

THE GENTLEMEN OF MOWLEY AND TITLEY - THE GREENLY FAMILY

A talk by Beryl Lewis for the Kington History Society, 19th. September 1997.

This is the story of a successful family that has farmed land in Staunton on Arrow and Titley in north west Herefordshire for five hundred years, and are still there today at a little stately home called Titley Court.

Staunton and Titley are adjacent. They lie alongside the River Arrow. From the river the parishes spread across south facing hillslopes that rise up to over 1,000 feet on their northern boundaries. Both have hillocks of clay and stones, moraine left by the last glacier - the ice reached up to about 600 feet. The resulting landscape is most suited to pastoral farming, the flatter areas being used for crops. The steeper slopes are covered with oak, ash and conifer woodland. Titley lies on the main road from Presteigne to Kington. Staunton on Arrow is away from through routes.

The surname GREENLY could originate from places called Grineley in Nottinghamshire and Cheshire. However, the name occurs in Staunton as early as the 1380's, so I suggest that the family were once associated with a "green clearing", and this suggests an Anglo-Saxon/English origin for their name.

The family name first turns up in 1387, after the Black Death, at the Upper Staunton Manor, which included lands at what is now Staunton Park and Staunton Green, Storklow, Stansbatch, Highland and Mowley. In the Manor Court Rolls there was firstly an (illegible) Grenely whose name began with "A", secondly in 1393, an Edward Grenely, who "gave the lord one cockerel for his lands held by knight service", and thirdly in 1406 a William Grenelye who also held land in the manor.

Some of the medieval Greenly family farmed at Mowley, the western end of the Staunton parish which adjoins Titley. Today there are two farmhouses there, Upper and Lower Mowley, but in 1305 a township stood there, and 21 free tenants had land around it.

The township farmers cleared and developed lands on the edge of the large Mowley Wood on the border between the parishes. Copies of some old Deeds at Titley Court show that in 1442 William Grenely had some of this land, the *Netherstrangefordes Field*. By 1487 Phillip Greenly had all that field, and an adjoining *Overstrangefordes Field* as well. Both fields by then had been enclosed by hedges or fences. They are still part of the Greenly farmland today.

In 1525 John Greenly was prosperous enough to purchase an estate at Mowley called "*Woodhall in Stanton*". It is likely to have included two fields *Woodhalls Hill* and *Woodhall Meadow* (1807) which lay alongside a little stream that rises near Upper Mowley and flows eastwards to Stansbatch. "Hall" may be the old English word for *sheltered", "healh" and this place certainly is - as anyone walking the new Mortimer Trail nearby will appreciate.

These fields belonged with Lower Mowley Farm, for which, sometime in the seventeenth century a good quality farmhouse was built. Today the half timbered building is partly refaced, and a stone piece is added, but inside the northern end is a seventeenth century oak panelled room, with a plaster ceiling, in panels, with very simple decoration. It was a

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good farm. By the 1700's parish assessments for tax valued the farm at twice as much as the other farm at Mowley, Upper Mowley Farm.

Owing land carried obligations. This is the story of the Mowley Armour.

Henry VII in 1538, 1539 and 1542 arranged that able bodied men (over 16 years old) from each township were trained and armed ready to serve in his army if needed.

Beacons on hilltops would summon them. (Herefordshire men had recently been drafted to help with a rebellion in the north of England).

Mowley was expected to supply 6 billmen and an archer. The muster certificate of 1538 tells us that "Mr Grenely" of Mouldeley was wealthy enough to provide a *cote and salet*. A *salet* was a helmet, and a *cote* a "coat of plates" was body armour usually worn by billmen. A bill was a 4 - 4m long stave (over fifteen foot) with a curved spiked top, sharpened on one edge like a sword. Billmen did the slaughter on the battlefield, they were the executioners.

The rest of the township between them provided; 2 pairs of harnes, 6 bills, 3 swords, 4 daggers, and a longbow and arrows. The archer was a Philip Grenely.

By the end of the 1500' Greenly families were spread all around Staunton, at Staunton on Arrow and Stansbatch as well as at Mowley They called themselves "yeomen" in their Wills, (they held freehold land).

They also had plenty of children, and there are an embassingly large number of families to sort out.

There were families of Greenlys at TITLEY too. John Greenly in 1504 bought some lands at Oatcroft, in Titley, and Richard Greenly in 1546, was a substantial farmer who was valued for lay subsidy at £6.

In 1600 these Titley Greenly were related to at least one Staunton family. Richard Greenly, a "yeoman" said in his Will (probate 1600) that his brother John was at Upper Mowley. Richard left his house and land at Titley to John's second son, also named John. Richard was wealthy enough to have a house and two acre plock in Kington which he left to his daughter and her husband.

One Upper Mowley Greenly family at this time, can be traced through through the story of the Tithes.

THE STORY OF THE TITHES

In the seventeenth century when the corn was cut and tied up and made into stooks, men were sent to collect every tenth stood, which was taken off to a Tithe Bar. This corn was the "Great Tithe" owed to the bishop. Bishops however preferred money to grain and so they leased the Great Tithe to local families wealthy enough to afford the rent.

