chaise. This horse the schoolboys used to take to water, and I among the rest. One day I had got him out of the stable, and had got upon his back, with a view to ride him to the water, which was at a little distance from the stable. The horse not being thirsty, or some way or other, not liking to go, turned about and would go back again into the stable. Having nothing but a halter to guide him, I was not strong <sup>65</sup>enough to stop him with that, and he was so near the stable, that I had not time to get off. Providentially however, I was instantaneously induced to lean back upon his hinder part, and my chin missed the top of the doorway, and I was not in the smallest degree injured. What might have been the consequences if there had not been room for me as well as the horse to have passed under, in that position, or if I had not been immediately induced to place myself in that position, I know not. I have, however, always when I thought of it, considered it as one of the most remarkable preservations, that I have ever experienced, and I hope at times have felt grateful to the kind Providence which then so remarkably preserved me, and ever wish to do so. <sup>66</sup>I do not pretend to be able with any positive certainty to ascertain the exact time of my conversion to God.

I have had serious impressions at times, to a greater or less degree, ever since I can remember; and, through Divine Goodness I was never suffered to run into the same gross external enormities as some others have been permitted to do.

I have reason enough, however, to lament over a heart originally alienated from God, and manifesting that alienation in too many instances, for a number of years: and I do not consider any apparently serious impressions as having any abiding salutary effects upon me, 'til I was about sixteen or <sup>67</sup>seventeen years of age. About that time, without pretending to ascertain exactly when or how, I hope there was implanted in me some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel. I have indeed, sometimes been ready to think, that if ever I had a spiritual father, it was Mr. Henry Walker, who at that time was minister at Horsington in Somersetshire, and who afterwards removed to Bradford in Wiltshire, where he was settled as pastor and where he died. He was father of Mr. Thomas Walker of London, the celebrated singer, and he was an excellent singer himself. He used frequently, to exchange <sup>68</sup>with Mr Evans of Yeovil, on account of Mr Evans' going to Horsington to administer the Lord's supper to the church there,

## Powerful Preaching

Mr Walker never being ordained as pastor over them. At one of those times in which he exchanged with Mr Evans, he preached from Revelation 21:8

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

His preaching from this text was exceedingly awful, and was particularly struck with it, and as I have been sometimes ready to consider him as <sup>69</sup>the instrument so I have been ready to consider that as the time and the means of my conversion: but as I do not consider the knowledge of these circumstances as at all essential in the business of conversion, so I do not lay any great stress upon the before mentioned circumstances, in respect to my own hopeful conversion. It is the font itself, and not the knowledge of the time, means or particular circumstances, that in my present views, is of by far the greatest importance. I had however, a particular respect for Mr. Walker while living, and have a respectful recollection of his memory now he is dead, and has been <sup>70</sup>so for many years.

Various causes and circumstances, were, I hope, made to operate to produce and promote serious impressions in my mind. The death of a profligate young man, at Montacute, made a considerable impression upon me. He was a few years older than myself, and was exceedingly addicted to wickedness. At that time I was much impressed with the thoughts of dying, and of my own liability to death, though I was well, and though I was young. These thoughts used to follow me, and perplex me considerably. But it was frequently suggested to me, that I need not concern myself about dying more than other young people; that I was as <sup>71</sup>likely to live as any of those that concerned themselves the least about it, and this young man used, as it were, to be presented to my view as a striking example of one that did not trouble himself about dying, and I was as well as he, and as likely to live as he, and why should I concern myself about dying, any more than he? However, it pleased God, after a short illness of about four days, to remove this very young man by death. I pretend not to determine his eventual state. What God might do for him in his last illness, I leave. However, till that illness, he led an exceedingly abandoned life, particularly as to the article of intemperance. His <sup>72</sup>death much affected me. I was constrained, as it were to see, in that instance, that if I did not concern myself about dying, which it was too evident he did not, yet that I may die, and may die young, as he did. It was now no longer in the power of the devil himself to hold him up to my view, as a living example of carelessness about death, for he was dead. I trust this awful Providence, amongst other things, was caused to work together for my good, in my younger days.

## Temptations and Prayer

About this time, I was exceedingly harassed by Satanic temptations, and some of these particularly were of a most distressing nature. I was not only tempted <sup>73</sup>with respect to my own religion, but with respect to the very foundation of religion itself. And this temptation appeared to me to be of such a nature, as I did not suppose others that had any good in them were acquainted with; and this consideration particularly prevented me from relating to others what exercises of mind I felt. These things exceedingly perplexed me, and that for a considerable time. I have however, since found, that they were so far from being exercises peculiar to me, and evidential of a want of grace, that there are very few if any gracious persons that wholly escape them, and instead of despairing on account of such <sup>74</sup>exercises,

I have been ready, at times, to try to extract honey out of the carcase of the lion, and to conclude that the fierce assaults I then met with were a kind of proofs, that I was in reality concerned to desert the cause and service of Satan and that he was then using every means in his power, by trying to make me believe there was nothing in religion or painting it out to me in the most discouraging colours, to prevent me from embracing it, and to detain me on his own side. When I look back to about the period I now refer it, there are different circumstances that occurred from whence I have since at various times derived encouragement. One thing, in <sup>75</sup>particular, has often afforded me encouragement, in the recollection of it, namely, the places I used to retire to to pray in secret to God. I can now look back with peculiar satisfaction to my fathers barn, to a place fitted up at a distance from any house, in a field that my father occupied, for bullocks to feed in, where I have heretofore retired to endeavour to pour out my soul before God. My reason for so doing certainly could not be, to be, seen of men, for my only reason for selecting such places, was to get out of their sight, and to be out of their hearing; and I trust, I had been led to see before I thus acted, that my own prayers and my own righteousness in every respect, would not only <sup>76</sup>not do to trust in for justification, but needed the intercession of Christ to recommend the same to the Divine acceptance, and approbation.

I trust, therefore, without pretending absolutely to fix upon any time, circumstance or instrument of my conversion, that considerably more than 40 years ago, I was really converted to God. I trust, that through rich, free, and distinguishing grace, I was led to see my lost, miserable, and helpless state and condition as a sinner, my own utter inability to save myself, and the vanity of all other refuges except Christ; that I was led to see not only the absolute need I stood in of Him, <sup>77</sup>but His exact suitableness for one in my circumstances; and that I was brought to look to Him and to depend upon Him alone, for a whole and for a holy salvation; and that I was made the subject of a sincere desire to devote myself to his service and glory, and to renounce every other service that was contrary thereto and inconsistent therewith.

## **Baptism**

Sometime in the year 1768 I went to Mr. Peter Evans the pastor of the Baptist Church at Yeovil, to have some conversation with him about making a public profession of religion. He gave me all due encouragement, and after a while, namely, on the eighth day of December in the said year, <sup>78</sup> 1768, after having given a verbal experience to the church at Yeovil, I was baptized by him, on my grandfather Taylors premises at East Coker, where that ordinance used to be administered at that time, there being then no baptistery in the meeting house at Yeovil, though there has been since, and where my great grandfather, Robert Newton, my grandmother Geards father, had been baptized, a number of years before I was born. At the time I went to converse with Mr. Evans, relative to making a profession of religion, he lived at Stafford, about five or six miles from Montacute. Yeovil is not in the direct road <sup>79</sup>from Montacute to Stafford, but it is not very much out of the way. I went, through Yeovil. I said nothing to any person whatever, what particular end I had in view, in going that day to Stafford, but to Mr. Evans himself, when I got there. I do not recollect that I had any particular hesitations, about going quite through to Stafford at that time till after I had passed through Yeovil, which is about two miles from Stafford. Between Yeovil and Stafford, however, I not only began to hesitate, as to whether I should go through, or turn back again, but stopped more than once, deliberating what course to take, fearing I should do wrong, if I proceeded, yet <sup>80</sup>fearing I should not do right, if I did not. The first time I stopped, I sat down at the entrance to a kind of wood or grove, and stayed some considerable time, before I concluded which to do. At length, however, it was impressed

upon my mind, if I turned back, I should obey the dictates of the enemy of my soul, and that, if I persevered I should obey the dictates of the spirit of God. This consideration determined me to persevere, but however, when I got within sight of Stafford, my heart began to fail me again, and I sat sometime upon a stile, deliberating whether I had not better still return, without not going through to Mr. Evans. <sup>81</sup>However, I was after a while induced to go forward again, and I went quite to Mr. Evans house; but even then, I had not courage enough to go in; but went beyond the house and stood some time against a gate on the opposite side of the house, at a little distance from it. How much longer I should have stood there than I did, I know not, if the following occurrence had not taken place, but Jane Pavard, a worthy women, a member of the church at Yeovil, and how at that time kept Mr. Evans house, had occasion to come to the door to throw some dust out, saw me, which laid me under a kind of necessity of going in. I found Mr. Evans <sup>82</sup>at home, and, after a while, I mustered up resolution enough to inform him of the particular business that I came upon, and which was eventually followed by my being baptized, as has been already stated. The next Lord's Day, after I had been baptized, I was received by their unanimous consent into full communion with the Baptist Church at Yeovil, at which my father was at that time a member, and my grandfather Taylor a deacon. I was 18 years of age, the sixteenth day of the preceding March.

### **Talent for the Ministry**

It having been thought that I had some promising talents for the work of the ministry, <sup>83</sup>I was called upon, on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of November 1769, to exercise before the church at Yeovil. With fear and trembling, I did thus exercise, at that time, by speaking from the 84<sup>th</sup> Psalm, in the method of expounding, before the Pastor and some of the members of that church, for their judgment to be exercised, whether I had such talents or not. This was done, in the Baptist Meeting House at Yeovil. I exercised there, before the church, once more afterwards, in the way of expounding, and likewise engaged three times, in the method of preaching, from select passages of Scripture. The result of all was that the Pastor and church considered me as having promising talents, for public work, and I was, with the unanimous consent, I believe, of the whole church, recommended by them, to the Baptist Academy at <sup>84</sup>Bristol under the care, at that time, of those venerable and respectable characters Messrs. Hugh Evans, his son Caleb Evans, and James Newton. Mr. Caleb Evans was co-pastor with his father, at Broadmead, and Mr. Newton was assistant to the venerable Mr. John Tommas, at that time, Pastor of the Baptist Church meeting near Pithay. I accordingly went to that Academy, in the month of September 1770. It was soon after the first formation of the Bristol Education Society, and I was the second student taken upon the Foundation of that Society, Mr. Thomas Dunscombe being the first.

I hope, it was my sincere desire to be directed in this important business, by that wisdom which is from above, and, I trust, I was so; but, upon the supposition of my being called to the work of the ministry at all, it <sup>85</sup>was my particular desire that I might be called to it, while I was young, that I might have the advantage of some academical instruction. I did not consider any academical instruction as capable of making me or anyone else a real minister of Jesus Christ. I considered not only grace but promising gifts, as necessary prerequisites, in this matter, but, I considered human learning as useful, in its place where there were hopeful evidences of these necessary prerequisites. And I am just of the same opinion now, as to these matters, as I was then. At that time, there were several destitute congregations, at a greater or less distance from Bristol, that were supplied, in general, by the students of the Bristol Academy. In process of time, I was sent out as a supply, as well as others. The first place I was sent to was Chalford Bottom in <sup>86</sup>Gloucestershire, about 30 miles from



Bristol. Here I preached, February 24<sup>th</sup> 1771; and this was the first time I ever preached in a pulpit. I preached, without making use of any notes, in the pulpit, and I was carried through upon the whole, pretty comfortably.

