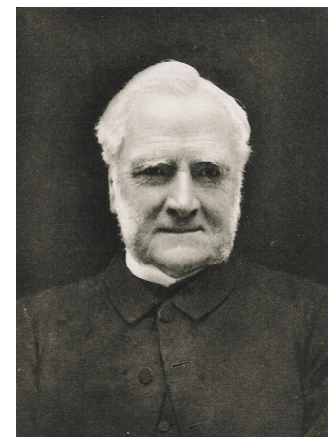


Astons' History Group
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SIR JOHN LEIGH HOSKYNS
(1817–1911)



Rector of St. Michael's Church

Aston Tirrold

1845-1911

by
Vivien Biggs



*Mrs. Richard Phelps (nee Caroline
Anne Hoskyns) much loved sister*

Acknowledgements

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Many members of the Hoskyns family who have been most generous with their time and interest, and with their family archives.

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Jancis Smith for her help in producing this book, and her constant interest and assistance.

My family for their encouragement and patience.

Vivien Biggs, Aston Tirrold, 2006

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St. Michael's Church, Aston Tirrold

A watercolour by Stephen Whitwell

Appendix B

Value of the Living at the time of Sir John Leigh Hoskyns' death, from a report to the Committee on Vacant Livings of Magdalen College :

	£	s	d
'Incomings			
Tithe rent commuted	286	0	0 (gross)
Present value	207	19	0
Rent of glebe (12 or 13 acres) *	12	0	0
Interest on £254-12-7	7	3	11
	<u>227</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>11</u>
 Outgoings			
Land tax on tithes	7	17	0
Property tax	12	19	11
Schedule B		7	4
House duty	1	7	6
Rates	51	3	8
Rent of Rectory House	6	3	5
	<u>79</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>10</u>

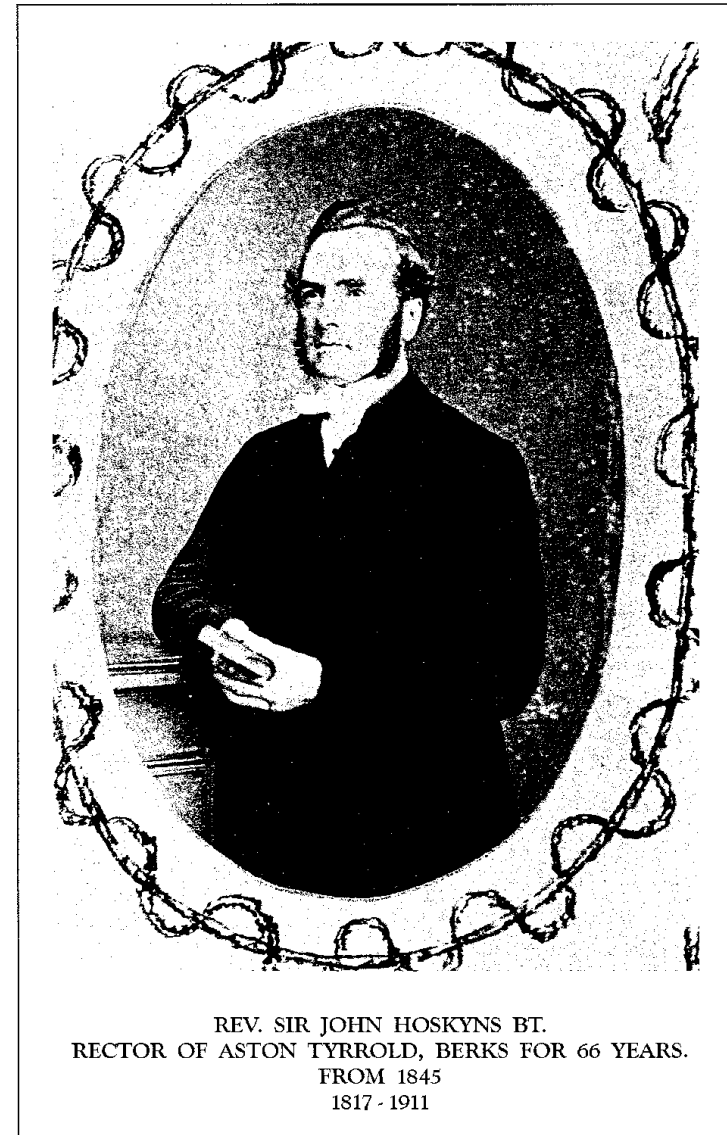
The late Rector collected his own tithe which totalled £147 4 0.'

* Lent to Mr. Cross

volume tries to fill out some of the family and personal background to a man who was a central part of the village for so long, and yet about whom so little is known.

Like so many incumbents of his time he felt compelled to restore, renovate and enlarge his church. He followed the example of the vicar of Cholsey with his church, which was 'restored' in 1847; St. Michael's followed in 1852. Unfortunately, in his restoration and modernisation, Hoskyns probably destroyed much of the ancient church, and the church we use and are familiar with today was largely his creation.

John Leigh Hoskyns was succeeded in Aston Tirrold in 1911 by the Rev. Lumley Green-Wilkinson, who stayed for 5 years, and who also kept a diary, but then left to go to Ascot. Then a succession of incumbents came to the Astons, none remaining for more than a few years, until 1977, when the living was joined with those of North and South Moreton in one benefice, with the Rectory in South Moreton. Hoskyns' beloved school, established in 1847, lasted until 1971.



REV. SIR JOHN HOSKYNS BT.
RECTOR OF ASTON TYRROLD, BERKS FOR 66 YEARS.
FROM 1845
1817 - 1911

FAMILY BACKGROUND

John Leigh Hoskyns was born on 4th February 1817 in Cheltenham. His family lived at Harewood Park, a country estate between Ross-on-Wye and Hereford. He was the 3rd son of Sir Hungerford Hoskyns, 7th baronet, and came from a family which had been settled in Herefordshire for over 400 years.

An early ancestor was Sergeant-at-Law John Hoskins (sic) MP (1566-1638), a well-known wit and literary critic and an intimate companion of Sir Walter Raleigh and Ben Johnson. He was a man of some note in the reign of James I, and spoke against the king's Scottish favourites, for which he was imprisoned in the Tower for a year. The family motto became "Vincula da Linguae vel tibi Lingua Dabit" - "Bind the tongue lest the tongue binds thee".

Sergeant Hoskins wrote to his son:

"Sweet Benedict, whilst thou art young
And knowst not yet the use of tongue
Keepe it in thral whilst thou art free
Imprison it or it will thee".

This John Hoskins is buried at Abbey Dore, near Moorhampton in Herefordshire in 1638. His son, Sir Bennet (now spelling his name 'Hoskyns'), a barrister, was the first baronet - created in 1676. They were an outspoken and independent-minded family: the second baronet, Sir John Hoskyns, declined to take the Oath of Obedience to William III. He, like many members of the family, was Member of Parliament for Hereford. He was also Master in Chancery, and several others were High Sheriffs. For generations they lived at Abbey Dore. There is a 'Hoskyns

Chapel' in Dore Abbey, where there is a monument listing all the baronets. John Hoskins' tomb has been used as an altar.

Harewood remained the family seat until 1877.

John Leigh was the son of Sir Hungerford Hoskyns, 7th baronet (1776-1862), and Sarah Philips (1778-18?). He was brought up at Harewood, the house bought by Bennet, the first baronet, which no longer exists. It was originally a house of the Knights Templar. It was taken by Henry VIII at the time of the Reformation, and sold several times before the Hoskyns family acquired it in 1654. After more than 200 years in the family, it was sold in 1877, when Hungerford Hoskyns, John Leigh's elder brother, died. After passing through several hands, Harewood was finally used as a forces' convalescent home in World War II. After this it stood empty and gradually fell into disrepair. Parts of the fabric were sold off piecemeal, and it was finally demolished in about 1960. Recently the estate has been purchased by the Duchy of Cornwall, and there are plans to build a new house on the original site.

John Leigh's parents clearly had a difficult marriage. Sir Hungerford was a temperamental man; his wife, Lady Sarah, a doting and indulgent mother. In December 1832, Sir Hungerford wrote to his son-in-law, John Arkwright, "At the present time, the idea of her [Lady H] sitting at the head of my table next week strikes me with such horror that I could not possibly [consider] it for many reasons among which two only to me would render it impossible under my present state of feeling. In the first place I should dread the effect of such excitement in her all at once past words." (We do not know what the second reason might have

Appendix C

Sources:

Berkshire Record Office

Records of the Hoskyns family; village records; school records.

