

The Vicar of St Andrew's Church, Headington and his sons

The Revd Thomas Henry Whorwood (1778–1835) was Vicar of St Andrew's 1804–1835, Vicar of Marston 1805–1833, and Lord of the Manor of Headington 1806–1835

His elder son Thomas Henry Whorwood (1812–1884) was Vicar of Marston 1833–1849 and Lord of the Manor of Headington 1835–1849

His younger son William Henry Whorwood (1817–1843) was a prodigal son

The Revd **Thomas Henry Whorwood** (1778–1835) was the son of Henry Whorwood, Lord of the Manor of Headington from 1771 to c.1800. His mother Mary had died a week after giving birth to Thomas Henry and his twin brother William Henry on 7 May 1778.

The older brother of the twins, Henry Mayne Whorwood, succeeded to the Lordship of the Manor in c.1800 on the death of their father, and was married in 1802.

As the second son of the Lord of the Manor, Thomas had been destined from birth to enter the Church, and in 1785 had gone off to learn his trade at Worcester College in Oxford. The Lord of the Manor conveniently held the advowson of both Headington and Marston, and in 1804, at the age of 26, he had been duly appointed Vicar of Headington by his elder brother; in the following year the vicarage of Marston similarly fell into his lap.

For his first two years as Vicar of St Andrew's the young Revd Whorwood had been an absentee, leaving the church in the hands of the curate, James Palmer. But in 1806 his elder brother died childless at the age of 35, and Thomas succeeded him as Lord of the Manor and thus came to live in the Manor House in the heart of Headington. Being a squarson as well as the Vicar of two parishes was no great burden at a time when most of the work was undertaken by hard-working curates; and two stipends would have been useful, as the Revd Whorwood was not as rich as might have been expected. In the first place, his fractionally younger twin brother, William Henry (who was now a naval captain) had inherited the Headington manorial estates (totalling 522 acres). Secondly he had inherited their deceased elder brother's debts, and on 8 December 1806 took out a mortgage on the Manor House and Holly's Farm, Headington with William Fletcher and John Parsons of Oxford, bankers.

While his older brother had been alive, the Vicar was evidently cowed by him: in 1805 James Palmer, the curate of St Andrew's Church, had written to the Bishop saying that the Vicar was in a state of such dependence on his elder brother that he could not 'differ from him materially without danger of starvation'. But as soon as the Vicar stepped into his brother's shoes as Lord, he began to show that he too had his brother's vicious streak and lacked the Christian charity that might be expected of a vicar: he immediately issued a notice announcing that 'Steel traps and other destructive engines' were to be set on his land in Headington to keep out poachers.

On 22 April 1807, within six months of succeeding as Lord of the Manor, Thomas married Mary Grape, daughter of the late Revd William Grape, at St Michael's Church in Bedwardine, Worcester, and the marriage was reported in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* of 25 April 1807. By his marriage settlement dated 16 and 17 April 1807 an Indenture of Release relating to the Manor House and 321 acres of its land was made between (1) Thomas himself, (2) Mrs Hannah Grape and her daughter Mary; (3) John Paget Hastings; and (4) the two trustees: Revd Richard Grape (Mary's brother) and the Revd Benjamin Mence of Worcester.

The Vicar and his wife baptised two sons at St Andrew's Church: the elder (born in 1812) was named Thomas Henry after his father, while the younger (born in 1817) was named William Henry after his father's twin. Since their father planned that both should follow him into the Church, they proceeded from Eton to the University of Oxford: Thomas to University College in 1829 (becoming a Demy at Magdalen College the next year) and William to Worcester College in 1834.

When he wrote his final Will in 1831, Thomas Henry Whorwood stated that on his death

his elder son should succeed him as Vicar of Headington, and his younger son as Vicar of Marston. So at this point, when the younger son William was aged 14 and still at Eton, he was obviously still considered to be good enough for Marston. But soon after going up to Worcester College, when he was still only 17, William did something for which his father was unable to forgive him. We may never know exactly what the boy did, but it made his father in February 1835 (literally, dramatically, and in front of witnesses) tear all references to him out of his Will. Time was not allowed to heal the rift, because less than four months later the Vicar of St Andrew's was dead.

In the event, the Will was declared invalid and the Vicar's property was distributed as if he had died intestate. His widow swore an Affidavit in December 1835 to explain the tattered state of the Will, saying that:

in or about the month of February last the said deceased in several conversations with her declared that his Youngest Son William Henry Whorwood who had then recently incurred the displeasure of his Father had by this bad conduct forfeited all claims upon him and that he the said deceased had resolved that his oldest son should have everything he possessed.

