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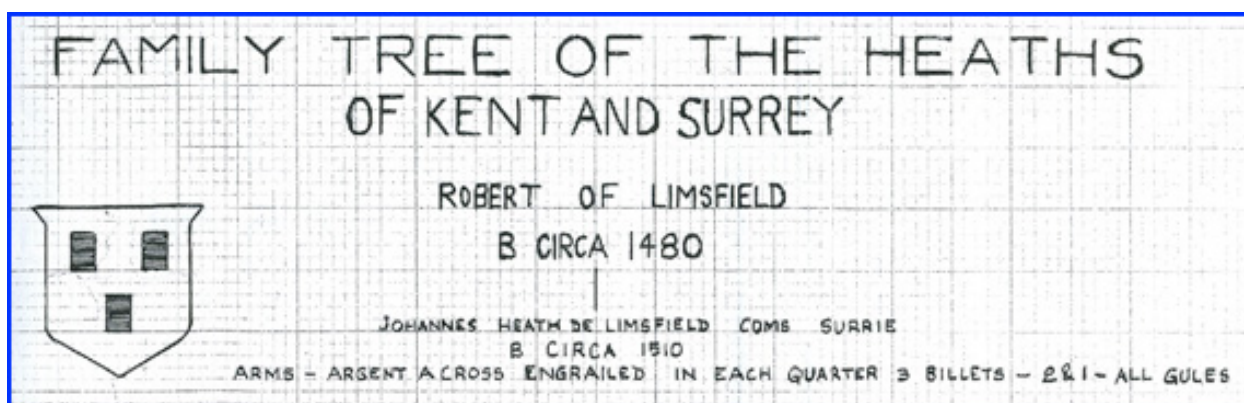
Early generations

This initial chapter is based almost exclusively upon information contained in a hand-written document created by **Dudley Stent** [1886-1974] entitled *Family Tree of the Heaths of Kent and Surrey*. I believe that the original document is now in the hands of Dudley Stent's son **Mark Stent**, who lives in Hampshire. I have access to this document in the form of a monochrome photocopy on a single sheet of paper, 55 cm by 75 cm. Throughout this monograph, I refer to this basic chart as [Stent], and I have incorporated various scanned fragments of its contents into my text. To a large extent, this chapter might be thought of as a presentation and clarification of the information in [Stent]. Whenever possible, however, I mention other sources of information. Finally, my computer-drawn genealogical charts represent my personal synthesis of all available data. As such, they may of course introduce errors associated with my interpretation of the data.

This chapter covers some ten generations. It starts in the 15th century with the earliest known ancestor, **Robert Heath** of Limpsfield (Surrey), and ends in the 18th century with the generation of **Miles Heath**.

Patriarch

The [Stent] chart starts as follows:



Item 1-1: Opening of the [Stent] chart.

The name of the town in Surrey where the patriarch lived is now spelt Limpsfield.

In my genealogical chart, item 1-9 (page 13), I have refrained from anglicizing the first name of the son, Johannes, to John. I am not familiar with this man's heraldic arms.

Bibliographical notes

- The website British History Online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> displays an article on Limpsfield taken from the following book:

H E Malden (editor): *A History of the County of Surrey*, Volume 4, 1912.

Here is an extract that mentions Heath individuals:

The family of Heath was settled in Limpsfield and at Edenbridge in Kent from early times. John Heath (1) died here in 1491 and left a son John. (2) A John Heath in 1590 was holding a farm called the Curtilage of Limpsfield which he had leased to Michael Heath. (3) In 1537 Richard Heath of Titsey was pardoned for the murder of Richard Aldriche at Limpsfield. (4) Robert Heath, a member of this family, was Solicitor-General to James I, Attorney-General to Charles I and Chief Justice of Common Pleas in 1631, and though dismissed from that office was Chief Justice of the King's Bench in 1642. He was very obnoxious to the Parliamentary party, was impeached and died abroad. He wrote historical memoirs with a strong partisan bias. (5)

1 E. Chan. Proc. bdle. 42, no. 87.

2 Will, P.C.C. Miles, 46.

3 Ibid. Drury, 49.

4 L. and P. Hen. VIII, xii (1), g. 1104.

5 Dict. Nat. Biog. xxv, 346.

- There is a book (which I have never seen) that sounds like a *must* for Heath researchers:
Charles Bridger: *An Index to Printed Pedigrees: Contained in County and Local Histories, the Heralds' Visitations, and in the More Important Genealogical Collections*, 384 pages, published 1867, reprinted 1987, available through Amazon.
This book provides references to archives about "Heath of Limpsfield".

Grandsons of the patriarch

Next in [Stent], we encounter two grandsons of the patriarch:

ROBERT OF LINFIELD	JOHANNES
B	B. CIRCA 1535
M	M. TOMASINA
D	D. JURISPERITUS
URSULA DAU. OF JOHN ALFREY OF EAST GRINSTEAD	FILIA ... SEYLIARD DE BRASTED COURT (REMARRIED RICHARD TICHBOURNE) OF EDENBRIDGE

Item 1-2: Grandsons of the patriarch in Limpsfield.

Here, I imagine that Robert's location should be Limpsfield, not Linfield.

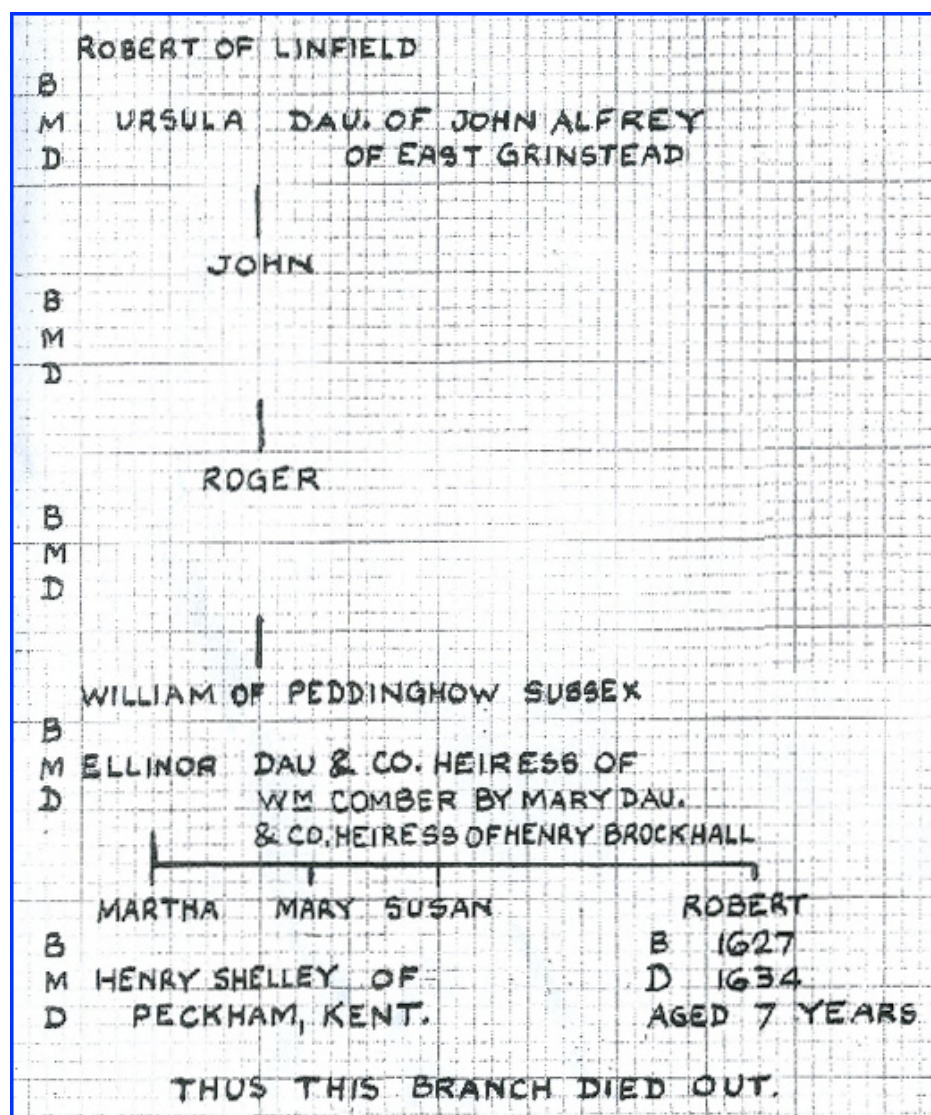
The expression *juris peritus* means "learned in law". In other words, I would imagine that Johannes Heath was a lawyer. As for his wife, I suppose that her first name was Tomasina and that the word "filia" is to be read as "daughter".