Of a Monday evening, once a fortnight, the students used to deliver a discourse, in the vestry of Broadmead Meeting House. On Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, 1771, I delivered a discourse there. This was upon the whole, considerably more trying than preaching to a country congregation, as we had not only to hear us, some of the most judicious of the Broadmead congregation, but Messrs. Hugh and Caleb Evans.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March I preached at Grittleton in Gloucestershire <sup>87</sup>about 20 miles from Bristol.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1771, I preached, in the morning, at the Pithay Meeting; and that day week, the 28<sup>th</sup> I preached at Broadmead Meeting. May the 5<sup>th</sup>, I preached the first time, at Bratton in Wiltshire, about 26 miles from Bristol.

As there was usually a vacation in the Bristol Academy, of several weeks, in the course of the summer, I was appointed to spend at least, a considerable part of the vacation, this summer, at Bratton. It commenced in the beginning of July, and on Lord's Day, the 7<sup>th</sup> of that month, I preached twice at Bratton and once at Trowbridge in the neighbourhood.

### Visit to Dr Gill in London



John Gill (1697-1771) (Wikimedia Commons)

I had, for a considerable time, had a particular desire to see the celebrated Dr. John Gill, author of the exposition, on the Old and New Testament, in nine volumes, in folio; and, as I thought I could compass my object in the week between two <sup>88</sup>Sabbaths, I went from Bratton to Salisbury Monday July the 8<sup>th</sup>, and went with a coach from thence all night, and got to London, next day, and returned back to Bratton again the following Saturday. During my absence I went to Camberwell, near London, where Dr. Gill resided with his son, and there had the singular gratification to see, converse, and dine with the Doctor, at his son's house. I have reason to think that the good Doctor was gratified as well as myself, particularly with the idea of a young man's coming so far to see him. From Bratton to Camberwell and back again, was an extent of two hundred miles, or more, the way I travelled. He treated me

respectfully, and, 'though he was not very abundant in talk, yet he conversed with me considerably more, than I understood, he was in the habit of doing,<sup>89</sup> in general, at least, with strangers. He was decaying fast, and was got into a weak state, at the time I saw him. He appeared, however, to be quite collected in his mind. I rather think, he never preached publicly afterwards, and he died on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the following October, aged 73 years ten months and ten days, and when he died, there was a great man fell in Israel! During this vacation, my mind was exceedingly exercised and distressed, on account of certain deep and abstruse subjects, and as I should necessarily be called upon if I persevered in the ministry, to treat upon such subjects, as now so exceedingly puzzled me, I had strong temptations to relinquish the ministry entirely: and, I think, if I had had such views and feelings exactly respecting the difficulties of a minister, before I ever at all engaged in, or with a view to, the work of the ministry, speaking after the manner<sup>90</sup> of men, I never should have entered upon it. These difficulties, however, though they were exceedingly distressing to me for a time, were over-ruled eventually, I hope, for my good, as I was never so consistently and firmly established, as to certain important truths before, as I was after I had been thus distressingly exercised

A few days before the commencement of the vacation, namely, June 28<sup>th</sup>, I received an account of the death of Mr Peter Evans, Pastor of the Baptist Church at Yeovil. He had been in a declining state for some considerable time before his death. He was between 40 and 50 years of age, and had been pastor of the church at Yeovil 20 years, I think, or upwards. He was a Welshman, and related to Mr Hugh Evans of Bristol.<sup>91</sup> He was not a man of very shining abilities but he was sound in the grand fundamentals of religion.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September, I returned to Bristol, the vacation being over, having been absent, almost nine weeks.

### **Preaching at Yeovil & Montacute**

Though I had preached at a number of other places, it was not till after a considerable time that I could muster up resolution enough to preach at Yeovil and Montacute publicly. However, on April 12<sup>th</sup> 1772, I ventured to attempt it, and was carried through better than I was afraid I should be. Many people attended out of curiosity, and especially at Montacute, in the evening. Several hundreds came to hear me, of one description or another. May it appear, at the day of judgment, that some of them were really advantaged by what they heard, whatever were their motives in coming to hear. After this, I did not feel so<sup>92</sup> much difficulty in preaching at Yeovil or Montacute, or anywhere in the neighbourhood.

I spent a considerable part of the vacation, this summer at Bratton again. On Lord's Day July 25<sup>th</sup> in this year 1772 and which was during the vacation, I was peculiarly situated, in point of difficulty. On this day, both the congregations at Yeovil and Bratton wanted me to supply them, in person or by proxy, if possible. To supply them both in person was impossible, but by previous arrangements I managed to supply them both, in person, and by proxy. I got Mr Job David of Frome, who was one of my fellow students, to supply the people at Yeovil which was about 40 miles from Bratton. I got good old Mr Clark who was pastor of the church at Crockerton near Warminster but who resided at Frome, to supply the<sup>93</sup> people at Frome one part of the day and I engaged to supply his place at Crockerton. I got the people at Bratton to have their morning service to begin earlier, and their afternoon service later, than usual. By these arrangements, and by preaching four times in the day myself, and riding about 26 miles, the matter was accomplished. Mr Clark was not in the habit of preaching at Crockerton, more than once a day. Mr Sedgefield, the pastor of the

church at Frome, where Mr David was Assistant, though infirm, agreed to preach once. By him therefore and Mr Clark the people there were supplied, in the morning and afternoon, and I was to manage to get to Frome to preach the lecture in the evening. We began the service at Bratton about nine o'clock in the morning, and finished about half after ten. I then rode about 8 miles to Crockerton, and began the service there about 12 o'clock which was<sup>94</sup> their usual time of beginning, and finished about half after one. I then rode back again to Bratton, and began the service there about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and finished, about half after four. I then rode about ten miles to Frome, and preached the lecture there in the evening. I have preached more than once four times in a day, in the course of my life, but never did such a day's work as this besides before nor since, including the distance of traveling, as well as the times of preaching. Such however, was the merciful state of health and spirits with which I was at that time blessed, that I was not at all distressingly fatigued and got up next morning and went to my grand-father's at East Coker, without feeling any inconvenience from the preceding day's exertions, about 30 miles from Frome, and there heard Mr David preach, and the next day accompanied him to Exeter,<sup>95</sup> 40 miles or more from East Coker. August 12<sup>th</sup> 1772 I attended the ordination of Mr Jameson at Warminster, in Wiltshire, who now resides, and for many years has resided, at Royston. I went thither from Bratton about 6 miles from Warminster. I went to Warminster from Bratton in company with Mr Samuel James of Hitchin, who had supplied the people at Bratton the preceding Sabbath. His eldest son Samuel James, who was with his father at Bratton, accompanied us. I never heard Mr James preach, as I preached at Yeovil and Montecute, the Sabbath he preached at Bratton.

I had an opportunity however, of seeing and conversing with him at Bratton, before we went to Warminster: and here I formed a slight acquaintance with his son Samuel, which appeared eventually, under the influence of an over-ruling Providence, to have the say to my coming to Hitchin, and becoming Mr James's successor. Mr James's health was,<sup>96</sup> at this time, in a declining state, and he took a journey to Bristol ....?....., with a view to the benefit of it: and, while he was out on this journey, he spent the Sabbath before mentioned at Bratton.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> September, after having preached at Yeovil and Montecute, the preceding day, which was the Sabbath, I returned to Bristol, the vacation having terminated.

### **An invitation to Pastorship**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1773, I had the peculiar gratification, to be introduced, together with my fellow student, Mr Suttcliff, by an elderly lady, with whom I had contracted a slight acquaintance, through my having preached at the Tabernacle at Bristol, erected by the celebrated Mr George Whitefield, to the famous Salina, Countess Dowager of Huntingdon at Bath. The good Countess received and treated us very respectfully, and was very free and friendly in her conversation with us, particularly as to what<sup>97</sup> she had attempted and meant to attempt for the furtherance of the Gospel. It was the wish of the people at Bratton, that I should settle with them as their pastor, and I had many struggles in my mind, whether I ought not to comply with their wishes, in that particular. They were a friendly, hospitable people, and though but few in number, much better able to maintain a minister than some other congregations that were much more numerous; and what made my difficulty the greater was, that my father and mother rather wished me to do it, as I should then have been within a day's journey of them, Bratton being but about 40 miles from Montecute. I however, eventually concluded to give this matter up, though I could form no positive idea where my lot would be cast. One thing that had considerable weight with me was, that the

number of people was not only small, but there seemed from the smallness of the population of the parish and <sup>98</sup>the state of the neighbourhood, but little prospect of much increase. We are, however, but poor judges of futurity. There has been since a considerable interest there, and is so at the present time, in which I rejoice. Nevertheless it did not appear, in the event, that that was the place which Providence had allotted to me.

Having given up the idea of settling at Bratton, it was concluded by Mr Evans, that I should spend the next vacation in Cornwall.

### **Preaching in Cornwall**

Accordingly, on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 1773, having previously gone from Bristol to my native county, I left Montecute, on a little horse of my fathers which I had for the journey, and went to Wellington in Somersetshire, that day, where I preached in the evening. The 22<sup>nd</sup> I went to Exeter in Devonshire, and preached there in the evening. The 23<sup>rd</sup> I went to Dartmouth in <sup>99</sup>Devonshire where the famous Mr John Flavel formerly resided, and preached there in the evening.

The 24<sup>th</sup> I went to Kingsbridge in Devonshire, and preached there in the evening. The 25<sup>th</sup> I went to Plymouth in Devonshire, and preached there in the evening in Mr Kinsman's Tabernacle. The 26<sup>th</sup> I crossed an arm of the sea, with my horse in a boat, about 4 miles from Plymouth, and got into the County of Cornwall, and reached Truro that night. I did not know one person in all the county of Cornwall that I recollect, at that time. However as intelligence had been sent before to give notice of my coming, I was kindly received at Truro, by Mr and Mrs Turner, and Lord's Day morning the 27<sup>th</sup> Mr Turner accompanied me to Falmouth, about ten or a dozen miles from Truro. I had not travelled, from the preceeding Monday morning, that I left my father's house, about 180 miles <sup>100</sup>and the whole of my journeying expenses amounted but to about half a guinea, and that was expended principally about my horse. At Falmouth I was kindly received by Mr and Mrs Motton and their house was my principal home, while I remained in Cornwall. At Falmouth I preached three times, on the day of my arrival there.

I tarried in Cornwall, from the time of my entrance into it, on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1773, to the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1773, being a period of almost three months. On the said 16<sup>th</sup> September, I left Cornwall and arrived at Plymouth in Devonshire. Here I tarried some days, and was kindly and hospitably entertained, by the venerable Mr Philip Gibbs, at that time pastor of the Baptist Church at Plymouth. I spent Lord's Day September 19<sup>th</sup> at Plymouth, and was present at the baptism of several persons by Mr Gibbs, and heard him preach .....

