



Received: April 2025
Accepted: September 2025

Keywords: Heraldry; Hatchments; Suffolk;
Eye; Cunningham; Deye; Sayer

Gone But Not Forgotten: Three Hatchments at the Church of St Peter & St Paul, Eye, Suffolk

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Abstract: Funerary hatchments are heraldic memorial boards, identifiable principally by their diamond shape and use of a white and/or black background behind the arms to indicate the deceased. Hatchments became popular amongst the gentry and aristocracy after the Restoration and eventually declined in the late nineteenth century. Where they survive, hatchments are often found in churches. They can be difficult to interpret due to inaccurate heraldry, the absence of names and dates, and the replacement of family mottoes. The Church of St Peter and St Paul in the Suffolk market town of Eye has three surviving hatchments, known to be connected to the Deye, Sayer and Cunningham families. The hatchments themselves are fairly inaccessible, however, and the families they represent have fallen out of the narrative of the town's history. This research analyses the hatchments, drawing on nineteenth-century church surveys as a starting point for a genealogical investigation. It finds that by reconstituting the lives and families of three individuals, a better understanding of gentry society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is achieved, enhancing this chapter of Eye's history. It also demonstrates the rewards and challenges of researching with such sources during this period.

Introduction

Visitors to the church of St Peter and St Paul in Eye, Suffolk, could be forgiven for overlooking four dark and dusty heraldic monuments mounted high on the wall of the west gallery. Possibly removed to this out-of-the-way location during modern restoration work, these memorials once enjoyed greater prominence, as Henry Creed's 1859 church survey suggests.¹ The smallest panel, depicting the arms of Cornwallis impaling those of Townshend within an ornately carved gilt frame, may once have adorned an organ-loft in front of the tower arch, which Creed observed to be "blocked up with plaister ... and painted, in very questionable taste, to represent drapery."² Another armorial of similar design, recently rediscovered, is surely the panel described in Martyn's Church Notes that once decorated a gallery in the north aisle, bearing the inscription: "This Gallery was put up by Nat[haniel] Deye gent. 1705"³ (Fig. 2). The remaining three are funerary hatchments: diamond-shaped boards, often approximately four foot square, painted with the heraldic arms of the deceased.

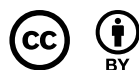




Figure 1. Heraldic monuments mounted in the west gallery at the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Eye.⁴



Figure 2. Cornwallis-Townsend and Deye-Cooper heraldic gallery decorations.⁵

Although hatchments are not usually named, various features including the arms themselves can be used to attribute them to an individual. Firstly, the arms may be simple (i.e. paternal arms only) or impaled (combined) with the arms of associated armigerous families. Supporters, mantling and crest may be depicted, as with any heraldic display, as well as orders to which the armiger was inducted, such as the Grand Cross and Star of the Royal Guelphic Order on Eye's Cunningham hatchment (Fig. 8). Personal or family mottoes are usually replaced with pious aphorisms, some of the most popular being *Resurgam* ('I shall rise again') and *In Coelo Quies* ('In Heaven, there is rest', as in Fig. 6).⁶ The hatchment's distinctive feature, however, is the use of background colour to indicate death. A black (*sable*) background behind a single coat of arms indicates the death of an unmarried individual (a distinction can be made between a bachelor and a spinster by the use of either a shield or a lozenge respectively). A black background behind both sides of impaled arms indicates that both spouses are now deceased. The use of a white (*argent*) background behind one half of impaled arms indicates a surviving widow/er. Whilst it is generally understood that hatchments were painted soon after death to be displayed outside the residence(s) of the deceased, carried in the funeral procession and eventually mounted inside the church, there has been some debate over the practicalities of this and the timeframe within which it may have occurred.⁷ Diagrams showing varieties of funerary hatchments may be consulted in *Hatchments in Britain* by Peter Summers and John Titterton⁸ as well as *Heraldry for the Local Historian and Genealogist* by Stephen Friar.⁹

Medieval origins

Hatchments have their roots in the funerals of medieval knights, which were carefully managed by heralds according to protocol. The deceased knight's *achievements* (his helmet, shield, sword, tabard, etc.) would be carried in the funeral procession, offered at the same moment as the priest's offertory during the requiem mass and later mounted on the wall of the church above the tomb. Such funerals also involved the use of lengths of black and white cloth and heraldic escutcheons and banners.¹⁰ In the pre-Reformation church, such displays served as important reminders to the living to pray for the soul of the deceased to help speed it through purgatory. One of the fundamental changes brought about by the Reformation was the abolition of purgatory, which shifted the purpose of funerals and of memorialisation towards concern for the living rather than for the dead.¹¹ Whilst heraldic funerals continued into Elizabeth's reign, heraldic offerings became

“meaningless in a Protestant context”¹² and memorialisation adopted a secular focus.¹³ Meanwhile, the tremendous expense of heraldic funerals and the obsolescence of plate armour have also been suggested as reasons for the decline of the heraldic funeral in the seventeenth century.^{14,15}

The origin of painted funerary hatchments remains unclear, but they seem to have grown in popularity following the restoration of Charles II in 1660. The earliest known surviving example surveyed in the *Hatchments in Britain* series dates to 1629.¹⁶ With the rise of gentry society, the popularity of funerary hatchments reached a peak during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, declining from the late Victorian period.¹⁷ As Titterton explains, these funerals were no longer organised by heralds but by executors and undertakers, who outsourced the preparation of hatchments to (often non-specialist) painters, providing scope for instances of dubious heraldry, especially perhaps in the provinces.¹⁸

Surveying Eye’s Hatchments

Eye’s hatchments have been surveyed on several occasions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, providing a basis for supplementary research. A survey of the church including its monumental inscriptions was made by the Rev. Henry Creed and published in the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology and History* in 1859. In 1863, John H. Sperling published ‘A Visitation of the Monumental Heraldry of Suffolk (Part IV)’ in *Notes and Queries*. Suffolk’s church heraldry was surveyed in around 1900 by the Rev. Edmund Farrer F.S.A., but his notes were not published until the 1980s, when they informed a series of booklets edited by Francis Steward and published by the Suffolk Heraldry Society. Meanwhile, Peter Summers F.S.A. published a preliminary summary of his research into Suffolk’s hatchments in the 1954 *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, and a full survey of Suffolk hatchments was prepared by Joan Corder in 1976 for the second volume of the *Hatchments in Britain* series, of which Summers was general editor. Papworth’s *Ordinary* (1874) and Burke’s *General Armory* (1884) have also been used in this research, along with other sources as referenced.

