ROBERT AND RACHEL GOADBY— THEIR GRAVESITE IN OBORNE AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION



THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS
AND THE LIBERTY OF THE PEOPLE
FALL TOGETHER
MAY HEAVEN LONG AVERT IT

(*From over the entrance to the Sherborne Printing House*)

Information collected together by the Friends of Robert Goadby and printed by Sarsen Press, Hyde St, Winchester.

Copies sold in aid of the old St Cuthbert's Chancel in Oborne. A PDF containing the same information is available on the Oborne Chancel page at www.visitchurches.org.uk.

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.....introduction

In early 2017 George Tatham, a local Sherborne historian, visited the gravesite of Robert Goadby and his wife Rachel in the field adjoining the Chancel in Oborne and was dismayed at the condition of the remains of a memorial to a once important local citizen. He was determined to see if anything could be done about having a replacement headstone installed. A small group of friends came together to support him in his endeavours and a first meeting took place where George outlined the importance of Robert Goadby:

> 'He was a publisher and a printer and he was involved in the London book trade. He founded the *Western Flying Post and Yeovil Mercury* in 1744 and ten years later purchased the Sherborne Mercury combining the two newspapers to form the *Western Flying Post and Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*. He developed an extensive distribution network. After his death his wife Rachel continued to run the newspaper for 13 years'.

George and Prof Jonathan Barry, of Exeter University, both have an interest in the English Urban Renaissance and this has resulted in an extended essay on Robert Goadby's influence on the wider publishing world. At this time the book was underway.

The gravesite, in the field adjoining the churchyard, is surrounded by a wooden fence and has been planted with an oak tree and there is a pile of stones, which is all that remains of the original memorial, with a wild flower growing amongst them. George would like to see some form of restoration and with this in mind an initial estimate for a headstone with a simple inscription and its placement together with some printed material which would include the original lengthy inscription was obtained (amounting to c£2,000). A request for support was sought from the Simon Digby Memorial Trust and £200 towards this project was received.

……..*next the appropriate people were consulted:*

- Simon Ferris BSc LLB MRICS, Property Manager, Diocese of Salisbury as the Diocese owns the land and acts as the letting agent. Simon stated that as there is no public access to the gravesite as it is on private land it would not be possible to install a new headstone. He also thought we should question the effectiveness of the money spent in reconstruction and wondered if the production of information, literature and photographs might be more beneficial in the long term.

- Rev Vivian Enever, Rector of Queen Thorne Benefice (Nether with Over Compton, Oborne, Poyntington, Sandford Orcas, Trent). Rev. Enever reported that his involvement with the old St Cuthbert's Chancel is very limited and consists mainly of one service a year on Trinity Sunday. He expressed his interest in the project, from an educational viewpoint, and wished us every success

- We met with Kim Thompson, Volunteering Officer, Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall for the Churches Conservation Trust in November 2017. The Churches Conservation Trust is the national charity protecting churches at risk. They care for the churches vested to them by the Church Commissioners of the Church of England, repairing the damage from sometimes years of neglect, and work with local communities to bring them alive again.

As by now it was clear that a replacement headstone was out of the question there was no longer a need for further fundraising. A request was sent to the Simon Digby Memorial Trust to transfer the funds to an educational project to which they readily agreed.

So began a long period of research which culminated in further information being placed in the old St Cuthbert's Chancel.

We would like to thank Tina Osgood, Local Community Officer responsible for CCT churches in Hampshire, Berkshire and Dorset for her ideas and her help in finalising this project.

Friends of Robert & Rachel Goadby

……..the Churches Conservation Trust

Is responsible for the St Cuthbert Old Chancel, Oborne, Dorset and this is the entry on website www.visitchurches.org.uk

Address: **London Road, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 4JY Open daily**

A tiny and enchanting survivor. This beautiful small building in golden stone is sandwiched between the A30 and the main train line from London. Only the chancel survives of the 1553 church, which must have been one of the last to be built before the Reformation. Interesting inscriptions over the east and north windows testify to its origins. Inside are medieval slip tiles and seventeenth century communion rails, pulpit and monuments; the pillar piscina comes from the redundant church at North Wootton. There are seventeenth-century monuments in the churchyard.



Photograph Diana Neal



……..a talk with the Custodian of the Chancel

Barry Brock and Barbara Elsmore talk with Bill Heath

Barry set up the informal meeting so that Bill could tell what he knows from his memories of the sequence of events concerning the old St Cuthbert's Chancel, the graveyard and the grave of Robert and Rachel Goadby, situated in the adjoining glebe land. (The meeting was recorded - 1 hour 15 minutes and Barry holds the original transcript). Bill has been the Custodian of the Chancel since 2001.

Bill began to assist when a friend, who was working for the Churches Conservation Trust, asked him to help a Mr Smith, who lived in Sherborne and who had been responsible for looking after the churchyard at the Chancel but who now needed to hand the responsibility on.

Bill found that the area contained within the iron fence was surrounded by 30 to 40 dead elms. They were possibly planted in Victorian times, when the metal fence was put around the inner churchyard area and had succumbed to Dutch elm disease. The whole area was surrounded by a wall - dilapidated in many places. The outer church yard area was now glebe land and was rented out by the Diocese in Salisbury and used as a paddock for a couple of rescued horses and fencing had been put up around it. The Goadby grave itself consisted of a pile of broken stones. There was no sign of the elm tree that once stood over it.

Bill explained the meaning of glebe land - he said the land is often known as ‘God's Little Acre’. The Glebe is land owned by the Church within the parish, and which was intended to support the parish priest. It will have been passed on from vicar to vicar, who will have used it (often by renting it out) to provide an income (for the incumbent to live on). It is not the burial ground. At some point Bill took on the lease and pays for this himself. Any work he does is on behalf of the Churches Conservation Trust. He started by cleaning the windows of the Chancel. Outside he removed the dead elms and cleared back much of the under growth. There was a series of huge bonfires during some fine February weather when the fire did not go out for two weeks. The Trust was keen to maintain the bowl of an ancient oak tree which was covered in ivy and was considered to be habitat for wildlife but eventually this too succumbed. Barry and Bill speculated that this tree could well have been planted when the church was first built.

Bill had some of the Victorian metal railings straightened where they had become bent over the years. He did make some claims for recompense originally to the Trust but they have 'run out of money' so he has discontinued this but when his son helps him once a year with an annual major tidy up he does put in a claim which is paid. When he came to the Goadby grave site he said only about a third of the stones that are in the photo, following the removal of the tree, remained. He saved anything vaguely 'ecclesiastical' and took the rubble and broken stone to the tip together with the remains of some of the railings. There is some dispute about whether or not the railings were cut off and used in the Second World War. The date of the coloured photo of the intact grave would give a clue to this if it can be found. He contacted the Western Gazette to ask if they would like to pay for a tree to be planted on the gravesite which they did, requesting an oak tree. The Digby Estates were asked to plant the tree and put up the fencing and a small dedication ceremony took place. He planted 'fox and cubs ' - pulmonaria officianalis - on the small pile of stones that remain. Two members of the Goadby family (dog breeders from Somerton) were invited to attend they had been located by Bill via the telephone directory. The date for this can be located via the visitors' book and a report was in the *Western Gazette* together with photos.

Bill requested a sign and was told there was no money so he managed to locate a second hand one and collected it himself from a Somerset church and dug some huge holes to set it in the ground.
He also planted three disease resistant elm trees, one of which was eaten by a horse, but the remaining two are thriving and turning into sizeable small trees.

Oliver Chisholm who lives in the cottage next door to the Chancel takes care of the mowing of the churchyard.

Barry asked Bill how he would like to see Robert Goadby commemorated and brought to the attention of others. He suggested that the oak tree is now doing this job. He does not really care for memorial benches or plaques and suchlike but seemed to be quite agreeable to the suggestion of a booklet and something appropriate to be prepared by way of explanation and placed inside the Chancel.

August 2017

Bill has a copy of John Buckler's painting of the Church which is photographed below. Sketched copies of the artist's preparatory penciled sketches (from 1802) were made at the British Museum in 1936 by Miss M V Williams and are now displayed in the Chancel. The Nave was demolished in 1861 leaving the Chancel.





From Wikipedia: John Buckler, Snr FSA (1770 – 1851) was a British artist and occasional architect who is best remembered for his many drawings of churches and other historic buildings, recording much that has since been altered or destroyed. By the end of his life, by his own account, Buckler had produced around 13,000 drawings of buildings. Many of the buildings Buckler drew had not been previously recorded, and many have since been demolished or substantially altered, so his work is now a valuable source of information on British architectural history.

By far the best way to visit the Chancel, if you are can, is to approach on foot either via the pathway from the entrance to Sherborne Castle through the iron gate and up the hill or from the footpath that runs beside the farm buildings in Castletown Way just in from the junction with the Oborne Road in Sherborne. This path will bring you out close to St Cuthbert's Church.

Parking a car near the Chancel is very difficult and visitors are urged, if possible, to park near St Cuthbert's Church and walk down to the Chancel. Great care must be taken in crossing the busy A30.

In the visitors' book in the Chancel there is an anonymous entry made in January 2000: 'A peaceful place—whoever looks after this place may I thank you for your care and work'.

Bill and his son signed 18-19 February 2001 with a note: 'Major clearance of dead wood pp CC Trust'. This would likely be just after the time when Bill took over from Mr Smith.

In April 2001 an entry states: 'It is recorded here that Kenneth Smith of Newland, Sherborne and custodian of this Chancel for many years and author of *Old St Cuthbert, Oborne, Dorset,* died.
His Life is remembered with gratitude'.







Robert and Rachel Goadby's grave is behind the old St Cuthbert's Chancel in Oborne on glebe land.

Robert Goadby requested a pine tree and flowers to be planted on his grave. At some point an elm tree was planted but it died in the wave of Dutch elm disease which swept through England from the 1970s onwards. Now in the same place an oak tree has been planted and surrounded by a wooden fence and some of the original stones are visible piled together in the long grass.
There is a Pulmonaria Officinalis (known as Fox and Cubs) growing amongst the stones.

……..more from George Tatham

Robert and Rachel Goadby

It is difficult now to imagine that in the eighteenth-century two provincial newspapers were published in Sherborne (population 2,000-3000). These were the *Sherborne Mercury,* founded in 1737, but run from 1749 by Robert Goadby and his family, including his wife Rachel from 1788 to 1790 until 1803, and the *Sherborne Journal,* founded in 1764 by William Cruttwell. With circulations covering the south-western peninsula, both achieved regional status. The *Sherborne Mercury* continues today as the *Western Gazette.*

In 1801, the unincorporated town of Sherborne (population 3,159) host to the Easter Quarter Sessions and with its Grammar School and monastic heritage and weekly markets and three annual fairs was the second largest inland Dorset town. Following the decline of the textile industry and the manufacture of silk buttons in the early 1700s, the town, well positioned on the London to Exeter and Bristol to Weymouth roads, developed as a thoroughfare town to service the increasing carrying and passenger trade. In addition, a silk throwing mill was established in 1753.