Two Great Tithes were collected at Staunton on Arrow because the parish lay in two Hundreds, Stretford and Wigmore.

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A prosperous Staunton Greenly family had leased the Great Tithe of the Stretford Hundred. This lay in the east and south eastern part of the parish, around Stocklow, and around Staunton on Arrow village. Pre- 1579 Phillip Grenely yeoman was leasing it and in his will he bequeathed it to his children, arranging that each in turn paid one year's rent. In 1598 his son Thomas "of Upper Mouldley" yeoman, handed the lease of the tithe on to his sons Philip, John, Edward and Thomas, again arranging that they share the payment of the rent. But it was Phillip and his wife Alice who were to take ultimate responsibility for the Tithe, and it was to cause them some bother. Phillip (originally from Upper Mowley) had gone to London and become a butcher. He had a house at St. Nicholas Shambles.

As *shambles* were a place where meat was sold, his house was probably also his shop. Nearby, in Pancake Lane he had a slaughterhouse. All this was to be destroyed in the Great Fire of London.

The Great Tithe of the rest of Staunton which was in the Wigmore Hundred, was leased to Amye Wigmore, a widow who lived at Shobdon Court, and leased the Manor of Shobdon. At a certain place in Staunton on the boundary of the Hundreds, at *Higgins Hill* and the *Sallinges* there were problems. The *Sallinges* was a strip of land between the River Arrow and the lane from Staunton on Arrow to Mowley to the east of the *The Butts Cottage*. Sallys (willows) growing alongside a leat probably gave this land its name. Higgins Hill was probably land alongside the small lane that goes uphill to the Rough Acre Farm - then just a cottage and plock.

in 1618 two men, Richard Smith and Richard Jones were sent to these fields to collect the Greenly Tithe. Amye however claimed the corn there was hers, and sent her son Richard and at least six other men to chase off the Greenly men. They were armed with swords, daggers, long pikes, staves, forest bills, corne pykes (pikels) and welsh hooks.

Ricard Smith was badly wounded and "long languished in peril of his life".

Amy took Richard Smith to court at the Hereford Assizes, and had her rights to the com confirmed.

In 1622 Phillip Greenly replied by taking Amye to the Court of Chancery in London. We do not know the verdict, but a description of the manorial boundary in 1709 and 1718, which was also the Hundred boundary, suggests that she may have been right about *Higgins Hill*, but wrong about the *Sallinges*.

After Phillip Greenly's death, his widow Alice moved back to Upper Mowley. She died in 1638 and was buried in Staunton.

The Greenlys had two farms at Upper Mowley. One house and farm was much better than the other, valued in 1617 for the Lordship chief rent at 12s. as against only 3s. for the other one. By 1618 the 3s farm was let to a tenant (Rowland Hudson).

Our only tiny clue about Greenly houses there is in Thomas Greenly's Will of 1598. He mentions a "boorde (trestle table) in the Parlor haule and chamber".

The Greenly family eventually left Upper Mowley. My last recorded Greenly there was Phillip (possibly Alice's son), and his wife Elinor who were still there in 1642.

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In 1654 Upper Mowley had a new owner, and a new house had been built there to replace one of the old farmhouses, which were called in the Deeds "Paynes" and "Pools". (There is a *Pools Green* field name nearby). The other house was pulled down in 1799 by Lord Oxford, the then owner. He rescued a very fine oak chimney piece, part of a panelled room, and gave it to Elizabeth Greenly. It is dated 1625 and has the initials A.G.

Today the chimney piece stands in another seventeenth century room, the Titley Court library, which has a handsome plastered ceiling decorated with wreaths of laurel. There are emblems from the Greenly coat of arms painted on the windows.

Though the Greenly's left Upper Mowley, they continued to live in the good house at Lower Mowley. In 1663 Phillip Greenly was living there. The farm had some land in Titley (meadows by the river Arrow) which were valued at £6.10s. for the military assessment tax. Philip had 5 fireplaces, and paid £16 for the Tithe - probably the same Lower Staunton Tithe that we have already seen being leased by the family when they lived at Upper Mowley. However by the beginning of the eighteenth century the Greenly had left Lower Mowley. Tenants have farmed it ever since, and its house is still part of the Titley Court estate, its ground being farmed from Titley Court. (A barn across the lane from the farmhouse is being converted to a private house).

Edward Grenely was said to have had the "Manor of Titley" in 1571. (This taken from a book about Henry Greenly, 1876 - 1947, a railway engineer of the Metropolitan Railway London, whose hobby was making model trains (he edited Model Railways and Locomotives 1910 - 1919). The book was written by his aunts, who said their family was descended from a younger son of the Greenly's of Titley Court, Edward, who left home in the 1700's to become a Customs officer. The aunts may have had access to some information that is now lost.)

The Manor had 132 and a half acres of land in 1769, and leasing it was one of the factors contributing to the success of the Greenly family there.

