

A Time of Trauma and Transition

17th Century Worle

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For Lupin

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Foreword

It is surprising how when writing out the history of a century it comes to so few pages. The problem probably occurs because there are so many records but few details. Perhaps hidden away in some dusty archive somewhere there is still more to be found, let's hope so!

For now all we can do is to work with what we can find and hope to improve on it as time goes on. Events of the seventeenth century affected the Parish of Worle and of course still affect our lives today so it seems worth having a record of what appears to have happened.

It is also fascinating to imagine people going about their everyday lives whilst such momentous things like the execution of the King were taking place elsewhere. The one thing we can never know is what they were thinking, what they really believed and what they agreed with, we can only guess.

I never fail to be astounded by things I read in the papers every morning. The majority of people in the seventeenth century couldn't read but their jaws must have dropped many times over when they were informed of the latest events and legislation.

Some things seem harsh and unbelievable but it was tougher times and an entirely different outlook, sometimes and for some exciting and other times just plain terrifying. We have to use our imaginations to fill in around the facts, a good way to waste hours musing. Looking back at the lessons learned should help to make a successful future, perhaps it should be compulsory!

Chapter One

Painting the Picture

As no early depictions of the Parish or Manor of Worle exist, exactly how it looked in the seventeenth century can only be imagined. The thatched cottage down in Ebdon Road is said to date to the previous century and some of the cottages at the top of the hill are known to be even older. Built of local Mendip stone they were unlikely to have been rendered and were possibly thatched originally.

It was a rural area by this time and sparsely populated, the livestock may well have outnumbered the people. The early medieval castle had long since disappeared, remembered only by its mound in the field still known as Castle Batch. Animals were taken to water at the pond in what was the bailey and there was another village pond near the crossroads at the bottom of the hill. True to its Somerset location there were many orchards and plenty of cider was brewed and consumed by the locals.

There were several yeoman class farming families who undoubtedly lived in more substantial farm houses than those in the smaller holdings. There must also have been farm labourer's cottages scattered throughout the parish. At the beginning of the century the village clustered around a green on the brow of

Worle Hill overlooking a still marshy valley. Here the villagers entertained themselves on a bowling green and at the cock fighting pit. Only one licensed victualler was recorded at the start but by the end of the century there was a public house and an inn. As a reminder to law and order the stocks were also located on the village green and probably provided some extra entertainment at the expense of the unfortunate miscreant therein.

Calamine was mined along the hill which was full of tunnels and shafts in which there were many accidents. A few miles to the west smuggling was rife in the Bristol Channel and Worle was reputed to be the central place of storage and distribution, serving the small bays along the Bristol Channel. It is said full use was made of the church tower and no doubt of any disused tunnels. Parish registers record sojourners, perhaps miners and smugglers. However later records suggest there were cordwainers and tallow chandlers in the parish and what village would have been complete without a smithy and pound.

The highways would have been little more than well trodden track ways forming a crossroads in the village and branching off in all directions to neighbouring parishes. The Medieval church, St. Martins stood a little to the west next to the tithe barn. Up until the dissolution both had belonged to Worspring Priory in Kewstoke who from the thirteenth

century had also been Lords of the Manor. By the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth the lordship had been obtained by the Wyndham family of Felbrigg but the church and glebe lands referred to as the Parsonage or Rectory of Worle appear to have remained a separate issue.

By breaking from the Roman Catholic Church at the beginning of the previous century, Henry VIII created great cultural and political changes throughout the country. These changes were nothing compared with what was to come during the seventeenth century. With civil war and rebellion there was also some extraordinary weather phenomena, it truly was a period of trauma and transition.

Chapter Two

The Alice Cole Charity

At the turn of the seventeenth century England was still governed by a Tudor monarchy which was the most powerful force in the country. All this was to change over the next hundred years and Worle had little option but to move with the times.

During November of the first year, 1600, George Utley of London conveyed the rectories, tithes and churches of Worle to Alice Cole of Bristol. The lands had been conveyed to Utley in October of the same year by Hugh Sexey also of London. They had been granted to him a couple of years earlier by Elizabeth I, to be held of her Manor of East Greenwich. Following the dissolution of the monasteries, lands in Worle and the neighbouring parish Kewstoke were recorded as belonging to Worspring Priory which was listed amongst the assets in Somerset of both Henry VIII and his son, Edward VI.