*Pp 101 to 106 missing*

<sup>107</sup>....in Cornwall, among other places that I preached at, I preached at Grampound, Mevagissy, Tregony, Truro, Helston, Penzance and Camborn, besides Falmouth and Chasewater. I preached at Helston, out of doors, and at Camborn likewise, under a signpost, and at the latter place, had a large and an attentive auditory to hear me, and was kindly and hospitably entertained by the landlord of the inn, under the signpost of which I preached, and slept at his house. Though therefore, it does not appear to have been the will of Providence that I should settle in Cornwall, and, though I have never been in the County since I left it in 1773, I hope it will appear at the Day of Judgment, that the seed which I scattered in so many places and directions was not only not altogether lost, but that it sprang up and produced fruit in a considerable number of instances. <sup>108</sup>The county of

Cornwall is remarkable for its tin and copper mines. It is comparatively an exceedingly barren county above ground. Its riches lie underground. The value of its tin and copper mines defies exact calculation. I understood, while I was there, that no single silver or gold mine in Peru had produced so much real wealth, as a single tin or copper mine had produced in Cornwall. Some of the mines are of an amazing depth. I had the curiosity to descend one of the copper mines. Dressed like a miner, with a jacket and trousers and shoes, but no stockings, with a candle in my hand, along with a persons belonging to the mine who conducted me, I went down forty ladders one after another. The whole depth was one hundred fathoms, or six hundred feet, or about a furlong from <sup>109</sup>the surface. Thousands and tens of thousands of people in Cornwall get their bread in working in these tin and copper mines underground and in separating the ore from the dross, and getting it into a proper state for sale and use above ground.

### **Mental Perplexity**

Notwithstanding I had preached so many times in Cornwall and other places, between the times of my leaving Bristol, and returning thither again; notwithstanding I had had, at times considerable pleasure in preaching; notwithstanding my preaching had been in general acceptable, and in many instances hopefully useful, at least, for encouragement, quickening, and consolation; yet soon after my return to Bristol, it pleased God to show me my own weakness by permitting me to sink into such a state of mental perplexity and distress that <sup>110</sup>I again not only began seriously to think about absolutely declining the ministry, but I was ready to conclude that it was absolutely impossible that I should be able, with any degree of comfort, to persevere in it. In this uncomfortable condition, I continued for some time, and though I occasionally preached as usual, yet it was with particular difficulty, as to my own feelings, and, at some seasons, I should have cheerfully given my coat from my back, if I could satisfactorily have relinquished the ministry altogether, and never have ascended a pulpit any more.

After a while, I was, however, restored through Divine Goodness, to some degree of satisfaction and comfort in my work. Various means and instruments were hopefully blessed to me, to answer this end. <sup>111</sup>Something said in a sermon preached at the Tabernacle at Bristol, by Mr. Kinsman of Plymouth, connected with what he said in conversation afterwards, in which conversation he spoke something about his own mental trials and exercises, had some encouraging effect upon my mind.

A sermon preached, at the Tabernacle by Mr. Cradock Glascott, at that time, chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon, and now, and for many years past, vicar of Hatherleigh in the County of Devon, had a very considerable effect upon me. His text was Nehemiah 6: 11 "Should such a man as I flee?" This was indeed a word in season to me, for I had been thinking of scarcely anything else but fleeing for some time, as far as it concerned the Christian ministry. Indeed that was not the <sup>112</sup>particular view in which he considered the passage: he considered it, as it may be applied to the common profession of Christianity, and not particularly as to the Christian ministry, but I thought if it would be cowardly in a common soldier to flee, it would be worse still, in one to do so who professed to be a sort of an officer. The impressions made by this discourse, which was a peculiarly energetic one, upon my mind were considerably deep and lasting. This circumstance took place soon after my return from Cornwall, for this sermon was preached, October 16<sup>th</sup> 1773. But what had the most encouraging effect on me, during the continuance of these perplexities, was some conversation I had with Mr. John Clark, a kind of methodistical Independent minister at Trowbridge. He was a man in good worldly circumstances ...

*Pp 113 to 134 missing.*

<sup>135</sup> ... Last illness was but short, as he kept his bed but four days.

## 1775

### **The call to Hitchin**

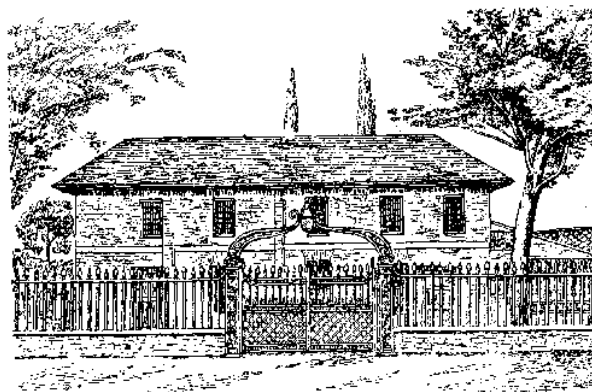
January 3<sup>rd</sup> I received a unanimous call from the Church, among whom I had now preached as a probationer, ever since the 12<sup>th</sup> of the preceding June, to take upon me the pastoral charge over them.

March 12<sup>th</sup>, after having deliberated much myself, consulted my friends, and, I hope, earnestly implored Divine direction upon the point, I this day, with fear and trembling, returned an affirmative answer to the call of the church, as to taking the pastoral care of them, upon me, and agreed so to do.

March 23<sup>rd</sup>, this day I received <sup>136</sup>an account of the death of my honoured grandfather Thomas Geard, who died suddenly in the night of the 18<sup>th</sup>. This unexpected afflicting intelligence much affected me. As he was born August 8<sup>th</sup> 1703, he must at the time of his death, be in the 71<sup>st</sup> year of his age. It was rather remarkable, that, in the month of November 1774, I had two grandfathers and one grandmother living, and before the end of March 1775, in a less compass of time than half a year, I should have no real grandfather nor grandmother. I had a grandmother in law still living, my grandfather Taylor's second wife, but my own grandfathers and grandmothers were now all gone. My grandmother Taylor was dead a number of years before .....

*Pp 137 to 140 missing*

<sup>141</sup> ... this letter was signed by the famous Dr. John Owen and Mr. George Griffith, in their own names and the names of several other elders of churches in and about London.



*The Old Meeting House, Hitchin*

The first pastor of this church was Mr. John Wilson, grandfather of the celebrated Mr. Samuel Wilson, one of the most popular ministers of his time, who, for some years, was pastor of the Baptist Church, in London, of which Mr. Samuel Burford, and Mr. Abraham Booth were afterwards pastors, and who died, much lamented, in 1750, and whose funeral sermon was preached, October 14<sup>th</sup> 1750, by Dr. John Gill. Mr. Taylor, hosier, in Newgate

Street, London, was the last person Mr. Wilson baptized. He is still <sup>142</sup>living, and is the only member of the church, who became one, in Mr. Wilson's time. He is the benevolent gentleman who has made a present to the new Baptist Academical Institution, at Stepney, of the Academical House and premises, which cost Mr. Taylor, six and thirty hundred pounds.

Mr. John Wilson, was a member of the church at Bedford, under the pastoral care of the celebrated Mr. John Bunyan, and there is the copy of a letter of dismission, from the church at Bedford, on behalf of Mr. Wilson, in order to Mr. Wilson's becoming the pastor of the church at Hitchin, dated the first month 1677, and signed by John Bunyan and...

*Pages 143 to 146 are missing*

<sup>147</sup> ... same house, namely that at Bull Corner, which belonged to Mr. James and his family. It makes it still more remarkable, that though I know not when nor where I shall die, yet that die whenever, or wherever I may, I shall not die before I have been pastor of this church, considerably more than thirty years. So that of all the four pastors of this church, there has not been one of them for a less period than thirty years. Nor does it appear, that there has ever been a period of two years at any time, since Mr. Wilson's settlement, which is now upwards of one hundred <sup>148</sup>and thirty years ago, in which the church has been without a pastor.

### **Previous Ministers**

Of all the four pastors only one of them suffered actual public persecution: but good Mr. Wilson, like his pastor Mr. Bunyan, was called to suffer imprisonment, for the sake of a good conscience. He was, for some time a prisoner for his religion, in Hertford jail, as Mr. Bunyan was in Bedford jail. He however had the happiness to "live to" better times, and was not only delivered from imprisonment but was called to rejoice in the glorious Revolution effected by the immortal <sup>149</sup>King William the third, and to see an end put to the infamous reign of that contemptible tyrant James the second. It was in Mr. Wilson's time, that the meeting house was first built, in 1692, after the passing of the Act of Toleration, in the first year of the reign of King William and Queen Mary.

*Half of page 149 is missing....*

<sup>150</sup> ...Cambridge, Hugh Evans of Bristol, Coles of Maulden, Jones of Hempstead, and Gill of St. Albans, are now numbered among the dead. And, of all the ministers that were present upon that occasion, I do not recollect that there are above ..... Living besides myself ..... Dr. Ripon of London.

*Bottom of page 150 and to page 152 are missing*

Ralph Radcliffe, Esq, who lived at the Priory, in Mr. Needham's time, though <sup>153</sup>a most profane one who was to an uncommon degree, addicted to the abominable practice of swearing, yet had a high esteem for father Needham, as he used to call him, and, in more ways than one, he manifested that esteem.

But the peculiar conduct of Mr. Needham, towards Mr. Wilson, considering the time of life in which it was exercised, strikes me, as far as it concerned fellow creatures, as the most

amiable trait in Mr. Needham's character. It has been already remarked, that Mr. Needham was but about 20 years of age, when he came to Hitchin, to be assistant to Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson was then getting aged and infirm, and as <sup>154</sup>Mr. Needham was afraid it might hurt good old Mr. Wilson's feelings if he should be led to suppose, by any means, that the people took more notice of Mr. Needham than they did of him, he made it a rule when he went to see the people, to go with Mr. Wilson and not without him, so far as he could contrive it to guard as much as possible against the good old man's being hurt, by such an idea as is above mentioned. Such a nice sense of ministerial decorum, such a delicate feeling of Christian honour, such an admirable display of respectful veneration towards a father in Israel, by a young ...

