Stultifying Closeness: an Examination of Some Aspects of the Historical Connection Between Abingdon School and Pembroke College, Oxford between 1624 and 1854.

"Here, above all, lay Pembroke's abiding problem: how to break the stultifying closeness of the Abingdon tie." So writes Colin Leach, formerly Fellow and Bursar of Pembroke, in his book *Sparks of Reform*, a sharply etched account of the reforming struggles of Francis Jeune, Master of the College from 1844 to 1864. Jeune's own view of Abingdon was unambiguously expressed in a letter which he wrote to the Chancellor of the University, Lord Derby, on 6 July, 1854: "Abingdon School, with which we are connected, is small, ill-endowed and locally confined. It has often been in a state of utter decay." Actually, it might have been argued with equal justice at the time that the closeness of the Pembroke tie was an abiding problem for Abingdon School – but this argument was not one that could possibly have occurred to Dr. Strange, Jeune's antithesis at Abingdon, and I shall have to develop the idea myself at a later stage in this paper. First, however, we must look at the nature and origins of the problematic connection.

The elementary facts in the case are tolerably simple. By Letters Patent of 29 June, 1624, King James I ordained that the ancient establishment known as Broadgates Hall should be re-established as a college, and re-named in honour of the then Chancellor of the University, the Earl of Pembroke. The new college was to foster the studies of divinity, civil and canon law, arts, medicine and other sciences; in so far as the first three of these were concerned, there was continuity with the history of Broadgates Hall, while the appearance of medicine in the list was a tribute to the eminence in that subject of the new Master. The college was to be populated, according to terms prescribed in the Letters Patent, by scholars and fellows who had rights of entry under the wills of the two principal material benefactors of the foundation, Thomas Tesdale and Richard Wightwick.

So far, there can be little cause for dispute. But as we begin to explore the details, we quickly come across complexities; and if we go on to ask about motives and intentions, the plot thickens rapidly. Where should we look for guidance?

For the College, the Authorised Version, so to speak, is represented by Douglas MacLeane's *History of Pembroke College, Oxford*, published in 1897. It is a weighty tome; Dr. John Platt has remarked, in an article published in the Pembroke College Record, that he "has yet to discover anyone who, having struggled to read this substantial work, whose text, not counting appendices, runs to some 500 demy octavo pages, has not found themselves rapidly defeated by its prolix shapelessness". I do not wish to lay claim for myself to exceptionally heroic qualities, but I will modestly admit to having ploughed all through MacLeane, and found the exercise not unprofitable. But the criticisms, which Dr. Platt goes on to make in his article, about the technical and methodological deficiencies of MacLeane's approach, are entirely justified; it is very much a work of its time, and the product of an amateur, not a professional. It is to be hoped that Dr. Platt himself might in due course meet the College's need for an up-to-date and thoroughly scholarly history; but for the time being,

at least, it remains a reproach to the memory of Degorie Wheare of Broadgates Hall, first Camden Professor of History and, briefly, Headmaster of Abingdon School, and likewise to the memories of Thomas Dudley Fosbroke and Philip Morant, both Abingdon and Pembroke men and two of the most notable pioneers of antiquarian studies in the eighteenth century, that MacLeane's inadequate understandings are still allowed to exercise influence over the collective identity of the College.

Broadgates Hall, the 'pupa' of the Pembroke 'imago', was the most substantial of a whole cluster of similar establishments, which occupied the whole of what is now the College site. These student lodgings were so closely crowded together, indeed, that 'clutter' might be a more appropriate word than 'cluster'. MacLeane's minutely detailed researches into title deeds and terriers enabled him to identify Segrim's Houses, New College Chambers, Abingdon Chambers, Cambey's Lodgings, Minote Hall, the Hall of St. Michael and St. James, Beef Hall, Wyld's Entry, and Dunstan Hall, besides Broadgates Hall, all hugger-mugger in the space between Pembroke Lane and Brewer Street – excluding, then as now, St. Aldate's church and its yard. The halls were essentially relics of the older system of the university, by which monasteries and similar foundations across the land had sent their junior members to reside and study for a while in Oxford. Following the extinction of the parent bodies at the dissolution of the monasteries, most of these little halls decayed, and by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the area that we are in now must have seemed ripe for what a modern property developer might call gentrification. Something of that sort was certainly in the minds of influential figures in the University; the movers and shakers of late Elizabethan and Jacobean Oxford were plainly keen to regulate and consolidate the muddle of petty residential establishments – anticipating, in this respect, the views put forward with greater force in the nineteenth century by such as Francis Jeune.

