

UNSETTLED TIMES 1660 - 1800

*"But of all plagues, good Heaven, thy wrath can send,
Save, save, oh save me from the "candid friend!"*

(George Canning)

During the Civil War every part of Devon was near to one army or the other, so it seems that there was a constant changing of loyalties according to which army happened to be the nearest! After the battle of Torrington in 1646, times were hard for all but the few who actively supported the army and extreme puritanism. Royalists had their estates confiscated and Parliamentarians bought lands; and around Torrington poverty and destitution were rife.

The Act of Settlement of 1662 prevented people from moving freely from place to place for employment. Each family was deemed to have a 'settlement' in any one parish. If a move was essential, notice had to be given to the authorities and the new property, which had to be valued at least at £10 per annum, had to be lived in for at least twelve months.

In North Devon however, there was a certain amount of movement among all classes below the landed class. The squire and freeholder remained rooted in the same parish for centuries, but the rest of the population measured its stay in generations. In the parish of Weare Giffard, an average of twenty per cent of family names disappeared, probably moving to nearby towns which were continually expanding and offering stable employment. Even so, it was rare to go out of the county.

POOR LAW APPRENTICESHIPS.

These were one of the ways used to help people into work. In 1671, John

Lovering was a benefactor who gave money which was laid out in land, for the endowment of a school. Until recently, grants were available from this foundation for the education of children of the village. John Lovering also gave a grant for the provision of fuel for the poor of this parish.

According to the Torrington Wardens' accounts of 1689, Mary Pollard of Weare Giffard was paid for taking home one of George Pollard's children (presumably a relative). Among those leaving bequests for apprenticeships was Sir John Ackland of Barnstaple. Under this bequest, seven apprenticeships are recorded in the old book of Wills. Among them, "*Lewis Purner of Weare Giffard, weaver, hath taken Susan Clare, a poor daughter of Widdowe Clare, later of the said widdowe, an apprentice bound until she be twenty one years of age He received 33s4d surreytyes for repayment there-of to the Mayor. Aldermen and Burgesses Thomas Blakemore, Richard Halse*".

RELIGION.

During the Civil War, Anglican parsons were more often than not Royalists who were driven from their livings, and puritans were put in their place. Influences from Torrington started to penetrate in 1654 when John Howe, a noted preacher and puritan divine, was the curate of the Torrington benefice until he was ejected under the Act of Uniformity of 1662. One of the results of the Reformation was that Church property gradually passed into lay ownership and one of the weapons

ownership and one of the weapons chosen to combat this process was a document known as a Glebe Terrier. This was a record of the endowments of each benefice such as fields (glebe lands), furnishing of parsonages, boundaries, gardens, orchards, charities and inventories of Church goods, and, by the 18th century, titles and surplice fees were also included. The documents are useful historical records for assessing the social and economic situations of the parish clergy.

Weare Giffard had Terriers in 1679 and 1727. Descriptions of the Parsonage in the time of the Reverend Honymcombe, given in the 1727 Terrier include details of the buildings, gardens, orchards and coppices, and a hop-garden. It refers to Weare Giffard as being all enclosed with no common land, and with good hedges. Another point of interest is the reference to a well of pure water, walled and headed with raised stonework, called Trinity Well. Water from the well would be fetched by the Clerk of the Parish for baptisms.

In 1706, James Flexman reported to the Bishop that there were no papists in the village. The school, donated by John Lovering, was administered by Protestants and other parcels of land were in Protestant hands. (See return at end of article)

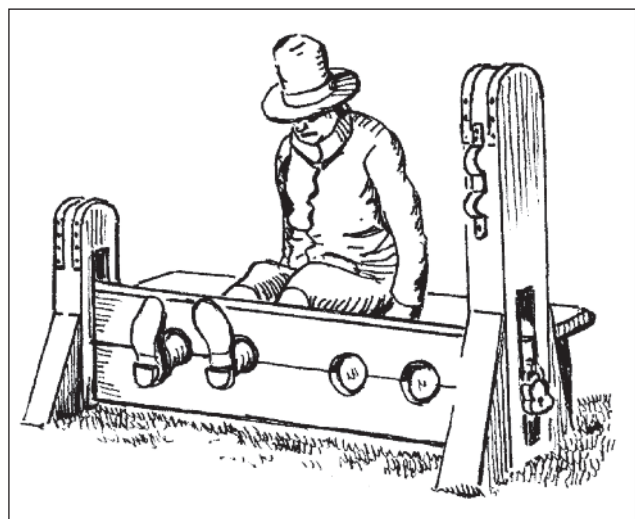
CRIME, LAW AND ORDER.

Weare Giffard was under the authority of the Torrington Union and Council. This meant that those who committed crime in the village were sent before Justices in Torrington, and confined to gaol.

From the Torrington wardens account, we learn that two people from Weare

Giffard, a John Bayley in 1729 and Elizabeth Jope in 1730 were sent to gaol. In 1731, Dan Gordon was paid for carrying two horse stealers to gaol from the village; and Ambrose Mitchell Bellman was paid for watching the prison hall door for nine nights. Torrington had, from an early date, a House of Correction, or Bridewell, a prison to house offenders from the surrounding area. Every town and village was expected to keep its stocks in good order for the punishment of rogues who wandered from parish to parish. In Exeter Records Office, the Receiver's accounts for Weare Giffard state that "in 1717 *pd Richard Scumders for mending the stocks. Pd his bill. 1726 pd John Poslett for mending stock. 1741 pd for a lock and nails for the stocks. 1749 pd Roger Saunders for Ironwork for the stocks*".

