

# SIR WILLIAM SMYTH – NORTH BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LANDOWNER, SOLDIER, LAWYER, PROPERTY DEALER AND ENTREPRENEUR

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*Sir William Smyth was an example of a flamboyant 17th-century North Buckinghamshire gentleman, who was able to take full advantage of turbulent times to improve his and his family's financial and social positions. Having become a barrister and an MP as a young man, he deserted the parliamentary cause for the King's service, just as the tide was turning against the Royalists. He was charged with the defence of Hillesden House in 1644 but in spite of his diligent efforts failed and was taken prisoner. In prison he met and married his first wife, and on the death of his father-in-law inherited the lease of an estate and Manor House in Radclive. On release he followed the Prince of Wales into exile, mixed in court circles and took full advantage of the right to exploit the Jersey Mint. Between 1640 and 1670 he made a considerable fortune from acquiring property from distressed sellers and selling it on in small parcels, using his legal expertise and determination to push through many hundreds of transactions, mainly in Stepney and Hackney. He also ventured in fuller's earth, salt and tin. He used his increasing fortune and position as an MP for Buckingham to consolidate his social position among the upper gentry of the county. As an interesting mixture of ruthless entrepreneur and charming host he was always ready to take an opportunity, and showed how it was possible to succeed in difficult times.*

William Smyth was born in 1617 as the eldest son of the Akeley landowner and London barrister Robert Smyth and his wife Martha Greene<sup>1</sup>. His grandfather, also William Smyth, had been a Winchester scholar and a Fellow of New College who became a senior ecclesiastical lawyer, a Prebendary of Lincoln Cathedral and held the living of Mursley for over 40 years.

William Smyth matriculated at Trinity College, Oxford in 1635 and then, like his father<sup>2</sup>, became a barrister at the Middle Temple<sup>3</sup> before embarking on a political and business career. William had three brothers; John, who appeared to live most of his life at Akeley; Robert, who went to New College and the Middle Temple, and Samuel, about whom little is known.

In 1640 William Smyth became MP for Winchelsea. When sitting in the Long Parliament, he strongly opposed the use of the royal prerogative and published two of his speeches on this subject in

1642. In 1643 he approved the Solemn League and Covenant, an agreement between the English Parliament and the Scottish Covenanters intended to deny the King support from Scotland, as did his fellow MP and future father-in-law Sir Alexander Denton of Hillesden<sup>4</sup>. However, in late 1643 Smyth abruptly deserted Parliament's cause in favour of the Crown and became a royalist commander, raising a cavalry regiment in early 1644.

Smyth was posted to defend Hillesden in February 1644, which occupied an important position between the royalist stronghold of Oxford and the parliamentary garrisons in Aylesbury and Newport Pagnell, taking command of around 260 troops and five small cannons. By all accounts he was an energetic and resourceful commander, who employed about 1,000 local men to dig defensive ditches and to round up food and cattle for use in the event of a siege.

The initial attack on Hillesden by some 300

Parliamentary horse and foot was repulsed by the cannons, including a larger cannon that had been improvised out of a tree trunk, and the defences of ditches and earthworks of Hillesden were then vigorously prepared in anticipation of a further attack. The next attack came sooner than expected partly, owing to an aggrieved local farmer failing to recover his cattle and other goods from Hillesden and appealing to the parliamentary authorities. This alerted the parliamentary troops to the need to move quickly. The defences were accordingly not quite complete when Hillesden House and the nearby church were attacked a second time on 5 March 1644<sup>5</sup> by Col Oliver Cromwell and Sir Samuel Luke. They attacked with 2,000 troops, and after initial resistance and some losses, including damage to the church which is still visible, Col Smyth was forced to surrender and Hillesden House was burned to the ground. As Smyth was being taken prisoner a soldier snatched his hat. Smyth immediately complained to Cromwell, who promised to punish the offender and gave Smyth his own beaver<sup>6</sup>.

The parliamentary victory at Hillesden was considered important enough to be the subject of an order that a statement should be read in all parish churches as follows:

‘A catalogue of remarkable mercies, conferred on the midland counties by the recent victories, including the taking of Hillesden House – which victory enabled the Parliament to ease and comfort the poor inhabitants of the almost wasted county of Buckingham.’

William Smyth and Sir Alexander Denton (who had come by chance to Hillesden just before the final battle) were taken prisoner and sent to the Tower of London. While there William Smyth had an opportunity to court Margaret Denton, the 19 year-old daughter of Sir Alexander, who had been permitted to look after her father while he was in custody. They were married in July 1644, presumably in the Poultry Compter to which William Smyth had been moved from the Tower<sup>7</sup>. After his wedding Smyth escaped, apparently with the help of his new wife, prompting parliament to arrest Margaret, Thomas and Elizabeth Isham<sup>8</sup> and Susan Verney, and to detain them for eight days on the charge of aiding and abetting his escape<sup>9</sup>.

While in prison Sir Alexander became seriously ill: he was moved to Lord Petre’s house<sup>10</sup> and died there<sup>11</sup> on New Year’s Day 1645. Although he died

‘of a fever’ Sir Alexander is often described as having died of a broken heart, due to the loss within a few years of his wife (the former Mary Hampden), his mother (the former Susan Temple), his eldest son, Col John, who died at the Battle of Abingdon, his sister Margaret and her husband Sir Edmund Verney, who died at the Battle of Edgehill, as well as the destruction of his beloved Hillesden House. The division of the family between the majority who were royalist and Sir Alexander’s sister Susan, who in 1644 married the parliamentary soldier Captain Abercrombie<sup>12</sup>, no doubt also contributed to his decline.

Smyth returned to prison after his escape, probably to ensure that his wife and new family were released. He was exchanged in February 1645 for Sir Robert Meredith.<sup>13</sup> He then made his way to Cornwall with a Royal Patent to set up a mint at Truro, which he briefly achieved in 1646<sup>14</sup>. He later followed Prince Charles to the Scilly Islands and Jersey and would have come to know the Duke of York, who also followed his elder brother into exile.<sup>15</sup> It is known that Smyth’s young wife Margaret followed him to Jersey in 1646 and 1647, where she must have given a good impression as she was described by Sir Edward Hyde, who was most suspicious of some of her husband’s activities, as ‘... someone who in truth is a sober woman.’<sup>16</sup>

It is unclear<sup>17</sup> who used Sir Alexander Denton’s Manor House at Radclive after his death, or who held the lease until about 1650.<sup>18</sup> It is possible that Sir Alexander agreed before he died that Margaret and William Smyth could occupy Radclive Manor as and when it was possible for them to do so, or possibly it was part of Margaret’s marriage settlement<sup>19</sup>. The house (Fig. 1) had been renovated by Sir Thomas Denton in the 1620s for his children and had been vacated a few years earlier by Sir Martin and Lady (Susanna) Lister.<sup>20</sup> It was the birthplace of at least four of the Listers’ children, including, in 1639, Martin, who later became the eminent naturalist and physician Dr Martin Lister FRS.

After the sack and burning of Hillesden House in March 1644, which Sir Alexander estimated to have cost him £16,000,<sup>21</sup> that house was uninhabitable and it is almost certain that Margaret Smyth moved to Radclive Manor, possibly with other members of the Denton family. A new smaller house was then built by the Dentons on the site of the ruined Hillesden House: a letter of 1648 indi-



FIGURE 1 Radclive Manor, from the east

cates that some building work at Hillesden was then being carried out<sup>22</sup>.