It is necessary to explain that Titley was divided into two manors. One, with a "Hay" (enclosure), was the western end of the parish, including Oatcroft, Flintsham and Eywood. The other manor lay at the eastern end of the parish. It belonged to and was developed by religious foundations, one pre-Domesday was Celtic, (St. Tylliarn - also called St. Tysilio - a saint of the Kingdom of Powys. The centre of his cult was at Meifod in Montgomeryshire), the other, Norman (founded in 1121) was a priory belonging to the Benedictine Abbey of Tiron in France. In the 1300's during the 100 years war with France, anything French was out of favour, and was either closed or heavily and unfairly taxed. Titley Priory was reduced to two monks by 1398 when it closed down. Its manor house and lands were sold to Bishop Wykeham of Winchester. Rents from a lease of the lands would thereafter support a school he was setting up there, now Winchester College.

Part of the Priory was of course, a Manor House. In 1663 and 1664 Greenly's probably lived in it, and the library area of the present Titley Court was probably part of their home. All we know for sure is that Andrew Greenly "Gentleman" had 5 fireplaces, William Greenly had 2, and Richard Greenly had one, all somewhere in Titley. Andrew and William had land there too, it was valued for military tax at £26.13s. 4d. and £10 respectively.

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In 1675 Blount writes that John Greenly was farming the Winchester College lands. This was possibly Andrew's son (Andrew died 14 years later in 1689). At Winchester College I saw two letters from John Greenly to the Warden. One written in 1686 is apologetic. James Woodhouse (of The Woodhouse Byton?) had carried money to London for John Greenly to pay to the Warden. James by mistake brought it back "into the countrey again". The rest of the letter is concerned with the care of the Court Rolls, of which John Greenly says, "*Mr Owen was employed for 20 years before I come to be concerned who hath them in his possesion. (Mr Owen was perhaps the lawyer from Little Brampton).* He ends, *"all things considered I hope I have done nothinge willingly to incurre yo' r displeasure and if yo' please to Creditt me there is nev'r a Tenn't belonginge to the Collegde that shall be now readye alt all times to serve yo' most faithfully to the utmost power of him who subscribe your worshippes most obl'ged humble serv't John Greenly."*

The second letter, dated 22nd September 1699, from John Greenly to Warden Nicholas, both reveals his character, and some interesting changes that he was bringing about in Titley. I quote -

19008 Letter, John Greenly to Warden Nicholas.

Titley Sept. 22nd. 1699

The occasion of giving you this trouble is to acquaint you and the rest of the worthy Gent: concerned with an Agreement I have made with the Tenn'ts for the divideing of that waste piece of ground and common called Titley's Wood, rights and customes hath occasioned great heats and differences amongst us, which by the doing of this a period will be put to all, there hath been noe Endeavour wanting on my parte to support yo'r rights, and perhaps a stranger could not have brought them to what I now have there is at present a pretty good understanding between us, and I hope by the going on of the encloseing of the Comon will be a great meanes for the Contunuance, which I cannot in the least doubt of yo'rs with the rest of the Gent:

Concurrence, where the adantage will be too great both to you and yo' r poor tenn't, before this is fenced and brought to perfection it will cost me near 40£ (sic) howew by yo' permission I am inclinable to undergoe it proposing of makeing some advantages of that, which now wee receive noe benefit from, hard upon 30 acres will be our divident, which is better had than nothing. my rent for some years past hath been so high, that I receive little to my selfe, let graine bear what peine it will. I find it impossible to bring the people I have to doe with, from the old rates 2s. and 12d. per ann., soe for ease and quietnes sake, I am content to take it, if you please to doe me the favor as tell Mr Auditor to give me an Acc't of my debet to the Colledge this yeare, and where he will pleas to order me to pay the moneys in London, it shale be puctually observed, I fear by this I have quite tyred yo'r patience soe that I shall trouble you with noe more att present but my most humble service to yo'r hon 'r selfe and the worthy society, I subscribe y'r poor tenn't and most obedient humble servant Jn Greenly"

(I looked carefully at these letters. The signatures of the John Greenly's at the foot of these letters seemed to be different. What is also interesting is that the handwriting of the 1699 letter is not the same as the signature. Someone wrote it for John Greenly perhaps?)

In 1706 the face of Titley was to change. John Greenly (one) d. 1729 was to have a new and important neighbour from Queen Anne's Court in London, who came and built himself

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a mansion in the Eywood end of the parish, just down the hillside from Oatcroft, a very good farm which for centuries had been the home of Traunter family.

The incomer was Mr Edward "Auditor" Harley, brother of Robert Harley, Queen Anne's chief minister. Edward was paymaster of the Queen's navy and for many years, the M.P. for Leominster. He had bought not just the Eywood manor, but a lordship, the *Lordship of Lugharnes* based formerly at Stapleton Castle near Presteigne. Titley manor was part of this, and John Greenly had to pay chief rents to this new neighbour.

The Auditor's son, another Edward, married Martha Morgan, a daughter of the ironmaster John Morgan of Tredegar, and in 1741 he inherited the earldom given to Robert Harley by Queen Anne, becoming the third Earl of Oxford.

Titley now had two prominent landowners. It is interesting to see how their Titley houses and lands compared in value in the 1724 assessment for the parish poor lewn tax. John Greenly's own property was valued at £64, and the Winchester College lands at a further £40. Altogether this added up to £104 - the College land providing less than half of the value of his estate at that time.

Mr Edward Harley's mansion and estate was valued at a total of £158.

