

Hugh Luttrell

Born 10.2.1857. Liberal Member of Parliament.
Life story compiled by his grandson Alex Reid.

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1. Luttrell Ancestors



Dunster Castle, Somerset.

This account of Hugh Luttrell and his ancestors was written by his daughter Louisa Reid.

Starting with my father's family, the Luttrells. As 'landed gentry' they may be popularly known as having owned Dunster Castle in Somerset from the 14th century until it was given to the National Trust in 1976. As an instance of the Luttrell - Dunster link, I remember my Aunt May telling me the following story. She used to stay at a small hotel in Italy, the San Giorgio, at Lenno near Lake Como. On one occasion they sent her a letter addressed to Miss Luttrell, England. Presumably arriving at the GPO London, 'Try Dunster' was added and it was duly delivered!

Of general interest is the fact that Mrs Alexander, the writer of several hymns in our present hymn books was a friend of my grandmother and was staying at the Castle when she wrote 'All things bright and beautiful'. She was sitting on the terrace, describing Grabbist Hill and the river Avill nearby. The verse referring to the rich and poor is no more out-of-date than is 'gathering rushes', but the church authorities evidently took exception to it as denoting class distinction and have banished it from our hymn books.

The first recorded Luttrells were living at Irnham in Lincolnshire. Of these, Andrew was one of the knights entrusted with the defence of Windsor Castle after the battle of Lewes in 1264.

Sir Geoffrey Luttrell (1276-1345) is chiefly remembered as being responsible for the Luttrell Psalter with its fascinating illustrations of contemporary life. There are scenes of harvesting, preparing and cooking food and entertainments. Sir Geoffrey and his family are shown sitting at the high table at a banquet. It is now permanently on view at the British Museum. For a further description of the fourteenth century I will quote Sir Geoffrey's will, made after his wife's death and shortly before his own. He bequeathed various sums of money to sixteen of his relations some of them members of religious communities, to his chaplain, his

confessor, his chief esquire, and his chamberlain. The largest bequests were those to works of religion and charity. For his funeral at Irnham, twenty quarters of wheat and twenty of malt, wine, spices, and other condiments to the value of 20 pounds were to be provided for friends attending the service. A sum of 200 pounds to be distributed among the poor in three instalments within a month. The beggars of the parish were also to have forty quarters of wheat and on the anniversary a further sum of 20 pounds was to be given to the poor praying for him. For the first five years after his death, twenty chaplains were to say masses for his soul in the church at Irnham, dividing among them a hundred marks a year.



Sir Geoffrey Luttrell dining, from the 14th century Luttrell Psalter, now in the British Museum.

Skipping through the centuries, Hugh Luttrell of Dunster was created a Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII in 1487. He was Sheriff of Somerset and Dorset for a year beginning in November 1488. Nine years later he took the field against Perkin Warbeck under the Duke of Buckingham. When the Princess Catherine of Aragon came to England in 1501 in order to marry the Prince of Wales, Sir Hugh Luttrell was one of the seven knights and gentlemen of Somerset who were selected to escort her from Crewkerne to Sherborne. In 1513, he was serving in the Royal Navy ship of Leonard Fiscaballi.

On March 31st 1514 Sir Hugh entered into an agreement with Sir Thomas Wyndham as follows:

'Andrew Luttrell, sonne and heire apparent of the said Sir Hugh, by the grace of God, shall mary and take to his wief Margaret one of the daughters of the said Sir Thomas, or any other of the daughters of the said Sir Thomas such as the said Andrew shall best lieke if the said Margaret or such of her sisters as the said Andrew shall best like thereunto will agree and the laws of holy church will permit and suffer.'

Andrew and Margaret duly married on April 22nd! Andrew's son John spent most of his time away from home, fighting both in Scotland and France. In 1544 he was at Boulogne in command of over two hundred men. In 1547, under the Duke of Somerset, he led three hundred men in the vanguard of the English army at the battle of Pinkie.

The Battle of Pinkie Cleugh, sometimes known as the Battle of Pinkie, took place on 10 September 1547 on the banks of the River Esk, near Musselburgh, Scotland. The last pitched battle between Scottish and English armies, it was part of the conflict known as the Rough Wooing. It was a catastrophic defeat for Scotland, where it became known as Black Saturday.

Enough of my early forbears. In 1867 my grandfather George Luttrell inherited Dunster Castle and the prosperity that went with it. This included most of Minehead, Luxborough, Wooten Courtenay and East Quantoxhead in Somerset. Also Wootton Fitzpaine Manor and land in Dorset and Nethway in Devon. The land, which included the ruins of Cleeve Abbey was bought in 1870. At that time the buildings were used for farming with pig sties in the cloisters!

My grandfather and later his son my Uncle Alec had the Abbey restored. I remember when visiting my uncle, seeing the work in progress. It was exciting to watch more tiles being discovered as the mounds of earth were dug out. These were carefully re-laid as flooring with no original pattern of arrangement. We always had a talk with Cleeva Clapp, the custodian, who lived nearby and was devoted to the place.



Cleeve Abbey is now in the care of English Heritage.

My uncle used to tell the story of Cleeva's name, which seems typical of those Victorian days. My grandmother had called on her parents to see the new baby and asking what she was called was told Plevna, which was just in the news. 'It seems a pity to call her after a battle, why don't you call her Cleeva after the Abbey?' she suggested. When the christening came and the rector asked for the name and was given Cleeva, he objected to it's not being a Christian name. The godparent answered 'Mrs Luttrell ordained it so' and the rector duly complied!