Ursula Alfrey's home place, East Grinstead, is in West Sussex. In my genealogical chart, item 1-9 (page 13), I have refrained from indicating the name of Ursula's father, just as I have not bothered to indicate that Tomasina remarried. Details of this kind should be recorded in a gedcom file, but there is no point in putting them in my chart.

Notice that [Stent] has now mentioned two individuals named Johannes Heath, whereas Malden's above-mentioned history of Surrey mentioned three men named John Heath. For the moment, I am unable to associate the two groups.

Extinct family group

The progeny of Robert Heath and Ursula Alfrey are described as follows in [Stent]:



Item 1-3: Progeny of Robert Heath and Ursula Alfrey.

Robert Heath of Edenbridge and his sister Joanna

Next, [Stent] presents the children of Johannes Heath and Tomasina Seyliard:

ROBERT OF EDENBRIDGE		JOANNA
B 1560		WIDOW OF WM. FREESTON
M JOANNA	DAU. & HEIRESS	MARRIED SIR MARTIN CALTHORP
D	OF NICHOLAS POSIER OF	AND 2NDLY WM. BOYS OF
JURISPERITUS	GUILDFORD SURREY.	NONNINGTON.

Item 1-4: Robert Heath of Edenbridge and his sister Joanna.

The medieval town of Edenbridge is located in Kent, but it lies in fact on the border with Surrey (to the west).

Like his father, Robert was a lawyer, and he married Joanna Posier of Guilford. As for his sister Joanna, she appears to have been married three times.

Chief Justice Robert Heath of Brasted

Finally, [Stent] introduces the unique son of Robert Heath of Edenbridge and Joanna Posier, who was destined to become a celebrated personage: Robert Heath of Brasted.

ROBERT OF BRASTED		RECORDER OF LONDON
B 1582 ^{May} 1575 ^{May}		AND CHIEF JUSTICE.
M MARGARET	DAU. & HEIRESS OF JOHN MILLER OF TONBRIDGE BY MARY	
D 1649	DAU. OF HENRY CROW OF BRASTED PLACE WHO BORE FOR ARMS:-	
	GULES A CHEVRON OR (GOLD) BETWEEN 3 COCKS ARGENT. THE CROWS	
	HELD LAND IN BRASTED TEMPO. EDWARD IV & HAD INHERITED:	
	BRASTED PLACE BY MARRIAGE WITH BOARE FAMILY	
	WHOSE ARMS WERE :- GULES, A BOAR PASSANT ARGENT.	

Item 1-5: Robert Heath of Brasted.

Through his marriage with Margaret Miller, Robert acquired a domain at Brasted along with heraldic arms: gules (red), a chevron or (gold) between three cocks argent (silver).

There is quite a lot of information on the web concerning the public career of Robert Heath of Brasted, and there is no point in my repeating it here. Basically, he became the Chief Justice of England under Charles I, and he was forced into exile in America after the monarch's execution in 1649.

There is a terse biography of Robert Heath on the website of St John's College at the University of Cambridge, which seems to be a little bitter about the fact that the distinguished and no doubt wealthy gentleman only left his alma mater eight rather mediocre books for their library, of a value of £20. Here is their biography:

Robert Heath left St John's without taking his degree, to become a lawyer. A protégé of George Villiers, later Duke of Buckingham, Heath became recorder for the corporation of London in 1618, solicitor-general in 1621 and attorney-general in 1625. He was also MP for East Grinstead in the parliaments of 1624-5. After Buckingham's assassination in 1628 his career went into decline. He was made a judge in the Court of Common Pleas in 1631, but was dismissed in 1634, possibly due to the machinations of William Laud. In 1637 he was appointed a king's serjeant, and in 1640 he returned to the bench. After the outbreak of the civil war he became an exile in France, and died at Calais in 1649. During his life he was involved in administering the colonization of North America, and invested in many speculative ventures, including Vermuyden's schemes for draining the fens.

The following portrait of Robert Heath, engraved by T & H Rodd in London in 1820, was probably based upon an image created during his life time:



Item 1-6: Robert Heath of Brasted [1575-1649].

The following porcelain plate, manufactured in China in the early 18th century, is illustrated by means of a fanciful version of the heraldic arms of Henry Crow of Brasted:



Item 1-7: Plate with the Crow arms [owned by Sheridan Henty].

Bibliographical notes

- The website British History Online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> displays an article on Brasted taken from the following book:

Edward Hasted: *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, volume 3, 1797.

Here is a first extract that mentions the heraldic arms with three cocks:

Brasted Place is an estate here, which was once accounted a manor, and was heretofore called Crowplace, from the residence of that family at it, as it was before that called Stocket's, for the like reason.

Walter de Stocket, sometimes written in records and old deeds Stoks, held this estate of the earl of Gloucester as the fourth part of a knight's fee, in the reign of king Edward I.

whose family bore for their arms, Per pale gules and azure, a lion rampant argent, pellettee. (1)

Simon Stocket possessed this estate in the next reign of king Edward II. and built a chancel in the church of Brasted, as appears by a deed of that time.

His daughter Lora carried this estate in marriage to Richard Boare, who bore for his arms, Gules, a boar passant argent, and was succeeded here by his son John, as he again was by Nicholas Boare, his son, who leaving an only daughter and heir, Joane, she carried this house and estate, called Stocket's, together with the chancel above mentioned, and certain land, called Boare's, to Thomas Crow the younger, son of Thomas Crow, of an antient family of Suffolk, who had before purchased lands in Brasted, in the reign of Edward IV.

From this family, who bore for their arms, Gules, a chevron or, between three cocks argent, (2) which coat was afterwards allowed to Giles Crow, of Brasted, by Robert Cooke, clarencieux, anno 1586, it acquired the name of Crow-place, and continued in the descendants of it till the latter end of the reign of king James I. when Mr. William Crow alienated it to Robert Heath, esq. afterwards Sir Robert Heath, then of Mitcham, in Surry, and successively chief justice of the commonpleas and King's-bench, who was, though born in the adjoining parish of Eatonbridge, descended out of Surry from John Heath, who was of Limpsfield, in that county. Sir Robert bore for his arms, Argent, a cross engrailed, between twelve billets gules, being his paternal coat. In one of the south windows of the Inner Temple hall, his arms, as chief justice of the commonpleas, depicted anno 1631, are a shield of four coats; 1st, Heath; 2d, on a bend, between two cotizes indented, three mullets; 3d as the 2d; 4th as the 1st; over all an escutcheon of pretence, ermine, a fess between three foxes heads erased. (3)

He was a great sufferer for his loyalty to Charles I. for which, being obliged to fly in foreign parts, he died at Calais in 1649, and his body was brought over and buried in this church, where there is a stately monument erected for him and his wife. Margaret, daughter and heir of John Miller, gent. by Mary, daughter of Henry Crow, gent. by whom he had several sons and daughters who survived him. After his death this estate continued sequestered by the powers then in being till the restoration of king Charles II. when Edward Heath, esq. his eldest son, took possession of it, in whose family it continued till Sir John Heath, leaving by Margaret, daughter of Sir John Mennes, knight of the Bath, an only daughter and heir, Margaret, she carried it in marriage to George Verney lord Willoughby, D.D. afterwards dean of Windsor, who was descended of the family of Verney, seated, in the reign of king Henry VI. at Compton Murdock, in Warwickshire, where Richard de Verney, the possessor of it, then built a noble manor house, the present seat of the family; (4) who bear for their arms, Three crosses recercele or, a chief vair ermine and ermines.

