

JOSEPH CLARK III'S REMINISCENCES ABOUT THE SOMERSET FOSSIL REPTILE COLLECTOR THOMAS HAWKINS (1810–1889)

'VERY NEAR THE BORDERLINE BETWEEN ECCENTRICITY
AND CRIMINAL INSANITY'

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ABSTRACT

An account of Thomas Hawkins (1810–1889) of Glastonbury has been located in the memoirs of Joseph Clark III at the Clark Archive, Street. It is transcribed and published. It provides a valuable perspective on the character and life of this important fossil collector.

INTRODUCTION

The fossil marine reptiles from the Lower Jurassic rocks of the West Country were some of the earliest extinct 'saurians' to come to public notice during the rise of vertebrate palaeontology in the early 19th century. These dolphin-like ichthyosaurs and somewhat sealion-like plesiosaurs were known from excellent and complete skeletons long before the dinosaurs were even recognised as a distinct and separate group. The most famous locality is of course Lyme Regis in Dorset, but the district around Street in Somerset also produced many finds (Copp *et al.* 2000; Howe *et al.* 1981; McGowan 2001; Taylor 1997b).

Of the collectors who worked at Street, the most important, and certainly most notorious, was Thomas Hawkins (1810–1889), son of a Glastonbury farmer. His finds, together with that of Gideon Mantell the dinosaur researcher, helped establish what is now the Natural History Museum as one of the world's key repositories of fossils, a position which it has never since left. His place in many histories of palaeontology is assured not only by his finds but also his personal eccentricities. In recent years the traditional picture of Hawkins as set out, for instance, by Bulleid (1943), long the standard biography, has come under increasing revision (eg. Taylor 1989; 1997a; in press 2004; McGowan 2001). One line of thought considers the scientific significance of his fossils and his work on them, and is not further discussed here. The other line of thought considers the character of the man, which influences the social context within which he carried out his fossil collecting, for the two cannot be separated – they are linked, for instance, by the search for social elevation through fossil collecting, then a key aim for many collectors (Knell 2000).

Hawkins has been considered eccentric, even increasingly insane, partly on the grounds of his grandiloquent books on marine reptiles, followed by a number of epic poems. This must now be modified, for it is now clear that the hyperbolic, dramatic, and romantic tone of his writing must be seen in the light of the then current range of literary styles, strange as it seems today (O'Connor in press). Nevertheless, Hawkins was undoubtedly unpleasant and difficult, and very possibly profoundly disturbed and even delusive. (For instance, one might wonder whether his repeated problem with lying under oath in court, mentioned below, was due to a blatant disregard for others, or simply because he genuinely believed he was speaking the truth.) On first reading, Hawkins's own autobiography (1887) is amply consistent with such a mental state, but it is strictly speaking only evidence for his mental condition late in life when it was written, possibly with the encroachment of senility, and it is not necessarily a reliable account of his earlier life. Independent evidence is therefore needed from contemporary documents and memoirs, and I here report, and print, a previously unpublished account of Hawkins by Joseph Clark III of Street. It is of particular interest as possibly the only surviving account of Hawkins the man by a contemporary of around the same status, at least in Somerset. It is presented here with the kind permission of the Clark Archive, and evaluated using, amongst other things, research findings kindly provided by Mrs Jehane Melluish.

Joseph Clark III (11 January 1840–19 November 1928) was the only child of Joseph Clark II, a corn trader and brother of Cyrus and James Clark, the founders of the eponymous sheepskin and footwear business of Street, and Martha Clothier Gillett, niece of Arthur Clothier, operator of a Street tanyard. He was therefore closely related to the main Quaker business families of the town. His obituary by a former colleague (Anon. 1928) gives an account of his life. 'As full of prejudices as an egg is full of meat, he was also as full of the milk of human kindness.' After an unsuccessful spell in his father's trade of corn dealing he entered the counting house at Clarks in the 1860s. In 1870 the sheepskin rug business was transferred to Northover near Street and reorganised as the firm of Clark, Son and Morland. Clark moved to the counting house there and worked there till his retirement. He had interests in classical and theological literature and science, especially microscopy and meteorology, being a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society, and also psychic issues such as life after death. He does not appear to have had any specific interest in geology or palaeontology. He lived all his life at the house of Hindhayes, Street.

