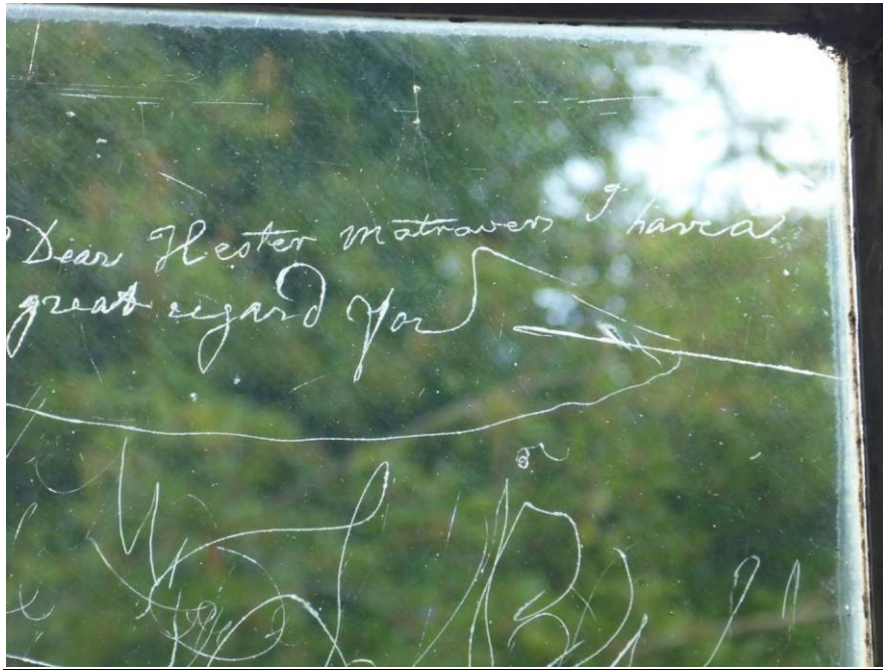


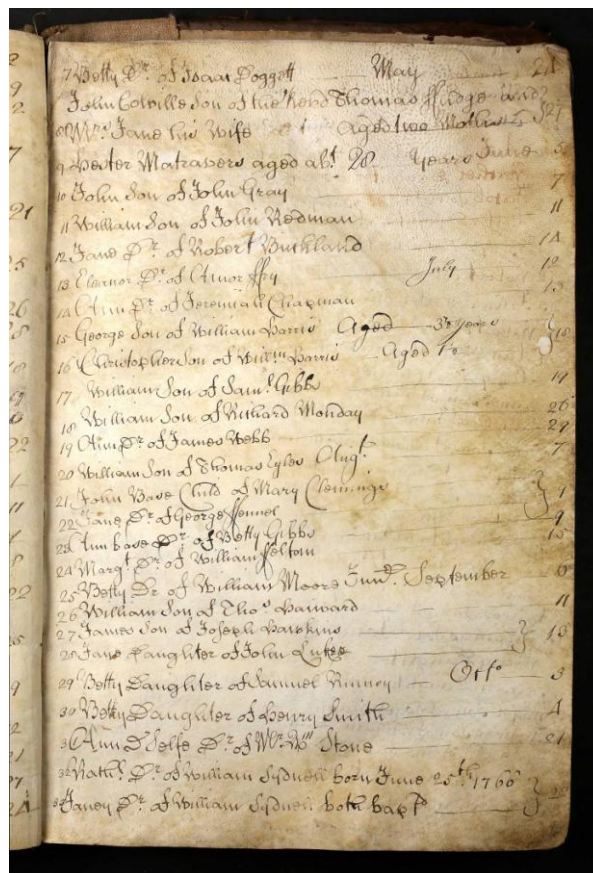
Investigation into an engraving on a window pane at The Manor, Chitterne St Mary