Robert Goadby (1720-1778) was born in London and by 1741 had set up as a bookseller in Bath. In 1744 he moved to Yeovil to publish *The Western Flying Post*, which in 1749 he merged with the *Sherborne Mercury*. Distribution was handled by an agency network which in 1788 consisted of 37 agents based in 28 towns, including Bristol and London. As a significant printer, publisher and bookseller with strong links to the London book trade, Robert was able to disseminate books, and serial publications which reflected his particular values and concerns with 'religion and virtue.' His own publishing ventures included the *Book of Fairs* (in partnership with London publisher William Owen), *The Illustration of the Holy Scriptures* (annotated by himself) and the 'memoirs' of the trickster Bampfylde Moore Carew, which became one of his most successful printing ventures.

The inscription above the door of the Goadby's printing house in Long Street attested to Robert's enduring interest in press freedom and the social consequences of its loss and reads as follows:

THE SHERBORNE PRINTING HOUSE. THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS AND THE LIBERTY OF THE PEOPLE FALL TOGETHER. MAY HEAVEN LONG AVERT IT.

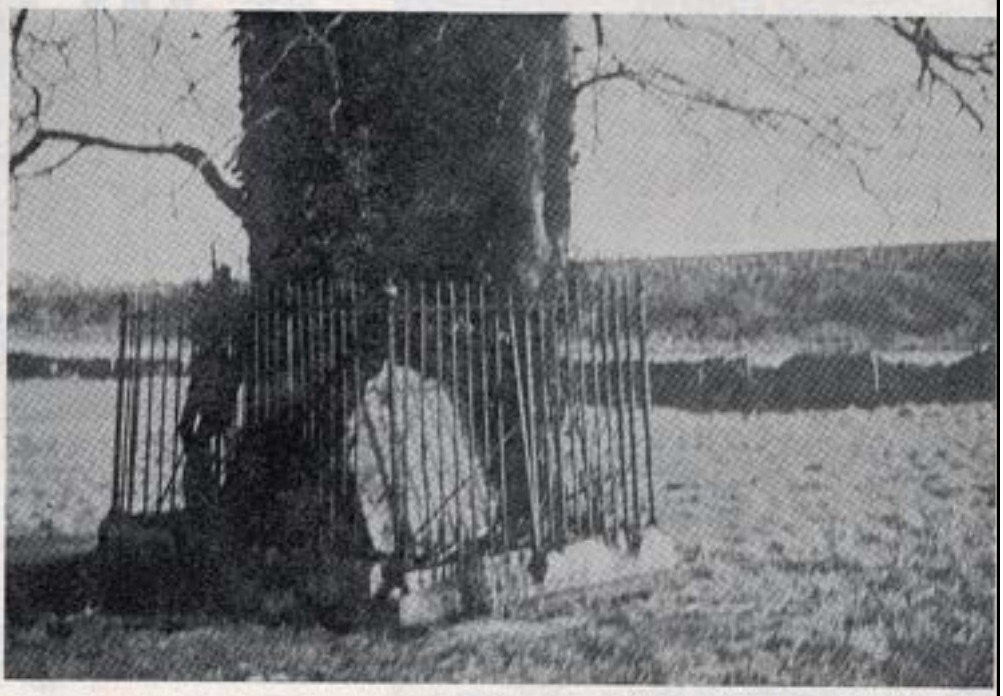
Robert married Rachel Bosher from Bristol and their only child, a son was baptized in 1749, but died aged seven and lies buried in Sherborne Abbey. Robert was involved in the civic and cultural life of Sherborne, becoming Warden of the Grammar School, serving as surveyor of the highways and in 1765 he opened a subscription library in Cheap Street. Abiding interests throughout his life were the welfare of the poor and a love of and interest in nature. He walked regularly to St Cuthbert's Church at Oborne and it was his wish that he was to be buried here 'not in consecrated ground.' In his will, Robert left £200 to provide an annual sermon to be preached in Sherborne Abbey on 'the Works of Creation' and for alms to be distributed to the poor of the town.

Robert Goadby was a successful newspaper proprietor of regional and national importance, who ensured the *Sherborne Mercury,* with its astute compilations of international, national, regional news and advertisements was circulated speedily and reliably across the south-west peninsula.

.....a helpful article is found published in 1978

TREE FELLERS DESECRATE GRAVE OF THE FATHER OF THE WESTERN GAZETTE

then . . .



Cyril N. Chester explains the significance of a shrine in a field at Oborne, near Sherborne, and the piece of Dorset history that has been lost.

REMOVAL OF an elm stricken with disease has led to the destruction of another piece of Dorset's history. In a field at Oborne, near Sherborne, a headstone and a square of railings marked the grave of Robert Goadby. Beside the stone there grew the elm.

Goadby was an 18th century printer and publisher who fought for a free press, warning: "The liberty of the Press, and the liberty of the People fall together."

With the cutting down of this tree last year, his entire monument has been destroyed. Its site is completely obliterated. Gone are the iron railings — even though they were five feet high, nearly ten feet long, and set in a stone plinth.

The saddest loss is the headstone, which bore the following inscription:

IN MEMORY
OF MR. ROBERT GOADBY
LATE OF SHERBORNE, PRINTER, WHO
DEPARTED THIS LIFE AUGUST 11th
1778 AGE 57

Death is a path that must be trod
If man would ever come to God
The fir tree aspires to the sky
And is clothed with everlasting verdure
Emblem of the good, and of that everlasting life
Which God will bestow on them
Since death is the gate to life
The grave should be crowned with flowers
Here also lies Rachel, his wife
Who died March 30th 1798.

Originally a fir tree had been planted on the grave. It lay on the south side of the ancient chancel of old Saint Cuthbert's church a few feet outside the fence of the churchyard in the Glebe Land. Access to the spot was through the gate next to St. Cuthbert's chapel, which stands on the A30 between Sherborne and Milborne Port.

Perhaps the peaceful beauty of this particular place, with an open view of Sherborne Park before the railway came with its embankment, may have influenced him in selecting this spot for his burial. Even the main road, before it was turnpiked, ran on the other side of the valley.

The Oborne church register records his burial on the 20 August 1778.

We know a great deal about Robert Goadby through John Hutchins' History of Dorset. He was a printer who lived in Sherborne, although not a native of the town, and a great lover of the beauties of nature, which his epitaph proclaims.

He bequeathed two pounds a year to the vicars of Sherborne forever on their conditions of their preaching an annual sermon on the first Sunday in May, after evening service in the parish church of Sherborne, "On the wisdom and goodness of God in creation."

This sermon has not been preached in recent years, but the Western Gazette of the 13 May 1977 published an echo in its 100 years ago column: "The annual sermon was preached by the vicar in the Abbey Church on Sunday evening in accordance with the wish of the testator, Goadby, as expressed in his will executed on the 7th August 1778.

The remuneration for this service is £2, which is annually paid to the vicar by the governors of Foster's School in whom the consuls are invested."

How did Goadby run his business? His printing house was in Long Street, Sherborne, and over the door was the inscription:

THE SHERBORNE PRINTING HOUSE
THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS, AND THE LIBERTY OF THE PEOPLE FALL TOGETHER.
MAY HEAVEN LONG AVERT IT.

and now . . .



He was the conductor of several miscellaneous periodicals and publications, which were popularly approved, and from which he carefully excluded everything of immoral or irreligious nature. Among the works he published were A Display of the Universe, or a Survey of the Wonderful Works of Creation in four volumes, The Family Library three volumes, A Concordance to the Scriptures and pamphlets.

In 1743 the Western Flying Post or Yeovil Mercury was established in Yeovil by Robert Goadby, a bookseller in that town, who had settled there and thought to be a London printer.

Owing to the death of the founder of the Sherborne Mercury the paper was acquired by Goadby, who amalgamated the two in the Western Flying Post and Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury. He sold the Yeovil premises, and moved to Sherborne and bought out the Flying Post from the Mercury office.

His paper became a household word in most towns and villages to the extreme end of the west of England. He employed and maintained a number of riders delivering the paper.

The Sherborne Mercury, his weekly paper, was conducted in a manner friendly to the liberties of Englishmen. T. Q. Louch of Bodmin writing in 1883, said. "It is fitting that the Goadbys of Sherborne should have a memorial in the pages of the Western Antiquary for our fathers and grandfathers mainly, if not entirely depended on them for their news and mental entertainment." The Western Gazette had its origin in the Sherborne Mercury in 1736.

Much can be said about Robert Goadby and his philanthropy: "To the poor he was a constant and generous friend. On some occasions he brought trouble on himself. From the zeal with which he pleaded their cause."

He bequeathed £200 to the vicar and churchwardens of Sherborne, the interest to be distributed annually to the poor of Sherborne. He was a knowledgeable bookseller, well versed in several languages, and a keen businessman.

It is a matter of great regret that a monument erected some two hundred years ago, is now no more. □

A very comprehensive article on the life and times of Robert Goadby from *Dorset* magazine issue 70 in 1978 written by Cyril N Chester. Photographs were black and white. Within this article Mr Chester has given the original inscription from the headstone and the inscription over the door of the printing house in Long Street.

Cyril Noel Chester was born in Leigh in 1899. In May 1918 he enlisted at Dorchester in the 4th (Reserve) B Dorset Regiment. He married Mildred Louisa Cook in 1928 and by this time he was a dairy farmer at Crackmore Farm. Mildred died on 25 June 1978. Cyril died on 11 December 1996 and was buried alongside his wife at All Saints church, Poyntington.

