

## The Siamese Princes – Allan Presented Research Done by Helen Price

This story shows an unusual connection between Kings Bromley and the man who Yul Brynner played in 'The King and I'.

A note, yellowed with age, was found in one of the many files Ivy Butcher left to the Historians. This had also been briefly referenced in one of her later books 'On Being a Hundred'. It gives the names of two Siamese Princes who were apparently taught to ride by Ivy's father, John Jefferies, who we know was groom at Kings Bromley Manor. Unfortunately, as far as we are aware, Ivy did not discuss this in more detail.

The handwritten names on the paper written by Ivy's father, were Prince Asdang (Dejavudh 1889-1925) and Prince Suriyong (Prayurabandhu 1884 – 1919). There are several references to the Princes online; they were just two of 77 children born to King Chulalongkorn and the grandchildren of King Mongkut, (1804-1868) made famous in the 'The King and I'.

King Chulalongkorn, Rama V of Siam, sent his son, Crown Prince Vajiravudh, to England to be educated at Sandhurst and Oxford University. He became acquainted with Maynard Willoughby Colchester-Wemyss of Westbury Court, Gloucestershire (now National Trust) who was a well-travelled man with many titles. The Crown Prince (who became King Rama VI in 1910) went to stay with Colchester-Wemyss and his family for three months in 1902, returning to Siam in 1903. Colchester-Wemyss accepted guardianship of three of the Crown Prince's younger brothers in 1905, collecting them from the Winter Palace at St Petersburg, which was a very dangerous place to be at the time. Tutors, valets and servants were hired for the princes and an academic programme planned according to King Chulalongkorn's wishes.

The 1901 census shows John Burgoyne Jefferies living in a Servant's cottage in the grounds of Stanley Park, Gloucestershire, where he was groom to William Marling, Baronet. Westbury Court is just 21 miles from there, probably the closest stately home in the vicinity. Also, there is reference in a letter to his father of Prince Asdang being found a place in a small school and being happy at Painswick. It might therefore be assumed Painswick to have been where he was schooled and John Jefferies' place of employment was only five miles from there. This makes it very likely that a groom from a local grand stately home be chosen as riding tutor to two Royal Princes.

There were two further names at the bottom of Ivy's father's note, both of whom are mentioned in Colchester-Wemyss' reports back to Siam, Bhongsidineb being described as Prince Asdang's companion. Presumably they were also riding pupils of John Jefferies.

Further information is available online, including photos of the Royal family, a very large family tree and an interesting catalogue of reports from Colchester-Wemyss to King Chulalongkorn.