1 Philipott, p. 65, 66; Book of Knights Fees, in the Excheq.

2 Peacham's Comp. Gent. p. 239.

3 Visitation Co. Kent, 1619. Guillim, p. 293.

4 Coll. Peer. vol. vi. p. 549, et seq. Dugd. Warw. p. 435.

- From that same book, here is another extract, which mentions monuments in the local church concerning various above-mentioned individuals (Sir Robert Heath, Nicholas Posier, Seyliard family, Sir John Heath):

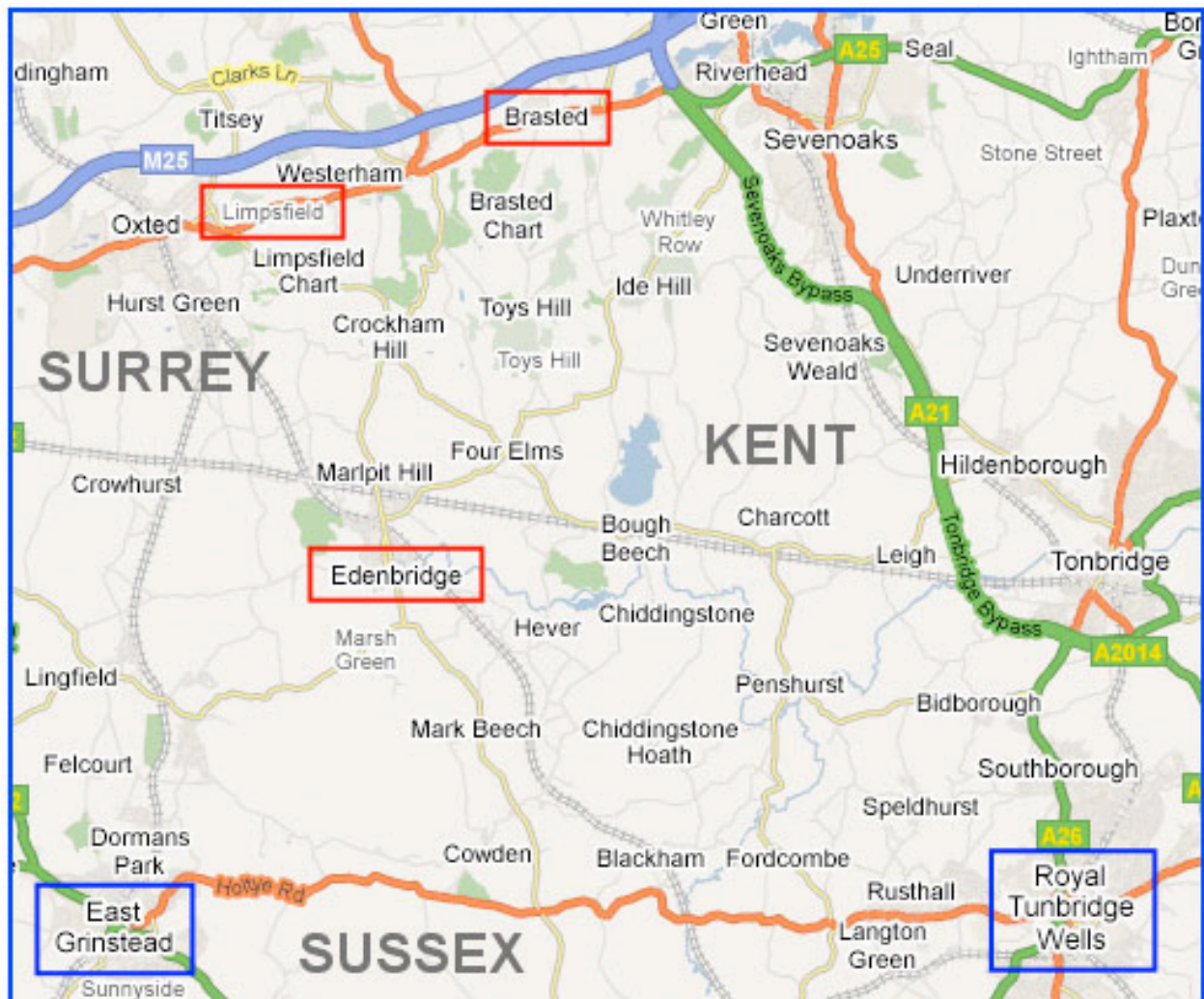
Brasted is within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the diocese of Rochester, and being a peculiar of the archbishop, is as such within the deanry of Shoreham. The church, which is situated in the ville of this parish, is dedicated to St. Martin. It consists of three isles and two chancels.

Among other monuments and inscriptions in it, are the following: In the north and middle isles, memorials for the Kidders. In the great chancel, memorials for the Bulls and Newmans; on the north side of the altar, a monument for Margaret, wife of Tho. Seyliard, daughter and heir of Francis Rogers, esq. of Otford, who left six children, obt. 1615; above, the arms of Seyliard, Azure, a chief ermine in a lozenge, with a number of quarterings; beneath the above is a beautiful altar tomb for Dorothy, daughter of William Crowmer, esq. of Tunstall, first married to William Seyliard, of Brasted, by whom she left four sons and two daughters; 2dly, to Michael Beresford, esq. of Westerham, by whom she left one son and two daughters, ob. 1613. In the east window is a shield, with the arms of Christ church, Canterbury, impaling Parker. In the north chancel, a memorial for Margaret, daughter of the Hon. John and Abigail Verney, ob. 1733, æt. 17; and for George, eldest son of the Hon. George and Margaret Verney, 1698, æt. 7. A mural monument for Margaret Mennes, daughter and heir of Sir Matthew Mennes, K. B. and the lady Margaret Stuart, married, secondly, to Sir John Heath; she left Margaret, her only daughter, ob. 1676. On the north side, a stately monument, on which is the figure of a judge, in his robes and cap, and on his right side his lady, resting on cushions, erected for Sir Robert Heath, justice of the common pleas, obt. 1649; Margaret his wife, ob. 1647; beneath an inscription, shewing that he was the son and heir of Robert Heath, esq. by Anne, daughter and coheir of Nicholas Posier, gent. by whom he left six sons and one daughter; arms at top, Heath argent billettee gules, a cross ingrailed of the second, with quarterings, which shield is likewise in coloured glass in a window over the monument. In the middle of the great chancel is a very antient grave stone, on which was an inscription in brass capitals of the 13th century, round the verge, now picked out, and illegible.

- There are papers associated with Sir Robert Heath [1575-1649] at the *Centre for Kentish Studies*, the *Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office*, and in the archives of the *University of Illinois Library, Urbana*.

Map

This Google map includes places that have been mentioned in the preceding pages:



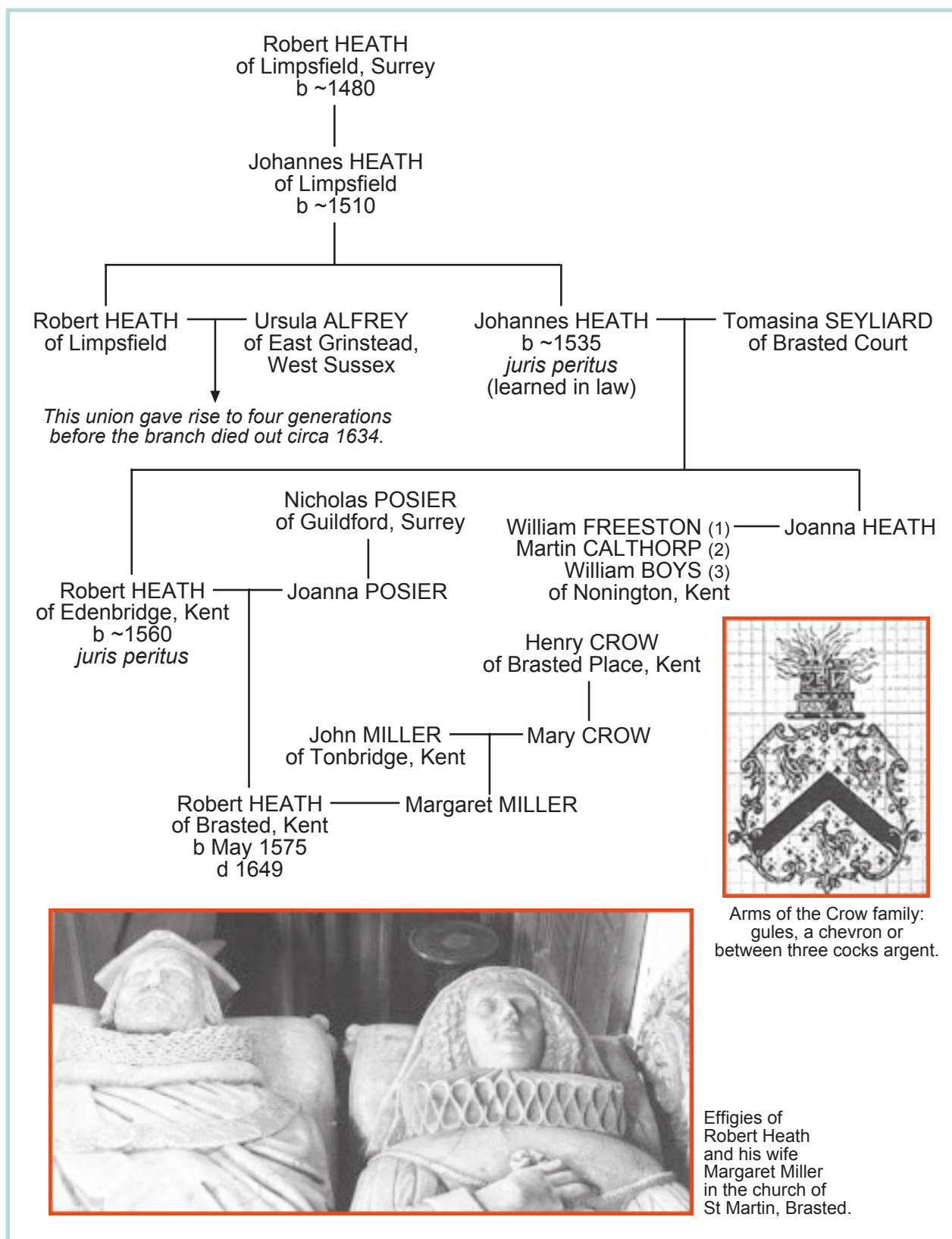
Item 1-8: Parts of Surrey, Kent and Sussex.