Eye has three surviving hatchments, with evidence of at least one more. Farrer recorded a fourth hatchment in the church, which was not found by Suffolk Heraldry Society in 1987;¹⁹ Summers (1954)²⁰ recorded only three hatchments in Eye, as did Corder (1976).²¹ This missing hatchment, which Farrer blazoned *Sable gutty Argent, on a fess Or (Argent) three Cornish choughs (Cornwallis of Brome) impaling: Azure, a chevron Ermine between three escallops Or (Argent) (Townsend)*, was attributed by Farrer to Edward, the sixth son of Charles, 4th Lord Cornwallis, MP for Eye, and Governor of Gibraltar, who married Mary, a daughter of Charles, Viscount Townshend.²² Edward Cornwallis and his wife both died in 1776, on 14 January²³ and 29 December²⁴ respectively, at which time they may not have been resident in Eye (writing her will in February 1776, Mary gave her residence as Birds Place, Essendon, Hertfordshire).²⁵ It seems more likely that Edward would be commemorated in his native town than his absent wife. Interestingly, this hatchment was not mentioned by Creed (1859) or Sperling (1863), suggesting that it may have been brought to the church from elsewhere in the interim. Bird’s Place was sold in 1779,²⁶ and in his *History of Eye*, Clive Paine cites epistolary evidence from 1752 that the Cornwallis family favoured Culford Hall near Bury St Edmunds as their principal residence, so perhaps the hatchment had been stored there.²⁷ *Hatchments in Britain* 2 includes only one Cornwallis hatchment from 1840, found in Little Walsingham, and none in Culford.²⁸ The apparent disappearance of the Cornwallis hatchment is testament to their essential vulnerability that must have led to the loss of many hundreds; Titterton reckons a survival rate of one in twenty.²⁹

Whilst perhaps not widely known, Eye’s hatchments have been surveyed and identified on several occasions. In the church guide, however, “various hatchments” hung in the tower receive only a passing reference and their location makes them easy to miss.³⁰ Using a genealogical approach, this article attempts to reconnect the hatchments with an understanding of the individuals that they were made to commemorate, their families and the society in which they participated. It also demonstrates the rewards and challenges of interpreting them.

The Deye Hatchment

The oldest of Eye’s hatchments displays: *Or on a chief indented azure two molets Or, impaled with: Gules a bend engrailed between six lions rampant Or*. The arms are displayed on a lozenge in front of a black background, indicating that it was painted for the funeral of a widow. The arms match those on a much worn flat stone in the north aisle, which records that Mary, the wife of Nathaniel D’Eye Esquire, died 27 December 1749,³¹ thus identifying the first of the impaled arms as those of the Deye family. Mary was buried on 1 January 1749/50, providing an approximate date for the hatchment’s creation.³² It was not mentioned by Creed (1859), although he did record the flat stone.³³ Sperling (1863) blazoned the hatchment,³⁴ but Farrer was the first to attribute the *sinister* arms to a family (viz. Cowper),³⁵ which has been repeated (probably derivatively) in later surveys. No marriage record has been found for Nathaniel Deye and Mary Cowper, making it difficult to trace anything more of her ancestry. By working forwards, into the doings of her grandchildren, however, it has been possible to discover her parentage and raise a question over the heraldry by which she has been represented.



Figure 3. The Deye-Cooper hatchment.³⁶

The Deyes are an ancient family, long associated with Eye. The Grant of Arms to the Borough of Eye (1592) is decorated with those of its principal families, including Cornwallis and Bacon. Later additions (*temp.* Charles II?) include the arms of “Thomas Dey, Esq.”: *Or, on a chief indented azure, two mullets pierced, of the first.*³⁷ The large Deye family requires significant genealogical effort to reconstruct, due to their reuse of a limited pool of names and the nature of seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century parish registers, some of which have gaps covering crucial periods. The 1664 Visitation of Norfolk and nineteenth-century genealogies of collateral families help, as do the family’s monuments in Eye church and Ancestry’s recently digitised Suffolk parish registers.

In *The Betts of Wortham in Suffolk*, Doughty notes that at the time of the English Civil Wars, two Thomas Deyes were prominent in the town: Thomas Deye the younger of Moor Hall and his uncle, Thomas Deye the elder of Stayer House,³⁸ which corresponds with the D’Eye pedigree.³⁹

Stayer House still stands on the edge of town, described in its heritage listing as a medieval hall house extended and improved in subsequent centuries,⁴⁰ with Moor Hall just over 200 yards to the southeast. Uncle and nephew married sisters Alice and Anne, daughters of Simon Blomfield of Bridge Place, Coddensham.⁴¹ If the remarks made by Thomas the elder in his will can be taken at face value, he was something of a surrogate father to his nephew and charged him to take the same avuncular interest in those of his cousins that might still be minors after his own death.⁴² Thomas the elder died in 1662, and thus when *An Alphabetical Account of the Nobility and Gentry* was published in 1673, Thomas Deye of Moor Hall was probably the "Thomas Deye of Eye Esq." listed in the directory.⁴³ In 1674, "Mr. Deye" of Eye was taxed for ten hearths (only one householder had more) and "Thomas Deye Esq." of Sutton and Langton (hamlets of Eye) was taxed for seven.⁴⁴

Nathaniel (bap. 1651),⁴⁵ the eldest son of the late Thomas Deye the elder, was only about 11 at the time of his father's death. In due course, he succeeded to his father's estates in Eye and Hoxne and married Mary Cowper. The couple baptised 12 children in Eye, several of whom will be important players in the forthcoming narrative: the eldest son Thomas was baptised in February 1688/9,⁴⁶ followed by Nathaniel in January 1693/4⁴⁷ and the youngest son Robert in March 1706,⁴⁸ as well as youngest daughter Lorina (bap. October 1704).⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Thomas Deye of Moor Hall had fathered his own heir, also Thomas (bap. 1641),⁵⁰ and died aged about 87 in 1700/01.⁵¹ Sometime later, his son Thomas married Temperance, a daughter of Henry Edgar of Eye Esquire, one of the town burgesses.⁵² No record of their marriage has been found, but their daughter Ann was baptised in November 1706.⁵³

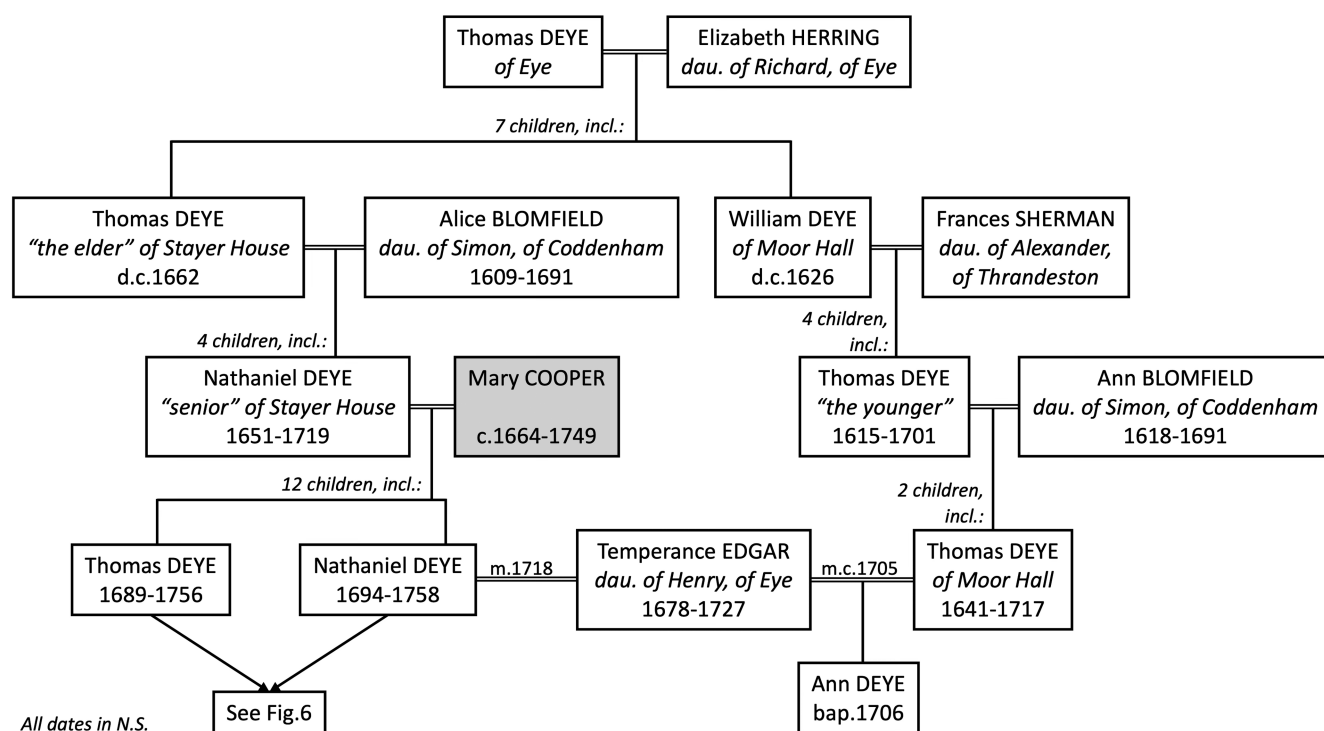


Figure 4. Deye family tree - Part 1.

