

The Chronicle

No 7



The Journal of the
Long Wittenham Local History Group

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Acknowledgements

On looking at the very first edition of 'The Chronicle' - back in 1986 - I see that, as the then editor, I gave 'heartfelt thanks' to all the contributors who braved the water in our first joint printed effort, and wrote so many interesting and informative pieces for it.

That 'Chronicle' set a high standard which subsequent editions have fully lived up to, and once again I must thank all the kind people who have given of their time to write articles for this - the 1993 - edition.

Looking at that first journal, I see that Patricia Lay was even then a contributor, ('The Church of the Tudors and Stuarts'), and it will be seen that once more she has given us an interesting piece on her special subject. It is nice, Chronicle after Chronicle, to see the same names coming up time and again.

Linda Francis has, yet again, given generously of her time and expertise in the arduous job of pasting-up, organising the printers, and generally doing everything to make sure that we will have a journal to show for all those meetings, activities and fund-raising events associated with our Long Wittenham Local History Group.

However, if Patricia Gilbert had not so efficiently typed up all the articles, liaising with Linda on where the spaces for illustrations etc. should come, we would not have this, our seventh edition. Thank you Trish.

Elizabeth McDougall
Editor

THE MISSES ROXBURGH

Helen Alderson Roxburgh - 1894 to 1973

Mary Evelyn Roxburgh - 1896 to 1973

by

Ruth McCreight & Muriel Thorpe



The two Miss Roxburghs, together with their housekeeper and great friend Jane Waite (who had lived with Evelyn during the war years in London) came to live at The Grange on the High Street in 1950.

Evelyn (Evi) and Helen (Naena) had a weekend cottage in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and used to cycle over to see Mrs Mildenhall's beautiful garden at Lower Farm on the Clifton Hampden road. It was thus they were first introduced to the village.

“Two real 'ladies'”.

“They ran the W.I. Produce Show”.

“Like real Victorian ladies. I am sure they had cucumber sandwiches for tea”.

“They put their hearts and souls into the Church Fete, we used to collect a trailer load from the Grange - bookcases, stands and tables that all had to be carried from the barn”.

“They had a gardener who wore a green baize apron”.

“They were connoisseurs of good food and drink”.

“Jane Waite, who was their housekeeper, was reputed to see the ghost at the Grange”.

“Very generous - but careful. They came from a Scottish farming background”!

These comments are all from people who remember the two kindly, intelligent and well travelled ladies with affection. When they both died, within one month of each other, The Wittenham Ways wrote the following obituary (1973):

“Not only their many friends in Long Wittenham, but a wide circle in London and Edinburgh are deeply saddened by the tragically sudden death on April 24th of Evelyn Roxburgh and, only some four weeks later, on May 16th of her sister Naena.

The sisters settled in Long Wittenham in 1950 and immediately took a great interest and played a full part in local affairs. Evelyn became President of the W.I. and Naena acted as its secretary at a time when she was also a volunteer driver for Oxford hospitals; many residents in Long Wittenham had cause to be grateful to Naena for this although she loved the service she could give.

Members of the Church of Scotland when they came to Long Wittenham, [they] soon expressed a wish to join, and were subsequently received into, the Church of England. From then on both Naena and Evelyn took an absorbing interest in the village's two annual events the Church Fete and the Produce Show.

Until two years ago Naena was the local organizer for the sale of poppies, her care in this matter being recognised only last year in a letter of appreciation from British Legion Headquarters.

The intellectual standards of Naena and Evelyn were high. For most of her adult life Naena was 'the right hand' of Lord Justice Scott, especially during his busy years as a Judge of the Appeal Court.

Evelyn, of a more practical turn of mind, was for a time with Metropolitan Vickers and a factory inspector in Manchester. Then, having qualified as a radiographer, she came south and took up the appointment as head radiographer at Surbiton Hospital, Surrey. One eminent consultant radiologist was known to remark that he had rarely seen radiographs of a great[er] diagnostic value than those taken by Miss Roxburgh.

Both sisters had a great sense of humour and were avid readers, little in their daily newspaper or weeklies escaping their critical appraisal.

Very sadly we, who [k]new and loved them, will not see their like again."

Both sisters relied entirely on Jane Waite to oversee the smooth running of the house. In this task she was helped by Mrs Edna Wilson. When Jane died in 1965 the Miss Roxburgh's were utterly bereft. Not only had Jane taken total care of them and the house, she was also a dear and valued friend.

It is touching that all three women are named on the same gravestone. Jane, who died first, is actually buried there. The two sisters, eight years later, were cremated and it is their ashes which are interred in the St. Mary's churchyard. In death they were not divided.

Miss Evi was a visitor at a local W.I. meeting in October 1951 and then became a member in December of the same year. She was Vice President in 1953 and President in 1954, 1955 and 1959.

Miss Naena was Secretary of the W.I. in 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1959. One of her favourite sayings was "Look, we've got to make as much

money as we can”, this whether in connection with a fete, the Produce Show or an ordinary Bring and Buy stall.

She served, for fifteen years, on the Parochial Church Council, from 1955 to 1970.

She also started our local branch of C.P.R.E. Our current Village Representative is Eva Sewers, who took over from her son Alistair in 1992.

The sisters must have been very happy in Long Wittenham. In the 1960's they persuaded two other maiden ladies - Miss Marjorie Hollowell and Miss Ivy Williams - to join them. They built what is now known as Red Barn. Yet another friend, a Mrs Peggy Potter, built “Woodbury”, but for some reason never actually lived there.

Acknowledgements: Many thanks to all the people who knew and remembered these ladies and were kind enough to share their memories with us.

THE CHURCH COURTS IN THE 16th AND 17th CENTURIES

By

Michael Sibly

Early in the year 1625, John Shurlock, Curate of Benson, and his two churchwardens, John Cotterell and John Brasier, made a report or “presentment” to the archdeacon's court at Oxford. They told the court:

“We present Joan Coxe for a double act on incontineny [i.e. fornication]”. The case was followed up by the court officials and Joan Coxe was summoned and appeared before the court on 14 March 1625. She confessed to the court “that she hath had a childe unlawfully begotten of which Mr. John Shurlock the Curat of Benson is the father whoe had the carnall knowledge of her body once only and that about three weeks before Michaelmas last was three years, by the fires syde at her mothers house in the night tyme when her mother was gone to bed; she concealed him hitherto, as being the father of her childe thought she was divers tymes examined thereupon. In regard that the said Mr. Shurlock before and after the childe was begotten promised to marry her but he durst not doe it untill after his father was dead.....there goeth a publique fame att Benson and att other parishes adjoyning of incontineny betweene him and Joan Coxe of Benson.”