Rural Education and Social Change in the Twentieth century.

Patrick Dillon, 1974. Special Study in Education, College of St. Matthias.

A Victorian Parson - The Rev. Sir John Leigh Hoskyns at Aston Tirrold 1845-1911.

Steven Whitwell, 1982. A paper for Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society

Companion and Guide to the exhibition at Wallingford Museum, spring 1984. Steven Whitwell, 1984.

This wonderful village. Martin West, Aston Upthorpe 2002

Letters from Sir John Leigh Hoskyns.

Magdalen College Library.

Many family papers, letters and photographs in the possession of the Hoskyns family.

In particular *Liber Diaconi or Deacon's book - a record of my early ministry in the Church of Christ*; and *The Minute Book of the Clerical Society*.

Correspondence between John Arkwright and members of the Hoskyns family. Lent to me by Catherine Beale, historical researcher, Presteigne, Powys.

been.) Lady Hoskyns often asked John Arkwright to approach her husband on her behalf – it appears that she may have feared his anger.

Sir Hungerford and his wife had seven children : Hungerford (1804-1877), Catherine Sarah (1806-1814), Sarah (later Arkwright) 1808-1869, Caroline Anne (later Phelps) 1810-1872, Chandos 1812-1876, Catherine (later Hawkshaw) 1815-1912, and John Leigh 1817-1911. He was therefore the youngest of the family, born when his mother was 39.

By the 1830s, after some years of instability, John Leigh's eldest brother, Hungerford, was finally deemed of 'unsound mind', although now we can see from his symptoms and behaviour that he probably suffered from schizophrenia. He went to Eton and Oriel College, Oxford. He wrote a lot of poetry, some of it thought to be very good. He became seriously ill by 1833, and (in letters to John Arkwright from the doctor caring for him) he is recorded as "attempting to maim himself, and even destroy himself", for which he was "restrained both as to hands and body, hoping that the paroxysm may abate in a day or two as to allow him the free use of his hands." Like all patients with this complaint at that time, he endured further horrendous medical treatment – such as 'blistering and bleeding'. Of course his condition caused terrible family upheavals. In all the correspondence he is referred to by everyone as 'poor Hungerford'. In 1838 Sir Hungerford, his father, writes to his son-in-law "it would be the greatest blessing on earth if I could afford to make Lady Hoskyns such an allowance as would enable her (as she really wishes, she has told me) to go and live

with Hungerford away from me.” In 1840 he is still complaining about his wife’s indulgence towards Hungerford. In 1841, Hungerford was admitted to Brislington Asylum, Bristol, where it is thought he remained for the rest of his life. Even then, Lady Hoskyns reports that her husband “has no feeling for his son, and sends him not a halfpenny.” Hungerford inherited the title in 1862 when his father died, but remained in hospital until his own death in 1877. The next son, Chandos (1812-1876) went to Shrewsbury and Balliol College, Oxford. Because of his elder brother’s mental ill-health, he bore all the responsibilities of the heir, and was very much admired both within and outside the family. He became a barrister, and was Liberal MP for Hereford in the years 1869-74. Chandos published several books on agriculture and land law. In 1873 he married the only surviving direct descendant of Sir Christopher Wren, and assumed the additional name ‘Wren-Hoskyns’. Chandos died in 1876, without a surviving male heir, a year before his elder brother, Hungerford, and therefore never took the title. Hungerford became the 8th baronet, for fifteen years. As a result, when Hungerford died (in 1877), John Leigh succeeded to the title, becoming the 9th baronet.

EARLY LIFE

John Leigh had two brothers and four sisters, all older than himself. He wrote some reminiscences in a book found among papers left by his son Benedict, Archdeacon of Chichester. It is a book with a marbled paper cover, blue leather spine and corners, and a brass lock. He calls it ‘Liber Diaconi or Deacon’s Book – a record of my early ministry in the Church of Christ’, and adds “Ordained by

so loved and so faithfully served the people and by them were beloved in return. Aged 96.’

* * * * *

* * * * *

them.

Sir John Leigh Hoskyns was a true Victorian in his taste and his high-minded morality, but he was also a man of all time - a kindly man, apparently loved by everyone, a gentle father, who loved the company of children. He did not seek promotion, but dedicated his life to the people of Aston Tirrold.

The dedication of his memorial in St. Michael's Church, which was a gift from the family, took the form of restoration of the chancel and its fittings; strengthening the walls with tie-beams; and a tiled floor in the chancel, with marble mosaic in the sanctuary. There were also a new oak reredos, oak panelling for the sanctuary, altar rails, priests' desks and choir stalls. The service was attended by five sons and a daughter, some remaining members of his beloved Clerical Society, and a large number of parishioners. The Archdeacon said then: "He was so courteous with that old-world courtesy which is now so rare, so considerate and kind, so wise and generous... and comes as near as anyone I have ever known to William Law's 'holy priest full of the spirit of the Gospel; watching, labouring, praying for the small country village; every soul in it as dear to him as himself, and he loves them all as he loves himself because he prays for them all as often as he prays for himself.'

When Lady Hoskyns died on May 7th 1914, this notice appeared in the Berkshire and Oxfordshire Advertiser: 'With her husband she will live in the affection of the people as long as the generation lasts, and traditions afterwards will tell of the devoted couple who

the honble and right Revd Richard Bagot, Lord Bishop of Oxford in Christ Church Cathedral on Trinity Sunday June 14 MDCCCXL" (1840). About a dozen pages have been torn out (perhaps the record of his early ministry), and what remains is largely about his childhood and early youth. He wrote (on Sunday evening December 6 1885 - at the age of 68) "possibly some attempts to sketch a few scenes in my past life may interest children and grandchildren - I should much have enjoyed such records of Ancestors - and the time grows short to one born Feb 4 1817". (He did not know that he was to live another 26 years!) He continues, "first dawn of consciousness at dear old Harewood. Nurse Sally Davis sitting working in the window of the nursery - Her departure to be married and the farewell ... was my first great sorrow - she told us she was coming back. Dim remembrances of being carried at night as a child to see dancing and music at Grange Farm on some great occasion - perhaps accession of George IV ... A memorable scene in dear mother's bedroom where she was called harsh names by someone and I felt deeply for her. I shall never forget the expression used." Was the 'someone' his father, or the poor, demented Hungerford?

However, there were good times for John Leigh and his brothers and sisters, and he writes: "the most memorable event was the annual or biennial journey to see Mr. Philips, my mother's father, at Bank Hall near Stockport... My grandfather was then about 90 - with grey powdered hair and pigtail...He was threatened by a scoundrel in his justice room - and I remember the scene and the man thrown down by the butler and a Constable and

handcuffed....Do not let me forget old Mrs. Moles the washerwoman. She had married a soldier and was in the retreat to Corunna. A superior old woman long long dead. She described to me some of the scenes in that memorable retreat in later years.....Then came the time of lessons. Sarah my sister... taught us chiefly and I began Latin with her. She could read Virgil with my father. I cannot remember distinct religious teaching except saying our catechism in a row on Sunday Evenings... It was a wonderfully free and uncontrolled life - no interference - and we did very much as we liked and we often made expeditions up into the old garrets or lumber rooms and imagined all sorts of things.”

John Leigh was then sent to Ham House School near Cheltenham, 30 miles away. (As a matter of interest, both Sir Philip Sydney and Judge Jefferies were at Ham House - although John Leigh Hoskyns bore no resemblance to either of them!) He writes vividly of all his friends there, and of his journeys to and from school by coach with horses. “The going home for the holidays - called very early - old Jonas and his swinging lantern to Cheltenham - the silent streets - long waiting at booking office at last the distant sound of wheels - then the wheels on stones - then the coach lights - what Joy !...How delightful the Comings Home. Getting off coach at Harewood End and running across down to the House - sometimes meeting all 3 sisters waiting for me!” He speaks of rivalries at school and even fights, but he seems to have enjoyed it and says “But the curtain closes on dear old Ham House. I left in the summer of 1828 and went in the autumn to Rugby.”