Alice was the widow of Richard Cole who had died the year before her investment. He had been an alderman, sheriff and mayor of Bristol to which city he was by bequest a generous benefactor. Interestingly Alice was one of the daughters of William Carr who had also been an M.P., alderman and sheriff of Bristol. William was the first lessee of Worspring Priory as a farm after the dissolution, and in his will he had

bequeathed the parsonages of Worle and Kewstoke to his second son, Edward Carr. Edward died without issue in London and presumably his lands in Somerset reverted to the Monarchy.

Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 bringing the Tudor period to an end and hailing the start of the turbulent Stuart era. Alice Cole died the following year also without issue. In her will she bequeathed her recently purchased parsonages of Worle and Kewstoke in fee to her trustees and their heirs, these included, when he came of age, her nephew another Richard Cole. She made allowance for the repair of Worle parsonage or tithe barn and the chancels of both Worle and Kewstoke churches with any residue reverting to almshouses in Bristol.

Richard Cole was to receive an allowance but if his line failed it was to be paid to decayed craftsmen and householders again in Bristol. Profits from the parsonage lands were to be used to support a preacher in the city and to help the poor prisoners in Newgate. An allowance was also made to the almshouses which were in St. James and Lewins-mead. Worle itself seems to have benefited very little from the generosity of Alice Cole.

Elements of the charity were still in existence well into the twentieth century and were most probably administrated throughout the seventeenth. The trustees were known to have repaired the tithe barn

which is unlikely to have fallen into an immediate state of disrepair as it did eventually. Events and political uncertainties which followed cannot have helped the success of the charity.

When James VI of Scotland ascended the English throne in 1603 it was to the great relief of most. However those hoping for changes in government were soon to become disillusioned, he was often at odds with the English parliament. Although they advised him against it on legal grounds he began to style himself King of Great Britain and Ireland, the Union Flag was created in 1606 from St. Georges cross and St. Andrews saltire, the three kingdoms were, according to James, united under one crown.

Chapter Three

The Great Flood and a Barbarous Murder

The newly formed unity was not without its disasters beyond the control of both King and Parliament. Many pamphlets were produced and circulated describing the event in the Bristol Channel of 1607 referred to as the Great Flood. With religious divisions being as they were, one tract was headed 'Gods Warning to his people of England.'

Worle village was fortunate in being situated near the top of the hill when around nine in the morning of January 30th a wave with a height of twenty-five feet and speed of thirty miles an hour breached the sea wall at Brean and came four miles inland. At least fourteen miles of the Somerset Levels were inundated at the same time but the village of Brean was said to have been swallowed up by it.

Beside the lower part of Worle other local parishes known to have been affected were Kewstoke, Banwell, Puxton, Lympsham, East Brent and Mark. It is estimated the area of the flood along the Bristol Channel covered two hundred square miles, many homes were swept away and about two thousand people lost their lives to say nothing of the livestock.

It is argued that a tsunami struck the coast whilst others argue that a very high Spring tide accompanied by an Atlantic storm caused the tragedy. At the time it was simply referred to as an Act of God which must have been terrifying to witness and was undoubtedly, clearly visible from Worle Hill. The flood water lay around for ten days before it receded and the local economy suffered greatly as a consequence.

Perhaps Agnes Powle was still suffering the effects of the economic dip when she was questioned by JPs in 1609. She admitted to taking milk from the cows of one Francis Jennings, Yeoman of Cheddar when she was hungry and to sleeping in the outhouse of his house at Worle. She was not the only one who had not learned her lesson from the Act of God it seems: a considerably more serious crime was described by the vicar in the parish register of the same year.

The entry states that Edward Bustle was buried in the churchyard of Worle on 10th March, his body having been taken up from a stall where it was hidden. He had been barbarously murdered by his wife and two accomplices, one named Humfry Hawkins. Edward's throat had been cut, his legs cut off and there were various other wounds to his body. All three accused were hanged 'in irons' at a place called Shute Shelf near Axbridge.

