

# On the Strodes of Somersetshire.

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BY MR. THOMAS SEREL.

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THE name of Strode may be traced back to the time of the Norman Conquest, nearly eight hundred years ago. There are good reasons for assuming that the progenitor of the family, Warine de Strode, came to England with William the Conqueror. Soon after this he became Lord of Strode, in the county of Dorset, and from him branches of the family spread themselves over England, acquiring possessions, and forming connections in different parts of the kingdom—especially in Dorsetshire and in our own county of Somerset. They were, most of them, persons of good social position and wealth ; and some of them, in the most eventful times and under the most difficult and trying circumstances, stoutly stood their ground—resolutely resisting the oppressor, however powerful, at the risk of life and the certainty of suffering in person as well as in pocket.

In judging the acts of dead men we should study and endeavour to understand the history of the times in which they lived. We should then the better be enabled to form something like an accurate opinion of their characters, and not condemn that which we disapprove, or praise that which we on unjust grounds approve. This should be borne in mind when weighing and deciding on the political character

of several of the Strodes. When the name first became connected with Shepton Mallet I cannot undertake, with anything like certainty, to decide ; but it seems clear that the name has been well-known here for at least four hundred years. Collinson, in his history of West Cranmore, states that John Strode, son of William de Strode, was of Shepton Mallet, but he gives no date ; and from the same authority we learn that this John Strode was the great grandfather of William Strode, so well-known in our county history. It is a rare circumstance that the same family continues at one place for so many generations as the Strodes have at West Cranmore and the immediate neighbourhood. The good old county name is still borne by the possessor of Southill House, and may it so continue for many centuries to come ! Few persons can imagine the difficulties which attend the following out genealogical researches, tracing the pedigrees, and investigating the history of families ; but this is peculiarly the case in dealing with the Strodes. The unusual number of the members of this family, bearing the same name—William Strode—is remarkable, and this fact has led to frequent historical mistakes, and caused many and serious genealogical errors.

To William Strode, who is generally styled as William Strode, of Barrington, I desire, for reasons soon to be adduced, more particularly to invite attention. He was born about the year 1589, and proved himself in every way worthy the name he bore. On the maternal side his descent was as illustrious as it is interesting, his grandmother being no less a personage than a daughter of Robert Whitynge, brother to the Venerable Richard Whitynge, the last Abbot of Glastonbury, who was cruelly murdered on Chalice Hill, at Glastonbury, by

order of the tyrant, Henry VIII. The name of his grandfather was Edward Strode, who, I have no doubt, was a resident at Shepton Mallet, where several of the Whitynge family were also at the same time settled. His father's name was William, and his mother's name Elizabeth. She came from a family ancient and honourable as his own, the name of which was Upton. One of this family was living, and well-known in this county, about the middle of the 15th century. His grandson, John Upton, who resided at Frome, married Elizabeth, daughter of Edmund Leveredje, Esquire, of Vallis House, an old mansion near that town—sufficient remains of which still exist to attest its former extent and magnificence. The eldest son of that marriage, Geoffrey Upton, came to reside in this neighbourhood, viz., at Wormister, near Wells, in a fine old mansion there, which has recently been denuded of most of its ancient features—no rare instance, I regret to say, of effecting present improvements and restorations, as they are called, at the expense of obliterating valuable memorials of the past. This Geoffrey Upton married Mary, daughter of Thomas Home, of Devonshire. Their son and heir, George Upton, also lived at Wormister, where he maintained great hospitality, and was much respected by his neighbours. As a proof of his social position and worth I may here mention a fact but little known,—that he was elected as one of the representatives in Parliament for the City of Wells on two occasions—namely, Nov. 23rd, 1585, and Oct. 7th, 1601—in which capacity he served his constituents with zeal and good faith. Elizabeth Upton, the daughter of Geoffrey, and sister of George, was the wife of William Strode. This William Strode appears to have followed commercial pursuits, trading chiefly in Spain. In this honourable occupation he not only acquired great