Ambition on the part of the university's innovators met a ready welcome from the other institutional partner in the foundation of 1624, namely the town of Abingdon, where there was a group of enterprising men ready and able to take advantage of opportunities for developing their fortunes. As the modern historian of Abingdon, Mieneke Cox, has ably demonstrated, the destruction of the great Benedictine abbey in 1538 had a devastating effect on the economy, and the physical structures, of the town which it had nourished at its gates; but it is apparent that the citizenry responded to this blow with entrepreneurial boldness, effectively creating a new Abingdon on the ruins of the old. They bought and recycled the materials of the Abbey buildings (for many years I spent my evenings in Lacies Court beside a fireplace which had come from a house of the first Mayor of Abingdon, who had used elements, including the painted stones of the magnificent arch, that had probably come from the Abbot's lodgings); they secured royal permission to establish a municipal corporation; and they reshaped some of their surviving mediaeval institutions to provide what would today be called educational, welfare and social services. There was continuity in the process, as well as change: the last monastically-appointed Headmaster of the grammar school remained in office during the troubled times that followed the dissolution; the civic benefactors who assisted his successors in the 1560s were themselves products of the earlier regime – just like the O.A.s

of Direct Grant vintage who willingly subscribed to the School's appeals of the 1970s and 1980s; and it was a member of the family of that same Headmaster of the transition years who was to provide the principal benefaction towards the foundation of Pembroke College. The family's name, of course, was Tesdale. To the Tesdales, and their aspiring contemporaries in Abingdon, learning – or, at least, proficiency in some of the skills that could be acquired through education – was a key to economic and social advancement. This view was widely shared, as can be seen from the figures for matriculation – that is, entrance at junior level to the University – during the first three decades of the seventeenth century. To take two samples, there were 870 matriculations in the period 1605-07, and 1,057 in the period 1630-02 – figures higher than were achieved in any subsequent decade before the 1870s. Nicholas Tyacke, the editor of Volume IV of *The History of the University of Oxford*, remarks that, "Youths of lower social status went to the universities to obtain the training and qualifications required for them to develop a career, especially in the church. A university education provided them with opportunities which they could not otherwise have had. It also offered the widening of social horizons and increased geographical mobility. Although the levels of remuneration for teachers and the clergy in particular varied enormously, the rewards to which a university entrant from a plebeian background aspired were partly economic. They were also social, for entry into the clergy endowed an individual with a status and respect in society which could only have been achieved with difficulty in another sphere. It was accepted that a graduate clergyman was entitled to gentle status, and a Leicestershire rector's claim that his MA made him 'a gentleman and that a worshipfull one' was justified. Here was a keynote which was to ring, more or less insistently, throughout the next two centuries and more of Pembroke's history: the opportunity of preferment. This was something which had little to do with abstract ideas about the beauty of learning, and still less to do with what we now call social engineering. The process which gave access to the opportunity was not unduly affected by considerations of intellectual merit, and while there was certainly a great deal of competition for a toehold on the ladder, the result was not decided by competitive examination. But to assist this process was, to the minds of the time, to engage in a very high form of philanthropy.

There was nothing new in all this, of course. Youngsters from modest backgrounds had gone from grammar schools to Oxford and Cambridge, in search of advancement and fortune, all through the Middle Ages; one such had been that Edmund who received his first schooling at Abingdon and died in the odour of sanctity, Archbishop of Canterbury and Metropolitan of England, in 1240. But the upheavals of the Reformation had made it necessary to rebuild some parts of the machinery which enabled such movement to take place. The monastic grammar school in Abingdon had been rescued from near-dereliction in 1563 by the municipality's ruthless manipulation of John Roysse's bequest. Now, in 1624, came an opportunity to re-establish a means of access to Oxford. I say 're-establish' because Abingdon Abbey had been accustomed to send some, at least, of its young students to Gloucester Hall – later to become Worcester College – where the arms of Abingdon Abbey can still be seen above one of the staircase doorways. Gloucester Hall had been a sort of receiving

house for Benedictine monks from all over England, but despite this it survived the Reformation. And this, I suspect, is where the plot of our story becomes both thick and peculiarly interesting.