By 1650 Smyth had returned from supporting Prince Charles, possibly as Governor of Chepstow Castle<sup>23</sup> and more certainly in Cornwall, the Scilly Islands and Jersey<sup>24</sup>. He and Margaret were by then living at Radclive; however William Smyth's marriage to Margaret was quite short as she died in 1651, almost certainly in or shortly after childbirth.

By 1653 Smyth had acquired (or renewed) the Radclive lease and it was renewed in 1659, 1666 and 1680<sup>25</sup>. After Margaret's death William Smyth remarried, this time to Dorothy (Doll), daughter of Sir Nathaniel and Anne Hobart.<sup>26</sup> He set about making the Manor House a centre for local power and good living, supported by his increasing fortune arising from his exploitation of various Mints and from land transactions. However at the time of his decimation in 1656, when such unexpected taxes were hard for many to pay in the uncertain economic climate, it was suggested<sup>27</sup> that his hospitality 'ever exceeded his income'.<sup>28</sup>

He and his wives lived in some style, keeping many horses<sup>29</sup> and bringing up a family. The family's close connection with the Dentons continued after Margaret's death, and in many ways the Dentons continued to consider Radclive Manor as if it were still a Denton family house. The Verney letters describe a dinner planned at Radclive Manor by Dorothy Smyth as a 'vengeance pasty' for a 'colt pie' – a savoury pasty – plotted by Dr William Denton and Sir Ralph Verney in July 1658 and served at Claydon House.<sup>30</sup> The Smyths improved the house, adding on two wings and a bigger coach house, and later in their tenancy Radclive Manor was to be one of the first domestic houses to use wallpaper<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 2).

Unlike the neighbouring Denton and Verney families, which both suffered devastating losses during the civil war, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, William Smyth was much more fortunate, although the 1640s and 1650s were still difficult for him personally, politically and financially. Like most prominent royalists he suffered parlia-



FIGURE 2 Wallpaper from a first-floor closet at Radclive Manor, dated to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century

mentary penalties; he and his widowed mother were forced to pay £360 for his late father's royalist 'delinquency' and he had to compound for his chambers in the Middle Temple and a house in Bristol in 1649 at the cost of £54 and again for his Akeley estate in 1653.<sup>32</sup> He was also 'decimated' in 1656, paying £210. In 1658 he was arrested as a royalist conspirator and his house, Radclive Manor, was searched for arms on the orders of Sir George Fleetwood<sup>33</sup>. He was then detained in Mr Kilby's house in Aylesbury with a number of other members of the local gentry. He nevertheless managed to escape any crippling taxes and to turn the difficult times to his advantage. He was alleged to have promoted a loyal address to Richard Cromwell, with whom he had enjoyed hunting at Stowe, presumably to keep in favour with the parliamentary authorities.<sup>34</sup>

He successfully exploited the uncertain times during the 1640s and 1650s,<sup>35</sup> not only by his very questionable activities when running the Truro and Jersey mints but also by acquiring forfeited Royalist estates and also buying mortgages over indebted estates, sometimes in partnership with his

brother John and Nathaniel Hobart. This was typified by his acquisition of charges over property in Stepney and Hackney owned by the Wentworth family. The nominal value of these mortgages eventually amounted to the very large sum of £32,568. Stepney and Hackney had originally been mostly owned by the heavily indebted royalist Thomas Wentworth, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Cleveland, who was unable to compound with Parliament and whose land was accordingly sold in 1649 by the treason trustees. William Smyth was granted the two lordships in Stepney and Hackney and the majority of the property in recognition of his claims. Having established his claims<sup>36</sup> he was able profitably to sell it on by many individual sales (over 40 up to 1660 alone).

In 1660 he was accused in a Petition to Parliament by the Earl of Cleveland and his son Lord Wentworth of having sold and embezzled their property, but Smyth later restored good relations with the Earl's son<sup>37</sup> and the latter's wife Lady (Philadelphia) Wentworth, who was a distant kinswoman and was widowed in 1665<sup>38</sup>. The Earl was later able to recover some of his former land

with Sir William's help. According to Allan Fea, Smyth faced several complaints of fraud made to Parliament after the Restoration. Smyth used his skill and legal knowledge to resist these complaints, but in the process became known as a person 'well versed in bargaining.'<sup>39</sup>

After Lord Wentworth's death in 1665 Smyth was appointed guardian<sup>40</sup> to his daughter Henrietta (1660–1686), who later became a prominent figure at Charles II's court and the mistress of the Duke of Monmouth<sup>41</sup>. Smyth therefore came to know the Duke of Monmouth in the 1670s.<sup>42</sup> Henrietta<sup>43</sup>, who after 1667 became Baroness Wentworth in her own right, remained Smyth's ward<sup>44</sup> and Smyth continued to have numerous business dealings with her mother in Stepney and Hackney<sup>45</sup>.

William Smyth was rewarded by Charles II for his services to the Crown, and for leading a force to Haddenham in January 1661 to put down a rumoured Fifth Monarchist rising.<sup>46</sup> He was granted a Royal Patent to export tin to France and was also created a Baronet in 1661 as 'Sir William Smyth of Redcliffe' (sic). He also won the Buckingham seat that year after a hard-fought campaign,<sup>47</sup> remaining MP for the borough until early 1679.<sup>48</sup> Although he had been an active contributor to the Long Parliament he almost never spoke in debates in Charles II's parliaments; however he sat on 73 parliamentary committees and promoted a number of private Acts of Parliament, mainly to assist his own or his friends' business interests, including one to permit the Earl of Cleveland to sell the property restored to him after the Restoration.

Smyth continued to seek opportunities to profit after the Restoration and seized on the ambiguity relating to the ownership of the Chaloner family's estates in Steeple Claydon. The main estate had been under the control of two regicide brothers, James and Thomas Chaloner.<sup>49</sup> They had been far from blameless in dealing with the estate while supposedly acting as trustees for their nephew Edward Chaloner, who had been born posthumously in 1625. When Edward's father died the estate had been left in the hands of James and Thomas until he came of age. In practice they had not passed on the estate to Edward but had continued to treat it as their own. On the Restoration James Chaloner committed suicide and Thomas went into exile, leaving their nephew Edward, whose father had been chaplain to James I

and who was by now married with children of his own, apparently the undisputed owner. Edward had moreover had no connection with Parliament's forces and had in fact spent the war years in France, where he had known Sir Ralph Verney.<sup>50</sup>

However, he and his family had not reckoned on Sir William and his colleague Richard Lane,<sup>51</sup> a groom of the King's bedchamber. They saw an opportunity to profit from the Chaloners' misfortunes and approached the Duke of York, and through him obtained from the King two grants by Letters Patent over the estate confiscated from the regicide Thomas Chaloner. They probably felt that their cause was invincible when the estate was included as forfeited in the Exchequer Commission's report of 1661. However, this attack on the Chaloners' property led to considerable local confrontation and the use of numerous legal actions on both sides. Great friction developed between Sir William and the Chaloners. Sir William asserted his ownership by felling timber, and then sought to raise rents and evict certain tenants. At one point in 1663 the Chaloners offered Smyth £1,500 for him to waive his claim. Smyth rejected the offer out of hand and continued to act aggressively. The particular targets of Sir William were Charles and Ann Chaloner, who were in possession of the smaller Rectory manor. Smyth dealt quite ruthlessly with them, and at one stage they were evicted and put into Aylesbury prison.

