

It was not stated just how long they stood in that spot.

We know that by 1767, Charles was living in the parish of St.Dunstan-in-the-East, just north of the river, in the City and that in 1775 his office was in Bow Street, near Covent Garden.

On November 10th, 1777, at the age of 38, Charles Towsey was examined for completion of articles of clerkship before Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, to be admitted to the Queen's Bench; the second highest court in the land, despite not being a member of one of the four Inns of Court.

Because Charles Towsey had already been an established and successful attorney in the Chancery Courts for many years, we can assume that his clerkship and thence admission to the Queen's Bench was more a formality, undertaken so as to allow him to represent his clients in that court when their business affairs moved into the realms of criminal law.

The admission of an attorney to any particular bench was, in those days, pretty much at the discretion of the head of that bench. We can assume that Charles must have had very good connections in London, because even before his admission to The Queen's Bench, he had appeared in the highest court; The King's Bench, as the following report from 1776 shows, where Charles is arguing an important case before the same Justice Mansfield.

Through business or family connections, it was easier for a gentleman like Charles to gain admission to the higher court; a path not necessarily open to those without the right introductions. These days, it is only barristers who may appear as an advocate before the higher court.

It was also Lord Mansfield who built Kenwood House, in what is now Hampstead Heath. We know that Mansfield used to entertain some of the young attorneys at his home, so it is quite possible that Charles Towsey used to be entertained in the same rooms that we can now visit in what has become the Kenwood House museum.