A central, if somewhat enigmatic figure in the post-Reformation history of Gloucester Hall was Thomas Allen (1540-1632). This remarkable man never held high office, but can be seen to have exercised considerable influence among a wide circle in Oxford and beyond. James McConica, writing in Volume III of *The History of the University of Oxford*, says that "His geniality, long life and, in part, his religious sympathies assured him of influence and a warm welcome in [a] circle of gentry and aristocratic families, many of them catholic". McConica also records that "Allen built up an impressive collection of manuscripts … which are an important source for the history of science in medieval Oxford. His passion for collecting would seem to have provided [another] key to his circle of relationships". His associates in this category included the Broadgates graduate Degorie Wheare (1573 – 1647), who was Headmaster of Abingdon in 1605-06, Principal of Gloucester Hall from 1626, and whom Allen recommended to his old friend William Camden as the first occupant of the history professorship endowed by the latter in 1632. Finally, McConica observes that Allen "deserves mention … as a tutor and friend of the most talented Oxford mathematicians of his day". He was evidently an astute networker and a fixer with a long reach. He would probably have been involved in the appointment of his Gloucester Hall colleague, John Budden (1566 – 1620) as Regius Professor of Civil Law in 1611, and was almost certainly instrumental in securing the Principalship of Broadgates Hall for Budden in 1618 – and, much more significantly for our purposes, the succession of Thomas Clayton to Broadgates in 1620. Dr. Platt, to whom I am much indebted for information on these points, is strongly of opinion that Allen was a major player in the events that ran up to the conversion of Broadgates Hall into Pembroke College.

But Thomas Clayton (1575 – 1647) is a still more significant figure in the story of the emergence of the College. He had been an undergraduate at Balliol (M.A. 1599), and thence moved to become part of Allen's coterie at Gloucester Hall. He was appointed Regius Professor of Medicine in 1611, in which capacity he has been described by Robert G. Frank as "the century's most energetic and active 'king's professor of physic". It is extraordinary that he has, so far, not been given an entry in the *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. He appears to have learnt important political skills from Allen, which were apparent from the moment when he took office in Broadgates Hall, and immediately launched an appeal for funds to enlarge the buildings. His ideas for what I earlier, frivolously, called the 'gentrification' of the Hall and its surroundings needed more than this first appeal could muster, however – and this was where the aspirant burgesses of Abingdon came into the picture.

Why Abingdon we must ask. It is tempting to mention again the name of Degorie Wheare, formerly of Broadgates Hall, ex-Headmaster of Abingdon, Camden Professor, and friend of both Allen and Clayton – tempting, but quite unprofitable, since we have no evidence of his involvement with the business of 1624.

A figure who does, however, appear to have been central to the Abingdon side of the matter was Thomas Godwyn (1586/7 – 1642). He had graduated M.A.

from Magdalen in 1609, when he moved to become Headmaster at Abingdon, (Wheare having left in 1606, and been briefly followed by one Edward Groome) where he stayed until 1625. His reputation today may be that of a laborious pedant – but it is possible that he has suffered from the unfavourable interpretation of a passage written by Anthony Wood, and that he stands in need of rehabilitation. Wood records the judgement that the Presbyterian controversialist William Twisse of Newbury "did … whip the old schoolmaster" in the course of a rather publicly conducted theological dispute, and this verdict has been repeated ad nauseam. On a close reading of the passage in Wood, however, I am inclined to think that he was only recording the view of the Presbyterians (who may well, indeed, have had the better of an argument which could have brought little lasting glory to either side), and that we should not take it as reflecting Wood's own opinion of Godwyn's abilities. Elsewhere, Wood describes Godwyn as " … following the studies of philology and the tongues with unwearied industry"; he goes on to say that Godwyn " … was a person of grave and reverend aspect, was a grace to his profession, was most learned also in Latin, Greek and Hebrew antiquity, and admirably well versed in all those matters requisite for the accomplishment of a rector of an academy". His significance as an academic really was considerable. Tyacke shows that Godwyn's works were recommended reading for the first three months of every Oxford undergraduate course in the seventeenth century, and they remained staple fare throughout the eighteenth, also, as is amply attested by the regularity with which they were reprinted, and by the inscriptions to be found in surviving copies. (I am proud to have been instrumental in acquiring a very nearly complete run of Godwyn editions for the archives of Abingdon School.) Tyacke also credits Godwyn with having been one of Oxford's most talented Hebraists in the first part of the seventeenth century.

