

Charles Towsey of Henley upon Thames in the County of Wexford Gentleman

Mary Harriot Sparks

A. B. Moorhouse

TOWSEY TALES

NAME: Edward Towsey

BIRTH DETAILS: 1676 Letcombe Regis

DEATH DETAILS: 7 October 1731

CHART REF: Towsey Charts F1 & E1

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 1st M: 20 May 1699

SPOUSE: Mary Frogley (21 Apr.1679- Mar.1701)

(See Towsey Chart E3 for Frogley)

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 2nd M: 27 Apr.1701 Wantage

SPOUSE: Mary Mills



Edward Towsey was the last of William Towsey and Mary Freeman's five children. He was born in 1676, the year in which his elder sister, Mary died. For some reason he was not christened until late in the following summer.

It was Edward who moved the short distance to Wantage, (then in Berkshire but now a part of Oxfordshire), where our family stayed for the next three generations.

As to the appearance of men like Edward Towsey at that time. Although large wigs had become fashionable in high society after the Restoration of King Charles the Second in 1660, it is unlikely that country gentlemen would have been wearing them. The diagram from 1690 shows the type of clothing that country people would have still been wearing at the end of the seventeenth century.

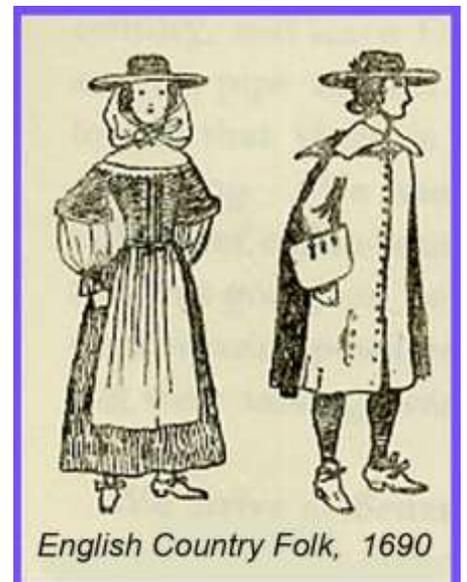
In 1699 Edward married the charmingly named Mary Frogley, a daughter of one of the most prominent families in the area. Nine months later, almost to the day, their daughter Mary was born. She died in infancy. A few months later, Mary was pregnant again. Then in March of 1701, she died in childbirth. This second daughter was also christened Mary.

Edward remarried just one month later, probably through the need of a mother for his baby daughter.

Edward's second wife was 24 year-old Mary Mills: our ancestor. We have records of her family dating back to the late sixteenth century. (See Towsey Chart E5).

As the eldest of nine children, Mary Mills would no doubt have already had plenty of experience of child-minding and perhaps considered that moving in with Edward Towsey and taking care of his one baby, was a better deal than staying at home with her eight young siblings. Besides, by this time, Edward would have been well on the way to becoming a successful young gentleman.

