

Affeton Castle

A Lost Devon Village



Affeton Castle, some three miles west of Witheridge is in that part of Devon which is thought to have been colonized by the Saxons about the year 680. There are residual traces of its former inhabitants, the Dumnonii of Roman times, although the Romans themselves seem to have been content to leave North Devon to its native rulers. The Long Stone at East Worlington, the "Castle" or hill-Fort at Burrige, and the place names of King's Nympton, signifying a Celtic sacred grove, and Romansleigh dedicated to the Celtic Saint Rumon, together with barrows or tumuli on Meshaw Moor suggest some degree of occupation before the Saxon invasion.

The suffix "ton" to place names signifies a homestead of Saxon settlement, and thus Cheldeston (now Cheldon), Affeton, and Worlington, three contiguous Saxon settlements along the North slope of the valley of the Little Dart.

The occupiers of these homesteads at the time of the Conquest were established in the Domesday Book some twenty years later, and we know that Cheldon was held by the Saxon Edmer until dispossessed by the Norman Walter. Worlington was held by the Saxon free-woman Ulvena (whence Uluvedington of which Worlington is a corruption) and was awarded to the Bishop of Coutances in Normandy.

Although an Affeton (or Afton) features in the Domesday Book when it was held by one Ailsa in the reign of Edward the Confessor and was among 58 lordships conferred on Ralph de Pomerai by the Conqueror, it seems certain that the entry relates to another Affeton which still exists near Berry Pomeroy Castle in South Devon.

W. G. Hoskins in his "Devon" thinks that Affeton owed its existence as a separate parish to

being carved out of Worlington. The shape of the existing parish which now embraces Affeton and both Worlingtons, East and West, supports that view, as does its absence from manors listed in the Domesday book. Conversely, however Affeton has always belonged to the Hundred of North Tawton together with Chawleigh and Eggesford: the neighbouring parishes of Cheldon and Worlington to the Hundred of Witheridge. Hundreds in Devon date from the reign of the Wessex King Edmund in the mid-10th Century. Furthermore, Affeton was always of the Honour of Okehampton, and its grouping with Chawleigh and Eggesford for administrative purposes seems to negate the suggested Worlington derivation.

As part of the Honour of Okehampton Affeton would have been granted by the Conqueror to Baldwin de Brionne, his Norman Sheriff of Devon. From him it would have passed by descent to the Courtney Earls of Devon, the first Earl having married Hawise de Brionne in the 12th Century. There is evidence that Affeton was indeed held of the Earls of Devon in this way. Its absence from the Domesday Book, if not a clerical error, could be explained by its having been carved from the parish of Chawleigh.

Apart from the original Saxon settler who was presumably called *Æffa*, the first person who occupied Affeton to appear in the records is one Robert, who styled himself "de Affeton" at the end of the 12th Century. His tenure included Affeton itself and a farm to the southward across the river called Cobley. With the good of his immortal soul no doubt in mind, Robert granted Cobley to the Priory of St. Nicholas in Exeter by a charter dating between 1179 and 1225. The extent of the grant was a house and garden, and 84 acres of land of which 20 acres were heath and gorse as late as 1597, indicating the southern part of the present farm that

bears that name.

The priory had as tenants of Cobley Ralph and William "de Cobehehei", East Cheldon was occupied by Richard "de Cheldon" and West Worlington by William "de Worlington" in 1243, so that each manor or homestead had by then acquired a family with patronymics derived from their holdings.

The tenants of Affeton or Cheldon or Worlington all held their lands of a superior in the Norman hierarchy in return for military service or of payment in cash or in kind, and were liable for feudal taxes and other services.

A succession of persons occupied Affeton calling themselves "de Affeton", whom Vivian has listed in a somewhat unconvincing family tree. Apart from Cobley (which had been given the Priory in mortmain) the tenants of Affeton managed to survive on the produce of their single Manor until 1351.

A church and village at Affeton came into existence by the latter half of the 13th Century, a small community having sprung up around the de Affeton family. Good building stone was available at Drayford and the house and church may have been built of it: the cottages were probably of cob and thatch. A mill probably existed from early times at the crossing of the River Dart, and a strong spring at Affeton, which no doubt dictated the choice of the site in the first instance, made Affeton a no less desirable village for settlement than Cheldon or Worlington. Yet Affeton has disappeared and the others remain.