I believe, though I cannot decisively prove, that Godwyn was to Abingdon what Clayton was to Pembroke – in each case, a man of vision, ambition, talent, and knowledgeable shrewdness. Both desirous of improving their constituencies, they put together a package which was intended to benefit both parties. As a Balliol man by origin, Clayton would certainly have been aware of the existence of the under-used Tesdale benefaction, which had already given rise to stresses between Abingdon and Balliol. It may be worth noting, however, that some time after 1629 Godwyn married as his second wife a daughter of Christopher Tesdale, who was Thomas Tesdale's cousin, and it can be presumed that he would have been close to this influential clan throughout his time at Abingdon. Godwyn seems marginally more likely to have been the one who brought in the elderly, retiring bachelor Richard Wightwick, Rector of East Ilsley, the next town on the main road south from Abingdon to Newbury. Clayton, the university politician, was in a position to mobilise elements in Oxford and at Court, including the Chancellor, Lord Pembroke, and that don manqué, the King himself. Godwyn, the ambitious schoolmaster, had a roomful of well-drilled scholars eager to proffer matriculation fees – and he himself was plainly hungry for academic recognition.

None of this emphasis on personalities should be allowed, however, to detract from the importance of the part played by the collective will of the people of Abingdon in the founding of Pembroke. Their role is aptly summarised by a

contemporary observer, Francis Little, whose manuscript record, which he entitled *A Monument Of Christian Munificence*, was written in 1627, just three years after the Charter act. He asserts as follows:

"The Mayor, Bayliffs and Burgesses of Abingdon, out of their pious and charitable disposition to so good and godly a work, did begin, and to their great costs and charges followed, the suit for the founding of the said college, wherein they considered also the public benefit that would thereby come and accrue unto the whole town by preferring of the poor town-born children from the school unto the college; which school the mayor, bailiffs and burgesses do gladly advance, for that they are patrons of it ; for which charitable deed of theirs, in procuring the said college, they do worthily deserve to be accounted among the benefactors of this Hospital [he refers to Christ's Hospital of Abingdon, for whom he was writing]; for by the prosperity of the school and benefit of the college, in breeding and bringing up of poor men's children, the Hospital may happily be freed from future charges."

So all parties to the transformation of Broadgates Hall were, for a brief moment, of one mind, and the outcome of 29 June, 1624 was a new college, tied at first to Abingdon and to the kin of Tesdale and Wightwick, under its Master, Thomas Clayton. The first of the ten Charter fellows was Thomas Godwyn, and the next three, Robert Payne, Christopher Tesdale and Nicholas Coxeter, had been his pupils; at least one of the others, William Lyford, appears to have had Tesdale connections, and the name appears in a later Abingdon list. Of the ten scholars, the first five were accredited Abingdonians, and the sixth may also have come from the School; the last four were on Wightwick's foundation. Various family links are discernible among the Tesdale names; the Wightwick connections are notable for the presence among them of Welsh border names.

It must be said at this point that MacLeane's account of the Charter episode is a particularly weak part of his work. Not only does it lack understanding of the essential purposes of charitable and educational foundations as these were perceived in the early seventeenth century, but, less forgivably in view of MacLeane's expressed wish to set up as a Pembrochian Anthony Wood, it fails to explore in any depth the careers and personalities of the chief dramatis personae, Clayton and Godwyn.

The new foundation flourished vigorously to begin with. It had joined the select group of 'twinned' colleges – Stephen Porter mentions it alongside New College / Winchester and St. John's / Merchant Taylors' – and the channel from school to college evidently flowed freely for a while. Altogether we know the names of 30, possibly 31 or even 32 young men from Abingdon School who were admitted to Pembroke during the years between 1624 and 1648 – but the lists are woefully incomplete, and the true number was certainly higher. In 1634 Pembroke was ranked as the sixth largest society in Oxford, with between 150 and 200 members – only a proportion of whom would have been resident, of course. (I cannot resist noting, also, that during the 1630s Degorie Wheare, as Principal of Gloucester Hall, was given the credit for matriculating almost three times as many students as his predecessor had done in the previous decade.)

