

Chapter eight

HENRY SELLER 1823-1897

Henry Seller, my great-great-grandfather, was baptised in Axmouth on 2 March 1823 when King George IV was on the throne and the country was governed by the Tories under Prime Minister Lord Liverpool. Henry was nine when Charles Darwin embarked upon his historic voyage aboard the *Beagle*. The following year six Dorset farm workers from Tolpuddle, forty miles east of Axmouth, were transported to a penal colony for forming a trades union. They returned to Dorset in 1838 but trades unions were not legalised until 1871.

Henry, the eldest child, was three when his father died. Five years later his mother married William Harner, a watchmaker from Uplyme. Henry and his brother John then had seven more siblings. The new family appears to have been close. Henry's stepfather and two of his half-brothers lived next door to Henry after his mother died.

Like his father Henry would have worked on the land from an early age. Although the 1833 Factory Act outlawed the employment of urban children under nine years old and introduced a maximum nine hour day for the under thirteens, such protection did not extend to rural children.

On Christmas Eve 1839 there was an enormous landslide at Axmouth. A report by geologists William Daniel Conybeare and William Buckland is one of the earliest scientific descriptions of such an event.

Eighteen-year-old Henry was living with his mother and stepfather in Colyton when the first national census was taken in 1841. He married Emma Robins in Axmouth when he was twenty-five. She was born in Southleigh in 1825 but lived four miles south in Beer with her parents and sisters Ellen, Elizabeth, Susanna and twins Mary Ann and Eliza. The newly-weds lived in Colyton. Emma's family moved into the house next door. Emma's father was an agricultural labourer who was probably born in Sidmouth. Her mother Mary Ann Fowler was from Southleigh. By 1861 they had moved from Colyton to Seaton and William Harner had taken the house. Mary Ann died in 1865. Two years later, when he was about sixty-two, Samuel married forty-five-year-old spinster Maria Tucker from Beer. Maria was the older sister of his son-in-law Richard. She was a lace-maker. The couple lived in the family home in Queen Street in Seaton where Samuel is described in the 1881 census, when he was about seventy-six, as a gamekeeper. He died in 1887 when he was about eighty-two. Maria took in washing and lodgers. She died in 1912 when she was ninety.

By 1861 Henry and Emma were known as Sellers rather than Seller. Henry worked on the land all his life except for a short period after his marriage when he earned a living as a middle man buying flax grown by local farmers and selling it on to be spun and woven into linen. Emma worked at home as a lacemaker. They had nine children: Samuel Charles my great-grandfather, Mary Ann, Eliza, Henry, Hannah Maria, John, Alfred, Rosina and Flora.

Emma died in 1873 when she was forty-seven and her youngest child was four. All but one of the children moved on when they grew up. Alfred, the youngest, stayed in the family home after he married. Henry died there when he was seventy-four and was buried on 14 July 1897.



Church Street Colyton, date unknown



Print here landscape
Sellers Harner tree

HENRY'S SIBLINGS

JOHN SELLER

Henry's brother John was baptised in Axmouth in 1825. His father died a year later. When he was fifteen the 1841 census records him, not with his mother, brother Henry and his stepfamily, but in the Axminster Union Workhouse where the census records him as a pauper. I can think of no explanation save that he did not get on with William Harner.

By the time he was twenty-five John had a job as a carter with miller and malster George Hawkins in Colyton. He lived with the family at Coles Mill. When he was forty-five he may have worked as a miner at the iron and copper mine at Molland in north Devon. A John Sellers of the right age was recorded in the 1871 census in a camp in the woods outside the village. His death was probably recorded in Bridgwater in the second half of 1876.

Henry and John's half-siblings are a large and interesting family. They were all born in Colyton and in 1861 William and two of his sons lived next door to Henry Sellers and his family.

HARNER FAMILY

Ann Seller married William Harner on 13 October 1828 in Uplyme. They had seven children: the eldest were contemporaries of Henry Seller, the youngest contemporaries of Samuel Charles Sellers. Similarly their older grandchildren were contemporaries of Samuel Charles Sellers while the younger ones were of an age with John Charles Sellers my grandfather.

Many of them lived and died in Beer or Colyton. The men were fishermen or farm labourers, the women almost exclusively Honiton lacemakers. Several of the men who followed their fathers into the bakery trade settled in London. Several moved to south Wales to work in the coal mines or on the docks. The censuses record them in Hywel Crescent in Barry living opposite members of the Tyte family, in Eleanor Street and in Inverness Place.

Ann and William's first child Emanuel was born in 1829. He died when he was fourteen.

ELIZABETH WILLS

Their second child Elizabeth was baptised in Axmouth in 1833. When she was twenty-four she married forty-eight year old Thomas Wills, a groom from Chard. Six years earlier the 1851 census recorded him in the Chard Union Workhouse. The couple lived in Chard where they had six children: Flora, Thomas William, Maria, Julia and twins Rosina and Lavinia. Thomas died in 1883 when he was seventy-four. Elizabeth worked as a charwoman and a lacemender and probably died in 1911 when she was seventy-eight. All their children lived and died in Chard.

The eldest, Flora, was a laceworker. She may have married when she was forty.

Her brother Thomas William was born in 1858 and seems to have been in trouble from a young age. When he was ten he was sent to prison for twenty-one days for stealing a fowl. Three years later he spent a month in prison for stealing a herring valued at sixpence, about two pounds in today's terms. The 1881 census records him, aged twenty-three, in the County Prison. Ten years later he was convicted of larceny at Wells Spring Session and sentenced to four months imprisonment with two years police supervision. The 1911 census records him as a cattle driver living with his mother in Chard. He probably died there when he was sixty-one in 1919.

Elizabeth's third child Maria was born in 1859. She may have married in 1883 when she was twenty-four. Her sister Julia was born in 1862. When she was eighteen she married Robert Long who had enlisted in the Royal Navy when he was seventeen and been invalided out after two years. He worked in a lace mill and an iron foundry before he died at the age of fifty-three in 1912. Julia died when she was seventy-two in 1934. They had five children: Rose, Mabel, Kate, William and Daisy.

Elizabeth's youngest children twins Rosina and Lavinia were born in 1866. Bobbin winder Rosina married lace hand Frederick Stoodley when she was twenty-three. She died when she was seventy-one in 1937. Frederick died when he was seventy-five in 1944. They had five children: Beatrice, Fred, Archibald, Reginald and Phyllis.

Lavinia married labourer Charles Southerley, her mother's lodger, when she was twenty-six. They both died when they were seventy: Lavinia in 1936 and Charles in 1937. They had six children: Edith, Rose, Kate, Charles, Ethel and John.

SIDNEY HARNER

Sidney, Ann and William's third child, was baptised in Axmouth in 1835. When he was twenty he married Lucy Searle a lacemaker from Beer. They lived in Beer where Sydney became a watch and clockmaker like his father. Sidney was temporarily admitted to the County Lunatic Asylum between May and September 1859 when he was twenty-four. He was charged with larceny and acquitted at the Quarter Sessions when he was thirty-eight. I cannot find him in the 1901 census. Lucy is recorded in Bristol with her widowed shopkeeper daughter Elizabeth Westlake and her granddaughter Winifred. Lucy probably died in Beer in 1910 when she was seventy-nine. The 1911 census records Sidney again in the Devon County Lunatic Asylum in Axminster. I have not found his death. He and Lucy had seven children: Amanda, William, Martha (Eva), James, Samuel, Elizabeth and Thomas who were all born in Beer.

AMANDA MUTTER

Amanda was baptised in 1857. She was a lacemaker. She married farm labourer John Mutter in 1883. John was a widower born in Beer in 1841. He had married Susan Cawley in 1860 and had four daughters: Elizabeth, Sarah, Mary and Susan. Their mother died between 1871 and 1883 but I have not found the record. Amanda married John Mutter when she was twenty-seven. They had three children: Ethel, Percival John and Sidney Leonard increasing the number of their children to seven. John died in 1898 when the youngest was two. Amanda was forty-one. She and twelve-year-old Sidney Leonard lived in the Axminster Workhouse where Amanda took in sewing. Fourteen-year-old Ethel went to her sister Elizabeth and six-year-old William to his sister Susan in London. By 1911 Amanda had moved into the Beer Almshouses and she earned money as a charwoman. She died in 1924 when she was sixty-eight.

Amanda and John's eldest daughter Elizabeth was born in 1860. She married fisherman George Newton when she was twenty. He died seven years later leaving her with a one-year-old son Bertram. She worked as a dressmaker and her two younger sisters, who were in service, moved in with her. In 1899 when she was thirty-eight she married Fred Hoskins, a baker ten years her junior. Their son Fred junior was born two years later. Elizabeth's fourteen-year-old step-sister Ethel lived with them. Elizabeth died in 1919 when she was fifty-nine. Fred continued to run his bakery in Beer. The 1939 register records him as a retired baker living with his sisters Sarah Newton, the widow of a John Newton, and spinster Bessie Hoskins. Fred died in 1941 leaving his son Fred about twenty-six thousand pounds in today's terms.