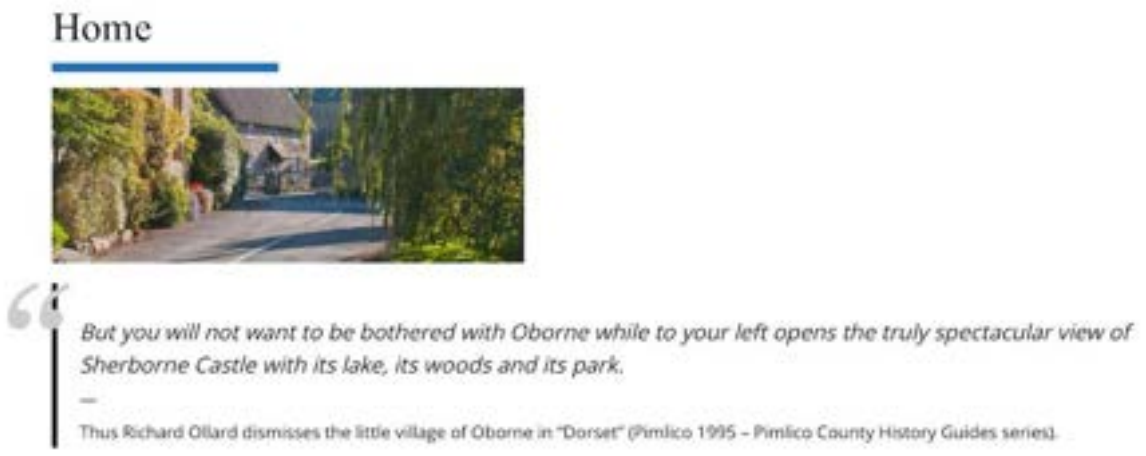
At some point between 1973 and 1977 Sir Mervyn Medlycott, on behalf of the Somerset & Dorset Family History Society, transcribed the memorial inscription from the headstone. When asked, in December 2016, if he remembers recording the grave—he does (he likely was one of the last people to visit it before the tree was removed) and he recalls that it was in the middle of a chicken run. He regrets not taking a photograph. He said that the headstone was hard up against an enormous deciduous tree.

PLEASE NOTE: In the memorial inscription record made by Sir Mervyn Medlycott—right - he had to refer to Hutchins, as parts of the headstone were illegible. The date of Rachel Goadby's death is incorrect: Rachel died 30 March **1790**.

16). Headstone,within iron railings,with a large tree growing inside the railings,situated some twenty yards south of the present burial ground boundary fence(now inside an adjoining chicken run) In memory of Mr: Robert GOADBY,late of Sherborne,printer,who departed(this)life,August 11,(1778),aged 57. Death is a path that must be trod,/ If man would ever come to God,/The fir tree aspires to the sky,/And is clothed with everlasting verdure,/ Emblem of the good,and of that everlasting/ life which God will bestow on them,/ Since death is the/ gate to life,the grave should be/ crowned with flowers. (Here also lieth Rachel,his wife,who died March 30) 1798. (Parts in brackets from Hutchins, IV,p.202).

……..an informative local history website





This very excellent website can be located at http://obornehistory.org.uk/introduction/
The site manager is Michael Fraser. The information has been compiled over many years and contains a wealth of parish records and photographs.

At the beginning of our research into Robert and Rachel Goadby and their gravesite we turned to this extensive site for information.



Robert Goadby's grave in the glebe south of the churchyard of the old St Cuthbert's Chancel before and after its destruction when the tree was felled.

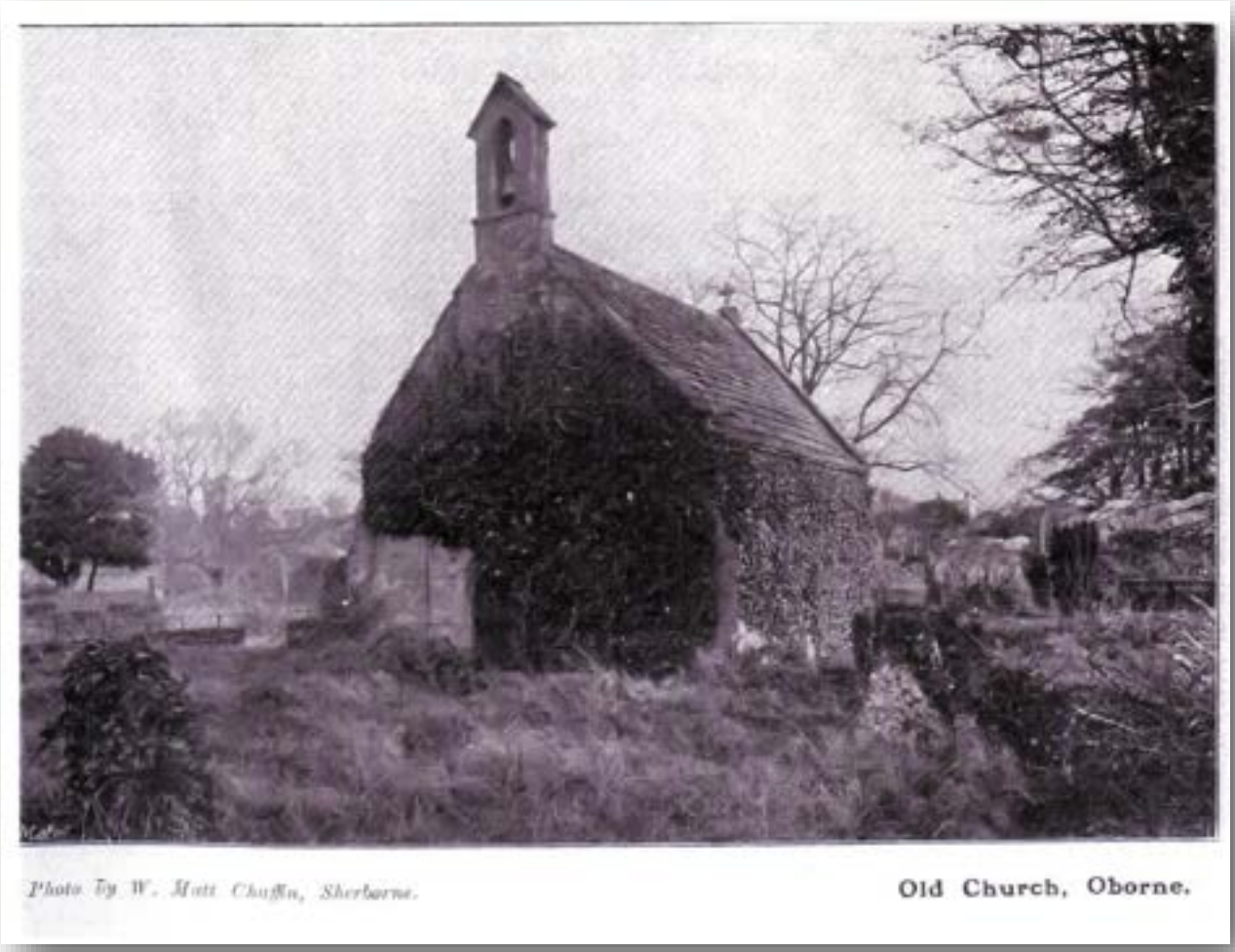
Copies in colour of the two photos used in Cyril Chester's article can be located on the Oborne History Project website. These are the photos that Bill Heath alluded to.





Michael Fraser was able to locate a set of photographic prints which included two new additions. One showing the grave taken from the south side where the grave site is dominated by a huge tree.

It is very likely that these photographs originally belonged to Cyril Chester whose article was publshed in *Dorset* magazine in 1978.



This photograph was taken by W. Matt Chaffin for the *Mates Directory of Sherborne* published in 1903

Situated within these pages are three articles by Roger Guttridge which we have his permission to reprint.

The first article (over following three pages) is entitled Dorset's first newspaper is followed by a later article.

From Roger Guttridge: '*The article—Dorset's first newspaper—appeared in the September 1995 issue of Dorset Life. See also p57 of my book The Villages of Dorset, written with photographers Roger Holman and Roger Lane and first published in 1993. By the way, this article was loosely based on a college project that I did while a trainee reporter at The Western Gazette in Yeovil in the early 1970s. In the days when Donald Mildenhall was our Sherborne district reporter.*'

Roger Guttridge was born at Redhill, Surrey, and brought up in the Sturminster Newton area of Dorset. He went to Blandford Grammar School before beginning a 53-year career which has embraced a wide range of media work including newspapers and magazines, book writing and publishing, PR and marketing, radio and television. He is a former district reporter, chief reporter and deputy news editor of the Bournemouth Daily Echo, the author of 20 books and the editor of several others. He is a former director of local history publishers Red Post Books.
Roger is particularly well-known for his books on Dorset and for his local history columns, which have appeared regularly in various newspapers and magazines over the last 35 years including the *Bournemouth Daily Echo, Southern Daily Echo, Stour Valley News, Blackmore Vale Magazine, Stour and Avon Magazine* and, currently, *Dorset Life*: the County Magazine and the digital *Blackmore Vale*. He is also well-known across Dorset as a speaker. His popular talk—My Family and Other Smugglers—has been heard by tens of thousands of people since 1983.

Published 1995



Dorset's first newspaper

Roger Guttridge celebrates the *Sherborne Mercury*



There's an old Cornish saying which describes a gossip or newsmonger as 'a regular Sherborne', and it's hard to imagine a finer tribute to Dorset's first newspaper. The *Sherborne Mercury* played a pioneering role in the distribution of news and advertisements not only in its native county but throughout the West Country. The men who distributed it became known as 'Sherborne Men' and their occupation as 'riding Sherborne'.

The *Mercury*, earliest ancestor of the *Western Gazette*, was launched in 1737 by William Bettinson and G. Price, two London printers who appear to have headed west with the specific intention of founding a provincial paper. There had been London newspapers for a century or so, but provincial papers were an 18th-century development. In the south-west, the *Sherborne Mercury* was preceded by, among others, the *Salisbury Journal*, launched in 1729.