*Pp 155 to 172 missing*

## **American war of Independence & French Revolution**

<sup>173</sup> .. Hitchin, I went to Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire, where I put up at an inn. It was on that day, and at that inn, that I first heard of blood being drawn, between the English troops and the Americans. This information I had from a traveller, that I lighted of at that inn. He mentioned it as a report he had recently heard, or seen upon some public papers. The report proved to be too true. It referred to the affair of Lexington which took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the preceeding month, April. In this unhappy business, the loss of the British troops amounted to 65 killed, 170 wounded, and about 20 prisoners. The Americans were computed not to have lost more than 60, included killed and wounded. <sup>174</sup> I was much concerned, when I first heard of this melancholy affair; but I little thought, at that time, that I should live to see, in this country, after having persevered in this contest about seven years, and after having wasted, perhaps, one hundred thousand lives, and expended one hundred millions of money, obliged to eat humble pie, and to submit to accede to the independency of America, and to renounce all kind of authority over that people. But I have lived to see still greater things than these. As Lewis the sixteenth king of the French, more out of hatred to this country, than out of love to America, impolitically interfered in this contest, in which, whatever may be said about the merits of it, he had <sup>175</sup>certainly no business, his troops, as any man possessed of five grains of common sense might easily have foreseen, while professed by fighting for the liberties of America, picked up some notions of the rights that Frenchmen had to liberty to, and having in concert with the Americans, secured the liberties of America, and peace had been brought about between England and France, as well as America, and they had returned back to France, they began to talk of the liberties which Frenchmen were entitled to, as well as Americans. The dissemination of these principles, in connection with the pecuniary embarrassments, which Lewis had foolishly <sup>176</sup>brought upon himself by intermeddling with a strife that did not belong to him, in the course of a few years, not only brought about a revolution in France, but brought Lewis's own head to the block. This I have lived to know the accomplishment of and also declared to be a Republic. Nor is this all, I have lived to see the time when France has been revolutionized again, and the man who had fought his way to supreme dominion over the French got himself acknowledged by them as their emperor, and reduced them to a state of despotism again. What makes this the more remarkable is, that this man was not originally a Frenchman himself, but a Corsican, and of comparatively low extraction, his father being only <sup>177</sup>a Corsican Attorney. I have also lived to see the time when this man, Bonaparte, has subjected the greatest part of Europe to his absolute control, or to such a state of abject fear of him, that they scarcely durst say their souls are their own. Kings and Popes, and Republics, have fallen before him like ninepins. I rejoice, however, that he has not been able to subjugate this country and, I hope, he never will. He, nevertheless, and others, who



under different names, and in different forms have governed France in the course of the last 20 years, have been at war with this country, with very little intermission, for a period of more than 18 years, which has occasioned an expenditure, to this country, of several hundreds <sup>178</sup>of millions of pounds, besides of, I know not, how many thousands of lives of brave British soldiers and sailors. Nor is the contest yet ended, nor is there, at this time, any present prospect of its ending. All these astonishing events and circumstances, may be traced up, I think, as there secondary cause to the first blood that was shed, in the affair of Lexington, in America, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1775. Whatever, however, may have been or may be the view and designs of men, of whatever names, characters or countries, in these matters, no doubt the Great Ruler of the Universe, has had important ends of His own to answer by means of these instruments, and whatever may be ...

*Pp 179 to 200 missing.*

<sup>201</sup> ...preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” Mr Robinson of Cambridge preached in the evening, from Isa. 2:5,6 “O house of Israel come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord. Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.” Mr Robinson’s was a very ingenious sermon. His grand design was to show, by what Christianity had been caused to degenerate from its primitive purity and simplicity, and mentioned the following causes as having operated to produce and promote that degeneration, namely, philosophy, <sup>202</sup>setting up reason instead of or above revelation; by allowing of human authority in matters of religion, and using craft and cruelty in propagating it, and enthusiasm. He then showed the sad effects of such degeneracy, and exhorted to return back again. Messrs Clark of London, Walker of Colnbrook, Brown of Potters Street and Sleaf of Chesham prayed this day.

### **Marriage to Ann Bradly**

As this was the first time I ever preached, upon so public occasion, I entered upon that exercise with fear and trembling, and felt much during the whole of the exercise. Whatever, however, I felt myself, my preaching, upon that occasion, was generally acceptable to <sup>203</sup>ministers and people, and by some of them, was much approved of. In returning from this Association, between Hertford and Stevenage I met with an accident. My mare fell down with me, and fell upon my right knee, and bruised it considerably. Through Divine goodness, however, no bone was broke. I got home to Hitchin, <sup>204</sup>and, after being lame, some little time, got quite well. Blessed be God, for journeying mercies, escapes, preservations, and recoveries.

July the 13<sup>th</sup>. This was a very important day of my life. I had commenced a peculiar acquaintance, more than a twelve month before this time, May the 16<sup>th</sup> 1777, with Miss Elizabeth Bradly, eldest daughter of Mr Samuel Bradly of Maidencroft, near Hitchin, and every necessary previous circumstance having been arranged, we were married on this day, in the parish church of Ippolits, in which parish, Maidencroft is situated, by the Rev. Mr Smith of Paulswalden, who, at that time, was the officiating minister at Ippolits. In Miss Bradly, I found a prudent, affectionate, and pious wife, whom it was the pleasure of God to share with me somewhat more than thirty years, in which time, she had become the mother of nine children, seven of whom survived her. But to my very great sorrow, it pleased God to remove her by death, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1808, which is now more than three years ago, in the 55<sup>th</sup> <sup>205</sup>year of her age. I desire to be submissive to the Divine Will, though this

has been the greatest trial, I ever met with, and to be thankful that it was the pleasure of the Almighty to spare her so long with me as he did, even till our youngest child had passed the 13<sup>th</sup> year of his age. But, as I shall have the melancholy task of advertising to this touching circumstance again, if I should be spared till I come to treat of the period in which it took place, I shall for the present wave saying anything further about it.

### **Journey to the West Country**

July the 15<sup>th</sup>. Set out with my wife on a journey, into my native country.

July the 18<sup>th</sup>. We arrived at Bath. Here we had an opportunity of seeing the celebrated General <sup>206</sup>Burgoyne, who, in the preceeding year, had been obliged capitulate at Saratoga, in America, to the American General Gates, in the disastrous war between this country and America, and which, in its consequences, paved the way to the humiliation to the country, and to the independence of America. General Burgoyne was a very fine looking man, about six foot high. In the afternoon, we went to Bristol.

July the 22<sup>nd</sup>. We went from Bristol to Montecute, my native place, and arrived there about three o'clock in the afternoon. My father, and my brothers Thomas and Samuel, and Mr Edmond Sams, came as far as Cannard's Grave, about <sup>207</sup>half way between Montecute and Bristol, to meet us, and accompanied us from thence to Montecute. We had the pleasure to find our relations in general well.

July the 27<sup>th</sup>. I treated about fifty of my father's work-people, men, women and children, with a supper. There were 46 pounds of beef bought, and 12 or 14 bundles of carrots, besides 7 or 8 puddings. The whole cost me one guinea. They all had a sufficiency, were well pleased, and separated in good time and order. My father provided them with what was drunk, and care was taken for them to have a sufficiency, without having too much. This was somewhat like the feast that Christ <sup>208</sup>recommends. It was made for such as could not invite the founder of it to a similar one.

Lord's Day August the 2<sup>nd</sup>. After having preached twice at Horsington, in that neighbourhood, I went to Milborne Port, where I was at school, in 1762, and preached a lecture there, in the evening. My good old master Mr William Newton, to my particular sorrow, was so ill at the time, as not to be able to go to hear me. He recovered however, afterwards.

While I was in the west, I did not forget to visit, Five Ashes, where my dear and honoured mother's remains had been deposited. Her tomb was a peculiarly <sup>209</sup>affecting object to me. This melancholy visit again raised up old sores and made them bleed afresh. My eyes that had been profusely wept on her account more than a year before, were, by this visit, set weeping again.

### **Back to Hitchin**

August the 6<sup>th</sup>. We left Montecute, and, after having visited Bratton, Salisbury, Broughton, Portsmouth, London, we arrived safe at Mr Bradly's at Maidencroft, August the 15<sup>th</sup>, having been in 10 counties and travelled 450 miles, or upwards.

Lord's Day September the 27<sup>th</sup>. After having preached twice myself at my own place, attended the funeral of good old Mr. Hyde, at Back Street Meeting, a deacon of Back Street

Church. He was born in August 1688<sup>210</sup> the Glorious Revolution year. He was called early by grace, under the ministry of Mr Chillingworth of Southill. He received particular advantage, under the ministry of Mr Wright, who preached at Back Street Meeting, many years before. He was much benefited, in point of comfort, by the preaching of good Mr Needham, pastor of Tylehouse Street Church. He had very few, if any doubts, as to the safety of his state, for the last fifty years of his life. He was a member of Back Street Church about 60 years. He was a peaceable member in the church as would give up his own opinion, for the sake of peace. He had not been able to hear at meeting, for some years,<sup>211</sup> yet he so loved the habitation of God's House, and the place where his honor dwelt, and was so desirous of being an example to others, as to attending on public worship, that he made a point of attending himself, as long as he could. His character was, upon the whole, an honourable one. He died of old age and weakness after having finished his 90<sup>th</sup> year. He was sensible and comfortable to the last. Mr Griffiths preached, by his desire, from Psalm 17:15 "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness". These words were frequently mentioned by him with pleasure. There was a great concourse of people to hear the sermon.

<sup>212</sup> Lord's Day October the 4<sup>th</sup>. I had this day, after afternoon's sermon, an opportunity of spending some time with Mr William Tapp, Mr John Tapp's brother. He was then a young man, and going to Doctor Scott's Academy, in Yorkshire, with a view to the ministry, and is now a settled minister at South Cave, in that county, and has been for many years.

### **The Cautionary Tale of James Bichens**

October the 14<sup>th</sup>. I travelled from Royton to Hitchin with Mr. James Bichens.

He was, at that time, one of the students belonging to the Bristol Academy. When he was a lad, he was decoyed, by a wicked captain of a ship, at London, into his ship. He flattered him, with what great things he would do for him, if he would go with him to<sup>213</sup> America. Being but a boy he was deceived by lips artful insinuations, but when he got to Virginia, instead of realizing the golden dreams, with which this infamous captain had amused him, he found he was sold by this very captain, for a slave, for £20, to a planter in Virginia. Here he remained, as a slave, two years and four months. He was employed by his master as a schoolmaster, having had some education, and hereby was exempted from those hardships which slaves in general, underwent. He had no great cause to complain of the treatment he met with while he was a slave. He joyfully, however, embraced his freedom when that was obtained for him. This was done, by a sum of money being given for his<sup>214</sup> ransom. He not only was restored to his native country, but, in process of time, became serious and was received a member of Mr. Robinson's church, at Cambridge, and, appearing to have promising gifts for the ministry, he was recommended by that church to the Bristol Academy, and had been now connected with that Institution, about two years. He had spent the preceding vacation, in Cornwall. When he left Falmouth, where he had been stationed, he came towards London, by sea, and when they came off the coast of Sussex, they ran foul of a rock. They were now in the most imminent danger, and expected nothing but death, for a considerable time. The captain and the sailors were like mad men, frightened and out of their wits.<sup>215</sup> They flew to Bichens, as if he had been a God, knowing the character that he sustained. O my dear parson, pray for us, was their cry. They could not attend to the proper business of the ship through fear of death. Bichens was frightened enough himself, but having religion to support him, he was more courageous than the rest. He encouraged them to pray and work, in the name of the Lord. One fellow swore at the beginning of their distress, but, on Bichens reproving him for his swearing, the fellows reply was "O my dear

parson! I did not think any harm. O! pray for me, I will not do so again". The sailors were so frightened, that they seemed capable of doing nothing, but as they were directed by Bichens, which he was the more capable of doing, not only from his being more <sup>216</sup>composed than they, but from his having been at sea before when he went to and returned from America. He himself was obliged to fire the guns as signals of distress, the sailors being too much frightened to do it. However, God was merciful to them. Assistance came to them, the next morning, though they were in imminent danger, a considerable part, if not the whole of the night. After the danger was over, the captain of the ship thanked Mr. Bichens, as one that he signified, had saved the crew, meaning, that if he had not been more composed than the rest, they must all have perished. Wicked men are disarmed by the immediate view of apparent death, while the righteous, if grace is in suitable exercise, are carried in a merciful measure above the slavish fear of death.