Elizabeth's older son Bertram became a baker, married Annie Pawsey from Sudbury in 1920 and with her ran the White House Cafe in Beer. He died in 1947 when he was sixty-one leaving today's equivalent of a hundred and forty thousand pounds. His son-in-law Cyril Perkins took over the cafe. Annie died in 1973 when she was eighty-three.

His step-brother Fred, also a baker, married May Collier in 1928. He kept his father's Central Bakery. He died in 1985 when he was eighty-eight leaving a hundred and ten thousand pounds. May died two years later.

John Mutter and Susan Cawley's second child Sarah was born in 1867. She married merchant seaman Joseph Gibbs in 1891. His aunt was Anna Maria Gibbs Sarah's sister Elizabeth's mother-in-law. They lived in Beer and from 1911 onwards Joseph is recorded as a retired master mariner. The 1939 register records their daughter Eliza, her husband William Lockyer, a retired Royal Navy lieutenant, and their two sons Archie and Peter living with them. Joseph died in 1947 when he was seventy-nine leaving sixty-eight thousand pounds. Sarah died later that year when she was eighty leaving a hundred thousand pounds.

John Mutter and Susan Cawley's third child Mary was born in 1870. When she was twenty-one she worked as a parlourmaid in Kensington. Later that year she married baker William Collier who may have been an uncle of her cousin Fred. They had five children: Hannah, William, Cecil, Bessie and Harold. Mary died in 1922 when she was fifty-two and William probably in 1937 when he was sixty-nine.

John Mutter and Susan Cawley's fourth child Susan was born in 1872. She married William John Marshall Newton in Marylebone in 1893. William was from Southsea. There is no ready connection between him and others in the Newton family. His father had been killed in the Boer War and he was brought to London by Prince Albert's charity, the Royal Patriotic Asylum for Boys, in Trinity Road, Wandsworth to be educated. When he was twenty-three he worked as an assistant baker where he lived in at 150 Newington Butts. Following their marriage William worked as a journeyman baker. He and Susan lived in Shoreditch with their children William junior, Florrie, Dorothy and Edward. William died there in 1943 when he was seventy-six. Susan died in Beer in 1951 when she was seventy-nine.

When her father died, Amanda's daughter Ethel, then aged fourteen, went to live with her step-sister Elizabeth and her husband George Newton. By the time she was twenty-four in 1911 she had left Beer and was working as a live-in servant in Hampstead in London. The 1931 electoral roll records her in Upper Wimpole Street with a family called Morley. She may have died in Weston Super Mare in 1973 when she was eighty-three.



Back row: Dorothy Lilian Beatrice Newton, William John Mutter Newton, Florrie Adelaide Ada Newton. Seated: Susan Mutter and William John Marshall Newton. Foreground: Edward Reginald Newton

Her brother Percival John was born in 1887. After his father died he lived with his step-sister Susan in Shoreditch where he became a baker. He married Alice Maud Stray in 1907. During the First World War he fought with the London Regiment of the South Wales Borderers. He and Alice lived in Shoreditch where he was an insurance agent. They had a son Edgar born in 1916. Percy died in 1957 when he was sixty-nine. Alice died in 1963 when she was seventy-five.

His brother Sidney Leonard, Amanda and John's youngest child, was born in 1889. When he was two he lived in the Axminster Union Workhouse with his mother. He became a journeyman baker. He married Lily Bastable in Sturminster in Dorset in 1912. He died at sea on 23 October 1915 aboard HMS *Marquette* and is buried in Kalamaria in Greece. A war gratuity of today's equivalent of four hundred and thirty-two pounds was paid to his widow Lily for the upkeep of his child. The *Marquette* was torpedoed by German submarine U-35 at 0915 hours on 23 October 1915 in the Aegean Sea. She sank in thirteen minutes. U-35 sank 244 allied ships, more than any other U-boat. Although the *Marquette* was a hospital ship she was also carrying combat soldiers and equipment including ammunition and animals. This made her a legitimate target. Of the 741 on board 167 lost their lives. The ship was sailing from Alexandria in Egypt to Salonika in Greece. Most of the dead were interred at the Mikra British Cemetery, others were washed up on the coast and are buried in Thessalonika in Greece. A hospital ship never again carried combat troops. Sidney Leonard's widow Lily died in Sturminster in late 1957 when she was sixty-eight.

GEORGE MUTTER

Sydney Harner's second child William George, known as George, was born in 1858. He was a blacksmith. In 1881 when he was twenty-three he married Lucy Salter. She died nine years later when she was thirty-six leaving him with five children under seven: Frances, William John, Walter, Rose and Frederick George. His sister Martha moved in to look after them. By the time he was fifty George had become a plumber. He died in 1946 when he was eighty-eight.

His eldest child Frances was born in 1883. She seems not to have married but remained with her father in Beer at least until 1939 when she was fifty-six. I have not found her death.

George and Lucy's second child William John was born in 1885. When he was twenty he joined the Royal Navy. In 1913 in Axminster he married Bessie Newbury. He was promoted to Petty Officer Stoker serving aboard HMS *Falmouth*. On the evening of 18 August 1916 the Grand Fleet put to sea in response to a deciphered message that the German High Seas Fleet would be leaving harbour that night to bombard Sunderland the following day. Part of the German plan was to draw the British ships through a series of submarine ambushes and *Falmouth* fell victim to one of the waiting U-boats, U-66, the following afternoon. Two torpedoes badly damaged the cruiser. Shortly after she was struck the armed trawler *Cooksin* went alongside and took off all the men not



HMS *Falmouth* 1910

required to crew the ship. *Falmouth* was able to steam slowly through the night under her own power. A pair of tugboats came out the following morning and took her in tow. Her course took her right past U-63 which, despite the presence of eight escorting destroyers, put another pair of torpedoes into her. The cruiser remained afloat for another eight hours before sinking off Flamborough Head in Yorkshire.

William John Harner was wounded in action in the second U-boat attack. He died of his injuries shortly afterwards, the only sailor to die in the action. His name is on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Bessie married

James Kingsland two years later. William and Bessie's son George was born in 1915. He married Ruth Turner in 1936 and in 1939 was employed as an engineering draughtsman by the Admiralty. He died in Tavistock when he was sixty-one in 1976.

George and Lucy's third child Walter was born in 1888. He joined the Royal Navy at Devonport four months after his brother. The 1911 census records him in the Royal Sailors Rest Home for Sailors in Fore Street in Devonport. In 1912 he became a petty officer. He married Ada Woodgate in 1915. Their son Jack was born in 1916. Like his brother William, Walter served in submarines throughout the First World War. He and three others were awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal in July 1918. The citation read:

The ratings above mentioned were members of the crew of Submarine C.3, which was skilfully placed between the piles of the Zeebrugge mole viaduct and there blown up, the fuse being lighted before the sub-marine was abandoned. They volunteered for and, under the command of an officer, eagerly undertook this hazardous enterprise, although they were well aware that if the means of rescue failed, and that if any of them were in the water at the time of the explosion, they would be killed outright.



HMS C3

They were awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French President the following month.

On 23 April 1918 British naval forces had carried out a blocking raid on Zeebrugge. The intention was to prevent German shipping and submarines from using the ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend. The raid began with a diversionary operation to land a force of Royal Marines at the Zeebrugge Mole, a mile-long harbour wall with warehouses and a quay built to create a harbour around the entrance to the Bruges Canal. The viaduct bridge connecting the Mole to the shore was blown up by an officer and four ratings from the crew of the submarine HMS C3 who packed the fore-ends with five tons of amatol, steered the ship manually into the viaduct between the iron pillars of the bridge, set fuses and escaped by launch. The submarine blew up taking most of the bridge with it. German reinforcements were consequently unable to reach the Mole and attack the British Marines. Three old British ships filled with concrete were then sunk to block the access to the ship-canal. The British deemed the operation a success, although the sunken ships did not create a total block on the German access to the submarine pens.

Walter served in the navy until 1927. The 1939 register records him as an office attendant living in Portsmouth. His son Jack was a fitter and turner. Ada died in Portsmouth in 1970 when she was eighty. Walter died there when he was eighty-seven in 1975.

Of Rose Harner, born about 1889, I know nothing. The youngest child Frederick George was born in 1890. He joined the navy in 1916 and I have found no further record of him. He may have died in Yeovil in 1971.

MARTHA MUTTER

Sidney and Lucy's third child Martha, sometimes known as Eva, was born in Beer in 1861. She was a lacemaker. When her brother George's wife died she moved in to look after him and his young children. By the time she was fifty she was living in Fore Street in Beer where she took in lodgers. She died in 1955 when she was ninety-four. Her brother James was born in 1865. He died when he was twenty-five.

SAMUEL MUTTER

Sidney and Lucy's fifth child Samuel was born in Beer in 1867. He enlisted in the Royal Artillery in 1886 when he was nineteen, re-enlisting every five years. He began his service in India in 1887. His service record is unclear but he seems to have been in the UK between 1892 and 1897. He married Elizabeth Gale in Weymouth in 1895. He and Elizabeth had five or maybe six children between 1896 and 1910. They were living in Great Yarmouth in 1914 when forty-seven-year-old Samuel enlisted in the Territorials in the Norfolk Regiment. He was demobbed in 1919. In 1939 Samuel was living, possibly in a boarding house, in Great Yarmouth. His death was recorded, probably in Beer, in 1949 when he was eighty-two. Meanwhile, Elizabeth was living at a different address in Great Yarmouth. I have not found her death.