There was also confrontation with the tenants of Steeple Claydon, who disliked what Smyth was doing, and in support of the Chaloner family they started a rent strike.<sup>52</sup> Smyth had no immediate answer to this as he could not easily take possession of all the land and houses. Moreover, Edward Chaloner had married Ann, a daughter of Sir Richard Ingoldsby of Lenborough, and so when Ingoldsby, a former parliamentary commander and another regicide was rehabilitated in the early 1660s, Edward Chaloner gained a powerful ally in north Buckinghamshire.

The matter was fought out at length on the ground and in the Chancery Court, at the end of which Edward Chaloner was reinstated at Steeple Claydon. Sir William had tried opportunistically to gain the Steeple Claydon estate by exercising court influence and local power but, in spite of considerable effort, he met his match on this occasion.

Although he suffered a rare setback over the Steeple Claydon affair, Smyth seems to have used

his power and legal expertise to acquire complete control of the Stepney estate by 1674,<sup>53</sup> when he took up regular residence there and was appointed to county office. In October 1675 Sir Ralph Verney was told that 'Sir William Smith's business is done. ... Prince Rupert and the Duke of Monmouth have presented him with their pictures'.<sup>54</sup> The 'business' may have been connected with the coinage of farthings from tin, in which Smyth had long been interested. He was also appointed to a position on the commission enquiring into the workings of the Royal Mint.

Smyth was also an entrepreneur in several ventures.<sup>55</sup> He was a prospector for fuller's earth in his manors of Wroxhill and Wavendon Heath and promoted tin as a metal for coinage, an interest which may have been initiated during his time in Cornwall. He also had an interest in a salt works on the Isle of Grain, although this was destroyed by the Dutch when their fleet attacked up the Medway in 1667. He also acquired the right to construct a salt works in Ireland, which right he sold in 1665 to his colleague Richard Lane and Edward Cooke.

He also sat on many commissions, including one which enquired into the working of the Royal Mint, and he was on the grand jury that heard the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury's<sup>56</sup> trial in 1681 for High Treason, a trial which faltered for lack of credible prosecution evidence. He was also foreman of the grand jury that committed Sir Algernon Sydney. Sydney was convicted of treason on limited evidence for his alleged part in the Rye House plot. Sir William's public work often involved harsh treatment of both Roman Catholic recusants and Protestant non-conformists, which caused people at the time to suspect that he did this to remain in favour with whichever party was in power.<sup>57</sup>

He did however propose some measures which may have been disinterested. He drafted a letter from the King to be read at quarter sessions, ordering that new workhouses should be built and that irregularities in empanelling jurors should cease. In 1684 he proposed the foundation of a hospital in Tower Hamlets for the dependants of seamen who had lost their lives or been enslaved by the Turks. A charter was ordered to provide for its maintenance by a grant of £100 p.a. from his court of record at Whitechapel, the limit of whose jurisdiction was simultaneously raised to £40. In his will he also left the income from £100 of land to support the poor of Akeley.

During most of this period the comfortable Rectory next door to Radclive Manor housed the Rector Robert Townsend and his wife Susannah (née Denton), whom Townsend had married in 1650.<sup>58</sup> The two families apparently got on well together,<sup>59</sup> and in 1659 Rector Townsend brokered the marriage of his younger brother John,<sup>60</sup> then a mercer and later to be twice Mayor of Oxford, to Susannah's younger sister Mary. The marriage took place in Radclive Church on 3 January 1660.

The Smyth family was quite numerous, but several of the children died relatively young. The eldest known child was Margaret, who was born in 1651<sup>61</sup> from William Smyth's marriage to Margaret Denton. She was apparently the only child of that marriage but died young, possibly in childbirth with her mother. Nathaniel (Nat) was probably born in 1655<sup>62</sup> and lived at least 30 years, but predeceased his father. William was born in 1662 and he also predeceased his father, probably dying quite young, while Thomas, whose year of birth is believed to have been 1661<sup>63</sup>, survived his father and became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet on his father's death in 1697. They also had two daughters, Dorothy (Doll) and Margaret (Peg), born in the 1660s.

During most of their time in Radclive the Smyths had enjoyed good relationships with the Dentons, the Verneys, the Temples and no doubt other local families. In 1673 Sir William enclosed about 75 acres of his demesne as a park into which deer were introduced<sup>64</sup> and trees planted. No doubt he did this to consolidate his social position among the local gentry. This park and a very small, rough sketch of the Manor House appear on the 1675 Ogilby map (Fig. 3) of the route from London to Banbury as 'Lady Smith's house and park,' showing that by that time the house was quite large and, although inaccurately positioned, the park also featured on Morden's map of 1695.<sup>65</sup>

Sir William Smyth's Radclive estate was quite well documented at this time, including entries in the churchwardens' accounts which show that he held 30 'yard lands' or strips in the common fields and a small area in Hasley Grove, as well as the 75 acres he had enclosed to form his park.<sup>66</sup> At that time he and the various tenants were assessed on a pro-rata basis to cover parish expenses of both a secular and church nature, the levies typically raising a total of between £5 and £10 per annum, of which more than half was paid for by Sir William.<sup>67</sup> In addition he paid tithes of £36 p.a. (an



FIGURE 3 Extract from Ogilby's strip map of the Buckingham-Aynho road, 1675

amount which at the time of the 1840 tithe commutation had risen to a rent charge of c.£100)<sup>68</sup> and various church collections 'on a brief' to support such causes as relief for French or Dutch Protestants, Algerian captives or the building of St Paul's Cathedral. Sir William, followed by the Rector, usually supported these causes quite generously, with most of the tenants contributing something. Several terriers of the estate were made during the Smyth tenancy detailing the particular fields, and in 1674 the annual rental was £314.<sup>69</sup>

Sir William's son Thomas does not appear to have been prepared for any particular career, although he may have been initially trained to manage his father's business interests. Thomas Smyth was

mentioned as a possible suitor for Henrietta Wentworth after her romantic but tragic affair with the Duke of Monmouth, by whom she had two illegitimate children.<sup>70</sup> Monmouth was executed in July 1685 after his failed rising against King James II, an enterprise that Henrietta had assisted. The Verneys believed that the Smyths, father and son, had hopes of a remunerative match with this wealthy but tainted heiress. Henrietta's early death in 1686 prevented anything coming of this but, in John Verney's words, 'T.S. have lost a rich wife; his father will have a richer widow by it.'<sup>71</sup>

Two years after Henrietta's death Thomas was involved in a great local scandal<sup>72</sup> by running off in 1688 with Hester, the wife of 15 years of his close friend Alexander Denton<sup>73</sup> and the mother of their seven children.<sup>74</sup> Hester had a daughter in September 1688 whom Alexander Denton 'would not own'. The daughter died soon afterwards, but the scandal was reported to have caused more bitterness to the Denton family at Hillesden than all the troubles of the Civil War.<sup>75</sup>

This elopement gave rise to great family friction and a lawsuit by Hester's husband against Thomas Smyth in the Court of Common Pleas alleging adultery, followed by a counter claim by Hester for libel in the Court of Arches. This scandal and the subsequent legal cases have been examined in their historical and social context by David Turner.<sup>76</sup> The matter was finally resolved by the payment to Alexander Denton of £5,000. Hester died in London in 1691<sup>77</sup> when she and Thomas were apparently living in Westminster.

Thomas had by then begun a military career. In February 1690 he obtained a commission as a Captain in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Troop of Horse Guards, which was commanded by James Butler, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Ormonde. He saw active service in Flanders<sup>78</sup> and achieved the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in 1696. In 1702 the Duke of Marlborough appointed him Quartermaster-General of the forces sent under Ormonde to attack Cadiz<sup>79</sup>. He retired from the Army in 1709 as a Brigadier-General.