The only other man of any substance in Titley was Mr Passy who was valued at £49
(An estate map of 1807 at Titiey Court suggests the Passy family may have owned Titley's Rhiwlas farm).

John Greenly (d. 1729) did not have much luck with his wives. The first (a Walsham from Knill) died aged 27 - there were no children. The second (a Hyde from Hopley Worcestershire) gave him 5 children including 2 sons, but died aged 31. His third wife, a Hopwood widow (possibly from Milton), gave him 4 daughters, and though she lived to be 61, he had 15 years on his own after her death.

In his Will we learn that he owned Marston Court in Pembridge, which he left to his son Edward. His daughter Phebe inherited his linen, while Edward together with his 8 other children were given £5 each "*for buying each of them mourning*".

John (one) died in 1729 and was succeeded by his son John Hyde Greenly who died in 1753. A handsome portrait of a John Greenly at Titley Court may be him. The man is young, and wears a full bottomed curly brown wig, and a gold coloured coat faced with blue satin. The style of the wig and the white linen necktie was that of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

He had two wives. There were no children from his first. His second wife, Elizabeth Butcher not only gave him two sons and a daughter, but she was an heiress. She brought the Greenly family some Welsh property and a coat of arms. These came from her mother, an heiress of John Williams of Cwm Du in Breconshire - near Tretower.

Her father John Butcher had married into the family of Floyers, many of them lawyers, and the Greenlys thereafter had relatives at Abergavenny, at a house called *Ty Gwn* (the white house) and its estate just to the north of the town. *Ty Gwy* was described '*an old timber framed house of great beauty ..*

... surrounded by a grove of ancient sycamore trees. The Greenlys eventually inherited the *Ty Gwyn* estate, and thereafter they had to ride into Wales to see about their property and collect their rents.

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Today a grey stone house (a hospital) stands there and the ancient sycamores have gone. (The estate included *Pen-y-lan-y las*, the top of the green bank, the present house was built about 1790 for the then tenant, a land surveyor called Morris, together with Pentwyn, the top of the tump. Both were sold by Chas Williams Allen Greenly to Crawshaw Bailey in 1884. Also in the estate was Ty-'r-ywen, the yew tree house, sold to Crashaw Bailey in 1878.) Five years before John Hyde Greenly died, a Greenly became lord of the manor of Huntington (including of course Kington). Edward Greenly bought it in 1749 This was probably John's brother, who had inherited Marston Court from their father. He was apparently living at Titley Court in 1749. He passed the Manor on to his son Edward, who sold it to John Harris of Brilley in 1773.

When John Hyde Greenly died in May 1753, his eldest son John was dead, and his second son and heir William was only 12 years old - and possibly Edward was left in charge of the estate until William was 21.

A good education could be afforded for William, he was sent to Lucton School and Oxford University.

In 1755 the Greenly family were among the local landowners invited to the funeral. of the third Earl of Oxford, whose body was brought home to Titley for burial, William was only 14.

Also invited were Dr Broughton, Mr Jones, Mr Price of Knighton, Mr Price, apoth(ecary) of Kington), Mr Palmer, Dr Thomas, Mr Bull, and Mr Griffiths, w(h)o together with Mr Greenly and family, Mr Passy and sisters waited at Joseph Guest the vicar of Titley's house. Also at the funeral were Mr Walsham and brother (Knill) Mr Watkins, Mr Passy, Col. Jones, Mr Coot of Luismore. and five clergymen. The ceremony was arranged by James Davies on behalf of the son and heir, the 4th. Earl - a member of Parliament, who was in London. To help feed the funeral guests a buck had been sent from Brampton Bryan.

It was September, but recent rains and floods had made the roads impassable. A coach was "once down" but nobody was hurt. Worse still, coming over the hills from Droitwich, by Abberley Lodge in the early hours of Saturday morning the 15th. (at three o'clock) the "perch of the hearse" broke. This was the day of the funeral. A waggon and horses had to be fetched from the Hundred House at Great Witley, and the hearse was taken back there. It was lunch time before the hearse was mended and could set off again for Titley which was reached - with difficulty.

James Davies sent this account of the funeral to the 4th. Earl in London (at Henrietta Street, Cavendish Square).

Hon'd Sir -Yesterday between three and four o'clock, the hearse and coaches came to Titley, where everybody concerned attended, the clergy and family servants being first fitted (with mourning). The great good man was immediately carried by his old workmen into the vault, without going into the church (as Mr Harcourt said by your express direction), and the funeral was performed with greatest decency and order.

Afterwards, the company were fitted with hatbands and gloves By six o'clock, most of the clergy and gentlemen were at Eywood, and took part of a handsome cold entertainment and wine; and all went home, except Mr Palmer and those that came from London, for whom everything was provided to their great satisfaction.

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Everything was done without noise or crowding. I never knew so many people met together with as little disturbance and disorder...