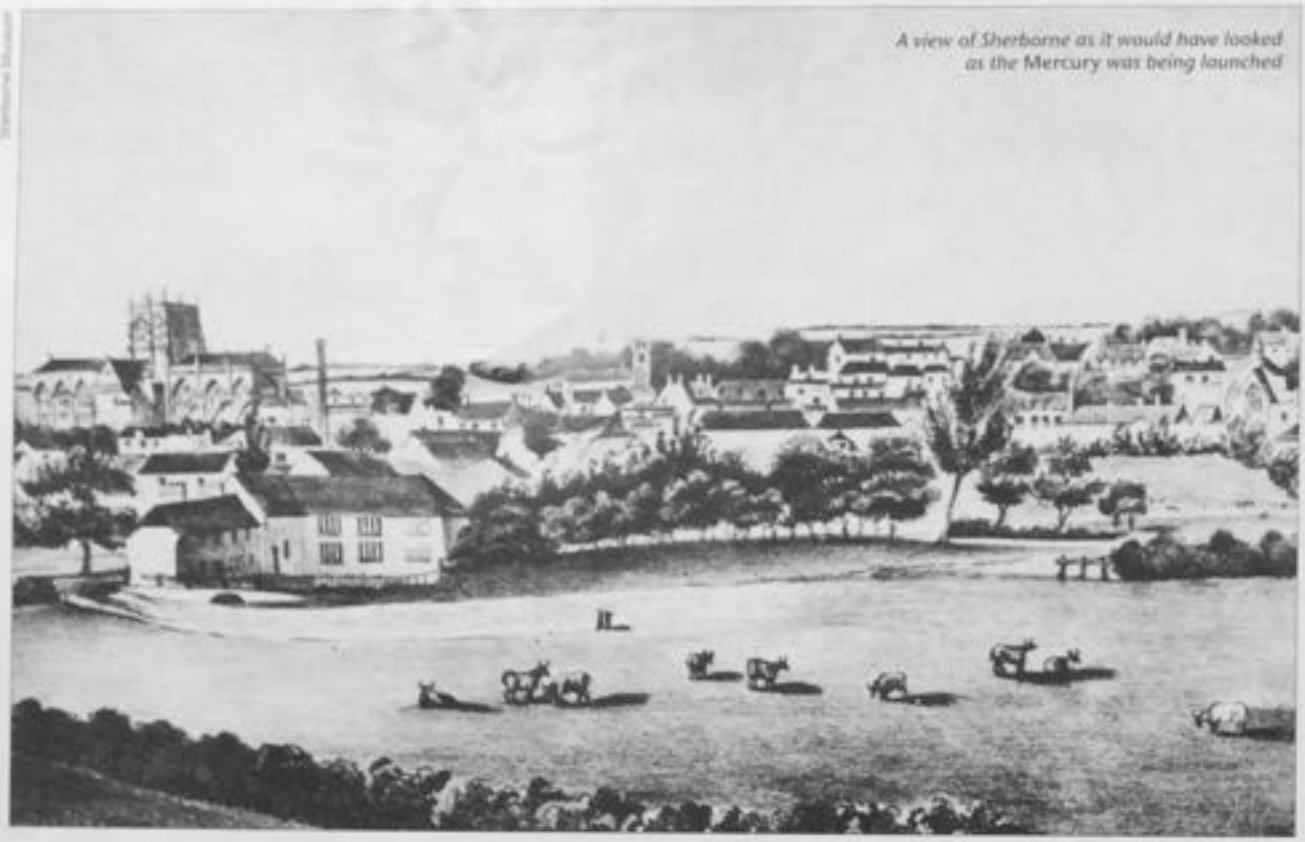
The first issue appeared on 22 February 1737, under the full title *The Sherborne Mercury or Weekly Advertiser*, and comprised four pages 'containing the most material articles of News Foreign and Domestick, etc.' There were no illustrations apart from decorative artwork around the masthead or title and pictures of Mercury and a galloping postboy on the earpieces (either side of the masthead). The paper was printed in Long Street, Sherborne, and sold for 2d, a quarter of which went in tax.

The first issue opened with foreign news, mainly political news from the capitals of Europe. The most interesting story to the modern reader is probably the one from Omagh, Ireland, concerning the birth of a son to 68-year-old Mrs John Delap. 'Her pregnancy, 'tis thought, was chiefly owing to the plentiful quantity of whisky her husband lately drank: they have had no child these 20 years past; for in the year 1715 the husband took an oath not to drink any of the liquor for 20 years, but the term being expired, he returned again to the use of it, and did not drink of it above a month when his wife was discovered to be with child.' In a footnote the publishers promise that the recipe for this 'fecundifying liquor' will be 'speedily published in the *Mercury*'!

The *Mercury* invites short advertisements at 2s 6d (12.5p), longer ones 'in proportion'. It also offers 'good encouragement' to 'any industrious, honest men of the villages near Sherborne that are willing to carry out this paper'. These delivery men included James Arnold, who in June 1737 mysteriously disappeared with his papers on the walk from



An artist's impression of an 18th-century printing establishment. The office of the Sherborne Mercury might well have looked very like this.



A view of Sherborne as it would have looked as the Mercury was being launched

Sherborne to Taunton. 'Tis feared he is either dead or come to some misfortune,' said his employers, and offered a reward for information. Another hawker, Richard Carrington, 'died suddenly on his journey to Warminster in 1739' and his customers were asked to 'send their respective debts to the Widow Carrington at Sherborne'.



THE
Sherborne Mercury
OR,
WEEKLY ADVERTISER.

Containing the moſt material Articles of News Foreign and Domeſtick, &c.

[Numb. 1] TUESDAY, *February* 22, 1737. [Price 1*d*.]

Thursday's Poſt.

FOREIGN NEWS

Extract of a private Letter from the Hague.

The number of local stories in the *Mercury* in its early years was very few, most of the editorial content being national and international news gleaned from the London Papers and reprinted verbatim. The news was often several weeks old by the time it reached the reader. The Sherborne Men are said to have made up the deficiency on local news by word of mouth - hence the 'regular Sherborne' phrase.

There are some notable exceptions, however, such as a report on the famous raid by smugglers on Poole Custom House in 1747. Barely disguising their astonishment, the publishers wrote: 'We have the following extraordinary account from Poole in Dorsetshire, viz that on Wednesday morning, about two o'clock, a numerous company of persons unknown, armed with blunderbusses, pistols, swords, etc, came into the town, broke open his Majesty's Custom house there, and forcibly carried off a large quantity of tea, which had been lately brought in by the Swift Privateer, who took a smuggling vessel. They told the watchmen that they came for their own, and would have it, but would do no other damage. And accordingly did not.'

The *Mercury's* circulation area at this time included Dorset and Somerset and

The first-ever front page of the Sherborne Mercury. *Local news is conspicuous by its absence. Instead, the lead stories are the death of the Lord Chancellor and a dispute over the succession to the Duchies of Juliers and Bergues, in Holland. Hardly front-page material for today's local newspapers!*

parts of Wiltshire and Devon. Despite this, Yeovil historian Leslie Brooke estimates its circulation at only one or two hundred. Price's name was dropped from the imprint in June 1737, apparently because of his death. Bettinson continued alone and in 1742-3 published a *Compleat History of Somerset* as a supplement covering 52 weeks for an extra halfpenny a week. His business also included general printing and the sale of almanacs and patent medicines.

Seven years after establishing the *Mercury*, Bettinson found himself facing a serious rival. *The Western Flying Post* or *Yeovil Mercury* was launched at Yeovil on 30 July 1744 by another Londoner, Robert Goadby, a former apprentice bookseller. As 23, Goadby was young and energetic, and he quickly established an efficient distribution network stretching as far west as Falmouth in Cornwall.

The two papers co-existed for a time but in 1746 William Bettinson died. His wife, Hannah, took over but eventually sold the business to Goadby, who took over the Sherborne premises and on 30 January 1749 published the first issue of a merged publication, the *Western Flying Post or Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*. The merger was brought forward to accommodate a memorable front page featuring an elaborate engraving of the set-piece Public Fireworks soon to be exhibited in London to celebrate the end of the War of the Austrian Succession.

Despite its new title, the paper continued to be known to the public as the *Sherborne Mercury*. Goadby continued in business as publisher, printer, author and bookseller until his death in 1778 and built himself a remarkable reputation. 'Few men have been more generally known in the West of England than he was, and few have had more friends, or more enemies,' says Hutchins' *History of Dorset*.

Then, as now, advertising was the key to success in newspapers and Goadby made more from a dozen advertisements than from the cover price of 3000 copies. The *Mercury* became the recognised medium for property advertisements and Goadby did everything possible to promote it, sending free copies for use in the leading coffee houses of London, Bath and Bristol.

Samuel Drew (1765-1833), whose father was a Sherborne man in Cornwall, described the *Mercury* as 'the only newspaper known to the common people' at that time. 'There were branch riders in different directions, who held a regular communication with each other and with the establishment in Sherborne. My father's stage was from St Austell to Plymouth. He always set off early on Monday morning and returned on Wednesday.'



The first front page of the merged Western Flying Post *and* Sherborne Mercury. *Again, local news gave way to a detailed description of the fireworks display planned in London to celebrate the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.*

THE
WESTERN FLYING-POST;
OR,
SHERBORNE and YEOVIL MERCURY.

[N° 1] MONDAY, *January* 30, 1749. [VOL I.]

A VIEW of the PUBLIC FIRE-WORKS to be exhibited on Occasion of the GENERAL PEACE,
Concluded at AIX-LA-CHAPELLE, October 7, 1748.

EXPLANATION

In the century following Goadby's death, the *Mercury* saw a succession of owners and rivals. In 1851 it was merged with one of its competitors, the *Yeovil Times*, and the printing moved to Yeovil. In 1863, another competitor was born, the *Western Gazette*, and it was soon to prove the most formidable rival of all. It was founded by the enterprising Charles Clinker, who had been producing the *Bridport News* almost single-handed and saw Yeovil, with its central position and three railway stations, as the perfect place to start a newspaper covering Dorset and Somerset. His venture was an instant success, outselling the *Mercury* from the outset with 3000 copies, rising to 10,000 within four years. Ultimately, in 1867, it took over its older rival to become the *Western Gazette and Flying Post*, dropping the latter half of the title in 1872. ◆



'Riding Sherborne' was not always a glamorous occupation, and the 'Sherborne Men' faced all types of hazard to spread the paper around the West country

2019 Sherborne Mercury introduced to a new readership.



Dorset's first newspaper

Roger Guttridge recalls the *Sherborne Mercury* and the 'Sherborne Men' who distributed it

There's an old Cornish saying that describes a gossip or newsmonger as 'a regular Sherborne', and it is hard to imagine a finer tribute to Dorset's first newspaper. The *Sherborne Mercury* or *Weekly Advertiser* pioneered the distribution of news and advertisements not only in Dorset but throughout the West Country. Those who distributed it became known as 'Sherborne Men' and their occupation as 'riding Sherborne'.

The *Mercury*, earliest ancestor of the present-day *Western Gazette*, was launched in 1737 by London printers William Bettinson and G. Price. London newspapers had been around for decades but in the early 18th century, provincial titles also began to appear, among them the *Gloucester Journal* in 1722, the *Exeter Journal* in about 1726 and the *Salisbury Journal* in 1729.

The *Mercury*'s first issue on 22 February 1737 comprised four pages 'containing the most material articles of News Foreign and Domestick'. The only illustrations were decorative artwork around the masthead and depictions of Mercury and a galloping postboy on the top corners of the front page. The paper was printed in Long Street, Sherborne, and sold for 2d, a quarter of which went in tax.

The edition was dominated by political news from Europe, but there was one story that would be at home in a tabloid today. From Omagh, Ireland, it was reported that 68-year-old Mrs John Delap had given birth to a son. The story claimed: 'Her pregnancy, 'tis thought, was chiefly owing to the plentiful quantity of whisky her husband lately drank: they have had no child these 20 years past; for in the year 1715 the husband took an oath not to drink any of the liquor for 20 years, but the term being expired, he returned again to the use of it, and did not drink of it above a month when his wife was discovered to be with child.' The *Mercury* promised that the recipe for this 'fecundifying liquor' would be 'speedily published'.

Home news included bankruptcies, stock prices and obituaries of the Lord High Chancellor, Lord Talbot, who had died of 'an inflammation of the lungs', of Mrs Andrews of Huntingdonshire 'in her 113th year' and of the former Opera House singer, Mrs Barbier. There was also news of 'great rains', floods and impassable roads across England.