Their eldest child Samuel Thomas, known as Thomas, was born in 1896. He died when he was sixteen.

Ernest James was born in 1897. In 1939 he was living with his mother in Great Yarmouth and working as a hotel doorman. He married Emily Elizabeth, of whom I know nothing, in Chelmsford in 1944 when he was fifty-one. He died in London in 1959 leaving his widow today's equivalent of ten thousand pounds.

Percy was born in 1899. He married Winifred Snelling in Yarmouth in 1920. In 1939 they lived in Park Crescent in Marylebone where Percy was employed as a caretaker. His younger sister Mabel, then working as a waitress, lodged with them. Percy died in 1943 in Malaya whilst serving with the Royal Norfolk Regiment.

Mabel was born in 1900. She had an illegitimate son who was baptised Kenneth George Horner in 1928 when she was living in Coram Street in London. She appears to have taken him to the Foundling Hospital, which by then had moved to Redhill in Surrey, from where he was adopted and given a new name. When she was fifty-one Mabel married Lambeth-born office clerk Albert Archibald Potter in Westminster. She died when she was seventy-three in 1973. Albert died in 1984 aged seventy-four.

Lucy was born in 1902. When she was twenty-two she married Thomas Tavner a railway checker from Islington. They lived in Dagenham. Thomas died in 1963 when he was sixty-eight. Lucy died when she was seventy-three in 1975.

There seems to have been another child named Samuel born in 1910 but I can find no official documents recording him.

ELIZABETH ANN WESTLAKE

Sidney and Lucy's sixth child Elizabeth Ann was born in Beer in 1870. As a young woman she lived and worked as a domestic servant in Taunton. She married John William Westlake when she was twenty-seven. They probably lived in Bristol where he died the following year, about the time of the birth of their daughter Caroline Winifred. When the child was two Elizabeth Ann's mother Lucy was living with them. Elizabeth Ann ran a shop from her home in Clifton. In 1911 she was in Hull with William Cawley and his family, younger brother of her sister Amanda's husband's first wife. I have not found Elizabeth Ann's death.

THOMAS MUTTER

Sidney and Lucy's seventh child Thomas was born in Beer in 1874. When he was sixteen in 1890 he joined the Royal Navy. He married Minnie Maud Ashley in 1899 when he was twenty-five. They lived in Devonport where in 1904 he was initiated into the Freemasons. In 1911 he was working at the Royal Naval Coastguard Station at Cawsand in Cornwall. He went back into active service in 1914. He may have died in 1923. In 1939 Minnie was living with her daughter Ivy and her husband William Porter in Plymouth. She died there in 1965 when she was eighty-five.

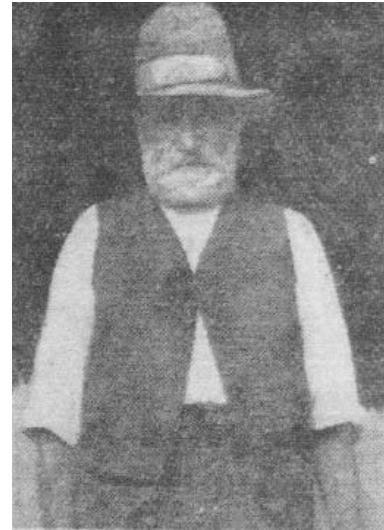
JAMES HARNER

Ann and William's fourth child James was born in Colyton in 1837. He was an agricultural labourer. He married Elizabeth Mary Clarke in 1860 when he was twenty-three. They had seven children: Julia Mary, George, Kate, Mary, Pamela, Henry and Albert. The children were all born in Colyton. The family then moved a mile down the road to Colyford. James probably died when he was sixty-eight in 1906. Elizabeth died when she was eighty-nine in 1921.

JULIA MARY AGLAND

Their eldest child Julia Mary was born in 1861. She married carter Samuel Agland in 1881 when she was twenty. They lived in Beer where they had ten children: Samuel, Kate, William, Elizabeth, Harriet, Reginald, Beatrice, Gertrude, Maud and Polly. Samuel died when he was forty-nine in 1908. Julia died in 1954 when she was ninety-three.

Their eldest child Samuel George was born in 1882. I cannot find him in the 1901 census but by 1911 he had earned his master mariner's certificate and was living with his uncle George Radford, a former staff sergeant in the Royal Marines, and his family in London. He married Stella Mutter in Axminster the following year. Her sister Hilda had by then married Samuel's brother William in Canada. Stella's parents were George 'Toby' Mutter and Patience Newton. I have not as yet been able to connect them directly with the other Mutters and Newtons. Presumably Samuel continued to go to sea. There is a record of his sailing from Hull to New York in 1933. Another record in 1937 describes him as a distressed seaman travelling to Liverpool from Quebec or Montreal. He died the following year in Liverpool when he was fifty-six. He and Stella had a son Peter born in 1920. Stella died in nearby Crosby in 1970 aged eighty-two.



This photograph appeared in the local paper alongside Toby Mutter's obituary in 1935

Julia and Samuel's second child Kate was born in 1883. She married William Bowles, who was on active service with the Royal Artillery, in Cardiff in 1905. They lived in Weymouth. William was discharged in 1916 when he was forty-one after twenty-two years service. Kate died in 1934 when she was fifty-one. William died in 1961 when he was eighty-six.

Kate's brother William was born in 1885. In 1905 when he was twenty, after a court hearing, Hilda Mutter was awarded the equivalent of twenty-four pounds a week for the upkeep of his illegitimate child. She was living at home in 1911 without the child. Her sister Stella was living with the family too. William and Hilda evidently emigrated to Canada where they married in 1911 in Winnipeg. He died there in 1932 when he was forty-seven.

Elizabeth was born in 1887. She married groom Charles Lowe in Hampshire in 1906. They lived in the New Forest. Charles died in 1935 aged fifty-nine. Elizabeth died in 1972 when she was eighty-five.

Julia and Samuel's fifth child Pamela was born in 1889. She married mason Albert Anning in 1915. Albert died in Beer in 1958 when he was seventy-three. Pamela died there when she was seventy-two in 1961.

Her brother Reginald was born in 1891. He married Bessie Lane from Beer in Winnipeg in 1913. She and their daughters Violet and Gladys made the dangerous voyage from Montreal to Liverpool in October 1919. Bessie died in Canada in 1945 when she was fifty-three. Reginald returned home at some point. In 1963, aged seventy-one, he married fifty-six-year-old Emily German in Derby. He died seven years later. Emily died in 2000 when she was ninety-two.

Julia and Samuel's seventh child Beatrice was born in 1894. She married Thomas Booth in Christchurch in 1920 and died in Bournemouth in 1989 when she was ninety-five.

Her sister Gertrude May was born in 1896. She married Harry Richardson, a farm worker from Lincolnshire, in 1915. Harry had joined the Royal Artillery in 1912 and was transferred to the army reserve in 1919. He re-enlisted in 1940. They lived in Northampton where they had three children: Cyril, Winifred and Samuel. Gertrude visited New York in 1960 presumably to see one of her children. She died in Brixworth in Northants in 1972 when she was seventy-six. Harry died in 1979 at the age of eighty-six.

Julia and Samuel's eighth child Phyllis Maud was born in 1898. She married Walter Norman Suckling from Axmouth in 1922. Walter had served in the Gloucester Regiment during the First World War and joined the Labour Corps in 1919. Phyllis died in Cambridge in 1951 when she was fifty-three. Walter died in Axmouth when he was seventy in 1964.

Phyllis's sister Polly Florence was born in 1900. She was known as Mary. She married James Green in 1923. They lived in Seaton where James worked as a painter. He died there in 1959 when he was sixty-seven. Mary died in 1980 at the age of eighty.

Julia and Samuel's youngest child Winifred was born in 1902. She married Richard Ladd in 1923. He had served throughout the First World War as a saddler with the Royal Artillery. They lived in Seaton where he died in 1972 when he was eighty-two. Winifred when she was eighty in 1983.

ALBERT HARNER

James and Elizabeth Harner's second child Albert George Clarke was born in 1863 in Colyton. He seems to have been known as George. He probably died in Harrow in 1951 when he was eighty-seven but I have found no marriage or census records for him.

KATE HARNER

James and Elizabeth's third child Catherine Elizabeth Snell Harner, known as Kate, was born in 1866. As a teenager she worked as a servant. She may have married Charles Henry Parsons in Exeter in 1886.

MARY HARNER

Her sister Mary Clark was born in 1869. I can find no further trace of her.

PAMELA SOMERVILLE

Her sister Pamela Harriet was born in 1871. She was a cook at the home of a tea and provision merchant in Exeter before she married Robert Somerville in Tiverton in 1895. Robert died there when he was fifty-four in 1923. Pamela lived to be ninety-four. She died in Tiverton in 1965.