In Abingdon, however, trouble was brewing. Edward Roode, Vicar of St. Helen's since 1624, was preaching sermons which denied the validity of the royal supremacy in religion, and the records of business in the Town Council

show that there were bitter arguments between factions with opposing opinions about religion. The influential Mayott family was strong for Church and King, and complained to the Privy Council about the Vicar; but the main, Abingdon-based branch of the Tesdales, who were no less powerful and held the Mayoralty, were described as "Nonconformists to the orders and ceremonies of the church in divine service, as, that some did not stand up at the Creed, nor bow to the altar, nor at the name of Jesus, nor receive the sacrament kneeling". The fact was that the town of Abingdon became, very quickly after the dissolution of its abbey, a hotbed of Protestantism and, in due course, Puritanism. The Corporation's treatment of John Roysse's benefaction in 1563, when they accepted his money but perverted his will, set a pattern for the century that followed. The strength of the Tesdale faction can be seen growing throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James I, and with the wisdom of hindsight we can detect the developing possibility of divergence between what Anthony Wood later called "the fanatical town of Abingdon" and royalist, Laudian Oxford.

If Oxford and Abingdon were drifting apart, however, the leadership of both School and College seem to have been at one in loyalty to Church and King. Anthony Huish, Headmaster from 1625 to 1654, was a committed Royalist, as was Thomas Clayton of Pembroke, and while we may readily imagine the stresses to which they were subjected by the Tesdale patronage machine, they evidently directed their respective establishments firmly in the line of orthodoxy. Both foundations, certainly, came out strongly for Charles I and Anglicanism in the early stages of the Civil War, and both suffered severely in consequence. Huish was deprived of his salary in 1643 and of his post in 1654. The College willingly handed its treasure to the King to help finance the war effort, and sent its undergraduates to labour on the fortifications of
Oxford during the Parliamentary siege of the city; according to one source, perhaps as many as fifty of its members went further, and took up arms; for this it was thoroughly 'purged' in the aftermath of the royalist surrender, which took place on 20 June, 1646.

The purging did not begin until Clayton was out of the way. He died on 10 July, 1647, in who knows what distress at the ruin that had befallen his College, his Church and his King. Since the previous September, the University had been subjected to a barrage of sermons from seven preachers who had been sent to prepare the way for a Parliamentary Visitation, so that the College would have had a very good idea what to expect following the death of their Master. They made what haste they could to forestall events, and elected Henry Wightwick, one of the original fellows, to succeed Clayton; one might think that it would have been shrewder to pick on a moderate Tesdale – but perhaps none such could be found. In any case, by the end of August, Parliament had intervened; Wightwick was dispossessed by order, and in his place was installed Henry Langley, one of the Presbyterian preachers who had been agitating the city for the past year. Four fellows, six scholars and two commoners were expelled by subsequent Visitations in 1648; the militant members of the College had left with the other royal troops twelve months previously.

The details of the purge need not concern us here. The essential point is that this was not just a remodelling by Parliament of a defeated royalist institution; it

was also a local coup by which one section of the Tesdale clan, based in Abingdon, seized control of the family trust.

The key figure here is that of the new, or, if you prefer, intruded, Master, Henry Langley (who is not to be confused with that John Langley, High Master of St. Paul's, who left £10 to Pembroke in 1657, and won from Anthony Wood the most enviable epitaph that ever, surely, graced headmaster's memory). Henry Langley was the son of a radically-inclined cobbler in Abingdon. Stephen Wright, the author of the article about Langley in the *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, asserts that he attended Abingdon School. I have to say that I have not been able to find any direct evidence for this, and nor has Nigel Hammond, compiler of a scrupulously researched Register of Abingdonians for the years 1563 – 1947 (and to whom I here pay grateful tribute as a true successor to W.H. Richardson and Arthur Preston). But it must be admitted that the likelihood is high that Langley represented the fanatic side of Abingdon's offering to Pembroke, where he certainly matriculated in 1629 and went on to graduate B.A. and M.A. He was the Tesdales' man, and the town petitioned for him to be put into Wightwick's place, where he duly showed himself to be, in Wright's words, "an energetic supporter of godly reform in the college" – otherwise, if you like, an intolerant exponent of political correctness as understood in the mid-seventeenth century.

The first effect of Langley's accession was an inrush of matriculations – 22 in each of the years 1650 and 1651; these were necessary, partly at least, to fill the vacancies created by the dispossessions and departures of 1646 – 1648. Numbers thereafter fell steeply until Langley, in his turn, was ejected at the Restoration of 1660. We do not know as much as we should like about the origins of the men whom Langley brought in, but it seems that few of them – perhaps no more than six in all over the twelve-year period – came by way of Abingdon School.

