Rep. Trans. Devon. Ass. Advmt Sci. **108**, 1–11

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

A Devon parish lost, a new home discovered

By *Sir Dennis Stucley, Bt*

I MUCH appreciate the honour you have done me by electing me to a place among your distinguished Presidents, especially as my predecessor at your first meeting in this town of Bideford was such an eminent man as Charles Kingsley. It is also noteworthy that this will be the second time that you have gone to Hartland for a President when visiting Bideford; Mr. Pearse Chope was a great scholar and historian, specialising in North Devon history. I fear that I have none of these qualifications. I was a Bideford boy, spending my childhood at Pillhead, east the water, and my adolescence at Moreton House, west the water. Since my marriage forty-four years ago I have lived at Hartland Abbey. The history of the Abbey would have been an obvious choice for my address to you—Mr. Chope had already dealt with the subject in his presidential address in 1926. I was tempted to be so bold as to supplement Mr. Chope's paper on Hartland Manor—his account tails off into uncertainty after the sixteenth century. Recently I have collected many facts which fill in some of the gaps, but more research is still needed to complete the story.

My subject is "A Devon Parish Lost, A New Home Discovered". The small parish of Affeton existed for about three hundred years. Early in the sixteenth century it merged with West Worlington, and the Affeton Church became the Stucley family Chapel until destroyed by Cromwellian troops in 1645.

Affeton is situated between Witheridge and Chulmleigh, about twenty miles from Exeter, facing south across the valley of the Little Dart. Good spring water probably determined the original settlement there. The ancient east/west track from North Devon to Tiverton through Chulmleigh, Cheldon and Witheridge passed this way. The position does not suggest any military significance, so it would be reasonable to assume there was a fortified mansion with church and cottages prior to the Civil War.

My brother, Judge John Stucley, is the historian of the family, and I am much indebted to him for all the research work he has done.

Affeton belonged to the Hundred of North Tawton, together with Chawleigh and Eggesford, and the neighbouring parishes of Worlington

and Cheldon to the Hundred of Witheridge. Moreover, Affeton was always of the Honour of Okehampton, and this would have been granted by William the Conqueror to Baldwin de Brionne, his Norman Sheriff of Devon. Baldwin was one of William's generals at the Battle of Hastings. He built Exeter Castle and he owned the Manor of Poltimore—my wife is Lord of that Manor today! From him it would have passed by descent to the Courtenays, Earls of Devon, the first Earl having married the General's daughter. The first recorded occupier of Affeton is one Robert, who styled himself "de Affeton", at the end of the twelfth century. His tenure included the parish of Affeton and a farm to the south, across the Little Dart, called Cobley. Robert granted Cobley to the Priory of St. Nicholas, Exeter.

In 1462 the Sixth Earl of Devon was beheaded and his honours bestowed upon Humphrey, Lord Stafford. At Katherine Affeton's death in 1467 the inquest on her property found it to have been held of Lord Stafford. In 1488, when her son Nicholas died, Affeton was free of feudal restraints.

When Sir Hugh Stucley married Katherine de Affeton about 1430, he founded a Devon family who played a prominent part in national and county affairs for the next two hundred and fifty years. They elbowed and fought and grabbed with the rest, made admirable marriages and allied themselves with the surrounding county families of note. They became administrators, courtiers, soldiers of fortune and sea-going adventurers; but, with all their opportunities, they never rose to the topmost rung of the ladder.

The story of Affeton has been moulded by the successes or failures of these varying personalities over the centuries. The Affeton family had already established themselves in the county hierarchy. Katherine's great grandfather, Sir Thomas de Affeton, had been knighted and had served as Sheriff of the county in 1370. His son, another Thomas, achieved an outstanding marriage to Elizabeth de Mannyngford, heiress to estates in Somerset and Dorset; he was subsequently able to purchase the Manors of Meshaw and East Worlington, and the western half of the Manor of Thelbridge, creating a considerable estate around his Affeton home. In this address I shall attempt to trace the disappearance of the parish of Affeton, the evolution of a modest holding into a castellated mansion, and its destruction and restoration.