Shurlock himself later appeared and testified in court that he had not slept with Joan Coxe and denied all the charges, producing as compurgators Thomas Freman, George Penny, John Quelch and John Cotterell to back him up. The court seems to have accepted this for,

after several failures to appear in court to answer new charges of perjury, Joan Coxe was finally excommunicated on 13 June 1626. This prompted her to appear again and on 28 September 1626 she sought absolution.

This story, taken from records left by the archdeaconry court of Oxford, is interesting in itself, but also reveals how useful such records can be for students of local history. We gain an insight into the attitudes of the churchwardens towards illicit sexual activity; see how the unfortunate Joan Coxe sought to get her revenge by attacking the reputation of the Curate who had been instrumental in her prosecution, and discover the identity of four men in Benson who were clearly thought by the Curate to be respectable and eminent enough to act as his compurgators. It would be possible to cross reference this information with that provided by other records to find out more about the position of the compurgators - we might for instance expect them to be fairly well off.

However, despite the importance and usefulness of these records, they are often overlooked. This article is therefore intended to provide a short introduction to the structure and operation of the church courts in this period, and will give some examples of the kinds of information they provide about local communities in the hope that it will be of interest and help to those seeking to write the history of Long Wittenham.

As well as the royal (or civil) courts, both central and local, and the manorial courts, England in the early modern period also possessed an elaborate structure of ecclesiastical or church courts. These courts had developed in the Medieval period, conducting a wide range of business and staffed by their own officials. It used to be thought that by the early 16th century the church courts had become highly unpopular, and

that their importance declined markedly after the Reformation. However, it is increasingly clear from work done on the records of the church courts in a number of dioceses (e.g. Lincoln, York, Norwich, and Winchester), that the church courts survived the Reformation as thriving institutions.

They continued to conduct a wide range of business throughout the early modern period, and although they were temporarily abolished during the Commonwealth period in the mid-17th century, they were restored in 1660 and continued to operate thereafter. It is clear from the surviving records that the church courts played a very important role in 16th and early 17th century rural society, and in some counties such as Essex - the amount of business they undertook actually increased in this period. We know much less about the operation of the courts after the mid-17th century, although further work will no doubt reveal this. The remainder of this article will concentrate on the church courts between about 1500 and 1640.

There was a well-developed hierarchy of church courts in England in this period. At the bottom were the Archdeacons' Courts. Archdeacons might carry out their judicial and administrative responsibilities themselves, or delegate them to other officials. Regular visitations of the Archdeaconry were supposed to be carried out, at which cases would be presented to the courts by churchwardens from each parish, or by others. As we saw above, the prosecution of Joan Coxe began with a presentment of this kind. In other cases local people themselves could bring business to the court. Some dioceses also had rural deanery courts below the archdeaconry courts, although this was mainly in the more sparsely populated regions of the country where deaneries were very large. Once a case was before the court, it was usual for those involved to be called before it to give evidence, and other witnesses might also be called to testify.

Accused parties might often bring forward “compurgators”, local people of good standing prepared to vouch for them, and we saw the Curate of Benson doing this as a way of reinforcing his denials of the charges Joan Coxe made against him. If the presiding official reached a guilty verdict, a variety of penalties was available. The mildest was admonition, but others included fines, a performance of public penance, and ultimately excommunication.

At the next level up were the Bishops’ or Consistory Courts. They had their own range of business, and cases might also be referred to them by the Archdeacons’ courts when reference to a higher level was necessary. The consistory courts were usually presided over by a Bishop’s “official principal”, commonly called his Chancellor, who was helped by the principle registrar and other officers. The division of responsibility between consistory and archdeaconry courts varied from one diocese to another, and even between archdeaconries within a single diocese.

Above these diocesan courts were the Archiepiscopal or Metropolitan courts of the two provinces of Canterbury and York, which dealt among other things with business referred to them by episcopal courts. Beyond these Metropolitan courts, the final authority in ecclesiastical Jurisdiction before the Reformation was the Papacy in Rome, but after the 1530s (except for Mary’s reign 1553 - 1558), English courts became ultimately subject to Royal authority, as the Crown assumed supreme leadership of the Church. After the Reformation, special ecclesiastical courts created by Royal Commission were also established. These were known as courts of high commission, and they existed alongside the hierarchy of ecclesiastical courts described above.

The jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts in the 16th and early 17th centuries was very broad. While they were of course extensively involved in enforcing discipline on the clergy, the powers of the church courts went far beyond purely clerical or straightforward religious

business, and extended widely over the laity. The church courts dealt, for instance, with the enforcement of religious orthodoxy, payment of tithes and attendance at church; with cases of defamation (which nowadays might be termed slander and libel); with perjury and with a wide range of moral and sexual offences such as adultery, fornication and illegitimacy. They also had responsibility for the registration and probate of wills, and other testamentary business; and for matrimonial affairs, including disputes between husbands and wives and what we would now recognise as breach of contract cases.

While in certain respects the jurisdiction of the church courts may have been declining in the face of pressure from the common law courts in the 16th and early 17th centuries, the precise divisions of responsibility between the lay and ecclesiastical courts was unclear and shifting. Whether a particular case, say, of defamation went before the secular or ecclesiastical courts might depend on local conditions and on the circumstances of the case. Whatever the case, it is clear that the church courts were intimately involved in many aspects of local life.

For the purposes of studying village communities such as Long Wittenham, the richest sources are those left by the Archdeaconry courts. These, the lowest in the hierarchy, were usually closest to the ground and their proceedings contain a wealth of detail about social life in local communities. The Archdeaconry courts gave rise to a variety of records, three of which may be given particular attention.