by John & Rose Rogers

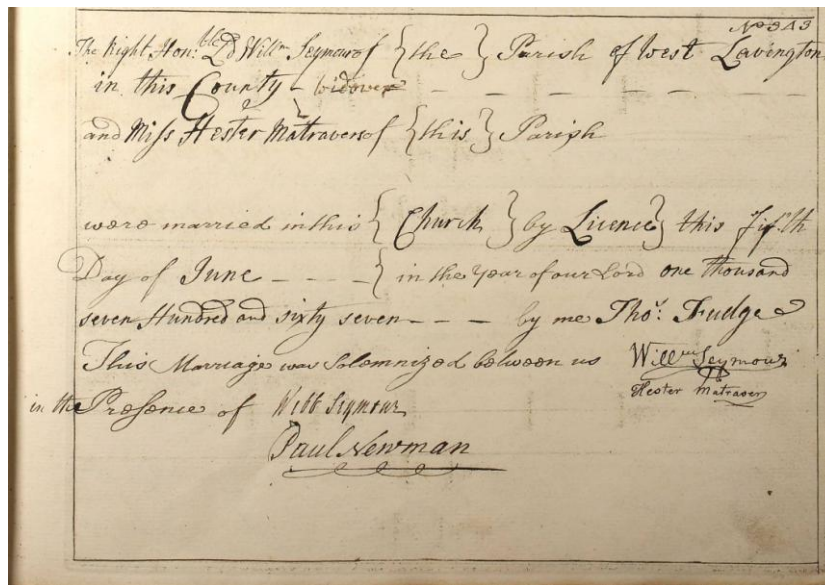


The Identification of Hester Matravere

We believe that Hester is the person of that name who appears in the Melksham parish records in 1767, by way of a baptism and a marriage record, both oddly enough on the same day. Looking at the baptism, which is dated 5th June 1767, it is an adult baptism, and she is said to be "aged about 28" – there is no mention of her parents here. Here is the baptism, it is line 9 on the page:



On the same day and place, Hester (referred to as "Miss Hester Matravers") is married to William Seymour, and here is that record:



As you can see, William is "The Right Honourable Lord William Seymour" to give him his full title, and he is very interesting indeed. His father was Edward Seymour, 8th Duke of Somerset, and the witness to the marriage, Webb Seymour is actually another son, so William's elder brother, and he would in turn become the 10th Duke of Somerset. Sadly, Paul Newman, the other witness is not he of Hollywood fame! Going back with this particular Seymour line, we arrive eventually at Sir John Seymour of Wolfhall in Wiltshire. Sir John was the 7x great grandfather of both William and Webb via his son Edward Seymour, who was the 1st Duke of Somerset. Another of Sir John's children was Jane Seymour, the third wife of Henry VIII. This made Jane Seymour a 7x great Aunt of William, so we can see that this family were pretty important, though possibly their influence had waned by William's time. The family seat by this time was Maiden Bradley, which we believe it still is.

We thought it strange that Hester was baptised just prior to her marriage, and further research shows that she was indeed baptised before – and her family were Quakers! She was baptised on 12th June 1738, though the record we found was transcribed as 12th August 1738 in error – this shows her parents were John and Susannah Matravers – see attached copy for that baptism. As Hester had been baptised as a Quaker, she would need to be baptised into the Church of England, as the Established church at the time.

This is a painting of Hester which we found on an Ancestry family tree in which she features:



Searching for her on Google, she does get a mention in Google, and they refer you to a volume by John Burke Esq. dated 1838 entitled "The Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland" where she is said to be "... John Matravers Esq, of Melksham, whose sole daughter and heiress, Hester, married in 1767..." and so on, as stated above.

There is another Hester Matravers born in Wiltshire in the 18th century, she is also from Melksham and born in 1767, but when we look at the other research we have done, we are convinced that the above Hester is the one referenced by that Chitterne inscription, though we are unable to state definitively who was the author of it. We do think it most likely, however, that it was written by William Seymour

himself, but that is just an opinion. If we are right in our identification of Hester, we next need to try and establish some connection to Chitterne itself, and that is what we will attempt to do next.

The Chitterne connection to the Seymour family

Time to look at any Chitterne – Seymour connections. Three members of a Seymour family lived or were connected to Chitterne in the 18th century:

Seymour, Charlotte: of Wantage, Berkshire.

Married: *Samuel Ferris* on 1 Nov 1759 at Chitterne AS (Reverend curate of Chitterne AS and SM from 1750). Parish Records.