HENRY HARNER

Her brother Henry was born in 1874 and probably died in Exeter in 1943. I know nothing further about him.

ALBERT HARNER

James and Elizabeth's youngest child Albert John Clarke was born in 1877. He was a baker and confectioner but I know nothing more about him.

GEORGE HARNER

Ann and William's fifth child George was born in Colyford in 1839. When he was twenty-three he married lacemaker Susan Collier Miller. They lived in Colyton where they had eight children: Alfred George, Matilda Ann, Maryann, Eva, John Miller, Flossie, Willie Miller and Albert. George was a farm labourer who later became a coal carrier. Sarah died in 1922 when she was eighty-two. George died when he was ninety-two in 1931.

ALFRED HARNER

Their eldest child Alfred George was born in 1864. He worked as a mason's labourer and married Susan Emily Potter from Paignton in 1887 when he was twenty-three. They moved to Pontypridd where Alfred went down the pit. His brothers John and Willie joined him and in 1901 they all lived at 18 Eleanor Street in Cardiff. I have not found Susan's death but in 1906 when he was forty-two Alfred married Hanna Lena Miller in Axminster. He died in Cardiff three years later.

MATILDA NEWTON

George and Susan's second child Matilda was born in Colyton in 1865. She was a lacemaker. She married Walter William Newton when she was twenty. He was the son of Henry, a mason, and Mary Newton of Beer. Walter was a bricklayer's labourer. They lived in Colyton where they had six children: Walter, Sarah, Albert, Alfred, Reginald and Flossie. They then moved to Comfee Cottage in Seaton where Walter died when he was eighty-three in 1947. Matilda died there in 1950 when she was eighty-five.

Their eldest son Walter was born in 1885. He married Rhoda Jane Bennett in 1904. They had two daughters Rhoda and Winifred before Walter died in 1910 when he was twenty-five. In 1922 Rhoda married a William Harner. He was probably her mother-in-law's brother Willie Miller Harner whose wife Edith Annie Matthews had died in Pontypridd in 1915.

The second child Sarah Harner Newton was born in Colyton in 1887. She married Shepton-Mallet-born George Henry Hooper, known as Harry, in Pontypridd in 1912. They lived at 45 Hywel Crescent in Barry where Harry was a railway shunter. Living on the opposite side of the road at number 42 was Billy Thomas, son of Tipper and Phoebe of the Tyte family. Sarah and Harry had a son called Raymond in 1919. Sarah died in Barry when she was fifty-four in 1942. Harry died there in 1949 when he was sixty.

The third child Albert William was born in 1888. I know nothing further about him. His brother Alfred George Newton was born in 1890. He married Annie Furzey in 1911. I know nothing further about them.

The fifth child Reginald Tom was born in Colyton in 1893. He married Florence Jenkins in 1914 and may have died in 1985 in Newton Abbot when he was ninety-two.

Their youngest child Flossie Ella was born in Colyton in 1894. She married Robert John Jones from Ystradgynlais in 1914. He served in France during the First World War. Flossie was living in Inverness Place in Cardiff. They had a daughter Gwendolen Winifred born in 1914. Flossie probably died in Barry in 1940.

MARY ANN HARNER

George and Susan's third child Mary Ann was born in Colyton in 1866. She may have died in Beer when she was seventy-five in 1940.

EVA LANE

Their fourth child Eva was born in Colyton in 1868. In 1892 when she was twenty-four she married plasterer Harry Lane from Edmonton in London. They lived in Kingston upon Thames where they had a daughter Elsie Marian in 1903. Harry died a year later when he was thirty-seven. Eva and her daughter went to live with her elderly parents in Seaton. She died in Beer in 1959 when she was ninety-one.

JOHN HARNER

George and Susan's fifth child John Miller was born in Colyton in 1871. As a teenager he was a mason's labourer. Before he was twenty he had moved to Pontypridd, become a coal miner and was living with his brother Alfred and his wife Susan. He lived there until his marriage to Amanda Ellen Smith in Cardiff in 1904. They lived in Treforest with Lilian Ellen, Amanda's illegitimate daughter who was born five years earlier in Musbury, and their children John, Violet and William. By 1939 they were living in the School House in Glyntaff in Pontypridd. John was the church caretaker. William was still living at home and working as a postman. John died when he was seventy-five in 1946. Amanda died in 1952 when she was seventy-seven.

FLOSSIE MITCHELL

George and Susan's sixth child Flossie was born in Colyton in 1872. When she was twenty she may have worked as a cook for a family in Seaton. She married railway porter John Mitchell in 1895 when she was twenty-three. They lived in Exeter where their children Alfred John, Amy Kathleen, Ivy and Ena were born. John died in Exeter in 1959 when he was eighty-nine. Flossie died at the same age two years later.

WILLIE HARNER

George and Susan's seventh child Willie was born in Colyton in 1876. By the time he was twenty-five he had moved to Cardiff to live with his brothers Albert and John and gone down the pit. He married Edith Annie Matthews in Pontypridd in 1903. They lived there with their children Winifred Maud and Eva Edna. Edith died in 1915 when she was thirty-eight. Willie died when he was fifty-six in 1933.

ALBERT HARNER

George and Susan's youngest child Albert was born in Colyton in 1879. He became a baker and confectioner in Seaton where he married Laura Cann in 1916. They must then have moved to Cardiff where Laura died in 1928 when she was forty-six. In 1939 Albert was living in Llanfair Road and working as a night watchman. He died in 1964 when he was eighty-five.

MARY AND THOMAS HARNER**MARY HARNER**

Ann and William's sixth child Mary was born in Colyford in 1843. I have been unable to find anything else about her.

THOMAS HARNER

Ann and William's youngest child Thomas was born in Colyford in 1847. He may have married Elizabeth Cumden in 1865 but I have been unable to find anything else about him.

Chapter nine

THE TIMES

In 1685 Colyton had been a centre of religious dissent. When the Protestant Duke of Monmouth marched through Devon to raise an army to overthrow James II he recruited more men from Colyton than from any other Devon town. The only weapons the one hundred and five tradesmen had were outdated guns and farmyard tools. They had no fighting experience but they believed that widespread popularity for the cause and sheer force of numbers would win the day. An unknown number were killed in the defeat at the battle of Sedgemoor and thirty-three were taken prisoner. Those who escaped went on the run, hiding in hedgerows and deserted barns. Eventually they were all caught. Many were hanged. The remainder were sent into slavery on sugar plantations in the West Indies.

By the time Henry settled in Colyton it was a busy market town. According to contemporary records it had a foundry and was home to farmers, millers, butchers, bakers, shoemakers, coopers, curriers, linen drapers, maltsters, brewers, innkeepers, milliners, saddlers and harness makers, stone masons, surgeons, barbers, a druggist, a fishing rod maker, a glove maker, a tanner, a gunsmith, a rope and twine maker, a tin plate worker, a watchmaker and a wheelwright.

In the late eighteenth century parish workhouses in the county could accommodate a total of a hundred and eighty-two: eighty inmates in Axminster, sixty-six in Colyton, twenty-four in Seaton and Beer and ten in Uplyme. There were other workhouses in Lyme Regis, Membury, Stockland and Thorncombe. In 1831 the population in the area covered by the poor law union was a little under twenty thousand. The average annual poor-rate expenditure between 1833 and 1836 was over eight hundred thousand pounds in today's terms.

Axminster Poor Law Union was formed in 1836. It was overseen by an elected 25-man Board of Guardians representing the seventeen constituent parishes of Axminster, Axmouth, Beer and Seaton, Colyton, Combe Pyne, Kilmington, Membury, Musbury, Shute, Thorncombe, Uplyme (and then in Dorset) Charmouth, Chardstock, Dalwood, Hawkchurch, Lyme Regis and Stockland. The new Axminster union workhouse for three hundred inmates was built in 1836-1838. The Poor Law Commissioners authorised an expenditure of about three hundred and sixty thousand pounds. The building was one of the Poor Law Commissioners' standard square designs by Sampson Kempthorne. It was crowded with low narrow bedsteads in wards with tiny windows high in the walls. Its toilets were ward commodes which the inmates took turns to empty. One cold-water bath served the entire population. There was no infirmary.

The workhouse was universally feared and loathed but reformers thought they could deter people from entering it by making conditions there worse than life outside. When they found that in order to make the diet worse it would have been necessary to starve the inmates beyond an acceptable level, other ways were found to deter prospective entrants ranging from the introduction of prison-style uniforms to the splitting up of families by segregation of inmates into yards of males, females, boys and girls. In 1846 conditions in the Andover Union Workhouse were found to be inhumane and dangerous. After a government inquiry the Poor Law Commission was replaced with a Poor Law Board administered by a Committee of Parliament with a cabinet minister at its head. Despite this another scandal occurred over inhumane treatment of paupers in the Huddersfield workhouse.

