

Massachusetts exiles in Cowbridge – 18th century

In Cowbridge (or Cardiff) –

John Murray & wife, visited by Thomas Hutchinson (the brother of Samuel Mather's mother), formerly Governor of Massachusetts 1711-80 . He rented 85/87 Eastgate (*Land tax assessment of 1784/5*)

William Apthorp

Henry Caner

Samuel Mather (he was in Cowbridge according to Hopkin James. He was chief clerk of customs at Boston.

Daniel Oliver

Thomas Flucker – definitely in Cowbridge, or Llanblethian

William Browne - aged 28 in Salem, 1762 elected to Massachusetts House of Representatives, collector of customs 1764, Colonel in Massachusetts military. Loyalist – no sympathy for the Boston Tea Party faction.

On March 1776, Browne & his son William left Boston for London, carrying with them General Howe's dispatches to the North ministry. Browne's wife Ruth, nee Wanton, joined him in the spring of 1778. They rented Old Hall, or part of it, in Cowbridge. His close friend, Richard Saltonstall, took a room at a Cowbridge inn. His daughter was baptised in Cowbridge in 1780. In June 1779, Browne & his family gave up their tenancy of Old Hall (chs04797), and in May 1781, he was made Governor of Bermuda.

Browne, William (1737-1802), public official and colonial governor, was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on 27 February 1737 to Samuel Browne, a merchant, and Catherine Winthrop (b. c.1716). He graduated AB from Harvard College as valedictorian of the class of 1755, ranked third behind Henry Appleton, the son of a member of the Harvard Corporation—an understandable departure from Harvard's tradition of ranking graduates according to the prestige of their family lineage. His MA oration in 1757 defended the proposition that not all warfare violates Christian charity.

Browne read law under Edmund Trowbridge, but instead of seeking admission to the bar he devoted himself to the management of his inheritance of £5000 and more than 100,000 acres in Connecticut and other settled parts of New England. He could have avoided public service, but in 1761, at the age of twenty-four, he accepted

appointment as justice of the peace in Salem, and in 1764 agreed to assume the office of collector of customs for Salem and Marblehead when his predecessor was caught flagrantly taking bribes from importers of wine and fruit and allegedly sharing the booty with the governor, Francis Bernard. In 1762 the voters of Salem elected him to the Massachusetts house of representatives where he supported Chief Justice Thomas Hutchinson while at the same time serving as a trusted adviser to Hutchinson's rival, James Otis. In 1768 Browne became a marked man when he voted to rescind the Massachusetts circular letter which had condemned the controversial Townshend duties (British direct taxes on internal American trade).

With family connections going back to the Winthrops and Dudleys, Browne did not need affiliation with the dominant Hutchinson-Oliver faction as a prop to his social pre-eminence, and accordingly the Sons of Liberty treated him gingerly. After the younger James Otis received a serious blow to the head in a fracas with a customs agent in a Boston tavern in 1769, a sheriff arrested Browne as an accessory. A crowd of more than 2000 followed Browne and the sheriff to Fanueil Hall, where he was questioned by two Boston justices of the peace and then released. A year later a writer in the *Essex Gazette* attacked Browne for cancelling his subscription in protest against the newspaper's radical politics. In 1770 he failed to gain re-election to the house. Governor Hutchinson retaliated by appointing Browne to a seat on the Essex court of common pleas and to the rank of colonel in the colony's militia. Although condemned as a lackey of the Hutchinson faction, by this time Browne had, in fact, earned his militia command by years of service in the ranks. But the gulf between Browne and his whig neighbours had grown too large to be closed by the old civilities. In April 1774 he paraded the Essex militia for Governor Hutchinson and then compounded the offence by serving the governor tea purchased from the Tea Act consignee, Richard Clarke, in violation of the Boston patriots' boycott of East India Company tea.