Imagine a vertical line that starts up in the top left corner above the name Westerham and moves down until it hits the road between East Grinstead and Royal Tunbridge Wells. The line runs to the right of Limpsfield and to the left of Edenbridge. Well, Surrey lies to the west of that line, and Kent to the east, while Sussex lies below the above-mentioned road. Let me summarize various Heath associations with places:

- Limpsfield (Surrey) is where the Heath story started: the home of the patriarch Robert and his sons Robert and Johannes.
- The patriarch's grandson Robert married Ursula Alfrey from East Grinstead (West Sussex), whereas his brother Johannes married Tomasina Seyliard from Brasted (Kent).
- The latter couple's son Robert lived in Edenbridge (Kent).
- Finally, the Chief Justice Robert Heath settled in Brasted.

Chart: From Limpsfield to Brasted

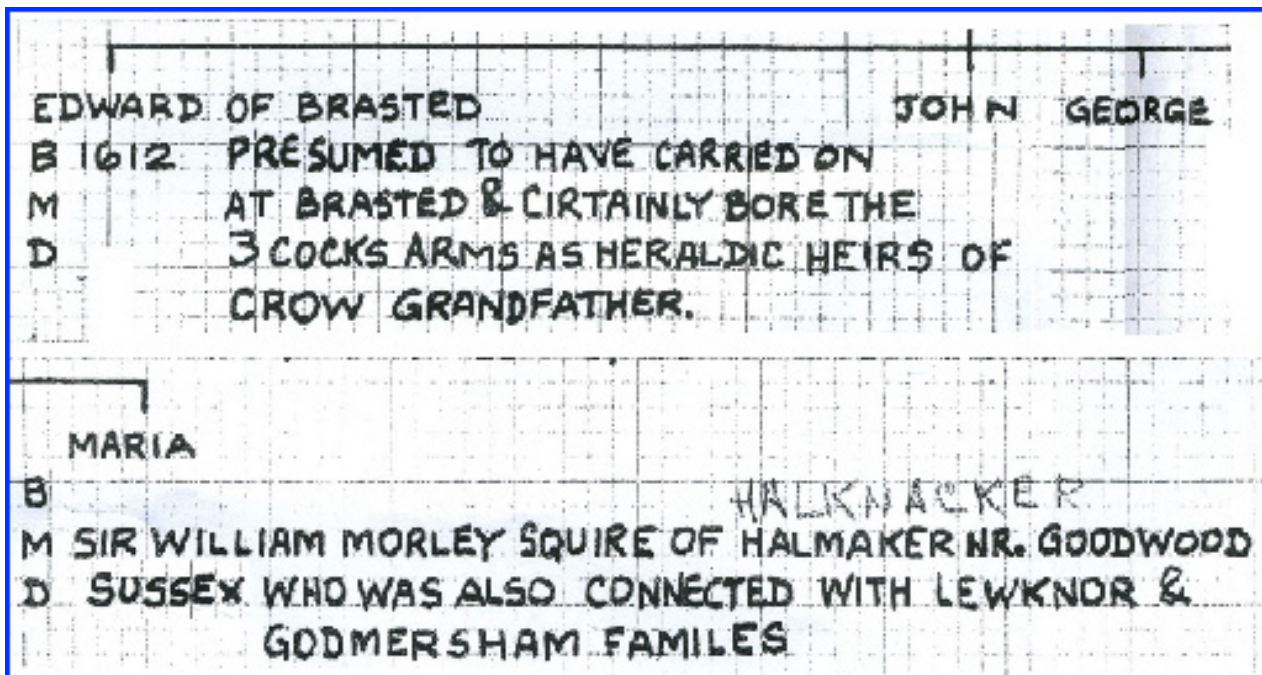
Here is the chart I have compiled concerning the earliest Heath generations:



Item 1-9: From the Limpsfield patriarch to Sr Robert Heath of Brasted.

Children of the Chief Justice

Next, [Stent] presents the three sons and a daughter of the Chief Justice.

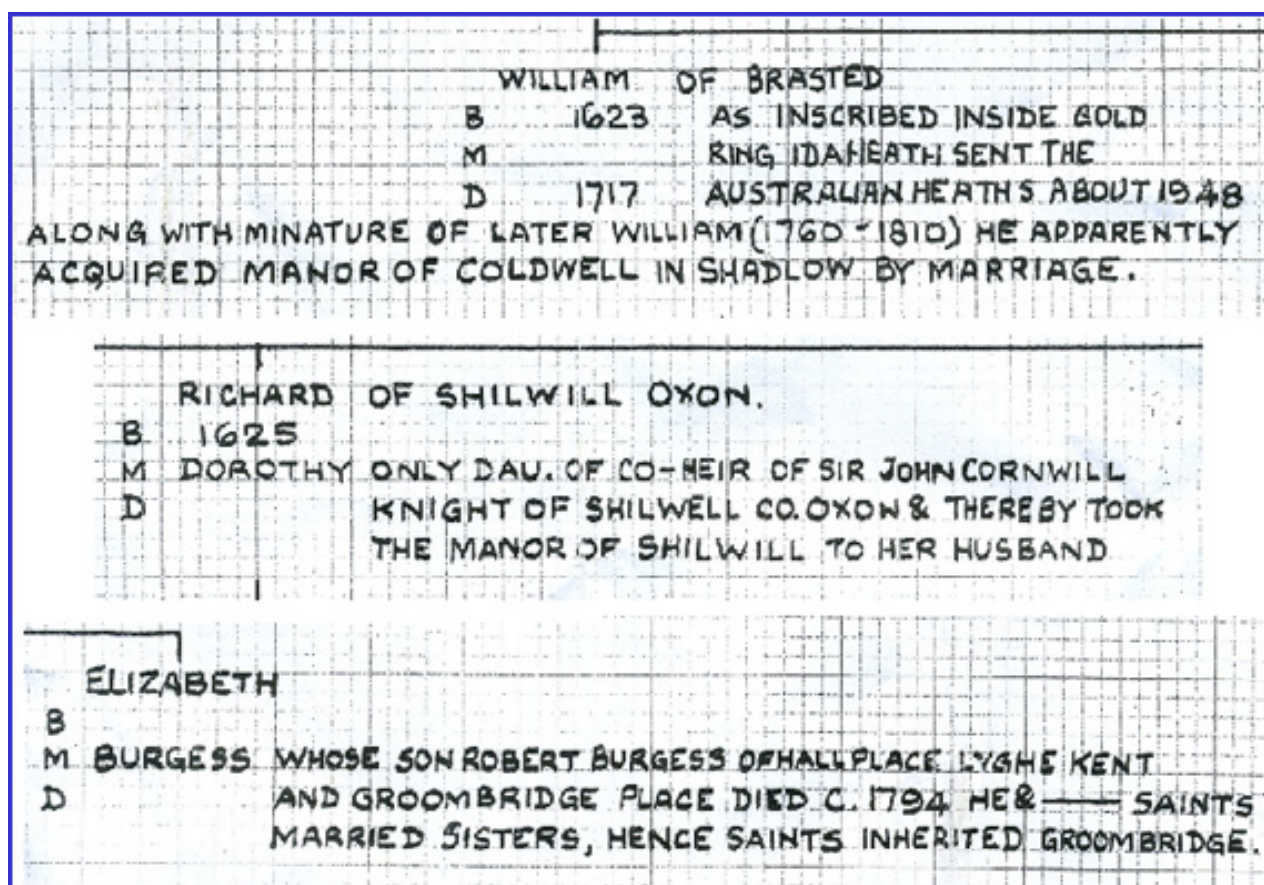


Item 1-10: Children of Robert Heath of Brasted.

The description of Edward is rather vague. As for Maria, I am intrigued to see that two unsuccessful attempts were made to spell the name of the village of Halnaker, near Chichester in West Sussex. In my genealogical chart, item 1-16 (page 19), I have not bothered to mention the vague references to the families Lewknor and Godmersham.

Grandchildren of the Chief Justice

We now reach a generation that is important but puzzling, for many reasons.



Item 1-11: Grandchildren of Robert Heath of Brasted.