Between 1349 and 1351 the plague hit Devon for the first time. Although it was to continue intermittently for centuries, the first onset was by far the most virulent, decimating the countryside, rendering many holdings tenantless and much reducing the price of land. It may be that it was the plague which led to both the disappearance of Affeton

as a parish and which contributed to the emergence of the "de Affeton" family from the ranks of the small tenant farmers.

In about 1350 the then tenant of Affeton was one Thomas who married Mabel Hatche (or Hatch) of Woolleigh in Beaford. She may have brought him some land as her dot because her descendants owned property amounting to three houses and 247 acres around Washford Pyne (some four miles from Affeton itself). In 1597 it was held of Anthony Hatch, Esquire, of his manors of Witheridge and Washford Pyne, but this may be coincidental. The property was sold at some time after 1646.

Meanwhile, the de Worlington family had died out in the male line and West Worlington manor was held by a Miss Crawthorne who married a Marwood. This Marwood sold West Worlington to Thomas Affeton while his wife was still under age, binding himself to guaranteeing that his wife would ratify the sale on attaining her majority. The sale occurred in 1350, the year of the plague, which may both explain the apparent urgency and its price being within Thomas Affeton's means, if Hatche money failed to amount to much.

Thomas Affeton managed his extended property with sufficient ability to warrant his being picked for High Sheriff of Devon in 1370/1.

A second Thomas Affeton, born about 1350, achieved an outstanding marriage during the reign of Richard II (or about 1377). His wife was Elizabeth de Mannyngford the heiress of the Le Chastelyn, Canteloupe, and Mannyngford estates in Somerset and Dorset: she not only added three or more quarterings to the de Affeton arms but greatly increased the income available to her husband.

Towards the end of the 14th Century Thomas de Affeton bought the Manors of Meshaw and East

Worlington; the advowsons in each parish were his in 1398 and 1399 respectively. He also bought the whole, or possibly only the western half of the Manor of Thelbridge. The de Affetons were now considerable land-owners, and took an active part in county administration, but as so often happens - the acquisition of an heiress was followed shortly by a failure in the male line. Elizabeth de Affeton had two sons, John and Robert. Robert was killed at Sparkford in 1399 and John died shortly afterwards having had but one daughter, Katherine.

Katherine was only a child-in-arms when she inherited her grand-father's estate; she was brought up by her grandmother Elizabeth. Elizabeth re-married a John Bottreaux, and the Bottreauxs lived at Affeton until after 1421 and perhaps as late as 1434 by which time Katherine de Affeton must have married Hugh Stucley. As the second son of a cadet branch of the Huntingdon family, Hugh brought little if anything to the estate, but it was during his life-time that the parish of Affeton ceased to exist for all practical purposes.

In 1439 Hugh and Katherine felt obliged to reduce the church at Affeton to the status of a chapel appurtenant to their house. A licence issued that year with Hugh's consent to the Rector of West Worlington to administer the sacraments and perform divine service in the parish church of Affetone, the income of which was insufficient for the decent maintenance of its Rectors. The Rector's income being then proportionate to the wealth of his parishioners, one has little difficulty in visualising a village empty and abandoned by reason, perhaps, of plague recurring over the previous ninety years.

In 1475, Sir Thomas Stucley, a grandson of Katherine de Affeton, was carried to the font and baptized in the parish church of Affeton, one mile

from the church of East Worlington according to a witness present at the ceremony. This would locate the church somewhere near Affeton Castle Crossroads.

As late as 1534, Nicholas Hamlyn, the Rector of West Worlington, left a gown in his will to "Sir John, chapelyn to Sir Thomas Stucley" which argues the continuance of the church of Affeton until then.

Nothing remains visible above ground of either church or village, and it may be relevant that Katherine de Affeton and her descendants were buried at West Worlington from 1467 onwards.

The south-east corner of West Worlington church is described as the chapel of the Stucleys and its carved screen as of late type (c. 1500) by Mr. Hoskins, but it bears the arms of Affeton and not of Stucley, and I think it may have been the gift of Katherine de Affeton (buried 1467) who left money to the churches of both East and West Worlington.