Clark's memoirs, deposited in the Clark Archives, Street, are written in a single unpaginated manuscript book, erratically punctuated and lacking paragraphing. They were certainly completed in 1920 when Clark was in old age (MS. p. [145]), and presumably written around this time. The transcript below is of the two passages referring to Hawkins. My comments and clarifications are contained within square parentheses. Paragraphing is inserted for clarity, based on that in earlier transcripts made by the archivists, to whom I am indebted, although I remain responsible for this version. No other MS material on Hawkins, whether by Clark or any other person, has been located in the Archive.

CLARK'S ACCOUNT OF HAWKINS

Extract 1, from Memoir MS pp. [73]–[75]

... an amusing story was told of him [John Clark son of Thomas – presumably John Clark (1785–1852) the inventor and Thomas Clark (1759–1850) of Overleigh Farm, McGarvie 1987] in connection with Thos Hawkins of Sharpham Park fame – I hope further on, to give a full account, so far as I can remember, of this Glastonbury genius, mountebank & rascal – Hawkins was one of the first to call attention to fossil Ic[h]t[h]yosauri & Plesiosauri found at Lyme Regis, and in our quarries; geology was then a new science, & was taken up by men of scientific

inclinations, partly, I think, because it [unclear – probably 'made'] a new interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis to be thought out.

Hawkins' collection brought him many visitors to Sharpham; but Hawkins set himself up to be a very superior person indeed: once he said to a visitor, who remarked that he had journeyed somewhere by coach; that he (Hawkins) never went by coach, he always posted! [i.e. hired a post-chaise – an extravagance compared to taking a seat in the public stagecoach], a Bridgwater man, interested in geology, asked John Clark – who was on friendly terms with Hawkins – to get him an introduction to Hawkins; Hawkins asked J.C. what position [sic] his friend held? 'he is a clerk in Woodland Bank Bridgwater' said JC 'Ah! I could not think of admitting a person of that description!' 'but, Thos. Hawkins, he is as respectable a man as I am!' 'ah! well you Mr Clark are an excentric [sic]' what JC said then history fails to record ...

Extract 2, from Memoir MS pp. [133–145]

... as I remember, [and] from what those passed on have told me, some of the incidents in Street, and doings of those who made local history.

I will begin by an account of the doings of one of the most eccentric local characters, namely Thomas Hawkins. He was the son of a farmer living in, or near Glastonbury, little is known of his early years: about 1835 great interest was taken in fossils, this came from geology being, a now fashionable study, a great many ic[h]thyosauri & plesiosauri were found at Lyme Regis, and also here in Street. Hawkins published a long-folio book called 'Great Sea Dragons', written in a florid style, the illustrations are good: H. worked out some good specimens of both which are in the South Kensington collection [now the Natural History Museum, London]; in 1838 he was living at Sharpham [somewhat between Glastonbury and Street] in rooms rented from a Mr. Laver who occupied the farm, I believe I am correct in this as I remember the late Thos Roach of Glastonbury telling me that, he, with others of a shooting party, dined with Hawkins on the 22nd Jany 1838 (Murphy's 'cold day')[.] Mr Roach said it was so cold, that they almost sat on the fire place, and that Hawkins apologized for not having the wine iced!!

Hawkins' collection became known and he had many distinguished visitors[.] somehow he must have got money one theory was by marrying women with large fortunes; as an instance of what sort of man he was, this will shew – a visitor happened to say when he went somewhere, he went there by coach, Hawkins replied, 'I never go by coach, I always go post'[.]