The ...

*Pp 217 to 220 missing.*

### **The birth of Samuel Geard - 1779**

<sup>221</sup> June the 6<sup>th</sup> A little before 4 o'clock in the morning of this day my dear wife was safely delivered of a son, and had a merciful time. As both his grandfathers were of that name, it was soon determined that his name should be Samuel.

July 12<sup>th</sup>. An Act of Parliament having been passed, in the present year, altering the requisitions relative to legally qualifying Protestant Dissenting ministers, so as to put them under the protection of the law, I this day went to the Quarter Sessions at Hertford, and did what was required of me, and thus put myself under legal protection as a Protestant Dissenting Minister.

July the 25<sup>th</sup>. This being Lord's Day I preached three times at Bedford, having exchanged with Mr. Symonds. During my stay at Bedford, this <sup>222</sup>time, I had some considerable conversation with Mr. Daniel Negus, who was 85 years of age, and had been an honourable member of Mr. Symonds church, upwards of 65 years. In the course of our conversation something came up about Joseph Perry, with whose conversion and experience I had been particularly struck, when I was a boy. He informed me that he had heard Joseph Perry formally preach twice at Goldington, near Bedford, and that he preached there for some time, and that, at that time, there was a Meeting House and a little interest there. By what he said, he was at that time a good looking man, under 40 years of age.

### **Dangers of Visiting the Sick**

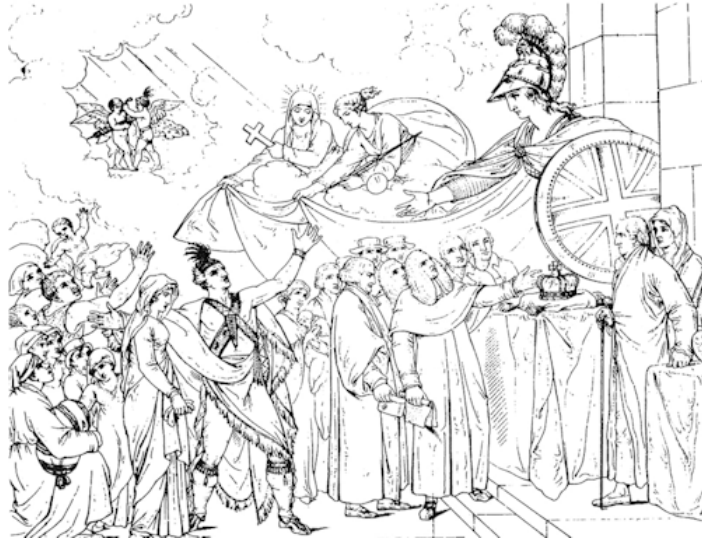
October the 1<sup>st</sup>. I spent some time, this day, at Mr. Crawley's, at Mangrove, with Mr. Pilley of Luton. One thing which was particularly <sup>223</sup>conversed about by us, this day was, whether it is the duty of ministers to visit their people, when they may be ill of contagious disorders. Mr. Pilley, upon this subject, mentioned the following striking anecdote. That at a time when there was a very bad fever at Luton, there was a deacon of Luton church, who being exceedingly fearful, never would go to see the people who were ill of it, and blamed Mr. Pilley, for what he deemed improper venturesomeness, in visiting them; but, though he refused to go nowhere, where his company was desired, by those who were ill of that disorder, and the deacon never went anywhere, yet that the deacon caught the disorder and died of it, while Mr. Pilley never had a symptom of it.

<sup>224</sup> November the 17<sup>th</sup>. I this day attended the funeral of Mrs. Mary James, relict of my worthy predecessor the Rev. Samuel James. She died in London, on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and was brought this day to Hitchin, to be buried. She had not long been removed from Hitchin to London. Before she left Hitchin, she had been affected by a paralytic stroke. It did not appear, however, that this was the immediate cause of her death, but some other complaint. She was the daughter of Mr. James's predecessor, the Rev. John Needham. She was a woman of good sense and genuine piety, and she made a good finish. Some little time before she died she expressed herself with strong confidence as ...

*PAGES 225 to 236 are missing. The following presumed to be 1780*

### **Col. James Cotton (1739-1785) - his Adventures in America**

<sup>237</sup> On the 25<sup>th</sup> July I dined with James Cotton Esqr. who lived about a mile from Arnsby, and who had married one of Mr. Hale of Arnsby's daughters. Old Mr. Cotton, who went from Boston in Lincolnshire, to Boston in America, during the times of persecution in England, and who was grandfather to the celebrated Dr. Cotton Mather, of Boston, in America, was this gentleman's great grandfather. His grandfather was an Independent minister at Hampstead, near London, and his father was an Independent Minister at Newbury, in New England, where the famous Mr. Whitefield died. This Mr. James Cotton, at the time of the breaking out of the American war, was a Justice of the Peace, and <sup>238</sup>a member of the General Assembly, in the Province of North Carolina. He sided with the King of England, in the contest betwixt this country and America, and raised a regiment, in 1775, chiefly at his own expense, in aid of the Royal Cause, and headed this regiment, as Colonel or Lieutenant Colonel thereof. His regiment, in some desperate engagement, were either cut to pieces, or obliged to shift for themselves as they could, and he was obliged to fly for his life. Being a noted man for having acted against the American cause, he was diligently sought after, and a reward of five hundred pounds was offered to anyone that would produce him, dead or alive. He hid <sup>239</sup>himself in a kind of cave or hole in the ground for three weeks, and was there nourished by a poor, but trusty Scotsman, who concealed him and fed him as well as he could, though he might have had five hundred pounds at any time for discovering him. At the end of three weeks, he left this cave, and made off for Fort St. Augustine, in East Florida which was about seven hundred miles from the cave, and, after undergoing many and uncommon privations and hardships, and being once taken prisoner, and some way or other obtaining his liberty, he arrived safe at Fort St. Augustine. He travelled, in general, through the woods, all this distance, and lay in the open air, and sometimes had nothing to eat for <sup>240</sup>three days together. His principle food sometimes was a sort of nuts, that grew underground, and that were discoverable by something that grew about the ground, under which they were. He chose to travel through the woods, and to avoid frequented roads for fear of being discovered. He obtained some relief, I think, sometimes from the Indians. What rendered his support more difficult to be obtained, as well as his lying in the open air the more difficult and dangerous, was, that it was in time of winter, he was thus circumstanced and exposed, it being not far distant from Christmas. When he arrived at Fort St. Augustine, he was considerably emaciated, and his <sup>241</sup>beard was grown so long, that he could lay hold of it with his hand, having not been shaved, from the time of his taking refuge in the cave. His clothes were almost all torn to pieces, and his shoes were fastened together by some bark that he had got off from trees. He was supplied with necessaries, when he got to Fort St. Augustine, and the day after his arrival there, he dined with Governor Tonyn, who at that time governed the colony of East Florida, under the King of Great Britain, that colony being a part of the British Dominions at that time. He staid with Governor Tonyn for a considerable time. <sup>242</sup> He left a wife and several children behind him, in North Carolina.



*American loyalists received by Britannia* (Wikimedia Commons)

Some time in 1777, he came to England, and his case being represented to the British Government, two hundred pounds a year was allowed him by that Government to live upon. After he had been in England some time, he had a mind to travel in to Yorkshire, and his road lay through Arnsby. At Arnsby his horse fell lame and wanted shoeing, which was the cause of his staying there a day or two. His wife died, supposed to be through a broken heart, in Carolina soon after his defeat and flight. When he was thus detained at Arnsby, he was, therefore, a <sup>243</sup>widower, and had been so some years. Staying at Arnsby, the next Sabbath after his horse fell lame, he went to Mr. Hall's meeting and heard him preach, and hearing another meeting given notice of, to be held on a following day, in the week, he concluded to stay and attend that meeting likewise. During his continuance at Arnsby he contracted an acquaintance with one of Mr. Hall's daughters, and, in April 1778, married her. He had had two children, by Mr. Hall's daughter, at the time I was at his house, one of which only, was living at that time.

The sacrifices which he made in the Royal cause were immense. He <sup>244</sup>had forty one farms, consisting of nearly twelve thousand acres of land in North and South Carolina. Besides this he was Receiver of the Kings Quit Rents, and Surveyor of Lands, which brought him in considerably. I understood from his wife, he used to have, if I mistook not, a thousand pounds a year, from Government. The two hundred pounds a year which he was now allowed from Government therefore, was but little compared with what he had lost. He had to recollect however, that whatever he had lost, in a wonderful, and almost miraculous manner, his life had been preserved, by the care of a superintending Providence. He was about 37 or 38 years of age, when I dined <sup>245</sup>with him at his house. Mr. Robert Hall, son of Mr. Hall of Arnsby, and afterwards minister at Cambridge, and now at Leicester, was with me when I was at Mr. Cotton's. He was then about 16 years of age, and was one of the Bristol students. His attainments, even at that time, were uncommon for his years. After the peace was made between Great Britain and America, and Britain had acceded to American Independence, Mr. Cotton went to the West Indies, and there he, soon after his arrival, died, and his wife, who accompanied him, returned back to England a widow. From the consideration of what her husband had sacrificed, however, in the Royal cause, a handsome allowance was <sup>246</sup>settled on her by the English Government. She is, as far as I know, \*still living, and supported by this allowance. [at foot of page]\* Since the foregoing account was

written, Mrs. Cotton has been removed. She died, at Loughborough in Leicestershire, June the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1812, aged 60 years.



*John Howard, FRS (Wikimedia Commons)*

August the 14<sup>th</sup>. I this day dined with that ornament of human nature, that credit to the cause of Protestant descent, that glory of the British Empire, John Howard Esquire, F.R.S. the celebrated Philanthopist, at his seat at Cardington, near Bedford. He was a man of good sense, gentile accomplishments, uncommon humanity, and real piety. He spent a considerable part of his life, in attempting to alleviate the distresses of poor prisoners, and, for this purpose, not only visited all the prisons in England, but a great, if not the greatest, part of all the prisons in Europe.

## 1781.

January the 13<sup>th</sup>. I this day attended the funeral and spake at the grave of old sister Maine, David Valentine's grandmother, who had been a member of the church, about sixty years, and died at about the age of ninety-three.

February the 20<sup>th</sup>. This day about a quarter after one o'clock in the afternoon, my wife, through Divine goodness, was safely delivered of a daughter. As that was the name of her mother, her mother's mother, and her mother's grandmother, it was soon concluded that her name should be Elizabeth.