wealth, but a reputation for integrity and honesty, which he carried with him until his death. About the year 1627 he purchased the mansion and estate called Barrington Court, in this county, and there he took up his residence. The abundance of his pecuniary resources enabled him to extend his landed possessions, and he soon became owner of considerable estates at Martock, Glastonbury, Street, and other places in Somersetshire. At Martock he founded and endowed a grammar school, and at Glastonbury he built and gave to the townspeople a town-hall, and at his own cost erected a bridge, called Cowbridge, thus enabling persons going from Glastonbury to Butleigh to cross the river with wheel conveyances, which before then they could not do. At Street, in his mansion there, he occasionally resided, and he is often described in legal documents as of Street, though much more frequently as of Barrington. In 1621 he married Joanna Barnard, daughter and heiress of Edward Barnard, Esq., of Downside, and thus acquired an addition to his fortune, and a more extended influence as a county squire. Richard Symonds, who accompanied King Charles and his army in many of their movements during the civil wars, wrote a gossiping kind of diary about many events and places which came under his notice. After speaking of the town of Shepton Mallet, he thus refers to the church, and to the Barnards and Strodes :—

“SHEPTON MALLETT CHURCH.—Within the north wall of the body of the church, under two arches, lyes the two statutes of two Knight Templars, crosse legged, in mayle, and shields upon their breasts. The roof of the church is curiously carved. Against the east wall, north yle of the church, is a small neate monument, with a picture of a man in armes—Captain Barnard, Esquire, 1640. Argent, a bear salient sable muzzled, Barnard. This is a market town. Mr William Strowd, one of the five members, married this Mr. Barnard's only daugh-

ter and heire (£2000 per annum). Strowd lived at Barrington, three myle from Iminster. Another house at Street. Hath all the parsonages betweene this towne and Barrington. He gott his estate by being a factor in Spaine. His father left him (£740 in all). His father was a clothier in Shepton Mallett. Barnard is descended of a clothier in this towne too."

The date preceding this extract is July, 1643, but as to the year it is clearly a mistake. The correct date is 1644, for the following reasons:—King Charles, after the terrible battle of Marston Moor, marched to Bath, Monday, July 14th, and on the 18th July, 1644, was at Mells-park, then the seat of Sir John Horner, where he held his court. On that day he addressed a letter to the corporation of Wells, asking for a loan of £500, which he promised to pay "when God enabled him to do so!" The citizens had been so impoverished by the plundering taxation and levies of both Cavaliers and Roundheads that the money could not be raised. They sent to the King £100 in cash, as a "free gift," together with 200 pairs of shoes for the army. The original documents may be seen on the walls of the Council Chamber at Wells. The letter has the autograph of his Majesty.

The times in which William Strode lived were as eventful as they were (for a time at least) disastrous to English liberties. He witnessed the commencement of the Great Rebellion, and was among the first who resisted the payment of the iniquitous and illegal tax usually called "ship money." This circumstance occurred in the year 1636. The officer whose duty it was to receive the tax, having demanded the money, was met by a positive refusal. Rather than pay he submitted to the indignity of a distress being levied, in which one of his cows was seized, which he replevied. The State papers contain many particulars of this distress, which led to some very unpleasant results.



In November, 1636, Lord Cottingham, Chancellor of the Exchequer, complained that the public service was "much obstructed by Mr. William Strode, the merchant, who had been distressed, and replevied, and that his example had been followed by Stradling and others." On that occasion he was examined by the King himself. In December, 1636, he was summoned before the Privy Council, but excused himself on account of illness in his house. After this (November 8th, 1637) the Bishop of Bath and Wells was deputed to examine Mr. Strode, as to his refractory conduct, and being called upon to answer in writing, he sent in an elaborate statement justifying himself, and exposing the illegality of the proceedings against him. Among the State papers is one in the handwriting of Sir Edward Nicholas, principal Secretary of State, containing a return and suggestions as to a proper person for sheriff, made by the judges of assize. In that paper the following names occur:—

"Somerset	{	Mr. Bull—Hath about £400 or £500 p'r ann.	} Both ret'd for being very re-	
		An unfit man.		fractory and dis-affected.
		Mr. Wm. Strode.		
		S'r John Horner		

"It imports that there be a well-affected man in this county, w'ch is full of faction.