Now I come to a bit of romance; At Beckery Mill there lived at that time a gentleman named Pratt, who was very friendly with my father [Joseph Clark II 1799–1877], he had a son & ['2' amended, or possibly deleted] daughters. Mr Pratt's family were on very friendly terms with the Lavers of Sharpham: One summer young Edward Pratt was over at Sharpham and in the garden seeing ripe strawberries thought they were those belonging to the Lavers' [and] helped himself; very soon he was nearly knocked over by a sounding box on the ear jumping he found Hawkins had given it him, for taking his strawberries, some hot words passed between them, & on return home Edward told his father what had happened, he naturally took his son's part: Shortly after this Mr Laver fell ill & asked Mr Pratt to be, with a gentleman, from the southern part of the county, to be his executor, Mr. Pratt, still remembering the affront to his son, agreed thinking that he might get a chance of being even with Hawkins; one day, when Pratt & my father were going to market together, Mr. P asked my father's advice as to being Ex[ecuto]r to Mr Laver, my father, who was a keen observer of how things were at Sharpham, advised his friend not to take the office, as he foresaw that there would be trouble with Hawkins after Laver's death; Mr P had, like some others, done the deed and then asked advice afterwards. Soon after this Mr Laver died, & shortly the trouble began with Hawkins, who was given notice to quit, this he would'nt [sic] do[;] the Trustees, unfortunately, broke open his room and Hawkins 'went' for them by law.

I think the Trustees had at one time so many as more than ten writs served on them, for all sorts of charges, one was for letting a dog run against and upset a case of wine; another was for leaving a stable door open, so causing a valuable horse to catch a chill and die – it was proved that this did not happen and that the horse was alive and well at time of serving writ!! in the dispute with the trustees H was backed by the Glaston[bur]y men and the trustees by the Walton and Ashcot[t] people, H. kept a sort of bodyguard and if any one went too near the house H sent out one or two of his men who caught the trespasser, [and] had him in, when H after talking to the offender, enforced his words by a horse-whipping, this only made matters worse and there used to be regular battles between the two factions. I can remember, when a child, hearing one summer evening the roar of one of these battles in the ‘Sharpham War’[:]; at last things got so bad that Hawkins, on his return from Bridgwater, was stop’d by the Waltonians, who had him out of the carriage, and he would have been seriously hurt if the Rector (Lord John Thynne) had not taken him into the Rectory; Lord John now prevailed on H. to allow the case [to] go to an arbitration: this went against Hawkins who now asserted that it was an unfair one, as the arbitrator, a barrister, was a cousin of Lady Thynne’s!!

Then H. disappear’d [sic] from the neighbourhood leaving the unfortunate trustees to pay for all damages and expences [sic], amounting to, I believe I am correct – between £5 & 6000! The worry & loss shortened poor Mr Pratt’s days, [leaving] his son Edward: a highly educated & very promising young man, married to a Bridport lady, a Miss Rendall, to carry on the Mill at Beckery, this trouble & loss crippled young Mr Pratt and about 1849 or :50 he failed: ... [a diversion about the Pratt family follows] ...

H[awkins] now left this neighbourhood during about 20 years – I think it was at Portsea in above mentioned time that he got into a quarrel with some solicitors whose chambers were at the top of a flight of stairs, down which he was sent far quicker than he went up.

When he came back he took rooms at Old Ivythorn [just south of Street], & shortly after tried the same line of conduct as at Sharpham; but Mr White, perhaps remembering ‘the Sharpham War’ at once got rid of him, he then went to Pipers Inn [on the other side of Walton, the next village west of Street] where he lived for some time: when [he was] there, a dispute with the S & D R Compy [i.e. Somerset and Dorset Railway], over a mistake by a clerk of 2d shows his mentality: when H was paying a bill for carriage of goods at Glaston[bur]y he noticed that the clerk had made the total s10/5, instead of 10/3, instead of pointing out the error, H made out that it was a deliberate fraud by the clerk: he either wanted the man to be handed over to the police at once, or he went up into the town & wanted the police authorities to at once go to the station arrest the clerk & put him in the cells: the Coy, to their credit, took their clerk’s part, so a long correspondence arose between H and the Coy over the 2d: one autumn morning in 1865 H came to the Counting House at C. & J. C.’s [i.e. C. & J. Clark] to ask my uncle James, then a Director of the S & DR Compy, to take his side in the dispute. My uncle, well knowing the other’s character, said, ‘Thomas Hawkins I will have nothing to do with thee or thy dispute’ H then laid his hand on my uncle’s shoulder and said ‘Ah! The Mr Clark, I used to know, was a man of truth and Justice!’ and walked off; the correspondence H had in his hand must have been an inch thick!