Uncle Alec was the eldest of the sons, the next being my father Hugh, the youngest Claude and their sisters my Aunt May and Aunt Bee. They evidently took their religion seriously as children. Uncle Alec told me how once they were having a

walk when one of them remembered that he hadn't said his prayers that morning so, then and there, he knelt on the path and did so, to the approval of the others. Uncle Claude remembered that when he was a small boy Gladstone, then Prime Minister, came to stay with his parents. Not realizing that Family Prayers took place each morning, Gladstone was half way down the main staircase leading to the hall where he could see that the Prayers had already started. Instead of disappearing upstairs again, Claude was impressed to see him kneel on the stairs and take part.

My grandfather was Master of the private pack of foxhounds without subscription known as 'Mr.Luttrell's'. The country hunted was later to become the West Somerset of which my grandfather became Master. All his children enjoyed hunting and riding.



My father is next in my list of ancestors. He chose an Army career, going into the Rifle Brigade. He as ADC to Lord Cowper and then Lord Spencer when each was Governor of Ireland. During his time there he enjoyed the hunting and polo. His next appointment was ADC to Sir John Adye, Governor of Gibraltar. Here he was on the staff of the Calpe Hunt. While he was there, the Prince of Wales, later to become George V (above right) stopped off on his way to India and had a game of polo. It always amuses me that my father lent him both his clothes and his polo ponies for this!

In the year 1892 at the age of 35 my father (right) stood as the Liberal candidate for the Tavistock Division of Devon, which included Dartmoor. Until then it had been Conservative. I remember Aunt Bee telling me how she stayed with her brother at the Bedford Hotel in Tavistock for the election. The sitting member and his wife were also staying there. Quite confident that they would win, they were very friendly, but as soon as my father's success was declared the Conservative pair were so surprised and angry that they would not speak to them again!

In 1904, my father married Dorothy Hope Wedderburn, aged 24, daughter of a fellow Liberal MP. They were married at Holy Trinity Church in Chelsea. Between 400 and 500 guests came and Campbell-Bannerman, the Prime Minister, was at the wedding reception.



3. Family Life



Louisa, Mary and Elizabeth as toddlers.

This account of Hugh Luttrell's family life was written by his daughter Louisa Reid.

When my father was MP for the Tavistock Division he rented Ward House, Bere Alston. It was a square Georgian house belonging to Lord Mount Edgecombe who lived at Cotehele, the other side of the river. The nearest large village, or small town, was Calstock. To get there we walked down to the river, and for a penny were rowed across by a man in a navy blue jersey. Our cook, Mrs Grills, lived in Calstock and arrived in this way. On Monday, washing was done in the laundry - a room that formed the right hand side of the 'hard' at the back of the house. On Tuesday, ironing was done here, and we liked to watch the little bubbles on the iron when it was spat on to test its heat. We brought our own hair-ribbons and dolls' clothes to be ironed.



Calstock, with its railway viaduct.

We got over a stile from the garden to walk up across a field to the railway, where the newspaper was thrown out to us by the guard. I don't remember now if this was a daily occurrence. Bere Alston is about two and half miles from Ward House and we went there in the pony trap with Miss Hands (who looked after us) or with my mother in the high, two-wheeled dog cart or on special occasions in the wagonette. This had cushioned seats all round it facing inwards, and was driven by Frost, the groom. All these were made of light-coloured varnished wood and had a long-handled whip slotted into a holder.

To give work to women in the neighbourhood my father started a fruit and flower farm. Raspberries were grown in rows and between them were planted narcissi. As far as I remember these were all 'pheasant eyes'. Early in the morning we heard 'It's a long way to Tipperary' and other songs of the time being sung by the pickers. We would watch the flowers being bunched neatly with flowers all facing one way, and packed into boxes. At raspberry time, these were loaded into barrels and weighed ready for the jam factory.

We spent most of our time 'playing in the garden'. This included climbing up into the laurel bushes, and talking amongst ourselves an invented 'double Dutch' language. We had our own pet rabbits and guinea pigs to look after. Each of us had an oblong patch of garden and our own wheelbarrow and tools. I remember taking my white turnips to the kitchen. We sometimes rode the pony and I remember falling off near a holly hedge and rolling onto the very prickly dry leaves.

On wet days we made things. These included kites made of brown paper fixed onto cross sticks and painted, with tails of cut up paper. Making scrapbooks was an everlasting pastime. These were made of brown paper and we cut out and pasted in pictures. We enjoyed paper chases through the surrounding fields, keeping to the edges. The excitements started the day before when we all sat round cutting up newspaper and filling the canvas satchel.

I don't remember any photograph albums of our own but we had post-card albums with slits to fit the cards into. There were five of us close in age - Mary, Louisa, Elizabeth, William and Anne. Two of us talking together would refer to the 'others'. 'I'll get/tell/find/ the others'. Mary probably kept the peace because I don't remember any quarrelling.

As well as Miss Hands, there was 'Mademoiselle'. There was probably a change of young French girl, but I just think of her now as a French speaking person. She would be there at meal-times when we had to say 'Puis je avoir quelque chose a manger' and would have a piece of bread and butter etc put on our empty plate. We always had to finish the food on our plate and if we were disinclined to would be told not to waste food and 'think of the poor Russians'. I didn't like runny boiled eggs and one occasion when I wouldn't eat one, it was kept until I did. It was much nastier cold. The only French I remember Mademoiselle saying to us was 'Depechez vous mes enfants' and 'Taisez vous mes enfants'. She seemed to be in charge when we were getting on our outdoor clothes that needed a lot of buttoning up. I remember a button-hook being used, and the discomfort as it was twisted around the button.