The Weare Giffard stocks have disappeared but those of Torrington can still be seen in the Civil War Exhibition. In a paper written by Mr. G.M. Doe (trans. Devon Association Chapter xxxv p.6.50) states "*another form of punishment remembered by old inhabitants was to place offenders in a cage erected in a public place, so that they were exposed to the jeers and taunts of the youth of town and village*"



Further evidence that criminals from Weare Giffard were punished at Torrington is provided by the records of the Torrington Quarter Sessions held on 14th January, 1805: "*Thomas Holwill of Weir Giffard was found guilty of feloniously taking and carrying away from a warehouse of Bryan Reed, a quantity of wool and three skans of year to the value of sixpence, and sentenced to be whipped at the cart's tail on two market days in Torrington and one day in the stocks, and to be imprisoned for three weeks*". By today's standards, a harsh punishment indeed.

THE PLAGUE.

The village was first hit by the plague in 1589 and again in 1591, when a total of 7 people per year were buried. Then again in 1714 - 15, when twenty people were buried. In 1729 and 1742, thirteen people died and in 1755, sixteen were buried. Being an area of scattered farms helped to keep the disease at bay. From 1756-1812 there was a large increase in the number of births in the parish and the population generally increased up to the late 19th century.

FARMING - DURING THE PERIOD 1700- 1850

Important changes occurred in farming. The open field system gradually gave way to enclosure of land, and production of food and raw material such as wool and leather increased. New methods of stockbreeding were considered and animals of better quality were produced. New kinds of farm machinery were also introduced. Enterprising farmers introduced the technique of growing clover and turnips as field crops, both of which supplied food for animals. By addition of manure and marl (a mixture of clay

and lime), the soil was improved. The cottagers and squatters, i.e., those villagers who had the least right to land, suffered most from the enclosures which had resulted in more efficient farming methods and machinery. This brought unemployment and hardship to many farm labourers. The gentry were the biggest landowners and in the case of Weare Giffard, it was Lord John Rolle who was considered to be an excellent landlord and liberal benefactor.(See p.204)

Later, the use of artificial manures on the land made unnecessary the quarrying of limestone and burning in local kilns, so these were abandoned.

WOOLLEN INDUSTRY.

In 1700, the making of woollen cloth was the most important British industry, but after 1750, the manufacture of cotton supplanted wool and the development of this was largely responsible for the changeover from cottage industry to the new factory system where new machinery was used. The changeover, however, was slow and as late as 1850, Mr. Turton who lived at the wool mill in Weare Giffard, was producing "Turton blankets". (See 'Our Industrial Village').

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.

Because Devon had no heavy industry such as the making of steel and iron, the industrial revolution did not greatly benefit the county. Most villages and towns declined in prosperity and size, and wages were very low. Trade was hit by the constant French wars and the loss of the American Colonies as a result of the American War of Independence in 1775. One surmises that this was not a particularly happy period for the people of Weare Giffard

PAPIST RETURNS

These were returns made by a responsible and named person within a town or village, swearing that there were no papists (Roman Catholics) living within their parish. These returns were made at various intervals, and followed the outcome of the Civil War. They were similar to 'protestations' and served much the same purpose.

PAPIST RETURN 1706

WEARE GIFFARD

My Lord,

May it please your Lordship to accept of those things, which I now offer to your Lordship's hands, in return to your order concerning Papists in every parish, which has been communicated to your clergy. My parish of Wear Giffard in which I reside and is in the North *Deanery:* of Barum and in it is no Papist or reputed Papist inhabiting; neither has any such right to your *advertising?* of your benefits or donation of a school or any lands herein for your sole right of *presentation?* of your Worship. Hugh Fortescue of Filleigh Esquire who has two Measures of Land within the parish and your most considerable estate of your Worship. Robert Rolles of Steventone Esquire and your donation of a school for teaching a certain number of poor children to read English, is in your power, of your heirs and trustees, of John Lowering, Gentleman, deceased, who are all Protestants. Other parcels of land here are in the possession of Protestants. I have been diligent in my enquiry and am * your return which I now make, pursuant to your * **B * of your order as they relate to * and shall show you like diligence to obey your commands which your Lordship shall lay upon.

Your most dutiful

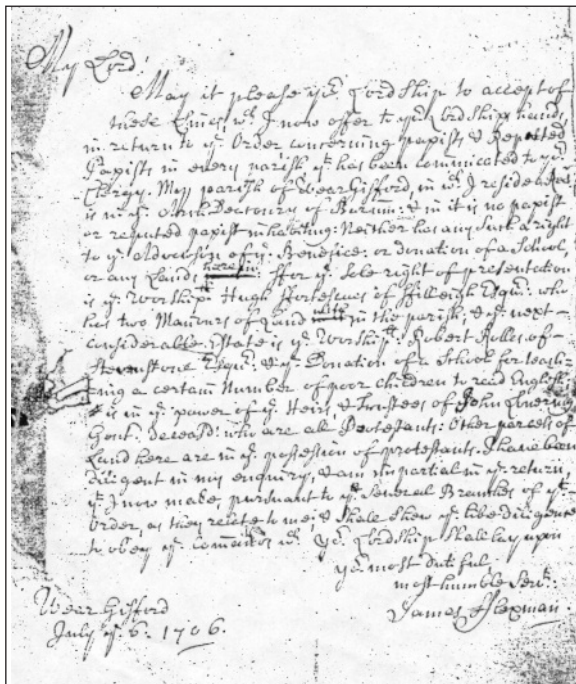
Most humble servant

Wear Giffard

James Flexman

July * 6 th* 1706.

* * = Indecipherable



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