In 1894 the *British Medical Journal* set up a commission to investigate conditions in provincial workhouses and their infirmaries. Following a visit to Axminster the commission's report had many criticisms of the institution. The sick wards were described as 'crowded and destitute of comfort, the bedsteads narrow and low, the red quilts much too heavy; the windows are small and placed high in the wall'. The workhouse was devoid of indoor water-closets and the only toilets for the sick were commodes in the wards. There was no running water in the sick wards. The workhouse's single bath had a supply of cold water but hot water had to be carried from the kitchens. There was one day-nurse, assisted by paupers, but no night-nurse. The report recommended that earth or water closets should be installed immediately and an additional nurse or nursing assistant appointed, followed by the building of a small, well-equipped infirmary.

From 1904, to protect them from disadvantage in later life, the birth certificates for those born in the workhouse gave its address just as Box House, Musbury Road, Axminster. It later became known as the Poor Law Institution and then under the National Health Service as Box House Hospital, renamed St Mary's Hospital in 1971.

Between 1827 and 1830 the Tories were in power led by Canning, Goderich and Wellington. In 1829 Wellington brought in limited Catholic emancipation. The issue then began to lose its importance for electors. A widespread uprising by agricultural workers spread through southern England in late 1830. The anger of the rioters was directed first at popularly hated, labour-displacing, threshing machines. It quickly spread to the targets seen as an equal source of misery: the tithe system, the Poor Law guardians and the rich tenant farmers who had been progressively lowering wages while introducing agricultural machinery. There were wage and tithe riots, rick-burning and the destruction of workhouses and tithe barns. If caught, the protesters faced charges of arson, robbery, riot, machine breaking and assault. Those convicted were imprisoned, transported or executed.

The 1830 election, triggered by the death of George IV and fought in the aftermath of the Swing Riots, saw electoral reform become a major issue in every county. Wellington led the Tories to victory but experienced a high degree of personal and political unpopularity.

In Devon the sitting Members were Tories Thomas Dyke Acland and Edmund Pollexfen Bastard. In May 1830, with an early dissolution seeming increasingly likely on the accession to the throne of William IV, Bastard was warned that several members of the local Whig gentry had 'for some time been canvassing for electioneering purposes under the cover of county business'. He told a few confidential friends that, contrary to the impression created by his infrequent public appearances, he had no intention of retiring. Whig Lord Ebrington, who was defeated at the previous election, agreed to be nominated as long as the election was not contested.

On nomination day the 'excitement of the contest was fully manifested' in Exeter as eight to ten thousand people including 'many well-dressed females' gathered in Castle Yard. Sprigs of laurel, oak and ivy were everywhere in evidence. Bastard arrived 'accompanied by a great number of clerical gentlemen'. He declared that his principles were unaltered. Acland declined to offer any pledges saying that if pledges were required after seventeen years' service then the service itself could not be worth having. Ebrington condemned the calumnies by which he had been attacked by the degraded section of the press which had accused him of colluding with Acland. He explained that he would personally support Acland for his defence of religious liberty and assiduous attention to county business but had never said one word about not opposing Bastard. He then retired and took no active part in the subsequent proceedings.

Following an inquiry from his agent Bastard made clear his determination not to spend any money in a contest as he had previously 'applied nearly £20,000 to the common cause and more I cannot expend'. He publicly announced his unwillingness to authorise any expenditure that might compromise his 'independence and ability to serve the county with unsullied honour'. He said he would incur only necessary legal expenses. Acland too informed the freeholders that he would no longer participate in 'so wasteful and ruinous a system' of electioneering. None of the candidates canvassed in person but the friends of all three established networks of district committees throughout the county to canvass and raise local subscriptions. Wealthy freeholders conveyed voters to the poll at their own expense and Ebrington in particular benefited from the free services given by some lawyers who were at the forefront of the challenge to established Tory interests.

On a show of hands about a sixth supported Bastard, about four-fifths favoured Acland (including Ebrington's friends but not Bastard's) and about two-thirds were for Ebrington. Bastard demanded a poll. The election began the following Tuesday when the most immense concourse of spectators that one newspaper could recall gathered within the Castle walls. Bastard and Acland spoke briefly and George Fortescue, representing his brother Ebrington, denied the rumours of a coalition with Acland. Polling commenced immediately and at the end of the day Ebrington led by six hundred and ninety-four votes to Bastard's five hundred and fifty-six and Acland's five hundred and sixteen. It was evident that Bastard's friends were in direct opposition to Acland who complained that placards alleging a coalition had lost him many split votes.

Bastard had been rejected in the most Tory county in England. Rolle believed that he had been the victim of an unjust coalition. Ebrington's agents maintained that they had carried Acland's election for him. In wider Tory circles the conclusion was that Bastard was a feeble candidate. He received a disturbing report that his own steward had 'by his oppressive conduct to your tenantry materially injured your cause and lost you at least five hundred votes out of the South Hams'.

Long before polling resumed on the second day every quarter of the city was roused by the sound of drums, horns and trumpets heading parties of freeholders from the country a large number of whom wore a leaf of laurel for Ebrington and oak for Acland in their hats. There seemed to be a determination among the Ebringtonians to give Sir Thomas a lift: the Bastard camp suspected an agreement between their party agents. Several handbills were circulated during the day, one of which urged those who wished to annihilate slavery and abolish punishment of death for forgery to vote for Ebrington and Acland. Another recommended split voting as the surest way of obtaining action on 'tithes, taxes and corruption'. Voters were also urged to 'save your country by reform and retrenchment, by abolishing the tithes system and lessening taxation. Do not run the risk of producing a revolution in the country like that in France, which the conduct of such men [as Bastard] tends to produce'. At the end of the day Ebrington still led but Acland had overtaken Bastard.

On the third day the 'arrivals of oak and laurel were immense'. Polling continued with 'increased and desperate energy' but it was clear that Bastard was 'fighting an uphill game'. By the end of the day Ebrington and Acland had increased their advantage. Bastard declared that he was ready to keep the poll open till the last but his committee recommended that he should retire. That night Exeter was 'most unusually animated'. Next morning the poll was formally opened and closed. Ebrington and Acland were declared elected. Ebrington dined that evening with about two hundred supporters at the New London inn where he gave credit to Wellington's government for settling the Catholic question. Acland, dining with his friends at the Subscriptions Rooms, praised his committee for 'preventing the enormous expense which was generally incurred'.

Ebringtonian dinners were held all over the county well into the autumn. In September and October a series of dinners for the 'friends of the good old constitutional cause' also took place. Privately, Bastard was told that there was not the least hope of his being returned again and, as an early declaration of his intentions was required, he made it known that he would not stand at any future election. His brother John, Member for Dartmouth, chaired a meeting in Exeter when it was agreed to form a Devon Constitutional Society, in emulation of the Whig County Club, so that they might fill the hiatus in the representation of the Tory politics of the county. By January 1831 it was reported that Sir John Yarde Buller was likely to be their new champion.

REFORM

Reform was debated as hotly in Devon as it was in Westminster. In September 1830 a requisition was sought for a county meeting on reform. Ebrington doubted the utility of early action since parliament was unlikely to debate the subject in the short session before Christmas and it would be difficult to get a large body of people to assemble again so soon after the election. He recommended delay in the hope that they might later act in concert with other counties in calling simultaneous meetings. The requisition, signed by nearly two thousand freeholders, was sent to the sheriff in November and a meeting summoned for the end of the month.

In the meantime Wellington stuck to Tory policy of no reform but there was division amongst the Tory Members and Wellington was unable to command a majority. In November 1830 the king sent for Grey who formed a Whig administration. Wellington went into opposition with Sir Robert Peel as the Tory Leader of the Opposition in the Commons.

The reform movement in Devon lost its impetus. The attendance at the county meeting, about six hundred, was the smallest that one newspaper could remember. Ebrington's brother apologised for his absence owing to 'indisposition'. The Whig supporter who moved the petition said he was ready to leave the remedy to parliament adding that, though he personally regarded the abolition of rotten boroughs and the secret ballot as essential, he abhorred universal suffrage and annual parliaments. The petition was carried unanimously and Acland received great applause when he observed that he would not look abroad for examples of how to act but hoped to see 'a wise...national...safe improvement in the...Commons'. Early in 1831 Ebrington presented the petition, signed by between six and seven thousand people.

Following a requisition signed by about ninety men the sheriff convened a county meeting in March 1831 to petition the Commons in favour of the ministry's reform bill. There were probably twelve hundred present. Acland's agent dismissed it as a failure. The petition's mover urged the people to show that 'we are satisfied with the principle of the bill and would have it adopted even though it does not make our hair stand upon our heads'. Another speaker said the measure would give the people 'the chance of throwing off their bonds...and being free'. He hoped to see a rejuvenated constitution 'like the majestic oak' and he ended with the words 'reduce, revive, retrench, reform'. Another speaker reflected that 'we are in... happier times with a sovereign who is not a conqueror, but the father of his people'. The petition was carried unanimously and presented by Ebrington. Two days later the Devon Constitutional Society held its first official dinner attended by more than a hundred members who adopted a petition to parliament embodying their opinions on reform but it was not presented.