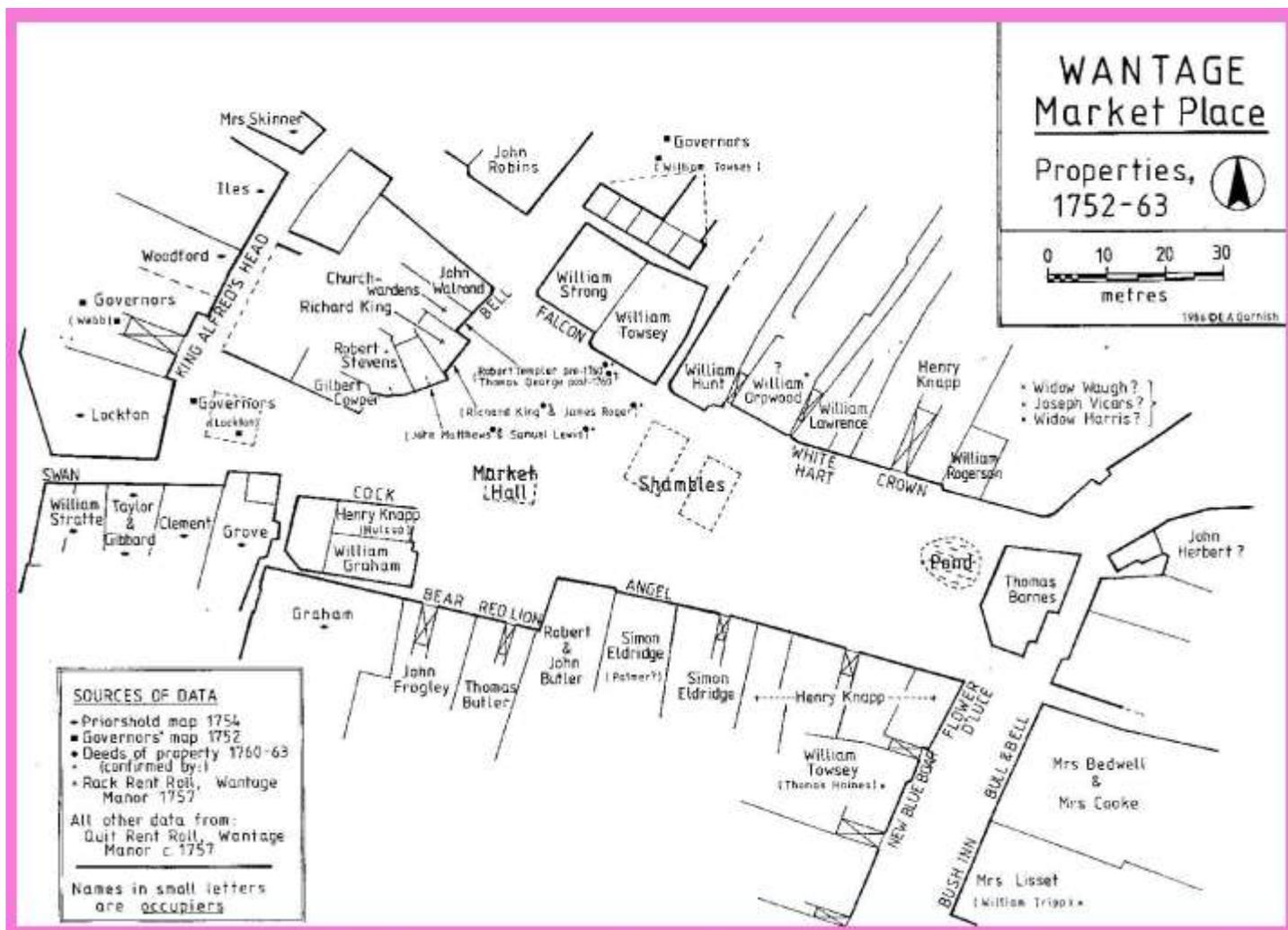
If Edward's reason for marrying Mary Mills in such haste, was in order to look after his



English Country Folk, 1690



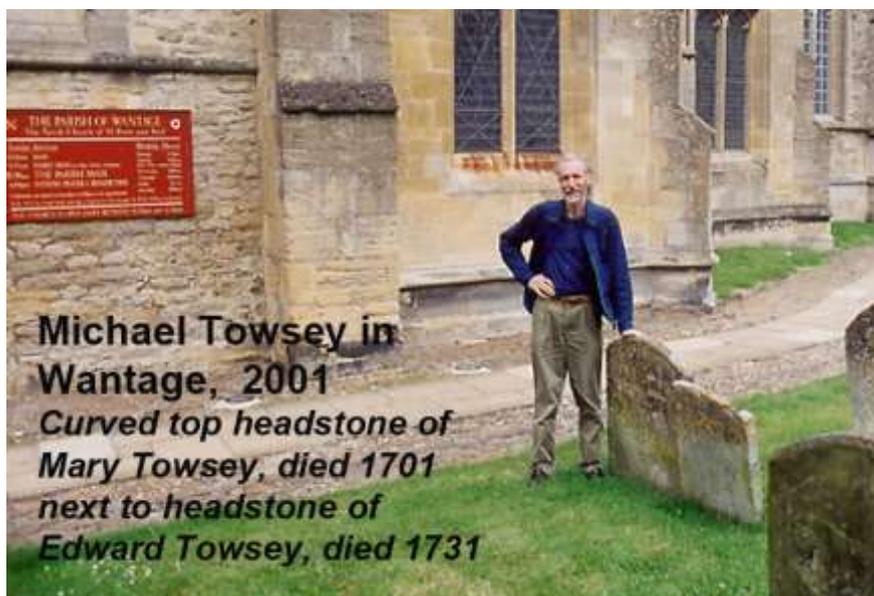
Late 17th Century Apothecary Shop



newborn daughter, then this reason was removed twelve months later, with the death of the second baby Mary.