This Thomas Deye of Moor Hall died in 1717, aged 76, leaving no male heir.⁵⁴ The following year, Temperance, his widow, remarried to his second cousin "Nathaniel Deye junior", the second son of Thomas Deye and Mary née Cowper of Stayer House.⁵⁵ Thus the Moor Hall property transferred to the senior line of the Deye family. Temperance was some 15 years older than Nathaniel, aged about 40 at the time of their marriage, and it appears that they had no children together. Eight months later, Nathaniel Deye senior of Stayer house died on 31 January 1718/19 and was buried in the north aisle of Eye church.⁵⁶ His will, which he had signed on 24 October 1718, was principally concerned with providing for his widow Mary and those of his children who might still be minors at the time of his death, including Lorina and Robert (aged approximately 13 and 12 respectively). Leaving his widow a life interest in his house, goods and stock in Eye, he divided other property in the parish of St Michael [Occold?], Eye, Thornham Magna, Braiseworth and Ilketshall St Margaret (all in Suffolk), Soham (Cambridgeshire) and Moulton (Norfolk) between his second son Nathaniel and his younger children. Notably, the will makes no mention of his eldest daughter Elizabeth, who had married in 1709,⁵⁷ and little mention of his eldest son Thomas. In one of the final clauses, he charged "all my children with my blessing that they live lovingly together and willingly do obedience to their Mother and neither cause or procure any suit or suites at Law

to be comenced or prosecuted amongst them or any of them."⁵⁸ His words were portentous, and although his children may have honoured their late father's wish, his grandchildren were not so obedient.

In 1724, Thomas Deye, eldest son of the late Nathaniel Deye of Stayer House, married Dioness Cullum, daughter and co-heiress of William Cullum of Thorndon.⁵⁹ Dioness gave birth to three children, only one of which outlived her own untimely death in 1730,⁶⁰ and only by six months.⁶¹ In June 1735, Thomas remarried to Mary Malyn, daughter of the rector of Occold and Mellis.^{62,63} Importantly in light of later developments, their only son died before his first birthday,⁶⁴ but two daughters (Dioness⁶⁵ and Mary⁶⁶) survived. Meanwhile, Nathaniel's wife Temperance had died in 1727,⁶⁷ and the following year he married Mary Cullum, sister of his brother's wife Dioness.⁶⁸ Over the next ten years, Nathaniel and Mary baptised seven children at Eye, of which only two survived: Martha (bap. 1730/1),⁶⁹ who married into the Betts family of Wortham,⁷⁰ and Thomas (bap. 1732),⁷¹ who was educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and became rector of Palgrave (1757-66).⁷²

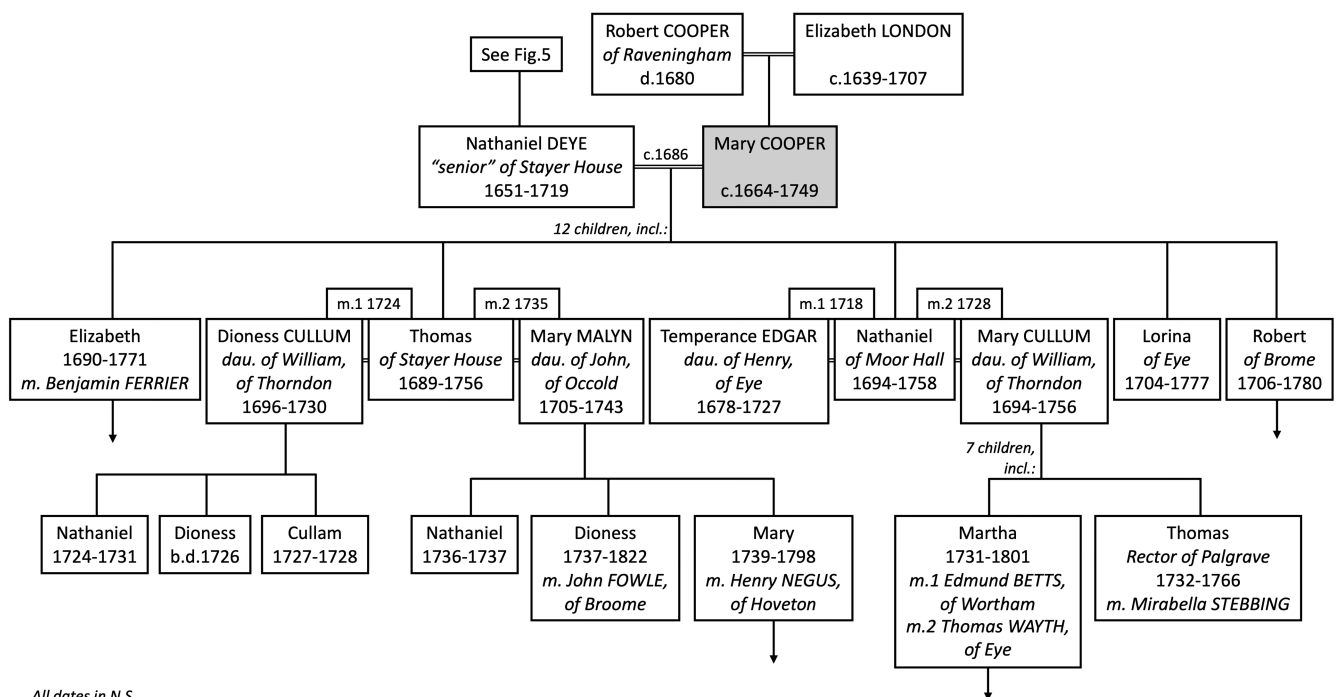


Figure 5. DEYE family tree - Part 2.