Among Langley's recruits we find one Job Roys, who joined Pembroke briefly in 1650 before moving on to Merton and thence to London, where he was noted, in the words of his contemporary Anthony Wood, as "a puling Levite among the brethren, for whose sake, and at their instance, he wrote and published *The Spirit's Touchstone*, which was esteemed an inconsiderable and canting piece … If you had set aside his practical Divinity, you would have found him a simple, shiftless, and ridiculous person". This is fairly easily decoded; Wood saw in Roys a posturing puritan, of the naïve and fatuous sort. He was supposed to have been related to John Roysse, the benefactor of Abingdon, but if this was indeed the case he had moved a long way away from the churchmanship of his notable forebear. So much for the remark of another Oxford diarist, Thomas Hearne, who wrote of "Roysse's fruitful nurseries, out of which the Earl of Pembroke's gardens were supplied".

The return of Charles II to his throne in 1660 brought about the return of royalist Anglicans to their stalls and benches in Oxford, as elsewhere in the kingdom, and the Wightwicks and their allies returned to Pembroke in force. This did not mean that Dissent was extinguished, of course, and certainly not in Abingdon, where the Tesdales remained strong. In due course, however, they had to suffer purging in their turn; in 1671 ten boys were expelled from the School, expressly for religious nonconformity; three of them were Tesdales. So the

conduit was purified. Henceforth, while College and School might maintain a close relationship, the Nonconformist elements in Abingdon society would be denied access to Oxford.

That did not of itself mean the end of Tesdale influence. There were other Tesdales than those who had made such a stir in the town during the previous half-century, and it was these increasingly scattered branches that were to supply the scholarships and fellowships that were available to them under the Founder's will during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There were a great many of them, and they came in course of time to bear, or at least be connected with, some very illustrious names – Lord Ossulston, the Earl of Tankerville, the Duke of Grafton. Abingdon School continued, for some of these collaterally-related Tesdales at least, to represent the gateway to Oxford, and the College was pleased to welcome them if they came as well-accredited churchmen and were supported by a trusted Headmaster of safe political affiliations. Indeed, the role of the School tended, if anything, to increase in importance during the eighteenth century, since, as L. and J.C.F. Stone have pointed out, during that period the patterns of education changed so that "Those who went to a boarding grammar school … remained at school until much the same age as that at which they had left the university a century before". The average age at matriculation rose by four or five years, the requirements of learning altered correspondingly, and the scholarly credentials of schoolmasters became more and more important. "Thus secondary educational institutions as well as private tutoring in large measure offered the same curriculum to boys of the same age as had earlier been acquired at the university. Many of the private tutors and the schoolmasters of these schools and academies were of the same background and calibre as the college tutors of the earlier period." (Stone and Stone.) Godwyn's works were now being used by the upper forms at Abingdon, rather than by the freshmen at Oxford, as the inscriptions in some surviving copies attest.

Seen against this background, three Headmasters of the period 1660 – 1854 are of paramount significance: they are Thomas Woods (HM 1716 – 53), John Lempriere (HM 1792 – 1809) and William Alder Strange (HM 1840 – 68). Woods was a scholar, a schoolmaster and a politician; Lempriere was a scholar; Strange was a schoolmaster. Oxford was happy with Woods, distrusted Lempriere, and disregarded Strange. So far as Pembroke was concerned, the tie with Abingdon was supportive while Woods was in office, troublesome in Lempriere's and stultifying under Strange. All three saw it as a matter of the first importance to get their pupils into Oxford (as, indeed, was true of every Headmaster of Abingdon during the period). Woods' efforts were rewarded with success and acclaim; Lempriere's with success and discredit; Strange's with less success, and much obloquy. With the wisdom of hindsight, we can say that the connection, which was congenial to all parties in the days of Woods, could not have survived the divergence of views and interests which separated School from College in the days of Strange; but we can see, also, that the self-defeating manoeuvres of Lempriere helped to bring the connection into such discredit that the ardent reformers of early Victorian times were able to make it serve as scapegoat in their scheme of purification.

Of the 339 Abingdonians whose names I have traced, with the assistance of Nigel Hammond's lists, as having gained places at Oxford between 1660 and 1854, 246 went to Pembroke. Of the others, most went to a small range of the bigger colleges – Christ Church, St John's, Magdalen, Queens'. These latter entrants tended to be the grandees – the son of the Duke of St. Albans, the sons of Lords Chedworth, Tracy and Wenman, the young baronets with names such as Danvers and D'Oyly, Isham or Jenkinson (he was related to Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister), or that George Villiers who claimed to be the rightful Duke of Buckingham. The Pembroke men, on the other hand, were overwhelmingly of the middling sort, purposefully in search of that preferment which had been the object of their first forerunners in 1624. They showed a strong disposition to become lawyers, or academics, and above all they populated the College livings. Pembroke produced clergymen in great numbers during this period, many of them called Hawkins since this was the name of a particularly prolific branch of the Founder's Kin.