A John Bustyll of Worle left a will dated 1546 in which he named his two sons, John and Thomas, perhaps Edward was descended from one of them. There are few later references in the parish registers of Worle to a Bustle family so it would seem Edward's story ended there. However in October of the following year a marriage was recorded for Nicholas Pitman to Isabell the widow of Humfry Hawkins. She was probably in possession of her late husband's assets and despite her notoriety would have been a good catch, no more is heard of them around Worle.

A serious crime such as murder would have been tried at an Assize court, records of which are held in the National Archives but date only from 1610. Presumably in this case being a town and borough the culprits were taken to Axbridge where an Assize court was convened for their trial. The gallows were just out of the town on Shute Shelve Hill at a site still known as the Hanging Field. A legend persists in Axbridge that the area is haunted by two men and a woman, all of whom were hanged for the murder of the latter's husband.

Chapter Four

The Monarchy and the Clergy

King James 1st had in the past a tendency to blame witchcraft for most natural disasters. His belief was apparently so strong he included it as part of his religion. There was so much divergence in theological doctrine that, the year after he succeeded to the English throne, James called the Hampton Court Conference. This included clergymen and scholars but importantly four Puritans and to redress their concerns he agreed to and commissioned an English translation of the Christian Bible. A task which took seven years to complete, the King James Bible was published in 1611 and issued in 1612 but it soon became the standard used in England.

It was in this year that the vicar of Worle, Ranulph Mainwarren left the parish; he went on to become canon of Exeter Cathedral. He had been appointed to Worle in 1598 and was the vicar who recorded the hangings at Shute Shelf which he ended with the comment 'a good president for wicked people.' Obviously a pious man, he had attained a Masters Degree at Cambridge University.

Ranulph was replaced by Simon Mace who had also graduated from Cambridge with a Masters Degree but he was described as a Sizar. This means he would

have been a servant to other students from whom he would have received an allowance, presumably he did not come from a wealthy background. Simon resigned from Worle in 1617 and was succeeded by John Egelsfield, Gentleman of Bristol and it would seem, much less pious.

Egelsfield was the son of an alderman of Bristol, most probably a wealthy merchant. Interestingly a Robert Egelsfield founded Queens College, Oxford in 1341 from where John graduated as an STP or Professor of Sacred Theology. He was at the same time, vicar of Congresbury but left Worle to become the vicar of Chew Magna in 1628 and then the rector of Loxton from where he was eventually sequestered by the Assembly of Divines. They described him as 'a prisoner in the Fleet and very scandalous in his conversation, a common frequenter of alehouses and disorderly company.' He must have been a bit of a shock to the system of the inhabitants of Worle! The Fleet was primarily a debtors' prison and the Assembly of Divines, established by Parliament, was made up of clergymen and politicians whose purpose was to reform the Church of England.

Perhaps some excuse can be made for Egelsfield's behaviour as in the year after he was appointed to Worle; King James issued the Book of Sports or declaration of sports allowed on Sundays or holy days. Permissible activities included archery,

dancing, leaping, vaulting, May games, Whitsun ales, Morris dances and May poles but bear and bull baiting were prohibited on Sundays after divine service. Later in the century Charles I attempted to relax the piety further by revising the declaration to include wakes and ales and also countryside festivals. Attempts to enforce it caused so much outrage that it eventually led to the execution of Archbishop Laud and Parliament ordered the book to be publicly burned.

North Somerset was a Puritan stronghold and there was unlikely to be much support for the declaration amongst the parishioners of Worle. Perhaps to prove the point in 1619 'the inhabitants of the tything of Worle' raised a petition to have two alehouses in the parish closed due to drunkenness and bad behaviour. They claimed 'there is very much disorder and many great abuses and wrongs done in them.' Their plea was granted and it was noted in the Session Rolls that 'their licenses if they have any be taken from the owners.' However not everyone seems to have agreed because one, Anthony Methwyn went over the heads of the local magistrates and obtained a license from the King for the King's Head in the following year. Perhaps flattery does get you everywhere!