Sir Thomas must have impressed Ormonde, as when the Duke became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1703 he appointed Sir Thomas to be Ranger of Phoenix Park<sup>80</sup>. He held this position while both serving in the Army and as an MP in the Irish Parliament, where he was MP first for Kilkenny City (a Butler stronghold) and then Duleek between 1703 and 1714.

Sometime after 1715 it appears (and his nephew the Oxford academic Dr William King asserted) that Smyth secretly married Frances Brudenell (1673–1736), daughter of Francis, Lord Brudenell, son of the Earl of Cardigan.<sup>81</sup> She had previously been married to Charles Livingston, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Newburgh, and after his death to Richard Bellew, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Bellew of Duleek, by both of whom she had had children. Frances had also been attached to George Granville, Lord Lansdowne and to Henry St John, later Viscount Bolingbroke, both of whom wrote poems about her.

She had the reputation of being a gambler and very extravagant. It appears that her extravagance caused Lord Bellew to borrow money from Thomas Smyth, and that Bellew had to sell many properties to pay off their debts. Frances appears to have also reduced Thomas Smyth to debt and penury, forcing him to borrow and even to have to sell his horses. He borrowed about £3,500 from his nephew William King (his sister Peg's son) which he could not repay, and this became the subject of a bitter lawsuit, with Frances and her Dublin lawyer friends using devious tactics against King, who was himself a barrister.<sup>82</sup>

After Bellew's death in 1715 Frances appears to have led a bisexual life; although married to Thomas Smyth she led a group of Dublin ladies who practised tribadism, and she had lesbian affairs with a number of aristocratic partners including Viscountess Allen<sup>83</sup>. When Smyth died in 1732 and William King had failed to obtain the repayment of his loan he decided to take his revenge on Smyth's widow, whom he blamed for his losses and apparently for her encouraging bandits to attack him. A friend of Frances, Sir Edward Pearce, had also led a group of bandits to take possession of King's house near Phoenix Park<sup>84</sup>. He lampooned her (and her accomplices) vituperatively in his mock heroic satirical poem *The Toast*, first published in Dublin in 1732, in which he portrayed her as the heroine Myra and set out in quasi-fictional form the devious and fraudulent ways in which Frances and others had deceived him. He also portrayed her as a promiscuous lesbian.

In contrast to their brother Thomas, it appears that the Smyths' daughters Doll and Peg led fairly conventional lives and were attractive matches as the daughters of a rich father. The first wedding was of his eldest surviving daughter Doll, who had

previously rejected the suit of the wealthy but relatively old Sir John Abdy, described in the Verney memoirs by Nancy Nicholas as 'no baby'. In 1687 Abdy, who was then aged 44, married Nancy's daughter Jenny Nicholas.<sup>85</sup>

Doll married Charles Wither<sup>86</sup> son of Gilbert Wither of Hall, later called Oakley Hall, in Hampshire. The wedding took place in Radclive on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1682 and there is a good account of it in the Verney Memoirs<sup>87</sup>. It appears to have been a grand occasion, which allowed Sir William ample scope to indulge his love of splendour. He drove the bridegroom's family about in his coach with eight men on horseback in attendance. Ten shillings were given to the Buckingham bell ringers, and fiddlers from Gawcott were sent for. After the wedding Parson King 'made love to Pegg, the bride's lively little sister, in such wise that the aunts and cousins gossiped pleasantly of another festive gathering to be held ere long.' Among the guests was their notorious cousin Dick Hals<sup>88</sup>, who was hanged at Tyburn three years later for highway robbery.

Peg married her Parson, Peregrine King, a year or so later. Peregrine had been at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, became curate at Radclive and in 1684 became Rector of the parish of Rowington in Somerset until his death in 1714. He also went on to become Rector of Ealing. Peregrine and Peg had a son William, who was baptised in Stepney on 11 March 1685 and who was to become Dr William King. He went to Balliol College, Oxford and became an academic, a wit, a writer and friend of Jonathan Swift. He eventually became Principal of St Mary Hall, Oxford and lived until 1763.

By the 1680s Sir William was getting into his 70s. With his wife, Doll, who was to die in 1686,<sup>89</sup> he appears to have spent most of his remaining time in relative obscurity. By this time he was no doubt well off, but in the process he had become unpopular in several quarters. He had made himself very unpopular in Steeple Claydon over the Chaloner affair. He had also been conspicuously obnoxious at the funeral in Toddington church of his former ward Henrietta Wentworth in 1686, when he had cut the bell ropes to prevent the customary funeral bell being tolled. He had presumably been anxious to distance himself from any association with the disgraced Duke of Monmouth.

In December 1685 Smyth was put out of the Middlesex Commission of the Peace and had



apparently offended Lord Chancellor Jeffreys (1644–1689), who had recently presided over the ‘Bloody Assizes’ in the South West of England following Monmouth’s rebellion. Lord Jeffreys criticised Smyth openly in his Chancery Court:<sup>90</sup> according to Allan Fea this led Smyth to retire to Radclive in early 1686. Fea cites letters between Sir Ralph Verney, John Verney and Dr William Denton in December 1685 and January 1686. The particular matter had been a proposal to erect a sewer from Spitalfields to the Thames, a proposal which had caused bitter rivalries. Jeffreys supported the faction opposed to Sir William, whose connection with Henrietta Wentworth, who had supported the Duke of Monmouth’s rebellion, may have exacerbated the dispute. Smyth had also failed in 1685 for a second time to be elected as an MP for Middlesex.

Smyth eventually gave up the Radclive lease in 1690 in favour of Captain John Woodfine of Stepney, a bonded captain of the Royal African Company, who was already known to him from property dealings there<sup>91</sup>. Sir William died in Stepney in early 1697 and was buried with his wife Doll in the chancel of Akeley church.<sup>92</sup>

In his will Sir William left an annuity to his brother Samuel<sup>93</sup>, his manors of Wavendon and Old Warden, which included fuller’s earth pits and land at Aspley, to his godson and nephew William Smyth, and the residue including land at Stepney and Whitechapel in trust to his nephew William, Peregrine King and Charles Wither during his son Thomas’s lifetime. If his son Thomas were to have male issue, his son would inherit after Thomas’s demise. As Thomas had no children he was effectively cut out of his father’s will, presumably due to the Hester Denton scandal.<sup>94</sup>

Lady Henrietta had left no valid will when she died in 1686. However, her mother Lady Philadelphia was apparently aware of her daughter’s wishes and sought to implement them in her own will ten years later. Henrietta apparently intended to leave Sir William £1,000, which in practice turned into £500 for his son Thomas.

It has been suggested that the £1,000 was in recognition of the Smyth family’s support by adopting her son by the Duke of Monmouth. Monmouth and Henrietta may have gone through some form of marriage ceremony, although as Monmouth was already married it would have been void and the child illegitimate. Henrietta’s son R.

Wentworth Smyth was almost certainly fathered by Monmouth and accordingly a blood relation of James II and of the Old and Young Pretenders. He was adopted by a Col Robert Smyth; however his connection, if any, to the family of Sir William Smyth has never been proved.<sup>95</sup>

Sir William Smyth led a very full life and played a number of different roles, all typical of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Buckinghamshire gentleman, although the number of roles he filled was exceptional.

He became a civil war commander at short notice and was nearly a successful one, although he had had almost no military training. He became a member of the county’s upper gentry, rather than being born into that position, and became the lord of the manor of Radclive, living in a fine house, creating a deer park and being known for his generous hospitality.