One of H’s delusions was that he was the rightful Earl of Kent! He had a seal of heraldic devices, as large as a florin!

While he was living at Ashcot [presumably still at Piper’s Inn] he made more disturbance, at Lockhill; a little higher up than Piper’s Inn lived a Miss Short who, having some property, Hawkins thought would make him a suitable, I think, 3rd or 4th wife, but Miss Short was not taken in by the plausible rascal: so Hawkins raised scandalous stories about her thereby giving great pain and annoyance ... [here follows a diversion about the Short family, omitted here as irrelevant to Hawkins] ...

To return to Hawkins’ history, while he was living at Pipers Inn, Mrs Rendell of Bridport was visiting in Street – she was a sister of Ed. Pratt who went to New Zealand after his failure –

hearing that Hawkins was in the neighbourhood she asked me to go with her to see H. & try to persuade him to pay back some of the money he had so wrongly caused her father to lose: I was ill at the time, and knew it would be useless to appeal to the better nature – if he had one – of the mountebank scoundrel he very likely might have made a case against us of endeavouring to obtain money by threats; soon after this he left Pipers Inn and lived at Seaton or Lyme [both in Dorset], there he again made a disturbance, something about the church bells if my memory is correct;[.]

Hawkins was often in London, his visits to South Kensington Museum became such a nuisance [sic] that Dr. Woodward at last had to forbid him the entrance, shortly after this, one of the attendants came to the Dr. & told him Hawkins was in one of the upper rooms, where he had got by means of a ladder and an open window; the Doctor went up, told Hawkins to follow him, & escorted him out of the Museum, telling him if ever he came there again a policeman would take him.

Once Hawkins appeared as defendant in a disgraceful [sic] charge before a London magistrate he was lucky enough to be acquitted; he had a defence printed, which made out that he had been triumphantly acquitted & sent round to prominent people in the scientific world.

besides his 'Great Sea Dragons' he wrote a long poem called the 'The Wars of Jehovah' a sort of continuation of Milton's 'Paradise Lost' I believe the poetry is poor, but Hawkins had it illustrated by one of the best steel engravers of that time Sharp I think the name of artist [*recte* John Martin (1789–1854)] – so the book is of value for the engravings.

Hawkins died in the Isle of Wight, some time in the early '80s, his epitaph would make the reader think he was an example of all the virtues.

To sum up the character of such a man is difficult; that he had abilities and skill there can be no doubt, but he is evidently one who was living very near the border line between eccentricity and criminal insanity. In person he was of middle height [sic], light hair, & a foxy unpleasant face is what I remember of him. Columbus Clothier [presumably J. W. Columbus Clothier (1821–1895), whose father in partnership with Cyrus Clark started a sheepskin rugmaking business before Clark moved to shoemaking: McGarvie 1987] told me Hawkins in a conversation with him held up his walking stick & said he could contemplate his soul on top of it!! he [Hawkins] told my father in 1864 or 5 that he had met his brother Cyrus, was sorry to see him so ill but he thought he had prolonged his life by taking his hands in his!!