His record of support for British authority earned Browne an unsought appointment to the mandamus council under the Coercive Acts, which were designed to punish the Bostonians for the tea party, and, in consequence, condemnation by a mass meeting of Essex county freeholders in September 1774. He wrote to his Essex county neighbours that they had no grounds to question his 'fidelity' to the public good nor his 'due regard to their true interest'—a careful statement of Massachusetts orthodoxy on the role and duty of an office-holder. Stung by this language the Essex county whigs demanded that Browne explain how 'you, Sir' could 'draw your sword and sheathe it into the bowels of your countrymen and fellow citizens' (Shipton, 554).

On 26 March 1776 Browne and his son, William, left Boston for London carrying with them General William Howe's dispatches to the North ministry. His wife, Ruth, née Wanton, about whom little is known, joined him in exile in the spring of 1778. With only his judicial salary of

£200 to live on, the family rented a small house in Cowbridge, Glamorgan. His close friend Richard Saltonstall, also descended from early puritan stock, took a room at a Cowbridge tavern so that he could enjoy Browne's company. At Browne's behest other Massachusetts exiles—John Murray, William Apthorp, Henry Caner, Samuel Mather, Daniel Oliver, and Thomas Flucker—settled in Cowbridge or in nearby Cardiff. Browne was the lynchpin of this exile community, and after his departure the group scattered.

In May 1781 Browne was appointed governor of Bermuda. When he arrived there he found the governor's residence 'in ruins' despite assurances that a garden capable of supplying his table would be restored in preparation for his arrival. Browne told the assembly that his long experience in colonial New England equipped him to understand 'their real wants and reasonable expectations', another example of his ability to articulate the assumptions of British official orthodoxy. As he later reported to Lord North, he got along well with the planter class by adhering to 'the principle of being well with every one and familiar with no one' (Shipton, 559). When the ministry privately asked Browne's advice about abolishing the slave trade, Browne reported that importation of Africans in Bermuda did not exceed ten a year and that the planters regarded the sale of slaves as morally reprehensible.

Browne secretly visited the United States in 1784 in hopes of recovering his property under the terms of the peace settlement. But he was too late. His Salem mansion was already listed for auction by the committee on the sale of confiscated estates—it was the only loyalist property in Salem not recovered by the original owners. Browne returned to Bermuda, and prepared a claim for compensation from the British government for his Salem property and more than 10,000 acres of land in Connecticut (estimated value, £33,256) which he personally presented before the claims commissioners in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the summer of 1786. There is no record of his claim's being paid, and his £200 compensation for service on the mandamus council and £750 salary as governor of Bermuda were in line with the minimal compensation that successful loyalist supplicants received.

These distractions compounded Browne's inability to suppress illegal trade between Bermuda and the United States and probably contributed to his recall in 1788. He took up lodging in the city of Westminster, and continued to receive a partial salary until 27 February 1790. His daughter married John Harvey Tucker, a Yale graduate (class of 1796), but his emotionally troubled son, William, for whom Browne had secured a commission in the 58th regiment of the British army, committed suicide in 1786. During the last decade of his life Browne devoted himself unsuccessfully to recovering unpaid salary and fees from the crown and a loan from the Winthrop family to Joseph Wanton which Browne had co-signed years earlier. He died in Westminster on 13 February 1802 following twelve days of a painful abdominal illness.

ROBERT M. CALHOON

The activities of old Judge Jenkins in all these matters were very great, and some account of him will be found below under the History of Cowbridge Church.

There were meetings concerning the militia of the county held in Cowbridge in 1688, and the county troop mustered on the Golden Mile in 1695-6. (M.M. 34. 41.)

The Acts of the Corporation contain many references with regard to the American and the French Wars:—

1776-7. “. . . It is agreed that the sum of ten pounds and ten shillings be paid . . . for the Relief of the soldiers in America, and of the widows and orphans of such as have fallen or may fall in Defence of the Rights of the Mother Country.”