Meanwhile the tradesmen of Abingdon, and their inferiors still further down the pecking order of Georgian society, saw less and less of Pembroke as the decades went by. Their sons might attend the grammar school on Roysse's charity (an entity separate from Abingdon School itself), or, if they were luckier, enjoy a Bennett place and the gown that went with it. But few of Roysse's boys went to Pembroke, and Nigel Hammond has shown, in his monograph on the Bennett boys, that none of them went to Oxford after 1719. The original rationale of the foundation of 1624 had thus been subverted, in favour of an arrangement which enabled good Tory churchmen in the Headmaster's house at Abingdon School to educate the sons of good Tory families from the counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Gloucestershire, for entry to a good Tory college from which they could proceed to the rectories of comfortable livings in the Cotswolds.

It was a system that seemed perfectly proper to the minds of the time. It sustained Church and State; it maintained the social order; it upheld scholarly values; and in so far as it respected the claims of kinship, it even fulfilled a part – most people felt, a sufficient part – of the requirements of the benefactors whose generosity had first established College and School as a double foundation. And it produced some of Pembroke's most creditable alumni – the author Richard Graves, the historians Thomas Dudley Fosbroke and Philip Morant, the Archbishop of Armagh William Newcome, and George III's favourite scientist Francis Demainbray, some of whose instruments have just gone on display at Kew Palace.

Of course, there were some manifest abuses – there will always be abuses in any system for distributing benefits to, and through, fallible human beings. But one ancient canard must now be shot and laid to rest, namely the oft-repeated suggestion that Abingdon Headmasters were much given to importing promising lads from elsewhere in order to smuggle them on to the Pembroke Foundation. Extensive researches of my own in the archives of School and College, together with much cross-checking elsewhere, have led me to the conclusion that this happened no more than 12 times in 64 years between 1747 and 1831. Of those 12 cases, two became Masters of Pembroke, two became

Headmasters of good schools, one became a distinguished historian, and one a knighted judge – not a bad record, and if by their fruits we are to know them we might almost conclude that the outcome justified the practice. Certainly this, like some other elements in Francis Jeune's case against the ancien regime which he was determined to dismantle, was an abuse much less substantial than he made it out to be. Unfortunately, it has become a favoured part of what might be called the legend of the Abingdon-Pembroke connection.

The disproportionate attention focussed on abuses of the Tesdale Foundation has perhaps obscured the fact that Pembroke drew its membership in the eighteenth century from a steadily widening pool. The Wightwick connection continued to be productive, and a series of bequests and special arrangements, from the Restoration period onwards, opened up a variety of regional recruiting grounds, of which perhaps the most important for our purposes was the Channel Islands, from whence came both the reforming Master Francis Jeune, and Abingdon School's *bete noire* John Lempriere. Without going here into the details of matriculation lists and numbers, it can safely be said that the picture of Georgian Pembroke as a closed society stifled by the tightness of the Abingdon tie was a distortion of the reality, though one eagerly propagated by the abrasive apostles of change led by Francis Jeune.

We must be careful, however, not to replace one misconception with another. To repudiate, at least in large part, the charge of pupil-mongering is not to deny that certain groups and families enjoyed privileged rights of access to Pembroke during the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. Much the same was true of every college in Oxford and Cambridge. The results, measured in terms of standards of scholarship and devotion to educational activity, used to be regarded as indefensibly low; more recent historical judgements, since Dame Lucy Sutherland's ground-breaking James Bryce Memorial Lecture of 1972, have been less unfavourable. L.G. Mitchell, in his Introduction to Volume IV of the *History of the University of Oxford*, points out that contemporaries saw it as the function of Oxford to support, rather, than question, the established order, to be conservative rather than innovative. It was in that context that the brilliant Edward Copleston of Oriel asserted in 1809 that "I am convinced that as things are now managed, Oxford is the most efficient University in the world". Pembroke may thus deserve a share of whatever credit is proper – though perhaps not a very large share, if we are to believe John Keble, writing to a friend c. 1831, when he described the College as "the cellar and dusthole of the University".