Chapter Five

A More Suitable Vicar but Less Suitable King

James I died in 1625 and was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, Charles I who, like his father, believed in the divine right of Kings. However James had been an astute enough politician to know when to appease his adversaries, whilst Charles raised suspicion from the outset by marrying a Roman Catholic.

John Egelsfield left Worle to take up his new post at Chew Magna in 1628 and Richard Snigge was appointed as the new vicar in his place. Richard had graduated with an MA from Oxford in 1622 but through his descent already had some interesting connections to Worle. His father, George Snigge was a barrister-at-law, an alderman and MP for Bristol and also became a Baron of the Exchequer. Through his mother Richard was the great grandson of William Carr of Worspring and therefore the great nephew of Alice Cole. This meant he was a cousin to Alice's nephew, Richard Cole who in his will of 1650 made mention of his annuity in the parsonages of Worle and Kewstoke and probably still had some influence in both.

Presumably Snigge had a leaning towards Puritanism and was far more to the liking of the parishioners as he seems to have survived in his appointment to Worle throughout the ensuing

upheavals. He was buried in the churchyard as vicar of the parish over thirty years later in 1662.

An event which may shed some light on his style occurred in 1639 when one Thomas Cook was recorded in the Ex Officio Act Book. He was accused, at his sheep shearing, of having caused a travelling boy to preach to the assemblage before he would give him any alms: at the end of which someone was said to have remarked 'I protest hee hath done as well as eyther Mr Snigge or Mr Methwyn could do.' Mr Methwyn was the vicar of Kewstoke, a member of a Scottish Presbyterian family who had first found favour with Elizabeth I. Cooke was ordered to appear before the bishop to answer for the indiscretion in the near future. No doubt the cider had been flowing well on the day in question!

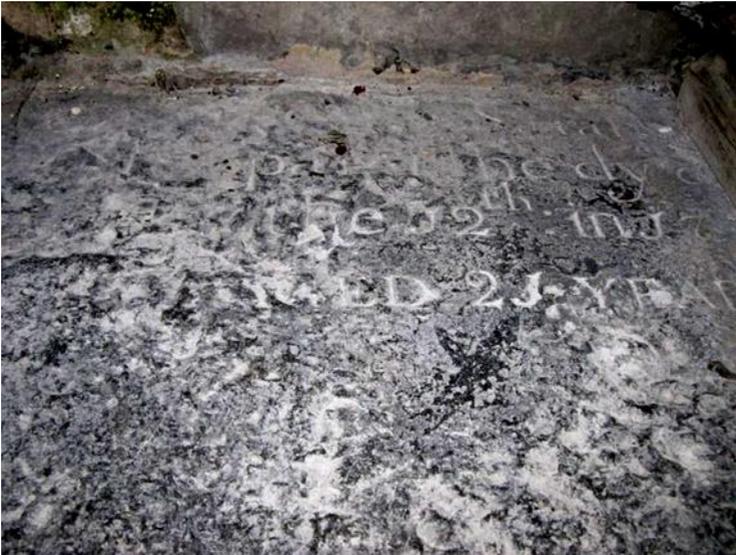
There is a note written in the parish register probably by Snigge himself, it is dated 1629 and shows that some people were more benevolent to the parish poor than others. The benefactor's name seems to read Lewis but the corresponding probate kept in the National Archives reads Lewis Wille. In his original will dated 1626 he bequeathed ten pounds to be held in trust for the poor people of Worle, the yearly interest to be distributed on Good Fridays. Alternatively forty shillings could be loaned without interest to those with sufficient securities to repay the sum within a year.

Curiously it took three years to prove the will which was done in 1629. Wille seems to have held a considerable amount of land in Worle which he left to his grandson, John Sheppard the son of his daughter, Ann and her husband, Edmond Sheppard the Younger. John appears to have been a minor at the time and Edmond was appointed executor. The Sheppards were a notable yeoman family of the parish and many references to them occur in later records.

In 1642 tensions between the Monarchy and rising tide of Puritanism came to a head and the first skirmishes of the English Civil War broke out.



The Maid in Mold Stone



Floor Memorial at Wick St Lawrence
Could she be the Maid in Mold's mother?



