

Some Notes on Tatworth

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WHAT we now call Tatworth is an ecclesiastical district or parish lying to the south of Chard, with which it is civilly united. The distance between the respective churches is about two miles. It includes a great deal more than was originally denoted by the name, for it comprises not only the tithing of Tatworth, but also that of South Chard, with the hamlets of Coombses, Perry Street, and Chilson. It was formed into an ecclesiastical parish in 1851, and now, save for the ties of sentiment and association, is entirely independent of the mother church of Chard. In 1882, when the Society visited Chard, a very interesting paper on the borough and parish was read by Mr. Green, in the course of which he made mention of Tatworth. In 1903, when the Society again paid a visit to the town, nothing was said about Tatworth at all. On this occasion, therefore, living as I am now at Parrocks Lodge, I think it is fitting that I should supply some further information about my native place, and also try to elucidate one or two points raised by Mr. Green.

1. The name 'Tatworth'. What's in a name? somebody once asked. A very great deal, especially if you look at it from an etymological point of view. I am aware that the prefix 'Tat' or 'Tot' has been interpreted in more than one way, but I think the simplest interpretation is the truest: 'Tatworth', that is, Tatt's enclosure or farm, Tatt being the name of its Saxon possessor. In like manner Tytherleigh, or Tyderleigh, in the adjoining parish of Chardstock, means Tedder's Lea, *i.e.* Tedder's pasture. Again, in Membury, where

I lived first as assistant-curate and then as vicar for twenty-two years, there is a farm called 'Godworthy', *i.e.* Goda's or Good's enclosure, the name of Good being far from uncommon in parts of East Devon. Apropos of names, we have at Tatworth as one of the commonest, 'Hayball', which I take it means the hedge bailiff, the man who looked after the hedges of the manor. No less than thirteen Hayballs took part in the Great War. Then we have Bondfield, no doubt a misspelling of Bonville, the name borne by one of the most powerful and wealthy families in the Middle Ages. 'Wall', too, is still with us, an abbreviation, I have little doubt, of Walterscombe or Wallscombe in Chard. Short cuts in names are as common as short cuts in travelling! I knew a Blatchford who was always called 'Blatch', a 'Glanville' whose name was shortened to 'Gloyn', and a 'Portbury' to 'Port'.

2. The Manor. In tracing the descent of this down to Lord Petre, Mr. Green says that in 1353-54 'Tatteworth Manor', with the advowson of the church, was held of the bishop by military service by Robert Fitzpayn, the value being 40s. per annum. I think this must mean the church of Chard, as there is no trace of a church in those days at Tatworth. Nor do I think it can mean the chapel of St. Margaret, which I shall mention again, for that is in the tithing of South Chard, and not in the manor of Tatworth at all. We find that the Coplestons were at one time owners of the manor, that well-known family of whom it is said 'Cruwys, Crocker and Coplestone Were when the Conqueror came at home'. It was finally granted to Sir William Petre, a great west country landowner, Lord of the Manor of Axminster and other places, in the second year of Queen Mary (1555), and his descendants held it till 1790 when it was sold—500 acres in extent—to Thomas Deane, Esq., of Bristol, a member of the old local family of Deane, who besides their Bristol connection were considerable owners of property in South Chard and other parts of the neighbourhood. It was sold again in 1823 by the great-nephew of Mr. Deane, Thomas Deane Shute, not as a whole but in about fifty lots. The Shutes then settled in Hampshire, and their present representative is, I believe, Major-General Sir Cameron Deane Shute, of Abbey House, Colchester. Thomas Deane, who bought the

manor from Lord Petre, built the present house of Parrocks Lodge in 1801, Messrs. Coode and Sealy, of Lambeth, being the contractors, and a Mr. Scholfield, of London, the architect. It was purchased at the 1823 sale by Mr. Coles, of Chard, and from him in 1851 by Mr. John Churchill Langdon, four years after his succeeding to the estates of his kinsman, Mr. John Stuckey, of Weston, in Branscombe, and the Manor House, Compton Durville, in South Petherton, Somerset. Mr. Green in his paper speaks of a property called 'Hall' connected with Tatworth, which he leaves to local knowledge to identify. I know of no property of that name, but it appears that Hall is joined in a certain legal document with a place called 'Wydney'. Now in my boyhood I was well acquainted with 'Farmer Notley' of the Manor Farm, Tatworth, and he always used to say that there was a house once standing where Parrocks Lodge now stands. Close to it there are several fields called 'Wydney' or 'Whitney', and it has occurred to me that Hall may have been the name of the house alluded to by Farmer Notley, and that when it was pulled down and Parrocks Lodge built on the site a new name was given to the new house of rather more grandiose sound! 'Parrock' means 'park', and is certainly more of a name than 'Hall'!