According to Lyson in his History of Exeter, Thomas de Affeton bought the free-hold of Affeton from the Countess of Devon in about 1350 but in this he seems to be mistaken. As has been seen, Affeton (and Meshaw) were part of the Hundred of North Tawton and formed an obtrusion of that Hundred thrusting north across the Little Dart into the Hundred of Witheridge between Cheldon and the Worlingtons. Presumably the entire Hundred of North Tawton was included in the Honour of Okehampton which was granted to Baldwin de Brionne by the Conqueror. John de Affeton (the father of Katherine) featured in the Patent Roll of 1391 "touching a trespass against Margaret, late the wife of Hugh de Courtenay" who was the second Early of Devon and who died in 1377. In 1462 the sixth Earl was beheaded and his honours bestowed upon Humphrey, Lord Stafford. It follows that at Katherine de Affeton's death in 1467 the inquest on her property found it to have been held of

Lord Stafford. Incidentally, the East Worlington and other Manors were held of Anne, Duchess of Exeter in free soccage. In 1488 when Katherine's son Nicholas died, Affeton was free of feudal restraints but the Worlingtons were still held of the Countess of Richmond, the Queen's mother, for service unknown. Only a toft in Chumleigh (query Molland?) was still held of the Courtenays who had been recreated Earls of Devon after Bosworth in 1485, East Worlington was later held of the Castle of Barnstaple to which it had been allocated for local financial backing as I suppose. It would seem, therefore, that the Worlingtons were held of the King from very early times - and Affeton of the Earls of Devon. I think the presumption to be drawn from the foregoing is against Affeton having been once part of Worlington.

The Affeton property suffered frequent escheat due to heirs being under age when their predecessors expired, but the process enables one to follow its development without the usual difficulties. The values declared for purposes of escheat were probably as suspect as those for modern estate duty, but it is of interest to note that the Affeton property was assessed at £40 per annum in 1467, and at £49-6-4 in 1488, of which the Manors of Affeton, East and West Worlington and Meshaw rated at £3-6-8, £5, £5-6-8 and £2 respectively.

An old account relates how: "Near the farmhouse called Affton Barton are remains of the ancient and extensive castellated mansion the seat of the Afftons in the 13th and 14th Centuries."

"The entrance gateway tower with a spiral staircase 49 feet high is still in good preservation, from whence 13 manors in possession of the Stucley family could be seen. It had an extensive park. It was built in the shape of an "E" ".

Weston described Affeton as "One of the most

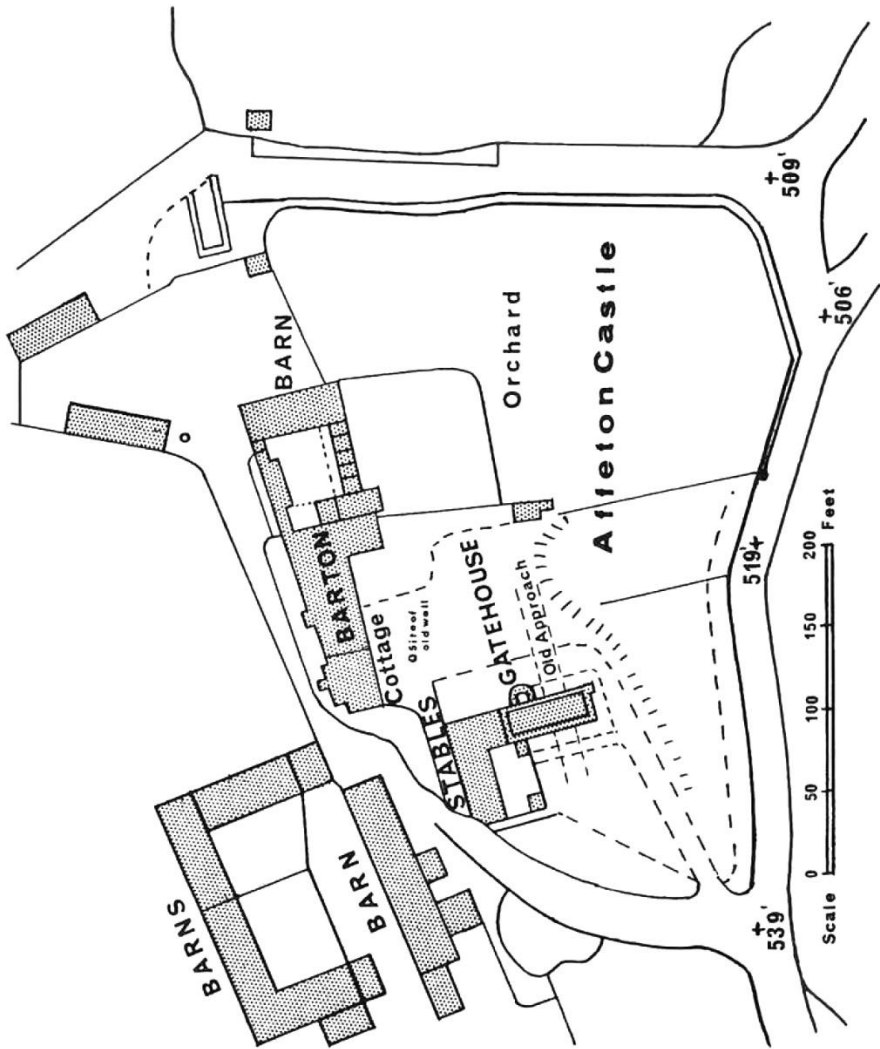
splendid seats of the County, and had an extensive park with large fish-ponds, woods, and a warren".