Mr. Tho. Smith,	{	of Long Ashton hath £2000 p. ann. a very
		able man, and son-in-law to L'd Poulet,
S'r Tho. Wroth.	{	persons of good estate, and able men, but
S'r Edw. Barkley	{	I know not their affect's."

In 1642, when the Rebellion was progressing, he was resident for a time in Shepton Mallet. Active measures were being adopted for resisting the King and his advisers with armed forces. In the corporate records at Wells are to be seen numerous instances, plainly showing the feeling of parties at that time in this locality. Among the names

of many other persons that of William Strode is often found. I will give one or two instances. One is that of a warrant bearing his signature, a copy of which I here quote :—

“ To the Right Wor’l Robt. Morgan, Mayor of Wells, and to Mr. Barth. Cox, Mr. Haskett, Mr. Salmon, Mr. Baron, and others of the Counsell of the Cittie of Welles, speed these :—

Gentlemen !—Our Lord Lieutenant of this County, the Noble Earle of Bedford, is now come amongst us with commission from the Parliament, and sufficient power and force to remove the grievance and settle the peace thereof, and had this day beene at your Cittie of Wells if we had been satisfied that there had beene fittinge entertaynment, for hym, whiche wee conceive could not bee without giveinge you notice of it : and although there bee divers of opinion that your Towne is verie ill affected to the peace of the Kingdome, and thereby would persaude us to desert it, yet wee conceive otherwise of itt, and that all honest and good men will to theire uttermost maintaine the Kinge, Parliament, and peace of the Kingdome : we have therefore intreated his Lordship not to desert you, assuring hym that hee shall fynde as faythfull servyce amongst you as in any Towne in this Countye. These are therefore to desire and intreate you that you forthwith provide a fittyng house wythin youre Towne for the entertaynment of the great person, with other provisions needfull that may be had upon soe short a warneinge, for hymselfe and some twentie persons of his retinue, for fower or five dayes, which wee believe will bee his longest staye ; and whatsoever you shall disburse or undertake for in his provision, wee doe engage ourselves to see fullie satisfied. Desiringe your present answer by this bearer, that wee may know to what howse we may conduct his Lordship, who will be with you to-morrow about 2 o’Clock in the afternoone : soe commende you to God,—doe rest, youre lovinge freinds and neighbours,—Alex : Popham, Cle. Walker, Will : Strode, John Ashe.

Saturday Augt. 19. 1642.

Post sc.—We shall further desyre you to see all the stables in the innes and private stables provided and furnished with stores of litter, hay, and oates, for soe greate a retinewe as will attende soe noble a p’sonage upon a businesse of publike concernment.”

The Corporators, as required, at once answered the foregoing unwelcome epistle, promising the best “entertayn-

ment" they could get "uppon soe short a warneinge." On the following day they again met, and resolved that there should be "a hogshead of claret wine p'sented to the Earll of Bedford," at the cost of the town. Lord Bedford visited the city, but had no great cause to be satisfied with his reception. In the month of November following I find another warrant bearing Mr. Strode's name. The following is a transcript of this curious document:—

"The coppie of a warrant made by the Deputy-Lieutenants of the Parliament, viz:—

Som'sett.—Whereas, your citty and towne of Wells have heretofore mayntayned for the publique service of the kingdome, and the defence of the county, fower and forty trayned souldiers, well armed, viz., 23 pikes and 21 musketts, whiche sayde armes, and the men that are to serve therein, wee finde very defective; and by the reason of the death of divers persons that performed those services somewhat unequally layd:— These are therefore in the name, and by the authority of Parliament, to will and require you that you take care to provide within your towne twentye good corsletts, with swordes and pikes, and as many musketts, with bandaleers, rests, hedd-peeces, and swordes, assigneinge and appoyntyng suffyicient persons to serve the said fortye armes, easeinge you of fower armes, yf in case they may be spared, that you may the better furnish the rest; and if any man that serves with foote armes and is fitt to serve on horse, you may leave hym oute, giveinge notice of such mens' armes. And further that you cause all these fortye armes and men to bee ready, completely furnished, to bee mustered att fower and twenty howers' warneinge for the present service, which requires greate expedition, in respect of the imminent dangers that threatens our peace. Whereof fayle you nott, as you will answere att your uttmost perill, and as you tender the safetie of his Majesties person, the Parliament, and kingdomes. Given under oure hands the 21st November, 1642.

