



*Dear Family,*

Seven hundred years ago our ancestor Hugh de Copleston, with William de Wotton, minor and other 'trustworthy men of the parish' felt it necessary to complain about their Vicar and a Visitation was made by Masters Robert de Veteri Terre and John de Uphaven at Colebrooke Church on 27 June 1301. These gentlemen reported that 'Sir William, the vicar, preaches in his fashion, also he expounds to them the Gospels on Sundays as far as he knows them. However, as to the Articles of Faith, the precepts of the Ten Commandments and the deadly sins to avoid, he does not give them much information.' They also say 'he has been accused about incontinency with Lucy de la Stubbe, a married woman' and 'All his buildings, except the hall and chamber, are falling down or are close to ruin, although he received them in good condition and are unlikely to be repaired for 100 shillings'. A number of other matters are listed, including 'for the high altar three towels inadequate in every way'. The tenants of the glebeland had their complaints, two of the places mentioned being 'Paynistone', which is of course Penstone, east of Colebrooke and 'Eleney', which must be Elley to the south.

This Visitation appears in Latin in the Index to Bishop Stapeldon's Register and is one of the items I have had translated using cousin Art's gift. Thanks must also go to the Library of the Devon and Exeter Institute who gave permission to quote. According to my 1952 edition of 'The Church and Parish of St. Andrew, Colebrooke' 'Sir' William the Vicar was probably William de Churitone, instituted in 1283. Before him was Alanus, 1280 and prior to Alanus is William de Bisenam, who is given no date. Both Alan and 'Sir William de Bisenam' are mentioned in the Visitation. In an earlier booklet on the Church, part of which was kindly sent me by David and Ruth, the author states that the Vicar was William de Churitone and he had quoted some of his own translation of the Visitation. What a marvellous addition to the family archives this is!

Two other documents have been transcribed and translated, which are the Wills of John Copleston of Copleston, grandson of Adam, who died in 1458 and was buried at Colebrooke, (like his father, John was a lawyer and at various times was aulnager, escheator, JP and MP for Devon. He wished his body to be buried in the aisle of St. Katherine in the parish church of Colebrooke) and that of John Copleston of Copleston buried 1550 at Colebrooke, great-grandson of the first John. John of 1458 left to Richard Stoyte, curate of Colebrooke, 40s for neglected tithes - Richard appears as Vicar in 1441 in the list - and to Philip his elder son his messuage in Exeter. To son John his best fur-lined gown and to son Walter his second best fur-lined gown. He also wished that his servants should be rewarded with his clothing and that they should above all remain together 'at my mansion house of Copleston at my expense until the feast of the Lord's Epiphany next following.' John also wished that his executors should build the Aisle of St. Katherine in the same style and proportion as the aisle of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the east side of the church. His executors were Walter Raleigh, John Amys of Orlegh, Thomas Powriss junior, Thomas Copleston clerk and Robert Gambon. Thomas Copleston was he who had dispensation from the Pope to hold two benefices as 'the son of unmarried parents' - was he John's brother, I wonder? The Will was proved in the house of the Carmelite friars off Fleet Street in the City of London.

John of 1550 also wished his body to be buried in 'the paryshe church of Colbrocke' and gave the church tenne shillings. He also gave Tiverton church 10s for maintenance and the same to the church of Teynegrace. To Sir John Lamerton parson of Nymet Rowland one goldinge or elles twentie shillings. All his Tynworkes in Devon went to his wife Katheryne (Bridges) according to the custom of the Stannarie. Son Richard received the Tynworkes in Cornwall. Katheryn had all his goods and 'cattalles' and was made executrix. This Will was proved before the lord Archbishop of Canterbury in London on the last day of October 1550.

All the lands and properties held by both Johns do not appear in the Wills - probably because they enfeoffed to others with reversion to the family - I shall never understand the law! (Regardless of having been a legal secretary).

Apart from all this, David and Ruth have sent results of their beavering away at St. Giles in the Wood and St. Bartholomew, Yealmpton. At St. Giles they discovered a magnificent brass dated 1430 to Alyanora Pollard, wife of John Pollard and daughter of John Copleston, who was father of the John who died in 1458. She is sometimes 'Elinor' or 'Eleanor'. A beautiful long gown and a horned headdress make one realise that one's ancestors really did dress this way (the affluent ones, that is!). All the transcriptions and drawings of these MI's were so patiently made by David. The top of the brass had been lost, but was restored in 1956. At Yealmpton they found a brass plate to Isabel Copleston, daughter of Henry Fortescue who married John C. of Bowden. The plate reads "Thrice shined September sun, five hundred years thrice spent, and four times twenty were, since Christ on earth was sent. When Isabel the wife of Copleston dear did die; The third day buried thence, now here in tombe doth lie; To Henry Fortescue third daughter by degree, And Agnes her Mother's name of St. Maures blood was she." John and Isabel's son Henry married Jone, daughter of Humphrey Weare and their son, also Henry, married Mary, daughter of Henry Weare of Halberton in 1615 in Exeter. Mary's tomb in St. Bartholomew's has a black marble top and above are the coats of Arms of Copleston and Weare, the Weare being in a lozenge, since Mary was female. A baby in cradle, son, father, mother and three daughters are all shown. These Coplestons descend from Walter, 3rd son of John Copleston and Elizabeth Hauley, he who inherited the 'second best fur-lined gown' - they all tie up neatly, don't they? Many thanks to David and Ruth for all their work.

Friend Eileen Stage (of the Coastguard Index) sent me a copy of a page from the September issue of West Middx FMS Journal which gives the Protestation Return for Harmondsworth. In the three columns of names for this Return of 1641/2 Christopher Copleston is the only one with 'gent' after his name - maybe he was the Squire! This is the first son of Christopher Copleston of Kingdon in Alverdiscott, born 1594 and buried 1650 at St. Margaret's Westminster. He married Katherine Dennis of Gloucester and they had only one child, Catherine, who died unmarried. Christopher was brother of Lancelot, from whose second marriage so many of us descend. Chris' father left him £500 and Lancelot received all the lands in Alverdiscott and elsewhere. Presumably Christopher came to the London area, but what business he engaged upon I don't know. I think Harmondsworth must have been his country home. I must delve into this.

Another old friend, Robert Jago, sent five records of railwaymen's contributions showing their stations, sicknesses and resignations. One is for Samuel Wilfred John Coplestone, father of the late Syd of Birmingham, who will be remembered by those of you who attended our Gatherings. His record shows him at Kingswear, Newton Abbot, Carmarthen and Birmingham. One of the records is of Walter Kennard Copleston and I have long tried to fit this twig which has Kennard or Kinnaird as a middle name - if anyone knows, do tell!

I have just enough space to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a good New Year. Thanks for all correspondence - do keep in touch.

*Your coz,* *Muriel.*