John Leigh entered Rugby School House in 1828, aged 11, at the

DEATH OF SIR JOHN LEIGH HOSKYNs

Sir John Leigh Hoskyns died in Bournemouth in his ninety-fifth year. The report in *The Church Times* says: “ Long will remain the memory of his presence moving in and out of the homes of his people, leading them in their reverent worship with all that beauty of voice and diction which he preserved to the very end. So ends with a unique sense of completeness the life of an ideal country parish priest...we may well thank God for the example of a man of high education and refinement who realised his vocation to live out of the world that he might minister to the spiritual needs of a few country people.”

Following an obituary in *The Times*, T. Herbert Warren, the President of Magdalen College wrote: “He always showed much attachment to both his colleges, and, in particular, used to drive or latterly to motor in to Magdalen every year till last year on the College Gaudy Day, not indeed to the dinner in the evening, but to join our afternoon party and to attend the services in the chapel.”

On his grave in Aston Tirrold is carved ‘Sacred to the memory of John Leigh Hoskyns Bart for 66 years the beloved Rector of this parish born February 4th 1817. Entered into rest Dec 8th 191. RIP.’ In the same grave is buried his wife Emma, and is carved ‘In loving memory of Phyllis Emma Hoskyns the beloved wife of Canon Sir John Leigh Hoskyns Bart. Born August 13 1817. Died May 7 1914. RIP.’ Interestingly, a neighbouring grave is that of Lady Hoskyns’ mother, which reads ‘Sacred to the memory of Frances Boyfield relict of Commodore Sir John S Peyton RN KCH who died Nov 27th 1849 aged 62’. Perhaps she died while staying with

much of the poetry; some serious thoughts about philosophy and religion; some affectionate reflections about people he saw; an interest in the wider world he would never see, and some light-hearted rather child-like humour.

After Sir John's death, the Committee on Vacant Livings of Magdalen College wrote a report on the state of the living of Aston Tirrold. It says "The Rectory House is substantially built and contains drawing room, dining room, study, storeroom on the ground floor; 6 bedrooms & one dressing room, 2 servants' bedrooms, and a workroom; also kitchen, washhouse, scullery, larder, pantry: there is stabling for 2 or 3 horses, a roomy carriage house and some other outbuildings. The garden is about an acre in size, containing 2 lawns, a good kitchen garden and an apple orchard....." *

(*See *Appendix B* for details of the value of the living at the time of his death.)

same time as the famous Dr. Arnold went there as headmaster. He writes of his peers and teachers there (some not very favourably "too soft, too mild - not inspiring" and so on). He writes especially of Arthur Stanley, a contemporary, (later Dean of Westminster) who is known to have been a favourite of Arnold's, and to whom Arnold deferred on 'Historical Questions'! John Leigh describes Dr. Arnold, whom he greatly admired: "How expressive was Arnold's look & questioning and silence & frown! I used to be much moved by His Sermons in Chapel - and felt the unspeakable contrast when any other master preached." John Leigh was happy at Rugby and says it "ended in 1835 to my great sorrow".

However, clearly the happiest memories of all were of when he was surrounded by his relations. He writes enthusiastically of his sister Sarah (Tally)'s wedding to Mr. John Arkwright - who was of the family Arkwright of 'spinning jenny' fame. He says "I was too late for the wedding & saw their carriage pass through Hereford while the bells rang." He obviously loved his sister, and says she was "not a commonplace girl, but remarkable for studious habits and a thoughtful mind. She read Virgil and Horace with my Father and taught me all I knew before I went to school". After their marriage he spent a fair amount of time with the Arkwrights, and he describes their life at Hampton Court, their home between Hereford and Leominster: "It was a great event visiting them at Hampton Court - the grand old place, spacious Hall, liberal of everything after the strict economy of life at Harewood was very delightful to us boys." It seems that John Leigh's father was either not particularly rich, or was frugal and careful with his

money. John Leigh continues: “Arkwright so kind and hospitable - glad always to see us. What happy rides we had over to H. Ct. during our holidays! Shooting, hunting, fishing ... Oh for my brother Chandos’ magic pen to describe the pleasures of dear Hampton Court in those olden days and before the builders came and destroyed the noble old Hall & the mysterious oak staircase ... and all the Romance of the place at a cost of £30,000 – besides 12 years of constant disturbance.” He may have felt that he did not have his brother Chandos’ magic pen, but he paints a vivid picture nevertheless!

He continues: “There was such a party there on the celebration of Carey’s christening [the Arkwright’s daughter] in 1831...James slept on the billiard table...Another great occasion was the birth of the Son & Heir in 1834. Such doings in the Park, a roasted ox and all sorts of games and festivities...There was a grandeur about the whole thing - all the tenants assembled - half Leominster there.” He writes at length about times at Hampton Court, and concludes: “It is impossible to describe the sort of Romantic interest with which I record the happy days at Hampton Court. They lasted more or less from 1830 -1856. Of course the earlier years till my ordination in 1840 were the most enjoyable. Can it be that they lasted only ten years ! In my remembrance it seems a lifetime. I hope I learnt much from Mr. Arkwright. He was such a contrast to anything or anybody I had seen before ! ... The beauty of Hospitality - kindness to the young and Liberality to all - unselfishness, simplicity of character - truthfulness - gentleness - all met in Him.”

Summer’(also by Moore) and comments that it is ‘one of the most beautiful bits of poetry ever written’. He includes another long poem starting ‘Hail Sovereign Love, thou laid the plan...’ which he said was in the possession of Ann Slade at Aston Tirrold. “She affirmed that the verses here transcribed first led her to think seriously about her soul.”

Several other poems engaged him :

“Little drops of water, little grains of sand,

Make the mighty ocean, and the pleasant land”

and *To a Waterfowl* by Bryant, which ends

“He who from zone to zone

Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight

In the long way that I must tread alone

Will lead my step aright.”

He also writes occasionally of current issues, such as: “The Cherokee Indians now publish a newspaper and are becoming civilised, but the shameful manner in which all the Indians are treated is a great impediment to their advance into civilisation. In Jackson’s presidency they were ordered across the Mississippi - many anecdotes are to be had illustrative of their high courage and generosity.”

These commonplace books were quite usual in Victorian times, and were not written generally for publication; they were more like passing thoughts included in a personal diary. This commonplace book gives us some insight into the personal world of Hoskyns. It is interesting to note the subjects that engaged his private thoughts : some Victorian sentimentality (as we might see it) in

powerless and he gave them force, the Church debased and he raised it, the land ravaged by a savage enemy, from whom he delivered it. His name shall live as long as mankind shall respect the past.”

And a few riddles he clearly enjoyed :

- * Why are churches like young ladies? Answer: Because there is no living without them.
- * Why are Chapels like old maids? Answer: Because there is no living with them.
- * Why are sheep very depraved animals? Answer: Because even the lambs gambol.
- * Why are rooks very sensible birds? Answer: Because they never speak without caws.
- * Why was Noah the greatest financier the world ever saw? Answer: Because he floated a limited company when all the world was in liquidation.

And a little philosophy :

“ Heaven is promised to us, but not to our carelessness, infidelity and disobedience.”

Sir John writes a great deal about death in the second half of his commonplace book, copying out long paragraphs and poems on the subject. For example, he copies ‘Oft in the still night, Ere slumbers chain has bound me...’ several times, and asks himself “Who is the author of this exquisite poem? Answer: Moore – author of *Irish Melodies*”. He writes out all the verses of *The Last Rose of*

The Hoskyns family had a holiday house at Weymouth, and several winter holidays were passed there. John Leigh’s brother Chandos met his future wife – Theodosia Martha Wren – there. John Leigh describes her as “very attractive – a beautiful daughter – a fortune – Heiress of Wroxhall Abbey nr Warwick”. His sister Caroline too met her husband, Richard Phelips, Rector of Cucklington there. John Leigh later spent many happy times with that couple as well (and says theirs was a home to him for 50 years). “If not so grand as Hampton Court it had other special attractions - sister Caroline’s tender, loving, kindness - the charm of the place.”