Grey produced a bold scheme of reform. The second reading of the Reform Bill, which was supported by both Ebrington and Acland, was carried by one vote in March 1831. The Tory opposition was determined to stop the scheme and when the Bill went into committee General Gascoyne moved an amendment requiring no reduction in the total number of Members representing England and Wales. The proposal was a skilfully drafted 'wrecking amendment'. Acland voted for it and Ebrington against it. Grey had been ready to ask for a dissolution immediately the Committee stage began. When Gascoyne's amendment was passed by eight votes William IV reluctantly dissolved Parliament in person amid a great political tumult.

As supporters of electoral reform the Whigs won a landslide victory at the 1831 election. In Devon a meeting of the 'Friends of Reform' at the Globe had resolved that in the event of a dissolution they would support only candidates who promised to give 'a decided adherence to the general principles' of the bill. Acland was informed that some had wanted to press him for an explicit statement of his views but this was not carried. The 'Friends of Reform' pledged to work for Ebrington's return at the impending general election. They agreed that, since Acland had forfeited their confidence, Russell (Lord Bedford's son and author of the bill) should be invited to stand. Acland published an address next day in which he announced that given the 'ample testimony...from very opposite quarters' of a determination to remove him he had decided to retire but would attend the nomination meeting to explain his position. Russell's letter accepting the invitation to stand was read at a third meeting at the Globe.

Meanwhile handbills were circulated urging the freeholders not to pledge themselves as arrangements were being made to bring forward 'two gentlemen of independent and constitutional principles'. The names of John Yarde Buller and Alexander Baring were mentioned. A meeting of the 'Friends of the Constitution' concluded that opposition to the government at that time 'might be so perverted as to have the character assigned to it of...fighting against their king' but they resolved to uphold their principles whenever a fitting opportunity should present itself. They also agreed to provide financial assistance to their chosen candidate. Rumours nevertheless persisted that they might after all nominate Acland. There appeared to be almost universal enthusiasm in the county for reform and the Dissenters were said to be undertaking extraordinary exertions on behalf of the Whig candidates. Canvassers in Tiverton reported that of over two hundred freeholders visited they had met with but two hesitations.

Russell's presence in Exeter roused the spirit of curiosity to an extraordinary extent and between six and eight thousand people assembled for the nomination meeting. Ebrington rejoiced at the opportunity afforded by Acland's prudent retirement to 'still more identify yourselves with the reform bill'. Russell stated that the king required them to 'pronounce distinctly aye or no' on a measure which aimed to restore the constitution 'to its original condition' and 'more truly associate the House of Commons with the other institutions of the state'.

Acland delivered a lengthy account of his relationship with the county claiming that the 'system of distrust' towards him had originated in the Catholic emancipation crisis of 1829 which caused many friends to 'part from my side'. Support from other sources had saved him in 1830 but the unrelenting hostility of the Protestant Tories meant they had sacrificed 'an old friend...not to elevate anyone whose opinions more accorded with their own but to throw the whole weight of county representation the other way'. He provoked 'great uproar' by asserting that before March 'the minds of men were not at all prepared for anything like the [reform] measure that was then produced'.



Earl Russell

On election day, many of the principal shops and houses were 'profusely decorated with laurel' and an 'enormous cavalcade' escorted Ebrington and Russell to the hustings. Ebrington's sponsors declared that without the bill there would have been a revolution in the country. Russell's sponsors argued that beneficial results would flow from 'this preliminary measure of reform', including the reduction of taxation, abolition of pensions and sinecures, a fair consideration of the tithes question and an increase in commerce resulting from the removal of the East India Company's monopoly of the China trade.

Ebrington and Russell were duly declared elected. The former made a triumphal speech recalling his past contests. Russell declared that the result was virtually a direction to present the reform bill again and, although the Tories were already canvassing against him, he had no fear of asking for a renewal of their trust at the next election. He issued a separate address to the United Committee of Protestant Dissenting Deputies thanking them for their generous financial support which had helped to prevent the struggle intended by the Tories. The usual procession of the Members followed and that evening about two hundred supporters gathered at the New London inn for an 'ordinary and dessert, paid for by themselves, so that the Members incurred no expense'. There was, 'in contradistinction to elections of former times, no feasting, no carousing'. Ebrington's election expenses were about thirty-four thousand pounds in today's terms. He left that night to assist in the campaign against the Tory Member for Cornwall Sir Richard Vyvyan.

In March Sir Trayton Drake of Nutwell Court chaired a 'highly respectable meeting of gentlemen' at the Clarence hotel where a petition was moved against the proposed system of national education in Ireland which compromised the 'vital principles of Protestantism'. Letters of support were received from Rolle and Bastard and nearly nine thousand signatures were obtained for the petition, including seventy magistrates, two hundred Anglican clergy and many Dissenting ministers.

A month later a meeting was convened of tithe owners and payers at the Globe where it was resolved unanimously that the Archbishop of Canterbury's bill to facilitate composition of the tithe offered no substantial relief to the farmers and that a permanent commutation was the only remedy. The Archbishop had suggested 'compounding' tithes for fourteen or twenty-one years and basing the farmers' contribution on the average price of corn over the previous seven years. A committee was formed to organise a requisition for a county meeting for which more than two thousand signatures were subsequently gathered.

Ebrington attended a second meeting in September when he explained that he favoured the archbishop's bill and stressed the 'impolicy' of a county meeting which might encourage the anti-reformers to raise the 'church in danger' cry. There followed a lengthy debate before a resolution to delay forwarding the requisition until the bill reached the Commons was carried unanimously. Afterwards, Ebrington inquired as to the state of feeling in Devon on the reform bill. He was assured it was more earnest than ever and he suggested petitioning the Lords for its speedy passage.

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A requisition with over three hundred signatures was forwarded to the sheriff and a meeting summoned for the end of the month. Despite 'the shortest notice ever known in this county' between two and three thousand people attended. Russell was absent owing to the pressure of public business. The petition was carried unanimously and forwarded for presentation. Ebrington congratulated the meeting and advised that 'temper and perseverance must conquer'.

Following the Lords' rejection of the bill another freeholders' meeting at the Globe in October 1831 agreed that in the 'present excited state of the public mind' another county meeting was 'inexpedient'. It forwarded an address to the king requesting the use of 'the means which the constitution has wisely placed in your hands' to resolve the crisis. Devon was said by one Whig to be perfectly quiet though 'all were eager as ever for reform'. The Tory bishop of Exeter, Henry Phillpotts, claimed that 'the farmers in several quarters have given strong indications of a return to common sense and a dread of the reform bill'.

In January 1832 a 'Devonshire Declaration' was published in the press, signed by nine peers including Rolle, forty magistrates and about four thousand clergy, freeholders and leaseholders. It praised the 'manly and independent' conduct of the Lords and sought to expose the 'gross fallacy' that the 'bulk of property and respectability' supported the reform bill although the signatories were 'not opposed to such reform of abuses as may be consistent with the preservation of all the rights and privileges of our glorious monarchical constitution'.

At a meeting of the 'Friends of Reform' in May a committee was formed to monitor the reform bill's progress in the Lords and judge of the propriety of calling a county meeting. When Grey's ministry resigned ten days later another meeting was convened at which it was argued that a prompt expression of public opinion was required in order to avoid 'shipwreck'. A requisition to the sheriff was signed by three hundred and fifty-nine men. The 'warmest approbation' was also given to Ebrington's Commons motion for the appointment only of ministers committed to carrying an unimpaired bill. In the anticipation of an early dissolution, as the Tories were said to be 'already in the field', an immediate canvass was undertaken to secure Ebrington's and Russell's return.

The attendance at the county meeting on 25 May was probably considerably lessened by the reinstatement of Grey's government but nevertheless there were nearly three thousand there including the principal reformers of the county. The original intention had been to move for an address to the king for the immediate creation of peers and a petition to the Commons to withhold supply until the bill was carried. Instead an address to the king was moved recommending the use of his constitutional powers if necessary. The address was carried unanimously as was a petition to the Commons urging resistance to any amendments to the bill. Three cheers were then given to the Members and 'three groans for the bishop'. A band struck up *God Save the King* as the meeting dispersed. Ebrington presented the petition and the address at a royal levee.

The Reform Bill was passed on 25 July 1831. It divided Devon into two constituencies which still returned two Members. Colyton was then in the constituency of Devonshire South. Parliament was dissolved and a general election called.

The 1832 election saw the Whigs win a large majority with the Tories securing less than thirty per cent of the vote. Grey was supported by Radical and other allied politicians. Wellington continued to lead the Tory peers as Leader of the Opposition. The Commons were led by Sir Robert Peel.

Ebrington and Acland stood for Devonshire North. Lord John Russell, the Whig who had been the principal mover behind the Great Reform Act, not surprisingly was re-elected. He was known by the nickname Finality Jack because of his complacency in pronouncing the Act 'the final solution of a great constitutional question'. The second Member was the moderate Whig John Crocker Bulteel of Flete in Holbeton in the South Hams. He did not stand again at the following election. He became Sheriff of Devon in 1841 and Master of the Dartmoor Foxhounds. He bred the finest pack of hounds in England, so I'm told. Sir John Yarde Buller was defeated.