In summer, our hats had elastic under the chin, and could also hurt if it snapped back. We were dressed to match for our everyday clothes. I remember the white check cotton in summer and navy serge smocked in red in winter. All these had no waistline and three tucks at the hem, which were let down as we grew. Our clothes were also handed down. Our best dresses were different to each other and also handed down. These had a lot of lace and we wore pink or blue sashes with them. We liked our matching hats. Our everyday ones were called rush hats and one year had wreaths of buttercups and another bright red and black realistic cherries; we liked these as they rattled as we ran. Our best straw hats were called Leghorn - a creamy colour with wreaths of mixed flowers.

In those days everyday objects were not coloured. Hairbrushes were natural wood colour and toothbrushes white. To distinguish our own possessions we each had a colour - Mary's pink, mine blue and Elizabeth's green. Sylko of these colours was twisted around the handle. The same distinguished our identical toys. I remember our dolls' beds with the sheets and blankets marked by little ribbon bows of our own colour. A few of our toys differed, probably given as presents.

Mary had a real china tea set with pink roses on it which fitted back into its box after every use. This was a special treat; Mary pound out and we had coloured flat pieces of coffee sugar for food. We pretended we were grown ups and conversed accordingly. It would be amusing have a recording of this! My tea set was blue enamel and I could use it at any time.

I liked to sit under the beech trees and collect the beech nuts to use on the plates. The Harness Room next to the stables was under the charge of Frost and we liked to visit him there and see everything so well polished. He had a notice there with the words 'A place for everything - and everything in its place'. Our father's sword hung in a place of honour! I suppose it was a relic of when he was in the Rifle Brigade before he was married.

The semi-basement floor was no longer in use as the pantry on the ground floor had been made into a kitchen. One of the rooms in the lower area had been made into a gym for us. The floor was covered with thick mattresses and a rope and rope ladder trapeze were hung from the ceiling. The old kitchen had a range which was lit when we had our hair washed and sat in a row with our backs to the tall guard to dry. Our hair was cut by a visiting hairdresser. This included singeing the ends, which produced a burning smell.

Mrs Pedrick came to teach us drawing and a dance teacher came on certain days; her instructions included deportment which meant walking with a book balanced on the head. I also remember learning to curtsy with a rug fixed to trail behind as a train. It was many years later that I was presented at Court with ostrich feather headdress and fan. I curtsied to Queen Mary and King George V, with Edward standing, brazen-haired, behind them.

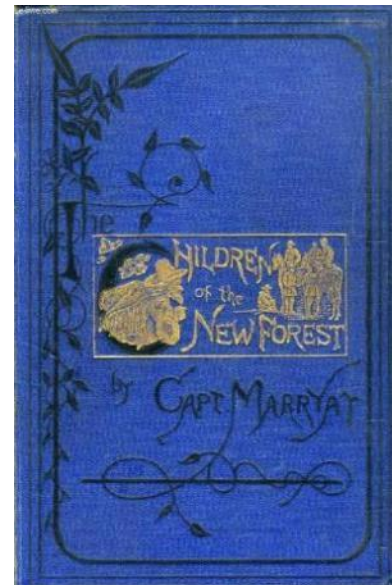


Our early education at Ward House was mostly from our mother. She taught us to read 'The cat sat on the mat' from a little green book and to write. We made the letters join up into words, unlike the script children learn today. Spelling was learnt as a game and I have never had any difficulty with it since.

My mother had been at Somerville College Oxford and at the Sorbonne in Paris. At twenty two she had married a fellow Liberal MP of her father's, who was double her age. Educating us was probably a career for her.

She read to us while we lay on the floor with our little red cushions for 'rest' or were having our hair brushed. The books were teaching us. They included 'Little Gera in Sweden', and all the 'Shown to Children' series.

Picture books of nests, shells, stars etc, 'Children of the New Forest' and 'The Little Duke'.



As well as Ludo and Halma we had instructive games. We each had a jigsaw puzzle of England with our initial on the back of each piece and would race each other to complete them. I still remember the largest yellow piece of Yorkshire and little brown Rutland. The game of Lotto was foreign flags which we soon recognised.



A wagonette.

I remember family drives in the wagonette when our parents would ask us in turn arithmetical problems, such as 'If apples each cost one penny, how many would you get for two shillings?'. Spelling has always been easy, having it well taught to us as a game.



Plymouth in 1910.

We sometimes went shopping with Mama in Plymouth. The shops I remember were called Pophams, Spooner and Yeo. It always included tea at Goodbody. Here we were each allowed to carry our plate to the counter and put on it a cake of our choice. Before Christmas, we went to the Penny Bazaar where our mother bought presents to put on the Christmas tree.

The Christmas party was at Bere Alston school for all the children of the village. There were steps up to the platform where the tree stood, sparkling with its lit candles. Two women, perhaps the schoolmistresses, stood beside it, one with a cane with a cone on the end to put out candles that bent over and might have set the tree on fire. The other took presents off the tree and handed them to Father Christmas. Two of us stood, dressed as fairies holding a wand in one hand, and with the other taking each toy from Father Christmas and giving it to the child who had mounted the steps.



Horrabridge.

For the next few days we visited the houses of babies or children who hadn't been able to come, to give them their presents. These walks would have been with Miss Hands, who looked after us most of the time. She also used to drive us in the pony trap with Topsy. I remember the scent of honeysuckle and the wild roses so near to us in the lanes as we went at a brisk trot.



Hugh Luttrell's wife Dorothy.

My brother John was born when I was ten. We hadn't been told anything about it, but had gone to stay with Miss Hands at her parent's house. This happened sometimes and we always enjoyed it. They kept the Post Office at Horrabridge on Dartmoor.