Weston describes Affeton in the fifteenth century as having an entrance gateway tower one hundred and forty-nine feet high, from which thirteen manors in the possession of the Stucley family could be seen. The mansion was built in the shape of a letter E, and was one of the most splendid seats in the county. The Gateway Tower described by Weston led Hoskins to suggest that the castellated building to which it gave entrance was probably erected in the thirteenth or fourteenth

century. The evidence supports the assumption that the second Thomas de Affeton, Katherine's grandfather, who was the first of the family to marry money, built the main part of the house between 1377 and 1407. That the main house was built by the Affetons and not by the Stucleys is borne out by the name.

The construction of the Gatehouse in the fifteenth century suggests a need for additional security for those living at Affeton. The Wars of the Roses, which led to much fighting between the Courtenays and the Bonvilles in Devon during the latter half of that century, may well have been pretext enough. Nicholas Stucley, who came of age in 1472 and inherited all his grandmother's Affeton estates, took no part in county affairs and appears to have stayed quietly at home, rearing a large family of children. It is probable that he built the Gatehouse, as it stands today, between 1472 and his death in 1488. There is one piece of factual evidence which supports this theory; there are two wooden carvings, heraldic shields, which constitute the sole surviving furnishings of pre-Civil War days. Lewis Stucley, Recorder of Bideford in 1700, in a letter that he wrote to his kinsman, Doctor William Stukeley, the well-known archaeologist, described the smaller of these coats of arms as being painted and plaistered upon the chimney-piece of the Inner Tower Chamber. This board, with the Sea Bear's head and quartering the arms of Stucley, Affeton, FitzRoger, and Mannyngford undoubtedly shows the arms of Nicholas Stucley, erected in that position five hundred years ago to commemorate his addition of the Gatehouse at Affeton.

Nicholas, in one visitation of Devon, is described as of Trent, a manor he owned near Sherborne, but the birth of his eldest son is recorded at Affeton in June 1475. The style of architecture of the Gatehouse certainly suggests a building of about that date. Nicholas had a long minority, and trust funds would have accumulated during his infancy making it possible to build a Gatehouse. Devon landowners at that date derived much of their income from the wool trade, and when Sir George Stucley restored the Gatehouse in 1869, the gold rebus ring was excavated, monogramming the name Stucley, which was used to seal the bales of wool consigned to the fullers and tuckers of the industry during the fifteenth century.

By a strange coincidence my son-in-law, Gerald Hohler, bought Trent Manor House, and my eldest daughter and grandchildren live there today. They had no idea that it was a Stucley home five hundred years ago.

A church and village came into existence at Affeton during the thirteenth century, a small community having sprung up around the de Affeton family. It was the smallest parish in the South Molton deanery, contributing 50p annually to the Diocesan Fund; Hartland

Abbey at that date was responsible for contributing £3.50 each for the parishes of Molland and Knowstone. The parish retained its separate identity until the early sixteenth century, but it does not appear in the Valor Ecclesiasticus temp Henry VIII. The patronage belonged to the Priory of St. Nicholas, Exeter, who presented the living up to 1389. In 1400 Thomas de Affeton was patron; John Bottereau, who married Thomas' widow and lived at Affeton, was patron from 1402 until 1421, and Hugh Stucley in 1445.

In 1439 Hugh Stucley reduced the Church at Affeton to a Chapel appurtenance to the house. A licence was issued that year, with his consent, to the Rector of West Worlington to administer the sacraments and perform divine service in the parish church of Affeton. In 1475 Thomas Stucley, a grandson of Katherine de Affeton, was baptised in Affeton parish church. As late as 1534 Nicholas Hamlyn, the Rector of Worlington, left a gown in his will to "Sir John, Chaplin to Sir Thomas Stucley", which indicates that the church was still in use, but probably as a family chapel.

Nothing remains visible above ground today of either church or village, and it is probably relevant that Katherine and her descendants were buried at West Worlington from 1467 onwards. The south-east corner of West Worlington Church is described by Mr. Hoskins as a chapel of the Stucleys and its carved screen of late type (circa 1500), but it bears the arms of Affeton and not of Stucley and was probably the gift of Katherine de Affeton, who left money to both East and West Worlington Churches. My uncle, Sir Edward Stucley, was the last member of the family to be buried at West Worlington, in 1927.