We now arrive at the death of Mary Deye, subject of this hatchment, by which time she had outlived her husband by 40 years. Her will, written in March 1745, shows her at the head of a large family, with four sons and four daughters living. She left property in Yaxley to her youngest son Robert, and directed her executrix to invest substantial sums to provide annuities for her three married daughters. She also left cash bequests of £200 to Francis (her third son) and £400 to her grandson Thomas (son of Nathaniel Deye of Moor Hall), to pay for his education. Various furniture and linen was distributed between several of her children, including her unmarried daughter Lorina, who also inherited her house in Church Street and £1,000, and was appointed sole executrix. One charitable bequest was made: £10 to the parish of Eye for arranging apprenticeships for two poor boys.⁷³ Lorina Deye remained a lifelong spinster but nevertheless acquired "all the Childbed Lening Childs Baskit and Christing Blankits" and her "dear Mothers Weding Gown and Pety cote", which she in turn bequeathed to her nieces Lorina Deye and Mary Negus.⁷⁴

Mary's death was closely followed by those of her two eldest sons, Thomas Deye of Stayer House (d. 24 September 1756, aged 67)⁷⁵ and Nathaniel Deye of Moor Hall (d. 4 November 1758, aged 65),⁷⁶ both intestate. Thomas's widow Mary and her daughters Dioness and Mary continued to live at Stayer House, believing themselves to have inherited it as heirs at law. So matters rested until 1760, when the sisters instructed Bungay attorney Daniel Negus, whose nephew Mary was engaged to marry, to divide the Stayer House estate. Negus was simultaneously engaged by their cousin, the Rev. Thomas Deye, in preparation for his own marriage. Negus seems to have approached Thomas with important information that he had uncovered whilst acting for the Deye sisters, with or without their knowledge. This revelation soured previously harmonious relations between the Deye cousins and led to the Chancery suit that their grandfather had expressly forbidden. The resultant legal papers made their way into the muniments room at Wortham Hall, where Doughty found them 140 years later, using them

for her summary of the dispute in *The Betts of Wortham*.⁷⁷ An inspection of these papers, now preserved at Suffolk Archives, has found that they include additional details not reported by Doughty, providing clues to Mary Cowper's identity.

The brief of bill and answers rehearsed several important events in the history of the Deye family.⁷⁸ Amongst the Stayer House deeds, Negus had found a settlement made in August 1686 by Nathaniel Deye in anticipation of his marriage to Mary Cooper (*sic.*) – the only record of their marriage found. The settlement, by indenture of lease and release between himself, Robert London of Loddon in Norfolk, Gent., William Randall of Beccles, Gent., and Mary Cooper, assigned the Stayer House estate to the use of Nathaniel Deye for life, and afterwards to trustees to preserve a series of remainders: firstly to Mary Cooper for life and subsequently to the heirs male of the body of Nathaniel Deye and Mary Cooper. After the death of Nathaniel Deye senior in 1718/19, this settlement seems to have been largely forgotten and Thomas, his eldest son, rightly inherited the estate. Since this Thomas had left no male heir, however, the Rev. Thomas Deye claimed that the estate should have passed to his late father Nathaniel (as second son) and then to him. His late father had had no knowledge of this settlement, the Rev. Thomas claimed, but now he was pursuing his own claim on the valuable estate. The Deye sisters and their mother, however, maintained that since the estate was held of the Manor of Hoxne Hall with the Priory, it was subject to the customs of that manor, which followed inheritance by borough English (i.e. through the *youngest* son). Hence Robert Deye, youngest son of the late Nathaniel and Mary Deye, was also required to depose that he had renounced his claim in favour of his elder brother Thomas, notwithstanding the latter's lack of a male heir. Ultimately, the Rev. Thomas Deye won his suit, paying compensation to his cousins.⁷⁹ The sisters soon married: Mary to Henry Negus,⁸⁰ who later inherited his family's property at Hoveton, and Dioness to John Fowle Esquire of Broome in Norfolk, an excise auditor.^{81,82} Thomas Deye took possession of the Stayer House estate and broke the entail through the legal process of common recovery.⁸³ His victory was short-lived, however. He died childless in 1766 at the age of 34 and bequeathed the property to his sister Martha Betts.⁸⁴ After being widowed, she married in 1789 to attorney Thomas Wayth.⁸⁵ By January 1790, Mr Wayth was advertising his former residence in Broad Street to be let in favour of his new offices at Stayer House.⁸⁶

The Stayer House legal papers also refer to property in Raveningham, Norfolk, which Mary Cooper seems to have brought to her marriage in 1686. The papers name her mother, Elizabeth, and her late father Robert Cooper.⁸⁷ This buried reference to Mary's parents makes it possible to uncover her background. In *Norfolk Families*, Rye identifies four Cooper families in that county, among them that of Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, Baronet, of Winborne, Dorset, who was the crown's choice for Sheriff of Norfolk in 1643-4. His arms quarter those of Ashley with Cooper, the latter of which matches the Deye hatchment: *Gules a bend engrailed between six lions rampant Or*.⁸⁸ No link has been found, however, between this family and Mary Cooper. Further clues are offered by the names of Mary's parents (Robert and Elizabeth) and one of the trustees to the Stayer House settlement (Robert London of Loddon). Rye further states that the Cooper family of Yarmouth descended from a John Cooper who was bailiff in 1657 and disclaimed arms in the 1664 visitation. His son Thomas Cooper married Elizabeth, daughter of Robert London. Rye goes on to state that John Cooper's grandson was High Sheriff in 1730 and bore arms: *Azure a saltire engrailed between four trefoils Or on a chief argent three dolphins embossed of the first*.⁸⁹ This is clearly not a match with the Deye hatchment. A link, however, is suggested between the Cooper and London families.

Turning to primary evidence, "Robert Cooper Gent." was buried in St Andrew's Church, Raveningham, and his ledger stone states his date of death: 2 August 1680 (six years before his daughter's marriage settlement, as expected).⁹⁰ Robert's widow Elizabeth was buried in the same church in January 1706/7.⁹¹ Her identification as Mary Cooper's mother is confirmed by the fact that, 64 years later, Elizabeth Ferrier was buried under the same stone, with the inscription: "Eliz[abe]th Ferrier Grand-daughter of the above Eliz[abeth] Cooper";⁹² this was Mary Cooper's eldest daughter who had married Benjamin Ferrier in 1709 (see Fig. 5).⁹³

Genealogical research on the London family of Norfolk published on fhhighfields's website provides evidence that Mary Cooper's mother Elizabeth was a daughter of Thomas London of Thorpe next Haddiscoe.⁹⁴ Elizabeth's first-cousin-once-removed (also Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas London of Cringleford) married Thomas Cooper of Burgh Castle (near Yarmouth), a close match for the Thomas Cooper-Elizabeth London marriage mentioned by Rye, although he named her father (perhaps erroneously) as Robert.⁹⁵ Accordingly, Robert London of Loddon (trustee of the Stayer House settlement of 1686) would have been a cousin of Mary Cooper's mother,⁹⁶ which is supported by references made by Robert London in his will to his cousin Elizabeth Coope [*sic.*] of Raveningham and to "my Cosen M^r Tho: Cooper of Yarmouth & Elizabeth his wife my Neice".⁹⁷ Furthermore, Avis London, another daughter of Thomas London of Cringleford, married John Castell of Raveningham, from whom the Castells acquired Raveningham Hall and through whom it passed to the Bacon family.^{98,99} This is significant, as, in a codicil to her will, Mary Deye (née Cooper) gave directions for the division of her silverware amongst her children. Her large collection was engraved variously with the initials *N.D.*, *N.M.* and *N.D.M.* [variations on 'Nathaniel and Mary Deye?'], and *E.C.* and *R.C.E.* ['Robert and Elizabeth Cooper?']. She also had several pieces of silver plate and spoons engraved with the arms and crest of the Bacon family and the initials *B.B.* [for Butts Bacon, 1st Baronet?], with whom she was apparently distantly related.