Church Bell dated 1683

Richard Sheppard inscribed on the reverse



Star Inscription in the wall of St Martin's Church



Church Bell dated 1723

Inscribed Daniel Starr

Chapter Six Skirmish and Gravestone

The Civil War came to Worle largely thanks to the rector of Weston-super-Mare, Christopher Sadbury who was a Royalist sympathiser. He is said to have continually sent intelligence to the King's army. In 1644 he had several of his parishioners imprisoned in the rectory whilst their property was seized and money exacted from them before he would agree to their release. When the war ended in favour of the Parliamentarians his parishioners brought a case against him in which they accused him of supplying horsemen and arms to the King's troops.

During 1645 Sir Thomas Austen brought a Royalist brigade to Weston to plunder the parish and no doubt the surrounding area. Men from Milton and Worle joined with those of Weston to route the troop who soon rallied and returned. Sadbury then supplied Austen with a list of their names and during the night rode with them to imprison and plunder those involved including some at Worle. Sadbury's trial dragged on over a couple of years until he was able to take advantage of the Act of Pardon and surprisingly remained as rector of Weston until his death in 1660.

The oldest stone in Worle churchyard dates to this time and bears the inscription 'A MAID IN MOLD: 60

YEARS OLD: JOANE: S: IA: 10: 1644'. The only parish register entry to correspond with this reads 'Joane Sheappeard late daughter of Edmund Sheappeard the elder deceased was buried the twelveth dai of January - 1644'. The modern calendar would of course translate the year to 1645, the IA: 10: of the inscription must stand for January 10. Archbishop Laud was executed on the same day.

Joane's father, Edmund Sheappard, had died in 1630. His will, stating that he was a yeoman of Worle, was proved the following year and the vicar, Richard Snigge, was recorded as an administrator. Edmund referred to his twelve children including Edmund the Younger and for Joane he made special provision, an allowance from the estate to be paid on quarter days. No reason is given for this but he refers to his now wife so it is possible that Joane's natural mother died and she stepped into the role of matriarch caring for her younger siblings and consequently never married.

What is left of a very worn inscription on a gravestone set into the floor of the church at Wick St Lawrence reads '..... Sheppard wife of of Worle 16...' Could this be Edmund's first wife and the mother of Joane? It is rare to find a gravestone dated before the eighteenth century when they came more into vogue. Those who could afford it usually had a memorial within the church. It is possible that the Maid

in Mold stone was the first to be erected in Worle churchyard and probably marked the family plot.

According to the hearth tax records of 1644, three of Joane's brothers owned houses in the parish unfortunately it is not known where. The oldest church bell is dated 1683 and is inscribed Richard Sheppard, Church Warden, he was probably Joane's great nephew.

Charles I was tried and executed in 1649, his son was exiled and the Commonwealth era began. Fighting continued until the Parliamentary victory at Worcester in 1651 and Charles II fled the country. Oliver Cromwell established himself as head of the Protectorate in 1653 and the Church of England was subject to Puritan rule.

Chapter Seven

The Parish Register and the Restoration

An interesting record appears in the parish register during the Protectorate, it read *'Thos Starr of the p'ish of Worle being chosen and presented unto the p'shioners there to be p'ish register of Worle aforesaid is by us approved and sworne in the sd office and appointed to have the keeping of the register booke according to the Acte of Parliament in that behalf made. Given under our hands this twenty fourth day of April 1657. Wm Cole, Tho Baynard, JPs.'*

This act was passed in 1653 so it is interesting to note that the first order to keep records of births, deaths and marriages was issued over a hundred years previously by Thomas Cromwell on behalf of Henry VIII. Oliver Cromwell was a descendant of the same family but this act under his jurisdiction took the upkeep of the registers out of the hands of the clergy who had not maintained them well especially through the upheavals of the past decade. Parish Register was the rather confusing title given to the appointee. The books were returned to the care of the Church after the Restoration.

Thomas Starr was a member of another notable family of Worle who unusually have a memorial stone set into the exterior wall of St Martin's Church. It is

headed by John Starr who died in 1704, followed by his wife Jone, three of their sons and a daughter all born during the seventeenth century. John was the son of Thomas Starr also recorded as a yeoman of the parish, he was baptised in 1630 the son of one, Arthur Starr.