William came of age in 1762. As the second most important landowner in Titley, he had to take an important part in parish decisions. An example from the churchwarden's account book shows William, the curate and Lord Oxford's agent John Sherburn taking a firm line to prevent the poor, particularly women and children, damaging woods, hedges and other fences to get fuel for their fires. Perhaps this was the result of John Greenly's enclosure of the Titley Wood commonland? This is how William, Lord Oxford's agent John Sherborne, and Joseph Guest, the curate dealt with it. They suggested lists should be made of the poor who could not afford wood, so that enough faggots could be bought for them with the Poor Lewn. They suggested that several sales of wood should be advertised, so other parishioners could "furnish themselves with enough fuel", and they suggested that persons cutting down coppice wood, or breaking hedges and fences should be prosecuted, and illegal residents sent back to their parish of origin.

In 1756 Willian was sound enough financialy to become a trustee of the Kington Turnpike Trust, that is he had £100 or more per year in rents. He also had an interest in the Kington and Radnor Bank, which survived when many others went to the wall in 1825.

In 1772 he was one of the three commissioners responsible for assessing and collecting Land Tax and Window Tax for King George II (with Wm. Bach and Wm.

Passey). A man from each parish had to collect the money and pay it at the Three Horseshoes in Corn Square, Leominster, four times yearly for the land tax and half yearly for the windows. For example at Brampton Bryan, Walter Pierce collected f1.14s. from the Vicar for his 14 windows ("lights") Since then the Old Rectory has had a chunk built on the back so no window count is now possible, but one prominent window upstairs on the east wall was and is a complete fake, designed that way from the outset. Window tax was not abolished until 1851.)

Appeals against the amount asked for had to be posted on the door of Kington Church by 10 am. on a Sunday before the day the commissioners set to hear the appeals.

William had wider duties. He was a magistrate, and was honoured by being elected Deputy Lieutenant of Herefordshire, and High Sheriff of Breconshire. He was a good horseman, able to ride daily to all the way to Brecon during his year as High Sheriff.

We have a glimpse of him aged 65, during the hard winter of 1776. In January he set out to Abergavenny but "*had to return the next day, having found the snow too deep to get through*"

He was on horseback and "*almost froze to death by the cold*" He must indeed have been in a deplorable state on his return. "*His feet were froze to his stirrups and icicles stuck out like spikes from the nose of his horse.*" After this trying experience he wisely put off his journey for 10 days, and then only reached Abergavenny with difficulty, as the roads were so filled up by snow that people had to leave them, and go over the hedges into the fields." (Mrs R. Greathed, The Herefordshire Magazine, 1907) William's good horsemanship would have stood him in good stead when he was a Captain in the Herefordshire Yeomanry Cavalry under Sir George Cornewalle.

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William's wife Elizabeth brought more property to the Greenly family. She was the heiress of James and Elizabeth Browne of Leinthall Earles, and the property, "Leinthall Farm" was a substantial 226 acres in 1807. William Greenly employed Benjamin Wishlade to build a house in Kington for Mrs Browne, his mother in law, in 1830. We know it as Castle Hill House, formerly Castle Field.

Extracts from her diary show that the Greenly dined at Eywood, sometimes for a celebration such as Lord Oxford's birthday in July 1773, and that Lord and Lady Oxford sometimes came to dine at Titley Court.

Both William and Elizabeth lived long lives, she died at 92, he died aged 93.

William and Elizabeth had one child, a daughter Elizabeth, 1771 - 1839, called "Eliza", and she is the most well known member of this family because for 55 years of her life she kept a diary. Aged 64, she copied it up into 5 volumes, and added some other family material. However, it must be noted that she said she had edited it - no doubt with posterity in mind. We may have lost some of her more controversial responses to people and events. Major Salt's very well written talk about the diary is printed in the Woollhope Transactions of 1951, and extracts from the diary itself can be found in the Record Office.

Eliza was described as "sweet tempered and good looking". She was also a highly intelligent, self educated woman possibly ending up with the kind of education more suited to a man. Victorian women were customarily given some man catching arts such as dancing, singing, playing the piano, and painting, but not much else. Eliza was widely read, was interested in politics (she supported Pitt and went to elections at Leominster). She was a keen theatregoer, and could read and enjoy French and Italian literature. She was intrigued by science and industry, visiting the Blaenavon iron works near Abergavenny, and met Josiah Wedgwood and his wife, James Watt and Michael Faraday. She was a friend of Matthew Boulton and visited his home, Aston Hall in Birmingham for the christening of three of his children. She took oil painting lessons "*from Laporte*" when she visited London. Aged 24, her painting of Bredwardine Bridge was exhibited in London in Somerset House (1795). Religion was an important and valued part of her life, (she was a protestant). She wrote sermons for the use of her father's household. Later, a friend in Bath called Harriet Bowdler whose husband is famous for bowdlerizing Shakespeare's plays, persuaded her to have them published. They were printed at Presteigne in 1843, and went into at least 5 editions. Eliza, was a skilful horsewoman, and like her father thought nothing of riding to Abergavenny.

As she was William's only child, she was therefore an heiress, and some very eligible suitors danced attendance on her. Her diary mentions one rejected suitor who was rude to the Greenly's at a dance in the Assembly Rooms in Kington, and challenged William, then elderly, to a duel. He wisely ignored the challenge.

Eliza refused all the suitors until she finally wed at 39. Was she avoiding the tiring yearly pregnancies that were customary for a Victorian married woman I wonder?