Our stay would usually include a picnic at a Tor on Dartmoor, but perhaps not this time as John was born on December 31st! We liked to sit on the Post Office counter, presumably after office hours, and tap out messages on the telegraph machine. At the end of this visit, we were told that would be a surprise when we got home. As we neared the house we all guessed what it would be.

I had recently learnt to whistle. My guess was a puppy and as we neared the house I whistled away hoping to see one! Back at the house we were taken to our mother's

bedroom, where we were told the surprise would be. On entering the room the first thing I saw as a wizened old woman sitting on a chair. Surely that wasn't the surprise. Then my mother in bed. And in bed with her the very bald head of our new baby brother. We already had William three years younger than me but I don't remember his arrival.



Two of Hugh and Dorothy Luttrell's children: Louisa and William.

Our father's mother, Gran-at-Dunster, lived at Dunster Castle near Minehead in Somerset. Also there were her daughters Aunt May and Aunt Bee. And sometimes Uncle Alec and Uncle Claude were there too. There were several staircases but the one that we used was a stone spiral one that took a long time to get to our nursery. I remember being in the dining room while the grown-ups were having breakfast and

my uncles walking round the table to eat their porridge. I was asked what we were going to do today and said 'We are going to the seashores'. I was told to say 'seaside' and however I tried I couldn't and felt so unhappy about it. I still remember what a relief it was when one of the uncles helped me with 'Louisa is quite right; the sea does have sides to it'. There was a gramophone in the hall; the records I liked best were a canary singing (or was it a nightingale?) and 'Angels, angels bright and fair, take oh take me to your care'.

Once when we were there, the Fire Brigade came to check the water pumps. Our nursery windows were closed as they were 'rained' on. The head gardener was called Thrush which we thought very funny. We used to go in the pony trap to Dunster beach.

3. Parliamentary Speeches

Hugh Luttrell served two terms as Liberal Member of Parliament for the Tavistock constituency in Devon, from 1885 to 1900 and from 1906 to 1910.

There follow are examples from Hansard, in chronological order, of his speeches in the House of Commons. He was clearly a humanitarian and a democrat. His speeches reflect his concern for the unfortunate, for example his interventions on life saving apparatus at sea, the reduction of harsh sentences for petty theft, and animal welfare. He was keen to discourage the excessive consumption of alcohol. And he was a strong proponent of democracy, including local democracy.

Ship Rocket Apparatus

House of Commons Debate, 5th May 1893.

Mr. Luttrell: I beg to ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the directions on the ship rocket apparatus are only in English and French; and, if this be the case, whether he will provide for the inclusion of directions in German and Spanish?

Mr. Mundella. The directions are only in English and French. The question of adding directions in other languages has been considered, and experimental tally boards have been made; but the Board of Trade were advised that the necessary addition to the size of the tally board would more than counterbalance the advantage, as the board has to be hauled through the sea and has to meet with all kinds of obstructions from rocks, wreckage, &c. Germans and Spaniards are not the only foreign seamen besides French wrecked upon the coast of Great Britain.



Making Government Local

House of Commons Debate, December 9th 1893.

Mr. Luttrell observed that the effect of this Amendment would be to constitute a large number of bodies in connection with these trusts. The hon. Member had said that by handing over Local Representative Bodies to the County Council the latter would have the power of making the appointments, and he had said that the County Council was composed of the representatives of the people at large.

That was why they (the Liberals) were opposed to the County Councils having this power. They were the representatives of the people at large, but what they wanted was to have the representatives of the people at small, in the parishes. They were called there to give the people in the parishes parish local government. It was not a question of county government, but of local government.

He took it that the people in the parishes were anxious to have the control, as far as possible, of local charities, whereas the effect of the Amendment would be, in the long run, to give to the County Councils the power which ought to rest with the Parish Council and the parish meetings.

Election not Appointment

House of Commons Debate on the Local Government Bill, December 18th 1893.

Mr. Luttrell said, there was now a clear issue before the House. They had to decide whether they should allow these ex officio Guardians to continue, or whether they should require Boards of Guardians to be composed entirely of representatives of the people. They had heard a great deal in the course of the Debate as to the merits of ex officio members of Boards of Guardians.

He was sure they on that (the Ministerial) side of the House desired in no way to minimise the efforts of those gentlemen who had given up their time at great sacrifice to themselves to serve the public on Boards of Guardians. But he would point out that it was a question of principle. It was a question as to whether they wished to have a really representative government in the localities—government by the people unhampered and unfettered by any nominees or men appointed by Local or Central Bodies. They wanted to have in the local districts their local representatives carrying on their work unhampered by ex officio Guardians. The hon. Member for Carnarvon, no doubt, was a gentleman of great experience in these matters, and his views were entitled to great respect.

The hon. Member proposed that Boards of Guardians should have the power of nominating men to act with them. What was the reason of his Amendment? He told them he moved it because he was afraid that if there were no continuity of ex officio Guardians—that was to say, of men of leisure and wide experience—there would be maladministration of poor relief. The hon. Member told them also that he feared that unless these gentlemen were appointed or nominated in some form or other they would not take part in the work of Boards of Guardians. That was entirely contrary to all their experience.

They had found in County Council elections that men who, previously to the Local Government Act of 1888, had taken part in local affairs were willing to stand for election as County Councillors. His hon. Friend wished to almost force the ex officio class on Boards of Guardians. Well, a good many faults had been attributed to the squires, but he (Mr. Luttrell) had never heard before that they were at all bashful, and he believed that they would be perfectly willing to come forward for election.

One hon. Member had said that ex officios would not stand for election because they were too busy. If such were the case, how could they afford the time to take part now in the administration of local relief? A great deal had been said about the evils which were apparent in Poor Law administration previously to the year 1834; but these evils had arisen mainly, or very greatly, through the action of the very class of men whom his hon. Friend now proposed to put on the Boards of Guardians.