The *Mercury* offered 'good encouragement' to 'industrious, honest men' from villages near Sherborne who were willing to distribute the paper. But it was hazardous work. In June 1737, James Arnold disappeared with his papers on the walk from Sherborne to Taunton and was feared dead or to have 'come to some misfortune'. A reward for information was offered. In 1739, Richard Carrington died suddenly on his way to Warminster and his customers were asked to 'send their respective debts to the Widow Carrington at Sherborne'.

Few local stories appeared in the early years, most of the editorial content being national and international news copied from the London papers. Even this was often weeks old. The Sherborne Men made up the deficiency by word of mouth, hence the 'regular Sherborne' phrase.

An exception was a story on the famous raid by smugglers on Poole Custom House in 1747. The *Mercury* reported: 'We have the following extraordinary account from Poole in Dorsetshire, viz that on Wednesday morning, about two o'clock, a numerous company of persons unknown, armed with blunderbusses, pistols, swords, etc, came into the town, broke open his Majesty's Custom house there, and forcibly carried off a large quantity of tea, which had been lately brought in by the Swift privateer, who took a smuggling vessel. They told the watchman that they came for their own, and would have it, but would do no other damage. And accordingly did not.'

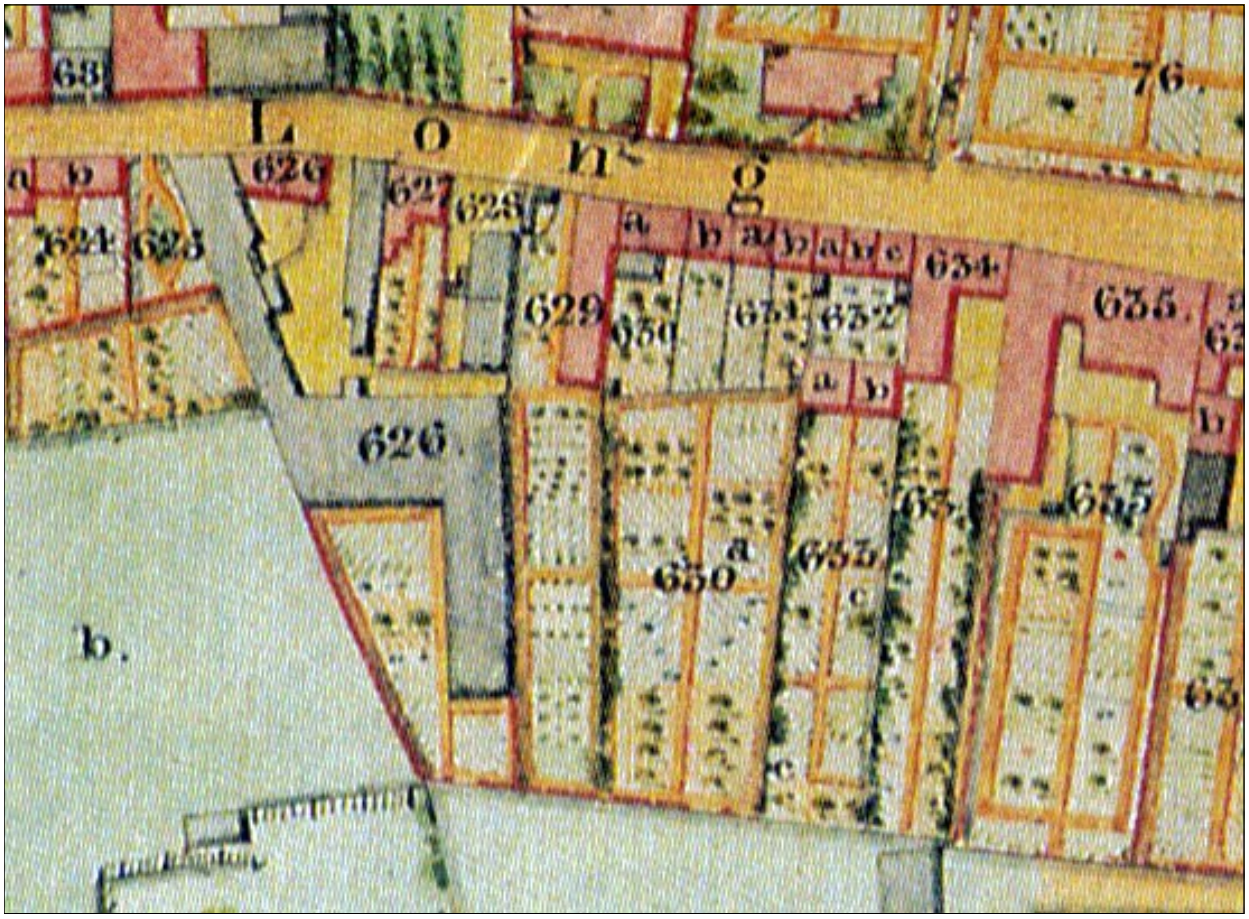


The *Sherborne Mercury*'s first issue

The *Mercury*'s circulation area at this time included Dorset, Somerset and parts of Wiltshire and Devon. After Price's death, Bettinson continued alone but in 1744, a serious local rival appeared. The *Western Flying Post or Yeovil Mercury* was launched by Robert Goadby, a young and energetic entrepreneur, who quickly established an efficient distribution network stretching as far west as Falmouth. The two papers co-existed for a time but in 1746 Bettinson died and his wife Hannah eventually sold the *Mercury* to Goadby. He moved his operation to the Sherborne premises and in 1749 merged the titles as the *Western Flying Post or Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*. The first issue featured an elaborate front page engraving of the set-piece Public Fireworks soon to be displayed in London to celebrate the end of the War of the Austrian Succession.

Then, as now, advertising was the key to success in newspapers and Goadby made more from a dozen advertisements than from the cover price for 3000 copies. Goadby died in 1778 and over the next 80 years the *Mercury* saw a succession of owners and rivals. In 1851 it merged with one of its competitors, the *Yeovil Times*, and the printing moved to Yeovil. In 1863, another competitor was born, the *Western Gazette*, and it was soon to prove the most formidable rival of all. Founder Charles Clinker had been producing the *Bridport News* almost single-handed and saw Yeovil, with its central position and three railway stations, as the perfect place to start a newspaper covering Dorset and Somerset. His venture was an instant success, outselling the *Mercury* from the outset, rising to 10,000 copies within four years and taking over its older rival in 1867 to become the *Western Gazette and Flying Post*. The latter part of the title was dropped in 1872.

……..where in Long Street was the first printing house?



Sherborne Terrier 1834—No 629 Mercury Printing Office & Garden. Occupier William Hibb Penny, Owner James Langdon.



Left: This is Bute House—the property on the site of the Printing House. Has the façade changed since Robert Goadby's time?

A History of Long Street, Sherborne by Susan and Ray Penn published in 2008 gives a chronological summary of occupiers and owners from 1737 until 2000 consisting of nearly 130 entries. This mammoth task of trawling through rate books, the poor rate, maps, directories, advertisements, censuses, electoral rolls and more leaves a quite remarkable legacy to anyone wishing to know more about Bute House.

From this publication it can be seen that Robert Goadby purchased the property from Hannah Guttridge in 1749. It was most likely that the print works would have been behind the main house with its important inscription over the door (see cover).

When Robert died in 1778 he would have lived and worked here for 29 years.

……..from the Dictionary of National Biography Vol 22

GOADBY, ROBERT (1721–1778), printer and compiler, of Sherborne, Dorsetshire, was born in 1721. He was an indefatigable bookmaker. His greatest production was the 'Illustration of the Holy Scriptures,' in three large folio volumes (1759). Goadby also compiled and printed a popular book entitled 'The Christian's Instructor and Pocket Companion, extracted from the Holy Scriptures,' which was approved by Bishop Sherlock. 'Apology for the Life of Bamfylde Moore Carew' [see CAREW, BAMFYLDE MOORE] was printed by Goadby in 1749, and has often been reprinted. Goadby and his wife have both been claimed as the author. Nichols says that Goadby was a man of modesty and integrity. His publishing business was large for a small provincial centre, and his 'Sherborne Mercury' was an influential journal in the south-west of England. Goadby was a strong whig, and made many enemies as well as friends by his plain speaking, though personally he was much respected. He was a great lover of botany and natural history, and bequeathed an endowment providing for the preaching of a sermon on the first Sunday of May in every year in Sherborne Church on the beauties of nature. As the endowment became too valuable for its purposes, provision for the poor was made with the surplus. He was a deeply religious man. Every morning before breakfast he walked from his house to the spot he had chosen for his grave, so that he might 'keep mindful of his latter end.' He died of atrophy after a long and painful illness on 12 Aug. 1778. Other works published by Goadby, besides those mentioned already, were 'The Universe Displayed,' 'A Rational Catechism on the Principles of Religion drawn from the Mind itself,' and 'Goadby's British Biography.' Goadby was at one time connected with 'The Western Flying Post.'

[Nichols's Lit. Anecd. iii. 723–6; Dr. Beard's art. in Unitarian Herald, July 1873, where there is much biographical and bibliographical information.]



