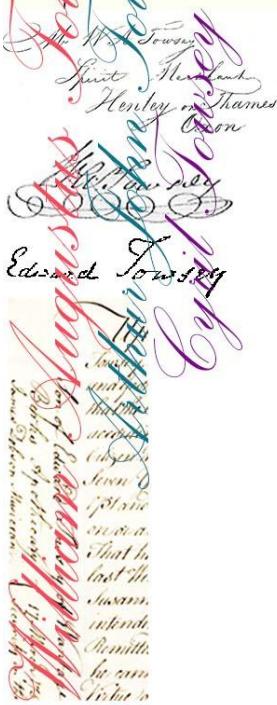


Charles Towsey of Henley upon Thames in the County of Oxford Gentleman

Mary Harriet Sparks

Mrs B. Moorhouse

TOWSEY TALES



NAME: William Towsey

BIRTH DETAILS: Ch: 13 Sep.1703 Wantage

DEATH DETAILS: April 1764 Wantage

CHART REF: Towsey Chart E1

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 1st M: circa 1719-1727

SPOUSE: Mary Prestwick of Shrivenham

(B: 1696 D: 12 Nov.1727 in childbirth)

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 2nd M: 20 Apr.1732 Ardington

SPOUSE: Mary Battin (B: 1702 - D: 15 Apr.1744)

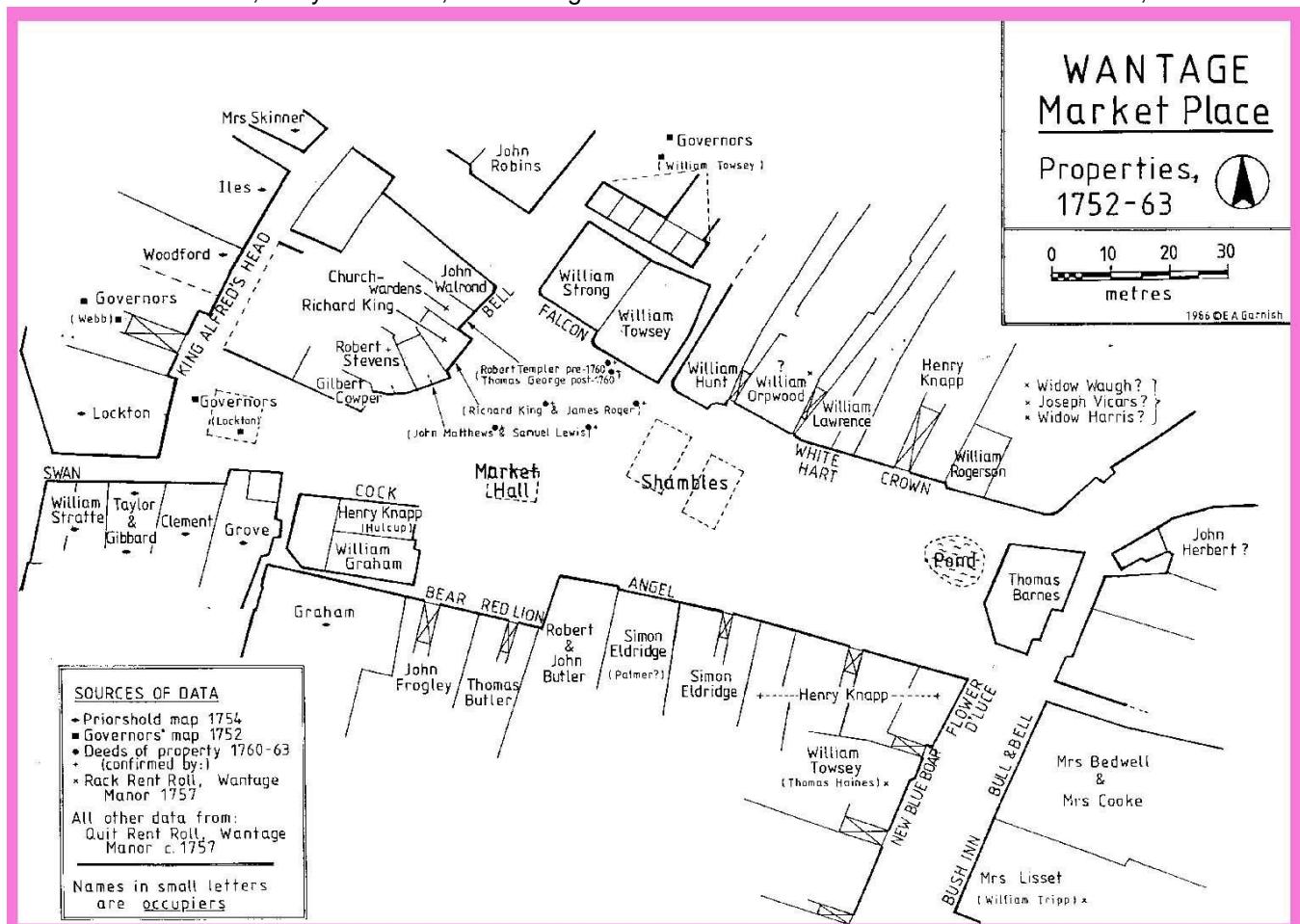
MARRIAGE DETAILS: 3rd M:

SPOUSE: Eleanor

Edward Towsey and his wife, Mary Mills, had five children. They might have had more except that Mary died less than two years after the fifth. Of these five, only the first two survived. That is, William Towsey, born in 1703 and his brother Edward, born two years later.

As you can see above, and on Towsey Chart E1, William was not very lucky with keeping his wives alive, though it might be more correct to say that it was his wives who were afflicted by a lack of good fortune.