CLARK'S ACCOUNT: AN ASSESSMENT

It would have been necessary to give a critical review of Clark's account, even if L.H. Barber, a former Clarks archivist, had not added a MS note to one of his diaries (1869:4:4) that Clark was 'a man of little judgment, egotistical and in most respects an ignoramus'. At worst, Clark could be considered to be retelling apocryphal tales, grown and mutated in the telling – but even then his account would be a revealing pointer to local perceptions of Hawkins. However, I believe that his account is markedly more valuable. Certainly, Clark was born in 1840 and therefore in no position to give a mature first hand assessment of the 'Sharpham War' beyond hearing the noise of the fracas, but he had heard accounts from older members of his family, as he himself states, and it should be noted that the Clarks and the Clothiers were two of the most important families in Street (McGarvie 1987). Moreover, his obituarist commented on his accurate memory of 'conversations of generations ago' (Anon. 1928). Clark plainly knew Hawkins and his doings at first hand when Hawkins returned to the Street area in the 1860s. For instance, the incident with his uncle James may well be an eyewitness account, for it took place in the counting house where Clark himself worked around this time (Anon. 1928). Clark does not mention Hawkins's own biased and fractured autobiography (Hawkins 1887), and there is no evidence that he is using it as a source.

Clark's account has already proved useful in helping trace Hawkins's moves around the country, although there are major lacunae, especially for events which took place away from Somerset, for example Hawkins's marriage in London, and his Isle of Wight residence (Taylor 1997a).

Comparing Clark's account with other contemporary sources shows that his portrayal of Hawkins is consistent in spirit and often in fact with other reports and evidence, if one allows the kind of detail errors that might be expected from someone writing from memory several decades after the events in question (Taylor 1997a; in press 2004). On some specific issues:

1. *Murphy's 'cold day'*. This was the 20th January 1838, an exceptionally cold day in southern England, gaining its name from its fortuitous prediction by a certain Patrick Murphy's *Weather Almanack*. 'Murphy's 'cold day'' may be Clark's expression, as the more usual term seems to be 'Murphy's Winter', reflecting the exceptionally cold spell of which this was the nadir (Rogers 1955). My reading of Clark, a keen amateur meteorologist, has the date as the 22nd January 1838: perhaps I have misread it, or perhaps he was going by memory and made a small slip.
2. *Hawkins and Pratt*. The *Sherborne Journal* for 22 September and 3 November 1842 reported Hawkins's 'reference' to H.S. Keating Esq., presumably the arbitrator, for five actions in which he was plaintiff, and three more in which his servants were plaintiffs, against Edward Pratt and John Hole executors to the late Mr Samuel Laver. This was held at Piper's Inn over a period from 7 September to 28 October, with adjournments. Nevertheless, the *Journal* reported on 6 April 1843 that 'Laver and Laver' had to go all the way to London to sue a Mr Allen for the return of three of their cows which Hawkins had taken from the farm at Sharpham Park and sold to Allen. The judge sitting in chambers found for the Lavers. A prior civil prosecution by Hawkins of 'Pinkard and Others', apparently at the session court at Taunton in or around June 1842, may also relate to this dispute; it was thrown out on the grounds of Hawkins's evident perjury ([Hawkins 1842]).
3. *Hawkins ejected from his coach and rescued by the Rector*. This is presumably the riot which the *Sherborne Journal* for 7 July 1842 reported as having taken place 'on the previous Saturday' between Hawkins's and Laver's partisans – not Laver's trustees' partisans, *pace* Clark. (Either the *Journal* referred to a second member of the Laver family, or Clark got his relative timings wrong, or both: it seems that the original Laver did indeed die around this time, for, as noted above, the *Journal* for 22 September referred to 'the late Mr Samuel Laver'.) The riot arose from disputes between Hawkins and Laver at Sharpham Park where 'assaults and outrages are constantly taking place' despite the parties being bound over to keep the peace – one area of dispute being Hawkins's habit of 'claiming the right of certain stock, etc., on the farm, [and] has sought to eject Mr Laver from possession'. The report on the riot in *The Times* for 8 July 1842, which has lost a critical section through bad editing, is sufficiently different in factual content and, especially, in tone that Hawkins might even have been its source, perhaps indeed its author.