Two of John's sons were recorded as cordwainers early in the next century, boot making continued in Worle into the twentieth century. The burial record in 1753 for one of the cordwainers, Joseph, states that he was also known as King Starr which many believe gives the family a link to the King's Head Public House. Another son's name, Daniel Starr is inscribed on one of the bells as church warden in 1723, he went on to become the Mayor of Axbridge. He was baptised in 1692 at Wrington but was also noted in Worle as a tallow chandler and soap boiler. Yet another son, Richard Starr was recorded as a yeoman of the parish. It seems fair to assume that the family were involved in most aspects of the district, farming and trade but few records survive for the seventeenth century.

Hurricane winds swept the south of England in 1658 and much damage was apparently done. The superstitious saw the winds as an ill-omen especially when Oliver Cromwell died three days later on 3rd September. His inept successor was his son, Richard Cromwell who was obliged to resign the following year

and word was soon sent to Charles II inviting him to resume his throne.

He was joyously welcomed back to London on his thirtieth birthday in 1660 and soon became known as the Merry Monarch. The restrictive hand of Puritanism was lifted and the country returned to normal custom and practice. Charles favoured tolerance but leaned towards Catholicism although the position of the Church of England was re-established.

Having no legitimate children Charles' brother James became his heir but when James was acknowledged as a Catholic, suspicions of a Popish Plot were raised. Charles dissolved Parliament several times to thwart an exclusion act which was finally defeated in the House of Lords. Two political parties grew out of these problems, the Whigs who were in favour of exclusion and the Tories who supported the King's views. Charles converted to the Catholic Faith on his deathbed twenty five years later.

Chapter Eight Theft and Frost

Christopher Willan became the vicar of Worle in 1662, following the death of Richard Snigge. The letters after his name were LL.B which meant he qualified as a Bachelor of Law. Unfortunately he died the next year presumably unmarried as in his will, he made no mention of a wife or her family. Interestingly he appointed his kinsman, Samuel Willan, rector of Weston-super-Mare as his executor.

During the same year Edward Bishop of Worle made a court appearance claiming to have had stolen a cheese stone, pig trough and cheese. The items were found in the home of Richard May who countered the allegation by stating he had taken them by warrant and denied the charge of felony. The Bishop and May family surnames occur many times in Worle's records, a James Bishop became Lord of the Manor by purchase during the next century and the Mays became well known brewers.

In the meantime the Windham family continued as the Lords and in 1665 the manor was settled on John Windham when he married Frances the daughter of the Earl of Anglesey. In the same year Thomas Stone was appointed as vicar, he had been ordained by the bishop of Bath and Wells, William Piers. Thomas was recorded

as 'lit' which means whilst he did not have a degree, he was considered by the bishop to possess enough literacy to qualify for ordination.

William Piers was probably guided by his theological convictions which were high church not puritan. He had been accused by Parliament of high treason, imprisoned in the Tower of London and deprived of his bishopric until the Restoration in 1660. Despite all he lived a long life and died aged 89.

During 1668, the year that Piers died, members of the Cooke family found themselves answerable again although this time not with the bishop. Joane Cooke, widow, gave evidence in the Midsummer Sessions against William Cooke yeoman of Worle, Richard Webb labourer and John Downe tiler of Wick St Lawrence. They were called to answer for the theft of a barrel of beer and a box of tobacco taken from the cottage of Edward May, deceased, of Worle.

It is believed that the inn known at the Valiant Soldier was built over the next decade along the Upper Road by the village green. Although no evidence has been found to support the claim the building almost certainly dates from the seventeenth century as do the row of cottages on the Lower Road which eventually became the Lamb Inn.

A major disaster struck the Mendip Hills in 1683, Worle Hill is of course an outcrop at the western end of the range. This was the year of the Great Frost when the ground on the hills is said to have frozen to a depth of four feet. Drifts were above head height and a frost settled on top of the snow. Much livestock and many elderly or infirm people were lost in the appalling conditions which lasted from Christmas until March. Strangely the frost was followed in the Summer of the following year by a drought and the local economy struggled again.