3. Antiquities of Tatworth. As I have before mentioned there is a building at South Chard still called St. Margaret's Chapel, with very thick walls, and according to our famous local historian, the late G. P. R. Pulman, showing traces of Early English architecture. It is no doubt one of the many chapels-at-ease that abounded in this land in pre-Reformation times, which were in most cases desecrated or destroyed by mistaken zeal. I have hardly ever been in a parish where I have not come across some relics of one of these chapels. At Membury there is one close to Court Farm of the decorated style, now used as a cider cellar! There is another called Chapel Croft, licensed by Bishop Grandison in the fourteenth century, now a farm-house, and so I might go on *ad infinitum*! Our St. Margaret's Chapel is, I am glad to say, used for a sacred purpose, being the Sunday schoolroom of the Christian denomination known as Particular Baptists. In the will of William Deane, of South Chard, dated 1634, he leaves to his daughter Susan the 'Chapell and ye writings for holding the same'.

He also speaks of a Fojlett or box standing in the lower chamber. What is a Fojlett? Mention is again made of the chapel in a document which runs as follows :

‘ This Indenture made the 25th July, 1654, Between Nathaniel Whetham Esq., governor of Portsmouth in the County of Hampshire and Lord of the Manor of Chard in the County of Somerset of the one part and Thomas Deane of Tatworth in the Parish of Chard aforesaid Clothier of the other part Witnesseth that the said Nathaniel Whetham for and in consideration of a competent sum of lawful English Money unto him in hand paid by the said Thomas Deane at the sealing and delivery hereof, the receipt whereof he, the said Nathaniel Whetham, doth acknowledge and confirm, and for other good causes and valuable considerations Hath given, granted, bargained, enfeoffed, and confirmed, and by these presents he, the said Nathaniel Whetham, as much as in him lieth, doth give, grant, bargain, enfeoff and confirm Unto the said Thomas Deane, his heirs and assigns for ever All that one house or chapel, commonly called or known by the name of Margaret Chapel, situate being and lying in the Tything of South Chard, in the parish of Chard aforesaid, near unto the Messuage or dwelling house of Hugh Welch, the elder, on the south, and the new dwelling house of William Brang on the east side, Together with all houses, edifices, buildings, ways, passages, profits, &c., whatsoever, to the said house or Chapel belonging, or in any wise appertaining, or with the same heretofore lawfully used, occupied, conveyed, as part, parcel or member thereof and all the estate, title and interest whatsoever of him, the said Nathaniel Whetham, of and in and with the same, to have and to hold the said house or Chapel and all and singular other the said premises hard by granted and conveyed or intended to be granted and conveyed hereby, and every part or parcel thereof, with their appurtenances unto the said Thomas Deane, his heirs, and assigns for ever to his and their own proper use, benefit and behoof for evermore Yielding and paying therefor yearly for ever unto the said Nathaniel Whetham his heirs and assigns the yearly rent of one Penny of lawful money of England at the Feast of St. Michael the Arch-angel if it be demanded.

And, lastly, the said Nathaniel Whetham hath appointed and in his place put his well-loved friend, Thomas Pitts, of Chard, and John Lumbard, of Chard, his true and lawful attornies jointly and severally for him, and in his name to enter into the said house or chapel, and possession thereof to take and thereupon in full and peaceable possession for him, and in his name to deliver unto the said Thomas Deane, his heirs and assigns, according to the intent and true meaning of these presents.

NATHANIEL WHETHAM.’

The Nathaniel Whetham here mentioned bought the manor of Chard in 1648 from the Committee of Trustees appointed to

deal with the manors, lands, and possessions of the late archbishops and bishops. He gave for it the sum of £3,718 9s. 6d. He lost it, however, at the Restoration, when it reverted to its proper owner, the Bishop of Bath and Wells. Thomas Pitts was the head of a family who were prominent clothiers in Chard in the seventeenth century, and from whom I am descended on my father's side by the marriage of Thomas Pitts with Joan Stuckey, daughter of John and Anne Stuckey, of Compton Durville in the parish of South Petherton. Their granddaughter, Mary Churchill, married in 1776 my great-grandfather, Thomas Langdon. One of the family was an original trustee of the Chard Grammar School in 1678: they filled several times the office of Portreeve, and the first link of the Mayor's Chain bears the name of Nathaniel Pitts, 1699. The Lumbards are one of the oldest families in the district and unlike the Pitts, who have all died out, are still flourishing.

Among the antiquities of Tatworth is the Roman Fosse-way, which runs from the Chard and Axminster road at the county boundary to Perry Street and Dyke Hill. What does 'Perry' mean? Has it any connection with the French 'pierre' a 'stone'? Most interesting too is the custom of letting a field belonging to certain owners and occupiers of land in Tatworth by the burning of an inch of candle. The highest bidder as the candle goes out obtains the field for the year. The letting takes place on the Saturday after 'old' Lady Day and is called Stowell Court, from the name of the field in question. The same or a similar custom exists at Chedzoy near Bridgwater, and also I believe at Longbridge Deverill in Wilts.

4. Trade of Tatworth. This was, of course, the staple trade of the west of England, the making of cloth. Both the Pitts and the Deanes made much money by it. There is a tradition that St. Margaret's Chapel was used as a weaving shed—not at all unlikely, I should think. We no longer make cloth here, but it has been succeeded by the manufacture of lace, more properly I believe called 'net'.

Such are a few notes I have put together on the subject of Tatworth. I have tried to avoid the repetition of anything written before as far as possible. I hope they may be enlarged and expanded by some later hand.