Hence a question-mark remains over whether Mary Cowper/Cooper ought to have been represented by the arms displayed on the Deye hatchment, by alternative Cooper arms, or none at all. Ultimately, although the family died out in the male line, the name of Deye lived on through its daughters. One of Martha Betts's grandchildren (Thomas D'Eye Betts, rector of Martlesham) was named after his great-uncle.¹⁰⁰ Christabel Negus, daughter of Henry Negus and Mary Deye, married into the Burroughes family and named one of her sons Thomas D'Eye Burroughes, presumably after her grandfather rather than the cousin who had disinherited her mother.¹⁰¹ Francis Deye, the third surviving son of Nathaniel Deye and Mary Cooper, had a son and grandson both named Nathaniel, the younger of whom became rector of Occold and Thrandeston.¹⁰² His only child, Ann Dioness, married the Rev. Edgar Rust, rector of Drinkstone.¹⁰³ Their children were heirs to their grandfather on condition that they assumed the additional surname of D'Eye, one of whom was the soldier and Suffolk artist Edward Henry Rust D'Eye.^{104,105} The wider family includes several other Nathaniels, Lorinas, etc.

The Deyes must have had a host of hatchments made, of which Mary Deye's is the only survivor, hanging on the church wall for nearly three centuries. It made the news in 1972, when it was restored by local artist Cavendish Moreton, although it is currently the most decayed of the three hatchments.¹⁰⁶

The Sayer Hatchment

Creed blazons Eye's second hatchment: *per pale, Gules, a chevron ermine between three sea-mews argent (Sayer) impaled with: Argent, two chevrons azure, a border engrailed gules (Tyrrell)*.¹⁰⁷ Burke corrects Creed's description of the charges to *seapies*.¹⁰⁸ The background is black behind the Sayer arms and white behind those of Tyrrell, indicating that the deceased left a widow. John Sayer Esqr. was buried on 8 January 1761,¹⁰⁹ and is commemorated by a flat stone in the floor of the nave:

John Sayer, Esq., died Jan. 3, 1761, aged 89. Grace, his relict, daughter of Thomas Tyrrell, of Gipping Hall, Esq., died Nov. 13, 1775, aged 61. ¹¹⁰



Figure 6. The Sayer hatchment.¹¹¹

John and Grace married on 7 October 1754 at Stowmarket.¹¹² He was 82 and a widower, whilst she was around 40. They seem not to have had any surviving children, and upon writing his will on 7 July 1760, John left his wife a life interest in his property, bequeathing it afterwards to his godson John Palgrave, son of the doctor William Palgrave of Ipswich, upon condition that John and his heirs assume the surname Sayer. Grace was appointed sole executrix.¹¹³

John Palgrave was not only John Sayer's godson; they may also have been family. The Sayers and the Palgraves had long been resident in Pulham, where the Sayers were lords of the manor.¹¹⁴ Genealogies of the Sayer family become slightly muddled around the time of the early sixteenth century, but if Rye's 1891 edition of the *Visitation of Norfolk* is correct, then John Sayer may have been a fourth cousin of John Palgrave's father William, who had attended Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and became a physician at Ipswich.^{115,116} There was also a

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A margin note on the registered will of John Sayer states that his estate remained unadministered at the time of Grace's death, and administration was granted to her nephew, the Rev. Charles Tyrrell, in 1811. Charles died soon afterwards and ultimately administration was granted to his widow Elizabeth in 1812.¹³⁹

The Cunningham Hatchment



Figure 8. The Cunningham hatchment.¹⁴⁰

The third hatchment clearly matches the coat of arms on a wall memorial in the north aisle, above which it was once mounted. Creed blazons these arms: *Argent a bishop's pall [shakefork] between two castles sable [impaled with] per fess, 1st, Argent, a fess sable, in chief three grenades flamed Or; 2nd Ermine, on a fess gules, a lion passant Or.*¹⁴¹ In their respective descriptions of the same hatchment, both Farrer¹⁴² and Corder¹⁴³ cite Creed as their source. Burke lists 26 Cuninghame/Cunynghame/Cunningham arms, mostly from Ayrshire, starting with the earl of Glencairn: *Argent, a shakefork sable, with the crest A unicorn's head couped argent armed Or, as in the hatchment.* A further 23 are based on the Glencairn arms, adding additional charges around the shakefork, or a bordure. Only two use the Glencairn crest, however, and only one makes use of the castle: the Fairlie-Cuninghame baronets of Robertland (which include, in an escutcheon of pretence: *Argent a shakefork between a bugle in chief and two castles in base sable*).¹⁴⁴ Descended from the 1st earl of Glencairn, David Cunningham was master of the horse to James VI and I, and was created a baronet in 1630. The descent of the baronetcy was complicated by the death of the 2nd baronet without issue, and of the 4th baronet's heir during his own lifetime, resulting in a 28-year dormancy.¹⁴⁵ No connection can be demonstrated between the Eye Cunninghams and the Fairlie-Cuninghame baronets beyond this partial similarity between their heraldic arms. On the other hand, no separate matching grant of arms had been found. Could the heraldry on the Cunningham hatchment have been imperfectly executed, omitting the bugle? In any event, these were the arms and crest used on the Cunningham hatchment and monument. Their motto, however, is different from that which is traditionally used by the earls of Glencairn and several of their cadet branches (*Over Fork Over*), and unusually it is included on the hatchment: *Vince Malum Bono* ("Overcome evil with good").



Figure 9. Cunningham arms on 1788 memorial.¹⁴⁶

Rear Admiral Sir Charles Cunningham's memorial states that he died on 11 February 1834, aged 79.¹⁴⁷ Another memorial, also in the north aisle but no longer easily accessible, gives details of Charles's father, "Charles Cunningham gent." who died in 1788, aged 78.¹⁴⁸ This earlier

monument displays similar arms, although the paint has since been removed (see Fig. 9). Traces of the letters “VI CE MA” are just visible on the scroll beneath the shield, suggesting that the same motto was inscribed there. Sir Charles’s entry in *The Annual Biography and Obituary*¹⁴⁹ states that he was a native of Eye, but this may be incorrect: no Cunningham baptisms occurred there in the period 1752-57, nor does his father seem to have married there. At this point, research into Sir Charles’s background stalls without recourse to a third Cunningham memorial, now hidden under carpet but fortunately transcribed by Creed and Farrer. This hidden memorial serves as a starting point for further research using parish registers and wills of collateral family, which brings further insight into the Cunninghams and the heraldry by which they have been represented. The hidden flat stone reads:

In a lozenge - CUNNINGHAM

Elizabeth Cunningham, daughter of Jonas Cunningham of Diss gent. died 6th March 1768. Also her niece Elizabeth Jones, relict of Richard Jones gent. died 26th September 1831 in her 88th year. Elizabeth Mary, eldest daughter of Richard and Elizabeth Jones died 8th November 1854 aged 76.¹⁵⁰

Elizabeth Cunningham (d. 1768) was one of three children born to Jonas Cunningham, a Diss baker, and his first wife, Rebecca Camell.¹⁵¹ With his second wife, Jonas had a further eight children, including sons Charles¹⁵² and Simon,¹⁵³ both baptised at Diss (see Fig. 10). On 20 April 1724, around the time of his 14th birthday, Charles was bound apprentice to a local saddler.¹⁵⁴ He married Mary Pearson in Bishopsgate in 1732¹⁵⁵ and had a son (Charles), who died young.^{156,157} In the baptism register, Charles is described as a pawnbroker. After Mary’s death, Charles remarried in 1754 in Southwark to Elizabeth Lasingby, a widow.¹⁵⁸ Hence Charles, their only child, was probably born in Southwark, where he was baptised on 21 August 1755.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Charles’s brother Simon Cunningham lived between Redgrave in Suffolk and Southwark. He had been granted the Freedom of the City of London by redemption with the Merchant Taylors’ Company in 1748.¹⁶⁰