Seymour, Frances: of Chitterne.

Married: John Burdon/Burden on 27 Dec 1762 at Chitterne AS (gent, of Little St Swithin, Winchester, Hampshire). Parish Records.

Marriage bond dated 25 Dec 1762, bondsman Samuel Ferris, vicar of Stapleford, Wiltshire. MLB.

Seymour, Thomas: of Chitterne SM.

Admin. Bond, commission dated 1761. WSHC P2/S/1578

Both Charlotte and Frances have grown in importance substantially during our investigation, but Thomas Seymour still remains a mystery to us at the moment. We thought we had made the breakthrough in identifying him recently, but it turned out to be a false hope. As stated before, he may be that Thomas Seymour buried in Figheldean on 6th November 1761, but there is nothing but the fact that this takes place in the same year as his Administration Bond referred to appears – this could just be a coincidence, and it must be said that the name Thomas Seymour has not emerged anywhere else in our research.

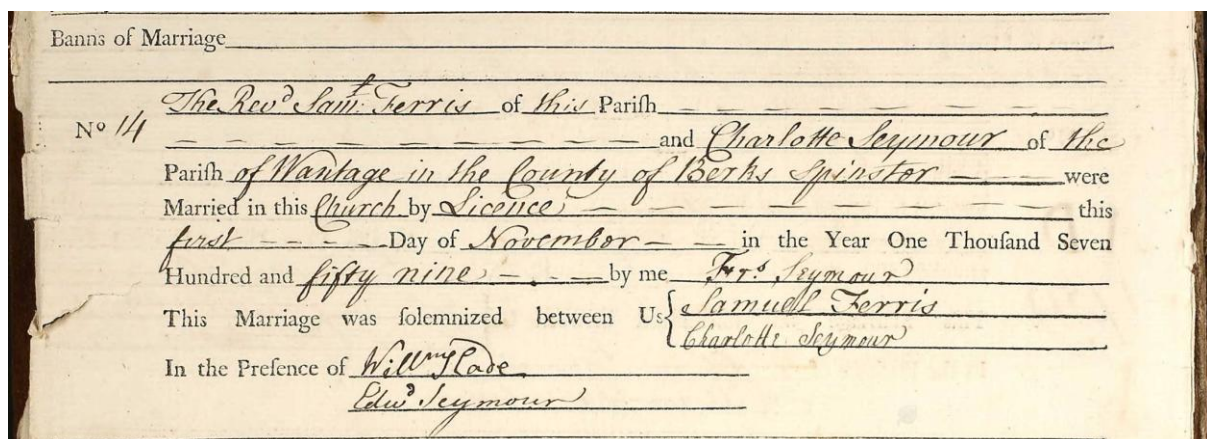
Charlotte and Frances throw up no end of leads, however. We found early on that they were sisters, and this has been proved to be correct, though we have had a major obstacle to overcome in getting to there. Their parents are Edward Seymour and Elizabeth Watkins, both of Wantage in Berkshire. Edward was born in 1707, Elizabeth in 1709 and they were married in 1732 – this was Edward's second marriage, his first wife Sarah having died just prior to 1732. We have tentatively traced Edward back to his parents John Seymour of Great Shefford, Berkshire and his wife Elizabeth Prince, but beyond that point we are in the realms of speculation, to be honest, so it is best to leave that line there, for now at least.

Edward from Wantage was a pharmacist, which seemed at first something of a step down from the nobility of the other Seymours – but he does appear amongst the benefactors of the Ashmolean at Oxford University, so there is obviously a lot more to this man than we have, as yet, discovered. We do think that if traced back far enough, there is a link between this Seymour family in Berkshire and the Seymours of Wiltshire. Here is a link to that Ashmolean reference:

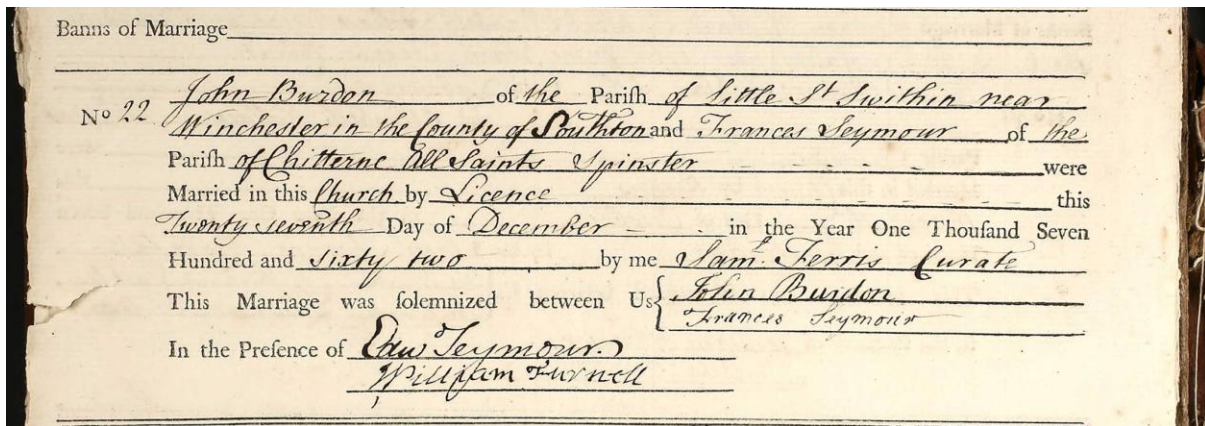
<http://www.ashmolean.org/ash/objects/makedetail.php?pmu=571&mu=574>y=brow&sec=&dtm=35&sfn=Title,Page%20Number&cpa=1&rpos=10>

He died in 1762 and was buried in Wantage on 2nd April that year. This may, or may not be relevant when looking at someone who is a witness at both Charlotte and Frances's weddings, and it's time to study them next.

Charlotte, as we know, gets married in Chitterne All Saints on 1st November 1759 – here she is, from the parish records:



Frances follows her on 27th December 1762, and here is her marriage from the parish records:



You will notice that one of the witnesses at both weddings is Edward Seymour, and originally we had thought that this was the girls' father. However, this cannot be the case with Frances's marriage, as he has died before Frances's wedding, so we have to look elsewhere for this second Edward.

We now need to look to see if we can trace Charlotte and Frances back in Wantage, and finding Frances is relatively easy. She was baptised on 14th March 1738 (probably 1738/9 under the old system) and was born on 25th February 1738, all in Wantage of course. Her parents there are said to be Edward and Elizabeth Seymour, and it was using this baptism that lead us to Edward and the information about him stated above. At this point, we hit a problem in that we could not find a baptism record for Charlotte in Wantage – or anywhere else, to be honest! There is however a record of a son called Edward, baptised on 2nd March 1740, born 30th January same year, parents Edward and Elizabeth, and we were subsequently able to prove that he was part of the same family.

So now, we have these two girls, both originally from Wantage, with seemingly the 1740 Edward Seymour (their brother) acting as a witness at Frances's wedding. But the lack of a baptism for Charlotte was troubling, to say the least. Eventually we found a will for Elizabeth Seymour, the wife of Edward the pharmacist of Wantage – this was dated 12th August 1760 and named a number of her children, amongst whom were all her daughters. They were named as Charlotte, Frances, Katherine and Elizabeth, and this seemed to prove that Charlotte and Frances were indeed sisters. By checking all the named children on the will, and cross-referencing them to all baptisms of Edward and Elizabeth in Wantage, we now knew we had the right family. The will did, however, raise one almighty problem, apart from the on-going mystery over Charlotte's missing baptism – Elizabeth's Charlotte was indeed, like our Charlotte, married by 1760 – but the man said to be her husband, and Elizabeth's son-in-law was not Samuel Ferris. A real blow, had we got it wrong all along? Elizabeth had Charlotte's husband as Pharis Clerk, and him we had never heard of at all. When Charlotte married in Chitterne to Samuel Ferris, she was stated to be a spinster, and we knew that she was still married to him in the 1780s, so it could not be a second marriage, so what was going on? Back to the drawing board, as it were.