Edward was an apothecary (which may be seen as the forerunner of both the modern general practitioner and the chemist). An apothecary would be likely to stock medicines, perfumes, spices, herbs, comfits, antidotes, aphrodisiacs, antiseptics, tonics, purgatives, laxatives, emetics, astringents, general cure-alls and perhaps such exotic and foreign substances as Peruvian bark, quinine, "Spanish Juice" and "Dragon's Blood".

In the map above, from half a century later, the building on the north side of the square, belonging to William Towsey, had previously belonged to Edward, and would most likely have been the place where he conducted his apothecary business.



There is at least one record of Edward being referred to as Doctor Towsey.

In 1724, he was paid two guineas by the rector of a nearby village to visit a sick family. Again, in 1729, "Mr. Towsey, the physician", was paid from the Wantage parish funds for "ingredients". Obviously medicines.

There are several records of contracts, whereby Edward Towsey leased properties which he owned within Wantage. The house in which he and his family lived, was probably a house later known as "Gibbons House", which was reached through a passageway through the middle of The Bear Inn, which fronts onto the south side of the market place. This can be seen on the map above, with the Bear Inn in the possession of John Frogley.

In his will, Edward lists his profession as Tallow Chandler.

Wantage at that time had a thriving tanning industry, so we can assume that apart from strange medicinal substances, Edward was also dealing in the tallow from these animals, which was used to make the cheaper sort of candles that ordinary folk would use. Wealthy people would be more likely to opt for the better quality wax candles, which not only burnt more evenly and lasted longer, but also did not stink out the house, like those made from animal fat.

Edward Towsey and his wife, Mary Mills, produced five children, though only the first two; William, born in 1703 and Edward (our ancestor), born in 1705, survived. The last of the five was christened in March 1709 and Mary died the following year on 26th November 1710, at the age of 33 years.

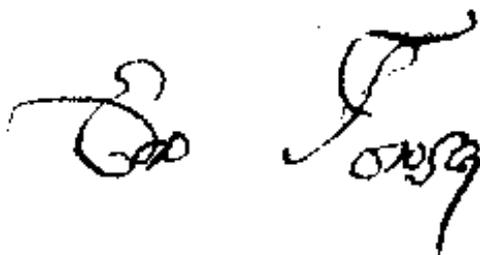
These details are shown on Towsey Chart E1. The upper part of Chart E1 also shows the descendants of the younger Edward's brother, William, who was classed as a gentleman but also had a tobacconist business. It is probably this William Towsey who occupied the shop in Wantage, shown on the above map, though by that time, it might have been his son, another William.

It appears that Edward (senior) married for a third time, though there is no record of such, for he mentions his wife in the will which he wrote on the seventh of August, 1731. He died just two months later on October 7th at the age of 55 years.

The shaky signature on his will, reproduced below, indicates that Edward Towsey was probably in a bad way at that time.

It is worth reproducing this will in full, as it is a good example of the normal format of a will of that period:

In the Name of God Amen this seventh day of August in the fifth year of the reign of our Sovereign lord George the second over great Britain and Ireland king Defender of the faith. Anno Domini One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty One. I Edward Towsey of Wantage in the County of Berks. Tallow Chandler do make this my last will and testament whereby humbly Surrendering my Soul into the hands of Almighty God whensoever it shall please him to take me out of this mortal life. And my body to the Earth to be therein decently buried I dispose of my worldly Estate as follows (viz) I give unto my loving wife Twenty Pounds to be paid to her by my executor herein after named within one month next after my decease And I give her the use of the feather bed and boulder she now lyes on And of the two pillows and pillow cases and three pairs of sheets (not the best nor the worst) And also of three blankets and one quilt during her natural life And after her decease I give the same unto my son Edward to dispose of at his will and pleasure. ITEM I give to my said son Edward the sum of four hundred pounds to be paid him by my executor herein after named in manner following That is to say Two hundred pounds part thereof within one year next after my decease and the other two hundred pounds within twelve calendar months next after the decease of my said wife And I give to my granddaughter Sara twenty guineas and hereby direct the same be paid by my executor to my said son Edward Father for her use within two years next after my decease AND my will is that my plate and rings be equally divided between my two sons William and Edward All the rest and residue of my goods and chattels land and tenements whatsoever and wheresoever I give devize and bequeath unto my son William his heirs Executors and Administrators BUT my will is that in case he be already married to Sarah Haymaker or shall hereafter marry her that then in such I give to my said son Edward one hundred pounds more over and besides the said four hundred pounds before mentioned And my will is the same shall be paid by my executor hereinafter named within the space of one month next after such marriage had or to be had PROVIDED always And my will and meaning further is that in case my son William shall happen to depart this life without leaving issue of his body lawfully begotten that then in such case I give one Royety (?) of my Real Estate unto my said son Edward and to his heirs and Assign Anything herein before contained to the contrary notwithstanding And I make my son William sole Executor of this my last Will and Testament and Richard Aldworth of Wantage aforesaid Trustee or overseer of the same and my Will is that in case any dispute or difference arise between my said two sons or my wife and them or either of them that it be decided by the said Richard Aldworth to whom I give a guinea for his care and paines therein And thereby revoak and make null and void all former wills by me heretofore made and declare this only to be my last Will and Testament IN WITNESS whereof the said Edward Towsey the said Testator have hereunto set my hand and seal the Day and Year of the Date first above written.



A vestry was originally a room attached to a church, where the priest's vestments were kept. This room was later used for meetings of the parish officials who, at the time of the above document, were the local government. All local administration and financial expenditure was managed by these church officials and their meetings were also called 'vestries'.

<p>Received the 15th of June 1745 of Mr. Thomas Brewer Vicar - Mr. Tho. Mills and Mr. John Frogley Church-Wardens Mr. William Towsey and Mr. John Butler Overseers the Sum of Fifty pounds being a legacy left in and by the last will and Testament of Mr. Ambrose Clement to Buy two Communion pieces of plate of the above Mentioned Sum of Fifty pounds for the use of this parish of Wantage - Witness Edw. Allan Tho. Garrard By me John Seymour</p> <p>At a vestry the 3rd April 1747 Ordered that a Carriage be made for the fire Engine and that the doors be altered for the more convenient getting it out and into the Church.</p> <p>The Parson Thomas Gibbons William Towsey Henry Knapp John Stubbins Richard Browne John Kirby John Seymour Richard Bagg John Stone Tho. Garrard John Stone John Richardson</p>	<p>WANTAGE PARISH CHURCH ACCOUNT BOOK</p> <p>Received the 15th of June 1745 of Mr. Thomas Brewer vicar - Mr. Thomas Mills and Mr. John Frogley Church Wardens, Mr. William Towsey and Mr. John Butler Overseers, the sum of fifty pounds being a legacy left in and by the last will and testament of Mr Ambrose Clement to Buy two Communion pieces of plate of the above mentioned sum of fifty pounds for the use of this parish of Wantage - by me John Seymour</p> <p>Witness Edward Allan Thomas Garrard</p> <p>At a vestry the 3rd April 1747 Ordered that a carriage be made for the fire engine and that the doors be altered for the more convenient getting it out and into the Church.</p> <p>Signatures including William Towsey</p>
<p>Both Thomas Mills and John Frogley were brothers-in-law of Edward Towsey senior. William Towsey was his son.</p>	

Edward Towsey Senior's son, William Towsey, mentioned in the above will and the Wantage Parish accounts, had already been married once, to Mary Prestwood, by the time this will was written. She died in childbirth in 1728.

It is quite likely that Edward Towsey was against the idea of his son marrying Sarah Haymaker, perhaps because she was not of high enough social standing. Whatever the reason, the thought of having to forfeit the weighty sum of one hundred pounds seems to have been enough to cool William's passion for Miss Haymaker, for it was not six months after Edward's death, that William married one Mary Battin.

You can read more about this William Towsey (born 1703), on his own Towsey Tale. The Frogley family can be seen on Towsey Chart E3 and the Mills family in Towsey Chart E5.