John Leigh Hoskyns matriculated from Balliol College, Oxford in April 1835, aged 18. He then was a Demy of Magdalen College 1837-43, and fellow 1843-45, gaining a B.A.(Second Class Lit. Hum.) in 1839, and an M.A. in 1841. There are two letters from Dr. Arnold (his old headmaster) to Hoskyns, dated 1839. He writes, “ If you were going into the Law, or to study medicine, there would be clear distinction between your professional reading, and your general reading:- between that reading which was designed to make you a good Lawyer or Physician, and that which was to make you a good and wise man. But it is the peculiar excellence of the Christian Ministry that there a man’s professional reading & general reading coincide ... Historical reading it appears that you are actually engaged in – But so much of History is written so ill that it appears to me to be desirable to be well acquainted with the greatest Historians.” In another letter, Arnold says “If death were immediately before us, say that the cholera was raging in a man’s parish, and numbers were dying daily:- it is

manifest that our duties ... would become exceedingly simple:- To preach the Gospel, that is to lead men's Faith to Christ, as their saviour by his death and resurrection,- to be earnest in practical kindness,- to clear one's Heart of all Enmities or evil Passions, - this would be a man's work and this only. His reading would I suppose be limited then to such parts of the Scripture as were directly strengthening to his Faith & Hope & Charity, to works of Prayers and Hymns, and to such practical Instructions as might be within his Reach as to the Treatment of the prevailing Disease."

There is also a letter from a George Bucknell (an old schoolfellow of Hoskyns') written in 1842, after Arnold's death. Bucknell was by now a master at Rugby. He felt that "his [Arnold's] complaint had been brought on partly by anxiety and trouble about his daughter's marriage which he had felt himself obliged to stop, and from other natural causes." He relates to Hoskyns the details of Arnold's death of a heart attack – the pain, the request to be read a passage from the Gospels, the final moments and his wife's distress. It goes on to describe Arnold's funeral attended by many of their contemporaries, and how he was buried in the school chapel under the communion table. He says the whole town was in mourning. "This is the case I believe throughout the country."

After his ordination, Hoskyns became Deacon at Dunchurch (near Rugby), where he lived from 1840 to 1841, when he left to become curate at Lugwardine (near Hereford). In 1845 he was presented with the parish of Aston Tirrold by Magdalen College, which had held the living since 1608 (and still does).

to give way and like a maddened torrent more violent because confined out they rush - a sad instance of this occurred to me April 19 1837 while at Oxford".

- Quoting Luther "If we take counsel with Reason, we shall no longer believe any mystery". John Leigh comments that the perambulation of the Children of Israel round the walls of Jericho had no basis in reason – they would have appeared 'perfectly absurd'. He says "God gives Man reason and then demands that it be set aside".

John Leigh recorded some sermons of others which impressed him. One is a sermon given by the Bishop of Australia (perhaps when he was at Oxford) "which gave a fearful description of the state of that country – concubinage, prostitution, not any religion – children growing up without baptism – this was the deliberate act of our country – to send out men without any care of their eternal interest, ridding ourselves of the poor and wicked (but precious souls) to sweep them off into eternity."

He went to hear Pusey preach in Oxford and says: "He seemed worn and exhausted and in the prayer before the sermon he wept, his wife lately dead and the words of the prayer recalling her to his mind. His walk through the crowded lines of gownsmen, humble and meek, his eyes cast down, face deadly pale – he was to my mind a resuscitation to life of one of those Holy Men of Old, the saints and martyrs of the Early Church."

He copied (in 1849) an epitaph on the monument to Alfred the Great in Wantage: "(AD 849) He found learning decayed and restored it, education neglected and he revived it, the laws

connected with the fauna and flora of Herefordshire!”

In commemoration of their golden wedding, Sir John and Lady Hoskyns gave, as a present to the village, a clock for the tower of St. Michael’s church, which is there to this day.

Sir John Hoskyns’ ‘commonplace book’ has survived, in which he wrote some thoughts, copied extracts from books, poems, little riddles and comments on sermons dating from 1837 (when he was at Balliol) until 1910 - the year before his death. A Mr. A.T. Wicker, vicar of Warborough, picked it up “from imminent destruction” in a wayside cottage – “I happened to be visiting in the locality of Aston Tirrold”. Sir John kept this book in a rather unorthodox way: it appears that, as he wrote, he left pages empty, and filled them up during later years so the pages jump from date to date in no sequence. I believe that it is from this book that we get the closest glimpse of John Leigh’s inner world. He wrote it for himself, left it to none of his family, and one can assume that he simply expressed his private thoughts in it. It is a strange jumble of poetry, philosophy and things that amused him. His boyhood writing is very small and neat, later becoming larger and more spidery, until one can see the shaky hand of a very old man.

Here are just one or two excerpts :

- “Those who naturally possess strong feelings are in particular danger ...supposing that they are living a quiet orderly life at Oxford or any other secluded residence. Something calls them away to a scene directly the contrary to what he has just left. The repression and mortification and discipline under which he has kept those feelings seem

ASTON TIRROLD 1845-1911

In 1842 (when John Leigh was a curate at Lugwardine) his mother wrote of his shyness and his kindness. He was probably the son who was closest to her, although everyone was extremely proud of Chandos. When John Leigh was to go to Aston Tirrold she knew that it would be a great loss to her. She told John Arkwright, her son-in-law, on 7 June 1845 that John Leigh had been offered this living, and in 1848 she wrote “He has a cheerfulness & activity about him that lightens all around him, and Nature could never have intended such a being to reside at Aston Tyrrold - it is some great mistake altogether.”

When John Leigh Hoskyns was appointed to the parish of Aston Tirrold in 1845, he was only the second rector to be resident in the parish. His predecessor had lived here for just one year from 1844 to 45. Most villagers were agricultural fieldworkers, but in the village there were also a building business, two pubs, two smithies, several small retail shops (a butcher, a baker, a bootmaker), two blacksmiths, several carriers and a number of professional people including two doctors. The economy and society revolved round the two main farming employers – the Slades and the Fullers. We have a lively picture of life among the gentry at the time when Hoskyns first came to the village. It comes in the form of a set of letters from the Slade family in Thorpe Farm, Aston Upthorpe, to a young son who had emigrated to Australia and then went to India. We know of endless tea parties in the freshly-mown meadows, ‘gypsy parties’ on the Downs, the young people coursing, hunting, shooting and playing cricket. It was into this world that Hoskyns

(himself a member of the gentry of Herefordshire) came. He slotted easily into the social life of the gentry of the villages, but he also had the care of all his parishioners, young and old, rich and poor, and he clearly knew, understood and loved them.

The countryside around the Astons was entirely agricultural and, until the time of the enclosures, open fields were farmed by the entire community. The last of the Astons' fields was enclosed in 1808, leaving cottagers and squatters without any land of their own, and entirely dependent on labouring on the newly formed estate farms. Wages were very meagre, and bad harvests were followed by agricultural depression so that the poor became even poorer.

The Astons were then, as now, two Downland villages divided by the Moreton Road, Fullers Road and Spring Lane. When Hoskyns arrived, the population of the two villages was 500 to 600 people - much as today, although there were fewer houses. More people lived in each house than do today, and single occupancy was extremely rare, whereas these days there are often more than 20 houses in the villages occupied by single people or single parents. We know that in 1847, Aston Upthorpe consisted of 43 households, and 159 people. Aston Tirrold had 79 households, and 341 people, therefore averaging four to five people in each house. Two-thirds of the population of the two villages lived in Tirrold, one third in Upthorpe, as now. The church of St. Michael's is in Aston Tirrold, and the little church of All Saints' is in Aston Upthorpe. All Saints' was at that time a chapel-of-ease of Blewbury, but was later linked with Upton parish. In the early twentieth century it was

the health of Sir John and Lady Hoskyns in a speech full of his usual eloquence and humour, referring to his being the only surviving witness present of their wedding at Lugwardine in 1846. He made a very touching allusion to the laying of the cornerstone of the present Rectory at Aston Tyrrold, by his late wife, Sir John Hoskyns' youngest sister, and in his happy vein spoke of Lady Hoskyns having reigned as undisputed "Queen of Hearts" at Aston Tyrrold for so many years. Mr. Arkwright then spoke on behalf of the other nephews and nieces who have presented Sir John with his portrait, by Mr. W. Carter A.R.A., which will appear in the Royal Academy Exhibition. Sir John in replying expressed his deep sense of gratitude to God for the many blessings of his married life, of being united for so many years to one who was beloved by everyone who knew her, and who had set so consistent and right an example to her children of truthfulness and unselfishness, and from whom they had learnt such valuable lessons... In addition to many other kind offerings the parishioners, through the churchwardens, sent an affectionate address of congratulation, and a beautiful basket of bridal flowers.. During the afternoon many old friends and neighbours arrived to offer their congratulations, and tea was served in the tent.'