WILL. STRODE,

CLE. WALKER.

To the Right Worshipfull the Mayor, Masters, and  
Constables of the cittie and boro' of Wells."



I introduce these documents to shew how active a participator, Mr. Strode must have been in the proceedings of the Parliamentary party. The majority of the Wells people were Royalists, and therefore the interference of the Roundheads, as they were sometimes called, was by no means welcome.

As I have before observed, the number of persons bearing the same name—William Strode—has led to many mistakes. Most of those who now hear me will recollect that in January, 1642, five members of the House of Commons were, by order of the King, accused of high treason, the basis of the charge being the part they had taken in opposing his Majesty's unconstitutional proceedings. Among these five members was a William Strode. The similarity of name and principles caused William Strode, of Barrington, to be mistaken for William Strode, "one of the five members." Symonds, whose diary I have quoted, though he wrote when both were alive, committed the same error. Though William Strode, of Barrington, was at one time in Parliament, having been returned for the borough of Ilchester, and was in the Long Parliament of 1640, yet he could not have been "one of the five members" for these reasons:—William Strode, "the member," died in 1645, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, from whence his remains were ignominiously exhumed after the Restoration, viz., in 1661; but William Strode, of Barrington, did not die until 1666. The circumstances here noticed have caused much controversy among learned men, but about the facts as I have put them there is, according to the authorities I have consulted, little doubt, and these facts have been made still more clear by the Calendar of State Papers lately published by order of the Master of the Rolls, where may be seen the copy of a Proclamation

for the apprehension of William Strode, gentleman, *son of William Strode, of the county of Devon*, who was then accused of sedition, &c. William Strode, "one of the five members," was one of the representatives of the borough of Beer Alston in Devonshire, which was disfranchised by the Reform Act of 1832. The subject is interesting, and, historically speaking, not unimportant. I shall be glad to see it carefully investigated and settled beyond doubt.

The eldest son of the William Strode, of Barrington, about whom I have been speaking, bore the same name as his father, and seems to have inherited the principles of his parent. These principles were plainly shown in connection with the events which preceded "Monmouth's Rebellion." In 1680 the Duke of Monmouth set out on a tour through the provinces, including the West of England. He visited many of the leading gentry, and among them Mr. William Strode was honoured with the Duke's company, at Barrington Court, where a most sumptuous entertainment was given to the royal visitor and his retinue. Several years after this, namely, 1685, Monmouth resolved on making an attempt on the Throne of England. From the Continent he despatched trusty messengers to the leading gentry, and among them the advice and assistance of William Strode were solicited, and no doubt promised. On the Duke's landing at Lyme, June 11th, 1685, Mr. Strode sent him supplies of horses and money. Nor was William Strode the only member of the family who openly aided Monmouth. In his progress through this county he passed through Glastonbury on the 23rd June, and came to Shepton Mallet; there he was met by Edward Strode, of Downside, brother of William Strode, who presented the Royal rebel one hundred guineas. After the terrible battle of Sedgmoor, Monmouth fled from the bloody field towards

Shepton Mallet. There again his trusty friend, Edward Strode, at the risk of life and fortune, received the unfortunate fugitive, and gave him lodging for the night at his mansion at Downside—this was on the 6th July, 1685, a little more than 180 years ago. For thus aiding the Duke, the Strodes had a narrow escape, but at length a pardon was obtained, 26th March, 1687. [I crave to be excused for digressing for a moment, merely to say that on this very day—180 years ago—the bloody assizes, presided over by the Bloody Jeffreys, began at Wells, at which ninety-nine persons were sentenced to an ignominious death for participating in “Monmouth’s Rebellion,” and twelve of them actually suffered in this town. An interesting notice of the “Bloody Assizes” is contained in the Wells Corporate Records, where there is an account of the costs of entertaining Jeffreys and his companions at Wells, a note of which I now place before you—

MONMOUTH’S REBELLION A.D. 1685.