Combining the two accounts, it appears that Laver's partisans had recruited some of the 'far-famed Polden-hill boxers' to attack Hawkins on his return home to Sharpham Park. As a result, Hawkins organized 50 special constables and had more than 20 of his attackers seized and eleven committed to prison for trial. To meet the magistrates, and prefer charges, Hawkins was travelling to (not, *pace* Clark, from) Bridgwater, according to *The Times*, or Wells, according to the *Journal*: Bridgwater is perhaps more likely as it was at Walton Gate (or perhaps Walton village) that Hawkins was stopped by Laver's partisans. Hawkins was forcibly removed from his coach and made to write a promise to forego proceedings, which Lord John Thynne, the Rector, countersigned, presumably to appease the large and angry mob. Hawkins was effectively imprisoned for several hours in a local beerhouse. Thynne

allegedly tried to extricate him several times but failed, and Hawkins was only brought to safety by 'the superior tact and courage' of a Mr Porch Porch, presumably Mr T. Porch Porch of the Abbey, Glastonbury. The bench of magistrates, including Thynne and T. Porch Porch, then transferred the case to Wells where, according to *The Times*, they met Hawkins, who was well received by a large crowd of his own Glastonbury partisans, 'his horses unharnessed, and his carriage drawn in triumph through the town'. *The Times* went on to report that Hawkins expressed his belief that the men in custody had been misled, and forgave them, whereupon the Bench discharged them with a reprimand; however, this triumphal note is uncorroborated by the *Journal's* more neutral account. *The Times'* report ended by stating that 'Mr Hawkins has withdrawn till the parties disperse'.

Clark mentions a case as going against Hawkins at arbitration at Thynne's behest, which might be why Thynne is unfavourably presented in *The Times*. This must be the original Hawkins-Laver dispute, or some part of it, rather than this prosecution at Wells. Clark's account is consistent with the 1824-1850 duration of Thynne's Rectorship at Street and Walton (McGarvie 1987, 128; Michael McGarvie pers. comm.).

4. *Hawkins physically ejected from a lawyer's office at Portsea*. Such an incident took place at Ryde, only the other side of the Solent from Portsea, i.e. Portsmouth, according to Hawkins's version in one of his characteristic pamphlets (Hawkins [1858]).
5. *The 'scandalous' London court case*. The problem here is knowing quite which case Clark meant, for several possibilities can already be confirmed from independent evidence. Hawkins was indeed in and out of the law courts, amply justifying Clark's father's advice to Mr Pratt. He was committed for trial in the Exchequer Court for an unspecified offence in 1851 (*Sherborne Mercury* for 22 November 1851). In a separate dispute arising from the legal management of three previous court cases in which Hawkins was involved, a lawyer sought to recover his fees from Hawkins. When Hawkins lost the case the judge committed him to trial at the Old Bailey for perjury, for either he or the plaintiff had evidently lied blatantly and deliberately under oath (*The Times*, 22 November 1858). He was also prosecuted for libel by the Ryde lawyer mentioned above in a civil case where he was found partly guilty and had to pay his own costs, but only £1 damages (*The Times*, 22 November 1858 and 4 December 1858).
6. *The unfortunate 'S. & D. Rly' clerk*. The date given, sometime after 1862 or so, is consistent with the opening of the Somerset Central Railway to regular traffic to Glastonbury on 28 August 1854, and more specifically its merger with the Dorset Central Railway to form the Somerset and Dorset Railway on 1 September 1862 (Atthill 1970; McGarvie 1987).
7. *The church bells at Lyme Regis, supposedly sometime after the 1860s*. The Dorset Record Office (Lyme Regis Parish Church Archive: PE/LR: IN 4/2) holds copies of pamphlets published by Hawkins in 1884 – a little later than Clark's account seems to imply – complaining for instance about practices and alterations in the parish church, such as a curtain in front of the board carrying the Ten Commandments, and the alleged unfairness in the division of offertory money at the expense of the poor. The surviving pamphlets do not specifically mention the bells which Clark tentatively mentions.
8. *The South Kensington Museum*. The original British Museum in Bloomsbury, London, had acquired Hawkins's two main collections of fossil marine reptiles in 1834 and 1840, and Hawkins was apt to take exception if he thought that they were not appropriately displayed (e.g. Hawkins 1848). The British Museum (Natural History) (now the Natural History Museum) was opened in South Kensington, London, in 1881. The Hawkins reptiles presumably moved there as part of the 1880 transfer of the geological collections from Bloomsbury (Stearn 1981). 'Dr Woodward' would then be Henry Woodward F.R.S., F.G.S. (1832-1921), who entered the Department of Geology in 1858 and was its Keeper from 1880 to 1901 (of several other Woodward's in the museum about this time, the least unlikely