During the Commonwealth and Protectorate he remained on friendly social terms with some of his former political opponents, e.g. Richard Cromwell and Sir Richard Temple (of Stowe), not unlike many other gentry families who did not let divided political loyalties conflict with ties of friendship. His two daughters married well and while his son was the cause of much grief and was cut out of his father’s will, he eventually partly redeemed himself by a successful career in the Army and in Ireland.

He was a politician (an MP from 1640–44 and from 1661–79) taking the parliamentary line in the early 1640s in common with most of Buckinghamshire’s gentry and MPs, but then switched his allegiance to the Crown. He gave service to the Crown in difficult times and was rewarded for it by being made a Baronet on the Restoration. He developed and later made use of his court connections and became known to and friends of some of the higher aristocracy.

He was a successful businessman using his legal knowledge and his determination to make a good deal of money from acquiring property from distressed sellers and selling it on at a good profit. He ventured in trade, having interests in fuller’s earth, salt and tin. He managed two Mints, almost entirely for his own benefit. His success in business led to a number of requests from friends, e.g. the Verneys, for help when they were up against a difficult commercial adversary, such as Sir Cornelis Vermuyden, who raised money from Sir Ralph Verney and the Hobarts for the reclamation of fen land and left them out of pocket. Smyth was seen as

a useful ally, who could take on a tough and tricky opponent.

While it is apparent that Sir William Smyth was a well educated, energetic and ambitious character he was to a considerable extent a man moulded by his class and period. His education and time served as an MP no doubt helped to launch his short military career as a civil war Colonel and gave him the confidence to take on the task of defending Hillesden with its garrison of *c.* 260 men. His initiative to employ 1,000 men to create defence works nearly won the day for the Crown, although his arrogance and lack of sympathy for local farmers may have contributed to the betrayal of Hillesden's defences by an aggrieved local farmer. He was however willing to risk the wrath of Oliver Cromwell by complaining about his lost hat; a complaint that Cromwell upheld and may have led to Smyth's later friendship with Richard Cromwell, to whom he made a loyal address.

His father and grand father had been eminent professional lawyers. That in turn led to William and his brother going to Oxford and then to the Middle Temple, where they qualified as barristers.

William Smyth was a classic example of a man who made the most of any opportunity presented to him. His imprisonment in the Tower did not last as long as it might have done, as his status allowed him to be exchanged for a Parliamentary prisoner. It also led to him meeting and marrying the daughter of a local landed magnate, Sir Alexander Denton. Sir Alexander's death led to him being able to take on the lease of the Radclive estate with his first wife, with its recently improved Manor House, and to establish himself as a member of the county's upper gentry, a position he later sought to enhance by enlarging the house and creating a deer park. His second wife brought him further useful social and legal connections.

His legal expertise allied to an ambition to make money led to him making a substantial fortune from property, taking advantage of distressed Royalists and Parliamentarians alike, whose expertise was no doubt less than his own. He used his position as an MP and a magistrate to further his own business affairs.

By following Charles II into exile he became known in Royal circles. This assisted his enterprises such as the Jersey Mint, where the protection of the King undoubtedly saved him from being shown up as a counterfeiter by the honest Governor

of Jersey, Sir George Cartaret and Sir Edward Hyde. He also used his court connections to attempt to acquire the Steeple Claydon estate, forfeited by the regicide brothers, James and Thomas Chaloner, although in this case he suffered a rare reverse due to coming up against a powerful alliance of local and county opposition. However this reverse would have been more than compensated for by the Baronetcy bestowed on him by the King for services to the Crown, including his defence of Haddenham in January 1661 from a Fifth Monarchist rising. There is a possibility that the risk from this rising may have been exaggerated, and it no doubt suited William Smyth to ride to its defence and present himself as the King's man.

William Smyth was clearly willing to cut corners. His activities with Mints in Truro and Jersey displayed his willingness to put his own interest above that of the Crown or the common good. Attitudes to private enrichment from public office were ambivalent in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but his actions attracted a deal of criticism, which he was fortunate to be able to deflect. He sometimes made promises to the Buckingham electorate (to repair the Town Hall) that he did not fulfil, although he would not have been alone in doing that. He could also be quite ruthless, as displayed when he was trying to annexe the Steeple Claydon estate and dealing with recusants and non-conformists and at Henrietta Wentworth's funeral.

He must have had the gift of charm as he managed to make and remain friends with the Wentworth family, out of whose misfortune he had been able to make a good deal of money. He became guardian to Henrietta, Baroness Wentworth, later mistress of the Duke of Monmouth, and was on very cordial terms with her mother. Smyth was also on good terms with the Warden of New College, who often referred to enjoying Smyth's hospitality at Radclive when on a progress around the college estates.

His son Thomas was, it would appear, a capable Army officer, finding favour with the Duke of Ormonde and able to establish himself in the highest social circles in Ireland. However, like his father he had a curious and unconventional streak, eloping with Hester Denton and eventually marrying a very unusual and ruinously expensive wife.

His daughters and grandchildren turned out well

with the elder daughter (who had quite bravely rejected her first offer of marriage from a Baronet) happily married to a Hampshire landowner, who became High Sheriff of Hampshire, with their son also becoming High Sheriff and the local MP. The younger daughter married a cleric with a reasonable income and their son, Dr William King became a renowned Oxford academic, who sadly lent money to his uncle Sir Thomas Smyth and had to take legal action to try to recover it.

Sir William Smyth is referred to quite often in the Verney letters by Sir Ralph Verney and Dr William Denton, both people of eminence in their own fields. They saw Smyth as one of their own, a 'cousin', good company and a useful ally in difficult circumstances. They thought he was extravagant, ostentatious and overly fond of being the centre of attention. However they recognised he had led a full life and achieved a good deal, more than most Buckinghamshire gentry could have hoped to achieve.

#### NOTES

1. William Smyth's father Robert had acquired the manor of Akeley under a long lease from New College and died fighting for the King in a skirmish near Oxford in 1645.
2. Robert Smyth was educated at Hart Hall, Oxford and became principal of New Inn and had a successful legal practice.
3. Smyth was called to the bar in 1641 and was created a D.C.L. in 1642 by Oxford University. He used his legal training in his property and parliamentary business and to help friends and members of the family. He helped Sir Ralph Verney to draft a petition in 1656 against the sequestration of his Claydon estates, Margaret M Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Commonwealth 1650 to 1660* (London 1892), p.266 (Verney III).
4. Sir Alexander Denton was MP for Wendover, then Buckingham and finally Buckinghamshire, and was High Sheriff in 1637. The Denton family owned other estates besides Hillesden, including Radclive. Sir Alexander also switched sides in 1643.
5. H Roundell, 'Hillesden House in 1644,' *Recs Bucks II* (1863).
6. David Greenwood, *William King: Tory and Jacobite* (Oxford 1969), citing the *Political and Literary Anecdotes* of Dr William King, Smyth's grandson.
7. This small prison, close to the current Bank of England, was administered by the Sheriffs of the City of London.
8. They were the sister and brother-in-law of Sir Alexander Denton and were living either at Hillesden or Radclive in the 1640s. Susan Verney from Claydon House was staying at Hillesden.
9. Frances Partenope Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Civil War*, vol. 2 (London 1892), p.203 (Verney II). They were also held at Lord Petre's house.
10. Sir Alexander Denton was moved at his request from the Tower to the house of William, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Petre, which was being used as an overflow prison.
11. Speaker Lenthall of the House of Commons ordered on 1 January 1645 that 'the brother of Sir Alexander Denton should have a warrant for a hackney coach, with six horses and a postillion to carry the body of Sir Alexander Denton who is dead in prison to burial' (*Die Mercurii*, 1.1.1645).
12. It was remarkable that Sir Alexander Denton's daughter married the royalist commander at Hillesden, while his sister married an opposing commander at the same engagement.
13. Sir Robert Meredith was Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer and had been committed to Dublin Castle for trying to persuade soldiers in Ireland to 'join the King's enemies' (Adrian Tinniswood, *The Verneys* (London 2007), p.201).
14. A mint existed in Truro around 1642 to mint coins from plate to pay royalist troops. Col Smyth re-established the Truro mint in 1646, but it could only have been for a short time. Smyth then appears to have taken an engraver with him from Truro to Jersey in 1646–1647 (Allan Fea, *The Loyal Wentworths* (London 1928), pp.59 ff).
15. In Jersey he used his position as master of the Trinity mint to smelt French bullion and use local silver plate to produce coinage, ostensibly to benefit the Crown. The mint subsequently failed and there is little doubt that it was a counterfeiting operation, proved by the striking of James I half crowns, which carried a premium over the coins of Charles I.