In 1722, Jonas Cunningham of Diss, baker, was party to a release of land in Diss, Horham and Stradbroke to his children Jonas and Elizabeth.¹⁶¹ This was probably part of the settlement from his first marriage to their mother, Rebecca Camell, who was a daughter of William Camell of Diss, brewer.¹⁶² Later, in 1761, Elizabeth Cunningham of Eye, spinster (daughter of Jonas and Rebecca) made her own will, in which she named her half-brothers John, Charles and Simon Cunningham. Charles was appointed executor and beneficiary of the residue of her personal estate. He also received Elizabeth’s lands and property in Horham and Stradbroke and her house in Eye, contingent on him fulfilling several pecuniary bequests to other family members, including his son Charles and step-daughter Elizabeth Lessingby [*sic.*].¹⁶³ Elizabeth Cunningham died in March 1768, as recorded on her memorial stone, and was buried in Eye church.¹⁶⁴ Inheriting his half-sister’s house and lands may have encouraged Charles, then 57, to retire to Eye.

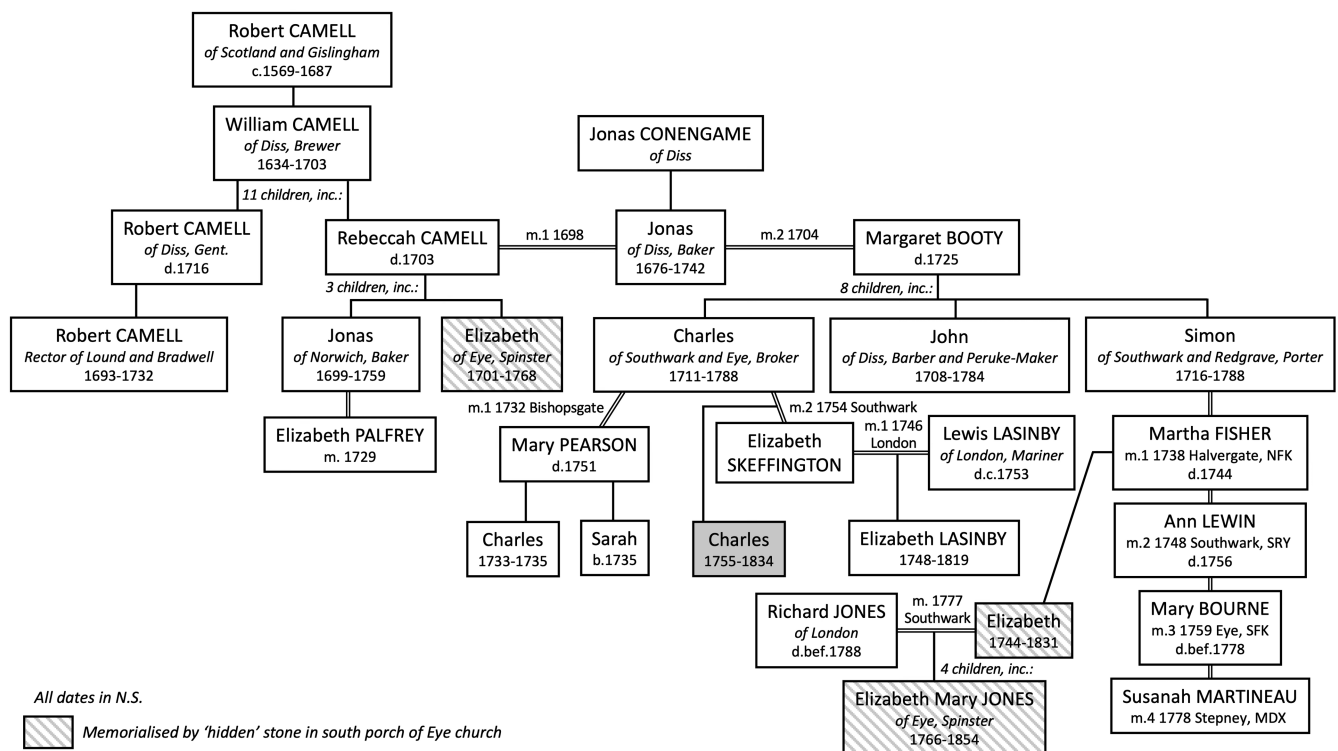


Figure 10. The Cunningham and Camell families of Diss, Norfolk.

Regarding the Cunninghams' heraldic arms, Blomefield records that the Camells of Diss descend from a Robert Camell who left Scotland at the time of the Anglo-Scottish wars and settled in Gislegham in 1583.¹⁶⁵ His namesake great-grandson, rector of Bradwell, used arms on a bookplate that is preserved in the British Library: *Gyronny of eight Or and sable*,¹⁶⁶ arms that are associated with the Scottish Campbells,¹⁶⁷ 'Camell' apparently being a contraction of 'Campbell'. The motto on the Camell bookplate (*Loyal Au Mort*) is, however, different to that which is usually associated with Clan Campbell. The Diss Cunninghams may also have been sixteenth-century Scottish diaspora, borrowing their name and arms from a relative or clan chief. The motto used by the Eye Cunninghams (*Vince Malum Bono*) has been attributed to the Jones family.¹⁶⁸ Charles Cunningham's niece Elizabeth married Richard Jones in 1777.¹⁶⁹

Sir Charles's obituaries state that he was much taken with the idea of life at sea and, encouraged by his Cornwallis neighbours, he entered the navy as a midshipman in 1775, aged about 20.^{170,171} He proved an able seaman, and within four years he was senior lieutenant on HMS *Hinchinbroke* under Nelson's command. In 1790, he was made commander of HMS *Ariel* by Sir William Cornwallis, then commander-in-chief of the East Indies station.¹⁷² Charles's father was resident in Eye at this time, and newspapers record his election to the office of town coroner in 1777 and 1781.^{173,174} At the time of his death in 1788, he was described as a gentleman and one of the town's "capital burgesses", although he died intestate.^{175,176}

Sir Charles's hatchment shows his arms impaled with those of two wives, the first of which is blazoned by Farrer: *Argent a fess and in chief three grenades sable inflamed proper (Wymond)*,¹⁷⁷ and by Corder: *Argent a fess sable and in chief three grenades sable inflamed proper (Wymond)*.¹⁷⁸ This attribution is supported by Papworth¹⁷⁹ and Burke,¹⁸⁰ both of whom identify the Wymonds of Green Hall, Sussex. Documentary evidence, however, reveals that Charles's first wife was Mary Boycott, only daughter of Samuel Boycott, rector of Burgh St Peter, Norfolk.¹⁸¹ After marrying on 4 January 1785, Mary gave birth to two daughters,^{182,183} but died at Eye on 1 November 1794, aged 35, and was buried in the Boycott family vault at Burgh St Peter.^{184,185}