Charles II died two years later in 1685 and was succeeded by his brother, James II whose kingship was strongly opposed in the South West because of his Roman Catholic faith.

Chapter Nine

Dangerous Times

The Duke of Monmouth was an illegitimate but Protestant son of Charles I and as such he claimed a right to the throne. James II became King in February but, by the beginning of July, Monmouth had landed at Lyme Regis and the West Country rose to his cause. These were ordinary people, tradesmen and farm labourers not soldiers, they armed themselves mainly with farm implements and consequently Monmouth's uprising is often referred to as the Pitchfork Rebellion. They became involved in several skirmishes with the King's troops but failed to take the strategic city of Bristol and the insurrection finally collapsed at the Battle of Sedgemoor on 6th July, 1685.

It is not clear whether or not men from Worle joined the uprising but it seems likely that some did, legends without documentation persist. One is that the landlord of the King's Head betrayed two fugitives from Sedgemoor, to the King's troops who found and hanged them. The landlord was apparently known as King Starr but which member of the family he was supposed to be is unknown. He is usually considered to be a bit of a scoundrel for his actions but it should be remembered how much trouble he was likely to find himself in otherwise as the hunt for rebels continued. Another story is that the farmer's wife at Nut Tree Farm

concealed a couple of fugitives in her children's beds. When they came searching she dared the troopers not to wake them and legend has it, she pulled off the bluff.

The series of trials in various places around Somerset which followed the battle became known as the Bloody Assizes. Of the one thousand, four hundred prisoners tried, less than three hundred were executed but their remains were publicly displayed in their home villages as a warning against future uprisings. About eight hundred people were transported mainly to the West Indies where they were sold into slavery.

The six judges who were sent by the King to conduct the trials were headed by the Lord Chief Justice, George Jeffreys who became known as the Hanging Judge. Another popular legend of Worle is that he stayed at the Valiant Soldier during his progress through Somerset, however none of the records of proceedings place him anywhere near the village. It is possible though that after these Assizes had finished, officials who did come to Worle to seek out agitators were put up at the inn, they would undoubtedly have been regarded as Jeffrey's men.

In a letter dated 6th December, 1685 the Earl of Sunderland wrote to the Duke of Somerset saying it had come to the King's notice *'at a parish called Worrell, a great meeting of fanatics is kept every Sunday'* and went on to suggest they were armed, dangerous and in

contempt of the law. He requested that Deputy Lieutenants and Justices of the Peace be sent to investigate the matter.

In another letter dated 14th January, 1686 from the Deputy Lieutenants of Somerset to the Duke it was stated that they had made a 'strict enquiry' and that no large gathering had taken place in 'Worle'. However they did admit that two or three men were 'skulking' around the parish who they believed to have been involved in Monmouth's Rebellion. Local officials had been unable to apprehend them as they were armed and dangerous but when 'greater powers' were sent the men were able to conceal themselves.

The Lieutenants in fact played the whole thing down suggesting that it had not been worthy of a letter which is strange considering the records of the next Assize. Many people had been rounded up and imprisoned for being suspected of complicity in the rebellion but on 10th March, King James issued a general pardon albeit with some exclusions. Apparently the King had been persuaded that the majority of the rebels were just poor working class people who had been lead astray by their masters. Perhaps that is why Joseph Franklyn, clerk of Worle was recorded amongst the exceptions of the amnesty.

Franklyn had been appointed as vicar of the parish in 1669, he was already the rector of Lymington

and also became the vicar of Locking in 1676. He must however, have been pardoned at some time for whatever his involvement had been as his name does not appear in the lists of deportees. Eventually he was deprived of his livings but that did not occur until 1693, five years after James II had fled the country. Incumbents could choose to be deprived when they were ready to retire but it is also possible Franklyn's strong political views had by then become an embarrassment to the church, his career does suggest he was well connected but little more seems to be known about him.