How do you prove that a mother is wrong about her daughter's husband? It seems impossible but if we were right, then Elizabeth was wrong somewhere. The answer came out of the blue, that was the lightbulb moment. We searched for a marriage between Charlotte Seymour and Pharis Clerk and got nothing – but our search did throw up something, though it was totally unrelated to our search – it threw up a marriage for a William Ferris Clerk in 1707 in Dauntsey, Wiltshire – and there it was! Pharis was Ferris, Clerk referred to Samuel's occupation, a clerk in Holy Orders! The copy we have of the will is, of course, a transcription, not the original, and we believe that there has been an error in transcribing Samuel's name into the document we see – it has to be that way, we reckon.

So now we are beyond that, but still left with that non-existent baptism for Charlotte. She came from a family who automatically did these things, it is unthinkable that they had simply not had Charlotte baptised, though it might have been lost somewhere. At this point, we went back to our list of baptisms for the family, and noticed that born on 19th November 1735, baptised the same day is one Charles Seymour – and he, unlike the other sons, does not appear on the will, which is odd. By this time, we knew from Charlotte's burial record in 1801 when she was aged 65, that she was born circa 1736 – and that is why there is no baptism under her name. Either the mistake has been made on the original parish baptism record, or it is possible that Charlotte's sex was mistaken at birth – there apparently was a case like this in Imber in the 1830s, though I was unable to find the actual person.

And that brings us full circle, we believe – Charlotte and Frances are indeed sisters, they come from Wantage but marry in Chitterne for reasons unknown, but why? And do they have any connection to William Seymour and Hester? We believe that they are connected to William, though quite what the connection is we have been unable so far to ascertain. Time to look at the link.

Charlotte's marriage

Charlotte, as stated above, married Samuel Ferris, or more correctly "The Reverend Samuel Ferris" who was at the time the curate of both Chitterne parishes.

He was the normal person to officiate at marriage ceremonies in Chitterne, though obviously he was unable to perform this duty at his own wedding. On that marriage, we see that it is carried out by Francis Seymour, and he again is an interesting person. At this time, according to the Clergy of the Church of England Database (CCeD) website, he was the vicar of Wantage, and this makes sense in the fact that Charlotte hails from that parish. He is, also from the same source, stated to be "Commonly called Lord Francis Seymour" and will later on in 1766 be appointed to the position of Dean of Wells Cathedral, and finally becoming vicar of Henstridge in 1777. All this at the same time, he was obviously a busy man! There's also an interesting comment attached to his records on this database:

“s. of Edward, of Seend, Wilts, baronet. QUEENS COLL, matric 10 Oct 1743, aged 18; vicar of Wantage, Berks 1756, chaplain in ordinary to the king 1752, canon of Windsor 1755-66, canon residentiary and dean of Wells 1766; died 1799”

Notice his connection to the (then-reigning) King George II and his position as a canon in Windsor – that was St. George’s chapel in Windsor Castle, no less.

More pertinently, as far as we are concerned are his family connections. He was a brother of the William Seymour above, the one who married Hester Matravers and coincidentally his direct descendants would eventually, in the late 19th century, become Duke of Somerset, when his brother Webb’s line itself died out. The present Duke, John Seymour, the 18th Duke is directly related, though it’s beyond us to work out the exact relationship here. The ancestral home is now in Maiden Bradley.

Now, it might just be coincidence that this Francis Seymour performed Charlotte’s marriage ceremony, but we would think that it might well be more than the fact he is vicar of Wantage – after all, it seems to be a fair old trip, especially back in the 18th century. So why did he do it? And we come back to where we started, that inscription on the window at The Manor.

Whoever did it was an educated person, particularly if it does date, as we think it may well do so, back to the 1760s. William was a widower when he married Hester, though so far we are unable to trace who his first wife was. If the inscription was his work, which we think it may well be – our opinion only, no more than that – then William must have at least been in Chitterne at some point prior to the marriage, and also a resident or guest in The Manor. Maybe we will never know, but it is fascinating, isn’t it? No matter how we look at it, his brother Francis is definitely in the village – and we don’t believe for one minute that was just a coincidence, this Seymour family had links to Chitterne, of that we have no doubt, no doubt whatsoever.