There is little information available on county elections between 1832 and 1885.

Grey's ministry saw the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1833 but Grey was cautious about initiating more far-reaching reforms particularly since he knew they would be unlikely to have support from the king. He seems genuinely to have preferred a private life. Colleagues remarked caustically that he threatened to resign at every setback. In July 1834 he retired from public life. The king had to invite another Whig to replace him as the Tories were not strong enough to support a government. Melbourne was the man most likely to be both acceptable to the king and hold the Whig party together. He hesitated after receiving the request from the king to visit him to discuss the formation of a government. According to the diarist Charles Greville, Melbourne said to his secretary: 'I think it's a damned bore. I am in many minds as to what to do' to which came the reply: 'Why, damn it all, such a position was never held by any Greek or Roman: and if it only lasts three months, it will be worth while to have been Prime Minister of England [sic]'. 'By God, that's true,' Melbourne said, 'I'll go!'. In the first instance he lasted for four months. The Palace of Westminster burned to the ground on 16 October.

Anxious to be rid of the Whigs, in November 1834 when parliament was temporarily homeless, the king used the spurious excuse of Lord Althorp's elevation to the Lords on the death of his father to dismiss the government. Wellington formed a caretaker administration until Peel could return from Rome. With Peel installed as prime minister the king dissolved parliament and called a general election. It was the last time a monarch exercised his constitutional right to dissolve parliament.

Following the 1835 general election Peel formed a shaky ministry which collapsed after about a hundred days. As his statement of policy at the election Peel had issued what became known as the Tamworth Manifesto in which he endorsed modest reform. It is often seen as the basis on which the modern Conservative Party was founded. The Whigs under Viscount Melbourne had a healthy majority thanks to an electoral pact with Daniel O'Connell's Irish Repeal Association and the Radicals known as the Lichfield House Compact and they returned to power. In Devon South Lord Russell was re-elected with Tory Sir John Buller-Yarde-Buller. Russell resigned later in the year on being appointed home secretary. Tory Montague Edmund Newcombe Parker came in for him.

In less than three months after the disastrous fire some running repairs allowed the Lords to sit in the Painted Chamber while the Commons sat in the former Lords Chamber, parliament having been prorogued twice in the interim to allow more repairs. Members of Parliament began to use the new Commons Chamber in 1850 although the building was not fully completed until 1870.

There was a general election in 1837 triggered by the death of William IV. It was the last time a parliament was dissolved as a result of the demise of the monarch. The practice was formally abolished by the Reform Act 1867.

In the first parliament of the reign of Queen Victoria Melbourne led the Whig government with Robert Peel leading the Tories in opposition. Parker and Yarde-Buller were re-elected for Devon South. Yarde-Buller held his seat until he retired in 1858.



John Crocker Bulteel



Sir John Buller-Yarde-Buller

Barely eighteen, the new queen was breaking free from the domineering influence of her mother the Duchess of Kent and her mother's advisor Sir John Conroy. Over the next four years Melbourne trained her in the art of politics and the two became friends. Melbourne was given a private apartment at Windsor Castle. Unfounded rumours circulated for a time that Victoria would marry Melbourne who was forty years her senior.

In 1839 Melbourne resigned. Prospective Tory prime minister Robert Peel requested that the queen dismiss some of the wives and daughters of Whig MPs who made up her personal entourage, arguing that the monarch should avoid any hint of favouritism to a party out of power. She refused. Melbourne supported her when she led him to believe that Peel had requested the resignation of all her ladies. Peel then refused to form a new government and Melbourne was persuaded to stay on as prime minister.

The Tories under Sir Robert Peel took control of the House of Commons at the 1841 election. In Devon South Yarde-Buller was joined by Lord Courtenay, William later eleventh Earl of Devon, who was elected as a Tory but joined the Peelites in 1846 after a split over the Corn Laws. Peel came to office during an economic recession which had seen a slump in world trade, a trade deficit and a budget deficit of over seven million pounds. Confidence in banks and businesses was low. To raise revenue Peel's 1842 budget re-introduced Income Tax. The rate was *7d* in the pound or just under three per cent. The money raised allowed the reduction or removal of over twelve hundred tariffs on imports including the controversial sugar duties. The repeal of the corn laws was proposed but defeated in a Commons vote by a margin of four to one.

The most notable act of Peel's ministry was the 1846 repeal of the Corn Laws which supported agricultural revenues by restricting grain imports. It has also been pointed out that from 1844 Peel knew he was going to be deposed as Conservative leader. Many of his MPs had taken to voting against him. The rupture within the party between liberals and paternalists which had been so damaging in the 1820s, masked by the issue of parliamentary reform in the 1830s, was brought to the surface over the Corn Laws. It has been suggested that Peel wished to be deposed on a liberal issue so that he might later lead a Peelite/Whig/Liberal alliance. On Peel's fall Lord Russell, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Devon in 1831 became prime minister.

At the 1847 election some candidates began calling themselves Conservatives. The split between the Protectionist majority led by Lord Stanley and the free trade Peelite minority led by former prime minister Sir Robert Peel left the Whigs under Prime Minister Russell in a position to continue in government. In Devon South Yarde-Buller and Lord Courtenay were re-elected but Courtenay retired from politics when he was made a Poor Law inspector in 1849. At the ensuing by-election another Tory, Sir Ralph Lopes, came in. He held the seat until his death in 1854.

By the 1852 general election Stanley had succeeded his father as Earl of Derby and his party had become known as Conservatives. The result of the election was close but again the split between



Lawrence Palk, Lord Haldon, about 1882

Protectionist Tories and Peelites made the government unstable. The split was a significant cause of the realignment of the political parties. After 1852 the Conservative party became almost completely the party of the rural aristocracy. The Whigs, Free Traders and Peelite 'Oppositionists' became the Whig party of the rising urban bourgeoisie, the boroughs and the growing urban industrial areas. Derby appointed Benjamin Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer in his minority Protectionist government. The period from 1847 to 1848 had been one of economic stagnation but 1849 to 1852 saw a return to prosperity. The Free Traders, believing that the repeal of the Corn Laws was responsible for the prosperity, continued to press for the repeal of all tariffs on consumer goods.

In December 1852 when Disraeli introduced a budget imposing tax increases on the profits of the rising bourgeoisie and extending income tax to the Irish bourgeoisie while granting tax cuts to the rural landed aristocracy enough Irish Tories voted against the budget to cause the Derby government to fall. George Hamilton-Gordon, fourth Earl of Aberdeen then formed a new government from the coalition of Free Traders, Peelites and Whigs that had voted down the previous government.

At the by-election in Devon South in 1854 following the death of Sir Ralph Lopes Tory Sir Lawrence Palk joined Yarde-Buller. They were re-elected in 1857.

England and France declared war on Russia in 1854. British and French troops landed on the Crimean peninsula. The Allied troops then moved across the Alma River at the battle of Alma and set siege to the fort of Sebastopol. A Russian attack on the allied supply base at Balaclava was rebuffed. The Battle of Balaclava is noted for its famous (or rather infamous) Charge of the Light Brigade. Russian forces were rebuffed when they tried to relieve the siege at Sebastopol and defeat the Allied armies in the field at the Battle of Inkerman. As reports returned to England detailing the mismanagement of the conflict parliament began to investigate. A select committee was appointed to enquire into the conduct of the war. Treating this as a vote of no confidence in his government, Aberdeen resigned and retired from active politics. Having exhausted all the alternatives the Queen invited Palmerston to form a government.

In October 1856 the Second Opium War was triggered by the Chinese seizure of the pirate ship Arrow. In the process, according to the local British official Harry Parkes, the British flag was insulted. The Chinese Commissioner Ye Mingchen refused to apologise. The British shelled his compound and Ye retaliated by issuing a proclamation calling on the people of Canton to 'unite in exterminating these troublesome English villains'. As the British factories outside the city were burned to the ground in reprisal Ye offered a hundred dollar bounty for the head of any Englishman.

Palmerston supported Parkes. In parliament British policy was strongly attacked in a censure motion by Richard Cobden and Gladstone. Palmerston played the patriotism card, saying that Cobden demonstrated 'an anti-English feeling, an abnegation of all those ties which bind men to their country and to their fellow-countrymen, which I should hardly have expected from the lips of any member of this House. Everything that was English was wrong, and everything that was hostile to England was right.' The censure motion was carried and the government fell.

Palmerston's Whigs finally won a majority in the House of Commons at the 1857 election as the Conservative vote fell significantly. Palmerston's stance in China was popular amongst the middle class and the commercial and financial interests. Cobden and John Bright lost their seats.

In response to French outrage when an Italian republican attempted to assassinate the French emperor with a bomb made in Britain, Palmerston introduced a Conspiracy to Murder Bill making it a felony to plot in Britain to murder someone abroad. Palmerston lost the vote and was forced to resign. Derby formed another minority government with Disraeli again at the Exchequer and Leader of the Commons. It collapsed the following spring. Yarde-Buller died in 1858. At the by-election Tory Samuel Trehawke Kerewich was returned. Palk and Kerewich were re-elected in 1859 and 1865.