The gateway tower described above led Hoskins to say: "The castellated building to which it gave entrance was probably erected by the Affetons in the 13th or 14th centuries and was a fortified manor house rather than a true castle." He ascribes the gatehouse to the 15th century and suggests it was built on the site of an older house.

That Affeton Castle was never more than a fortified manor-house is beyond dispute. The site alone precluded it from withstanding a siege by reason of its being on the side or brow of a hill rather than at the top of one. Nor was licence to crenellate ever issued to either de Affetons or Stucleys. The gatehouse, however, whose two upper rooms could be reached only by climbing the stone spiral stair, would have offered some refuge from violence short of a regular siege.

The creation of a house which could be defended from one which could not must have required wealth beyond the means of the tenant of a single upland manor. The evidence suggests the second Thomas de Affeton who was the first to marry money in any considerable quantity, and thus dates the main part of the house between about 1377 and 1407. That the main house was built by the Affetons and not by the Stucleys is borne out by the name.

By tradition, the main house stood in the orchard below the Barton. If it did so the gatehouse would have been sited at too great a distance and on an entirely different level to the building it gave access to. The layout of gatehouse, Barton, and the barn to the eastward of the farm-house together comprise an "E" which strongly suggests that the old house in part occupied the site of the present buildings. Sir Hugh Stucley (1873-1956) spoke of



cellarage extending southwards from the centre arm of the "E" in his memory, and if these lay under a building which since disappeared, its position would be corroborated by the direction taken by the drive-in through the archway of the gatehouse. Again, in both the north and south elevations of the main range of the Barton can be seen traces of arch-ways or arched window recesses which appear to predate the Civil War. At the close of the Civil War the then owners were greatly impoverished, yet they seem to have resumed occupation of Affeton within a comparatively short time; it seems logical to suppose that they made repairs to as much as was left of the old house since they certainly had insufficient money to build entirely anew. The position of an old well in front of the cottage end of the Barton range confirms this theory since the original house would not have been built far from the line of the spring.

The existing Castle is of course the gatehouse and tower to which the northern part and stables were added by Sir George Stucley in 1859. The approach to the main house led through the archways which, though blocked by Sir George, are still much in evidence. Sir George, too, opened those windows now existing on the ground floor to provide accommodation where there had previously been stables and storage space. There were originally only two rooms above. The stone spiral gave access to the first and largest room through which the smaller or "Inner Tower Chamber" could be gained at the south end. The Inner Tower Chamber with its three windows facing East, South, and West, and its closet in the buttress, provided a vantage point from which armed men could keep watch on the only three ways by which Affeton could be approached by road. Sir Edward Stucley (1852-1927) could remember the reconstruction of the gatehouse from being taken

there as a small boy and could recall a moat and charred timbers: one supposes the moat to have been a ditch to the westward of the gatehouse and the charred timbers evidence that the house had been fired during the Civil War.

The construction of the gatehouse in the 15th Century suggests a need for additional security for those living at Affeton and the means to provide it. The Wars of the Roses, which led to much fighting between the Courtenays and Bonvilles in Devon in the latter half of the that Century may well have been pretext enough. Nicholas Stucley, who came of age in 1472 and inherited all his great-grand-mother's lands, took no part in county matters and appears to have stayed quietly at home raising a large family of children. It seems likely that he built the gatehouse between 1472 and his death in 1488.