In a letter by Edith Blake (nee Hawkshaw), an amusing detail was added, when her father said he was the only one present at their wedding, "NO" said John Arkwright "I can remember not only the wedding, but the picnic when the young curate of Lugwardine and Miss Emma Peyton were missing during the afternoon, and were found wandering among the gorse bushes, deep in conversation not

Edwyn Hoskyns, now Vicar of Bolton and RD, was celebrant, assisted by his brother Rev B. G. Hoskyns, now Canon Missioner of Truro. This was followed by a special thanksgiving service at 12 o'clock, at which all members of the family now in England, and many relatives were present, including 18 grandchildren from the age of 13 years to six months. The two absent sons, Lieut Colonel C. S. Hoskyns RE, now in India and Commander Peyton Hoskyns RN, serving on the coast of Africa, were specially commended to the prayers of the congregation... Then followed a very interesting scene, the 18 grandchildren filing two and two into the Rectory garden to receive a warm welcome, led by their respective parents to Sir John and Lady Hoskyns for their blessing. Then Master Oswald Hoskyns, as the eldest of the grandchildren, presented on behalf of the others a massive gold seal engraved with the family arms; and Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Hoskyns presented to Sir John and Lady Hoskyns an address beautifully illuminated and framed, as the gift of their children, with the signatures of those who were old enough to write their names, regretting that the portrait of Lady Hoskyns, by Luke Fildes, A.R.A. which he hoped also to present from the family, was not yet completed. It was finished, however, and is now in the hands of Dr. Benedict Hoskyns, Bart.

At half-past one the company assembled for lunch in a tent near the Rectory, the sun still shining brilliantly. Lunch ended, Mr. Leigh Hoskyns (in the absence of his eldest brother, Lieut Colonel Hoskyns) read several telegrams of congratulation from relatives and friends... The Rev. E.B.Hawkshaw, brother-in-law, proposed

separated from Upton, and joined into one parish with St. Michael's, Aston Tirrold.

At that time perhaps more than half of the population were Dissenters. In 1662 two Anglican clergymen had been removed from their parishes for refusing to comply with the Act of Uniformity, but were welcomed into the Astons by a local landowner, Mr. John Fuller, who allowed them to hold services in his barn. In 1728, two of his descendants, Joseph and Richard Fuller built the congregational church in an orchard in Aston Upthorpe, and a dissenting congregation grew and flourished. By the time Hoskyns came to Aston Tirrold they had already established the first school in the villages – The British School.

There is a charming account of life in the villages, written about the middle of the 19th century, by the children of Rev. George Marris, the Dissenting minister. They say:

“Aston Tirrold is situated in a valley, adorned with orchards and gardens, which in the spring appear in their gayest attire...The soil is fertile and produces abundance of grain, fruit and vegetables...The climate is salubrious, and we would recommend any invalid who wishes to recruit his or her health, to spend a few weeks in Aston as convenient and respectable accommodation may be obtained, together with the society of well informed inhabitants, who are particularly kind and hospitable to strangers...the country is very open, as the fields are not generally enclosed with hedges or walls...Among the respectable residents, morning calls are not frequent; for

the Gentlemen are generally engaged in the former part of the day. The young Men are early taught the use of the gun, riding, coursing &c and are particularly fond of the game of Cricket, they generally associate together in their evening parties, but seldom in Harvest-Time...The poorer classes are a hard-working race of men: their dwellings are mean, generally built of mud and thatched; the men are fond of smoking and drinking, and usually resort to the Public-house on a Saturday night to spend a part of their weeks wages. The women are uncouth and vulgar owing to their being brought up to work in the fields, instead of going into service; few good servants are to be obtained in the village... There are two or three respectable shops in the Village where things may be had wholesale and retail also a Pastry Cook and Confectioner... The roads in the wet season are indifferent but the present Surveyer has greatly improved them... May Day is regularly observed by the Villagers for their children to go about Aston with Garlands..."

In their account, the children describe the festivities on Queen Victoria's coronation in 1837, and comment about a bazaar, held in a barn with a soldier in uniform at the gate, wearing his medal from the Battle of Waterloo. They clearly delighted in "Gipsy parties" when "the respectable residents go off to the woods in two waggon-loads, with parents, children, neighbours and servants". They conclude :

"In summer it is like a watering place, for many visit it

home, as the later record of its members was to show, affords a fine instance of the part which the village parsonage plays in English life."

A cutting from the Abingdon and Reading Herald of Saturday, 10th May 1884 reads: "Marriage of Miss Hoskyns - Aston Tyrrold village was en fete last Tuesday on the occasion of the nuptials of Mr. Charles Morrell of Burcote, Master of the South Oxon Hounds, with Miss Emma Hoskyns, daughter of the Rev. Sir John Leigh Hoskyns, Bart, for upwards of 30 years vicar of the parish. Many friends of the popular vicar marked their appreciation of him by attending in considerable force. The fine bells in the embattled western tower heralded the auspicious and lovely May morning with a merry peal, and long before the time appointed, the villagers had started to assemble in St. Michael's Church. The bride was attired in a rich dress of ivory colour brocaded satin, trimmed with pearls and old Brussels lace, and she carried a large bouquet of gardenias, lily of the valley, white lilac and white flowers. Outside the pathway was lined with village maidens holding baskets of flowers, who strewed the path with blooms picked by kindly hands."

On April 22 1896, Sir John and Lady Hoskyns celebrated their golden wedding. A report in *The Times* records :
'At the pretty village of Aston Tyrrold under the Berkshire Downs and just now in full dress with the bloom of its numerous cherry orchards, Sir John and Lady Hoskyns celebrated their golden wedding... The sun shone out brilliantly through the whole day, and the village was aroused at an early hour by a joyful peal. There was a celebration of Holy Communion at 8.30, at which the Rev.

Again in 1881, Dr. Breach (a general practitioner), born in Aston Upthorpe, lived in the Workman's Club House (now The Red House) and was 66. His wife, Martha was 61, and was born in Aston Tirrold. They had two unmarried children living at home at that stage – John Frederick and Martha Louisa (aged 29 and 33). They had a groom, a cook and a housemaid living in their household.

George Frederick Fuller, cousin of the Fullers of Aston Farm, occupied Cope Stile Farm, aged 23 and unmarried. He lived there with his mother, Sarah, aged 59, and his 2 unmarried sisters aged 34 and 32. They had two servants, a cook and a housemaid. One can assume from other records of the time that all these families employed village people daily in their gardens, stables and households.

In contrast, Thomas Curtis, aged 48, who was the farm bailiff at the farm of Thomas Wellingham Fuller, lived with his wife, two daughters, son and nephew somewhere in Aston Street, with no living-in servants at all.

We glimpse an insight into the life of the young people of the prosperous houses from an article about John Leigh Hoskyns' son, Bishop Edwyn Hoskyns, written at the time of his death in 1925. It was said that "With his many brothers and sisters, [he] learnt to love the English countryside, the open air and the Thames, and to discover in horse and fishing rod two of his best friends. Amidst all the fun and interests of the large family at Aston, he would find time to teach a village boy to read, to take a class on Sundays, or to help the choir at their weekly practice in church. Indeed the Aston

from London, Oxford and the adjacent places. To be seen at advantage the Visitor ought to come in the month of May and continue till the harvest is got in; for really in Spring and Summer and Autumn the village wears a very pleasing aspect."

It was into this world that Hoskyns arrived in 1845 – an established and settled place, with a pattern of life with which he had to merge – far from home in Herefordshire, and (so far as we know) with no friends nearby. But it was to be his home and his life for the next 66 years – knowing everyone, speaking with authority, leading the local clergy, and welcomed in every house in the village.

At that time, the churchwardens of Church of England parishes and the parish clerk performed various duties to do with poor rates and the highways, which would later become local government responsibilities. One source of poor rates was the sale of manure, collected from the roads, to farmers and landowners to fertilise their land. The Rector had to chair the meetings arranging for such sales.

The railway had reached Didcot in 1839, and the branch line to Oxford in 1844, a year before Hoskyns' appointment. The age of the train had arrived! But Hoskyns does not mention it much. In his early days he appears to have travelled little, other than to nearby parishes. However, later in his life he discovered European travel, and often went to the South of France, and once to Italy (in 1878, leaving in September, and returning the following May.) He left a curate in charge of the parish. He says "The vicar of Box near Chippenham resided at Aston and took my duties." One

wonders who looked after Box?