Palmerston won the 1859 election. Although he and William Gladstone treated each other cordially they disagreed fundamentally over Church appointments, foreign affairs, defence and reform. A member of the cabinet claimed that at the beginning of each session and after each holiday Gladstone would come in 'charged to the muzzle' with all sorts of schemes of reforms which were in his opinion absolutely necessary to be undertaken immediately. Palmerston would look fixedly at the paper in front of him saying nothing until there was a lull in Gladstone's outpouring. He then rapped the table and said cheerfully: 'Now, my Lords and gentlemen, let us go to business'. Palmerston told Lord Shaftesbury: 'Gladstone will soon have it all his own way and whenever he gets my place we shall have strange doings'. He told another friend that he thought Gladstone would wreck the Whig Party and end up in a madhouse.

When in 1864 Edward Baines introduced a Reform Bill in the Commons Palmerston ordered Gladstone not to commit himself and the government to any particular scheme in his reply. Instead Gladstone told the Commons that he did not see why any man should not have the vote unless he was mentally incapacitated although he added that this would not come about unless the working class showed an interest in reform. Palmerston believed it to be an incitement to the working class to begin agitating for reform. He told Gladstone: 'What every Man and Woman too have a Right to, is to be well governed and under just Laws, and they who propose a change ought to shew that the present organization does not accomplish those objects'.

At the 1865 election Palmerston increased his majority. In October he caught a chill and died a week later. Russell again became Prime Minister. It was then that the party became known officially as the Liberal Party. One of Russell's early priorities was a Reform Bill but the legislation that Gladstone announced in the Commons in 1866 divided his party. The Conservatives and the dissident Liberals repeatedly attacked Gladstone's bill finally defeating the government. Russell resigned and went into permanent retirement. The dissidents were unwilling to serve under Disraeli so Derby formed a third Conservative minority government with Disraeli again as Chancellor.

There was concern about unrest caused by public pressure for reform. In 1867 the Conservatives introduced a new reform bill. Without a majority in the Commons they had to accept amendments that considerably liberalised the legislation though Disraeli refused to accept any from Gladstone.

The Second Reform Act passed in August 1867 extended the franchise by nearly a million. It eliminated rotten boroughs with fewer than ten thousand inhabitants and granted constituencies to fifteen unrepresented towns with extra representation to large municipalities such as Liverpool and Manchester. Disraeli gained wide acclaim and became a hero to his party for the 'marvellous parliamentary skill' with which he secured the passage of reform in the Commons.

Derby had long suffered from attacks of gout which sent him to his bed unable to deal with politics. As the new session of parliament approached in February 1868, bedridden at his home, he resigned. Disraeli became prime minister. The earlier passage of the Reform Bill required the calling of an election once the new voting register had been compiled. The Conservatives remained in office in a minority government for most of the year waiting for the new electoral register. Neither party wished a poll under the old roll but Gladstone began using the Liberal majority in the Commons to push through resolutions and legislation.

At the 1868 election the Liberals again increased their majority. This was the last election at which the two leading parties were still loose coalitions. The constituency of Devon South having been abolished in 1867 Colyton was then in Devonshire East. Following the reorganisation Kerewich stood in the neighbouring constituency. Palk and Edward Baldwin Courtenay, son of William Courtenay who stood down in 1849, came in for Devonshire East in 1868. Courtenay resigned two years later. He later became the twelfth Earl of Devon. At the ensuing by-election the Tory Sir John Kennaway was elected unopposed.

Gladstonian Liberalism was characterised by a number of policies intended to improve individual liberty and loosen political and economic restraints. Public expenditure was minimised on the premise that the economy and society were best helped by allowing people to spend as they saw fit. Foreign policy was aimed at promoting peace to enhance trade and reduce expenditure. Forster's Education Act set the framework for schooling of all children in England and Wales between the ages of five and thirteen. In 1870 Gladstone had sponsored an Order in Council introducing competitive examination into the Civil Service which diminished the political element of government appointment. Disraeli did not reverse the order but he often frustrated its intent. His party was hungry for office and its emoluments after almost thirty years with only brief spells in government. Disraeli appointed hard-up Conservative leaders to positions previously given to career civil servants and rewarded old friends with clerical positions. In 1872 Gladstone secured passage of the Ballot Act which brought in secret ballots.

In 1873 Gladstone brought forward legislation to establish a Catholic university in Dublin. It divided the Liberals and an alliance of Conservatives and Irish Catholics defeated the government by three votes. Gladstone resigned. The queen sent for Disraeli who refused to take office because without a general election a Conservative government would be another minority dependent for survival on the division of its opponents. Gladstone's government struggled on beset by scandal and unimproved by a reshuffle. As part of that change Gladstone took on the office of Chancellor leading to questions as to whether he had to stand for re-election on taking on a second ministry. Until the 1920s MPs becoming ministers, thus taking an office of profit under the Crown, had to seek re-election. He unexpectedly dissolved parliament in January 1874 and called a general election.

The 1874 general election was the first Conservative victory since 1841. Disraeli became prime minister. In Devon Kennaway and Palk were re-elected. In August 1876 Disraeli was elevated to the House of Lords as Earl of Beaconsfield and Viscount Hughenden. He had declined two offers from the queen to ennoble him over the previous eight years when he had been reluctant to leave the Commons for a house in which he had no experience. Continued ill health during his second premiership caused him to contemplate resignation but Derby was unwilling because he felt he could not 'manage' the queen. The Lords, where the debate was less intense, was the alternative to resignation from office. Five days before the end of the 1876 session of parliament Disraeli was seen to linger and look around the chamber before departing the Commons. Newspapers reported his ennoblement the following morning.

Under the stewardship of Disraeli's home secretary Richard Assheton Cross the new government enacted many reforms. The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act allowed peaceful picketing and the Employers and Workmen Act enabled workers to sue employers in the civil courts if they broke legal contracts. The Education Act passed the following year brought in compulsory attendance at primary school and permitted the Poor Law Guardians to help with the payment of school fees. The Liberal-Labour MP Alexander Macdonald told his constituents in 1879 'The Conservative party have done more for the working classes in five years than the Liberals have in fifty.'

Gladstone's Liberals secured one of their largest ever majorities in the 1880 general election. In Devon Kennaway was re-elected, Palk retired and was succeeded by Tory William Walrond. Conservative chances of re-election were damaged by a long spell of poor weather with its consequent effects on agriculture. The previous four consecutive wet summers had led to poor harvests. In the past the farmer had the consolation of higher prices but with bumper crops cheaply transported from the United States grain prices remained low. Other European nations faced with similar circumstances opted for protection. Disraeli had been urged to reinstitute the Corn Laws. He declined as protection would have raised the cost of living and been highly unpopular among the newly-enfranchised urban working class. Gladstone again became prime minister. Disraeli's health continued to fail. Suffering from asthma and gout he went out as little as possible, fell ill with bronchitis and died in 1881.

Gladstone originally intended to retire at the end of 1882, the fiftieth anniversary of his entry into politics, but in the event did not do so.

Gladstone extended the franchise to agricultural labourers and others in the Third Reform Act in 1884 giving the counties the same franchise as the boroughs. It added about six million to the total number who could vote in parliamentary elections. Parliamentary reform continued with the Redistribution of Seats Act in 1885 which introduced the concept of equally populated constituencies. After the Third Reform Act Colyton was in the constituency of Honiton from 1885 to 1917. It sent one member to parliament. Sir John Kennaway continued to be the Member until he retired at the 1910 general election. He was succeeded by Conservative Sir Arthur Clive Morrison-Bell who sat for Honiton at least until 1931.

At the 1885 election a majority of adult males could vote and most constituencies returned a single Member to parliament. Henry Sellers may have then been eligible to vote but I am by no means certain. Gladstone's Liberals had no overall majority. The Irish Nationalists held the balance of power which exacerbated divisions within the Liberals over Irish Home Rule. Gladstone's downfall came in Africa, where his failure to rescue General Gordon's force in Sudan in January 1885 was a major blow to his popularity. The queen sent him a telegram of rebuke which found its way into the press. Critics said Gladstone had neglected military affairs and had not acted promptly enough to save the besieged Gordon. Critics inverted his acronym, GOM (Grand Old Man) to MOG (Murderer of Gordon). He resigned as prime minister in 1885 and declined the queen's offer of an earldom.

Conservative Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, the Marquis of Salisbury, formed a minority government. Lacking a parliamentary majority he resigned early in 1886 when Gladstone returned as prime minister. The Liberals were split over Irish Home Rule. The breakaway Unionist wing, which was against Home Rule, was led by Lord Hartington (later the Duke of Devonshire) and Joseph Chamberlain. The split forced Gladstone to go to the country.

Salisbury won the 1886 election in an electoral pact with the Unionist wing of the Liberals which gave the Conservative party its parliamentary majority without joining a formal coalition. Gladstone's Liberals and their sometime allies the Irish Parliamentary Party led by Charles Stewart Parnell came a distant second. It ended the period of Liberal dominance in which they had and won five of the six elections and held power for eighteen of the twenty-seven years since 1859.