- According to Sir Edward Hyde, Smyth tried to bribe the Governor of Jersey, Sir George Cartaret. However, Cartaret refused the bribes and Smyth only managed to escape serious consequences by producing a letter from Prince Charles confirming his mastership of the Mint. Hyde set out his detailed suspicions of William Smyth's activities in Jersey in a letter to Sir Edward Nicholas cited in Fea 1928, pp.58–61. Sir Edward Nicholas was Secretary of State to Charles I and II.
16. Allan Fea (Fea 1928, p.59), citing the letter from Hyde to Nicholas. Sir Edward Hyde, later 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Clarendon, was Chancellor of the Exchequer under Charles I and Lord Chancellor under Charles II. His daughter married the Duke of York.
  17. Radclive's Manor House was described in correspondence as being in the ownership of William Smyth at the time of the wedding in 1650 of Radclive's Rector Robert Townsend to Susannah Denton (Lady (Margaret) Verney, 'The wooing and wedding of Mary Denton', *Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archaeological Journal*, I, 1896, p.107). It is possible that he occupied it before then. In a letter dated 2.11.1648 to Sir Ralph Verney, Dr William Denton wrote that Radclive had been sold for £3,200 and he remarked that this equated to the low multiple of nine years purchase. In 1661 the estate was apparently worth £400 per annum, although Smyth repeatedly sought to obtain lower valuations.
  18. Sir Thomas Denton acquired the lease of Radclive from New College, Oxford and improved the house. On his death in 1633 the lease was renewed by Sir Alexander and the house was occupied by his sisters and their cousins, Sir Martin Lister and his wife Susanna (née Temple), parents of the naturalist and royal physician, Dr Martin Lister FRS, who was born in the house in 1639.
  19. Allan Fea (Fea 1928, p.206) stated that it was inherited by Margaret Smyth, but cited no evidence.
  20. Sir Martin Lister was a parliamentary MP for Brackley from 1640–1648 and would no doubt have known his fellow MP William Smyth. Susanna was a daughter of Sir Alexander Temple, had been a maid of honour to Anne of Denmark and was esteemed a great beauty by Samuel Pepys.
  21. Tinniswood 2007, p.200 and Verney II, pp.189–200.
  22. Frances Partenope Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Civil War*, vol. 1 (London 1892), p.323 (Verney I).
  23. This is recorded in Joseph Foster (ed.), *Alumni Oxonienses; the members of the University of Oxford, 1715–1886; their parentage, birth-place and year of birth, with a record of their degrees, 1500–1714 and 1714–1886* (Oxford 1888 and 1892 (entry for William Smyth) and in George E Cockayne, *Complete Baronetage*, 5 vols. (Exeter 1903), vol. 3, p.191. While they both state that he was a royalist Governor of Chepstow Castle during the civil war it is not stated when this occurred.
  24. Prince Charles was proclaimed King Charles II in the Royal Square of St Helier in February 1649 (Fea 1928, p.15). Prince Charles had appointed or confirmed Col. Smyth as Master of the Jersey Mint in 1646 or 1647.
  25. New College Archives, MS 9591.
  26. The date of this marriage is unknown. However, their son Nathaniel Smyth's unclear baptism record in the parish register shows an apparent date of 24 September 1655. Sir Nathaniel Hobart (1600–1674) was a son of Sir Henry Hobart, 1<sup>st</sup> Bart, Attorney-General 1606–1613 of Blickling, Norfolk. Sir Nathaniel became a Master in Chancery. Sir Nathaniel's elder brother, Sir John, was MP for Brackley 1626–1628. Sir Nathaniel's wife Anne (née Leake) was a cousin of the Verneys.
  27. Margaret M Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Commonwealth 1650 to 1660* (London 1892), p.268 (Verney III).
  28. Michael Woodward, Warden of New College 1658–1675, refers to the good company he experienced when he dined or stayed at Radclive on his progresses; '... always appreciates the ample feasts provided by Sir Wm. Smith at Radclive' (Eland, 1935, p.79). He was once entertained when he was delayed for several days at Radclive by a scalded foot, '...where I was very kindly treated' (G Eland, 'The Annual Progress of New College by Michael Woodward, Warden 1659–1675,' *Recs Bucks XIII. II* (1935), p.127). William Smyth also entertained Sir Richard Temple to a handsome dinner after hunting (Verney III, p.206).

- Anne Hobart writes of staying with her daughter Doll at Radclive and having ‘much good company.’ It is also recorded that Doll Smyth arrived in 1677 to stay at Preshaw House with an entourage of two daughters, a chaplain, two maids, three in livery and six horses (Sir Harry Verney, *The Verneys of Claydon* (London 1968), p.191.
29. Verney III, pp.219 & 220. Sir Ralph Verney and Dr. William Denton both considered Sir William to be extravagant. Col Henry Verney wrote how cousin Smith ‘would not let mee wagg, but must stay to keepe Mr Haile company .... He is like to have his stables full for neare this 3 months as I doe heare, for what with the six coach horses and other naggs, and doggs, it is well fill’d.’ Smyth was in a position to offer, or perhaps was obliged to provide, one or two horses in 1661 for a volunteer troop being raised in Aylesbury. (Margaret M Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family from the Restoration to the Revolution 1660 to 1696* (London 1892), p.8 (Verney IV)).
  30. Verney III, pp.418 & 419.
  31. Some wallpaper was discovered at Radclive Manor in the 1990s in a first floor closet (previously a cupboard) and has been dated by Gill Saunders of the Victoria & Albert Museum to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Accordingly it represents a very early example of wallpaper being used as a wall covering.
  32. John Broad ‘Contesting the Restoration Land Settlement? The battle for Regicide lands in Steeple Claydon, Buckinghamshire 1660–1700 and the shaping of a village,’ *Recs Bucks* 47.1 (2007), p.157) shows that Smyth was successful in reducing the sums he had to pay when he compounded.
  33. George Fleetwood was MP for Buckinghamshire from 1647, Colonel of the Buckinghamshire militia and signed the royal death warrant. On the Restoration he was convicted of regicide, was imprisoned for several years and lost his estate.
  34. Basil Duke Henning, *The House of Commons 1660–1690*, 3 vols, (London 1983) (entry for Sir William Smith). It is not known which address was referred to.
  35. The first known acquisition by Sir William was in 1640 when he bought 112 messuages from the Earl of Cleveland and his son Lord Wentworth.
  36. Henning 1983, vol. 3 and Allan Fea, *King Monmouth* (London 1902), p.91. The House of Lords Record Office Main Papers, 2/760, give more details. William Smyth succeeded in obtaining security over the Wentworth estate at Toddington against his loans to the Wentworth family.
  37. They had both been MPs in the Long Parliament. Baron Wentworth was considered impetuous and intemperate.
  38. Lady Philadelphia was a Car(e)y from Great Linford in Buckinghamshire. Sir Henry Cary was born there and he was first cousin to Lady Philadelphia’s father Sir Ferdinando. His younger brother Thomas married a cousin of Sir William Smyth’s father (Fea 1928, p.54).
  39. Fea 1928, p.62. It is however probable that Allan Fea confused Sir William Smyth with another baronet, Sir William Smith of Cranstock in Cornwall, who died in 1661. One complaint relating to the Deanery of Crantock clearly related to the other Smith, and it is possible that the others were also made against the Cornish Smith.
  40. Thomas, Lord Wentworth had become godfather to Sir William’s son Thomas, who was born in 1661.
  41. The diarist John Evelyn mentions having seen them both together at a court masque in which Henrietta performed on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1674 (Austin Dobson (ed.), *The Diary of John Evelyn* (London 1906), p.378). James Scott, Duke of Monmouth (1649–1685) was the illegitimate son of Charles II from his liaison with Lucy Walter.
  42. Dr. William Denton refers to Monmouth as ‘... a man with whose unstable character and ostentatious ways he [Smyth] had much in common’ (Verney IV, p.264).
  43. On the scaffold in 1685, after being convicted of treason after his failed rebellion, Monmouth was denied the Sacrament unless he confessed to adultery. He stated that he considered himself married ‘before God and men’ to Henrietta Wentworth, and that his first marriage at the age of 15 to the Countess of Buccleuch was void as it was forced upon him by his father.
  44. Fea 1928, p.65.
  45. Fea 1902, p.92.