Katherine de Affeton was an only child when she inherited her grandfather's estate. She was brought up at Affeton by her grandmother who had married Richard Bottereau. About 1434 she married Hugh Stucley, whose father was Richard Stucley of Trent and whose mother was Elizabeth, daughter of Lord FitzRoger. These Stucleys were a cadet branch of the Huntingdon family who lived at Great Stukely in that county. Hugh was knighted and served as Sheriff of Devon in 1449. When Hugh died Katherine married Lord Fitzwarren, who had also been previously married and had a son, Fulk Bouchier, who succeeded his father as Lord Fitzwarren and married Elizabeth Dynham. Elizabeth was the daughter and co-heiress of John Lord Dynham, Lord of the Manor of Hartland, and thus was created the first link by marriage between Affeton and Hartland. Through this marriage a quarter share of the Manor of Hartland passed to the First Earl of Bridgwater. Recently amongst the Hartland Abbey documents I found the Deed of Purchase by my ancestor, Charles Orchard, of one quarter of the Manor of Hartland from Lord Bridgwater, dated 1701.

The Bridgwaters and Stucleys maintained the rather tenuous connection through the Dynham marriage, as is shown by a letter of 3rd October 1538. A page of Lord Bridgwater's, a son of Sir Hugh Stucley, came to Torrington on Michaelmas eve with a letter from Lord Hertford to Lord Bridgwater (Gardener's letters, a paper of the reign of Henry VIII).

I have spoken of Nicholas Stucley, son of Hugh and Katherine; his son and grandson were both knighted and both served the county as Sheriff, Sir Thomas in 1521, Sir Hugh in 1545. Hugh married Joan, daughter of Sir Lewis Pollard whose brother Richard was Thomas Cromwell's Commissioner, King's Remembrancer and General Surveyor of the Exchequer to Henry VIII. This placed Sir Hugh in a very favoured position to purchase monastic lands at a nominal price. The family must have often regretted the pious generosity of Robert Affeton three hundred and fifty years previously, when Cobley Farm just across the valley was given to the Priory of St. Nicholas, Exeter. Sir Hugh took this opportunity to reclaim the farm which subsequently became the Stucley dower house. The family farming Cobley today have been tenants of the Affeton estate for over two hundred years.

Lord Russell, then Commissioner of the army, reported to Henry VIII "that the Sheriff, Sir Hugh Stucley, should be commended for such painful diligence and desirous of mind to serve which I have noted in this little time that I have been in the County of Devon. There has not been a day on which he has not been on horseback to travel to and fro to see the King's bulwarks and fortresses." That year of 1545 England was threatened with invasion by France.

Sir Hugh must have been relieved that Lewis was his eldest son, and heir to Affeton; his younger son, Thomas, was a wild, adventurous young man who became one of the most notorious rascals of the Elizabethan period. Lewis was a staid Devon squire, served his turn as Sheriff and was succeeded by John. His third son, Hugh, moved to Beckland Farm, Hartland, and together with William Abbot of Hartland Abbey, Robert Carey of Clovelly and Lewis Pollard, was granted letters patent in the second year of Queen Elizabeth's reign to hold two fairs annually at Hartland. This link with Hartland probably accounts for his nephew Sir Lewis Stucley becoming, with Antony Monk, trustee for the Abbot Lutrell marriage settlement of Hartland Abbey.

John Stucley, the next owner of Affeton, had married Frances, daughter of Sir John St. Leger of Annery, Bideford, her elder sister Mary having married Sir Richard Grenville. When Sir Water Raleigh organised an adventurous expedition to colonize Virginia, it is not surprising that John agreed to join his brother-in-law who was put in command of the enterprise. They set off from Plymouth with eight

ships in April 1584. They were scattered in the West Indies by terrible storms, but eventually reached the coast of Virginia. About a hundred men were left there to found a colony; all were killed by Red Indians. Fortunately my ancestor accompanied Sir Richard on the homeward voyage and they succeeded in capturing a richly-laden, Spanish treasure ship with a cargo worth £50,000, a fortune in those days. His share would have been a most welcome contribution towards the Affeton estate.