There were one or two 'Dames Schools' for privileged children in the villages in the early nineteenth century, but the first day school, known as the British School, was established in Aston Upthorpe in 1827 by the Presbyterian Church for poorer children of farm labourers and others. It was maintained by voluntary support, with fees of 3d per child per week. The school moved into a new school house in 1859. The 3d fee was difficult for labourers to find in hard times and attendance was often low. Added to that many children had to walk long distances to school and clothes once wet were difficult to dry. An entry for the British School log-book from 1880 says "The wet and windy weather has made some difference in the attendance. The children from a distance absent." Also, children's labour was an important part of many families' economy. The attendance of a child at school could deprive a family of the much needed income to survive. Another entry from the British School log book says "Several children at potato gathering and walnut gathering – very detrimental to their progress."

The British School refused to teach the Church of England catechism to their children, so Hoskyns immediately set about starting a church school of his own. It was to become his chief interest and concern. (The building remains to this day as a private home in Aston Street.) Hoskyns writes in 1846 "May 31st. New schoolroom commenced. Mr. Herbert gave the ground and paid for the conveyances – A most desirable situation. John Huggins, the blacksmith, our Sunday schoolmaster." In a report to Magdalen college in 1853, he writes that it is both a Sunday and a day school,

also scholars. There also was a governess aged 29, and a number of domestic servants, none of whom were there 10 years before – a cook, aged 38, a housemaid and 2 'general' servants. There was also a 'boarder' aged 14 from Cholsey.

In 1881 we find John Leigh Hoskyns and his wife (now 64 and 63 years old). John Leigh has by now inherited the title of Baronet. Only their daughters are left living at home: Emma aged 27, Mary aged 22, and Florence aged 20, all unmarried. They have a visitor – the daughter of another Rector staying with them, aged 22, possibly a friend of the young ladies. There is a cook, aged 22, a lady's maid, aged 22, a parlour maid aged 23 and a housemaid aged 19. On this occasion John Leigh Hoskyns was the sole male with 9 women in the house!

By 1891, Sir John and Lady Hoskyns only had Florence remaining at home, and kept a housekeeper, a German laundrymaid, a parlourmaid and a housemaid.

So from these censuses we get a picture of the residents in the Rectory over 40 years. To compare their household to others of similar status, we can see that Thomas Wellingham Fuller owned Aston Farm (sometimes called Tirrold Farm), which the census of 1881 tells us consisted of 720 acres, and employed 23 men and five boys. His household at that time included himself (aged 61, and a therefore a contemporary of John Leigh Hoskyns), his wife Martha, aged 58 (younger than Lady Hoskyns), and their 2 unmarried daughters, Edith and Alice, 30 and 29. They had two living-in servants - a cook and a housemaid (compared with four in the Hoskyns household in the same year).

- John and Chandos Hoskyns, the twin sons, aged 2, born at Aston Tirrold
- Leigh Hoskyns, aged 1, born at Aston Tirrold
- 4 maidservants, aged 23, 22, 22 and 19, three of whom were born in Herefordshire (presumably recruited by the Hoskyns family there)

Also there on the day the census was taken were John Leigh Hoskyns' sister Catherine and her husband, the Rev. Edward Hawkshaw (who at that time was Rector of Bampton) and their 3 little girls Emma, Catherine and Lucy, aged 4, 3 and 2. They had obviously come on a family visit, and had also brought their maid, aged 18.

In the 1861 census, we have again in the Rectory, John Leigh Hoskyns, his wife Emma, and their children John (without Chandos this time) aged 12, Leigh aged 11, Edwyn aged 9, Peyton aged 8, Emma aged 7, Benedict aged 5, Mary aged 2, and Florence aged 4 months. All had been born at Aston Tirrold. Their family was now complete – nine children - and yet in this eight bedroomed house they still had space for a cook aged 35, a nurse aged 17, a housemaid aged 21 and an under nurse aged 14! One can only surmise that in this household of 15 people there was a good deal of doubling-up!

In 1871, many of the children were away, it seems, and the household recorded in the census, consisted of John Leigh Hoskyns, his wife Emma, their son John aged 21, (described as a scholar), and their daughters Mary aged 12, and Florence aged 10,

with girls and small boys attending on weekdays, and older boys admitted on Sundays. Numbers were 35 on weekdays and 50 on Sundays. It was run on strictly Church of England principles, the catechism being regularly taught. The annual income of £28-16-0 was made up by contributions from:

Rector	£5-0-0
Magdalen College	£2-2-0
Benefactors	£5-10-0
Aston Upton Chapel	£2-2-0
Charities	£7-2-0
Children's pence	£4-10-0
2 endowments	£2-10-0

The greater part of this sum went to pay the mistress (£16 p.a.), the Sunday school master and mistress (£2-12-0 each p.a.), and a Monitor (£1 p.a.). Things did not go altogether well at the start. His letter to Magdalen College goes on "I must add that the mistress is very inefficient but as the three chief proprietors in the parish are resident dissenters and will give nothing to the church school, there are no funds for a good trained mistress or master. Thus the state of the day school is very unsatisfactory – not a person in the parish takes any interest in it except myself and my wife. There is nothing in which the evil influence of dissent is more painfully felt than in the way in which it disables the clergyman from keeping up a good and efficient school." This must have been a bad time for Hoskyns trying to promote his school; but things got better, his hard work was rewarded, and in about 1855 he writes in the village diary, "Our new school Mistress Mrs.

Mobbs came Sept. 20. How much reason have we to be thankful for the arrival here of this excellent person.”

He tells us that she married Thomas Curtis – a farmer – in 1874 - son of the ‘old Clerk.’ (The ‘old clerk’ was also called Thomas Curtis, parish clerk for 57 years, according to a plaque in St. Michael’s church.)

In 1870, the school records show that there were several schoolmistresses, and when Mrs. Curtis went home to nurse her own mother “Mrs. Hoskyns conducted the school with the help of the Assistant Mistress”.

There were continuing improvements - in 1870 the school and classroom were painted and whitewashed, the House had additional piping, the offices and exits for boys and girls were rearranged and separated, and a lobby made for washing hands. In 1871, the school was inspected and designated a Public Elementary School under the Act of 1870. There were 65 children registered, but the average attendance was only 42. During the 1870s, there was much absenteeism: “The mothers were in the Field....the girls either at work or minding little ones.... numbers falling off, harvest commencing...many children away owing to the fruit picking.”

Many were absent with measles and several children died of scarlet fever. However in October 1876, it was noted that the attendance was very good, over 60 being present each day.

In 1881 Hoskyns needed money to enlarge the school, and he wrote again to Magdalen College, “ I mentioned to you that a considerable portion of the land here is in the hands of dissenters and that they have a school, but the increase in our numbers lately

- The eldest daughter, Emma (born in 1854) married Charles Morrell of Dorchester Manor, Wallingford (from the well-known Oxford family of ‘Morrells Ales and Stouts’).
- The sixth and youngest son Benedict (born in 1856) also became a clergyman and later Archdeacon of Chichester.
- The second daughter, Mary (born in 1858) never married, and lived to the age of 91.
- The youngest child was their beloved third daughter Florence (born in 1861). She married Francis Gurdon, a clergyman who became Suffragan Bishop of Hull. Florence died in 1909, and the organ in St. Michael’s church in Aston Tirrold was given by her parents in her memory. She and her husband are both buried in the churchyard at Aston Tirrold with Sir John and Lady Hoskyns. On the Gurdons’ graves are carved ‘Remember in love the soul of Florence Gurdon born Jan 7th 1861. Married May 30 1893. Died March 23 1909. Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord’; and ‘In loving memory of Frances Gurdon Esq. of Hull who died 24 Dec 1925 aged 78. Beloved of all, his life to the end was devoted to the service of God.’

Thus the Hoskyns had nine children in thirteen years, the last when Phyllis Emma Hoskyns was 43.

In the census of 1851, only 5 years after moving in, we learn that the household of the Rectory consisted of :

- John Leigh Hoskyns, aged 34, born at Cheltenham
- Phyllis Emma, aged 33, born at Milford in Hampshire

John Leigh and Emma Hoskyns moved into The Rectory in 1846, and soon started a family. They apparently lived a happy married life in Aston Tirrold, celebrating both their golden and diamond weddings in the village, until his death in 1911, aged 94. Lady Hoskyns died in Eastbourne three years later, aged 96.