William, the elder son, has inherited the family property at Brasted. If he was really born in 1623, then there must have been a mistake in the birth date of his father Edward (item 1-10 on the previous page), who could hardly have had a son at the age of 11.

The anecdote about a gold ring is interesting, but puzzling. Ida Heath, née Gunn, the woman who sent these objects out to Australia, was the wife of Reginald Heath. Her name appears in item 2-2 (page 32). Ida Heath might have decided to send this ring to relatives in Australia because she realized that there would be no more male Heath descendants in England. What happened to this ring? Besides, how can we be sure that this ring belonged to the eldest grandson of the Chief Justice?

The “later William” is mentioned later on in [Stent]. He was the spendthrift son of Miles Heath, but he died in 1840, not 1810. Nicholas Heath in Australia has just sent me a copy of this portrait, associated with that of a woman. See item 1-20 (page 28).

Item 1-11 says that William of Brasted “apparently acquired” by marriage the manor of Coldwell in Hadlow (not Shadlow), Kent. The document reproduced below reveals that he simply *purchased* this estate, and then died without progeny, leaving it to his sister.

Curiously, there is no further mention whatsoever of Brasted in the remainder of [Stent].

Bibliographical notes

- The website British History Online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> displays an article on Hadlow taken from the following book:

Edward Hasted: *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, volume 5, 1798.

This extract on the parish of Hadlow mentions the Coldwell estate purchased by William Heath [1623-1717], who left it to his sister Maria Burgess:

Goldwell, alias Coldwell, is an estate in this parish, which was antiently in the possession of a family of some rank, named Beald, from whence it passed into that of Fromund, who were considerable owners in this parish, as has been already related, in whom it continued some time, and then John Fromund alienated it to one of the family of Colepeper, (fn. 9) in which it continued till Sir Richard Colepeper, of Oxenhoath, dying in the 2d year of the reign of king Richard III. without male issue, his three daughters became his coheirs, and on the division of their inheritance, this estate of Goldwell was allotted to Margaret the eldest, married to William Cotton, esq. afterwards of Oxenhoath, and his grandson, Robert Cotton, esq. of Hadlow, alienated it to John Chowne, gent. of Fairlane, whose great-grandson, Sir George Chowne, of Fairlane, intending to confine his possessions within Sussex, sold it, after the death of king Charles I. to Mr. Thomas Barton, gent. whose daughter Alice married John Keriell, esq. whose grandson John Keriell, passed it away by sale to Mr. William Heath, on whose death without issue, it came to his sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Burges, of Westerham, whose only son, Robert Burges, esq. of Hall-place, in Lyghe, lately died possessed of it.

Mystery manor

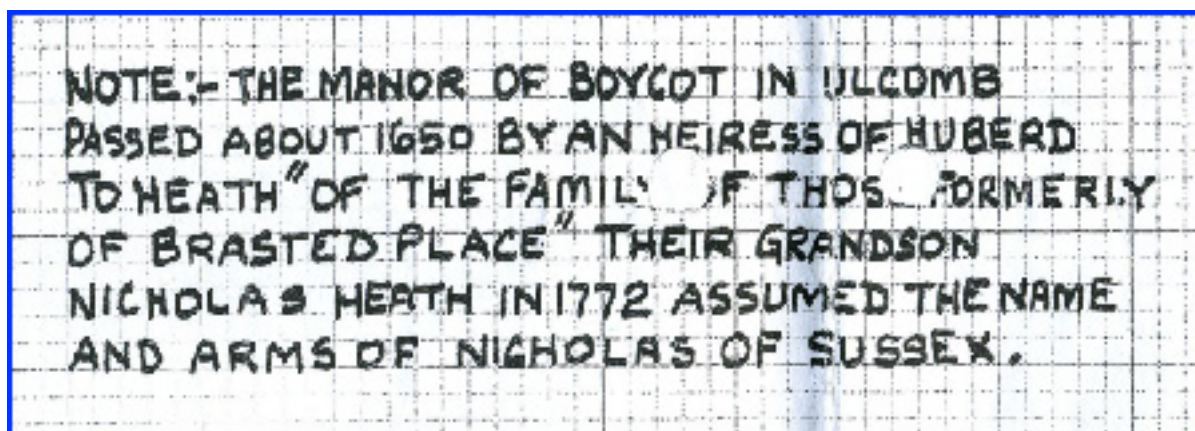
Let us move on to the second son, Richard. We encounter the name of a mysterious manor, first indicated as “Shilwill Oxon” then as “Shilwell Co Oxon”. Richard Heath acquired this property through his marriage to Dorothy, “only daughter of co-heir of Sir John Cornwill”, the original owner of this property. Does that mean that somebody inherited the manor after Sir John’s death, and that this somebody (male or female?) then had a daughter, Dorothy? In my genealogical chart, item 1-16 (page 19), I have written her name as Dorothy Cornwill, and indicated that she was Sir John’s daughter... but this is not necessarily what is stated in [Stent].

By far the greatest puzzle concerns the location of this Shilwill manor. I spent a lot of time searching vainly for such a place in Oxfordshire, using both real maps and the Internet. Finally, I concluded that [Stent] was referring to Chilwell in Nottinghamshire. On the other hand, I never succeeded in finding traces of a knight, Sir John Cornwill.

The rest of [Stent] concerns descendants of the above-mentioned Richard Heath... of the place I refer to—for want of a more plausible explanation—as Chilwell, Nottinghamshire.

Curious note

In the upper region of [Stent], the following note appears:

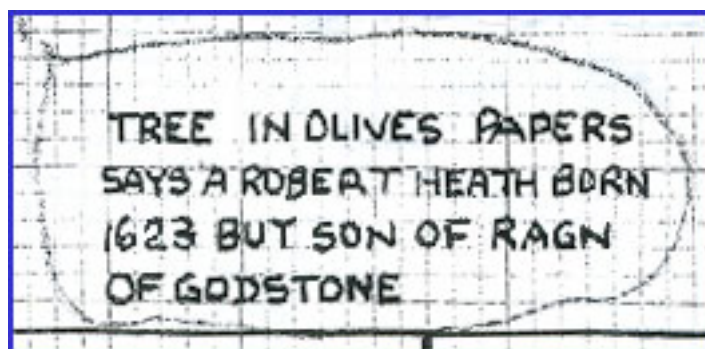


Item 1-12: Curious note.

I am incapable of relating these words meaningfully to any other part of [Stent].

Another curious note

The following note is enclosed in a pencil-drawn circle with an arrow pointing up to the description of William of Brasted that was shown at the top of item 1-11.



Item 1-13: Another curious note.

The Olive in question would probably be Olive Philpots [1875-1970], mentioned later in [Stent], but I fail to understand the sense and relevance of this observation.

Children and grandchildren of Richard of Chilwell

Next, [Stent] presents the progeny of Richard Heath of Chilwell.

	ROBERT OF SHILWILL	MANOR OXON	PERCIVAL	MARY
B	1655/60			
M	KATHERINE	DAU. OF THOMAS CASTLE		
D		OF SWYCOMB CO. OXON.		
	THOMAS OF SHILWILL	MICHAEL	ANTHONY	MARY
B	1680/85			ELIZABETH
M	JANE	DAU. OF JOHN DENTON OF		
D		AMRISDEN CO. OXON.		

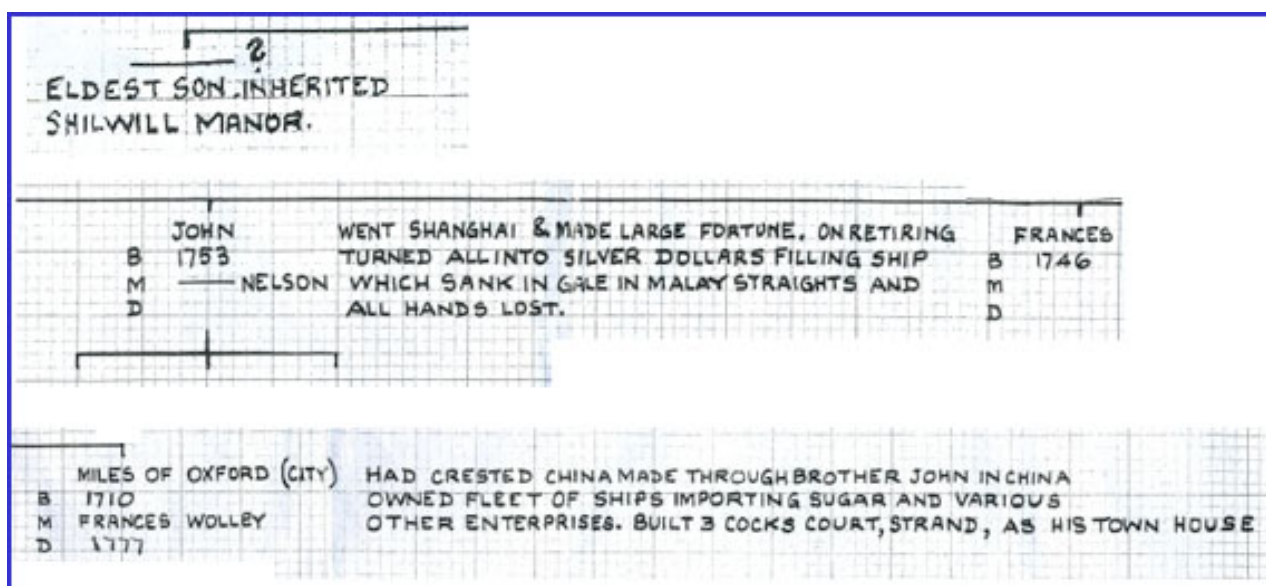
Item 1-14: Children and grandchildren of Richard Heath of Chilwell.