(*Extract from the Wells City Records.*)

“1685.”—The account of monies disbursed by Rich’d Cupper for ye entertainment of ye five judges and their attendance, by order of Mr. Mayor and this house, at the Assizes, in Wells, in September ’85.

Paid for 2 hogsheads and halfe and 1 tearse of beere	£	s.	d.
and ale brewed .. .. .	3	0	0
,, Mr. Edward Slade for 5 duz. of October beere	1	0	0
,, 24 flint Glasses .. .. .	12	0	
,, 1 Load of old hay and 1 load of straw ..	2	12	0
,, 2 Bushels of Beanes .. .. .	8	4	
,, 9 Bushells of oats at 1s. 9d. per bushel ..	15	9	
,, 2 Sacks of Charcole .. .. .	6	8	
,, 16 Sackes of Cole, at 9d. per Sacke ..	12	0	
,, 5 Duzzen of bottles and Corkes .. .. .	11	10	
,, Tobacco and pipes, 2s. ; 12 Slips, 10d. ..	2	10	
,, 5 horseloads of dry billets and 30 faggots	10	6	
,, Caridge, 10d. ; vinegar and oyle, 2s. 6d.	3	4	
,, 1 Sacke more of Oates .. .. .	8	0	

24 Sept.-2 Bushells and $\frac{1}{2}$ of beanes, at 4s. 4d. per bushell .. .. .	10	10
„ Nicholas Olding for 1 hogshead of ale ..	2	0 0
„ Jo. Johnson, 4 days and 4 nights' attendance on <i>My Lord Jeffries</i> his coach horses ..	6	0
„ Webb and Kenfield for attending <i>My L'd</i> Baron Montague's coach-horses ..	6	0
„ 1 Night's pay for 8 horses to Jos. Elver ..	4	0
„ Allen and Lane for stables .. .. .	6	0
„ Henry White for a Racke and Manger and Nales .. .. .	10	
„ Fr. Law, by Dr. Smith's Order, for cleaning the Street .. .. .	1	0
„ Fr. Rowden for 2 days' labour, 2s., and for watching 4 days and 4 nights .. .. .	8	0
„ Mr. Henry Merefield's bill .. .. .	18	4
„ Washing Linninge, 1s. 9d., and for 3 Napkins lost .. .. .	3	6
„ 2 Knives lost and broaken, 18d.; besoms, 6d.	2	0
„ 1 Pewter plate lost, 13d; 1 duzzen spoons, 1s.	2	1
„ Skoweringe the pewter and re-carryinge ye borrowed goods .. .. .	2	0
„ Mr. Paynter for course linninge .. .. .	5	9
„ Gave Mr. William Pierce his servants ..	2	0 0
„ Thomas Perrie for a Chamber at ye Rose and Crown .. .. .	4	0
„ Gave Goodwife Chisman fer lent of pewter	1	0
	19	5 7

This sum of £19 5s. 7d. was raised by a subscription in the city, except £4 12s. 11d., which Mr. Cupper himself was obliged to pay.]

After the accession of King William and Queen Mary, namely in 1691, Mr. Edward Strode having refused to take the required oaths, was fined £40, and in the following year an order was made by the justices at the quarter sessions that the oaths should be again tendered to Mr. Strode and if he still refused then that he should be committed to gaol.

Although I have dwelt at some length on the personal history of the sturdy old Somersetshire squire, William Strode, and several of his descendants and connections, yet there are other and more pleasing circumstances which