First, there are the presentments made by churchwardens to the courts. The churchwardens in each parish would be required to make regular statements to the Archdeaconry courts in answer to a number of standard questions - for instance, whether the churchyard was in good repair; whether the fabric of the church was well maintained; what the

state of the bells was; whether anybody had been guilty of failing to attend church on the sabbath etc. In addition the churchwardens could present for prosecution individual cases such, as that of Joan Coxe,

The second kind of record is the proceedings of the courts themselves, which are recorded in a mixture of Latin and English in what are known as “act books”. It is the difficulty of using these which has led to their neglect: the Latin used in the court books is often, very highly abbreviated, written in a great hurry by the clerks of the court and hence difficult to read. However, a clear idea of the nature of these records can be found from a publication from the Oxfordshire Record Society, “The Archdeacons’ Court: Liber Actorum 1584”. In two volumes, edited by E. R. Brinkworth, these volumes give a transcript of the act book of the Archdeacons’ court for Oxfordshire in the year 1584.

The third set of records left by the courts which are of particular value are the transcripts of wills and their associated probate inventories which were deposited with the court when a will was proved. The nature of the documents is relatively well known, and for the present therefore we shall leave them to one side.

These records provide a wealth of information about local life which is not available from other sources. They are, in general, endlessly fascinating. Two examples of the kinds of case which came before the courts will have to suffice here to illustrate their nature: first, a defamation cum public order case, and second, some matrimonial cases.

Cases of defamation occur regularly in church court records and are interesting both because of the conflicts they reveal within

communities, and because in church courts such conflicts could be brought into the open and possibly resolved. Some cases were little more than what we might now call “public order” issues, with defendants accused of slandering each other and brawling, disturbing the peace etc. but others reveal jealousies about social position and other social conflicts.

For instance, Barbara Nicholls and Margery Hopkins of St Ebbes in Oxford were brought before the Archdeacon’s court on 9 January 1584, held on that day at the official’s lodgings in Exeter College. We read that Barbara testified that

“upon Twelffe daye last past at evening prayer this respondent [i.e. Barbara] was in her seat wheare she was appointed to sitt by the churchwardens there, and ther she hathe sytt by the space of v years and abowte the middle of evening prayer goodwiffe Hopkins came into the churche into the same seate and offered to take the ouer hande in the seate of this respondent, and syed unto her that she wolde move her seate, and after evening prayer was donne theye fell at further woordes insomutche that goodwiffe Hopkins called this respondent basterd and sayed she wold prove her a basterd, and thereupon this respondent sayed unto her, whosoeuer saithe that I am a basterde I says she is a whore of her tong.”

Margery’s side of the story was then heard. She said that

“upon Twelfe daye at night last past after evening prayer was donne this respondent and Barbara Nicholle fell at woordes together in the churche for theire seates, and because that Nicolles is not a ffreman the churchwardens there placed this respondent being a freman’s wiffe in the seats wth the said Barbara Nicholles and upon the better hand in the seats at the beginning of evening prayer the sayed Barbara iostled ffarther into the seats and wolde not lett her come into her owne place there, wheupon (*sic*) this respondent sayed unto her, yf yowe will not lett me come into

mye owne seat I will sitt upon you. (There follow) ffurther woordes of inconvenience betwene theime, as whore and basterd and such lyke as hereafter bye order of laws shall appeare.”

Clearly the two of them were quarreling over their pecking order in church, and this quarrel had led to some very unladylike behaviour. But we can also see the importance attached to one’s position in church, and how apparently seats were allocated by the churchwardens.

The records of the church courts are particularly interesting when it comes to cases concerning the regulation of marriage. Until Lord Hardwicke’s Marriage Act of 1753, which provided that only marriages consecrated in church were legally binding, the law of marriage in England was very complicated. The law which prevailed was based on the Canon Law inherited from the medieval church which was taken over lock, stock and barrel by the Anglican church after the Reformation. Three legally binding forms of marriage were recognised.

The first, and the one which the church preferred, was marriage in a church in front of a clergyman, following the calling of banns thrice, or the obtaining of a marriage licence. In addition, however, there were two other forms of marriage which were equally legally binding, but in which the church had no role. The first of these was the simple exchange of vows by the two parties concerned, using words of the present tense, and in front of witnesses. This might often be accompanied by the exchange of tokens - for example a ring or a coin. The other form which was recognised was the exchange of vows by the two parties using words of the future tense. As long as this was



"A wedding circa 1750"

done in front of witnesses and as long as it was followed by consummation it represented a legal marriage.

Given that these two latter forms of marriage were legally binding, there was plenty of scope for breach of contract cases and the church courts were the place where these would be resolved. What would usually happen is that one of the parties would renege on the contract and the aggrieved party would then bring a case before the church court arguing that vows had been exchanged in front of witnesses and that therefore there was a legally binding marriage.

One such case between William Hanwell and Isabelle Riddisdale, who lived near Aylesbury, came before the Archdeacon's court of

Buckingham on 6 February 1520. One of the alleged witnesses to the exchange of vows a Christopher Atkins - was sworn in and testified that he had heard William and Isabelle exchange vows in the upper room of a friend's house early in January of the previous year along with another of their friends, a certain Robert Halton. Christopher Atkins swore in court that he and Robert Halton had seen William and Isabelle place their hands together, upon which William said "I William take thee Isabelle to my wedded wife and there unto I plight my troth". Christopher Atkins also said that after William and Isabelle, had exchanged these vows, William handed over two pennies to Isabelle as a token of marriage. The other alleged witness to this contract - Robert Halton - was then called to give evidence. What he said was very similar, although the form of words which he said William used is slightly different - "I William take thee Isabelle unto my wedded wife for better or for worse, and there unto I plight my troth".

What is particularly interesting about this case is that the vows exchanged are very similar to those which Thomas Cranmer later incorporated into the marriage ceremony in the Book of Common Prayer - written some twenty years or so at least after the court case cited here. This suggests that Cranmer was drawing on popular traditional formulae in writing his marriage ceremony. It might be added for the record that we do not know the outcome of the case; it dragged on for a long time and may well have been brought to court because there were financial property matters at stake.

Another kind of matrimonial case which might arise was where churchwardens would present a couple for failing to live together properly. For example in 1584 at the Archdeacon's court in Oxford, one Miriam Marsh of Steeple Barton was brought to court and it was said that

“she did refuse to lie with her husband because he hath abused her divers times and did (about three years ago) send one John then his manservant to her bed for her to have lain with him; and that he doth, continually ever since abuse her in words and calleth her whore and other railing words so that she cannot live in quite by him”.

Robert Marsh was called to court in the next session and asked to give his account of affairs, He swore on oath that he denied that

“he thinketh his wife to live incontinently with any person or that he suspecteth her of any such dishonesty, but confesseth that they live together in house but lie not together by his wife's fault, and not any fault of his own”.