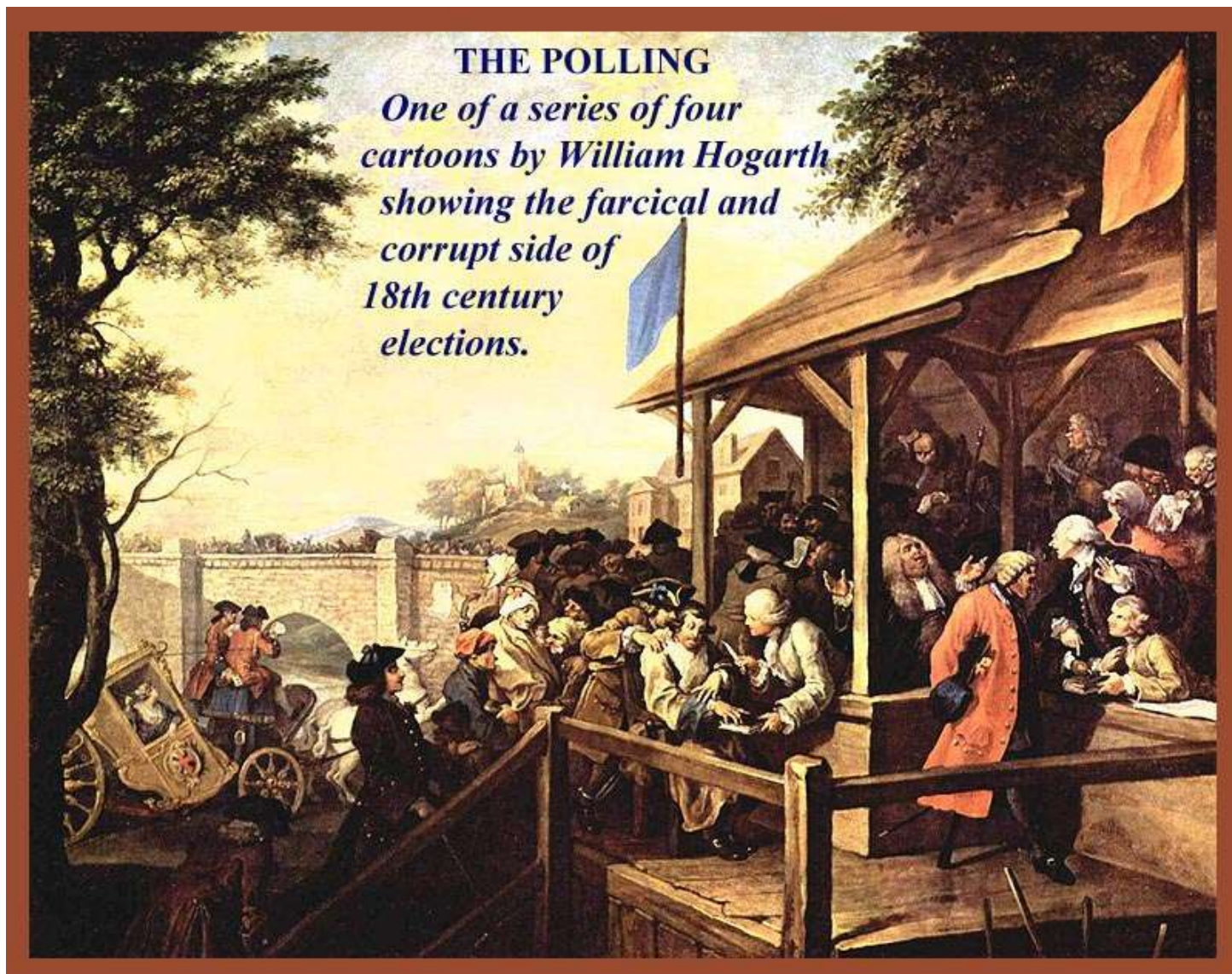
February 20th, 1776

A cause was tried in the King's Bench, Westminster, before Lord Mansfield and a special jury, wherein Mr. Towsey of Clement's Inn was plaintiff and a gentleman of the county of Worcester was defendant. The cause was brought by indictment against the said gentleman for wilful and corrupt perjury on a late occasion. After a hearing of near seven hours, the judge summed up the evidence and gave his charge to the jury, who withdrew and in half an hour returned and delivered their verdict, finding the defendant guilty of wilful and corrupt perjury. He was ordered to be brought up the first day of next term in order to receive sentence. Great numbers of persons of distinction, and several members of the lower assembly, appeared in behalf of the prisoner.



Images of Kings Bench, 1770s

Without the name of the defendant in this case, I had to call out from storage in the old salt mines in Cheshire, the original rolls for all 1600 cases during that term in 1776. I did not find the relevant roll, but have seen a very similar case which, together with the mention of several members of the House of Commons appearing for the defendant, indicate that this was probably a case of electoral fraud, where the gentleman in Worcestershire tried to bribe the electors. Remember that before the days of universal suffrage, where only men of a certain social standing could vote, such bribery would have been a lot easier to organize.



As with the case in Worcestershire, the defendant in Wiltshire also seemed to have a lot of friends, which is easy enough to understand when the electoral candidate is throwing his money around. The Wiltshire gent was also found guilty and fined the enormous sum of one thousand pounds. In addition, he was given six months in prison and two sessions in the pillory. Being a popular guy, these hours of humiliation in the stocks, were not greeted by hurled tomatoes and raucous ridicule, but by musicians and a general party mood.

Charles was married in 1767, at twenty eight years of age, to Susannah Pearson, at the parish church in the village of Horton at the very bottom of Buckinghamshire, just to the west of what is now Heathrow Airport. Charles is shown as being of the parish of St. Dunstan in the East, in London, at the time of his marriage.

Horton is right next to Wraysbury, a village which sits on the upper Thames River.

There are no obvious family connections to the Pearson family in Buckinghamshire, so we can only speculate as to how Charles, from Wantage and living in London, met Susannah. It might have been through one of her brothers, who were just a bit younger than Charles and would almost certainly have been educated in London.

One thing that has become obvious by this time, is that the Towsey men did tend to marry well. Charles's mother, his wife and those of his son and grandson all came from wealthy families.

William Pearson, Susanna's father (about whom you can read more at his own 'Towsey Tale'), wrote his will in March of 1763, leaving the control of all of his property to his wife, during her lifetime, except for the mill, which included a house and surrounding farmland, all leased from the charmingly named Mister Holland Cooksey, of Worcestershire, which he left equally to his two sons, James and Thomas. He also left five hundred pounds each to his two daughters,

Susanna and Sarah, which they would get when they turned twenty-one, or married. The two girls would also share, after their mother's death, the annual interest on four thousand pounds invested in bonds.

Within three months, probably as a result of his rapidly declining health, William had handed the mill over to James and Thomas. He then died in June, 1764.

One provision of William's will, was that if James and Thomas did not get along amicably as business partners, then James would take over and pay Thomas for his half share.

We can assume that this clause was inserted in the will through William's insight into the character of his sons, because on 29th April, 1766, the partnership was dissolved. It would seem that James did not have enough money of his own with which to pay off his brother, so he borrowed £450 from his mother, out of Susannah's inheritance, in November, 1766.

By this time, the marriage of Susannah Pearson to Charles Towsey, had already been arranged, so a condition of James being allowed to borrow what was in fact, Susannah's dowry, was that he would enter into a bond to repay £900 to Charles.

Charles and Susanna were married in Horton, three month later and between that date and August 1767, Charles lent James a further £1,143/18/-, leaving James in debt to Charles for £1,593/18/-, in return for which Charles received a half share of the leasehold property and the paper making, milling and farming businesses conducted thereon.

Charles and Susannah also moved into the house that was a part of that leasehold and their first child, Amelia Sarah, was born there, probably at the end of 1767.

James presumably lived with his mother and other sister at another of their properties in Horton.

If Charles and Susannah thought that they were settling into a stable lifestyle for decades to come, then they were quickly disabused of that notion, when James was declared bankrupt on 29th December 1767.