Quips such as this, no doubt repeated with glee over the port in other Senior Common Rooms, were as gall and wormwood to the fiercely meritocratic and politically radical Master from 1844, Francis Jeune. Jeune had been appointed Chief Master of King Edward's, Birmingham, at the age of 28, and had transformed the school by his savage energy (he once beat eleven boys in eight minutes), before becoming Dean of Jersey, where he was violently unpopular. His election to Pembroke was a disputed affair, but once in office he was indefatigable in his efforts to raise the status of the College. Towards the Oxford Tories he was a proud son of wrath.

The charges levelled by Jeune against Abingdon when he mounted his campaign to change the College Statutes, a campaign which led directly to the

University Reform Act of 1854, can be simply summarised. He asserted that the standard of the pupils produced by Abingdon was so low that they had a debilitating effect on the quality of the College. Given the smallness of the numbers taken from Abingdon, relative to the number drawn from other schools, this could hardly have been the whole truth. Nor could it properly be maintained that the Abingdon connection had a stranglehold on the college fellowships; there was a particular irony, indeed, in the fact that Jeune himself had been a Bennet Fellow – thus an offshoot of the Tesdale Foundation. The truth is that Abingdon's admitted weakness at the time of Jeune's reforming activity enabled him to make what was really a political case, using the School as a horrid example for propaganda purposes.

Against this, as I hinted at the beginning of this paper, it could plausibly be argued that the cosiness of the unreformed relationship between Abingdon and Pembroke did more harm to the School than to the College. In the first case, it tended to foster in the Headmasters a conviction that their interest lay more in managing their fee-paying pupils than in teaching the town boys – with the result that there was a progressive, and all too plainly demonstrable, deterioration in relations between the townspeople and the School during the later eighteenth century and thereafter. Matters in this respect came to something of a head in 1827, when a Mr. Cowcher of Abingdon complained so vehemently against his son's Headmaster, Dr. Edward Nicholson, that Nicholson was compelled to resign. The uneasy relationship which resulted from this and similar episodes of the time can sometimes seem to have persisted to this day.

But there is a more substantial charge to be levelled at the College, namely that it was Pembroke that supplied the very masters who brought down the standards of the School. It is true that Thomas Woods, one of the most successful and distinguished of Abingdon's Headmasters, was a Pembroke man (though not, as I once thought, an Abingdon boy); but Pembroke also sent to Abingdon John Lempriere, who virtually emptied the School of pupils and destroyed its reputation for competent teaching, and William Smith, who as Usher from 1793 to 1844 assisted complacently through the almost equally disastrous reigns of Lempriere's successors Edward Nicholson (1809 – 27) and James Hewlett (1827 – 39). Their failures were used to justify a distressing series of unedifying performances by College examiners at the annual visitations, when it seems that pompous dons sometimes came to Abingdon intent on insulting the Mayor and the Master of Christ's Hospital. Finally, there was the booming, blimpish figure of William Alder Strange, almost a parody of the Victorian pedagogue, an unreconstructed Tory in uncomprehending opposition to Francis Jeune's intolerant Liberalism – and Abingdon and Pembroke through and through, man and boy. Strange and Jeune might have been selected to depict loathly opposites – and to their contest there could only be one outcome. When Jeune told W.H. Gladstone in 1854 that "I cannot read the Statutes and fail to perceive that the first object in the minds of the two Founders was the advancement and interest of the School of Abingdon. In my capacity of Visitor it is not Pembroke College but Abingdon School which is virtually committed to my fostering care." one may feel, with Colin Leach, that he was being sanctimonious; indeed, one might well go further, and call him disingenuous.

The College stood condemned out of its own mouth for neglect and mismanagement of its own nursery.

I must admit that I cannot repress a spurt of sympathy for the angry shade of William Strange, when I re-read his heavily inked annotation to the list of Abingdon Scholars elected to Pembroke, for the date 4 August, 1856: “N.B. This was the last occasion on which an Election took place in Abingdon School, the University Reform Bill of 1854 henceforward commencing its unrighteous operation, the right of Election being transferred to others, and the privileges of the School, as designed by Tesdale and Wightwick, alienated by Act of Parliament!”

In the end, of course, there is nothing unusual about morally convinced reformers employing low spin tactics to achieve their ends. Jeune was not unique in his ruthless manipulation of the facts. But it is high time that his politically slanted interpretation of the College’s earlier history, as it is embodied in MacLeane’s “History”, was put on to the high shelves in the library, where it now belongs.

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