Lord Althorp, when he introduced the Poor Law Bill of 1834, said that— From the conclusion of the last century up to the present time the Magistracy of this country, though acting with very good feelings of humanity, had in the administration of the Poor Laws fallen into considerable mistakes, and he had himself, in his own situation as a Magistrate, not unfrequently felt bound to act upon bad and erroneous principles in this respect. With this view, he should propose that Justices should not in future have the power of ordering parochial relief to persons in their own homes—he meant outdoor relief to the poor. The proposal of the Government was to give the people more representative power. By granting increased representative power in 1836 Parliament, to a large extent, abolished the evils which then existed, and he believed that when a still greater increase of representative power was given the Poor Law administration would be still further improved.

It was not necessary to have such Guardians as his hon. Friend proposed, because there was now a Central Authority. The President of the Local Government Board stated the other night that he had ample power to safeguard the interests of the ratepayers and to prevent any wanton or undue expenditure on Poor Law relief. He (Mr. Luttrell) hoped that the Committee would shortly go to a Division, and he felt perfectly convinced that in one Lobby would be found the friends of privilege, and in the other Lobby the friends of democratic representation, unhampered by officialism.

Medical Services for Rural Postmen

House of Commons Debate 24th June 1897.

Mr. Luttrell: I beg to ask the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster General, whether he would take steps to supply all rural postmen with free medical attendance, in the same way as postmen in towns; or, in the event of the Department being unable to grant free medical attendance where there are not sufficient postmen to warrant the employment of a medical officer, whether an allowance could be paid to rural postmen when they have to seek medical advice?

Mr. Hanbury: Rural postmen who reside in or start from a town where the Department has a medical officer are entitled to free medical attendance, and those who reside more than three miles from the town can obtain advice and medicine free at the surgery; but beyond this the Postmaster General is not prepared to go.

Rat Worrying

House of Commons Debate, 23rd May 1898.

Mr. Luttrell. I beg to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his attention has been drawn to a case before Mr. Sheil at Westminster, in which a man was charged with cruelty to a rat by worrying it with a dog while held captive by a string; whether he is aware that it was held that, as the animal was not a domestic animal, it was no legal offence; and whether he would take into consideration the advisability of so altering the law as to make all such cases amenable to justice?

Secretary of State for the Home Department: Yes, my attention has been called to this case and the magistrate's decision. The point is one which I have already noted as a proper subject for legislation when an opportunity occurs.

Mr. Luttrell. Is the right honourable Gentleman prepared to introduce a Bill?

Secretary of State for the Home Department: If I saw a Bill on the subject I should be anxious to give it careful consideration; but, as the honourable Gentleman knows, the subject is not free from difficulty.

A Soldier Kills his Opponent in a Boxing Match

House of Commons Debate, 23rd February 1899.

Mr. Luttrell. I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State for War whether his attention has been drawn to the fatal boxing contest which took place at Cape Town on Monday, 6th February, in which a private of the King's Royal Rifle Corps was engaged, and in which his opponent lost his life; and whether, out of consideration for the maintenance of the respect in which the British Army is universally held, as well as on the grounds of expediency, he will take such steps as to prevent the soldiers in Her Majesty's Army taking part in such contests?

Mr. Wyndham. No report on this matter has reached the War Office. The Secretary of State for War does not propose to prohibit soldiers from taking part in any lawful pastime.

The Cruel Case of Jane Morrice

House of Commons Debate, 29th October 1908.

Mr. Luttrell: I beg to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he would inquire into the case of Jane Elizabeth Morrice, who was sentenced at the Middlesex sessions on Saturday last to five years penal servitude and two years police supervision for stealing 1d.

Mr. Gladstone: As I have already stated, I cannot reply to this question until the ten days within which the prisoner may apply for leave to appeal against her sentence have expired.

Restraining the Consumption of Alcohol

House of Commons Debate, 13th November 1908.

Mr. Luttrell appealed to the Government to withdraw this new clause, or at any rate a portion of it. The clause did not appear to be popular on either side of the House. [Cries of dissent.] Well, he had heard a good many speeches, but with the exception of those delivered from the front bench, none were in its favour, and he appealed to the Government to withdraw it.

One of the objects of the Bill—and a very important object—was to restrict the amount of Sunday drinking, but this clause would check the full restrictions which the Government proposed by the Bill to place on Sunday drinking. There would be

immense difficulty in carrying out the proposals in the clause as well as in making an attempt to differentiate the period of time when the houses should supply the one form of refreshment or the other. The houses were to be closed, but in a room set apart for the purpose, liquor with meals could be taken. It would be extremely difficult to say where the "house" ended and the "room" began. There was not only a question of geography, but also one of history, because the public and the publican would have to find out what it was that the law really meant.

It would not be a question of the law as to closing as it then was, but as it had been previously. Then it would be extremely hard to define a "meal." It might be possible for a man to demand an alcoholic drink, and at the same time to take a biscuit. Again, did the Government mean a "solid meal" or a "liquid meal." If the latter, soup might be allowed, and it would be possible for a large amount of alcohol to be introduced into the soup. This clause was not framed in the interests of temperance but to meet the outcry which came from certain people who were interested in fashionable London restaurants. Why should the whole country suffer on that account? Therefore, in the interest of temperance he appealed most strongly to the Government to consider whether they could not withdraw, at any rate, a great portion of the clause.

Sheep Dipping Regulations

House of Commons Debate, 7th August 1907.