William's first wife, Mary Prestwick, died during the birth of what we assume to be their first child, in 1727.



Four years later, William was apparently considering marriage to Sarah Haymaker, when his father died. In his will, Edward left £400 to his son, Edward and the remaining, unspecified balance of the estate to William. This extract from the will shows that for some unknown reason, Edward senior was not at all happy about William's potential bride and stated that if he went ahead and married her, then he would receive £100 less:

...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...

It could be that Edward Towsey was against the idea of his son marrying Sarah Haymaker because she was not of high enough social standing, or, maybe she was a Catholic. 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 his father's death, that William married Mary Battin.

This couple produced three children, of whom just one, another William Towsey (a maltster by trade), survived.

| WANTAGE PARISH CHURCH ACCOUNT BOOK | | |
|---|---|---|
| <i>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 Witness Edward Allan Thomas Garrard</i> | | |
| <i>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</i> | <i>John Galler Timothy Gibbons William Towsey Henry Knapp John Robbins Richard Bourne John Kirby John Seymour John Scott John Stone John Garrard John Price John Watson</i> | |
| | | <i>Signatures including William Towsey</i> |
| | | Both Thomas Mills and John Frogley were brothers-in-law of Edward Towsey senior. William Towsey was his son. |

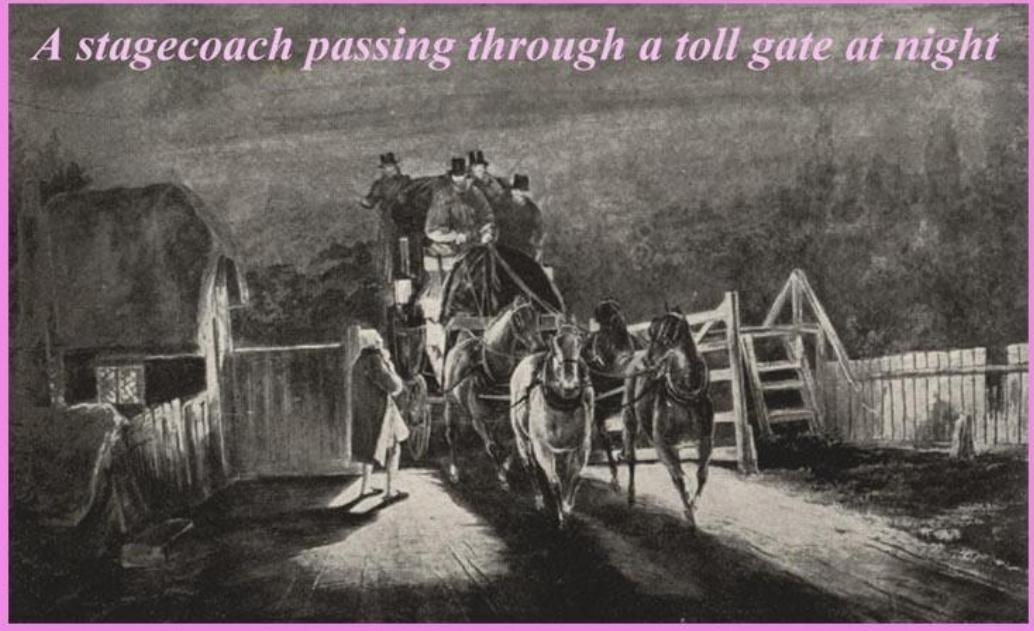
A vestry was originally a room attached to a church, where the priest's vestments were kept. This room was later used for meetings of the parish officials who, at the time of the above document, were the local government. All local administration and financial expenditure in the parish, was managed by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

William, by virtue of his parentage, was classed as a gentleman, but he also had a tobacconist business in Wantage. It is probably this William Towsey who occupied the shop in Wantage, shown on the map above, though by that time, it might have been his son, another William, occupying the shop on the north side of the town square.

Despite what might be seen a character flaw or two, William was still seen as a leading member of local society. Apart from his work as a parish official, he and his brother were also both trustees of the Upper Thames Valley Roads

Turnpike, from 1752 to 1754, meaning that they oversaw the management of the toll roads, ensuring that the money collected at the toll gates was properly utilized in road maintenance.

A stagecoach passing through a toll gate at night



Both William the father and William the son were wealthy and respected members of the Wantage gentry.

The younger William was a substantial land owner in Wantage. He most likely grew wheat on the 62 acres he owned along Newbury Street, just out of the town (now built upon). From this he would have made particularly large profits at the time of the drought of 1762, when the price of wheat doubled.

The younger William produced three daughters. Two survived and only the younger one, Mary, married. She in turn produced just one daughter, Mary Wise, who ended up inheriting all of that substantial Towsey estate from her mother and her Aunt Charlotte, who lived in one of the three houses that her father had owned in Newbury Street, until she died in 1827.

There is a record of Charlotte being allotted land in the nearby village of Ardington from an enclosure in 1811.

As mentioned above, the first Edward Towsey seems to have had an issue with the judgement of his eldest son, William, as to his selection of a suitable partner. Perhaps Edward's view that William was inclined to act impulsively, in matters of the heart, is reinforced by the fact that after the death of his second wife, William produced two illegitimate children with a woman called Eleanor, before finally taking her as his third wife.

Of these two, also shown on Towsey Chart E1, we know that the elder, James Towsey, who would have been born between 1745 and possibly as late as about 1765, lived until 1792. He married and had a son: Charles Henry Towsey, a cordwainer (a maker of fine quality leather footwear), born in 1785, who lived for 82 years, dying in 1867, still living in Wantage.