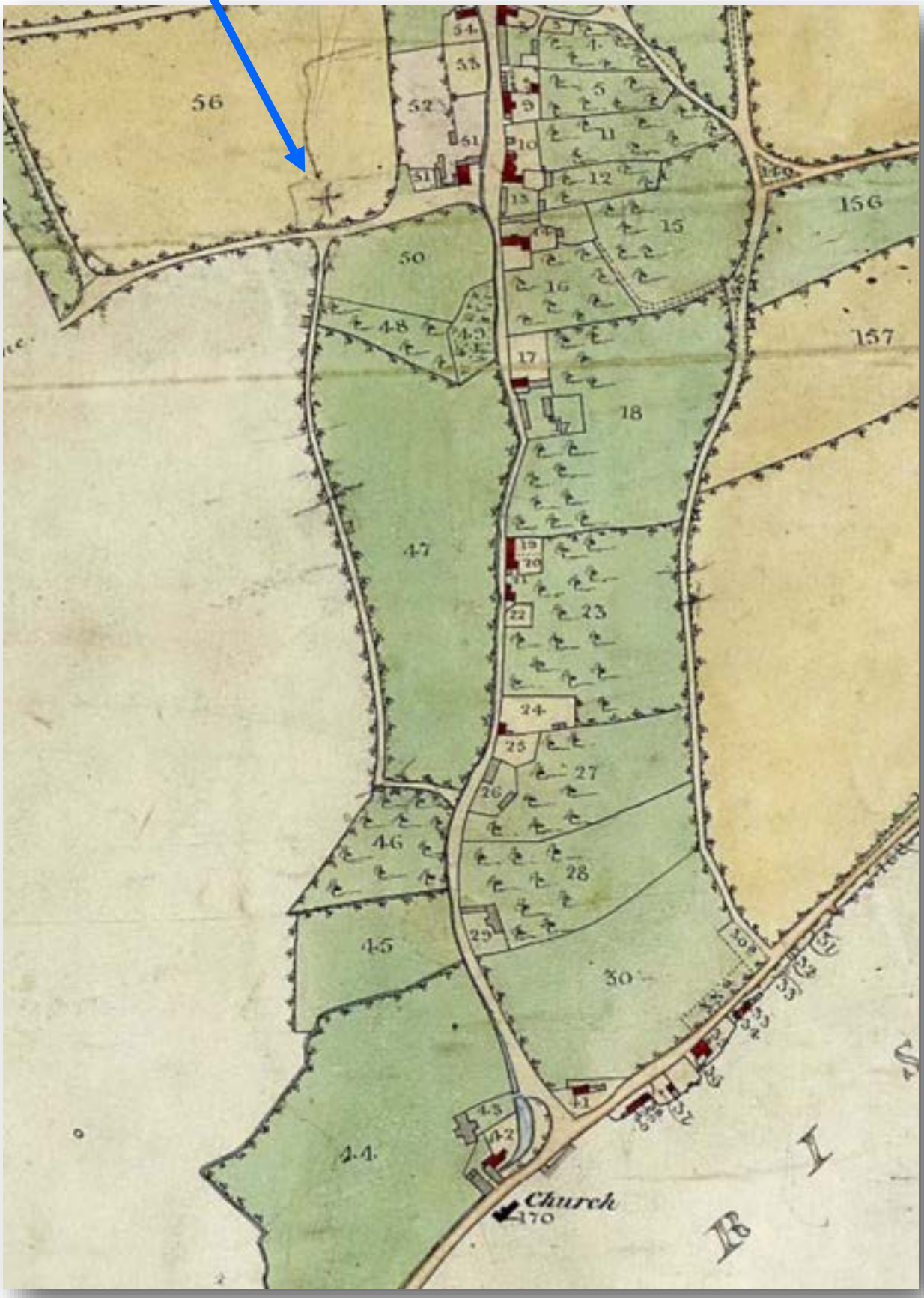
Did Robert Goadby walk to the site of his grave before breakfast each day?
If he did which route did he take or did he vary his route? The most direct route would be to the end of Long Street onto the now Oborne Road and A30.
Jack Dimond of Castle Farm stated 'there could well be an old pathway that Goadby might have taken that runs across the farmland that my son rents from the Digby Estates'.

One can only imagine the sights, sounds and smells that the changing seasons would have brought to him on his regular walk.

Oborne Tithe map 1834

New St Cuthbert's Church built 1861-62

Note: X where the new church is to be built and the shape of the area marked out –56.




This Will was proved at London the tenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight before the Right Worshipful Sir George Hay Knight Doctor of Laws Dean of the Arches or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury lawfully Constituted by the Oath of Sarah Goodwin Widow the Relict of the Deceased and sole Executrix named in the said Will to whom Administration was Granted of all and singular the Goods Chattels and Credits of the said Deceased having been first sworn duly to administer &c.

By this my last Will Testament written with my own Hand this fourth Day of March in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight all others Wills Trust Annulled & revoked I Robert Goadby of Sherborne in the County of Dorset Printer do dispose of my Worldly Effects in manner following In the first place I make my Beloved Wife Sarah

Robert Goadby

X

On 10 March 1778 Robert Goadby made his will and it was signed and sealed on the 17th. He died five months later. Did he foresee his end? It is very likely as according to his entry in the *Dictionary of Biography* 'he died of atrophy following a long and painful illness'.

On the following two pages you will find a transcription, made by Rachel Hassall, of this will which enables close inspection and what a very interesting document it is. He was generous to his employees leaving 'every apprentice who may be in my service at the time of my decease the sum of five pounds each to be paid at the expiration of the term of each one of their apprenticeships on condition that each one faithfully discharges his duty to the full completion of his indenture'. The value of £5 pounds in 1780 would be very nearly £1,150.00 today (December 2022).

A codicil was added concerning his bequest to the poor of Sherborne—'And by this Codicil I give and bequeath to the **Vicar and Church Wardens** of the Town of Sherborne in the County of Dorset for the time being for to their successors for the time being the sum of two hundred pounds of the three per cent consolidated annuities in the Bank of England transferable to them In Trust that they the said **Vicar and Churchwardens** or their successors for the time being do distribute annually to the poor of the said Town of Sherborne the sum of four pounds, and likewise that the **Church Wardens** do pay or cause to be paid the annual sum of two pounds to the **Vicar** of the said Town of Sherborne on consideration of his preaching an Annual Sermon on the first Sunday in May after Evening Service in the parish church of Sherborne on the Wisdom and Goodness of God in the Works of Creation'. (the value of £200 in 1770 would be around £46,000 today.)

The signing of the will reveals the severity of his condition as it seems he was too weak to sign his name and so he could only sign with an X which then had to be witnessed: 'X the above is the mark of **Robert Goadby**.
We the underwritten do testify that **Robert Goadby** of Sherborne in the County of Dorset, printer, did declare before us that the contents of this paper has been read to him and approved of by him, but being unable through extreme weakness to write his name hereunto did in our presence make the above mark as his testimony to and approbation of its contents. Witness August 7th 1778. [signed **Ben. Whitehead**, **Joseph Dodge**]'

Regarding the £200 bequest for the poor of Sherborne—According to *Foster's the story of a Dorset School,* by S G McKay, in 1872 eleven of the twelve charities that were administered by the school were amalgamated to form 'the endowment for Foster's School'. The twelfth charity– the 'Robert Goadby's Charity' was not included.

Robert Goadby's Will

In this my last Will & Testament written with my own hand this tenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight. All other Wills being annulled & revoked. I **Robert Goadby** of Sherborne in the County of Dorset, printer, do dispose of my worldly effects in manner following – In the first place I make my beloved **wife Rachel** sole Executrix of this my Will. I give and bequeath unto her, subject to the payment of my just debts, funeral expenses and such legacies as I shall hereby appoint to be paid by her, all that I die possessed of whatever denomination excepting what I have otherwise given and bequeathed by this my will. I give and bequeath to my niece **Joannah Lee** six hundred pounds to be paid to her by my said wife in such manner as my Brother shall approve of. I give and bequeath to my niece by marriage **Sarah Jane Douglas** to be paid by my said wife, seven hundred pounds in consideration of the great part of her life she has devoted to an assiduous care]?over] her Aunt and myself. I give and bequeath unto my Brother **Samuel Goadby** and to my nephew **Samuel Lerpinier** for their joint lives and the life of the survivor of them subject to the payment hereafter mentioned, all my Printing Office in Sherborne with the appurtenances thereto belonging, and all the implements of trade the property of the **Sherborne Mercury**, all my stock of books in quires or sheets and all my copys of books wherein I have a sole right or joint share of the Stampt paper for the quires which may be in hand at the time of my decease out of the profits of which I will and owe to be paid to my wife during her life an annuity of twenty five pounds per annum the sum of two hundred pounds to my nephew **Daniel Lerpinier** and six hundred pounds to be paid in trust to **Samuel Lerpinier** for the benefit of the child or children of his Brother **Edward Lerpinier,** with liberty to apply what part he may think prudent for the benefit of his said Brother **Edward**. I give and bequeath to every relative any sum or sums any of them may be indebted to me at my decease. I give and bequeath to my nephew **Samuel Lerpinier** ten pounds yearly to be paid out of the profits of the Printing Office In Trust for my nephew **Elias Goadby** to be paid to him for life at such times and in such manner as the said **Samuel Lerpinier** shall think will be most to his advantage. The Intent and meaning of this my Will is that the aforesaid **Samuel Goadby** and **Samuel Lerpinier** shall have full liberty to dispose of for their advantage all the stock of books I devise to them but shall have no power to dispose of the Printing Office nor the property of the **Sherborne Mercury** nor the copies of the books for their private advantage but the survivor either by himself or his executor shall dispose of them and the money arising therefrom be equally divided among the heirs of my Brother and my Nephews and Nieces by blood or their heirs that shall then be living. **Robert Goadby** signed and sealed March 17th 1778.

By this Codicil to my Will made April 13th 1778, I give and bequeath to my niece **Joannah Lee** all my share in the hotel at Weymouth. I give and bequeath to my wife one half of the clear profits arising from the business at Sherborne the first year after my decease. I give and bequeath to my old friend **Mr Owen** and **Mr Meacham** five guineas each to buy rings. To my niece by marriage **Katharine Douglas** twenty guineas. To **Mr Samuel Braund** of Menheniot of ten pounds. To **Mr John Dale** of Tywardreath five guineas. To my servant **John Cox** ten pounds. And to my servant **Elizabeth Middleton** five pounds. These legacies to be paid by my executors. [signed **Robert Goadby**]

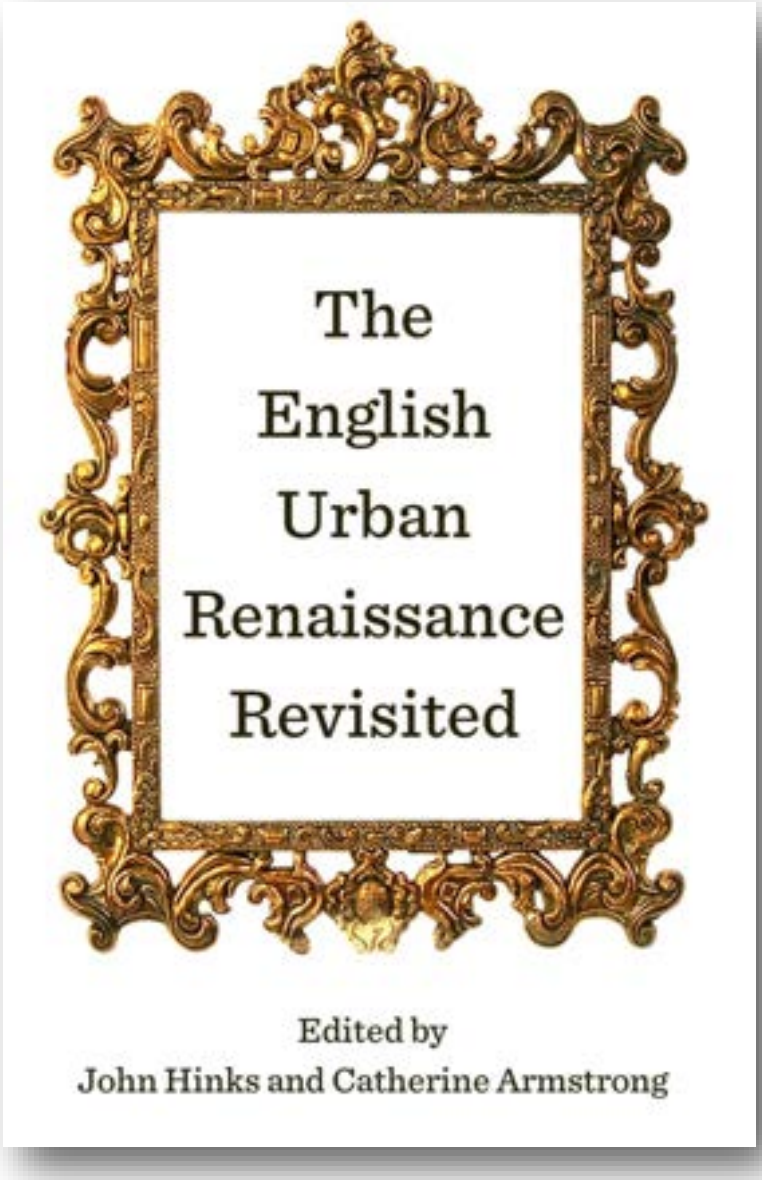
We the underwritten do testify that the above mentioned **Robert Goadby** declared to us that the whole contents written on this paper were of his own handwriting. Witness to the said declaration August 7th 1778. [signed **Ben. Whitehead**, **Joseph Dodge**]