When she did marry, the man was a disastrous choice for such an intelligent and sensible woman. Was the wedding the result of mounting pressure from her family as her child bearing years grew fewer? There were no children.

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On the face of it, Sir Isaac Coffin Greenly, a baronet, should have been a favourable catch. He was born in Boston, America, and had had a satisfactory naval career, he knew the right people and was created a baronet for his most recent services as a naval commissioner. He had some land in the Magdalene Islands in the Gulf of St Lawrence, Quebec, between New Foundland and Nova Scotia, Canada. Today the most southerly island is called Coffin Island. After the marriage he became an Admiral, and an MP for a pocket borough (Ilchester) from 1818 to 1826.

Eliza's entry in her diary about her wedding in 1811 is terse. There not a word about her happiness or fondness for her bridegroom - or did she edit her feelings out when she copied it up?

"April 3rd Mr Whitcomb (an attorney from Kington, who lived at the Whittern, Lyonshall) and Mr King (of Staunton Park) arrived to be present at the perusal of my marriage settlement. April 4th. I was at Titley Church united to Sir I.C.G., he taking my name on the occasion." Miss Dickenson, Capt. W. Bissell and her parents were present. "We returned to Tilley Court for breakfast, after which Sir I and I set out for London. Dined and slept at the Hundred House (Great Witney). Next morning reached Oxford and on Sat 6th. got to London by half past three".

Amongst a round of visits and entertainments, he took her to see the naval establishments on the south coast.

Sir Isaac was part of the Prince Regent, (Prinny's circle, and some months later they had an invitation to one of the prince's "Fetes" at Carlton House. Eliza was staying with relatives at Weymouth, and he summoned her back to London, where Mrs Barwell, Sir Isaac's sister *"took me in her carriage to order my dress etc. I dined with Mrs Furye and on the 19th. with Mrs Barwell, at whose house I dressed, she lending me all her splendid diamonds, the earrings only being worth £2,000, and at 9 we drove to Carlton House. We got home about 4 in the morning."*

What was wrong with Sir Isaac as Eliza's husband. Plenty! He was considerably older than herself, being 52, and was already sometimes "laid up in bed" with gout. He was a loud mouthed man, who openly flirted with any good looking woman that crossed his path, and he spent money foolishly on over-generous presents. For example he told Mrs Crummer, the attractive Kington bank manager's wife that he had "*planned on her for his second*" (wife). She asked him for a small compass, but he bought her an elaborate case of mathematical instruments especially designed by the Superintendent of Plymouth Breakwater.

He was totally unpredictable. In 1814, 14 months after the wedding he said goodbye to Eliza at Llanidloes, to catch a coach to go north. Eliza said "*I felt much at parting with Sir I., though I little dreamed of the cruel part he was about to play and that I was not to see him for seven years*". He arrived back at Titley Court one breakfast time unannounced.

Meanwhile Eliza lived (as before with her father and mother at Titley Court. She was later to refuse to go and live permanently with Sir I in his lodgings in London, though she visited him there. When apart, he made sure she sent his share of the £400 given her at her marriage by her father.

Major Salt writes that "*in 1835 on his last visit to Tilley Sir Isaac would not see his nephew who came down to Kington to visit him, but was wheeled down to the Stag's Head to stand*

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the landlord a quart of porter. He offered a sovereign for the fattest goose in the village, paid his usual compliments and made his usual interminable speeches. In fine, he was Sir I Coffin at his best and worst, with a French valet Benoit, like a stage shepherd, in a snow white waistcoat and white trousers, in the background. Benoit's smirks made Richard's cheeks curl incessantly, and (he) created an unpleasant diversion by leaving a loaded gun in the kitchen which, by good fortune only wounded a fish kettle and a dripping pan, " Sir I just outlived Eliza, dying aged 80.

Meanwhile, the Greenly's neighbours at Eywood were the 5th Earl and his very beautiful and lively wife, the daughter of a Hampshire clergyman. Eliza liked Lady Oxford, and they were on good terms, possibly because both their husbands and were absent from home from time to time, both preferring some bachelor freedoms.

Lady Oxford whose love affairs, and differently fathered offspring were much gossiped about, wrote to Eliza " *You have always been candid in disbelieving wild reports and have been circumspect in your advice*".

Eliza was not impressed with Lady Oxford's last lover, Lord Byron, whom she met at Eywood.

Another friend of Eliza's was Augusta Hall, wife of Sir Benjamin Hall of Llanover, (south of Abergavenny), Clerk of Works to the crown and responsible for building Big Ben, which is named after him. She went to their wedding, - and they lived for a short time (3 years) at Newport house in Almeley, coming to dance at Assemblies in Kington. The Halls disapproved of drink, they made all the inns on their estate at Lanover become coffee houses. Benjamin died in 18?? and Augusta was a widow for nearly 30 years. In 1811 Eliza writes of riding to Llanover. She got up early, reached Letton for breakfast with friends there, and then crossed the Wye at Bredwardine. She reached Llanover Hall at 8 in the evening.