The outcome of this case was that the two were ordered by the court to live together properly, and then dismissed without further ado. Apart from the insight this gives us into a 16th century domestic dispute, it is interesting that the church courts regarded the private relationship of a man and wife a fitting subject for regulation by the church courts.

THE ROYAL ASTRONOMERS

by

Patricia Lay

Stephen George Tribouder Demainbray was vicar of Long Wittenham for five years from 1794 - 1799. It is likely that he was an absentee vicar because by the time he took the living he was already astronomer to George III.

Astronomy was one of the great interests of this king. When it was anticipated that the Transit of Venus would be seen in England in 1769 George III decided to build his own observatory, initially to monitor this event. It was built at Kew, took a year to construct and was finished, just in time.



Demonstrating an astronomical model, 18th century

The King appointed Dr. Stephen Charles Demainbray as his royal astronomer. A famous astronomer and philosopher, who had lectured at Edinburgh (where he had performed electrical experiments), Dublin, Bordeaux and Montpellier, Demainbray had been persuaded to return to England in 1754, after the death of his first wife. He became tutor to George, the then Prince of Wales, and his brother the Duke of York. He was rewarded with a salary of £300 per year for teaching the Princes mathematics, experimental philosophy and natural history. He also gave lectures to other members of the Royal Family from time to time.

When the Prince of Wales was 18 years old all his teachers were dismissed except Dr. Demainbray who continued to teach him sciences and also taught his wife, Charlotte. In an article in 'The Observatory', written in 1882 by a descendant Gibbes Rigaud, it is recorded that Queen Charlotte gave Demainbray a valuable watch inscribed "The gift of Her Majesty Queen Charlotte to Stephen Charles Tribouder Demainbray, A.D.1769". It then passed into the hands of a grandson and was reported to still keep good time "though 111 years old".

Thus it was natural that George should want Demainbray to be in charge of his Observatory. The King visited it frequently and acquired the best clocks and watches of the day. By daily observations of the sun, time could be regulated to the precise second. For many years the clocks at Parliament, St. James, Horse Guards and other public places took their time from Kew.

Dr. Demainbray died in 1782 and was succeeded by his son, then aged twenty-three. The Rev. Stephen Demainbray was the third child of Dr. Demainbray's second marriage. He had been educated at Harrow and was a fellow and tutor of Exeter College. Like his father before him, Stephen was a tutor to the young royals. They came to the Observatory for lectures on astronomy and philosophy. The King had amassed a large collection of instruments and apparatus which could be used for

experiments in mechanics, magnetism, electricity, etc. There was also a well-preserved natural history collection to delight and instruct.

Twelve years after becoming royal astronomer, Stephen was offered the living at Long Wittenham. He had married a year or two earlier and his son, Francis, was born at the end of 1793/early 1794 in Chelsea. It is likely that they continued to live in London while a clerk performed his duties in Wittenham, with possible visits from the Rev. Demainbray in the vacations. His place at Kew could be taken by his nephew Stephen Rigaud, professor of Astronomy at Oxford. In 1799 Demainbray was offered the better living of Broad Somerford in Wiltshire and he resigned from Long Wittenham.

He remained at the Kew Observatory until 1840 when it was closed, due to lack of interest shown by Queen Victoria. The valuable collections of instruments were given to various institutions, including King's College, London. The Rev. Demainbray received a life pension and retired to Broad Somerford. He died in July 1854, aged 94 years.

Bibliography: Dictionary of National Biography

*'The Observatory' as supplied by the British
Astronomical Association.*

THE TOWER SUNDIAL OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH LONG WITTENHAM

by

Michael Jewess



Fig. 1

The south face of the fifteenth-century¹ tower of St. Mary's church bears a sundial (Figure 1). The sundial consists of a downwardly-sloping iron pointer (called a "gnomon") set on a smooth mortar rectangle (called a "dial-plate"). Formerly, the dial-plate was painted with markings so that the time could be read from the position of the shadow of the upper edge of the gnomon. Today, all that remains of the paint is a slight discolouration of the mortar on the left side and some lighter colouring at the upper edge. There is no reference to the sundial in the church guide, although the medieval "mass" or "scratch" dials are mentioned².

The Long Wittenham Local History Group has raised enough money to pay for professional restoration of the sundial, which it is hoped will be completed during 1993, with the support of the Parochial Church Council and the approval of the Diocese. This article presents some general technical and historical information on sundials, and describes the work which has been done towards ensuring an authentic restoration of the St. Mary's dial.

Most people nowadays think of sundials as garden ornaments with a gnomon on a horizontal dial plate supported on a pedestal. The vertical sundial high on a wall, tower or pillar was, historically, the most important type of sundial, being easily visible to the public. Locally

one can see numerous vertical sundials; as well as the St. Mary's dial, there are sundials on the East Hagbourne village cross, on house fronts in East Hagbourne and Sutton Courtenay, on the tower of the market cross in Witney, and on the walls of quadrangles in All Souls and Merton Colleges in Oxford.

It may be wondered why sundials were so common.³ England is a cloudy country so that pre-arrangement of meetings or events by the time according to the sundial cannot ever have been practical. The heyday of sundials in England began in the seventeenth century, when mechanical clocks became widely available to public authorities and to affluent individuals. This seems paradoxical at first - one might think that clocks and sundials were competitors. In fact, they had a symbiotic relationship. Mechanical clocks had the advantage over sundials that they could be read when it was cloudy and also in the hours of darkness. However, they had the disadvantage that they gained or lost time in a more or less unpredictable way and therefore needed periodic resetting to accord with astronomical observations. Nowadays, the astronomical observations are made by professional astronomers who broadcast time signals; in those days, amateur astronomical observations on the local sundial were used to reset clocks. Even in England in winter, the sun usually shone often enough for a reasonably accurate clock not to get too far out between resettings by a sundial.

The geometrical principles of a sundial are a little more involved than might be thought. It might be supposed, in particular, that a satisfactory sundial could be made by mounting a vertical rod on a horizontal surface or a south-pointing horizontal rod on a south-facing vertical surface. However, for reasons that are perhaps not immediately obvious, such a dial would have practical value only for indicating noontime (i.e. the time when the sun is in the south). In order to be able to paint the dial with a full set of hour marks, the essential requirement is that the gnomon of the sundial should be aligned parallel

to the axis of rotation of the earth. How this works out is shown schematically in Figure 2. In the case of a garden sundial, with a horizontal dial plate on a pedestal, the gnomon has to point due north, inclined upwards from the horizontal through an angle equal to the latitude of the place ($51^{\circ}38'$ for Long Wittenham).