Four years later on 1st June 1589 his niece, Catherine Grenville, married Justinian Abbott at Hartland Church. I like to think of the Stucleys from Affeton attending this very social wedding and party at the Abbey.

John died in 1610, leaving his estates in good order, but his son was ambitious and extravagant. His father had given him the adjoining Manor of Cheldon but this he sold in order to be a courtier in London and obtain appointments of importance. Lewis was knighted at Whitehall in 1603 by James I on his arrival in England. In his account of the arrest and journey to the Tower with Sir Walter Raleigh, he describes how Sir Walter offered him £500 to allow him to escape to France. Sir Lewis replied that he had paid £1,000 for the appointment of High Admiral of Devon and Cornwall. He retired to Lundy Island for some time after Raleigh's execution, as he was unpopular in the county. He became Guardian of the Red Indian princess Pocohantas and her son; I wonder whether they visited him at Affeton. There was little of his inheritance left when he died. His son John was obliged to mortgage Affeton to the Chichester family for £1,000; he was left with only Affeton, West Worlington and Burridge in Chawleigh parish. Some eight thousand acres had been disposed of. John 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 wife and ten children. The only benefit that his father, Sir Lewis, did bestow on the family was his marriage to Frances Monk of Potheridge, whose nephew was to become the First Duke of Albermarle, and this connection might have retrieved the family fortunes.

Cheldon parish became part of Lord Portsmouth's Eggesford Estate. Early this century, when it was sold to pay estate duty, my uncle, Sir Lewis, bought some of the woods but not the farms. I have twice tried to buy the farms but each attempt has failed.

Thomas Stucley succeeded his father in 1637, at the age of seventeen; the Civil War started in 1641. Two years later he married Elizabeth Sydenham, daughter of Sir Ralph Sydenham of Youlston; he lived there having married a Chichester widow. Sir Ralph was a prominent Royalist and undoubtedly influenced his son-in-law to take an active part in support of the King. He served as a captain in the siege of

Plymouth, and for the next two years as a Colonel of Cavalry in defence of Exeter.

Colonel Okey, commanding the Plymouth Regiment of Cromwellian Dragoons, established his headquarters at Great Fulford House. In December 1645 he made a foray from there, reducing Eggesford House, the home of Viscount Chichester; and it was only a short distance to ride on from there to destroy and pillage Affeton. Thomas Stucley was defending Exeter. His wife and children hid in Cobley Wood. When arraigned before the Commissioners at Exeter in 1646 he told them that his house at Affeton had been frequently plundered during the war. Although he pleaded that he was ruined the Commissioners fined him £300 for supporting the King.

To pay his debts Thomas sold a lease of half the Affeton Barton farm lands for ninety-nine years. I had often wondered why the best land between Affeton and West Worlington did not belong with the Barton; recently I discovered the document dated 1652 dividing the farm. In 1974 my son, Hugh, succeeded in amalgamating this land with the Barton which he is farming three hundred and twenty-two years later. It is a sad thought that the impact of Capital Transfer Tax in the 1974 Finance Act will splinter the Affeton lands again.

This must have been an unhappy time at Affeton for Sir Thomas and his family. His father-in-law, Sir Ralph Sydenham, had fled to France and had been fined £600 in his absence. The Stucleys moved into Cobley Farm which had been vacated by Sir Lewis Stucley's widow on her move to Torrington when the Civil War commenced. The remains of Affeton were rebuilt as a modest farmhouse. The gatehouse was left standing, a hollow ruin.

Fortunately for Thomas, George Monk of Potheridge was his first cousin and good friend; he acted as trustee for the marriage settlement. Monk was the oustanding soldier of that period; he had become Commander-in-Chief of the Army and, after Cromwell's death, he played the leading part in restoring the monarchy. It was undoubtedly he who reminded Charles II of Thomas' plight owing to his loyalty to the Crown. Two days after Charles landed at Dover, Thomas was knighted at Canterbury; he was commissioned Major General, appointed Master of the Stanneries and elected Member of Parliament for Tiverton. This was his opportunity to restore Affeton and the Stucley fortunes. Unhappily he died two years later. His widow married again and remained at Affeton until her death in 1684.