I have two remarks here:

- [Stent] speaks of "Swycomb Co Oxon". I would imagine that this should be Wycombe in Buckinghamshire.
- [Stent] speaks of "Amrisden Co Oxon". This is surely Ambrosden in Oxfordshire.

Generation of Miles Heath

We now reach the generation of Miles Heath, presented as follows in [Stent]:



Item 1-15: Generation of Miles Heath.

I would imagine that the name of the wife of Miles should read, not Wolley, but either Wooly or Wooley. In my genealogical chart, item 1-16 (page 19), I have written Wool(e)y.

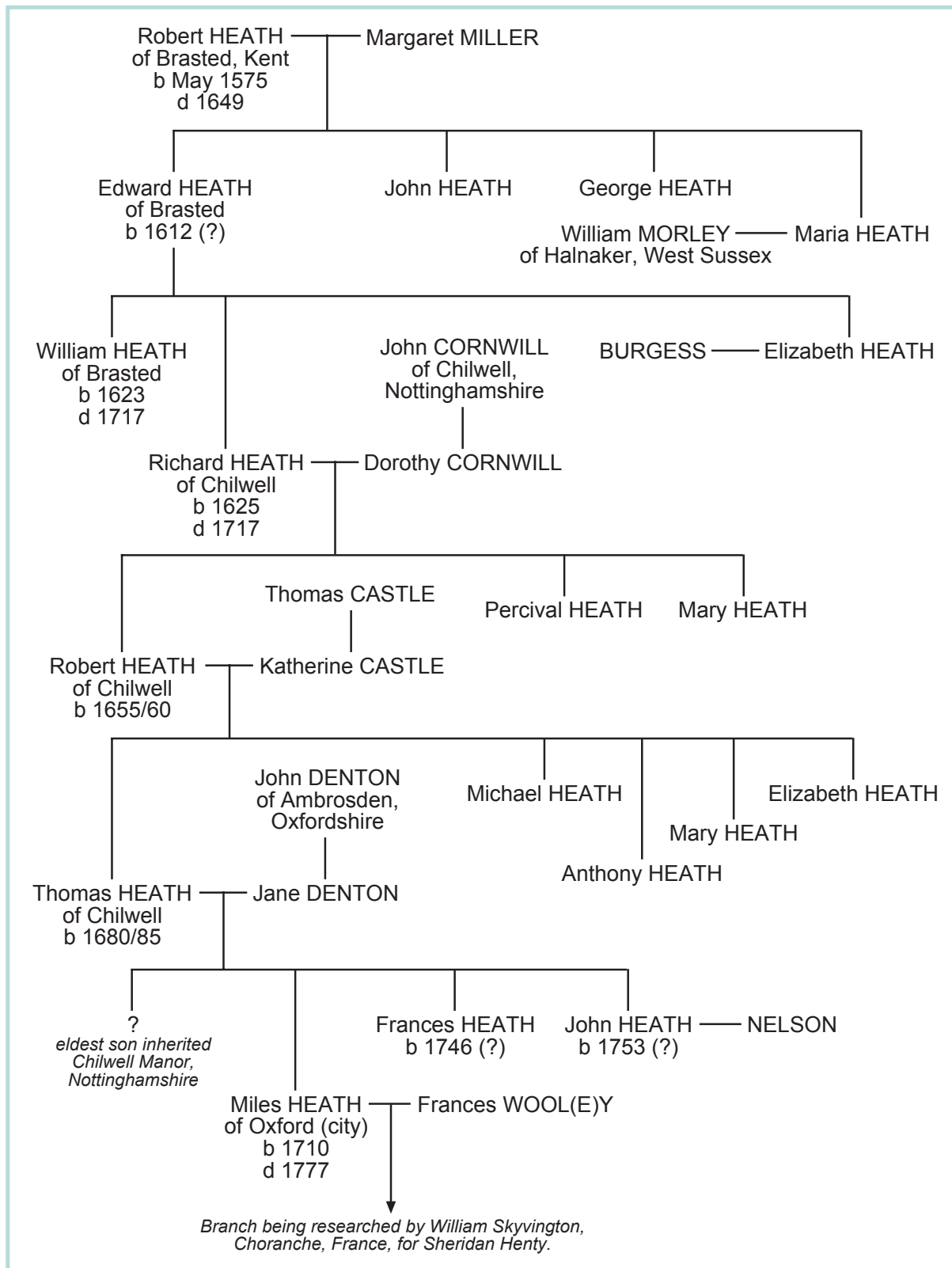
The birth dates of John Heath (1753) and Frances Heath (1746) do not harmonize with that of Miles (1710). It is more likely that Frances and John are children of Miles Heath.

The note about crested crockery being made for Miles Heath in China corresponds to the anecdote I mentioned earlier on, when describing Sheridan's plate (item 1-7, page 9).

Concerning the unknown "eldest son" who inherited the Chilwell property, I have suggested a hypothesis that this fellow could well be the Nottingham bookseller described on the web by a present-day researcher: [Jeremy James Heath-Caldwell](#). This is a big and complicated story, which I shall leave aside for the moment.

Chart: Brasted and Chilwell generations

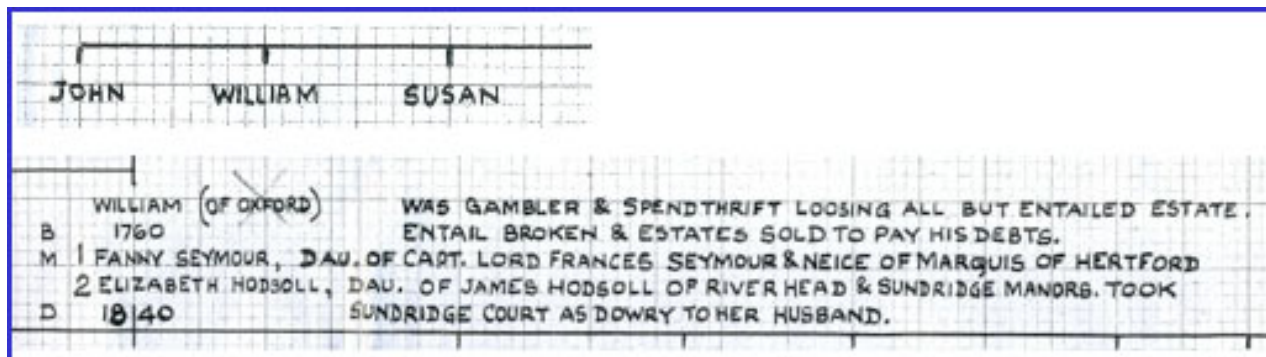
The following chart represents my summary of the generations from Robert of Brasted up to Miles Heath:



Item 1-16: Brasted and Chilwell generations.

William Heath the gambler and spendthrift

Let us turn now to the next generation. William, son of Miles Heath, is presented by [Stent] as a “gambler and spendthrift”.



Item 1-17: Generation of the children of Miles Heath.