46. Broad 2007, p.157. There was a series of risings in 1661, whose main leader was Thomas Venner.
47. He and Sir Richard Temple allegedly offered Buckingham (whose burgesses comprised the electorate) £300 for the building of a new Town Hall (the old one having been burned down). These promises, if made, were not delivered by either of them (although Sir Richard did give £40 worth of timber). A new Town Hall was eventually built after the 1685 election, at the expense of Sir Richard Temple and Sir Ralph Verney.
48. He also served as a JP and attempted but failed to become MP for Middlesex in 1679 and in 1685.
49. Thomas Chaloner is believed initially to have been a royalist, as his father had been a tutor to Prince Henry and was a colleague of Sir Edmund Verney of Middle Claydon, who was also a member of Prince Henry's household. However Chaloner became disaffected with the Crown after he was allegedly dispossessed by Charles I of his right to exploit the production of alum shale (an agent used to bind dye to cloth), which was mined on the Chaloners' Yorkshire estates.
50. Broad 2007, p.155.
51. Smyth and Lane were involved in other ventures including Irish salt. Lane had been appointed to his position in the Royal Household in 1661 owing to his and his family's support to the King after the Battle of Worcester.
52. It is recorded in E R C Brinkworth (ed.), 'Episcopal Visitation Book for the Archdeaconry of Buckingham 1662,' *Buckinghamshire Record Society* 7, 1947, p.66 that Smyth restricted the funds going to the school at Steeple Claydon.
53. He had for example acquired the right in 1664 to an annual fair at Mile End Green, a weekly market at Ratcliffe Cross and a court of record in Whitechapel.
54. Verney IV, p.264. The portrait of the Duke of Monmouth and probably also that of Prince Rupert hung at the Hobarts' house in Chancery Lane, where the Smyths had a suite of rooms (Fea 1928, p.56). It appears from the Verney correspondence that Lady Smyth was not always considered a good tenant by her mother. Portraits of Sir William and his wife Doll, stated to be by Sir Peter Lely, were hanging at Oakley Hall, the Withers' home in Hampshire, as late as 1907, and are listed in Rev. Reginald FitzHugh Bigg-Wither, *Materials for a history of the Wither family* (Winchester 1907), p.81. The contents of Oakley Hall, probably including the portraits, were sold in 1932 after the bankruptcy of the Beach family (descendants of the Withers).
55. The Verneys and Dentons did not always approve of Sir William's methods and considered him manipulative but potentially useful on occasions. Sir Ralph Verney asked Dr William Denton (Verney III, p.206), '... cannot cozen Smith show a Trick for his Trick ...' in the context of their seeking redress against Sir Cornelius Vermuyden. They and Sir Nathaniel Hobart had lost money in Vermuyden's scheme for reclaiming fen land and believed they had been deceived.
56. Dr William Denton wrote, 'Our friend Sir W. Smith is of this grand jury, where you know his pregnancy of parts will justly entitle him to be *Dominus fac totum*' (Verney, 1968, p.196). Anthony Ashley Cooper, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, was the leading Protestant politician of his day and had held high offices of state. He was at risk in the hysteria which arose at the time of Titus Oates and the Popish plots.
57. As an example of his actions against non-conformists in December 1682 Sir William with a strong guard entered the Stepney meeting house of Matthew Mead, the guardian of the alleged Exeter heretic James Peirce, and pulled down its pulpit. By coincidence Mead's family came from Mursley, where William Smyth's grandfather had been Rector.
58. The wedding took place at Claydon, officiated over by Rector Aris. Hillesden Church and House were presumably not in a suitable state to host a wedding. The marriage of these two Denton daughters to relatively poor husbands was unsurprising in the difficult financial times of the 1650s.
59. Verney 1896, pp.106–110 describes the relations as follows: 'And his wife's little sisters ever found welcome and shelter in the pleasant Rectory. The Manor House .... was at this time owned by William Smith .... The families at the Manor House and at the Rectory lived on terms of family intimacy.'