In selecting Nicholas Stucley as the person most likely to have had the gatehouse built there is one piece of factual evidence which supports his candidature. A descendant of his, Lewis Stucley, a Master of the Bench of Middle Temple (1740-48) lived at Affeton Barton until 1692, when he was eight years old, and then went to Barnstaple Grammar School before joining his Inn of Court. His commonplace book shows that he was interested in heraldry as it affected his family, and when Recorder of Bideford, wrote to his distant kinsman William Stukeley the antiquarian upon the subject. His commonplace book has the following entry: "Eight coats of arms carved on a board at Affeton note these 8 coats are also painted and plaistered up on the chimney piece of the Inner Tower Chamber at Afton where two more coats are added to them There is another crest viz: a Sea Bear's head with two paws and a on its head painted over the eight coats on the board above mentioned."

There are, in fact, two oak boards set into the modern panelling of the Inner Tower Chamber today. One has ten quarterings which correspond as to nine of them with the larger of the two coats described by Lewis, the other has four quarterings and the "Sea Bear's head" and represents the arms of Nicholas Stucley.

These boards, and their descriptions by Lewis Stucley, raise a number of queries. Traditionally the boards constitute the sole surviving furnishings of pre-Civil War days. They appear authentic 15th and 16th Century wood carvings, and yet neither is accurately described by Lewis, who appears to have confused one quartering on the larger board with a quartering which appears on his uncle's monument in West Worlington church, and to have added four quarterings to the smaller coat with the "Sea Bear's head". The problem can be resolved by asking whether Lewis wrote his description from an imperfect note or from memory, or whether there were in fact eight different coats of arms at Affeton in his day.

After his mother's death in 1692, Lewis visited Bideford as Recorder and stayed with a brother who lived in that town. His eldest brother Dennis also moved to Bideford early in the 18th Century, and Lewis may have had little occasion to revisit the home of his childhood. I think it probable on balance that Lewis attempted to describe the two existing coats and did so inaccurately.

The board with the Sea Bear's head quarters the arms of Stucley, Affeton, FitzRoger and Mannyngford and are undoubtedly the arms of Nicholas Stucley. It seems probable that the board constituted an embellishment of the house on some occasion of altering or adding to the original structure, and it is a reasonable proposition that the larger board graced the

main house and the smaller the gate-house. If the premise be tenable, it would add weight to the suggested identity of the builder of the gatehouse being Nicholas.