April the 22<sup>nd</sup>. I this day preached a kind of funeral sermon for my venerable tutor, who gave me the charge at my ordination, Mr. <sup>248</sup>Hugh Evans of Bristol, having previously received certain intelligence of his death, from Zech. 1:5

"Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever?" By a letter I received from his son, Mr. Caleb Evans, who also was my tutor, I learned that his father died, on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, at half past one in the morning, and that his latter end was indeed peace; and that as Mr Tommas expressed it, who spake over his grave, at his interment, the frame of his mind towards and in his last moments, was "like a calm summer evening

without a cloud"; that he was never in raptures, but always comfortable, and used to say, very often, "blessed be God, I am not at all afraid to die"; and that he was buried April the 3<sup>rd</sup>, that the train of mourners <sup>249</sup>and spectators that followed him and attended his funeral, was prodigious; and that Mr. Francis preached an excellent sermon, upon the occasion, from Matt.25:21 "Well done thou good and faithful servant". He died, in the 69<sup>th</sup> year of his age. It rejoiced my heart to find that my good old master made so good and comfortable a finish. May I die the death that he died, and may my latter end be like his. What intelligence I received relative to his death in one way and another, at different times, peculiarly affected me. He had behaved like a *[part of page missing.]* ... to me, and felt somewhat ... at his death ...

<sup>250</sup> ... Thomas, who died the 22<sup>nd</sup> aged seventy-one years. He had been a member of the church many years. His last illness was exceedingly painful, but he was mercifully supported under it, and carried above the slavish fear of death. He left considerable property behind him, and bequeathed one hundred pounds towards the support of the minister, for the time being, at Tylehouse Street Meeting House. I preached his funeral sermon, from Job 19:25&26 "For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at ... *[part of page missing.]*

<sup>251</sup> ...mentioned several times in his last illness.

June the 5<sup>th</sup>. On this day the Eastern Association was begun, which was, this year held at New Mill near Tring.

### **Sermons against Popery**

June the 6<sup>th</sup>. This day I preached on the Rise and Progress of Popery from 1 John 14:3 "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world".

Mr Robinson preached on the decline and destruction of <sup>252</sup>Popery, from 2 Thess.2: 8 "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming". These subjects, it had been previously agreed betwixt Mr Robinson and myself, should be preached upon by us, upon this occasion, and both our texts had been concluded upon some time before, at his house at Chesterton near Cambridge. It was intended, that there should be a connection between the subjects, and that one of them should illustrate the other. My particular object was to endeavour to give an account of the origin of Popery, and trace it's progress. This could be done from historic <sup>253</sup>documents, as well as scripture predictions. It appears that the man of sin was conceived in the apostolic age. The mystery of iniquity even then began to work. In the course of a few centuries, he was evidently born; and in the course of about a thousand years, from the period of the apostles, not only grew up to a man, but to a monster. By that time, the whole world, comparatively wondered after the beast. Having endeavoured to trace the rise and progress and full growth, of this abominable, and destructive monster, I concluded my discourse with an intimation to the audience, that there would come a time when this monster <sup>254</sup>would be destroyed: but that they would receive an account of this destruction from one who was much more capable of giving them this account than I was.

Mr. Robinson's discourse on the destruction of Popery, was an exceedingly ingenious one. As to the time of this destruction, he was exceedingly cautious. He signified that he was not



going to say that in that year or the next, in that century or the next, but that, at some period or other, Popery would be destroyed. His general idea was, that its destruction, like its rise, would be gradual; that it had already<sup>255</sup>commenced, and would gradually proceed till it was fully accomplished. His idea respecting the spirit of God's mouth, and the brightness of His coming, was, that these expressions intended the WORD OF GOD, attended by the influences of the SPIRIT OF GOD: and that by this Word and Spirit of God, Popery would be gradually consumed and destroyed; and that wherever the Word of God went, accompanied by His Spirit, whether into a village, a town, a city, or a nation, so far as this Word proceeded, and was understood, under the illuminative influences of this Spirit it would consume Popery. This general idea<sup>256</sup> he illustrated by several particulars. Some at least, of which were the following.

First, the history of the Word of God is calculated to consume Popery. There are such historic facts, in that Word, as are calculated, if rightly understood, to consume Popery, by prejudicing mankind against it.

Secondly, the prophecies of the Word of God, are calculated to consume Popery. There is a false religion, painted out in its true colours, in that Word, which when compared with Popery, evidently appear to have had their exact accomplishment in and therefore as far as they are properly understood, by mankind, will consume<sup>257</sup> Popery in their estimation.

Thirdly, the spirit and temper commended in the Word of God, is calculated to consume Popery. That spirit and temper is humane, benevolent, charitable, and, in every respect, amiable; but the spirit and temper of Popery, is uncharitable, intolerant, persecuting, and in every respect abominable spirit and temper.

Fourthly, the conduct recommended and enforced in the Word of God, is calculated to consume Popery. The conduct recommended and enforced in the Word of God is that of piety towards God, sobriety as it concerns a man's self, and justice and benevolence, as it respects others; but the conduct allowed of, and, in certain cases, required by Popery,<sup>258</sup> is just the reverse of all this. So far as the Word of God should be properly understood, and its influence properly felt, under the guidance and operations of God's Spirit, therefore, it must necessarily consume and destroy Popery.

How far the general idea that Mr Robinson inculcated in his sermon, has been justified by subsequent events, is worthy of consideration. It is now (December the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1811) more than thirty years ago, that that sermon was preached. Popery has been, in a very considerable degree, as to its power, at least, consumed, and destroyed, since that time, and the Pope himself has been driven from<sup>259</sup> Rome, which was the seat of the Beast for ages, and is now no better in fact, than a prisoner, under the power of Bonaparte. This astonishing alteration, has been however, not altogether produced by the gradual progress of God's Word, but, in a great degree, by the progress and terror of Bonaparte's arms. Nevertheless, this progress and terror, may have paved the way, for the progress hereafter of the Word of God (not to say, what effects, in that view, they may have already produced) in a degree, and with that extent and rapidity which may not have been otherwise likely to have taken place. And the wonderful exertions which have been made, of late years, for the diffusion of Divine truth, by<sup>260</sup> Missionary Societies, and other institutions, and which particularly have been made and are likely to be made, in an increasing ratio, by the British and Foreign Bible Society; and the various auxiliary Bible Societies that have been formed, and are likely to be formed, in this kingdom, appear peculiarly calculated, by the Divine blessing, to realize Mr. Robinson's idea

of gradually consuming Popery, by means of the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures, as well as the ignorance, superstition, and prejudice of Heathenism, Judaism, and Mahomedanism.

In the evening Mr. Baskerville preached, from Psalm 68: 20 "He that is our God ...

*Pp 261 to 294 missing*

<sup>295</sup> ...within about two hours of each other. I preached on this peculiarly solemn and affecting occasion, from Psalm 90: 5 "Thou carriest them away as with a flood".

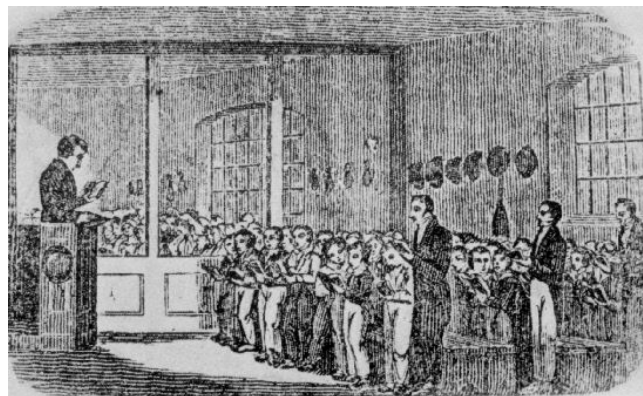
December the 31<sup>st</sup>. I received an exceedingly affecting account from my father of the death of my sister Pittard's two children, which were all she then had. The youngest was taken ill the 16<sup>th</sup>, and died the 18<sup>th</sup>, and the other was taken ill the 18<sup>th</sup>, and died the 20<sup>th</sup>, and they were both buried at Five Ashes, the 23<sup>rd</sup> in the same grave.

In the same letter, my father gave me an affecting relation about himself. He had been lately in London, and on the night preceding 22<sup>nd</sup>, which was Lord's Day, he was exceedingly distressed in his mind, but in the morning of that day was proportionally rejoiced, and never enjoyed such a Sabbath before in his life.

My sister's children were both alive, and for ought I know, well, when he left home, and both dead and buried before his return.

## 1783

<sup>296</sup> January the 1<sup>st</sup>. I wrote a letter of condolence and serious advice, to my sister Pittard and her husband on the occasion of the very afflicting Providence that they had recently been excersided with, in the removal of their two children by death.



*Back Street Meeting House Circa 1800 (Philip John Wray)*

Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>. I went to Back Street meeting and heard Mr. Giffiths preach a funeral sermon, for Daniel Lawrence, from Isa.35.8 "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those, the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err there in". Daniel was 40 years old when he died. He never could speak nor hear in his life. Yet he was a regular and constant attendant <sup>297</sup>on Divine worship, when he could. He was an excellent servant, diligent and honest in that capacity, and strictly conscientious. I hope, in the best sense, he was a truly good man. He worked for Mr. Bradly many years, and continued to do so as long as he was able.

In taking a general survey of the preceeding year, it is remarkable that twenty two persons old and young died, out of my congregation. Thus, though no-one died, during the month I was absent, on my West Country journey, many died in the course of the year.

## 1784

January the 5<sup>th</sup>. I was particularly rejoiced this day, with the intelligence that Preliminaries of Peace were signed between Great Britain <sup>298</sup>and France and Spain and America, and a Cessation of Hostilities agreed upon between Great Britain and Holland.

March the 4<sup>th</sup>. This morning between 8 and 9 o'clock, through Divine goodness my wife was safely delivered of a son. It was soon agreed upon that his name should be John.

### Public Reading of Scripture

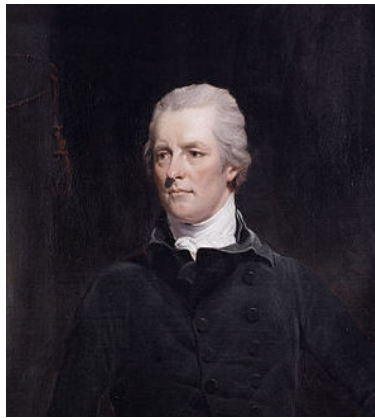
April the 3<sup>rd</sup>. It had not been in general a practice among Dissenters, to read Scriptures publicly, as part of Divine Worship. I had been struck with the impropriety of this omission, in consequence of what had been said in conversation at my house, by Mr. Robinson of Cambridge, upon that subject, when the Eastern Association was held at Hitchin in 1780. Mr. Robinson at that time <sup>299</sup>threw out an idea of this kind, that the Dissenters had erred on one side, as well as the Church of England, on the other. That the Church of England, notwithstanding the Reformation from Popery, had retained in her services, too much of the superstitions of Popery. But that the Dissenters, in order to get far enough off from Popery, and far enough off too from the Church of England, had gone a step too far, and had not only left off surplices and bowings at the altar, and the cross in baptism, and objectionable passages in the Liturgy, but had left off reading of the Scriptures in public likewise, because this was a part of the public service of the Church, as though that service polluted the very <sup>300</sup>Scriptures, by its including them in it. I was so forcibly struck with this absurdity, that, after due deliberation, and having mentioned it for consideration at a previous church meeting, and it having been considered by the Church as well as myself, it was concluded upon, at a church meeting held this day, that, for the future, I should read a part of sacred Scripture, as part of public service, on the Sabbath, and, in general, I have done this, on some part of the Sabbath or other, ever since. It is remarkable that much about the same time, the same idea struck other Dissenters, and now, I apprehend, it is considered as a part of public worship, of a Lord's Day in most Dissenting <sup>301</sup>congregations in the Kingdom.