Mr. Luttrell: To ask the hon. Member for South Somerset, as representing the President of the Board of Agriculture, whether he is aware that great inconvenience is caused to farmers by the regulations affecting sheep-dipping, in that they may have to dip their sheep during harvest time, and especially to those farmers who have their sheep on the moor and who, under the present regulations, may have to bring their sheep from a considerable distance in to be dipped and then turned out again, necessitating a second gathering; and whether he can see his way to extending the time during which sheep may be dipped from the end of August to the end of September.

Sir Edward Strachey: The period during which the dipping must be carried out was selected, after full consideration, as the one which would entail the least possible inconvenience to all concerned, and we could not extend it without having also to impose restrictions on the movement of sheep, which would cause much greater inconvenience than the present arrangements. If, however, my hon. friend will give me any specific instances of special difficulty I shall be glad to see if it is possible to meet them.

Games in Royal Parks

House of Commons Debate, 13th August 1907.

Mr. Luttrell: To ask the First Commissioner of Works, whether his attention has been drawn to the action of a committee of the London County Council with regard to games in the London parks; and whether he could see his way to allowing some portions of the royal parks being used for the purposes of games.

Mr. Harcourt: I am not at present able to see my way to devote further accommodation for the playing of games in the royal parks. Facilities are now given for games organised under the education committee of the London County Council and will continue to be so afforded so far as space permits.

Affordable Allotments

House of Commons Debate, 13th August 1907.

Mr. Luttrell seconded the Amendment, and said he would strongly urge the Government to accept it. After all, what was the object of this Bill? It was to provide small holdings for the people, but it was no use providing small holdings for the people unless they provided them at a price which the people could afford to pay. When they considered of whom the county councils were personally composed, they knew perfectly well that, as at present constituted, they consisted very largely of landowners, and although no doubt they did not wish to be unfair, they were almost of necessity bound to look upon the land at perhaps a higher value than it really was worth.

It was common knowledge that most people looked upon their own possessions at a higher value than they really were worth, or, in common parlance, "all their geese were swans." What, however, the House was doing by this Bill was to make out of the swans of the county council geese of the people. He thought the great advantage of the Bill was that it gave the tenants security.

The man who took a holding knew that he could continue on in that holding at a certain price and that the rent could not be raised. But if they were going to allow a man to take land at a higher price than its proper value a burden would be placed upon him which he might not feel immediately but which he must feel as years went on. Such a thing would do away absolutely with the great advantage obtained under the Bill.

There were strong reasons, therefore, why the House should be in favour of this Amendment. The dangers of people paying too high a price for the land were apparent in Ireland. He was informed that in Ireland there was a very great danger in the future on account of the price that was paid for the land. It was proposed that the Board of Agriculture should be allowed to step in and say to the county council whether they considered the price was a fair one or not.

The whole of the Bill was drawn up with the recognition of the subserviency of the county council to the Board, and therefore it was not too much to say that the Board should have some voice in this matter. It had a great knowledge of agriculture and would be of great service in determining the point. He therefore urged the right hon. Gentleman to consider very carefully whether he could not accept the Amendment.

Water Cannon not Bullets

House of Commons Debate, 14th August 1907.

Mr. Luttrell: To ask the Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland whether, in view of the loss of life at Belfast through the firing with bullets in the streets, he

would make representations to the authorities as to whether, in the event of the necessity of dispersing a mob, some other means, such as the use of water, might be adopted.

Mr. Birrell: I think my hon. friend may rest assured that, as in the recent case, the authorities will only use firearms in the very last resort, and when all other means have failed. I will, however, bring my hon. friend's suggestion to the notice of the authorities.

Harsh sentencing of poachers

House of Commons Debate, 4th October 1909.

Mr. Luttrell: asked the Home Secretary whether his attention has been called to the case of two men recently sent to prison by the Welshpool justices for three months and two months respectively, and to find sureties in the sum of £10, with an intimation that on failure to do this they would have to remain in gaol for an additional period of six months, the offence being that of having unlawfully destroyed certain game, to wit, 12 rabbits; and whether he would consider if this sentence might be mitigated?

The Secretary of State: presumes that the case to which my hon. Friend refers is that to which his attention was called by the hon. Members for Exeter and North Mayo by questions put down on the 3rd ultimo. The Secretary of State would refer my hon. Friend to the answer he gave on the 7th ultimo.

4. Constituency Speeches



A Liberal Party meeting of the period.

The following are reports of speeches made by Hugh Luttrell in his constituency. They were archived here in 2021, with acknowledgement and thanks.

From the Western Daily Mercury of October 20th 1910.

Crowns and Top Hats

Mr. Hugh Luttrell M.P. on Events in Portugal - Striking Address at Peverell

Speaking at a well-attended public meeting in the Hyde Park School (under the chairmanship of Mr. W. Lewis) last night, Mr. Hugh F. Luttrell, M.P. for the Tavistock Division, remarked that it was true politics at home had been very quiet indeed, but their interests were not confined to these islands. More and more people of the world were beginning to feel that they had interests in common - (hear, hear).

In Asia they would find that India had been greatly agitated; in Turkey not only had there been agitation, but what looked like a very great reform had followed it - it was too short a time yet to judge the results of that revolution which took place there; in Portugal they had very lately had most stirring times; and in France, too, especially in Paris, they could not call their times quiet and dull.

Examining into some of these movements, especially those which had more lately taken place in Portugal and France, he said it appeared to be a great wave, or something greater - Nature asserting itself. He took it to be a great sign of the times and something for which they who were in favour of progress had to open their eyes

to this state of affairs, and examine it. They might cramp and confine a child's foot in a tight boot, but when the corns became painful off went the old shoe - (hear, hear).