alternative is the next Keeper, Dr Arthur Smith Woodward, who entered the Museum in 1882: Cleevley 1983; Stearn 1981). Clark's account, taken literally, therefore has Hawkins going up a ladder aged 69-plus; however, this is still credible as Hawkins would have been anxious to see what had been done to redisplay his precious reptiles even before the Museum opened in 1881. Or possibly the incident happened at Bloomsbury, perhaps when Woodward's predecessor was Keeper. Be that as it may, it is likely that Clark himself, or another family member, had the story direct from Henry Woodward. In 1887, for instance, Woodward formally opened the geological museum in Street. Today long closed, this museum was based on the collection of Alfred Gillett (1818–1904), a relative of the Clarks, with specimens from other donors including Woodward himself (Anon. 1887; McGarvie 1987). Woodward returned there in 1902 to address the visit of the 54th annual meeting of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (Anon. 1903). Moreover another South Kensington Museum 'denizen', although not formally employed there, was George Jennings Hinde, FGS, FRS (1839–1918), who became Joseph Clark III's own cousin-in-law in 1881 when he married Edith Clark (1852–1943), daughter of James Clark (1811–1906), Joseph III's uncle (Woodward 1918; Shoe Museum 1981). Hinde was a researcher on fossils, especially sponges, and a friend and distant relative by marriage of Woodward's, assisting him in editing the *Geological Magazine*. He would often have visited the South Kensington Museum, especially from 1881–1883 when he wrote a major catalogue of the fossil sponge collection. Finally, of course, Alfred Gillett himself would have been known to the Museum's staff as a notable Somerset fossil collector, who donated a fine ichthyosaur in 1884 (Cleevley 1981).

Clark (as he himself notes) seems perhaps less certain or reliable in areas gained from hearsay, notably his reporting the local speculation that Hawkins got his money by judicious marriages – but this is corroborated by the affair of Miss Short, and by Jehane Melliush's recent discovery that Hawkins was married, and soon separated, from a Mary Webb who soon died, and from whom he derived a considerable sum of money (Taylor in press 2004). This is the only wife of Hawkins's about whom we know, and she died in 1858, so Clark's reference to Hawkins seeking a 'third or fourth' wife in, apparently, the 1860s raises the tantalising possibility that there are one or two more wives still unaccounted for, so to speak. This may just be local gossip, but it is certainly not refuted by Hawkins's autobiography, which omits any mention even of Mary Webb.

Clark's final conclusion interestingly assesses Hawkins as an intelligent and talented personality 'very near the border line between eccentricity and criminal insanity', or as we might perhaps say today, a marginal psychopath, though this should perhaps not be taken too literally: quite apart from the changes of psychiatric terminology, Clark was presumably speaking as a layman rather than a medical man. At any rate, Clark's account notably confirms the impression from other sources that Hawkins had a very dark side and was not just the tragically eccentric buffoon that one might infer from the memoirs of Richard Owen and Gideon Mantell (refs. in Taylor 1989 and Taylor in press 2004). These were eminent palaeontologists, superiors in the scientific pecking order whom Hawkins had every reason to propitiate. Clark, unlike them, had to live at the same social level and in the same small town as Hawkins, and his account confirms the savage judgement of the combative naturalist and editor Edward Charlesworth (1840, 16), that Hawkins 'could adopt the language of the most cringing adulation, as well as that of the coarsest bullying, just as it chanced to suit his purpose'.

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