In the month of April, my brother Thomas and my uncle Curtis came to Hitchin. I learned from my brother, while he was at Hitchin, that Thomas Grey, and Ambrose Murly's mother who are both mentioned, page 292 , were dead.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of this month, I went, in company with my brother and uncle to London, and on the 15<sup>th</sup>, I heard Dr. Fisher preach an excellent sermon at the Broad Street Lecture, from 1 John 4: 13 "hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit". I was particularly struck with one observation which he made, and have been many times encouraged by it since, and my repeating of it has been the means <sup>302</sup>of encouraging some others. It was to the following purport: That wherever the Spirit of God in reality was given and possessed, there was a certain something in such characters, which nothing short of Jesus Christ and His WHOLE SALVATION, would either suit or satisfy.

## At the House of Commons

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, I was introduced into the gallery of the House of Commons by Mr. Alderman Bull, one of the representatives of the City of London, in Parliament, with whom I had been acquainted for some years, and with whom I once drank tea at the Mansion House, in 1774, when he was Lord Mayor of London. I had a particular desire to be in the gallery of that House, that day, as a debate was expected to take <sup>303</sup>place, relative to a loan of twelve millions, which Lord John Cavendish, then Chancellor of His Majesty's Exchequer had recently contracted for. It was in the time of the celebrated coalition betwixt Lord North and Mr. Fox, which made so much noise, and excited so much disgust in the nation. Lord North and Mr. Fox, who had been in peculiar opposition to one another, during the American war, were now united, and one of them was Secretary of State for the foreign, and the other for the home departments.



*William Pitt (Wikimedia Commons)*

Mr. William Pitt who was Prime Minister afterwards, for a number of years, was then in opposition. I heard Lord John Cavendish, Lord North, Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt, all speak upon the subject of the loan at that time. Mr. Pitt, in my opinion was by far the best speaker among them all.

## Duke of Bedford's Vault

<sup>304</sup> June the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Being this day at Chenies, in Buckinghamshire, where the family vault of the Bedford family is owing to the head steward being at that time at Chenies, or, at least having lately been there, who usually kept the key of the vault, and the key being at this time in the possession of Mr. Davis, at whose house I was, one of the Duke's under-stewards, a worthy man, and a deacon of the Baptist Church at Chenies, I had an opportunity of going into the said vault. There I saw nobility in a most gloomy habitation, there were perhaps, forty coffins in the vault, old and young, male and female, of the Bedford family, or such as were some way or other connected with that family. There I saw the coffin of the old Duke, the grandfather of the present Duke. There were a long string of titles upon his coffin, but notwithstanding <sup>305</sup>all his titles and honours, he was dead. I was as much struck, as with anything that I saw in that gloomy habitation, with the coffins of the Marquis and Marchioness of Tavistock, the old Duke's son and his son's wife, and the father and mother of the present Duke. They both died before the old Duke. On one coffin was the name of the Marquis, who died, such a year, aged 27 years. On the other coffin was the name of the Marchioness who died the very next year, aged 28 years. Thus it appears they were much of the same age, and died, at farthest, within two years of one another, in the very prime of

their lives, from all the worldly honors and enjoyments they then possessed, as well as the still much greater ones which apparently lay before them. Alas! "sic transit gloria mundi". Thus passes away the glory of this world.

<sup>306</sup>June the 4<sup>th</sup>. I attended the Eastern Association at Colnbrook. Public service began, about half after ten o'clock. Mr. Giles of Chenies prayed, Mr. Liddon of Hempstead preached, from Col. 3: 16 "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom". Mr. Davis of Reading prayed, and Mr. Baskerville of Hertford preached from Jer. 2:2 "the love of thine espousals", and concluded with prayer and the benediction. In the evening, Mr. Gill of St. Albans prayed, and I preached from Eph. 1:22 "and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" and concluded with prayer and the benediction.

### **Northamptonshire Association**

June the 11<sup>th</sup>. I attended the Northamptonshire Association, which was held this year, at St. Albans. Public service began about ten o'clock. Mr. Fuller prayed, Mr. Ryland senr. gave some account of the nature and design of <sup>307</sup>Associations, Mr. Ryland jnr. Preached from Isa. 43:10 "ye are my witnesses". Mr. Evans, late of Foxton, prayed, and Mr. Hall preached from 1 Cor. 16:22 "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha". In the evening, Mr. Suttcliff prayed, and Dr. Stennett preached from 1 John 3:14 "we know that we are passed from death into life, because we love the brethren" and concluded with prayer and the benediction. The Association began on the preceding evening when the letters from the different churches were read. There was something particularly pleasing in the letter from the church at Arnsby. Mr. Hall had laboured there for about 29 years, and though he had been considerably useful to people who had attended at Arnsby, who had come from <sup>308</sup>greater or lesser distances, yet it seems, during all that time, he had had but few, if any, hopeful evidences of usefulness, as to Arnsby itself. But it appeared, by this year's letter, that a remarkable alteration had taken place at Arnsby in that respect, and that lately there had been a considerable revival of religion, by Mr. Hall's instrumentality, in Arnsby itself. This circumstance afforded abundant encouragement to patience and perseverance.

### **Mr Luke Haywood**

Lord's Day August 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Coupees of Luton called at my house in the evening, and informed me of the melancholy event of the death of my dear and much esteemed friend, Mr. Luke Haywood of Cardington, Cotton End. This intelligence exceedingly distressed me, as he was a man with whom I had been particularly intimate, <sup>309</sup>with whom I had had much serious conversation, and whose conversation had been peculiarly encouraging to me, as his experience, as to the painful part of it, had been in a great measure, similar to my own. I first became acquainted with him, at St. Albans, when he was a soldier, and heard him preach the first time, in his red clothes, in Mr. Gills meeting. I learned from him, at different times, that he was a wild youth, and like many others, under the influence of a thoughtless disposition, enlisted for a soldier. During his being in the Army he was sent to Minorca, in the Mediteranean Sea. There he was stationed for some years. While in Minorca, a comparatively, exceedingly dark place, it pleased God by some means to enlighten him. He went in <sup>310</sup>the dark, out of a land of light, and obtained light, in a land of darkness. Being a man of some talents, he, after a while, used to speak to such of his fellow soldiers as chose to hear him, and in process of time there was a pretty knot of religious soldiers, and religious soldiers wives, that used frequently to meet together, and he used to preach to them, which it seems, their officers connived at. After the commencement of the American war, the King

sent some of his Hanoverian troops to garrison Minorca, and the British soldiers were removed to England. Mr. Haywood, and a part at least, of the regiment to which he belonged, were stationed for a while at St. Albans, and there he repeatedly preached, with considerably acceptance. There <sup>311</sup>were several other serious men in the regiment, that I knew, through their being at St. Albans, and with whom I had some conversation. I was particularly struck with the high estimation in which Mr. Haywood was held, by his fellow soldiers that were serious men, though he was no more than a common man himself, and some of them were inferior officers. They appeared to esteem him very highly in love for his works sake. While he was stationed at St. Albans, he frequently preached at the Baptist meeting at Watford and they being at that time without a pastor, were desirous of having him in that capacity. They made some efforts to get him discharged, but, for a time, these efforts were in vain. I should have remarked that while he was stationed <sup>312</sup>at Minorca, he and the other serious soldiers were particularly patronized by that phenomenon for benevolence, John Thornton Esqr. He used to furnish them with religious books, and in one way and another testified his peculiar respect for them, because of their religious character. Religious soldiers were particular objects of this good mans attention.

From St. Albans Mr. Haywood was removed into Scotland, or somewhere near Scotland, and there he met with his wife, in whom he had a suitable, pious companion. Providence saw fit that they should be united before his discharge should be obtained. However soon after that event had taken place, the efforts of the people at <sup>313</sup>to obtain his discharge were effectual, and he and his wife removed to Watford, and after a while, he was settled over the Baptist Church there as their pastor. He became a Baptist, practically, after his return to England, from Minorca, nor do I know that he was a Baptist in sentiment while he was in Minorca. After a while, his situation at Watford was become uncomfortable, and the event was that he removed to Cotton End where he was settled on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1782, as has already been remarked, so that he was pastor there only one year, and somewhat less than two months. This was one of the mysteries of Providence, as he was a man apparently likely to live a number of years, and to be useful among the people at Cotton End, for whom <sup>314</sup>he appeared to be peculiarly suitable. But God's ways are not our ways, neither are his thought our thoughts. While he was at Cotton End, he was particularly patronized by the celebrated philanthropist John Howard, Esqr. Who had a seat at Cardington, about a mile from Cotton End. He established a little school, and employed Mr. Haywood to teach his scholars in the vestry of Cotton End meeting house. He had two objects in view in this matter, namely, to assist Mr. Haywood, and to provide education for the poor children that he sent him. Though Mr. Howard was seldom at Cardington himself, he so arranged matters with his steward, that the children were sent to school and Mr. Haywood paid, whether Mr. Howard was at Cardington <sup>315</sup>or in Germany or anywhere else. He was kind also to Mr. Haywood in other respects. As there was a field or two belonging to the Meeting at Cotton End, and Mr. Howard conceived this would be of use to Mr. Haywood's family, he made him a present of one cow, if not more. However, it was not the pleasure of God that he should continue here long. He died of a bad fever on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August and was buried in the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup> aged, I think, 43 years. Mr. Symonds of Bedford preached his funeral sermon. What made this Providence the more afflictive was, Mrs. Haywood, his wife, lay dangerously ill of the same fever, at the time he died, and there were four small children. On the 19<sup>th</sup> I went to Cotton End to enquire about poor Mrs. Haywood <sup>316</sup>and her family. I found that she was still alive, but exceedingly ill, and sensible but a little while at a time. I did not see her this time. On Lord's Day the 24<sup>th</sup> I preached a funeral sermon in the afternoon, on occasion of the death of Daniel Brown, son of William Brown of Langley, who died the 15<sup>th</sup> in the 19<sup>th</sup> year of his age. In this sermon, I had a view also to the affecting death of Mr. Haywood.