The rent on the mill and associated property, was £210 per annum, paid half-yearly and a standard clause of the lease stated that if the lessee did not pay the rent within a certain time, the lessor was entitled to take possession. And this is precisely what the owner, Holland Cooksey of Worcester, did on 10th May, 1768.

Charles had apparently, said that he would pay the outstanding £105, but Cooksey refused and tricked Charles and all of the servants out of the house by some stratagem that, if it were as Charles later stated, makes him look somewhat gullible.

In court arguments that went on for at least the next six years, Charles claimed that under William Pearson's management, the value of the property had been greatly increased by the upgrading and addition of various buildings. He



LONDON STREET SCENE 1770

On the left, Dr. Johnson seems to be speaking to Boswell. Next Charles Towsey is explaining to his wife, Susannah, the perils of London streets. A small boy has bought a caged bird. A woman is selling bread rolls. A gentleman is negotiating with an expensive courtesan, and the couple on the right had better keep an eye on the lad. Is he an apprentice on an errand, or a cunning cutpurse?

also said that Cooksey took the property, using the excuse that it had sunk into a state of considerable disrepair, which Charles denied, saying that Cooksey had merely erected scaffolding in the house to give the impression of large scale repairs taking place.

Cooksey's counter claim was that he was required to spend more than £900 to restore the property to a sound condition and that tenant farmers had been complaining that due to neglect, the banks that channelled water into the mill, had collapsed in places, resulting in the flooding of their farm lands.

It is difficult to ascertain the truth in all of this, but it cannot be denied that to be declared bankrupt within three years of taking over a solid, thriving business, one would have to be a hopeless businessman.

We do not know the eventual outcome of the litigation brought by Charles Towsey, nor have I found any further references to the fate of the hapless James Pearson.

It is likely also, that although Charles and family were living in Horton, he would have kept a room at Clement's Inn, or elsewhere, whilst pursuing his legal career in London. It is unlikely that Charles ever intervened in the management of the mill, beyond handling legal matters.

After the seizure of the house near the mill, Charles and family must have moved into another property in Horton, because at least their next two children were born there. It must have been between 1770 and 1773 that Charles took his family back to London

As you can see on Towsey Chart D1, we have records of five children of Charles and Susannah Towsey, though there may have been more who did not survive.

Their fourth was Augusta Matilda, who was christened on July 16th, 1773 at St.Pauls Covent Garden. She died seven weeks later in Horton. Charles and Susanna's fifth child was Sophia Clementina Towsey.

The Towsey family seem to have lived around central London and the West End, quite possibly in various rented houses. Frequent moves from one rented property to another was the norm in London in those days, even for wealthy families.

It would seem, from the available documents, that they moved to Henley, on the banks of the upper Thames River in Oxfordshire, in 1777.

In 1779, Charles took on a clerk: a legal apprentice, in Henley.

Apart from conducting his own business as an attorney at the time of his move to Henley, Charles became the 'Master Extraordinary in Chancery', for Oxfordshire. This means that Charles was the county representative of the Court of Chancery, empowered to conduct business and sign documents on behalf of the court.

There may well have been other factors in Charles's decision to move to Henley.



The years since Charles's arrival had seen dramatic changes in the London landscape. The building boom which started after the fire of 1666, did not slow throughout the 18th century. A constantly swelling population, due to the industrial revolution, required more and more green fields to be covered with rows of Georgian terraced houses. This would have made it more difficult to get away from the stench of the unsewered streets.

Also by 1777, a system of turnpike roads, or tollways, had replaced the woefully inadequate highway system that had existed forty years earlier, halving the time it took to get from London to Henley.

But why not move back to his ancestral home in Wantage?

There is a chance, though I have found no substantial proof thereof, that Susannah's mother had come from Henley, so there might have been relatives there already. This is based on the fact that at the time of her death, Sarah Pearson is stated as being 'of Henley'. This though, might have been because she had spent her final days being looked after by Charles and Susannah.

It might just be that Henley is a lot closer to London than Wantage and, in addition, Wantage was in a state of decline towards the end of the 18th century, though it did not decline dramatically until the 1790s, when the negative effects of the industrial and agricultural revolutions were compounded by the costs and uncertainties of the Napoleonic War.

On November 8th, 1781, Charles and Susanna's last child, Louisa Susanna, was christened in Henley. On the following day, Susanna was buried, having presumably died in childbirth. We know that the child, Louisa Susanna was still living in 1789.

Over the coming decade, it may well be that Charles divided his time between Henley and London.

In 1786, when his son, William Augustus turned sixteen, Charles took him on as a clerk. This is shown as being in Henley, but William probably moved back and forth to London with his father.

Charles died at 50 years of age on 10th November, 1789, in London, just one month after the French Revolution and five months after the second fleet of convict rabble had shoved off to New South Wales on the other side of the world.