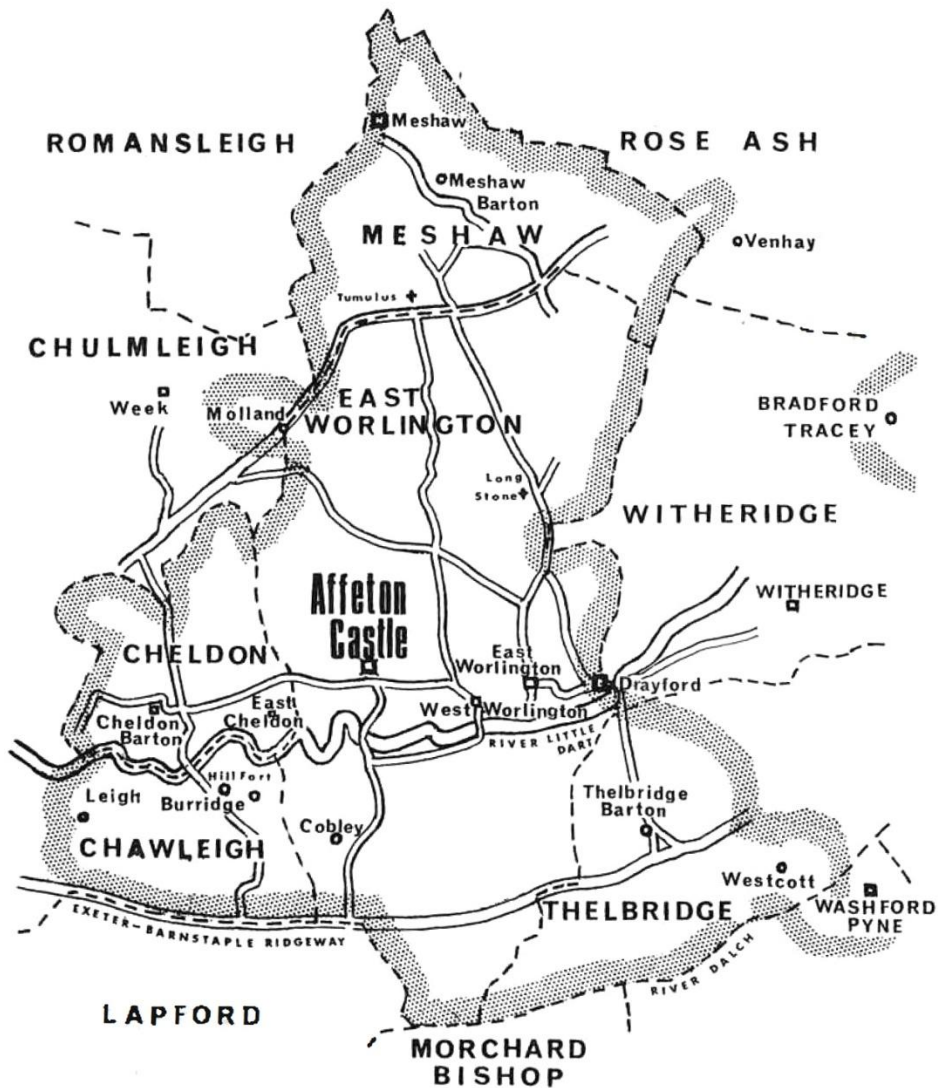
Nicholas, in one visitation of Devon, is described as "of Trent", a manor he owned on the Somerset/Dorset border, but we know that his eldest son was born at Affeton in June 1475. The style of architecture of the gate-house certainly suggests a building date of about then.

Sufficient funds to engage in substantial additions to the old house may have been available from accumulation of trust money during his infancy (he came of age in 1472), and from the profits of the wool trade.

We know that the Stucleys, in common with most other land-owners in North Devon in the Middle Ages, derived part of their income from wool. This was evidenced by a gold signet ring dug up at Affeton when the stable foundations were being excavated and which bore a rebus monogramming the name. The rebus would have been used to seal the bales of wool consigned to the fullers and tuckers of the industry. Regrettably the ring was sold for its intrinsic value in the 1930s.



By 1488 the Affeton Estate was a considerable one and included the Manors of Affeton, both Worlingtons, Bradford Tracey near Witheridge, Meshaw, other lands in Devon and three manors in Dorset and two in Somerset, but it was still basically the property acquired in the 14th Century by Thomas de Affeton. By 1610 the Estate had expanded to include the Manors of Cheldon and West Thelbridge, and half the Manor of Chawleigh which, with other parcels



APPROXIMATE EXTENT OF THE AFFETON ESTATE IN 1610.

1,050 acres of land around Morchard Bishop
are not included in this diagram.

of land at Knightstone in the south and Romansleigh in the north represented a holding of about 12,000 acres around Affeton alone, although much of it was and remains poor agricultural land.

One part of this property deserves especial mention. In 1539 the Stucleys reacquired "Monken-cobleigh" upon the dissolution of the monasteries. Cobley had of course belonged to the monks of the Priory of St. Nicholas in Exeter since about 1200, and the Stucleys, as they looked across their valley of the Little Dart must have often regretted the generosity of their remote Affeton ancestor: a fortunate marriage with the daughter of Sir Hugh Pollard, in 1512, led to Cobley being recovered. Richard Pollard was Thomas Cromwell's Commissioner, King's Remembrancer, and General Surveyor of Henry VIII's Exchequer, and it followed that any relation of the Pollards was well placed to acquire monastic lands at nominal prices. Incidentally, the Pollard marriage is commemorated by an heraldic glass roundel in a window of the Pollard chapel at King's Nympton Church and Sir George Stucley had it copied and appropriately inserted in the south window of the Inner Tower Chamber commanding Cobley farm.