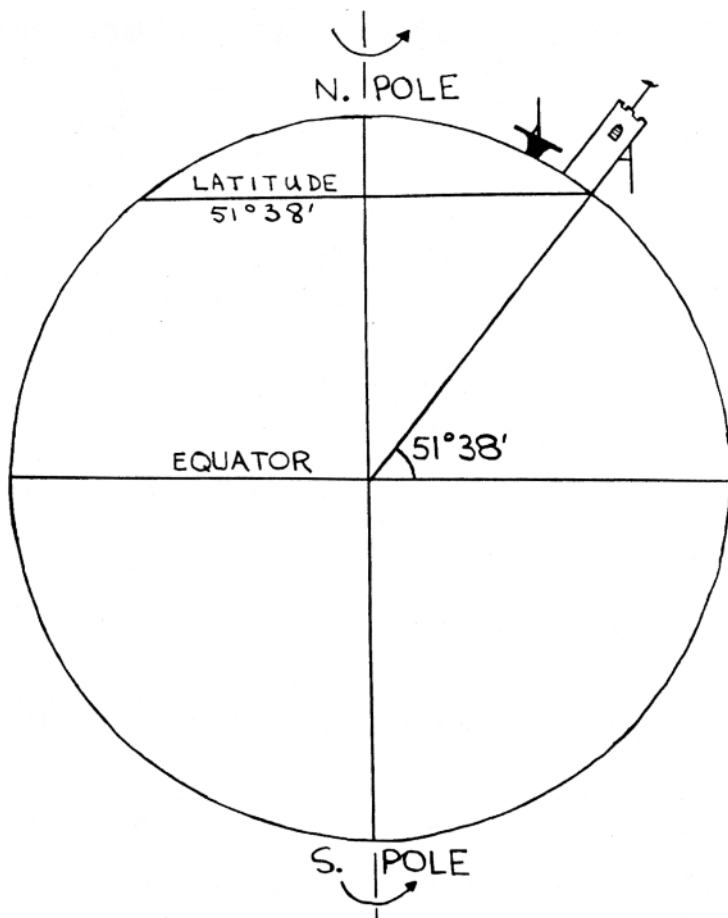


Fig. 2

With a sundial on an approximately south-facing wall, the gnomon

points due south, dipping below the horizontal by the same angle. The reader will immediately see how Figure 2 explains the general appearance both of horizontal garden sundials and of the St. Mary's vertical sundial. The correct position of the hour marks on the dial plate can be calculated by use of fairly simple equations.⁴ For a gnomon of the size of that on St. Mary's church tower, the time should be readable with an accuracy of 5 to 10 minutes.

To restore the St. Mary's dial, we will need first to make sure that the gnomon is correctly aligned - a bend is visible in the gnomon which will have to be straightened out - and secondly to paint on the hour marks. The position of these is easily determined from the equations, although the style of the lettering etc will follow the old photographs of the sundial in the south chapel or vestry of the church. Two photographs have been taken out of their frames and examined under bright light and magnification. The first shows the dial on a rather small scale relatively soon after the dial was last repainted, and the second shows the dial on a larger scale some time later when only the paint on the upper part of the dial plate remained. The two photographs together, complemented by calculation, indicate that one hundred years ago the dial was as shown in Figure 3. The old photographs are of course monochrome, and the colours that we use in restoration will have to be reasonable guesses.

The reader will notice that the hour markings in Figure 3 are not symmetrical. 12 noon is when the shadow is vertically downwards, but the morning hours to the left of the 12 noon mark are less spread out than the afternoon hours. The reason for this asymmetry is that the church tower does not face due south; a provisional estimate is that it faces 13 degrees east of south. Only if the wall faced due south would the dial be symmetrically marked.

The date 1887 that was formerly displayed at the top of the dial plate is almost certainly the date on which the dial was last repainted, probably to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. The other date that was displayed, 1830, may be the date of the original construction of the dial, or else of a previous repainting.

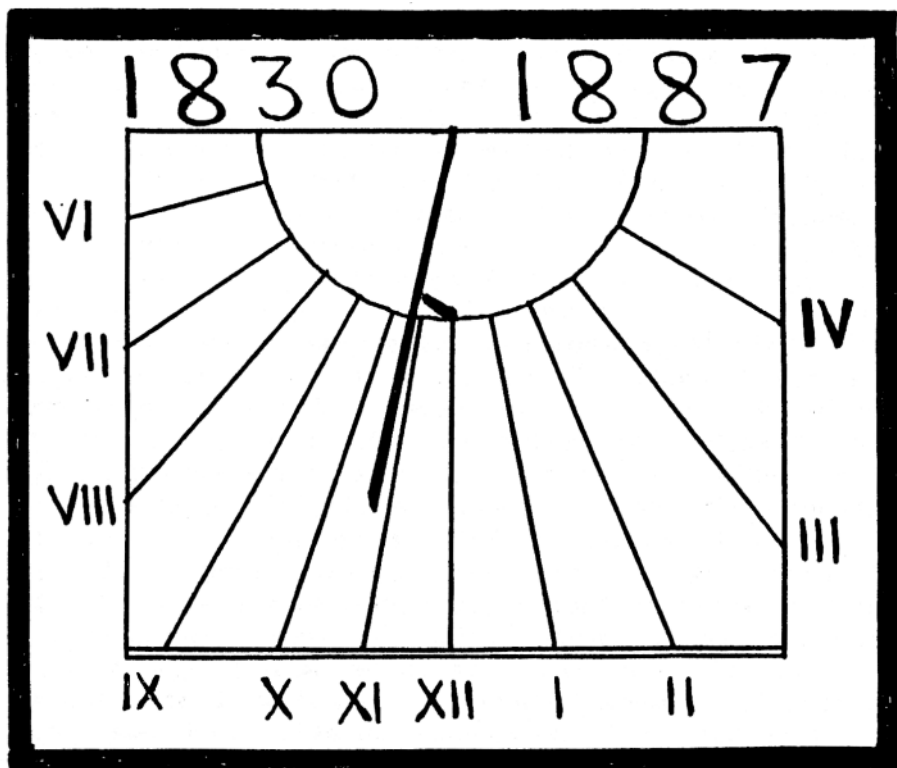


Fig. 3

It is worth discussing the question of what exactly the time as read on the sundial, once restored, will mean. The time read from the sundial will be technically described as “Long Wittenham true solar time”, i.e. the time in Long Wittenham according to the sun. The length of the solar day (the time between successive noontimes as indicated by a