When the King produced a Catholic heir things came to a head with the English Parliament and word was sent to his Protestant son-in-law, William of Orange begging him to bring an invasion army from the Netherlands. William landed in 1688 and the Glorious Revolution also known as the Bloodless Revolution began. James II fled to Europe and was considered to have abdicated, he was the last ever Catholic King. William and his wife, James' daughter, Mary were offered the throne by Parliament, jointly at their own request in 1689. Mary died in 1694 but William continued to reign alone until his death in 1702.

George Jeffreys had been elevated to Lord Chancellor after the Bloody Assize but following the Glorious Revolution he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. He died there in 1689 probably from kidney

failure, he had been in constant poor health and is believed to have been an alcoholic. His passing would not have been much lamented in the South West.

Chapter Ten

The End of a Century

The Bill of Rights was presented to William and Mary by Parliament at the time of their accession. Importantly for the whole country it set out the requirement for regular Parliaments, free elections and free speech in Parliament. In effect it limited their power and introduced a constitutional monarchy, it truly was the start of the modern era so hard fought for throughout the seventeenth century. The Toleration Act of 1688 also permitted freedom of worship to nonconformists but still penalised Catholics who were excluded from political office and universities.

It is not clear when he was appointed but in 1690 Hieronymous Alley was recorded as the vicar of Worle. Hieronymous taken from Greek and Latin means 'sacred name', his given name was almost certainly Jerome. He had been appointed as curate of Heston, Middlesex during 1684 but little else is known of his career. His was perhaps a caretaker role until 1693 when William Wainwright was appointed as perpetual vicar. During the same year Wainwright was also appointed curate and preacher at Chewstoke and in the following year as curate and preacher of Locking where in 1698 he became the vicar. His incumbency took the parish into the next century, he died in 1706.

Whilst the Hanoverian dynasty was now established some of the laws instituted by the Stuarts were still adhered to. An interesting record was made in the parish register of 1692 which read 'Hester Joanes of the Parish of Worle maketh oath that John Churchhouse who was buried fifteen day of November was not wrapt nor wound in anything but sheeps wool according to an Act of Parliament in that behalfe made and provided, intituled an Act for Burying in Woolling only.' The act, introduced in 1680 required an affidavit to be sworn that people other than paupers were buried in pure English woollen shrouds, the purpose being to protect the woollen industry of which Worle was very much a part.

So the parish along with the rest of the country moved forward into modern times. The local inhabitants became involved in the upheavals of the seventeenth century but they and their families survived the turmoil. Although much has been lost there is still evidence of their endeavours to be found around the parish and village, it is worth protecting our local heritage.

Dates and Sources

- 1600** Conveyance of the rectories, churches and tithes of Worle and Kewstoke - Som. Her. Cen. DD\SE/19/2
- 1604** Alice Cole Charity - Charity Commissioners Report (on line)
- 1609** Edward Bustle Murder - SHC Worle Parish Registers
- 1609** Great Flood - Various Pamphlets (on line)
- 1609** Agnes Powle questioned for robbery - SHC Q/SR/8/17
- 1612** Simon Mace, Vicar - Cambridge Alumni
- 1617** John Egelsfield, Vicar - Oxford Alumni
- 1618** Book of Sports - (on line)
- 1619** Petition of the Inhabitants of Worle - SHC Q/SR/32/244
- 1628** Richard Snigge, Vicar - Oxford Alumni
- 1629** Will of Lewes Wille - Probate Register

- 1639** Thomas Cooke to appear before the Bishop - Ex Officio Act Book
- 1644** Maid in Mold - SHC Worle Parish Registers
- 1657** Thomas Starr Parish Register - SHC Worle Parish Registers
- 1662** Evidence of Edward Bishop - SHC Q/SR/102/71
- 1665** Manor settled on John Windham - Norfolk Rec. Off. WKC3/29,399X5
- 1665** Thomas Stone, Vicar - CCED (on line)
- 1668** Evidence of Joane Cooke - SHC Q/SR/111-5
- 1683** Great Frost - Various pamphlets (on line)
- 1686** Letters from and to the Duke of Somerset - Calendar of State Papers
- 1690** Hieronymous Alley Vicar - CCED
- 1692** Hester Joanes Oath - SHC Worle Parish Registers
- 1693** William Wainwright Vicar - CCED

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