Augusta (and other gentry) had a mission to encourage "welshness". Eliza was swept up in this. She learnt welsh far better than Augusta, who could do little more than give her welsh speaking servants their orders in welsh. Eliza had one advantage, visiting her family's estate at Cwm Du, she probably met the vicar there since 1825, Rev. Thomas Price. He was a welsh scholar ... "winning prizes for his knowledge welsh history, geography and the scriptures. He was an accomplished harpist, etcher and carver".

Eliza's visits to relatives in Abergavenny will have acquainted her with a Society of Welsh scholars of Abergavenny, Cymdiethas Cymreigoddion y Fenni, which local trades people in Abergavenny had founded. They promoted welsh teaching, adopted welsh names for their children and held an annual Eisteddfod, but, to their annoyance, when the gentry were present, the proceedings had to be in English. Eliza won a prize at an Eisteddford for an "air" she composed in welsh, with harp accompaniment. She also donated two annual prizes.

Some idea of what it was like to stay at Lanover Hall to attend an Eisteddford at Abergavenny, comes from the memoirs of Mary Elizabeth Lucy, formerly a Miss Williams from Flintshire, heiress to the fortune from a lead and copper mine. (heiress of Sir John and Lady Margaret Williams of Boddlewyddan). In 1852 she and her daughter "Miggy" went to stay at Llanover, to attend the Abergavenny Eisteddford. She found note in her room "A fly is ordered to take you to the Eisteddford each day during the week and the charge was to be one guinea a day. I thought to myself this is a queer place, and so it seemed was the general opinion, and some wag wrote on the entrance gate, 'a park without deer, a house without cheer, a cellar without beer; Sir Benjamin Hall lives here'. Mary Lucy and the rest of the

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women were ordered to wear "frightful linstey petticoats and bodies, and black welsh chimney pot hats with coarse mob caps" ... hot heavy and uncomfortableall the ladies were furious. We returned our linstneys and hats etc. to her ladyship that same evening and made her very angry: Sir Benjamin and his lady were anything but a genial host and hostess ..."

Sir Benjamin did not allow smoking, but some of the gentlemen, including Lord Bateman (of Shobdon Court) "smoked in their bedrooms till they were found out and there was a terrible row".

Titley Church is probably the only church in England to have the closing words of the prayer for the chairing of the bard, written in welsh inside its tower. When William Greenly died, Eliza had a vault built for him at the west end of the church, and a tower built over it by Wishlade. The inscription reads, In Er Diw A Phob Daioni An the name of God and all that is good) This tower was built AD 1834 at the sole cost of Dame Elizabeth Brown Coffin Greenly.

William Greenly and his wife and Eliza improved Titley Court, adding in 1809 a gothic tower on the east end built by wishlade. They made further improvements in 1815 and 1817. In 1820 the east end of the Court was fronted in stone and the "iron greenhouse erected". Titley too benefited. The Balance Inn with its 8 acres of land was purchased in 1833 and renamed the Stag's Head. It was refaced in brick and a butcher (and grocers) shop built alongside it. In 1815 the Rhiwlas Cottage was built.

Eliza began a school in a room at the Balance Farm. In 1826 money was found for a grey stone schoolhouse (now a house) across the lane from The Balance.

They rebuilt the farm in 1838. Another new building was Little Bircher, which replaced a decaying timber cottage.

Eliza died in 1839. Titley Court went first to her cousin and friend Louisa Hastings, wife of Sir Thomas Hastings. They had been living at the Parsonage in Titley. Then another cousin, Charles Williams Allen inherited, and took the name Greenly.

AND FINALLY - A CONTRAST IN FORTUNES

The Greenly family continued to quietly prosper. In 1876 Charles Williams Allen purchased the Winchester College lands. The archivist at Winchester told me that the College had not previously been allowed to sell any of its lands as they were considered to be "church lands". However in 1867 or 1868 this restriction was lifted and they were able to sell off some of their more distant property.

Charles William Allen's son Edward Howarth qualified as a barrister, and served for 37 years as a magistrate on the Kington Petty Sessions. At his retirement in December 1912, the Kington Times reported that his colleagues presented him with a "massive silver inkstand and blotter". Mr Gwyer of Eywood had been sent to London to buy it. His colleagues W.H.Banks, J. Charlton Parr (of Staunton Park), A.P. Turner, Anthony Temple and Bernard Philpin "all admired his careful decisions and admirable and efficient services to the Court". (Another colleague Stephen Robinson could not go to the presentation). Edward Howorth was interested in botany, and contributed many botanical records to the Transactions of the Woolhope Society.

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His wife Sarah was born in India, in Madras, and she and Edward and their children appear in a photograph taken outside the front door of Titley Court. (It was taken before 1892 when she died). Edward was wearing long woolly stockings and thereby hangs a tale. During the building of the Titley Junction to Presteigne railway c. 1874/5, the navvies used to go to the Stag for their Sunday morning refreshment. Edward Howorth Greenly walked by on his way to church wearing red woolly stockings. He did not say good morning to them, so some affronted navvy called out "turkey legs".

A second tale is told of the navvies. A performing bear was brought to the Stag, and they shut it in the lavatory. The result can be imagined

The Greenly family owned the Stag, and Titley gossip says that as a result of the navvies and some difficulties with the landlord Edward Howorth closed it but retained its licence.