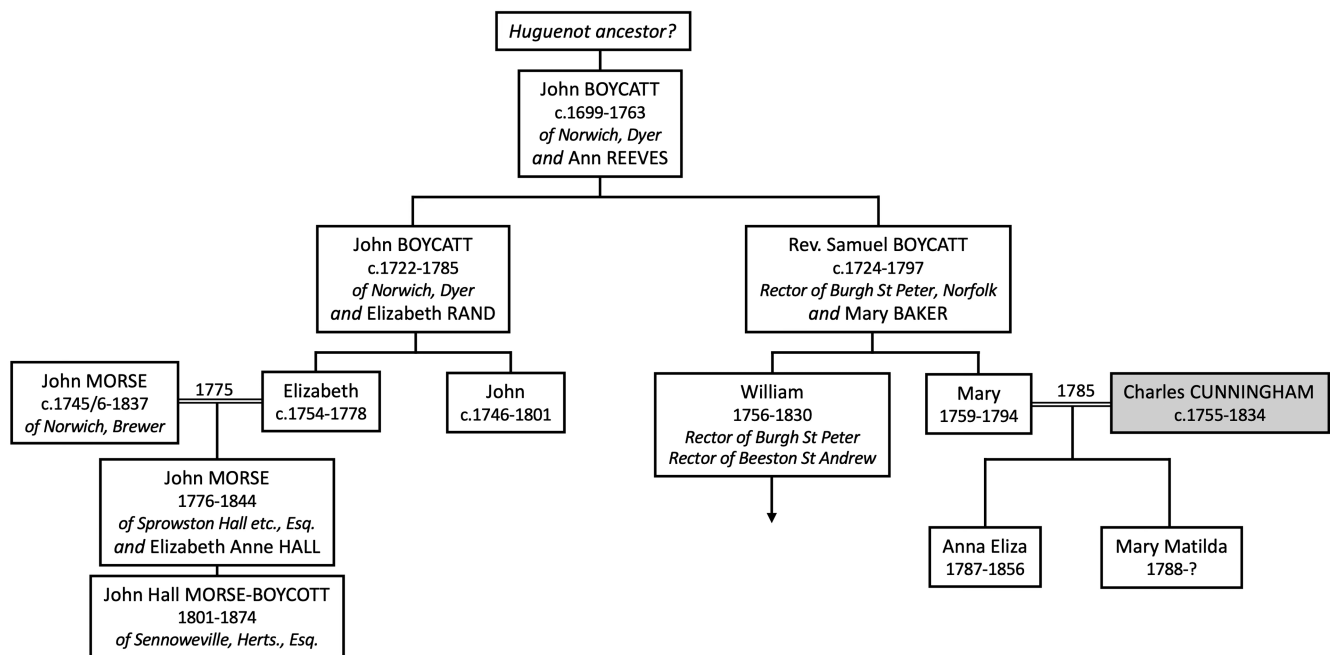


Figure 11. Boycott/Boycott family tree.

Why then this confusion over her family's heraldry? Mary's father, Samuel Boycott, was the second son of Norwich dyer John Boycott (c.1699-1763). Notes written inside the cover of one of the Burgh St Peter parish registers indicate that the Boycotts were thought to descend from a Huguenot refugee.¹⁸⁶ John Boycott's elder son, also John and a dyer, became wealthy enough to purchase several estates near to the City of Norwich in the 1780s, including Sprowston. He made his grandson John Morse his principal heir. After John Morse's death in February 1844, in accordance with the terms of his will, his son John Hall Morse was granted a royal licence to bear the name and arms of Boycott [*sic.*] in addition to his own, hence the family name became Morse-Boycott (the family having altered the spelling of Boycott/Boycott in the meantime).¹⁸⁷ When John Hall Morse-Boycott erected a memorial to his late father in Sprowston church, the Boycott arms were displayed as: *Paly of six Or and gules on a chief engrailed ermine three hand grenades proper*.¹⁸⁸ This matches the arms attributed to Boycott of Sprowston by Papworth¹⁸⁹ and Burke,¹⁹⁰ and by Rye in *Norfolk Families*, although he found no record of the grant in any Norfolk armory.¹⁹¹ Both Papworth¹⁹² and Burke¹⁹³ list only one other armigerous Boycott family, that of Hinton and Buildwas, Shropshire, with arms (*Gules on a chief argent three fireballs proper*), a family with which the Norfolk Boycott/Boycotts have no obvious connection. No separate grant of arms appears to have been made to the junior line of the Boycott family (through the Rev. Samuel Boycott) and thus Mary Boycott should presumably have been represented by the arms of her uncle John Boycott. The precise reason for this irregularity remains unclear, but may simply be an error on the part of the artist who painted the hatchment. Mary's family certainly used heraldic arms during her lifetime. Her husband's will refers to silver plate bearing the arms of Boycott and of Cunningham impaling Boycott, which he must have acquired during their brief marriage.¹⁹⁴ Mary Boycott's death in 1794 predates the erection of her cousin's memorial by half a century. Perhaps the Boycotts had been using different arms to those that were confirmed to John Morse-Boycott's descendants in 1844. Interestingly Sperling blazoned this quarter of the Cunningham hatchment *Argent, a fess sable, in chief three bomb-shells fired proper*, but attributed them (both correctly and incorrectly) to Boycott.¹⁹⁵

Throughout the 1790s, Charles Cunningham was captain and commanding officer on various ships during the French wars. He was in Eye long enough to serve as town bailiff in 1795.¹⁹⁶ On 10 February 1797, he married Beatrice Proby, the daughter of the commissioner of Chatham dockyard, whose nephew was the Earl of Carysfort, hence the arms of Proby are impaled second on the Cunningham hatchment.^{197,198} This was an advantageous marriage: Beatrice's grandmother was a daughter of John, 1st Baron Gower and Lady Catherine Manners.¹⁹⁹ Charles and Beatrice's first child, a daughter named after her mother, was born the following year.²⁰⁰ Charles's seagoing career ended in 1804, by which time he had achieved the rank of commodore.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, Beatrice gave birth to three more children, including a son baptised Charles Proby Cunningham at Eye in 1802.²⁰²

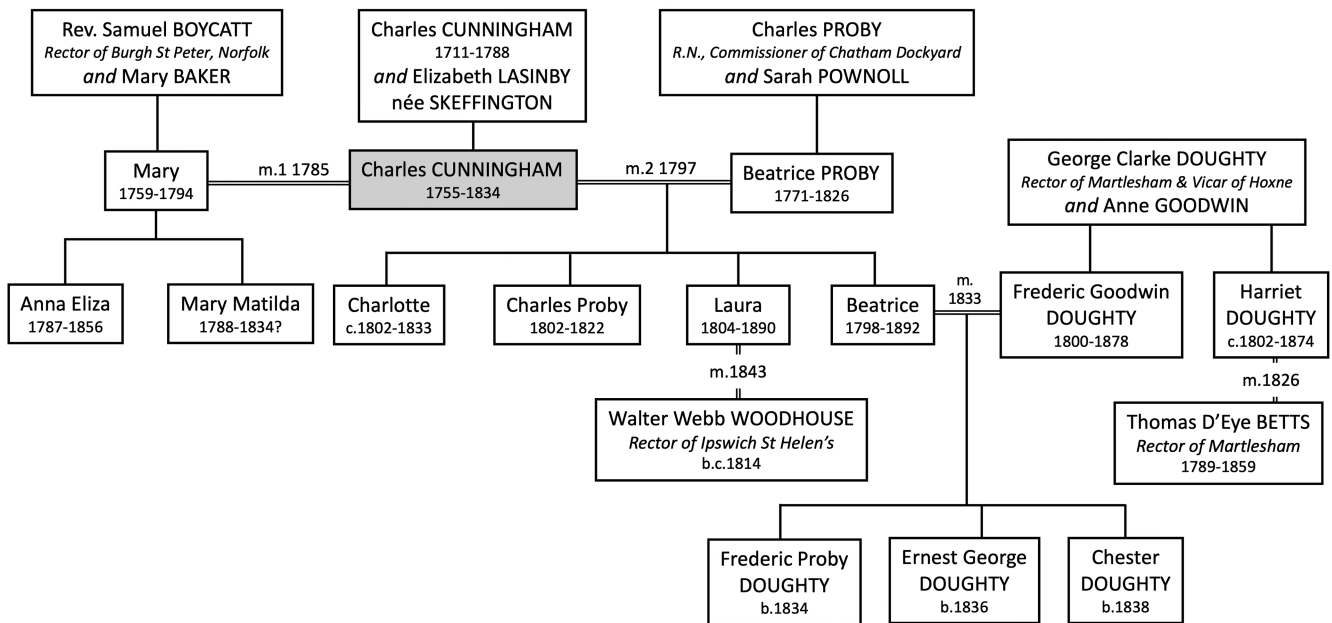


Figure 12. Family tree of Rear Admiral Sir Charles Cunningham, KGH (1755-1834).