A second Codicil to the Will of **Robert Goadby** of Sherborne in the County of Dorset, printer, which Will bears date the tenth of March in the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight and was signed on the seventeenth of the said month of March in the same year and to which Will there is a Codicil dated April the thirteenth of the said year, all and every part of which will and Codicil are written in the handwriting of the said **Robert Goadby**. Whereas in my Will I have given and bequeathed to my Brother **Samuel Goadby** and to my nephews **Samuel Lepiniere** my Printing Office with all appurtenances and impliments therewith belonging for their joint lives with liberty to the survivor of them or his executors to dispose of the same for the benefit and advantage of the heirs of my Brother and my Nephews and Nieces by Blood as shall then be living my intent and meaning extends only to such of them as are lawfully begotten and born in wedlock. And whereas by my said Will I have bequeathed to my **Nephew Daniel Lerpinere** the sum of two hundred pounds by this codicil. I give and bequeath to him the said **Daniel** one hundred pounds to be paid to him the said Daniel by my Brother **Samuel Goadby** and my nephew **Samuel Lerpinere** out of the profits

arising from the Printing Office which by Will I have devised unto them. And by this Codicil I give and bequeath to my Niece **Margaret Klotz** the sum of two hundred pounds to be paid to her by my Brother **Samuel Goadby** and my Nephew **Samuel Lerpinere** out of the profits arising from the Printing Office which I have devised unto them by my Will. I likewise give and bequeath to my Nephew **Samuel Lerpinere** the yearly sum of five pounds In Trust for my Nephew **Elias Goadby**, subject to the same restriction as the sum of ten pounds left by my Will to the said **Elias Goadby**. I likewise give and bequeath to **John Bettinson**, **Benjamin Dodge** and **Israel Watts**, all of whom are now employed in my Printing Office, the sum of ten pounds to each of them provided that they continue faithfully to discharge their duty in the said Printing Office for the space of twelve calendar months after my decease if they are so required. I likewise give to every apprentice who may be in my service at the time of my decease the sum of five pounds each to be paid at the expiration of the term of each one of their apprenticeships on condition that each one faithfully discharges his duty to the full completion of his indenture. I likewise give to all the **News Men** now employed in circulating the **Sherborne Mercury** the sum of half a guinea to each man provided that they continue in the same employment after my decease if they are so required. And by this Codicil I give and bequeath to the **Vicar and Church Wardens** of the Town of Sherborne in the County of Dorset for the time being for to their successors for the time being the sum of two hundred pounds of the three per cent consolidated annuities in the Bank of England transferable to them In Trust that they the said **Vicar and Churchwardens** or their successors for the time being do distribute annually to the poor of the said Town of Sherborne the sum of four pounds, and likewise that the **Church Wardens** do pay or cause to be paid the annual sum of two pounds to the **Vicar** of the said Town of Sherborne on consideration of his preaching an Annual Sermon on the first Sunday in May after Evening Service in the parish church of Sherborne on the Wisdom and Goodness of God in the Works of Creation.
X the above is the mark of **Robert Goadby**.
We the underwritten do testify that **Robert Goadby** of Sherborne in the County of Dorset, printer, did declare before us that the contents of this paper has been read to him and approved of by him, but being unable through extreme weakness to write his name hereunto did in our presence make the above mark as his testimony to and approbation of its contents. Witness August 7th 1778. [signed **Ben. Whitehead**, **Joseph Dodge**]
This Will was proved at London with two codicils the fourth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight before the **Worshipful Francis Simpson,** Doctor of Laws and Surrogate of the **Right Worshipful Sir George Hay,** Knight, also Doctor of Laws Master Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury lawfully constituted by the Oath of **Rachel Goadby**, widow, the relict of the deceased and sole executrix named in the said Will to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods, chattels and credits of the said deceased, she having been first sworn duly to administer.
3rd September 1778.
Appeared personally the **Reverend Joseph Towers** of the parish of St Giles Cripplegate, London, Dissenting Minister, and **Cornelius Berry** of the parish of Christ Church in the County of Middlesex, stationer, and being sworn upon the Holy Evangelists to depose the truth, desposed as follows, to wit, that they knew and were well acquainted with **Robert Goadby** late of Sherborne in the County of Dorset, deceased, for several years before and to the time of his death and during such acquaintance have frequently seen him write and subscribe his name and they these deponents have now carefully viewed the paper writing hereunto annexed purporting to be the last Will and Testament and one codicil of the said deceased the said Will beginning thus “By this my last Will & Testament written with my own hand” endeth thus “or their heirs that shall then be living” and subscribed and dated thus “Robt. Goadby Signed and sealed March 17th 1778”, and the said Codicil beginning thus “By this Codicil to my Will”, ending thus “These legacies to be paid by my executors”, and subscribed thus “Robt. Goadby”, deposed that they verily believe the whole contents of the said Will and Codicil and the subscriptions thereto to be all of the proper handwriting and subscription of the said **Robert Goadby** deceased. [Signed **Joseph Towers**, **Corn. Berry**] Same Day the said **Joseph Towers** and **Cornelius Berry** were duly sworn to the Truth of the above affidavit before me. [Signed **Frs. Simpson**, Surrogate pt., **Thos. Adderley** junr. Notry. Pubd.]

Transcribed by Rachel Hassall

……..the Goadby legacy lives on



CHAPTER THREE

ROBERT GOADBY, THE *SHERBORNE MERCURY*
AND THE URBAN RENAISSANCE
IN SOUTH-WEST ENGLAND

JONATHAN BARRY AND GEORGE TATHAM

If you tap—Robert Goadby third chapter—into your search engine you can read it for yourself via Exeter University website.

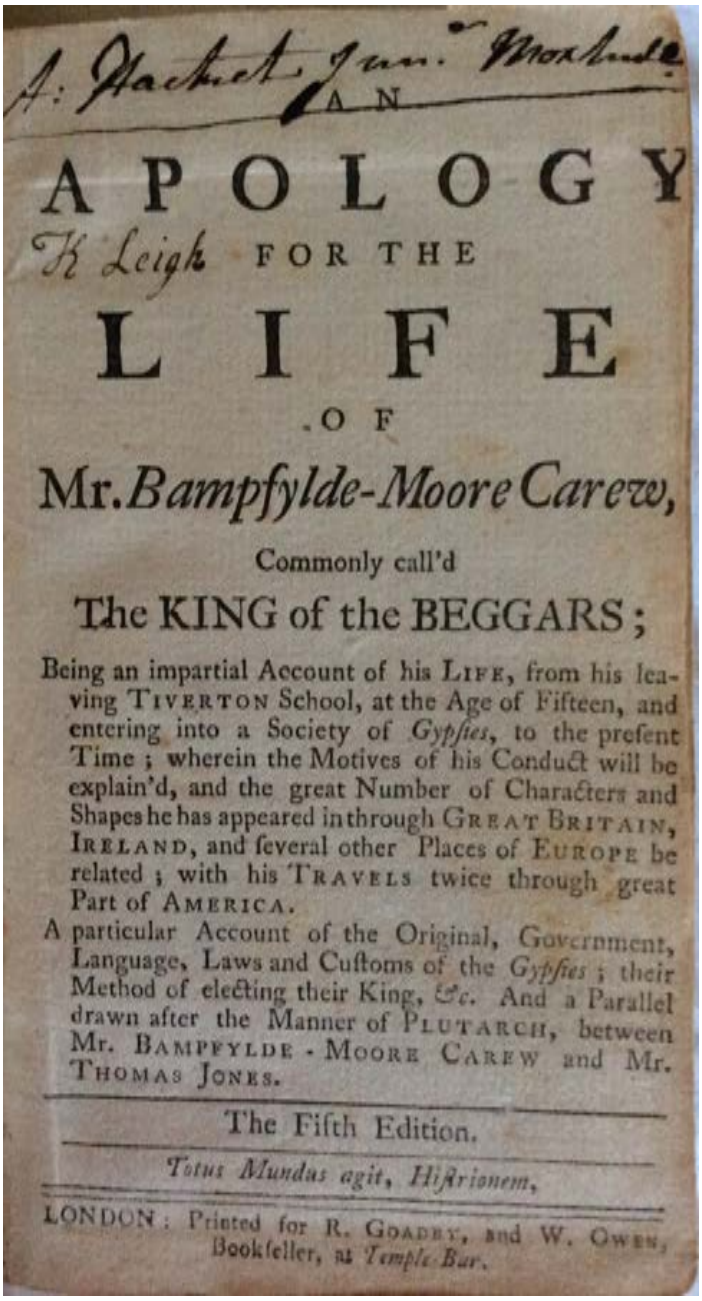
PUBLISHED IN 2018

From Wikipedia—Bampfylde Moore Carew (1693–1759) was an English rogue, vagabond and imposter who claimed to be King of the Beggars .

He was the son of Reverend Theodore Carew, rector of Bickleigh. The Carews were a well-established Devonshire family. Although they had a reputation for adventurousness, Bampfylde Moore Carew took this to extremes, if his picaresque memoirs are to be believed. Little is known about his life beyond these, in which he is described on the title-page as *'the Noted Devonshire Stroller and Dogstealer'*.

The Life and Adventures of Bampfylde Moore Carew was first published in 1745. Although it states that the contents were *'noted by himself during his passage to America'* and it is likely facts were supplied by Carew, the author was Robert Goadby, a printer in Sherborne, Dorset, who published an early edition in 1749. It has been suggested that Carew dictated his memoirs to Mrs. Goadby.