sundial showing that the sun is in the south) varies with time of the year in a way that an accurate mechanical clock does not imitate, so for clock-setting purposes it is necessary to adjust true solar time so as to average out these variations. The adjustment varies with the time of year and at its greatest is about 16½ minutes. Adjustment of Long Wittenham true solar time in this way will give “Long Wittenham Mean Time” (in which “mean” refers to the averaging process). This will be 4 minutes and 50 seconds behind Greenwich Mean Time, the time that we in the U.K. use officially in the winter. Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) is the mean time at Greenwich. Long Wittenham is 1° 12' 30" of longitude to the west of Greenwich and therefore sees the sun in the south every day 4 minutes and 50 seconds later. (The earth turns through 1° of longitude every 4 minutes of time).

From a historical point of view, such local mean times are significant.⁵ Formerly, each town would set its clocks by its local sundials, and use a local mean time. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, high-speed travel on the railways and virtually instantaneous communication by electric telegraph led to the decline both of local time and of sundials for clock-setting. The railway companies found local times unsuitable for timetabling, and adopted GMT as the standard time throughout their networks. The effect of using local times in timetables would have been to shorten the apparent duration of east-west journeys and to lengthen, the apparent duration of west-east journeys. This effect had previously not been a matter of much concern, road travel being relatively slow and uncertain. Its significance for rail travel can be seen from the following table for the “broad gauge” railway to Exeter in 1847⁶.

	Padd'ton	Didcot	Bristol	Exeter
Scheduled journey time	0m	55m*	2h30m	4h25m
Local time behind GMT by	0m44s	4m58s	10m19s	14m18s

* Commuters will note that British Rail still frequently fails to reach the standard set by the 1847 timetable.

In itself, the railways' requirement for a common time across the country did not preclude the continued use of sundials for clock setting; it is easy (as indicated above for the St. Mary's dial) to make the adjustment necessary to set a clock to GMT if the longitude of the sundial is known. However, by 1853, time signals determined by professional astronomers at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich were being sent telegraphically along cables laid beside the railway tracks. Local amateur astronomical observations by sundial could not compete in accuracy or convenience, and were now superfluous wherever time signals were directly or indirectly accessible. Sundials for clock-setting were seriously advertised in the Nautical Almanac as late as 1934 for use in remote places. Since then, even this residual practical use of sundials has disappeared; there can hardly be anywhere on the inhabited globe where it is not possible easily to receive radio-broadcast time signals.

The lead of the British railway companies in adopting GMT was soon followed by the general public. By 1855, 98 per cent of public clocks in Britain were set to show GMT. However, the use of GMT was at first not endorsed legally. In 1858, in the case of *Curtis v March* at the Assizes in Dorchester, Dorset, March and his lawyer arrived in court some minutes later than required, and March lost his case by default.

March appealed against the judge's decision on the ground that he had not been late according to Dorchester Mean Time, only according to the judge's clock, which had been set to GMT. The appeal court decided that the correct time for a court to work to was indeed local time, and therefore reversed the assize judge's decision. It was only in 1880 that an Act of Parliament made Greenwich Mean Time the relevant time for legal purposes. Since then Parliament has introduced the extra complication of putting the clocks forward in the summer by one hour.

When the sundial on St. Mary's tower has been restored, it will, we hope, be an achievement which the parish, can be proud of and a fitting adornment to the church; but at the same time it will be a reminder of technological and social change. In the early seventeenth century, the daily life of the citizen was unconstrained by a strict mathematical concept of time of day. By the late seventeenth century, the sundial and the mechanical clock were making the professional classes in towns more fully aware of time, as Pepys' diaries show. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the railway companies were revolutionising life in Britain, running themselves and their passengers to timetable, imposing a common time on the whole country, and, incidentally, making the sundial obsolete.

Notes.

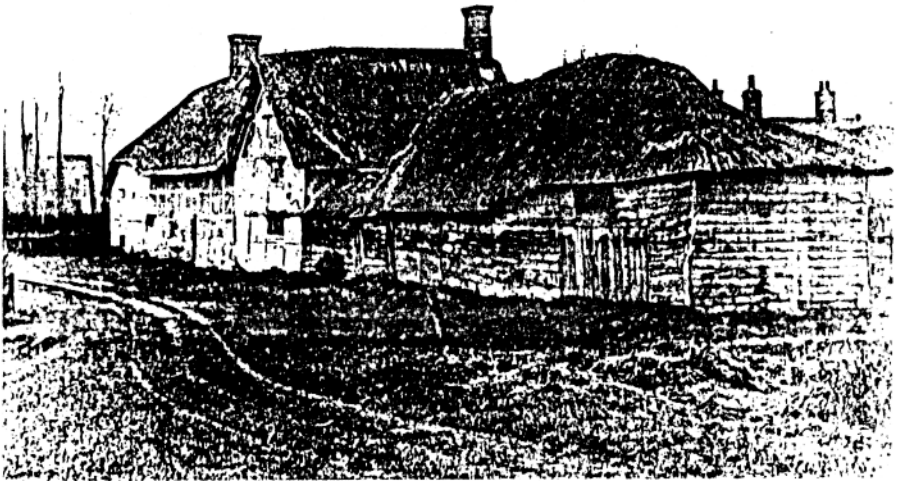
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3. *Christopher St J H Daniel, Sundials, Shire Publications Ltd. (1986), pages 9-11.*

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5. *G J Whitrow, Time in History, Oxford University Press (1989), pages 160-165.*
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FRENCH'S

By

Eva Sewers



French's, one of the oldest houses in the village of Long Wittenham, is named after the French family who lived there and farmed the surrounding land from early in the 16th century.

John French is the earliest member of this family about whom we have any information. He was martyred in 1530 and subsequently mentioned in Foxe's Book of Martyres in 1579. The entry runs thus:

Martyres, and the causes of their martyrdome.