Sir John succeeded to the baronetcy in 1877, on the death of his brother Hungerford, becoming the ninth baronet. As far as we know he did not keep any personal records of his family activities, household accounts or details of his personal life. If he did, they are now lost. However, we know that Sir John and Lady Hoskyns had six sons and three daughters, all of whom lived to adulthood:

- John and Chandos (twins), born in 1848. John died, an unmarried army Officer, in 1887. Chandos succeeded to the baronetcy (becoming the tenth baronet), but died three years later in 1914, leaving three daughters but no sons.
- The third son, Leigh (born in 1850) became a barrister then succeeded to the title, as eleventh baronet. He too had three daughters and one son (who pre-deceased him, killed in World War I). He died in 1923.
- The fourth son Edwyn (born in 1851) became a clergyman; later he married Mary Benson. He became Bishop of Southwell, and succeeded to the title as twelfth baronet. He died in 1925. The title still survives in his direct line, the sixteenth baronet being Dr. Benedict Leigh Hoskyns, who lives in Essex.
- The fifth son Peyton (born in 1852) joined the Royal Navy and became a rear-admiral.

has made the enlargement absolutely necessary.” He received subscriptions for this from Edward Wells (the Wallingford brewer) as owner of the Chequers Inn, from the Bishop of Oxford as holder of some Upthorpe tithes, and from Mr. Payne a shop owner.

Numbers in the dissenters’ British School were much the same as in the Church of England National School – between 50 and 60 at best. After 1870, when both schools were supported by government funds, the dissenters’ British School governors denominational, contrary to the Education Act. The last years of the British School were unhappy and bitter, the children were discouraged from speaking to the children from the rival school, numbers fell off, and it closed for lack of support in 1907.

The standards of both schools were raised by the attendance of the ‘charity children’ from London. They were ‘boarded out’ (fostered) with families in the villages by both Dr. Barnado’s Society and the ‘Waifs and Strays’ – a Church of England charity started by Dr. Edward Rudolf (now The Children’s Society). These charity children attended both schools, leaving for work when they were thirteen. They were said to be brighter than the village children. The National School flourished, with the constant interest of the Hoskyns family. The Rector and his wife often taught in the school, as did other members of the family, and visitors to the Rectory. It survived until 1972, many of the older people still living in the villages today having attended it.

One of the early activities of John Leigh Hoskyns was to restore the church. In 1847, he writes in his diary “Every church nearby in the neighbourhood has undergone...that most necessary process,

which consists in pulling down unsightly square pews and galleries, scraping off the whitewash from arches and windows – new flooring etc. The advantage is great.” So he decided to do the same. Unfortunately, in ‘restoring’ their medieval churches, these industrious Victorian parsons often damaged and destroyed much of great interest and beauty, replacing it with their own style of Victorian church interiors. Hoskyns was no exception. He says about his new church, “who that ever stood in the old one could believe it was the same place?”

He describes it in his Village Diary, emphasising the “unsightly pews”, the gallery cutting one window in half. The tower was “a dirty place... shut off from the rest of the church, so the west window was invisible from the church.” There was a ceiling so no roof timbers were visible. He lowered the churchyard and replaced graves, because, as he recounts “the mould was 3 feet up the walls of the church and it smelt of damp – unwholesome on entering, and green damp was all round the walls inside.” No doubt much of this was a great improvement, but with all these changes, he also removed wall paintings of saints “some very curious”, and Reformation letter texts. He says that the windows “had originally been decorated with the rose ball flower all up the sides and mullions”. All this was removed, and not recorded carefully, so that we do not know exactly what the church was like before Hoskyns’ restoration. Next he raised £372 to demolish the north wall of the church and to building an extension, accessed by three arches, and accommodating 50 to 60 people, necessary because of the greatly enlarged congregations, and the people who might otherwise have occupied the demolished galleries.

he and his wife lived until the house was ready for use (nor indeed if he lived in Aston Tirrold before his marriage). He himself gave no description of what the original rectory was like or how old it was. He simply records: “ On Monday morning May 5th 1845 the workmen commenced pulling down the old rectory and the large barn which stretched along the south-east corner of the churchyard from East to West so as almost entirely to hide the church from the parsonage. Both were level with the ground by Wednesday evening the 7th.” He then adds (one imagines with some relief), “ No accident of any kind occurred”. It was nearly a year later that the new rectory was begun. Hoskyns wanted his rectory to have a good-sized garden, and so prevailed on Magdalen College to buy half an acre of adjoining orchard to the west. On 13th March 1846 the cornerstone of the new rectory was laid. Hoskyns records “Sang Psalm 127. Remarkably dry and beautiful summer. House finished by November and we came to reside.” (Psalm 127 begins “Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it... Happy is the man who has his quiver full of children.”) Hoskyns was to achieve his quiverful of nine children in only a few years. At the time, Magdalen College provided £700 towards the cost of the rectory. The building still stands, and was a rectory until 1977. It is a house of good proportions – ‘the house of a gentleman’, suitable for one of the leading persons of the village. It was indeed comparable in status to the homes of the Fuller family, who owned all the large houses – the Manor, Filberts and Copse Stile. None was a ‘stately home’, but all were comfortable, attractive houses.

FAMILY LIFE IN THE RECTORY AT ASTON TIRROLD

In November 1843, Lady Hoskyns (John Leigh’s mother) braced herself for a scene with her husband over John Leigh’s proposed marriage to Emma - not a criticism of Emma, but because Sir Hungerford hated change. But Lady Hoskyns wrote “we all think it so desirable that Leigh shd marry that we must be thankful the fair lady is so sweet and amiable a creature.” However in January 1845, she wrote to her son-in-law, John Arkwright that Leigh (as he was known in the family) was busy building a house, and asks “Is he stuck in a bog?” She goes on to say “ Leigh will be surrounded by Dissenters which is why a Junior Fellow would not take it... His engagement to his ladylove blinds him, and she is as little suited to bogs and loneliness as any young lady I know.” Later she writes “I would have wished it in a nearer county, for it will be a sad long distance for us in our latter days, and he is not an everyday son by any means. When he comes to us he neither requires company nor musick to make him happy. There is an unaccountable goodness in that boy that endears him to everybody, so that I don’t know how I can bear him to go so far...”

We know however, that on 22nd April 1846, at Lugwardine, Herefordshire, where Hoskyns had been the curate, John Leigh married Phyllis Emma (also born in 1817) the daughter of Commodore Sir John Strutt Peyton RN of an old naval family.

Immediately on arrival in Aston Tirrold, Hoskyns went about pulling down and rebuilding the old rectory, (of which there is no record, but it was possibly a small wattle and daub house like many others in the village at that time). Hoskyns does not record where

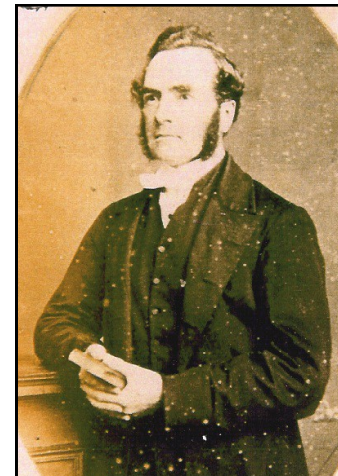
Harewood House (east front) and Chapel

Childhood home of Sir John Leigh Hoskyns



*Lady Hoskyns, (1817-1914)
wife of Sir John Leigh Hoskyns*

*Sir John Leigh Hoskyns
1817-1911*





Mrs. Hawkshaw, nee Catherine Hoskyns (b.1815), sister of Sir John

Seated : Sir John Leigh Hoskyns. Standing (left) : Rev. Edward Hawkshaw, brother in law of Sir John, (right), Chandos Wren-Hoskyns, older brother of Sir John

Mrs. John Arkwright (nee Sarah Hoskyns) 1808-1869, sister of Sir John



raised his offer to £255 and the Board agreed, and the land was sold to him.

In 1905, Mr. Cross built a purpose-built modern (for the time) downland farm on the site, calling it Carrimers Farm. It is still there, a working farm, on the other side of the A417 road from the main village.

efforts. It made new rules: all the clergy of the Deanery were ex-officio members. They were to meet every month “12½ (sic) with a prayer, after which a plain lunch of sandwiches”. This was followed by a New Testament discussion, then discussion on a theological or pastoral subject. The meeting closed at 3.30 pm with a prayer and tea or coffee. In 1884, Hoskyns was made Rural Dean, and was always referred to by that title, rather than by name, in the minutes, except when he himself took them. He himself introduced a subject at this time : ‘Singleness of motive in using our personal influence as clergymen.’ Many of the members died, and the Society gradually crumbled. In 1886, Hoskyns records, “Meredith, late vicar of Hagbourne, died at Grantham in 90th year. May I follow.” (He was in fact to live another twenty five years.)