He thought both Portugal and the ex-King were to be congratulated, for ruling in the way King Manuel did could not be called a happy position. A crown was rather heavy headgear to an enlightened community - (laughter).

Now he would go back to the Crown. He found we were asked to spend a great deal upon our Court - a Court very closely connected with the Crown, and they might have remarked that a few months ago he found himself voting against the Government upon the loss which the people of this country were being put to on account of making provision for the courtiers and 'courtlets'.

Small Fry

He found that for small fry - relatives of the Crown - brothers and sons - the Government were proposing to make grants which he thought far in excess of what they ought to be - (applause). He ventured to point out to the Front Bench that it ill became them to make these proposals. But he was beaten, and so the country had been put to this extra expense. If anyone wanted to make the Court in this country unpopular the very best thing they could do would be to make these huge demands upon the public for the maintenance of the Court.

Possibly if top hats were going at half price people would not mind so much wearing them, but if they were going to be so very expensive they might say: 'I will wear out my old top hat, but will not buy another' - (laughter and hear, hear). What were the lessons to be learned from the state of things in Portugal. Portugal, he admitted was an extreme case.

He believed there was not a country in Europe where illiteracy was so widespread as it was today in Portugal, nor a country where the land compared worse with other countries. Though the soil was good and the climate genial, acres and acres of land were neglected because they had a bad land system.

They had this bad land system in Portugal because the people had been kept under by a clique. The new Government in a few days had found that money had been taken from the people, not to be returned to the people in any form whatever, but to go directly to the governing class.

Clerical Interference

Then, again, it was common knowledge that clerical influence had been keeping the people back. Illiteracy and clerical despotism seemed there to have gone hand in hand. Was it to be wondered at that the people should revolt against this state of things? We must examine these movements and see if we could learn from them. What could we learn from this one? Were we perfect? Was our land system perfect?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer the other day said that much of our land was neglected because of 'noble' sport. He felt that the people of the land ought to be considered noble before the sport of people who called themselves 'noblemen'. We must put ourselves in order and he would advise those who were now indulging in

the luxury which wealth had given them that if they wished to enjoy a portion of this luxury - only a portion - they had been not allow these grievances to bear too heavily upon the people of the land. (Hear, hear).

Had we not clerical interference in England? Were our school masters allowed free play? No. In half the schools of the land the schoolmaster had to belong to one Church, and money was spent to teach the doctrines one particular Church. The hon. Member went on to speak of the Osborne judgement. He said trades unions had been so useful to the general industry of the community, both to employer and employed, that the Government of the day ought to see that their career of usefulness was not in the future hampered, and that what they had been doing in the past they should be alloed to do in the future.

We ought to have Free-trade for our unions. Let them be freeto do what they pleased with the funds which had collected. (Hear, hear). That would be the same for trades unions of capitalists and trades unions of workers. Let them be free to collect money as they pleased, so long as they did it honestly, and spend the money as they pleased. The hon. Member further expressed himself in favour of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales each having a Government to manage its own affairs, with an Imperial Parliament sitting supreme over all.

The Cause of Progress

An Exposition of Liberalism and The Issue of this Election - Reprint of a speech delivered by Mr. H. F. Luttrell at the Recreation Room, Princetown, on Wednesday, December 7th 1910.

Luttrell) supposed that he had lived in the greatest luxury they could imagine. Yet had had not found any happiness from it. Now he was living in a much plainer way, and he found that the simpler he lived the fewer wants he had. An immense amount of money did not ensure happiness. He was inclined to think that a large amount of money might be an injury rather than a benefit. At any rate the advantages that came from it were counterbalanced by a lot of disadvantages.

Personally he would not become a millionaire if they gave him the chance - (laughter). No, he would not. If anyone put a million pounds down on that able and said 'You may go out with the million pounds or without it', he would say that he would rather go without it - (renewed laughter). They might laugh, and they might think it foolish, but it was a fact. He was speaking in all seriousness. If he felt that he was strong enough to withstand the temptation of being a millionaire he would far rather that his children should not have that temptation put in their way. He did not think that was good for children to be brought up in such tremendous luxury.

Feeling that, he did not think that they were doing much harm to wealthy people when they proposed to take away some small proportion of their luxuries. He supposed that the Budget might to some extent interfere with him, because was not a very rich man, not a rich man as wealth was gauged, but e would rather have what he had taken from him and given to the public than he should dole it out. He did not

think that doing out was good, either for the man who gave or for those who received. Let the people be more independent of charity.

For instance, with old age pensions there was no doe giving. The dukes and the lords said that the reason they were against the Budge was that they would not have so much money to give away to poor people. It was much better to have charity from the State than from private individuals. They did not want the tax collector to go further than was necessary, but if it was necessary to have taxation let them go to those who had the money, who had the luxuries, rather than go to poor people - (hear, hear). Those were the principles on which Mr. Lloyd George had been able to give a certain amount of State charity, a very good form of charity, to old age pensioners, and he was glad to think that when January came along they would have more of those pensioners - (applause).

Mr. Asquith, to his mind, had made the most reasonable proposals. He proposed to reduce the length of Parliament from seven years to five, also that there should be opportunities given to the Government of the day, were it Conservative or Liberal, when it passed its measures through the House of Commons, to feel that there was some chance of getting those measures passed into law by the House of Lords. The Liberal party proposed to have what were called the veto resolutions. It was proposed that if the people's Chamber passed a measure twice the third time it went to the Hosue of Lords it should become law. How fair that was. The Second Chamber would have the opportunity of sending a measure back in order that it might be carefully examined - not once but twice. There would be delay, if necessary, but they would not allow the Second Chamber to be able to permanently prevent the will of the people being carried into effect.

