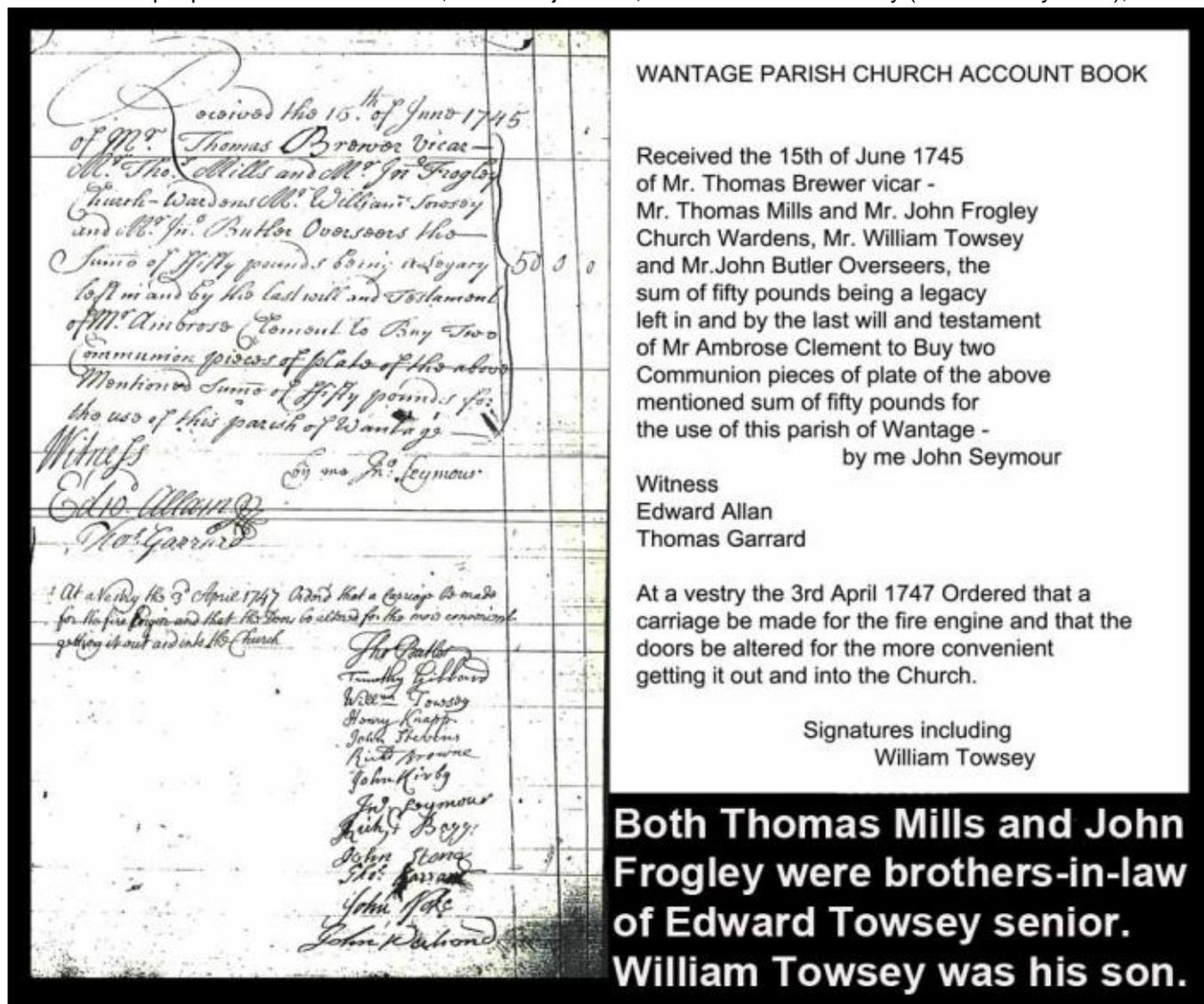


Four years later, William was apparently considering marriage to Sarah Haymaker, when his father died. In his will, Edward left £400 to his son, Edward and the remaining, unspecified balance of the estate to William. This extract from the will shows that for some unknown reason, Edward senior was not 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 devise 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.



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.

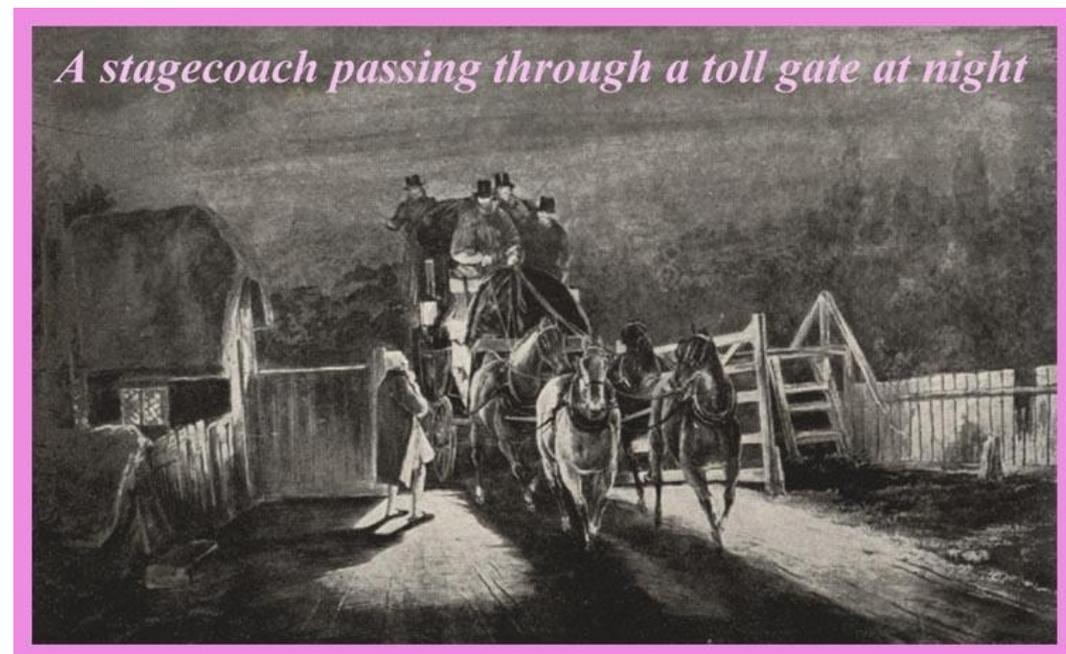
Despite what might be seen a character flaw or two, William was still seen as a leading member of local society. Apart from his work as a parish official, he and his brother were also both trustees of the Upper Thames Valley Roads

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.

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.