The *Life and Adventures* continued to be a best seller throughout the next hundred years in numerous editions as books and chapbooks. He became a nationally known character, appealing to a provincial audience. One edition of his life was printed in Hull in 1785.



A N

APOLOGY

FOR THE

LIFE

OF

Mr. *Bampfylde-Moore Carew*,

Commonly call'd

The KING of the BEGGARS;

Being an impartial Account of his LIFE, from his leaving TIVERTON School, at the Age of Fifteen, and entering into a Society of *Gypsies*, to the present Time; wherein the Motives of his Conduct will be explain'd, and the great Number of Characters and Shapes he has appeared in through GREAT BRITAIN, IRELAND, and several other Places of EUROPE be related; with his TRAVELS twice through great Part of AMERICA.

A particular Account of the Original, Government, Language, Laws and Customs of the *Gypsies*; their Method of electing their King, &c. And a Parallel drawn after the Manner of PLUTARCH, between Mr. BAMPFYLDE-MOORE CAREW and Mr. THOMAS JONES.

The Fifth Edition.

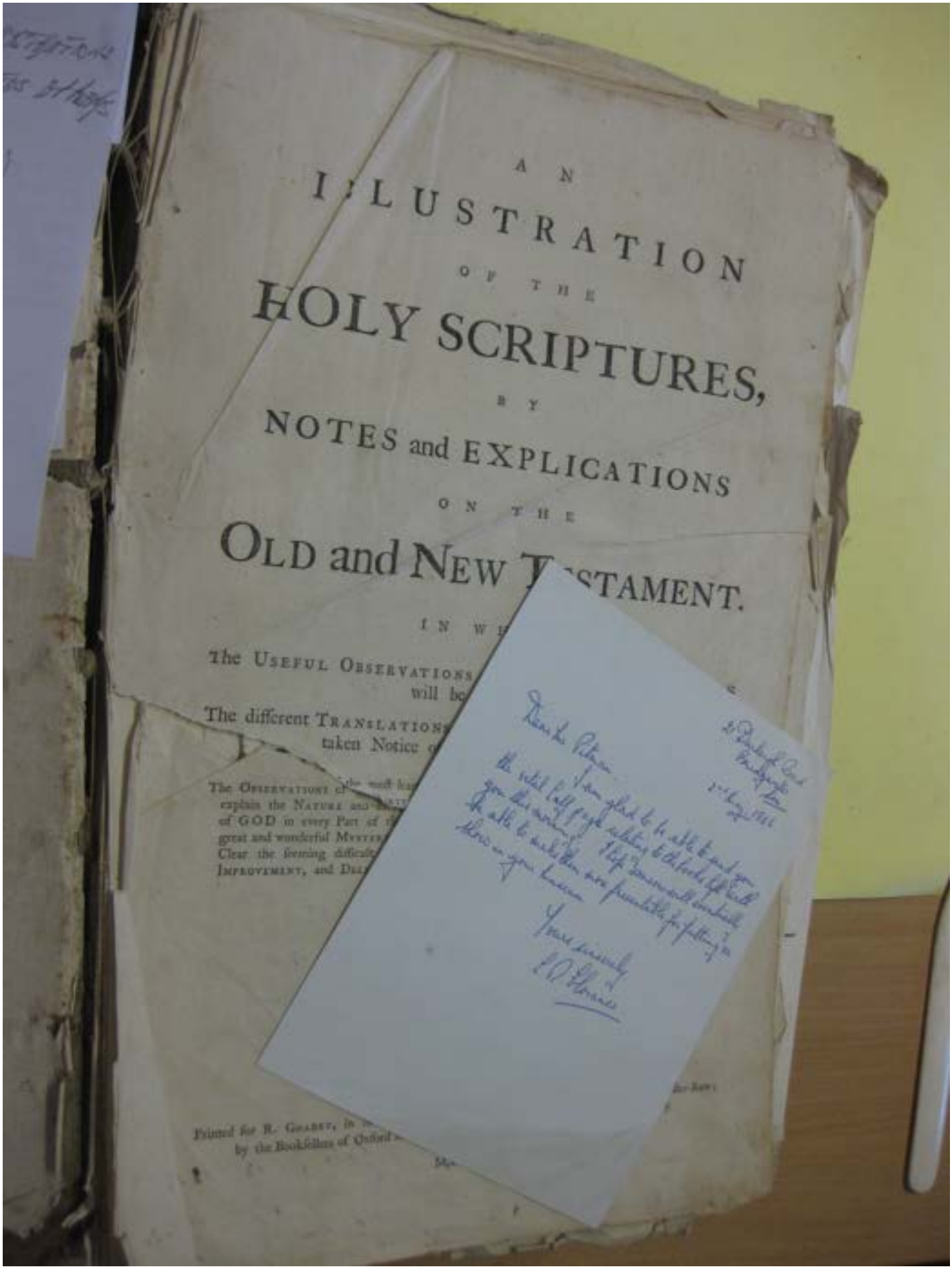
Totus Mundus agit, Histrionem.

LONDON: Printed for R. GOADBY, and W. OWEN, Bookseller, at *Temple-Bar*.



Portrait on loan from the National Portrait Gallery hangs in Bickleigh Castle.

Frontispiece to a fifth edition belonging to George Tatham.



Robert Goadby's *An Illustration of the Holy Scriptures by Notes and Explications* donated to Sherborne Museum by L R Florance, 21 Durleigh Road, Bridgwater probably 1966—with letter to Gerald Pitman



John Peters completes the mammoth task of straightening pages July 2014 and the even greater task of returning the engravings to their rightful pages as all had been detached and placed at the back of the book and with no page numbers on them as guides this entailed hours of searching through before replacement.

John with Patricia and her brother, Michael Goadby and friend in September 2016





In the last of Roger Guttridge's articles - *Dorset Life* January 2020—he writes with special reference to Robert and Rachel Goadby's gravesite



An unfit monument

Roger Guttridge praises efforts to revive the memory of a Dorset printer and publisher

IN A FIELD near Sherborne lie the remains of a man whose contribution to Dorset and wider history has been widely underestimated. The second edition of Hutchins's *History of Dorset* says of printer, publisher, author and bookseller Robert Goadby: 'Few men have been more generally known in the West of England than he was, and few have had more friends, or more enemies. Truth was the object of his researches, in the pursuit of which he was indefatigable. His knowledge was of course considerable, and he was well versed in several languages. The productions of his press were numerous; almost all of them of a moral or religious tendency.'

For reasons unknown, Goadby and his wife, Rachel, are buried in unconsecrated ground barely ten yards outside the churchyard of the chancel at Oborne. The ancient chancel – the only surviving part of St Cuthbert's Church – can be seen to the left of the A30 as you drive between Milborne Port and Sherborne. Goadby acquired the burial plot some time before his death in 1778, aged 57, and is said to have walked there daily from his home in Long Street, Sherborne, enjoying nature and admiring a view from Oborne that is now obscured by the railway embankment.

Until 1977, the grave not only was protected by a square of iron fencing but included an inscribed headstone praising nature as our link to God and describing a fir tree that originally grew out of the grave – a tree 'clothed with everlasting verdure / Emblem of the good, and of that everlasting life...' It is ironic that this tribute in stone to two enthusiasts for the natural world eventually fell indirect victim to Dutch elm disease. By the mid-20th century, the fir had long since given way to an elm, its progress assisted to maturity by the very same fencing that also guarded the headstone. When the diseased tree was felled in 1977, the fellers



ABOVE All that remains of the site of Robert and Rachel Goadby's graves

also removed the railings and shattered the stone. 'With the cutting down of this tree, his [Goadby's] entire monument has been destroyed,' bemoaned an article the following year in *Dorset: the County Magazine*, forebear of *Dorset Life*. 'Its site is completely obliterated.'

The railings have since been replaced by a wooden fence and the elm by a youthful oak. But of the memorial stone only fragments remain. Happily a group of heritage enthusiasts are hoping to put things right – although even this simple aim has not proved challenge-free. 'Originally we hoped to have a new gravestone erected to replace the one that was destroyed,' Barbara Elsmore tells me. 'We obtained a grant from the Simon Digby Trust, only to find that because it is on private land with no public access, we can't put a headstone there and no-one can visit it. We are therefore proposing an information board on Goadby to be hung in the chancel. We recently put some proposals to the Queen Thorne PCC and the Churches Conservation Trust and hope to receive a response soon.'

Goadby spent almost all his adult life in Dorset. His and Rachel's only child, Robert, died in 1756 aged six or seven and is buried in Sherborne Abbey. Goadby is best remembered as the owner of Dorset's first newspaper, the *Sherborne Mercury*. He bought the title from Hannah Bettinson, widow of founder William, and merged it with his own Yeovil-based paper to become the *Western Flying Post or Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*. He moved the whole operation to Sherborne in 1749.

Despite its new title, the paper continued to be known among readers as the *Sherborne Mercury*. It became the recognised medium for property advertisements and was vigorously promoted by Goadby, who sent free copies to the coffee houses of London, Bath and Bristol. The paper reflected its owner's 'unwearied exertions' for the poor, strong moral compass, gentle take on politics and zeal for the freedom of the Press. An inscription above his Long Street printworks proclaimed: 'The liberty of the Press and the liberty of the people fall together. Long may heaven avert it.'

Goadby's distribution agents were known as 'Sherborne Men' and supplemented the printed news with up-to-date gossip gathered on their journeys. One son of a Sherborne Man described the *Mercury* as 'the only newspaper known to the common people'. Another admirer wrote: 'Great was the anticipation of the Sherborne Rider with spattered boots and bestriding his bulging saddlebags, from which latter he dispensed to the eager crowd his *Mercury* and *Entertainer*, took the money and orders of new customers and he was off.'

The education of the public was Goadby's strongest motivation and he produced numerous other publications including the long-running *Book of Fairs*, and, in three volumes, *The Family Library*. The *Mercury* was eventually taken over by the fledgling *Western Gazette* in 1867. When he died a decade later, Goadby left £200 to Sherborne's poor and £2 a year to the town's vicars on condition that they preached an annual sermon 'on the wisdom and goodness of God in creation'. It was still being preached 100 years later.

.....in conclusion

Roger Guttridge entitled the preceding piece ‘An unfit monument’.

Now that we have taken the opportunity to collect all we can about the lives of Robert and Rachel Goadby we have come to the conclusion that an oak tree, with its potential to live for a thousand years, together with the written and distributed word—the medium to which they both dedicated their lives — we can conclude that we have done what we can to ensure that there continues to be a ‘fit monument’ to two important local people.

Friends of Robert & Rachel Goadby
Sherborne, Dorset
March 2023