A large number of American loyalists sought refuge in the old country owing to the War of the American Revolution. Mr. E. Alfred Jones, M.A., has given us an interesting account of some of them in an article, “American Loyalists in South Wales,” published in *Americana*. (Vol. XIII. No. 2. Pp. 146-155.)

Several of these settled at Cowbridge.

“Selecting the names at random,” says Mr. Jones, “the first of the American Loyalist refugees in South Wales was Samuel Mather, who chose as his abode the ancient borough of Cowbridge, in Glamorganshire.” He was born in February, 1736-37, and was the eldest son of the Rev. Samuel Mather, of Boston, and, in the words of his petition to the Commissioners of American Claims in London, “descended from some of the most ancient and reputable settlers” in the Province of Massachusetts Bay. He had served in the war against the French in North America and was an officer in a provincial corps. He held many important appointments—Deputy Commissary General in Quebec and Commissioner of the Court of the King’s Bench. In 1771, or thereabouts, he removed to Boston, his native place, and was appointed chief clerk at the Customs.

By taking the Loyalist side in the War of the Revolution he incurred the displeasure of his reverend father and, in his own words, was “guilty of disobliging the best of fathers by refusing his advice and commands to quit the service of His Most Gracious Sovereign, and enter into that of the States of America.” His mother’s brother was Thomas Hutchinson, Governor of Massachusetts, and he chose to follow him into exile. In a letter which he addressed from Ilfracombe in 1782 to Councillor Price, of Cowbridge, he said that he intended to take a small cot with a bit of land if he received an allowance from the Government, and he sends his compliments to Miss Price, Miss Harris, and Mrs. Morgan at Cowbridge.

He was paid £400 by the Government by way of compensation for loss, together with a pension of £100, which was paid till his death in 1813 at Boston, the place of his birth.

Mr. and Mrs. Murray were also American exiles at Cowbridge and were visited in the ancient Borough by Governor Hutchinson on 24th July, 1778.

In the little town there resided also an eminent Massachusetts Loyalist in the person of William Browne, of Salem, sometime representative in the General Assembly and Judge of the Superior Court. He was one of the two hundred and more Loyalists of Harvard College and a man of great estate, for his claim for his real estate in Connecticut and Massachusetts came to £32,256, and the final allowance was £7,658. His only son, William Browne, was educated at Winchester and gazetted to the 58th Regiment of Foot in 1779.

In the son's petition in 1780 he states that his father "is now concealed among the rugged mountains of Wales, subsisting with a family upon a salary of £200 a year."

William Browne, senior, lived at Cowbridge for over two years, and Governor Hutchinson called on him and his wife on 24th July, 1778.

On 7th April, 1779, the Governor wrote to him at Cowbridge asking him to send his son, who was about to be gazetted to his regiment, to London, so that the Governor's tailor might make his uniform. He invited the young subaltern to breakfast and dine with him during his visit to London, before embarking with his regiment for Gibraltar.

Young Browne served throughout the siege of Gibraltar from 1779 to 1782.

The father left Cowbridge on his appointment as Governor of Bermuda on 19th January, 1781. In Bermuda he remained till his retirement in 1788, when he returned to the old country and died at the age of sixty-five in 1802, leaving, according to his will, two daughters, Catherine and Mary.

After the Fishguard Invasion some of the French prisoners of war, when they were taken through Cowbridge, were lodged in the "Bear" stables.

Sir Goscombe John, whose father attended the Eagle School at Cowbridge, and whose grandfather and great-grandfather were Cowbridge men, tells me that what stands out most clearly in his recollection of the stories his father related to him was *the number of old soldiers and sailors belonging to the district who had served in the Napoleonic and other wars.* His great grandfather died

On 31 October 2017 at 22:37, Jillie <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hi Betty

Wow - thank you so much - that is all fascinating. I wondered what had brought the Fluckers to that area.

I am researching the Flucker family for an article (or maybe book) I am writing.