The Kington Times also tells us that for many years Edward Howord: had a licence to "store carbide" (calcium carbide) Water was put with this to make acetylene, a gas, so Titley Court was probably being lit by gas lamps at this time. (It was dangerous stuff' if stored badly and allowed to get damp - hence the licence).

Subsequent Greenly's have supported their estate by earning their living as professical men. Edward Howorth's son, "the General", Walter Howarth Greenly was a professional soldier. In 1895 he joined the 12th lancers. He served in the Boer War: and from 1912 to 1916, he was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Hussars. At home in 1910 and 1914 he was a member of the Kington Rural District Council and the Kington Times records he rarely missed a meeting. In 1910 he attended the territorials prize givings, and gave a cup for a Kington boy scouts ' shooting competition. During the first world war he rapidly earned promotion, in 1915 he was mentioned in despatches, promoted to Brevet Colonel, and was made a Companion of the Order of St Nicolas and St George. From 1917 to 1920 he was a Colonel in the Royal Lancers.

He had a house in Canada, and a bailiff looked after his Titley estate - local gossip says this was a rascally employee who "let it go down".

Titley villagers referred to him as "The General" when he came back to Titley Court after his father Edward Howorth's death in 1926 to keep his spinster sister Ethel company. She was old fashioned, made the maids wear bonnets, had one eye, and kept 11 geese. One Christmas, when the Titley villagers were preparing their puddings etc, some of her geese were missing and a poem was found pinned to a door, "*Miss Greenly with your one eye and your geese so nice and fat, we've taken seven of the eleven and you must be thankful for that*".

In contrast to the Greenly family at Eywood there were serious difficulties, caused it seems by the 5th Earl, husband of the beautiful Lady Oxford.

A friend of the family, and contemporary with their children, the Reverend Archer Clive, wrote this about the fifth earl when hearing of his death:

..... Married early to a beautiful, foolish and wrong headed woman who never loved him, his bachelor profligate habits made him soon false to her, then she to him. then an ill ruled, extravagant house, gaming and racing, brought them as early as 1813 to an allowance from creditors. She went abroad with four daughters and one son. He stayed at home with the eldest who in due course went to Christchurch, got into debt, signed away his reversion and was accidentally drowned. The second son who is the late Lord Archibald Hamilton's and as like him as possible, soon followed his brothers example. Married foolishly, quarrelled,

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roamed the Continent, in jail one day and in worse company out of it the next, and is now the sixth earl. The daughters have all married and I believe have behaved well ...

... Lord Oxford was a capital farmer, thoroughly understanding all stock and in all country matters, good natured, and with a sensible wife might have made a respectable member of Society - as might she with a good husband. But they have left reputations notorious for evil

.....

"I was a wretched life of external splendour and internal want, and latterly all want and poverty"

We have an eye witness account of the earl's funeral written in 1849, from the diary of Gracilla Boddington of Burcher Court. "Lord Oxford's funeral passed me in the village, a mournful sight, as I could not feel that he had honoured Christ on earth & could not but fear lest God might not honour him by owning him at the last day. The pomp was poor indeed. A half dozen men were walking with no sort of solemnity or order & nothing followed but a raitletrap. It was the mockery of ... and the farce of a state funeral. Poor man, his heir was found in prison when called to succeed to his title! It is to be hoped poverty will prevent his ever being our neighbour".

A huge mortgage was handed on to his children, £30.000 had been owing in 1835, in 1889 £51,645, that is two and a half million pounds in our money today. There had to be a sale at Eywood of his furniture etc.

The last Lord Oxford only outlived his father by 5 years. He had no children and died in 1853. His sisters inherited Eywood for life - Lady Langdale having it first. She was taken to court for not keeping up the interest payments. She died in 1872 and had no surviving children.

Lady Charlotte fought for possession of the place for herself and her son for life. She won the case, but as a result, an additional thousand pounds was added to the debt.

Queen Victoria offered to recreate the title of Lord Oxford for her son, but he refused, saying the bills will be twice as much if I have such a title.

A 26 year old, Robert Dakar Harley with a factory near Shrewsbury inherited the Harley estates. He came to live at Brampton Bryan, and was obliged to sell off many of the Harley possessions to break even. Eywood mansion and its contents were put up for sale in 1895. It was sold to the Gwyer family. When they died in the 1950's it was too large to run, and everything saleable from the furniture to the chimney pots and doorhandles was auctioned and carried away. The mansion was demolished - all that is except the porch which was sold to an American who never came to take it away.

The Greenly family is still at Titley - the only family with unbroken occupation of lands in Staunton and Titley since the late fourteenth century. Their fame has travelled a steam engine was named after their home - "Titley Court."

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WCA Winchester College archive.
H.R.O Hereford Record Office
PRO Public Record Office, London.
DGF Deeds to the Green Farm, Staunton on Arrow. Private Coll.
LP Luggarnes Presentments, Coll. Mr C.C. Harley, Brampton Bryan.
SPR Staunton on Arrow Parish Register, TPR Titley Parish Register
NP The late Miss Nancy Price, formerly of The Rhiwlas Farm Titley.
AT Absract and Title to the Staunton Park Estate.

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