William, although a Scholar of his college, never completed his degree, but (according to *Alumni Oxonienses*) left in 1836 when he was still only 18.

Soon after this William Henry Whorwood inherited most of the manorial land of Headington from his seafaring bachelor uncle, who had died just a fortnight after his twin brother. On 13 July 1838 William is described in an indenture of being of the City of Oxford, so he was not living with his family in the Manor House. Less than five years later he died alone in Jersey at the age of 26. When his will was proved on 17 June 1843 he is described as 'William Henry Whorwood late of the City of Oxford but at present residing in the parish of Saint Helier Island of Jersey Gentleman'. After making small bequests to the servant who cared for him during his last illness and to his 'affectionate and beloved mother', he left the bulk of his estate to his elder brother Thomas.

Meanwhile that brother had been leading a dutiful life in Oxford. In 1833 his father (probably already suffering from ill-health) had made him Vicar of Marston as soon as he became 21. William's subsequent disgrace put paid to any idea of Thomas later moving over to Headington to make way for his brother; and in any case Thomas himself appears to have had no interest in this prospect, because when he succeeded his father as Lord of the Manor in 1835 he appointed Joseph Charles Pring as Vicar of St Andrew's in his father's place; and Pring (although at 33 his patron's senior by ten years) was to remain in this position for the next 41 years. In any case Thomas (despite his fourth-class degree in *Literae Humaniores*) had also in 1833 been appointed a Fellow of Magdalen College, and although he remained Vicar of Marston for sixteen years until 1849, he seems to have taken more interest in his college duties than his parochial ones.

On becoming Lord of the Manor in 1835, Thomas immediately put Headington Manor House and its remaining land up for sale. Only a proportion of land was sold, however, and on 13 July 1838 Mrs Whorwood and her two sons sold the Manor House and 321 acres of land to the auctioneer George Alexander Peppercorn

Thomas and his mother had to move out of the Manor House, and went to live in a Magdalen College house at 1 St Clements (on the site of the present Waynflete Building). William Tuckwell described her thus:

Madame Whorwood, a stately old lady in antique dress, lived with him in the house overhanging the Cherwell on the north side of Magdalen Bridge; the top of her high cap usually visible to passers-by.

The mother and son eventually moved to another Magdalen house at 64 High Street.

In 1849, when Thomas was given a college living at Willoughby in Warwickshire, he sold the title of Lord of the Manor of Headington to William Peppercorn, who had already inherited the manor lands from George Alexander Peppercorn. Thomas still spent time in Oxford with his mother, and after her death in 1855 led a miserable lonely life 'ruled by five domestics whose service was perfect freedom'. Tuckwell describes him as 'a fresh-coloured, smooth-

faced, vivacious, whist-playing, amiable loungeur', and wrote, 'I met poor Whorwood not long before his death, pallid, weary, corpulent; and he cried as we talked over old times.'

Whorwood ceased to be patron of St Andrew's Church in 1879 and died in 1884, 'the last and landless descendant of an ancient line'. His loneliness and self-pity are revealed throughout his will, and it is clear that the only living being he really cared for was his 'parlour dog Charlie', who was to have £175 invested to pay for his keep. Most of his bequests are to his servants, and he states that 'my relations are very distant and scarcely known to me'. In a codicil, however, he did make an effort to keep the family name alive: he left £3,500 to the children of Mary Whard Holmes (the adopted daughter of his seafaring uncle), provided that her eldest son Cyril took the surname Whorwood.

He also directed his trustees to 'spend such sum as shall be necessary for filling in the East Window of the Church of Headington ... with

stained glass in memory of my late dear Mother, Father, Uncle, and Myself'. This indicates that he had erased his brother from his memory.

The prodigal's brother was also judgmental in his charity: he left £50 each to the Vicars of Headington and Marston to distribute not according to need but:

amongst the poor parishioners of their... parishes who attend their respective Parish churches and no other place of worship, and shall not be Dissenters or members of the Agricultural Union....

The Revd Thomas Henry Whorwood, his twin brother William Henry, his wife Mary, and Thomas Henry junior all lie in St Andrew's churchyard, but not the prodigal son: he was presumably left out of sight and out of mind in Jersey.

Stephanie Jenkins



Headington Manor House, where Henry Mayne Whorwood chose to live from 1801, followed by his brother the Revd Thomas Henry Whorwood. Thomas's elder son of the same name sold the house and moved to Oxford in 1838