Thomas Flucker is well documented - he was Secretary of Massachusetts and managed to leave before the seige started. His wife and 2 daughters, Hannah & Sarah, left at the evacuation & spent a year or so in Halifax before joining him in London. I presume they waited there as they thought they'd be able to go back home when the British won!

The daughter Hannah Flucker had married James Edward Urquhart in Boston in 1774 (he was town major of the British troops). I know that they had a son as a letter written to Hannah in Halifax asks "is your little boy well, is he still living?". I also know he was with them in Llanblethian as he is mentioned in the divorce proceedings of Hannah & James, though only in passing - that Hannah left her son behind at school in Cowbridge when she left her father's house. One witness named him James, another named him George.

The Urquhart family were from the Scottish Highlands and the *History of the Urquhart Family* says that James had no issue & I can find no trace of this child other than these 2 instances. If he had died while they were in the area I'd have thought I would have found some record. What happened to him intrigues me. I had assumed his age relevant to his mother's marriage to James Urquhart, but that may not be the case - he could be older.

What is also interesting is the article about the Aubrey's. Hannah's sister Sarah married Anthony Jephson in St Athan in 1782. Anthony was the son of Denham Jephson & Frances Aubrey. Presumably they met while the family were living in Llanblethian.

The child's name was either James or George (or possibly both) URQUHART & he was born in about 1774/5. He could also possibly have been registered under his maternal grandparents name of FLUCKER.

The Flucker's were living in Llanblethian in 1780.

Jillie Horwood <[REDACTED]>
To: Betty Alden <[REDACTED]>

14 November 2017 at 07:05

Hi Betty

Thank you so much for all your efforts & please thank Brian James for me. I also thought that 5 or 6 seemed very young to be boarding at a school but the witness was quite specific that he was left at school in Cowbridge and not at his grandparents house.

I shall keep you informed of anything further I uncover that connects to Cowbridge.

Kind Regards

Jill Horwood

From: Betty Alden <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, 10 November 2017 10:22 a.m.
To: Jillie
Subject: Re: Your query re Cowbridge Grammar School

Just heard back from Brian James - he's been digging out what he can find for you (unfortunately does not use a computer so can't link with you direct).

He writes : 'Regarding the Fluckers, there is very little I can usefully add. Did you tell me that the boy left behind at the grammar school was only five? That sounds rather young but we cannot rule it out. The age of boys starting at the school at that time is rarely known. We only know how old they were when they went to Oxford. But there is one case - the future Sir John Nicholl of Merthyr Mawr, 1759 - 1838, is said to have been at the school from 1765/6 to 1773, and if so he would have been 6 or 7 when he first went there.

Thomas Flucker probably rented one of the big houses in Llanblethian, just as William Browne rented Old Hall, Cowbridge, and John Murray rented 85-87 Eastgate, Cowbridge (Llanblethian village adjoins the little town of Cowbridge).

The marriage of Anthony Jephson of Llanmaes (another nearby village) and Sally Flucker of St Athan (again a village close to Cowbridge) took place in St Athan in 1782. Perhaps the Fluckers had moved to St Athan by that date but the name does not appear on the land tax or window tax lists for 1784.

Anthony Jephson's mother, Frances (1716 - 75) and her unmarried sister, Margaret (1717 - 93) were daughters of Sir John Aubrey of Llantrithyd (again a nearby village), and they had a life interest in part of the Aubrey estate. The diarist William Thomas noted that they removed from Llantrithyd to St Fagan's castle (nearer to Cardiff) in May 1767 and, after only a brief stay there, moved on to Llanmaes in October 1767. They both remained there for the rest of their lives, but were buried in Llantrithyd.

John Aubrey, son of Anthony Jephson Esq and Sarah his wife, was baptised at Llantwit Major (a small town about 6 miles from Cowbridge & Llanblethian, and near Llanmaes) on 8 September 1783.

I can't find any references to the Urquharts.'

I hope this might help! I would be very grateful sometime for some information, however scant, on the family and their connection to this area so we can enter it into our archives. Best wishes, Betty Alden