Charles's house in the centre of Eye and its contents were sold by auction in November 1803.²⁰³ He then held civil appointments as Commissioner of Victualling from 1803 to 1806; commissioner of Deptford and Woolwich dockyards from 1806 to 1823; and commissioner of Chatham dockyard from 1823 to 1829.²⁰⁴ Newspapers note his presence at royal inspections and "splendid balls" held at his residence at Chatham dockyard. Charles's son joined the Royal Navy, but must have become ill. He died at his father's house in Woolwich on 11 November 1822.²⁰⁵ Four years later, Charles's wife Beatrice died "after a few hours illness" at his house in Chatham.²⁰⁶

Charles retired in May 1829 with the rank of rear-admiral, and in 1832 he was created knight commander of the Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order, an honour which is represented on his hatchment.²⁰⁷ Returning to Eye, he took up residence at Oak Lawn House, Hoxne, where he lived with his unmarried daughters. Fourth daughter Charlotte died on 15 May 1833, aged 33, and is memorialised with her father in Eye church.²⁰⁸ Charles's name appears in Suffolk newspapers during the early 1830s, as steward of subscription assemblies at the White Lion Inn. Perhaps it was at one of these events that his third daughter Beatrice formed an attachment to Frederic Goodwin Doughty, younger son of George Clarke Doughty who was rector of Martlesham and vicar of Hoxne.²⁰⁹ Frederic and Beatrice married on 21 August 1833 and lived afterwards at his properties in Woodbridge and Martlesham, where they raised three sons.²¹⁰ Through the Doughtys, the Cunningham family became connected to the Betts and Deye families. Frederic's sister Harriet Doughty married the Rev. Thomas D'Eye Betts, rector of Martlesham and grandson of Martha Betts née Deye.²¹¹

Charles Cunningham had his portrait painted by Henry Wyatt in around 1833. The portrait, which depicts him wearing the undress uniform of a rear-admiral with the star and neck order of a Knight Commander of Hanover, is in the collection of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.²¹² He died at Oak Lawn House on 11 February 1834, aged 79.²¹³ His long will was proved on 3 May, and is principally concerned with providing for his four surviving daughters.²¹⁴ The sale of property in Blo' Norton (the settlement from his marriage to Mary Boycott) raised just over £3,000 which was to be invested to fund two modest annuities for Mary Matilda and Ann Elizabeth. The settlement from his second marriage to Beatrice Proby, made up of £8,000 of annuities, was to be divided between his younger daughters, Beatrice and Laura. His plate "engraved with the Arms or Initials of Cunningham only or Cunningham & Boycott or Boycott only" was bequeathed to Ann Elizabeth; more plate "engraved with the Arms or Initials of Cunningham and Proby or Proby only or Lewson [Leveson?]" was to be divided between Beatrice and Mary. Curiously, eldest daughter Mary Matilda was left out of this division of property, but she was bequeathed a legacy of £20; a letter annexed to the will instructed Charles's attorney to increase the legacy to £200.

By July, Oak Lawn House was advertised to be let.²¹⁵ Eldest daughter Anna Elizabeth remained unmarried and appears to have lived at Bassett Down House, Wiltshire, with her friends the Story-Maskelynes, to whom she made significant bequests in her will.²¹⁶ It is not clear what became of second daughter Mary Matilda. A Mary Cunningham of Hoxne was buried there on 13 September 1834, seven months after Sir Charles's death.²¹⁷ This record is not a perfect fit. The woman buried was 43, whereas Charles's daughter would have been 46; additionally,

Charles and his daughter Charlotte were buried in Eye rather than in Hoxne. The recent disruption of Charles's death and the change in his daughters' circumstances might account for these irregularities, or this might not be the correct record. Charles's youngest daughter Laura married Walter Webb Woodhouse, who later became rector of St Clements, Ipswich.²¹⁸ The couple had no children and retired to the South West, where Laura died at Weston-Super-Mare in 1890.²¹⁹ Beatrice was the longest-lived of Charles's daughters, dying in Woodbridge in 1892 at the age of 94.²²⁰

Reflections

At first glance, Eye's three hatchments might appear isolated, difficult to interpret and of little consequence. Taken together and analysed with supporting historical and genealogical records, however, they are illustrative of town's Georgian past. The stories of the Deye, Sayer and Cunningham families demonstrate how a combination of high infant mortality and poor life expectancy could conspire against attempted longevity. When adult members of these families died, however, their funerary observances must have been conducted with all due pomp and ceremony, and if they were accustomed to the display of funerary hatchments, then it must also have been the vogue amongst their neighbours. If Titterton's estimated survival rate of one in 20 is accurate, then these three chance survivors hint at the existence of many more, the vast majority of which are now lost.

Of the families discussed in this article, only the Cornwallis family receives particular attention in Paine's *History of Eye*, although the Deyes' residence at Stayer House and their ledger stones in the church are also noted.²²¹ Paine does not include the hatchments in his chapter on the church.²²² During the Victorian age, new families rose to prominence in the town. The recently-ennobled Kerrison baronets acquired Hoxne Hall (later renamed Oakley Park) in the early 1820s and Brome Hall in 1823.^{223,224} Meanwhile the Tacon family, brewers by trade, arrived in the town early in the nineteenth century and prospered. Both families were closely associated with the church's restoration and subsequent alterations, and hatchments commemorating extinct families must have seemed irrelevant and anachronistic.

Those interested in other surviving hatchments connected with those at Eye can find one in the church at Bungay, commemorating the married daughter of Matthias Kerrison, father of the 1st baronet. The hatchment of Edmund Tyrell, brother of Grace who married John Sayer of Eye, is at Gipping; her nephew, the Rev. Charles Tyrell, has a hatchment at Stowmarket. The Rev. George Betts has a hatchment at Wortham, and in Norfolk, several members of the Negus family are commemorated by hatchments at Hoveton St Peter, including Henry Negus and his wife Mary (née Deye) of the Stayer House débacle. The Deye arms also appear in pretence on the hatchment of John Fowle Esquire, in the church at Broome, who married Dioness Deye.²²⁵ Meanwhile, at Bredfield, the married daughter of Henry Edgar of Eye is remembered, and Ann, the married daughter of Robert Denny of Eye, has a hatchment at Woodbridge. Near to Eye, the churches at Thrandeston and Yaxley each have two hatchments, and Thornham Magna has seven.²²⁶

Acknowledgements

With thanks to The Rev'd Dr Guy Sumpster and Mrs Pinky Palmer, Rector and Churchwarden at St Peter and St Paul, Eye.

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