From 1610 onwards the Affeton Estate dwindled away rapidly. Sir Lewis Stucley, who succeeded in that year, had had East Cheldon settled on him several years previously, and had also been given all the standing timber in Burrige Wood in Chawleigh together with "divers great sums of money" by his father. Sir Lewis was far from content to live a bucolic life at East Cheldon awaiting his father's death and preferred the excitements to be found at Court in London. He was one of the many courtiers who were knighted by James I at Whitehall in 1603 on the King's arrival in England. By the time Sir Lewis died (in disgrace for his part in the arrest and

execution of Sir Walter Raleigh) there was little left of his inheritance. His son John, obliged to mortgage Affeton to the Chichester family for £1,000, left only Affeton, West Worlington, Cobley and Burr ridge Wood in Chawleigh. Some 8,000 acres had been disposed of.

By 1638 Cobley was the dower-house to the Castle, and John's step-grand-mother Mary Stucley (nee Redman) was living there. Affeton was assessed at £150 per annum, and West Worlington, which was probably leased for a term of three lives at a nominal rent, at only £6-13-4d. John was only entitled to the reversion of Burr ridge, and all else was let for a term of seven years. John, indeed, seems to have devoted his eighteen years tenure of Affeton to paying off his father's debts and to providing as best he could for his widow and ten children.

The next owner was John's son Thomas born in 1620, the year his grandfather was buried at South Molton. He was a minor when his father died in 1638, and married Elizabeth Sydenham in June 1643 the second year of the Civil War. Up to then he seems to have played no part in the fighting, but his wife was the daughter of a prominent Royalist, Sir Ralph Sydenham, who lived at Youlston through having married a Chichester widow. Sir Ralph finally escaped to France and was fined £600 by Parliament for his delinquency.

Thomas's brother Lewis was an active parliamentarian and a non-conformist priest who was awarded a chaplaincy to Cromwell for his services: by reason of his marriage perhaps, Thomas was equally active in support of the King.

By November 1643 Thomas was a Captain in Digby's force besieging Plymouth. The siege was abandoned on Christmas Day of that year, and for the next two years Thomas served as a Colonel of

cavalry in the defence of Exeter. By October 1645 Fairfax had entered Devon with his New Model Army and it was now Thomas' s turn to withstand a siege within the defences of that city.

Meanwhile, Colonel Okey commanding his Plymouth Regiment of Dragoons had established his head-quarters at Great Fulford House near Dunsford on the slopes of Dartmoor. From Great Fulford his dragoons were sent north and south to wipe up isolated pockets of resistance in the country-side, and to reduce such country houses or castles as were garrisoned for the King. One such foray reduced Eggesford House the home of Edward, Viscount Chichester and step-grandson of Sir Ralph Sydeham, on the 18th December 1645.

It was only a short step from Eggesford to Affeton, and according to one account: "At this time, Sir Thomas Stucley threw open his mansion house of Afton Barton and burrowed himself with his cattle and valuable property in a large wood, now known as Burrige Wood, where the large trench and encampment may now be seen". This imaginative account is highly inaccurate: Sir Thomas was not knighted until May 1660, and was certainly not at Affeton when it was sacked by the Plymouth Regiment. The old Iron Age Fort at Burrige may well have been used as a cattle coral in an attempt to evade the depre-dations of roving bands of armed and hungry men that winter, although the fort is somewhat closer to the main road along which such bands would have come than the Castle itself. That objects of value were buried is probably true: a hoard of silver coins of the period were unearthed in a field hedge at East Worlington this Century, and there has long been a tradition that gold lies buried in the Steep Meade below Affeton Castle itself.

My father, Sir Hugh Stucley, recalled having

seen a letter written by Thomas from Exeter lamenting that Affeton had been sacked on three occasions, twice by so-called Royalists and once by Roundheads. He was to repeat his complaint to the Parliamentary Commissioners in Exeter when compounding for his estates in 1646. He told them too that his house at Affeton had frequently been plundered during the Wars.

Thomas Stucley broke out of Exeter with his regiment early in 1646 and took part in the last battle of the Civil War at Torrington on the 15th February. He only lost three of his men before joining the rout of the Royalist Army into Cornwall.

Later in the year he was examined by the Parliamentary Commissioners at Exeter who found him to be life tenant of the Manor of Affeton and of rents from lands in West Worlington, Chulmleigh, and Washford Pyne worth £15-18-10d a year. Affeton was assessed at £180. His personal estate brought in £70 a year and his real estate was heavily encumbered. £100 a year was due to his step-mother Elizabeth Coode (who survived until 1684) and there were rent charges payable to other relations amounting to £70 while the Chichester mortgage for £1,000 was still unredeemed. Thomas admitted being £200 in arrears with annuities and in debt for a further £656-16-8d. But despite this evidence the Commissioners assessed his clear income at £150 a year and fined him £300.