The last entry (in another hand) is ‘Sir John Leigh Hoskyns died on Friday Dec. 8 1911 in his 95th year, beloved by all who knew him’.

In 1902 Hoskyns entered into a complicated correspondence following The Glebe Lands Act 1888, which allowed glebe lands to be sold. These particular lands were twenty three acres in two parts ‘on the hill by the Reading Road’, and said to be ‘in a very foul condition’. Hoskyns wanted to sell them to Mr. Cross, now owner of the Manor (as Mr. Cross now called it) for £220. (It is interesting that Hoskyns refers to Mr. Cross as ‘our new squire’). He says, in correspondence with Magdalen College, that the land has been of considerable trouble to him: “my worthy predecessor who lived wholly in Yorkshire for 46 years did not much study his successors’ convenience at the enclosures”. The Board of Agriculture did not think the price was high enough. Mr. Cross

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The children of Sir John and Lady Hoskyns.

1. Leigh (1850-1923), Chandos, sitting, younger twin (1848-1914) and Peyton (b.1852).

2. (standing) Benedict (1856-1933), seated : Edward (1851-1925) and John, elder twin and eldest child, (1848-1887).

3. (left to right) Emma (1856-1933), Florence (1860-1909) and Mary (1858-1947).

(Photographed 1867/68)



parishes. The attendance at the services was regularly 10 to 15 people. Hoskyns attended for the first time in April 1845, and was admitted as a member that September. The first meeting at Aston Tirrold was in August 1846. Clearly Sir John threw himself into this organisation with enthusiasm. In March 1849 he became the secretary, and for many years recorded the meetings, but always without comment. He instituted a rule that any member not attending should be fined 5/-, and anyone arriving after “½ past 12” 2/6d. “The money to be distributed to the poor of the Secretary’s parish.” The book records the attendance at the meetings of eight to fourteen vicars and curates from a wide range of parishes - Rev. H.W. Lloyd of Cholsey, Rev W.H. Young of North Moreton, Rev. R. N. Milford of Brightwell, Rev. J. Langley of Wallingford, Rev. R. Twopenny of Ipsden, Rev. Edward Hawkshaw of Ewelme (Hoskyns’ brother-in-law) and many others. They must all have travelled on horseback or in carriages to each others’ parishes, stabling their horses before returning home – some of them up to ten miles. After dinner there was a subject for discussion - various passages from the Bible, but also such things as ‘Parochial Discipline’; ‘The manifest sins of the present times: how should they affect our preaching?’; ‘How far assurance of pardon and acceptance of final salvation be individually attainable or necessary?’; ‘The point at which dissenters separate from the Church, and the causes which keep them separated’.

The Society was disbanded in 1871 after 40 years, due to many members failing in health, leaving the area or dying. In 1882, the Society was reformed and resurrected, largely through Hoskyns’

received with continuous laughter for over an hour.’

A new burial ground was presented to the Church in 1910 by Mr. Cross, but it is recorded by Hoskyns’ successor (the Rev. Green-Wilkinson) that Hoskyns did not like the site (being too far from the church), and it was not used until after his death.

There remain two books from Hoskyns. One is his Commonplace Book (of which more later). The second is a record of The Clerical Society, dating from June 23rd 1829 (before Sir John’s time) to September 3rd 1886. It was started by Rev. J. Langley of Wallingford in March 1829. At the first meeting seven parsons attended. One was Richard Meredith, vicar of Hagbourne, who became a great personal friend of Hoskyns; this man’s son gave the book later to the Hoskyns family.

The Clerical Society was one of Hoskyns’ greatest interests and pleasures. The objects of the meeting are interesting: “Brotherly intercourse, personal edification and ministerial usefulness.” They were to meet six times a year, rotating the meetings from house to house - the chairman was to be the person in whose house the meeting was held. The rules were strict; the person who proposed the subject for discussion was to speak first, the person on his left to follow. “No-one may interrupt or speak out of order.” Nothing of a political nature was to be introduced. If any member was absent four times ‘without good reason’ his name was to be erased. Clerical visitors were welcome, but no ministers “except regular clergymen of the Established Church” were eligible as visitors. Subjects were discussed before and after dinner, followed by an open service in the evening before the clergy returned to their own

Photograph of Sir John Leigh Hoskyns and his wife Emma with their family, on the occasion of their Golden Wedding. Taken outside the Rectory at Aston Tirrold, 22nd. April 1896.

Back Row, left to right

Peyton, Edwyn with his hand on Clement’s shoulder, May (Edwyn’s wife), Frank Gurdon, **Florence** Gurdon, **Chandos, Mary, Benedict.**

Front Row, left to right

Grace (Peyton’s wife), Charles Morrell, **Emma** Morrell, Lady Hoskyns, Sir John Leigh Hoskyns, Jean (Chandos’ wife and sister of Grace), Ettie (Chandos’ daughter), **Leigh** and Fanny (Leigh’s wife).

Sitting on the ground

Molly (Leigh’s daughter), Phyllis (Edwyn’s daughter), Harold Morrell, Phyllis Morrell, Muriel (Chandos’ daughter)

{Sir John and Lady Emma’s children in bold - only John is absent (died 1887).}

The restoration started on March 1st 1852, and the bishop preached at the re-opening on June 7th. John Hoskyns was well pleased with his efforts.

The Fullers, one of the major families in the area, were originally from Blewbury. An early John Fuller was a puritan, and signed an oath of allegiance to Cromwell. Apparently because of some misconduct by a catholic priest they became dissenters, as we have seen, and built the Meeting House in Aston Tirrold. Joseph Fuller (1721-1810) was the first of that family to live at what is now the Manor (then known as Tirrold, or Aston, Farm). Richard Fuller (1717-75) later inherited it. Filberts, another large old house in Aston Tirrold was owned by his son Thomas Fuller until his death in 1858. The third substantial house, Copse Stile Farm in Aston Upthorpe, was also owned by the Fullers.

The Fuller family played a large part in the life of the villages from the 17th century until 1900, and in spite of being staunch dissenters, were a constant link between the denominations.

Thomas Wellingham Fuller (1819-1905) was baptised in the non-conformist chapel, but shifted his allegiance, and joined the Church of England (as did his sisters, one of whom married the village doctor, Dr. John Breach, who lived at what is now the Red House). Hoskyns became very friendly with Thomas Wellingham Fuller, living as they were, virtually next door to each other - Hoskyns in the Rectory and Fuller in what is now the Manor. The Fuller family was probably the nearest to the Hoskyns in social status in the villages, although of course, when John Leigh inherited the title of

baronet, it put him in a different bracket - no longer simply landed gentry, but a person with an ancient family title! He was also made Honorary Canon of Christchurch Cathedral in 1880.

The rest of the Fuller family (apart from T.W. Fuller) remained faithful to the Presbyterian chapel. They were not pretentious people, preferring to call themselves 'yeomen' and 'farmers', and not assuming the role of 'squire'. However, along with many landowners, the Fullers fell on hard times in the agricultural depression of the 1870s and 1880s. George F. Fuller of Copse Stile Farm (and cousin of Thomas Wellingham Fuller) had to sell some of his land in 1882, and mortgaged the remaining part of his estate.

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was commemorated in 1897 by the establishment of a public recreation ground. Five acres of land were offered by George F. Fuller, and a committee was formed to raise £150 – the asking price. Hoskyns immediately offered £100; the rest was raised by subscription. The recreation ground remains to this day a great asset to the village, and is well used. George F. Fuller died suddenly on the cricket field on 4th June 1898, leaving a widow and five young children, who left the village. His cousin Thomas Wellingham Fuller became frail, and in 1900, at the age of 80, sold the Copse Stile and Manor estates to Mr. Francis Kynaston Cross of Bolton, Lancashire, a mill-owner's son.

In Hoskyns' time, fortnightly lantern lectures were arranged for men in the Parish Room behind the Rectory during the winter. A report in the local paper says that 'Sir Francis Edwards Bart. MP gave a most amusing lecture on 'Popular Artists' illustrated by slides, reproducing the work of Phil May, Tom Browne, Will Owen and others... the lecture was greatly appreciated, being