60. John Townsend (1623–1701) was mentioned in Richard Blome, *Britannia: or a Geographical description of the Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, with the Isles and Territories thereto belonging* (London 1687) as being a ‘gentleman of Oxford’. He continued as a mercer together with his civic duties.
61. Some historians have assumed that this Margaret was the same as the Margaret or Peg who was married in the 1680s to Parson Peregrine King. The latter was almost certainly the second daughter of Sir William Smyth and Dorothy Hobart. She was married after Doll and was described as her ‘lively little sister’ in the contemporary account of Doll’s wedding recorded in the Verney memoirs (Verney IV, pp.314–315). In 1656 an increasing number of little heads in the Radclive nursery were noted (Verney III, p.268). This may have included the first Margaret and certainly Nathaniel.
62. His baptism was recorded in the Radclive church register as apparently occurring on 24.9.1653 (although the year is indistinctly written). It is however referred to in Verney III, p.247 as occurring in 1655. Nat Smyth was certainly alive in 1664, as he and Rector Townsend were entertained then by Edmund Verney (Verney IV, p.82).
63. Allan Fea (1928, p.209) does not state the evidence for this information.
64. Earlier in 1657 there had been discussions between Sir Ralph Verney and William Smyth over a possible purchase of Viscount Monson’s herd of deer. These plans came to nothing so far as William Smyth was concerned (Verney III, p.409). The area of the park included the land east of the Manor House on both sides of the river Ouse. When Sir William had established his deer park he was known to have sent to the Verneys ‘fatt haunches of venison’ from time to time (Fea 1928, p.206, citing an unspecified letter from Claydon House). Doll Smyth (Verney III, p.409) wrote at around the same time that her husband had been offered deer from ‘my lord Gray’s park’ – probably Ford, Lord Grey (of Chillingham Castle), who was a companion of the Duke of Monmouth and a leader of the 1685 Rebellion.
65. The park is marked prominently on Robert Morden’s map of Buckinghamshire of 1695, although its extent is exaggerated.
66. The wooden pales enclosing the park were a temptation for thieves and in 1675 a thief, who turned out to be a local cooper, was detected (Verney IV, p.214).
67. Radclive Churchwardens’ Accounts.
68. Tithe map 314, held at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.
69. New College Archives, MS 1288 and 1456. William Smyth succeeded in reducing the value in 1674. In 1661 when he was subject to an ‘Assessment for the Horse’ Radclive was attributed an annual value of £400.
70. Allan Fea (1928) made out a strong case that Monmouth had a son by Henrietta (R. Wentworth Smyth, 1679–c.1750) and another child. He believed that Wentworth Smyth was adopted by a Col Robert Smyth, a one time aide-de-camp to the Duke of Monmouth, and that he brought up Wentworth Smyth in Paris and left him his fortune. He also cited (p.167) the French ambassador, Paul Barillon, who wrote to Louis XIV on 25 July 1685 stating that ‘The opinion of the King of England is that Monmouth wishes to support Mme Vinton [Lady (Henrietta) Wentworth] by whom he has a child,’ (Archives of the French Foreign Office, England, vol. 155, fol. 408 v). Wentworth Smyth is reputed to have had a son, John Ferdinand Smyth Stuart (1745–1814), who studied medicine in Scotland and emigrated to Virginia becoming an American loyalist in 1775. Smyth added the Stuart suffix in 1793.
71. Fea 1928, p.205, citing an original letter of John Verney written in 1686. There had also been rumours that Sir William might marry Lady Philadelphia Wentworth after the death of his wife Doll in 1686.
72. Information from Verney IV, p.422. In the Verney memoirs Thomas Smyth is referred to as ‘T.S.’ and being from a Stepney gentry family. See also Tinniswood 2007, pp.459 & 460.
73. Alexander Denton was the grandson of Sir Alexander and Deputy Lieutenant for Buckinghamshire. He was MP for Buckingham 1690–1698.
74. Hester was the sole heiress of Nicholas Herman, lord of the manor of Middleton Stoney. Hester was described as beautiful by several people including Lady Gardiner and Sir George Wheeler (Verney IV, pp.188, 286,

- 371 & 422). On her marriage the manor of Middleton Stoney was acquired by Alexander Denton. It was sold in 1712 by Alexander Denton's son Sir Edmund for £12,500.
75. Verney IV, p.422.
  76. David M Turner, *Fashioning adultery: gender, sex and civility in England, 1660–1740* (Cambridge 2002), chapter 5.
  77. Although Alexander Denton never saw her again and she had forfeited any right to financial assistance from him, because she had taken £500 with her when she eloped, he paid for her modest burial in Stepney.
  78. He fought at the battles of Steenkirk in 1692 and Landen in 1693 (Charles Dalton (ed.), *English army lists and commission registers 1661–1714*, vols. 3 and 4 (London 1904), vol. 3). These actions were part of the Nine Years' War (1688–1697) between France and an Alliance including England, Scotland and the United Provinces.
  79. The Battle of Cadiz 1702 (Dalton 1904, vol. 3) at the outset of the War of the Spanish Succession.
  80. He was appointed Ranger of Phoenix Park and of the game in Ireland in December 1704 for life, succeeding the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Meath. This followed his petition (*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series for the Reign of Queen Anne*, 994) by a Warrant to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Ormonde. He was followed in the office in 1736 by the French born Huguenot John Ligonier, later Field Marshal Earl Ligonier (information kindly supplied by John McCullen, a former Chief Superintendent of the Park). The Park had been established in 1662 by James Butler, Duke of Ormonde and still covers c.1750 acres on land north of the Liffey to the west of Dublin, which originally belonged to Kilmainham Priory and has for many centuries been home to a herd of fallow deer.
  81. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB) entry for William King (1685–1763).
  82. ODNB entry for William King. Sir Thomas had originally lent Lord Bellew £2,250, which he had difficulty in recovering. King eventually received some repayment but this did not even cover his costs.
  83. See John Beynon and Caroline Gonda, *Lesbian Dames: Sapphism in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Farnham 2010), pp. 32 and 127.
- Margaret Du Pass was the wife of Joshua, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Allen. She was satirised as *Traulus* by King's friend Jonathan Swift.
84. Pearce was a Palladian architect and an Irish MP.
  85. Jenny Nicholas was the grand daughter of Dr William Denton and of Secretary Sir Edward Nicholas and daughter of Nancy Denton and George Nicholas. Doll Smyth's rejection of Abdy, followed by his acceptance by Jenny Nicholas, must have been a cause of some interesting discussions among the Nicholas, Smyth, Verney and Denton families.
  86. The Withers had a son Charles who was born in 1684, became High Sheriff in 1708 and was MP for Whitchurch in 1708 and then for Christchurch from 1727 until his death in 1731. Sir William Smyth used the occasion of the marriage to petition the King in 1681 for the repayment of over £5,000 due to him 'having great necessities for the money for the marriage portion of a daughter' (*Calendar of Treasury Books*, 17 May 1681, cited in Fea 1928, p.209). The £5,000 may have been the sum he had advanced on the security of the Wine Act in c.1670.
  87. Verney IV, pp.314 & 315. Radclive church was described as a 'peaceful old grey church.'
  88. Captain Richard (Dick) Hals, a nephew of Anne Hobart (and a relation of the Verneys, Dentons and Smyths), was a notorious but apparently lovable and socially acceptable rogue, who was convicted several times and was finally hanged at Tyburn in 1685. Jack Verney observed him in the cart carrying him from Newgate to Tyburn (Verney II, p.264). He had for many years been helped out of numerous scrapes by his relations. Hals's cousin, Fred Turville, was also a highwayman and was hanged at Hertford for burglary in 1666.
  89. It is suggested by John Verney (Verney IV, p.414) that Sir William did not regret her demise as much as he should have done. John Verney also hinted that Sir William considered marrying Lady (Philadelphia) Wentworth after Doll's death. Lady Wentworth's daughter, Henrietta, on her death in 1686 had left no will and so her estate went to her mother 'so shee will bee a brave match for Sir William.' Sir William was clearly on very good terms with



- Lady Philadelphia and in his will asked her to use her discretion to support his son Thomas if the need arose.
90. Fea 1928, p.205.
91. In 1659 William Smyth and others had sold messuages at Limehouse to Thomas Woodfine of Limehouse, a mariner, and to Katherine his wife, who were the parents of Captain John Woodfine and his brother Thomas, who was also a Royal African Company captain.
92. Akeley church was pulled down in 1982.
93. Little is known of Samuel Smyth apart from this mention in William Smyth's will which suggests that he may have been disabled, as Sir William noted that his gifts of annuities amounting to £30 per annum 'should provide a good support for him.'
94. New College Archives, MS 4538 indicates that Sir Thomas Smyth in 1703 purported to be the only son and heir of Sir William and so obtained the proceeds of the sale of a messuage and land in Chackmore.
95. According to John Ferdinand Smyth Stuart (John Ferdinand Smyth Stuart, *Destiny and Fortune: an historical poem* (London 1808), p.42, note U to Elegy XI), this Col Smyth was 'a most affectionate and confidential friend of the Duke of Monmouth, who had been his aide-de-camp in Flanders in the service of France, [had] taken him under his care and protection, and left him with his name, his whole fortune in that country: ...'. The connection if any with Sir William Smyth's family (e.g. his brother Robert) is unknown. Allan Fea (Fea 1928, p.237) tried hard but failed to find any connection.