242 K. Hen. 8 Persecution of simple men within
the Diocesse of Lincolne

JOHN FRENCH,
of Longwitan. At Longwitan,
Anno 1530
Against John French like-
wise these three articles were ob-
jected

1. That hee beleaved not the
body of Christ, flesh, blood and
bone, to bee in the Sacrament.

2. That hee was not con-
fessed to any Priest of long time.

3. That Priests had not po-
wer to absolve from sinnes
etc.

For the which, hee likewise
with the other, was troubled, and
at length compelled also with

them to kneele downe, and to
aske his holy Catholicke Fa-
thers and Mothers blessing of
Rome.

It appears, from the Manorial Rolls at St. John's College, Oxford, that the family lived at French's from this time right through until about 1712, when Phyllis French died. The lease was passed on to Ursula Jennes and Will, her nephew.

Recorded in the Vicarage Tythes (to be found in the Archives of Exeter College, Oxford) is an entry dated December 27th 1763 for the rent of £4. 13s. 0d. due from Mr Jennes of French' s. This was one of the highest tythes in the village. It either represents a large acreage of land or a numerous head of cattle.

As an example, contemporary prices for two lambs was 3s.; a dry cow 0s. 6d.; 5 cows in calf 12s. 6d.; orchards (i.e. Lamas Eyot) 3s. 6d.; 1 tod of wool (28 lbs.) 6s. 6d.

By the time of the Enclosures Act (1809) the house was held leasehold and owned by Joseph Hewitt. He died in 1868.

LONG WITTENHAM INCLOSURE.			
ABSTRACT OF CLAIMS.			
<i>Claimants.</i>	<i>Property.</i>	<i>Tenure.</i>	<i>Observations.</i>
11 JOSEPH HEWITT.	Messuage, barn, stable, and yard, and close of ground extending from the street to the river. A rick yard.	Ditto	

The 1871 Census shows William Champ, an agricultural labourer, as living in the house.

Hearsay has it that the house - or rather the garden has a friendly, resident ghost. Unfortunately he/she is shy, and there are no recent sightings to report.

Some French prisoners of war - at the time of the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19th. century - were supposedly locked up in a barn at French's, and one of them is rumoured to be the elusive spectre. A skull was discovered in this barn with a hole in it. It was thought that this might have belonged to one of the prisoners who had been shot, but subsequently it was found to be much older than the early 19th century and the hole, it was decided, must have been caused by water dripping onto it over a period of many years.

In 1901, after his marriage, one Mr William Hayes of London set off in his double sculler up the Thames in search of a weekend home for himself and his wife. Weekend after weekend they rowed further and further upstream. Mrs Barbara Stack, Mr Hayes' daughter, recounts:

“In time they reached Clifton Hampden and put up for the night at the Barley Mow. The next day was deluging with rain and instead of going on the river, they decided to go for a walk - to Long Wittenham. There my father spotted the somewhat derelict old farmhouse. He decided that with careful conversion it could be the house of his dreams and negotiated for a sixty year lease from St. John's College.”

After the conversion the originally small and narrow house was greatly extended into one of six bedrooms; two servants' bedrooms; one bathroom; a dining room; music room; sitting room; playroom; kitchen; scullery; workshop; apple store; larder; external WC; timber shed and, down by the river, a boat house with a landing stage. Two barns were included in the building, that on the south side alongside the street being converted into a room to house Mr Hayes' tall glass-fronted bookcase which he moved from London, thus creating a lovely room with a much higher ceiling than in any of the other rooms in the rest of the house.

The old barns adjacent to the house were pulled down and the north side of the house was extended parallel to the High Street.

Mrs Stack takes up the story again:

“In the early 1930's my father wished to drain the natural pond which was in the rock garden and turn it into a water garden. One weekend he, together with a nephew, set to work with a pump and by lunchtime had succeeded in lowering the level of water considerably.

Being weary from their labours, lunch was a rather prolonged occasion and by the time they returned to the rockery, [they] were horrified to find the water level back to where it had been before pumping had begun! The solution was obviously a stronger pump which they used to good effect to drain the pond but caused great concern from the inhabitants of the neighbouring cottages who discovered that their wells were dry!

In the summer of 1931 a Fete was held in the garden of French's to raise money for the launching of the first W.I. in the Wittenhams. The outstanding feature of that occasion was the use of the largest barn as a theatre. The play performed was “Haste To The Wedding” by Mabel Constanduros and the cast were helped in the production by Emma Holloway, wife of the well-known Shakespearean actor Balliol Holloway, who came from London to rehearse the play.

Another feature was a Baby Show which was won by June Woodage.”

In the middle of World War II Mrs Stack's mother prudently wished to safeguard some of her most precious household possessions. She too began digging in the garden. This time the exercise was not to get rid of a pond but to bury a dinner service. The secret of its hiding place was shared by only one other person, and he carried it with him to the end of his life.

Colonel Allan took over the house in 1943 and Commander Ritson in 1947. Mr and Mrs Flint then lived there right through until 1963, when Mr Kemp bought and renovated the house - dividing it into two.

The northern half (French's Riverside) was sold to Michael and Inge Drew, who live there to this day, and the southern half (French's) was bought by Mr and Mrs Proudman.

They built the present modern bungalow (Waterside) in the then orchard, on the river bank. This house is now lived in by Peter and Diana Burdett.

Subsequently the Proudmans sold their half of the house, and part of the land, to Mr and Mrs Wethey. From 1972-1974 Dr and Mrs Findlay owned the house, it was then bought by Peter and Juliet Surridge who lived there for ten years. French's was then sold to Mr and Mrs Robinson who lived in it until 1988 when the present occupiers (Robin and Eva Sewers) took it over.

Let us hope for no more martyrs - one is surely enough for any English village?

Acknowledgements:

I wish to thank Mrs Stack for her contributions.

I also wish to thank Juliet Surridge who handed over all her research material and allowed me to use it.

FASHION IN THE 1900s

by

Elizabeth McDougall

Ladies of the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries, whose suspicious husbands unkindly locked them into chastity belts before themselves swanning off on exciting adventures to the Holy Land, must have regarded themselves as very unfortunate, with considerable Justification. How many of us, however, have ever spared a thought for their 20th century sisters who *voluntarily* incarcerated themselves in equally constricting coats of armour not, this time, in the name of purity but merely to keep in fashion.

I refer, of course, to the corset.