tend still more to increase our respect for the name. Few towns of the same extent can boast of more valuable charities than the town of Shepton Mallet. From the Strodes by far the greater portion of these endowments are derived. A desire to benefit and do good to the poor seems to have been a prominent feature in the character of this family. I have had an opportunity of examining extracts from more than thirty wills of the Strodes, and in nearly all there are gifts to the poor, or for some charitable purpose. Commencing in 1627, we find numerous benefactions for the benefit of the inhabitants of this town. In that year Edward Strode, Esq., then of London, and our good old friend, William Strode, of Barrington, vested in trustees "All that the scite and soyle of the Co'rt of the Mann' of Shepton Mallet" (which I assume to have been the manor-house), then converted into five almshouses, a chapel, school-house, and dwelling-house for the schoolmaster, together with the rectory and advowson and patronage of the Church of Meare; upon certain trusts (which were defined by subsequent documents,) for the inmates of the almshouses, and for the maintenance of a school for twelve poor scholars of Shepton Mallet, and otherwise for the poor inhabitants of the town. This Edward Strode died September 9th, 1641, aged 56, and was buried in Shepton Mallet church. In 1699, Edward Strode, of Downside, (no doubt the donor of the 100 guineas to the Duke of Monmouth,) vested in trustees four almshouses which he had built, for four poor old men, and gave a yearly sum for buying bread to be given away to twenty poor persons—£4 being of the gift of his grandfather Barnard, and £4 of his own gift. In the front wall of the houses he caused to be inserted a tablet inscribed with the following true though simple and brief memorial:—



“BVILT BY EDWARD STRODE OF DOWNSIDE  
ESQVIRE FOR THE HONOR OF GOD AND TO  
DOE GOOD. ANNO DOMINI 1699.”

This Edward Strode died in 1703, and his remains were interred in the “tomb of his fathers” in Shepton Mallet church, where his epitaph (truly expressing his character and worth) can still be seen :—

“Near this marble is deposited the pretious dust of Edward Strode, of Downside, Esq., the son of William Strode, of Barrington, esq. by Mrs. Johanna, the only daughter Edward Barnard, of Downside, esq. and the husband of Mrs. Joane Strode the daughter of Alderman Gonning, of Bristol, by whome he had five sons, and five daughters; who in his life-time was an excellent reflection of all the virtue and lustre he derived from his ancestors, and at his death fully recompenc'd the honour of his descent by leaving an unstained and polished mirror thereof to posterity; who in all respects, relating to God, his country, his own family, and to the household of faith, hath left an example to be justly admired, but rarely imitated. Reader, in short, if thou hadst the pleasure to know him, he needs no other praise but to be named. If thou wert a stranger to him, read some little more of his character upon his tombe. Turne it into practice, and thou shalt be acquainted with him hereafter. He having lived above seaventy years an exile here below (for such is our life on earth) being aged 73, he returned home to his native and heavenly country, the 28th of October, 1703. The signe given from thence to his approaching removal was on the Lord's day at his family devotion, and the fourth day after he ascended into his eternal Sabbath, where he rests from all his labours, and whither his works, which were wrought in God, have followed him. This monument his daughter and executrix hath erected to be both a joyfull and a sorrowful memorial of him to his surviving relations and his christian friends; the former for his gain, the latter for his loss. Phil: I. 21. “For me to live is Christ, to die is gaine.”

ARMS. Quarterly. 1,—first and fourth, ermine; on a canton, sable, a crescent, argent. *Strode*. 2,—Argent; a bear erased, sable, muzzled, or. *Barnard*. 3,—gules; three guns in pale, argent. *Gonning*.

In 1712, Elizabeth, daughter of the said Edward Strode, endowed the almsmen of her father's almshouse with 6d. per week to each, and gave 20d. per week to ten poor old people of Shepton Mallet. When the Charity Commissioners were at Shepton Mallet, in 1816, they found that the gross income of the Strode charities was £434 6s. per annum. In addition to these endowments Thomas Strode, of Bowlish, and Thomas Strode, of London, gave certain lands at Shepton Mallet for the benefit of the poor of the place, the yearly income of which in 1816, was about £5. What the income of the whole of the Strode charities may be at this time I do not know, but I presume it has not decreased since 1816. With so large an endowment how much good may be and, no doubt, is done. For this the poor as well as rich of this town should be thankful. I wish I could see here, as well as in other places, some plan adopted for a periodical (say yearly) public recognition of the benefits derived from those who in their day delighted in doing good. An example of such a periodical recognition may be found in the yearly meetings in Bristol to do honour to the name of Colston, the philanthropist. I do not recommend the political gatherings of Conservatives and Liberals, but the model I would take would be the "Grateful" Society. I am convinced much good would result from an annual "Strode" commemoration at Shepton Mallet.

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