He said that that meant a tremendous lot. It meant that the people were going to assert their rights - (hear, hear and applause). If Mr. Asquith got a majority, as he was inclined to think he would, he believed that he had got assurances such as would allow of those veto resolutions becoming law. They had wealth, from a Duke down a squire, almost all against them. They had something on their side more valuable. They had great principles, and people with great hears and great souls. They would proud of those principles, and it was for that reason that they had been able to defeat those big men, and it was because of those principles that they had this most important election which gave them a splendid opportunity of beating those great men agai - (much applause).

There was no response to an invitation for questions to be asked. A vote of confidence in Mr. Luttrell was proposed by the Chairman, and seconded by Mr. G. Williams. The Rev. J. Dickinson of Torquay, followed with an able speech in support of the motion. The resolution was carried, with three dissentients, and Mr. Luttrell, in high appreciative terms, proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Barnard for presiding, which was carried with acclamation, followed by cheers for Mr. Luttrell.

5. Before Democracy

The Luttrell family had a long history of providing Members of Parliament for the then tiny constituency of Minehead, which included the village of Dunster and Dunster Castle, the home of the Luttrell family. Minehead was evidently entitled to elect two Members of Parliament. The following extract from A History of Dunster by Sir H.C.Maxwell Lyte recalls the corrupt nature of parliamentary elections in the 18th century.

At the General Election of 1790, John Fownes Luttrell was returned for Minehead, together with George, Viscount Parker, who was appointed Controller of the Household in the following year. Although there had not been any contest, sixty one of the electors eventually received four guineas apiece. When Lord Parker succeeded to the Earldom of Macclesfield in 1795, Luttrell was unprovided with a suitable candidate willing to purchase a fairly safe seat. In order therefore to maintain the interest of Dunster Castle in the borough, he put forward his own brother, Thomas Fownes Luttrell, who was duly elected.

After a long period of tranquillity, the little borough of Minehead was, in 1796, agitated by a severe electoral contest, four candidates coming forward for the two seats. On the one side were John Fownes Luttrell of Dunster Castle and his brother Colonel Thomas Fownes Luttrell; on the other John Langston of Sarsden House in Oxfordshire, and Rear Admiral Charles Morice Pole. Whether there was any political question at issue does not appear. The electors were, however, exhorted by Langston and his friends to free themselves from tyrannic sway. The poll was Opened on Saturday the 28th of May and closed on the evening of the 30th, when the Luttrells were exhausted and their Opponents in almost the same condition .

Result: J. Fownes Luttrell 97, J. Langston 94, T. Fownes Luttrell 85, C.M.Pole 82.

The result of the voting was not entirely satisfactory to either side. John Fownes Luttrell and John Langston were accordingly returned to Westminster After the election was over, a list was made of no less than eighty two persons who had promised one vote to John Fownes Luttrell, but who at the poll recorded both their votes against him. Considering that several of these turncoats were tenants who had not for several years paid the rent due to him, it is clear that his opponents must have offered them some very substantial inducement to vote openly against their landlord.

Having got into Parliament, Langston applied himself to strengthening his interest at Minehead, by buying land and building houses there. On the other hand, twenty-four of the principal inhabitants met at the Plume of Feathers in November, to form some plan for recovering and effectually securing M .Luttrell's interest and unanimously passed several resolutions. They recommended, for instance , that Mr Luttrell should repair the common houses and erect temporary shambles for the butchers. Their third resolution was That Mr. Luttrell be recommended to dispossess all such persons of their houses, grounds, etc. as were inimical to his interest at the last election. They, moreover, bound themselves to give a preference in the employment of labourers to all such as had supported Mr. Luttrell at the

recent election. A very circumstantial and withal fairly candid account of the Minehead election in 1802, was laid before Thomas Plumer, afterwards Master of the Rolls. The least prospect or expectation of repayment, although he had suffered no pecuniary loss through lending his name for a similar purpose at the previous election. After the issue of the writ, Langston and Woodbridge became more liberal than before, while the supporters of Luttrell and Patteson 'were restricted to bread and Cheese in a large room, the liquor at the inns being supplied by Lethbridge, without authority from them'. At the last moment, two fresh candidates were put up against the Castle interest, in view of the possibility that the House of Commons might disallow the return of any Of the others. The poll for this little borough was kept open no less than five days, the result being declared on the 5th of July, as follows:

Luttrell 139, Patteson 139, Langston 108, Woodbridge 108, Caslett 13, Walters 13.

This election seems to have aroused a good deal of ill feeling. On the one hand, Luttrell began proceedings against some of his neighbours for libel on the other hand, the defeated candidates presented a petition against the return. Luttrell had not the least apprehension "that he could be unseated for bribery. Upon his canvass, he uniformly rejected to receive the promise of any vote attended with any condition whatever." With regard to treating, his position was much weaker, and the returning Officers, who were virtually his nominees, had refused the aid of an experienced assessor.

In the case submitted to counsel by his agents, there is an ingenious confession. 'How to state the conduct of the returning officers so as to show that they did not act illegally, partially, and corruptly, is felt from the nature of things to be very difficult . As the other side had equally valid reasons for shunning a public enquiry, a compromise was eventually made, Luttrell undertaking to stop his prosecutions , and Langston and Woodbridge undertaking to drop their petition

Furthermore, in August 1803, Langston agreed to sell to Luttrell all his property in the borough of Minehead, consisting largely of houses built for the purpose of creating votes. Three arbitrators learned in the law fixed the price at £7.000. Fin ally William Davis of Alcombe, merchant, published an apology for having issued a most false, scandalous, and malicious libel on John Fownes Luttrell, esquire'.

The constituency of Minehead was abolished by the Reform Act of 1832.