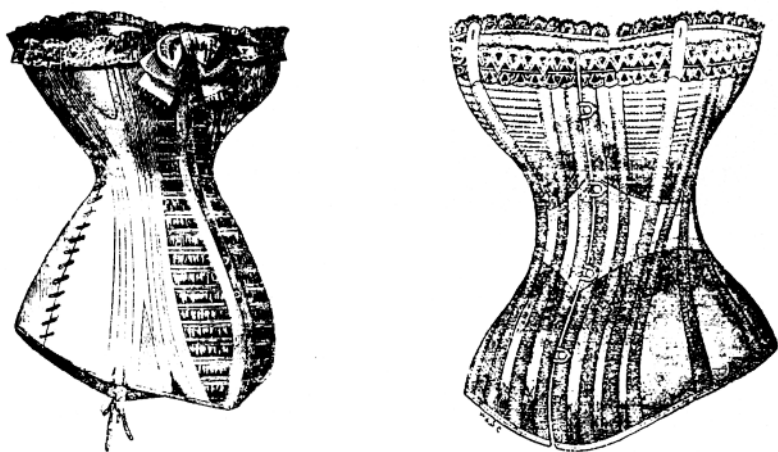
Well-to-do women living in Long Wittenham around the 1900s would not only have forced their own bodies into these severely restricting garments, they would have put their adolescent daughters into them as well. The results were catastrophic, and accounts for the many references, in English novels of the day, to 'swooning' and the need for fashionable ladies to carry *sal volatile* (smelling salts) at all times.

In a surprisingly explicit book on female health, 'Die Frau als Hausärztin' ('The Woman as Family Doctor') published in Stuttgart in 1905 - and owned by Mrs Eva Sawers of French's, Long Wittenham - Dr. Anna Fisher-Dückelmann devotes thirty-one pages of her large and interesting book to the subject of women's fashion and its effect on the female body.

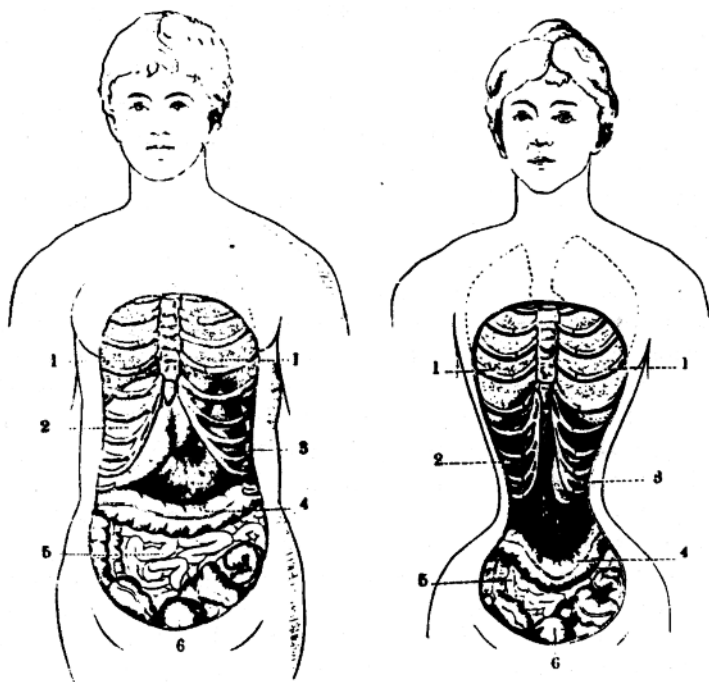
She pulls no punches.

Starting with the evil corset - a subject which aroused in the good doctor a great deal of righteous indignation - and ending with her full endorsement of the then so-called, modern 'Reformkleidung' (translated in a contemporary [1909] German dictionary as 'rational dress'), Dr. Anna attacks all ('unreformed') clothes worn by women of the day with a frankness that does her credit.

Beginning, so to speak, at the top, Dr. Anna illustrates how, having completed their morning toilette, ladies of fashion were totally unable to draw a proper breath for the rest of the day. The tightly pulled corset constricted their torsos to such an extent that only the upper part of their lungs were able to expand. After years of wearing corsets, the proud possessor of an eighteen inch waist was totally unable to take a breath, hold it for any length of time or even exhale it properly. Dr. Anna has some useful exercises for women wishing to return to nature and regain these useful skills. No wonder they fainted and that 'palor' was considered, perforce, to be both 'interesting' and the 'in' look.



Two long-waisted corsets dated (left) 1879 and (right) 1886



*1. Lungs 2. Liver 3. Stomach 4. Large Bowel 5. Small Bowel
6. Bladder*

The two figures above show a) the normal, healthy human body so much admired by Dr. Anna (male figure on the left); as against b) its abnormal, unhealthy counterpart so detested by the good lady (female figure on right). The facial expression of the young man expresses contentment with his lot, as well it might do, considering that all his internal organs are in the right place.

The young woman, on the other hand, has a fixed, drawn look. A quick glance at what wearing a corset is doing to her will explain why. Nothing is where it should be. Not only did the fashionable plate armour (Dr. Anna's own expression) squeeze her liver until it was severely elongated and half its normal width; press her breasts down

and push her stomach out; put a nasty bend in her intestines and make her seriously infertile, it also produced a terrifying condition described, in German, as 'wandering kidneys'. Seeing how little space was left in her abdomen after being trussed up like a chicken for years one cannot help but wonder where they were able to 'wander' to.

Not content with handicapping the top part of her body in such a drastic manner, a lady of fashion in the early part of the century then finished off the job by crippling her feet as well. Long, thin, inadequate shoes gave her painful bunions and squashed, deformed toes, but did produce the pointed, slim little foot that the fashion of the day demanded.



*Crippled feet as a
result of bad shoes*



*Modern 'Hack shoes' as
they should not be*

Happily, a look at the rest of the underclothes worn at the time does present a more 'user friendly' picture. 'Drawers' (invented by Catherine de' Medici, a clever woman, but then it was a talented family), shifts and nightgowns all made of fine, white linen (cambric) often beautifully embroidered and edged with tatting or lace were so

strong that they have survived to this day. These garments have become heirlooms in many families, including that of Mrs Edwards in Long Wittenham.

There can be no doubt that whatever else the modern woman can be prevailed upon to accept in the name of fashion, she does insist upon being comfortable.

I cannot see corsets coming back.

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