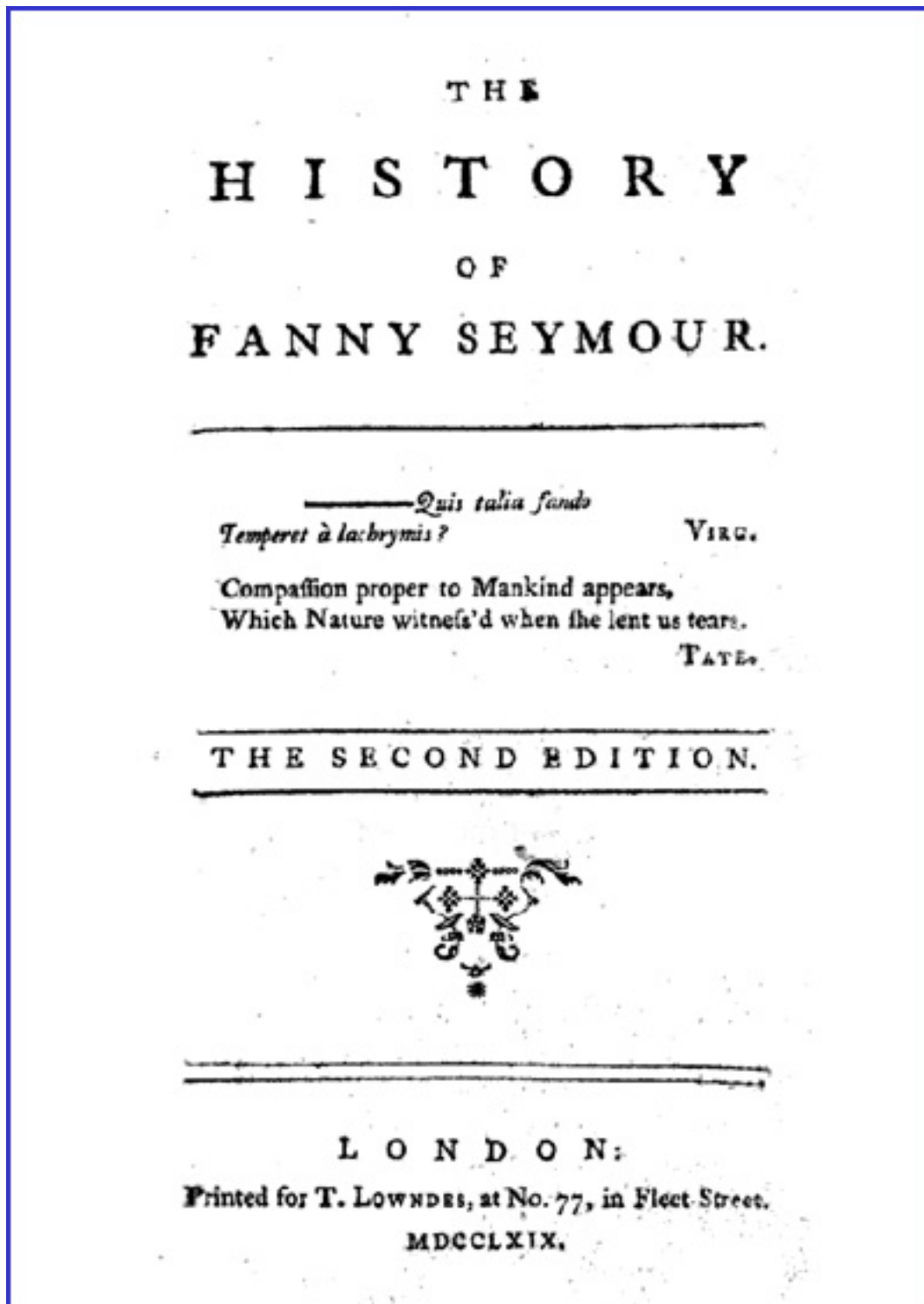
Maybe, as I have just suggested, the individuals named John and Frances in item 1-15 (page 19) should rightly appear in the present diagram. Besides, the presence of a second William in item 1-17 is no doubt an error.

It should be noted that the adjective “entailed” is legal terminology, designating a property that is destined, through official notarial acts, to remain in the hands of a particular family for a specified number of generations. Here we learn that an act of entailment had to be breached in order to pay the debts of William Heath. I would imagine that the major property lost in this fiasco was the *Three Cocks Inn* in London, but other estates may have been dilapidated.

According to [Stent], William Heath married twice: first to Fanny Seymour, then to Elizabeth Hodsoll. Insofar as there appears to be no issue from the first union, we might concentrate solely upon the second marriage... which leads us into the modern epoch of the relatively recent ancestors of the Stents (in Hampshire) and Sheridan Henty’s family (in Australia). But I am tempted to dwell for a moment upon William Heath’s first spouse. If indeed I have correctly identified this Fanny Seymour, then her genealogical context is quite spectacular! And it is amusing to discover the kind of circles in which William Heath apparently moved...

Fabulous “Fanny Seymour”

Let me explain my title. To be honest, I have not succeeded in finding any explicit references whatsoever to a female named Fanny Seymour, let alone a marriage record linking her to our William Heath. So, she is literally a *fabulous* individual... although I am persuaded that she did in fact exist, but not necessarily as William’s legally wedded wife.



Item 1.18: Novel by William Bathoe published in 1769, when William Heath was 9 years old.

[Stent] provides us with clues to this woman's identity when he describes her as follows (with Dudley Stent's usual assortment of transcription, spelling and factual errors):

DAU. OF CAPT. LORD FRANCES SEYMOUR & NEICE OF MARQUIS OF HERTFORD

To start the ball rolling, let me correct the most blatant mistakes:

- *Frances* is a female first name. So, we do not know the real name of Fanny's father.
- The title *Captain* suggests a military man, but it is not a particularly elevated rank for somebody who is then referred to as *Lord*.
- The only reason I draw attention to the trivial spelling error in "*neice*" is that it lends weight to my feeling that Dudley Stent had a habit of inverting certain elements in his explanations, and often inadvertently introducing confusion.
- In the English peerage, there is no such thing as a *Marquis*, which is a Continental term. I point out this factual error in order to suggest that Dudley Stent was probably not using family archives when he wrote this description concerning William Heath, otherwise he would have surely transcribed the correct term: *Marquess*.

So, we end up considering that our Fanny Seymour was the niece of the Marquess of Hertford, and the daughter of a distinguished military man named Seymour. Let us therefore examine the identity of the Marquess of Hertford. The first thing that might surprise us is that marquesses are very highly placed in the English peerage. There are only a few dozen of such peers, and they rank just below dukes, and above earls. So, if William Heath did in fact marry the niece of a marquess, it was as if he had married into the very highest levels of the peerage, on the immediate outskirts of royalty. Besides, his wife's family name lends weight to this aura of nobility. After all, Edward Seymour [1506-1552] was the first Duke of Somerset, the brother of Jane Seymour (Henry VIII's third queen consort) and the Lord Protector of England after the death of Henry VIII. We recall, of course, that William's distant ancestor Robert of Brasted was the Chief Justice in Stuart times, but that hardly sounds like a pretext, nearly two centuries later, for marrying the niece of a marquess. Besides, if our William were really a notorious spendthrift gambler, how and when did he get involved in a marriage with a Seymour? And what were the circumstances in which he went on to marry for the second time? To my mind, that rapid reference in [Stent] to William Heath's first marriage raises a lot of troubling questions...

During the period when William Heath [1760-1840] might have normally been looking for his first wife, two individuals held successively the title of Marquess of Hertford. The first was Francis Seymour-Conway [1718-1794], and the second was his son Francis Ingram Seymour-Conway [1743-1822]. Maybe it was this first name of the marquess, Francis, that made Dudley Stent imagine that the first name of Fanny's father was Frances.

Did one or other of these two marquesses have a brother, a senior military officer, whose daughter was our Fanny Seymour? Well, the first marquess had a brother named Henry Seymour-Conway [1721-1795] who was first a general and later a field marshal... which sounds good enough to be referred to as Captain! He had a daughter named Anne Conway [1748-1828], a dozen years older than our William Heath. In 1767, she married a

certain John Damer, a few years older than herself, who was the son of the future Earl of Dorchester. They separated after seven years, and Damer committed suicide with a pistol, leaving considerable debts. His widow, often referred to as Mrs Anne Seymour-Damer, went on to become a prominent sculptor.

Here is a marble statue of Anne Seymour-Damer executed by Giuseppe Cerrachi:



Item 1-19: Mrs Anne Seymour Damer. Was this “Fanny Seymour”?

This statue was created around 1777, just after her husband’s suicide, when Anne Seymour Damer was not yet 30 years old. At that time, our William Heath was merely a 17-year-old youth. Anne never remarried. Indeed, there were rumors suggesting that she was lesbian. So, is this our fabulous “Fanny Seymour”? Would this artistically-gifted

noblewoman have been the source of William Heath's ruin? I have found no solid data to support this hypothesis, but I find it highly plausible.

Here is a text that I found on the web, entitled **The Honorable Mrs Damer**:

Though many ladies, from Angelica Kauffman and Maria Cosway downwards, have been distinguished by their pencil, and still more by their pen, yet few have made themselves a name by the chisel of the statuary and sculptor. One great exception, however, must be made to this rule in the person of the Hon. Mrs. Damer, the author of the colossal marble bust of Lord Nelson, for which that hero sat to her on his return to England after the battle of the Nile, and which she presented to the City of London, to be placed in the Guildhall, where it still stands.