Both Thomas' sons died without having children and, in consequence, his brother Lewis succeeded to Affeton. Lewis was a dedicated nonconformist, known as the "principle independent" of the west. He served as Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell and was a friend of John

Milton's; I found a book at Hartland Abbey inscribed by Milton to his "dear friend Lewis Stucley". He founded the Congregational Chapel at Chulmleigh where there is an impressive memorial to him. Arthur Bryant records that, when Charles II tried to appease the nonconformists, he asked for a list of the concessions they wanted—top of the list was a plea that Lewis Stucley should be allowed to preach again. He occupied Affeton for only three years, and lived mostly in his wife's house situated in High Street, Bideford. She was Susanna Dennis of Orleigh, Buckland Brewer, and her will included a legacy of £200 to found a grammar school at Bideford.

When Dennis Stucley inherited Affeton at his father's death, he made his home at Bideford. He let the Barton for twenty-five years to Mr. Voysey, reserving only the two herb gardens at West Worlington and the Free Warren to hunt, hawk and fish. He did not marry and was succeeded by his nephew, another Dennis, who also lived at Bideford, and served the County as Sheriff in 1748. He too died unmarried.

I believe that it was only owing to the friendship that developed at Bideford between the Congregational Minister, Lewis Stucley, and George Buck, a merchant of that town, that saved the Affeton property from being sold during this period. Lewis' daughter, Sara, married George Buck and it was her grandson, another George Buck, who eventually inherited Affeton.

The Buck family made a fortune trading across the Atlantic from Bideford harbour. After each successful voyage they bought more land around Bideford and, by the end of the eighteenth century, their property encircled Bideford from Westleigh to Northam. It was certainly their policy to acquire land, not to sell it. They owned a sawmill at Bideford, Maine, U.S.A. and tobacco plantations in Virginia, and succeeded to the Hartland Abbey estate through a marriage to Paul Orchard's heiress, Ann.

The Stucley-Buck alliance was not only social; Lewis Stucley, Recorder of Bideford, wrote to Lord Granville, Secretary of War in Queen Anne's last government, requesting that Mr. Buck's ships should be protected from French privateers. He also wrote to the Lord Chancellor protesting that his brother-in-law was pricked for the office of Sheriff when Mayor of Bideford.

My grandfather, George Stucley Buck, was typical of the Victorian era, taking a keen interest in family history, heraldry and his ancestors. He was fascinated by the long tenure of the Affeton property and the exploits of his Stucley forebears. When he was created a baronet for political services in 1859 he elected to be Stucley of Affeton, and assumed the surname of Stucley by Royal Licence. Ten years later he reconstructed the ancient gatehouse.

His eldest son, Lewis, records an expedition to Affeton in 1861, the railway between Bideford and Exeter being open by that date, but the journey from Hartland was still a formidable adventure. On Wednesday, 21st August, he walked as far as Fairy Cross where he was given a lift to Bideford station, then went on by train to Eggesford. From here he walked via Chawleigh and through the Affeton woods, where he lost his way. He comments, "By good luck we hit off the old Tower, after dinner we had a heavy turn of pipes and gin, next day I awoke with a headache which was not to be wondered at. We rode round the Affeton farms, most of which seemed to be in bad order; we also saw some moors that had lately been taken in."

Next day he got a lift in a gig to Lapford station and walked back to Hartland from Bideford.

My grandfather, Sir George Stucley, lived at Hartland Abbey from 1840 until 1870; I have quoted his son's experiences in visiting Affeton in order to remind you that, in Victorian times, it was still a day's journey to travel from the Abbey to the Castle. Grandfather kept a detailed diary for fifty years; he usually rode over to Stevenstone, Eggesford House or Castle Hill, occasionally lodging with the farm tenant at Affeton Barton. Each August he stayed there for the grouse shooting; these were the Blackgame which, in those days, were numerous but today are extinct in that district. I remember the last survivor, a Blackcock, in 1936.

The reconstruction of the Gatehouse started in 1868 and was completed by the autumn of 1869. A house-warming party was given that Christmas for the tenant farmers.

