

Friday, 27th : Meeting from 5 pm for drinks in the Motel Bar

Saturday, 28th : A brief visit at 9.30 am to the new North Devon Record Office where our family history local to the area is being deposited. The record holdings will be explained by staff. Thence to Bideford and Lavington Church which stands upon the site of The Great Meeting House where Rev. John Copleston was Pastor 1718-1729. To Willett Street where the house of John and his father Coriolanus was registered for dissenting worship. Lunch. To Instow where we visit Fullingcott, home of the Instow branch in the cl6th. Time permitting, a visit could be made to Weare Giffard where lived members of the same branch of the family.

Sunday, 29th : Leaving at 9.30 am we follow the A39 all the way to Kilkhampton in Cornwall. A search of the churchyard will reveal whether there are tombs of the family which Col. Vivian in his Visitations of Devon showed as non-existent! We lunch in Kilkhampton and then drive to Lee Barton, once home of George Copleston of Ley in Morwenstow, again in the cl6th. From Lee we go north to Morwenstow, the other Church in which this family worshipped and see the breathtaking view from the cliffs.

Monday, 30th : Departing again at 9.30 am we take the B3232 directly to Alverdiscott, where the son and grandson of George of Ley had their home at Kingdon. After visiting the Church we hope to see whichever of the three Kingdons was ours - at time of writing we think it to be Lower Kingdon, but there is Higher Kingdon and Kingdon Farm! Lunch at Newton Tracey, just north of Alverdiscott, or in Barnstaple.

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NOTES

As always, people have been most helpful towards planning the itinerary. Ms. Rose of the new Record Office had offered to give us a talk on the Friday, but not enough of us will be present in time. Muriel has booked in there for a couple of hours of search on the Friday afternoon. The Rector of Newton Tracey and Alverdiscott, Mr. Bernard Tinsley, has kindly sent details of baptisms and burials at Alverdiscott and told us where to get the key to the Church - repairs may be afoot at the time of our visit.

Pat Slade of Devon Family History Society has provided a map of the Alverdiscott area and she and Marjorie Snetzler, also of Devon FHS, will be dining with us on Saturday. Valerie Huish of Instow kindly provided information regarding Fullingcott Farm and we hope to have her company when we are there. Mr. B.D. Coldwell, the Land Agent for Tapeley and Saunton Estates, says that Mr. and Mrs. Tyttcott will be happy for us to take photographs of Fullingcott, their home.

Sue Read of Crediton Country Courier, who took photographs of our first Gathering, hopes to come up to Barnstaple to see us. Mr. Hobbs of Lee Barton wrote 'We would be very pleased to have you call on us' - haven't present-day owners of our ancestral homes been good to us?

Mr. Pointon of Yarncombe was good enough to put me in touch with Mr. Lake of Torrington who farmed Lower Ruxhill (now farmed by his grandson) in Alverdiscott and he sent very useful information on the Kingdons. Our thanks go to all these good folk.

Now, as to the visits: those of you hoping to see the Cop(p)leston(e) name and Arms all over the place will be disappointed! Warleigh House and the churches in Merton, Dolton and Iddesleigh provided plenty of examples, but only because they were main line family and made grand marriages. Woodland and Knightstone are further places which advertise the fact that the family were there and we all enjoyed them, but in North Devon and Cornwall we are in an area where we will be very fortunate to find tombs or graves, since most were buried in the cl6th and if they are there, the inscriptions are most likely worn away, as at Marshwood. In Bideford you will see the name of John Copleston in the list of Pastors at Lavington Church, but although several were buried at Bideford Parish Church before his time, I know of no graves extant.

This branch descending from George Copleston of Ley became 'hardworking' pastors, seamen and mercers and I doubt they had much interest in emblazoning the name and Arms - save that some of them left 'my signet ring engraven with my Arms' to their favourite sons, which were probably sold or melted down when some family member was 'hard up! The point is that they lived lives which are fascinating to us and if we cannot feel them in the atmosphere when we stand where they lived for some centuries, our imagination is slipping.

The Reverend John had a brother George who sailed his 70-tonner, the 'Sarah', in the Newfoundland Trade out of Bideford, his ship being named for his wife, Sarah Prust. Their cousin Thomas was a mercer and one time Mayor of Exeter. Abdolominus, one of the sons of Lancelot and Wilmot, was buried in Barnstaple - perhaps an evening excursion to the churchyard to see if we can find him? 1671 was the date, so it is not too hopeful.

The family at Ley, or in Morwenstow or Kilkhampton descend from John, son of George of Ley, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Arundel. Col. Vivian didn't find this marriage in 1570 at Morwenstow and so stated that John died without issue. In fact he had two sons and three daughters, from which came many descendants, perhaps including our Cornwall tree 'stuck' in the 1730's. 'Northleigh' came to the family via Anne Bonville who married Philip Copleston.

Regarding Kingdon: we know that George's son Christopher (by his second wife, Agnes Drew) was the first to be described 'of Kingdon in Alverdiscott' and that Lancelot inherited Kingdon from his father. Christopher described in his Will 'my mansion house called Kingdon', but there doesn't seem to be a mansion now. Lancelot willed 'all my lands in Alverdiscott, Morwood, West Putford, Woofardisworthy, Hartland and Morwenstow ...' to Coriolanus, Caesar and Abdolominus, his sons. - Caesar left Morwood and West Putford to his wife and 'other tenements' to Coriolanus, but there are no Wills available for Corio or Abdolo. Doubtless the lands were all sold before 1700.

Most of us in this branch descend from Rev. John Copleston's son Coriolanus, who, although ordained an Independent Pastor in 1742, conformed and eventually became Curate-in-Charge of the Parish Church of St. Mary, Luton from 1771 until he died in 1800 and was buried in the nave of that Church. There is no plaque or MI to this remarkable man although you may walk over him when passing the pulpit. It has been suggested that, since many family members feel two years to be a long time between gatherings, a day be spent in Luton next year. This opportunity is taken to put forward the idea. People in many parts of the country could get to Luton for a day and it would be most rewarding. Not only is St. Mary's a very beautiful Church, but in a nearby burial ground there are some interesting graves of members of the Luton family and some of their houses are still solid dwelling places. Please let Derek know what you think of this so that a day in Luton can be arranged.

We hope everyone enjoys this Gathering. Now that we are running out of Devon places, how about thinking of a Cornwall Gathering in 1990? Perhaps by then the Cornwall family will be sorted out and from Liskeard we could see all the places where these mariners, basket makers, farmers and cordwainers lived out their lives - and where some still do. Think about it.