How destroyed was Affeton during the Civil Wars? We know enough of Thomas's movements to know that he lived in Devon during the Commonwealth and was eventually buried at West Worlington in September 1663. That in his will he was able to leave his widow £50 worth of "house-hold stuff" in 1657. Then there are the two oak boards with coats of arms and the evidence of Lewis Stucley his nephew, some fifty years later, that a coat of arms could then be seen 'painted and plaistered' up above the

chimney piece in the Inner Tower Chamber.

I think it a reasonable assumption that much of the main house was ruined by fire, but that what remained was rebuilt, on a much smaller scale, by Sir Thomas to provide a roof over the heads of his wife and children. The unusual quantity of stone cottages in West Worlington suggests that the ruins were utilised as a quarry of ready cut stone for their construction: one masoned lintel used to lie on the way to West Worlington where it fell perhaps from the cart carrying it there. It now stands in the Castle garden.

Did Sir Thomas move in to Cobley while the Barton was being rebuilt for his occupation? We know that his step-grand-mother Mary (Redman) was living there in 1638 but was buried at Roborough ten years later. Could she have moved to Roborough to provide a roof for Thomas and his family?

After Thomas died his wife continued at Affeton with her two sons and four daughters. She remarried the Rev. John Dodderidge in 1677 and continued at Affeton with him until his death in 1683. Her brother-in-law, the Rev. Lewis Stucley, as remainderman to the property (both sons having died) brought a suit in Chancery of that year to oblige Lady Stucley to account for her stewardship of the property.

In an effort to pay off the debts encumbering it she sold a number of 99 year leases in 1668 for £510 and claimed to have spent her own money in maintenance. The court ordered her to find a further £2,000 to meet outstanding obligations under her late husband's settlement of 1657.

The next owner, the Rev. Lewis Stucley, at first lived at Bideford after his marriage to Susannah Dennis of that town in 1672/3 but seems to have moved to Affeton in about 1684, being buried at West Worlington three years later. In her will his widow spoke

of herself as "of Affeton" in 1689 and referred to the house in which she had "formerly lived in in the High Street in Bideford." She too was buried at West Worlington in 1692. Their eldest son was an eccentric who after studying law in London went to Bideford to live by May 1705. At his death unmarried in 1742 he was described as "formerly of Affeton but of late of Bideford."

A nephew, another Dennis Stucley, owned Affeton from 1742 until 1755 but never lived there; the property then passed to a cousin, George Buck.

George Buck's son, George Stucley Buck, predeceased his father and so never inherited Affeton. He whiled away his time as heir apparent with a taste for alcohol, and is said to have seen a ghost at the Barton when staying there. No one else having had a similar experience, the spirit may have been derived from a bottle.

George Buck's great grandson, another George Stucley Buck, inherited Affeton in 1858 in which year he changed his name to George Stucley Stucley, and set about rebuilding the gatehouse to serve as a shooting box. His baronetcy, which he acquired in 1859, was styled "of Affeton Castle" when work on the house was no doubt in progress.

It was he who blocked up the gateways, redivided the upper floor so as to make the Inner Tower Chamber the larger of the two, added the northern section to accommodate a scullery below and dressing room above, and erected the stables.

It was while the foundations of the stables were being excavated that the gold ring with the rebus was found together with the half of a seventeenth century steel helmet and a Bellamine wine jar which still remains at the Castle today.

When work was started at Affeton, the gatehouse had a tree growing from the top of its tower

and the stonework towards the top had been breached to allow a donkey, which had climbed the spiral stair and could not be coaxed backwards, to be lowered to earth on a rope. Any moat there may have been was filled in, and Sir George managed to resist his agents' suggestion that some ornamental canon would embellish the finished house.

Since 1859 the Castle has been used as a shooting box and the Barton has been let to a succession of tenant farmers. It suffered a near miss from a German bomb in the 1939-45 War.

Only excavation of the area south of the Barton can solve the many intriguing questions posed by the lost village and Castle of Affeton. Questions which will perhaps never be satisfactorily answered.

London,
January 1967.