My father, Sir Hugh Stucley, was devoted to Affeton. He stayed there at regular intervals, took an interest in forestry, and was keen on the shooting and fishing. He erected oak panelling in the large tower room, which was an excellent improvement. His ashes were scattered on Affeton moor in 1956.

I had been given the Castle and Affeton estate in 1947; it comprised the Manor and parish of West Worlington, with the exception of the Glebe Land, Burridge Farm and woods in Chawleigh parish, and some land in Chulmleigh, Cheldon and Meshaw parishes, virtually unaltered since the extravagant expenditure of Sir Lewis Stucley in the reign of James I had reduced the estate by eight thousand acres. During my twenty years' tenure of the property I brought main electricity and a piped water supply, with modern amenities, to every house on the estate. I put in two bathrooms at the Castle where there were previously none, and I have planted over three hundred acres of trees and reclaimed much moorland.

My son, Hugh, is now the owner of Affeton and, for the first time since the Civil War, a family is being reared at the Castle; he and his

wife, Angela, have two sons and a daughter. The ancient Gatehouse has been extended to include a nursery wing and additional bedrooms. They have very cleverly reorganised this old building so that it is labour-saving and comfortable by modern standards. Hugh is a hard-working farmer, cultivating almost a thousand acres, having reunited the Barton lands after three hundred years.

The parish of Affeton is indeed lost, but the Castle is a new home discovered for another generation of Stucleys.

APPENDIX

A LIST OF THE OWNERS OF AFFETON AND THEIR WIVES

1200	Robert de Affeton He gave Cobley Farm to the Priory of St Nicholas at Exeter.	
1350	Sir Thomas de Affeton Sheriff of Devon 1370/1	x Mabel Hatche
1377	Thomas de Affeton	x Elizabeth de Mannyngford
1434	Katherine de Affeton	x Hugh Stucley Sir Hugh Stucley, Sheriff of Devon 1449
1467	Nicholas Stucley	x Thomasine Kokeworthy x Ann Pomeroy
1521	Sir Thomas Stucley Sheriff of Devon died 1542	x Ann Wood, daughter of Sir Thomas Wood, Chief Justice of Common Pleas
1545	Sir Hugh Stucley Sheriff of Devon died 1559	x Joan, daughter of Sir Lewis Pollard
1568	Lewis Stucley Sheriff of Devon died 1581	x Janet, daughter of Sir William Hill
	John Stucley died 1610	x Frances, daughter of Sir John St Leger
	Sir Lewis Stucley Vice Admiral of Devon & Cornwall died 1620	x Frances, daughter of Anthony Monk of Potheridge
	John Stucley died 1637	x Honor Halse x Ann Coade of Morwell
	Sir Thomas Stucley M.P. for Tiverton 1660–63 died 1663	x Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Ralph Sydenham
	Rev. Lewis Stucley Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell died 1687	x Susannah Dennis of Orleigh Buckland Brewer
	Dennis Stucley died 1742	
	Dennis Stucley Sheriff of Devon 1748 died 1755	

George Buck grandson of Sara Stucley died 1794	x Ann Orchard of Hartland Abbey
Lewis William Buck M.P. for Exeter 1826–32, M.P. for N. Devon 1839–57 Sheriff of Devon 1826 died 1858	x Ann Robbins
Sir George Stucley Baronet 1859, Sheriff 1863 M.P. for Barnstaple 1855–59, 1865–68 died 1900	x Lady Elizabeth O'Brien x Louisa Granville 1872
Sir William Lewis Stucley Bt Lt Col Grenadier Guards Devon County Alderman D.L., J.P. died 1911	x Rosamond Best 1869 x Marion Fane 1879
Sir Hugh Stucley 4th Bt Lt Cmdr R.N. County Alderman D.L., J.P. died 1956	x Gladys Bankes 1902
Sir Dennis Stucley 5th Bt Major Devon Yeomany & Grenadier Guards County Alderman Sheriff of Devon 1956 D.L., J.P.	x Hon. Sheila Bampfylde, daughter of 4th Baron Poltimore
Hugh Stucley Lt Royal Horse Guards Owner of Affeton Castle since 1970	x Angela Toller