Anne Seymour Conway, only daughter of Field-Marshal Conway (brother of the first Marquis of Hertford) and of Caroline, Countess Dowager of Ailesbury, and granddaughter of John, fourth Duke of Argyll, was born in the year 1748. She married, in June, 1767, the Hon. John Damer, eldest son of Joseph, first Lord Milton, and brother of George, Earl of Dorchester, but her marriage proved to be an unhappy one. Mr. Damer was heir 'in expectancy' to £22,000 a year, but was of a turn of mind too eccentric to be confined within the limits of any fortune. He shot himself at the Bedford Arms, in Covent Garden, on August the 15th, 1776. leaving Mrs. Damer, his widow, without issue. Lord Milton refused to pay his son's debts; Horace Walpole says that he was very angry with leer, poor soul, and meanly wanted to make her sell her jewels in order to pay them out of her own pocket.

Mr. Damer's suicide was hastened, and indeed provoked, by his father's unkindness. Horace Walpole, after entering at length into this matter in a letter to Sir Horace Alarm, a few days after the act had been committed, gives the following circumstantial account: 'On Thursday Mr. Damer slipped at the "Bedford Arms," in Covent Garden, with four ladies and a blind fiddler. At three in the morning he dismissed his seraglio, ordering his Orpheus to come up again in half-an-hour. When he returned, he found his master dead, and smelt gunpowder. He called, the master of the house came up, and they found Mr. Damer sitting in a chair dead, with one pistol beside him, and another in his pocket. The ball had not gone through his head, or made any report. On the table lay a scrap of paper, inscribed with those words:

"The people of the house are not to blame for what has happened, it was my own act . . .

What a catastrophe for a man of thirty-two, heir to two-and-twenty thousand a year!"

Walpole remarks, with his usual cynicism on this affair, that 'Five thousand a year in present, and £22,000 in reversion, are not, it would seem, sufficient for happiness, and cannot check a pistol.

From this period Mrs. Damer seems to have devoted herself to the cultivation of her talents, and particularly to her chisel. In early life she showed so much taste in art and literature, that Horace Walpole bequeathed to her the reversion of Strawberry Hill, his favorite 'bijou' residence, with remainder to Lord Waldegrave.

Walpole appears to have been very fond of her, and frequently had her to stay with him at Strawberry Hill, where she often assisted in 'doing the honors' of the place. In 1752, Walpole wrote a pleasant letter about her-in which he speaks of her as his 'little wife'--to Field-Marshal Conway, her father. He also, in another letter, styles her 'the infanta' ; and her progress in the art of waxen statuary is duly chronicled by him in 1762.

Walpole, in fact, was very proud of her, and when she grew up and married, and danced at court balls and 'Almack's,' he acknowledged that he was 'apt to be frightened about her.' It seems that Horace Walpole would at times even go so far as to interest himself in the matter of her personal adornment; for, in a letter to a friend, in 1775, he writes: 'Tell Mrs. Damer, that the fashion is now to erect the toupée into a high, detached tuft of hair, like a cockatoo's crest; and this toupee they call la physiognomies; I don't guess why.'

In 1779, the Duchess of Leinster, another lady, and Mrs. Damer, when making a voyage, were captured by a privateer, but released very shortly afterwards. The lives of artists are generally most uneventful, and this is almost the only incident which history records concerning Mrs. Damer.

The young widow mixed largely in the fashionable world and in the literary society of her day. She was somewhat delicate, and of classical taste. Her great friend and benefactor says that she 'writes Latin like Pliny, and is learning Greek' He also admits that she was shy, modest, and reserved; adding that 'you won't discover one thousandth part of her understanding.'

In the art of sculpture, Miss Conway (or Mrs. Damer) undoubtedly took the lead of all amateurs. In early life she received lessons from Ceracclin, and also from the elder Bacon; and she even followed the example of professional artists, in taking a voyage to Italy to improve herself. Her elegant, tasteful, and classical productions are widely scattered as presents. At the suggestion of her relative, Sir Alexander Johnson, with a view to aid the advancement of European arts in India, she sent a bust of Lord Nelson to the King of Tanjore.

It was by the advice of no less a person than David Hume, the historian, when he was acting as private secretary to her father, the field marshal, that her attention was first drawn to the study of the principles of sculpture, and afterwards to its practice as an art. Her progress was rapid, the more so as her eye had been trained to admire beauty of form among the art-treasures of Strawberry Hill; and it was not long before she attained to a perfection in statuary which made her name known among connoisseurs, not only in England but on the Continent.

On the death of her father's intimate friend, Horace Walpole (for by that name he is far better known than by the earldom which he possessed for the last six years of his life), Mrs. Damer took up her residence at Strawberry Hill. She occupied this, her 'Twickenham Castle,' till about the year 1810; when, finding the situation lonely, she gave up the house, together with the two thousand pounds a year which her cousin had left to keep it up and maintain it, to the Waldegraves, who continued to inhabit it till a recent date. Removing thence to East Sheen, she found the air unsuited to her delicate constitution, and in consequence purchased from Prince Stahzemberg York House,

Twickenham, formerly the residence of Lord Chancellor Clarendon, where she spent the remainder of a long life.

On settling down at Twickenham, she found that a studio was absolutely necessary, in order to carry out her favorite pursuit, and, in fact, to her happiness; and therefore, as one wing of the mansion had been converted into a theatre, she resolved to turn the other wing into a studio and gallery of sculpture. Here she worked constantly ; and here grew into life, one by one, that series of works in marble and stone with which all admirers of Flaxman and Chantry are familiar.

The list of Mrs. Damer's works is too long to be given here. Among the best known of them, however, are a figure of a 'Dog,' for which she was highly honored by the Academy of Florence; an 'Osprey,' formerly at Strawberry Hill; the colossal bust of Nelson in the Guildhall, and that executed for the King of Tanjore, as already mentioned; and a third for King William I., when Duke of Clarence and Lord High Admiral; heads of the rivers Thame and Isis, which adorn the key-stones of the bridge over the Thames at Henley (near which town was her father's mansion, Park Place); two 'Dogs' in marble for her sister, the Duchess of Richmond-now at Goodwood ; a bust of herself, presented by her to the late Mr. R. P. Knight, F.S.A.; several pieces for Boydell's Shakespeare; statues of her mother, the Countess of Ailesbury; Miss Farren (afterwards Countess of Derby); Miss Barry, the friend of Horace Walpole, and editor of his works; the Hon. Peniston Lamb, and his brother, the second Lord Melbourne, when children; Sir Humphry Davy; Queen Caroline, the consort of George IV; and a bust of Mrs. Siddons, which has been considered a very masterly performance. The statue of King George III in the register office at Edinburgh is the work of her hands, and so is the beautiful bust of Sir Joseph Banks which adorns the British Museum. Horace Walpole makes mention of a group of marble kittens which Mrs. Damer gave him; and adds that they are so much alive that I talk to them.'

But it was not merely as a sculptor that Mrs. Damer acquired celebrity hr her day, for she was also a very clever actress. When the Duke of Richmond patronized private theatricals, he was glad to avail himself of Mrs. Damer's assistance. She was the 'Thalia' of the scene. She appeared in the character of 'Violante' in the Wonder when Lord Henry Fitzgerald supported the part of 'Don Felix.' She also was eminent as 'Mrs. Lovemore,' in 'The Way to Keep Him,' and as 'Lady Freeloze,' in 'The Jealous Wife: At a later period, during her stay at Strawberry Hill, she herself fitted up an elegant little theatre. Here the comedy called 'Fashionable Lovers' (which has been attributed to the pen of Lord Orford) was first represented. Kemble obtained permission to transplant this comedy to the boards of Drury Lane, but there it was not successful.

Mrs. Damer lived to a great age, respected and admired by all her contemporaries; and at her death, in 1828, she bequeathed York House to her cousin, Lady Johnston, the wife of the late Right Hon. Sir Alexander Johnston, and only daughter of Lord William Campbell, a younger son of the Duke of Argyll.

It is clear from what is said above that, in an ago not very remarkable for the love of art, Mrs. Damer secured for herself a name and reputation which was all her own, and fairly distanced the amateur artists of her time. And she may certainly be pronounced

singularly happy, if there is any truth in the words of Pericles that 'the lady is the most to be envied whose name is least mentioned among men whether for praise or blame.' But few anecdotes are told about her; and she does not figure much in the anecdotal memoirs of the 'Georgian Era.' At her death she was guilty of one little piece of pardonable eccentricity; for 'Sylvanus Urban' tells us that 'she directed that her apron and her tools should be buried with her, and also the bones of a favorite dog that died before her.'