## Assistance for Luke Haywood's Widow

I preached from 2 Timothy 4:6 "The time of my departure is at hand". As Mrs. Haywood was left in poor circumstances, we made a public collection this day to assist her, to which people cheerfully contributed, as he was a man held in considerable esteem among us, and the circumstances of his removal, and of his wife's dangerous illness at the same time, were<sup>317</sup> particularly moving. I was much affected myself, and I was instrumental in exciting a great degree of affectiveness in others. My sorrow this day was however, intermingled with joy, as I heard this day, not only that Mrs. Haywood was living, but now considered as hopefully out of danger. On the 27<sup>th</sup> August, I went to Cotton End, and saw Mrs. Haywood. She was now mercifully recovered considering the low state into which she had been brought. I was particularly rejoiced to learn how remarkably DIVINE PROVIDENCE had appeared for the distressed widow and children of my dear departed friend. Samuel Whitbread Esquire, who, as well as Mr. Howard had a seat at Cardington, I learned from Mrs. Haywood, had sent her<sup>318</sup> a present of ten guineas. In process of time, public collections were made at other places besides Hitchin. It seemed as if the whole country comparatively was turned, by a kind Providence into a river of generosity, and the streams thereof made to flow to Cotton End. As some people, I presumed, might not be provided, on the 24<sup>th</sup> when I began a public collection for this purpose, I made another, on the 31<sup>st</sup>. I collected and received on these two days £10. 11s. 11d. After this I received among my own people £2. 2s. 0d. from Master William Thomas, £1 1s. 0d., from Mr. Angell £1. 1s. 0d., from Mr. Crawley, besides some smaller sums. Mr. Matthew Foster of Little Wymondley gave £1. 1s. 0d. towards the collection made on the 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>319</sup> I received also some contributions from Watford. The whole of what I had received on or before September the 3<sup>rd</sup> amounted to £10. 10s. 5d. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, I visited Mrs. Haywood again. I found her husband's good friend Mr. Howard had not been unmindful of her, as he had called on her and made her a present of a £10 bank note. She was now mercifully recovered as to her health. I had something handsome communicated to me from Watford, for Mrs. Haywood's use, some time after her husband's death, besides that which I had already noticed. Indeed the whole of what she received from every quarter and in every way, I should suppose could not be less than<sup>320</sup> one hundred pounds, if it was not considerably more. Among other places at which collections were made for her, there was one made at Luton.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, I went to Cotton End and Bedford to get a petition ready for Mrs. Haywood to send to the Widow's Fund in London for assistance. This was accomplished, and she has now received annually from that Fund ever since. And with the assistance she has derived from the profits of the Evangelical Magazine, in addition to that from the London Widow's Fund, and by one means and another, she has been mercifully provided for, upon the whole. Thus God<sup>321</sup> in His dealings with this good woman, has remarkably mingled mercy along with affliction. She was mercifully supported and comforted in her mind, under the loss of her husband and her own affliction. Thus strength from above was granted her according to her day. In the same week in which Mr. Haywood died the town of Potton in Bedfordshire, was, in a great measure, burned to the ground. It was occasioned by a man's not taking proper care about a hayrick which, heating too much, at length took fire, and set the town on fire. Sixty dwelling houses, besides other buildings were destroyed, exclusive of household furniture, and other property. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September some<sup>322</sup> gentlemen came from Potton to Hitchin to collect for the poor sufferers. It was thought proper that persons of different denominations should go about with them, upon this melancholy occasion. Mr. Morgan, the Vicar, Mr. Griffiths the Independent Minister, myself, and some of the people called Quakers, engaged in this benevolent business. A number of persons in this town and

neighbourhood subscribed liberally. Lady Salisbury of Offley sent thirty guineas, John Radcliffe Esquire of Hitchin subscribed twenty, Mr. Sharpless subscribed ten, and Messrs. Everitt, Tristram, Gray, William Lucas, Joshua Wheeler and Mr. Pierson seven guineas each. Some subscribed five guineas, others three, others two, and others one, and <sup>323</sup>others smaller sums. The whole of what was collected at Hitchin, and it's neighbourhood, amounted, eventually, I understood to two hundred and fifty-eight pounds.

### **Contrast in Generosity**

A very striking contrast may be exhibited between Hitchin generosity in 1783, and in 1670, one hundred and thirteen years before. It appears from the Parish Register of Hitchin, that a general collection was made in the said Parish for and towards the redemption of captives, that were in Turkish slavery. There were one hundred and seventy-nine persons, who subscribed towards this collection, all whose names are in the Register affixed to the sums they subscribed, and yet the whole of what they all subscribed did not amount <sup>324</sup>to the sixth part of what one person subscribed towards the Potton fire, as it came short of five pounds. The whole amounted to exactly four pounds four shillings and seven pence.

The largest subscriber was Sir Ralph Radcliffe, and his subscription amounted to eight shillings. His descendant, John Radcliffe Esquire, subscribed more than forty times as much towards the Potton fire. Several of <sup>325</sup>the subscribers whose names are in the Register subscribed no more than one penny a piece. I do not know exactly how many there were, within the Parish of Hitchin, exclusive of the neighbourhood, who subscribed to the Potton fire, but I should not suppose they amounted to a greater number than the subscribers in 1670. I do not know exactly neither what the whole amount of the subscriptions of the inhabitants of Hitchin exclusively amounted to. I should not suppose, however, that it fell much short of two hundred pounds, if it did not exceed that sum. Supposing for the sake of argument, there number was equal, namely one hundred and seventy nine, there must either be a wonderful difference, in the circumstances or in the generosity of the inhabitants of Hitchin, in 1670 and 1783, or in the apparent value of money as in the former period they subscribed only £4. 4s. 7d., and in the latter upon the above supposition, £200. 0s. 0d. A number of single individuals in 1783, gave more than all the 179 did in 1670. Mr. Sharpless himself gave more than twice as much as they all did. There was one life lost if no more at the Potton fire.

<sup>326</sup> On the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, in this year 1783, John Radcliffe Esquire, of the Priory in this town, who died in London, the 21<sup>st</sup> was brought to Hitchin to be buried in the vault in the church. I attended him to the vault. He was 45 years of age.

### **Many Fires**

In the course of this year, and particularly towards the close of it, the inhabitants of Hitchin, and it's vicinity, were frequently alarmed by the dreadful cry of fire. There were, I think, nine fires that took place in comparatively short time. One was at Mr. Lyles's kiln, New England, another was at the Black Horse, another was at Mr. Bradley's kiln, another at a hayrick of Mr. Barons of Gosmore, which stood in a field by itself, and another, which <sup>327</sup>was the most dangerous, as to the Town of Hitchin, was at the King's Arms. The taking place of these fires, was, in a great measure, a mystery then, and has been ever since. By circumstances, it appears, that they must, most if not all of them, have been the effect of design, and yet it was a difficulty to account for what design any could have in such horrid proceedings. In one or two instances, the design seemed to be pretty well ascertained, namely, to set



something on fire, not for the purpose of destruction, but in order to have the merit of first discovering it, or putting of it out, in order to obtain some reward. This appeared<sup>328</sup> particularly to have been the case, as to the fire at the King's Arms, and another, relative to a barn, which there was at that time, situated near Burts Close. The state of the town and neighbourhood, at length became truly alarming. It was expected to hear the alarm of fire about 7, 8 or 9 o'clock at night, as though it was an ordinary event. And these awful expectations in more instances than one, to the great terror of the inhabitants, were actually realized. There was, however, a wonderful mixture of mercy along with these alarms. No very great damage, comparatively, was done, by either of them separately, or all of them put together. Some individuals ...

*Pages 329 to 332 are missing*

### **Death of Daughter, Elizabeth**

<sup>333</sup> April the 10<sup>th</sup>. I and my dear wife were much distressed, this day, on account of the alarming indisposition of our dear daughter, Elizabeth, who had not been well for some days, but was now got to be dangerously ill.

Lord's Day April the 11<sup>th</sup> was an exceedingly trying day to me. I with particular difficulty however, preached twice, in the morning and afternoon. I was so much affected in my first prayer, in the morning, that it was with particular difficulty, I could proceed, when I came to take notice of the circumstances of my poor afflicted child. I did not go out at all in the evening.

Lord's Day April the 18<sup>th</sup>, my dear<sup>334</sup> child, contrary to many anxious fears which I and my dear wife had had in the preceding week, that this would not be the case, being still alive, I again went to meeting, and, with a heavy heart, preached twice. I was again so much affected in my first prayer in the morning, when adverting to the circumstances of my afflicted child, as to be scarcely able to proceed. I again staid at home in the evening.

April 19<sup>th</sup>, was a trying day, indeed to me and my beloved spouse. After hopes and fears had alternately agitated our minds, from time to time, our hopes were all cut up by the roots, between ten and eleven<sup>335</sup> o'clock in the evening of this day. My hopes had been raised higher than they had been at some times, even this afternoon, so far that I even ventured to go out into the town. They were, however, damped, even before I got home, by what Dr. Dimsdale told me, who attended her, and whom I happened to meet, before my return. I found her much worse on my return home, and she kept getting worse and worse, until she expired. This was a heavy trial both to me and my dear partner. We had two sons, but this was our only daughter, at that time, and a lovely child she was.

I hope, however, we were both mercifully kept from murmuring under this bereavement, though we could not<sup>336</sup> help mourning. If she had lived till about one o'clock of the following day, she would have been three years and two months old, she being born about that time of the day, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1781.

I saw her when she was dying, but did not see her actually die. I tried by ejaculatory prayer, to commend her spirit into the hands of God, when she was in dying circumstances, and I trust, he received that spirit into the mansions of glory. As, I presumed her to be within the confines of infancy, this consideration was a great relief to my mind, as I had and still have, a cheerful hope, as to the final states of all infants, without exception, who die<sup>337</sup> in their

infancy. I trust, that as in the first Adam they all die, so in the second Adam, they are all made alive. My dear wife was supported as well as could be expected. She was not so much distressed, when the child was gone, as she was to see her in so much misery as she was in, some time before her removal. She suffered much for some days before she died, *and* my wife was therefore much more reconciled to the idea of parting with her, when the trying time came, than she was some days before the awful event took place. Thus, under the influence of a wise Providence, one affliction is sometimes the occasion of reconciling to another. I found this also to <sup>338</sup>operate in one particular view relative to myself. I scarcely know what particular disorder it was that occasioned my dear child's death. But whatever it was, it had a particular effect on her head. And I was given to understand that her head had been so affected by her disorder, that it would have been extremely doubtful whether ever she would have had her senses, even if she had lived. This had a wonderfully reconciling effect upon my mind, as, dearly as I loved her, I should rather have her a dead child, than a living senseless one. April the 24<sup>th</sup>, my dear departed Betsy was carried to the house appointed for all living. This I record with weeping eyes, though <sup>339</sup>it is now more than eight and twenty years ago. Neither I nor my mourning partner attended the funeral. She was buried, in a private manner. My much respected brother, Mr. Griffiths, attended her to the grave and spake in the meeting, on the solemn occasion.

Lord's Day April the 25<sup>th</sup>, I did not go out in the morning. The meeting was carried on by prayer and singing by my friends. In the afternoon, I went out and tried to preach to myself as well as my hearers, from Hebrews 12v.5. "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him". Among other means which I had used as calculated to reconcile me to this afflicting Providence, I had read Grosvenor's Mourner. This <sup>340</sup>passage is particularly noticed and beautifully illustrated, in the preface to that excellent piece. I never was so struck with this passage, nor so well understood it, as I did, after reading this illustration, under this Providence. The general idea is to guard against the extremes of being too much or too little affected under the afflicting hand of God. I was in most danger, in this case, of the former. Against that therefore, I hope, I was enabled to be particularly on my guard, and I trust, through Divine help, though I mourned I did not mutter, though I groaned, I did not grumble, under this trying dispensation. I was carried through the difficult task of preaching this afternoon, better than I was afraid I should. I did not go out in the evening.

On ....

*Note - all further pages are missing.*

[Inside cover is annotated "Received back from Mr R. L. Hine 21/12/28"]