

THE MOLESWORTH FAMILY OF WEMBURY

by Robert Rowland



REYNOLDS, Sir Joshua

William Molesworth of Wembury
1.27 x 1.02 (40 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 39 $\frac{7}{16}$ in.)

Painted c. 1756

Exh: Plymouth, 1951 (10);
Plymouth, City Art Gallery, Sir Joshua Reynolds P.R.A.
July - Aug 1973, (29)* q.v.

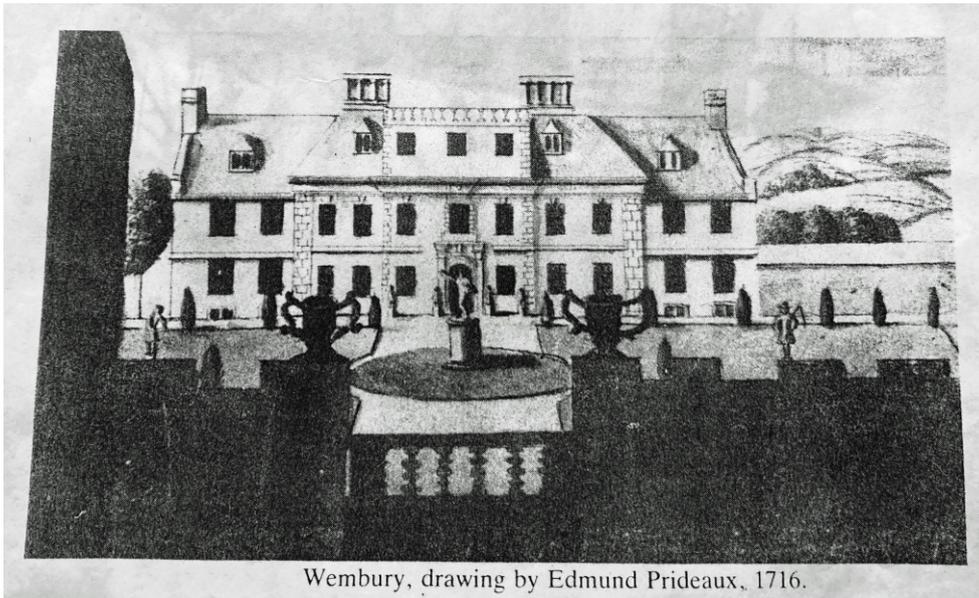
Prov: by family descent,
Private collection.

Lit: Graves & Cronin, ...Reynolds, II 1899, p.651;
E.K. Waterhouse, Reynolds, 1941, p.40;

PMC neg: 73 0760*

MOLESWORTH FAMILY OF WEMBURY

On 6th March 1756 William Molesworth married Elizabeth Smyth at Egloshayle Cornwall by License. Elizabeth was an heiress of James Smyth of St Audries Somerset. William's older brother John had married Elizabeth's sister Frances Smyth at West Quantoxhead six months earlier on 28th September 1755. John would inherit the family seat at Pencarrow. William and Elizabeth purchased Wembury Manor from Elizabeth Chudleigh the Great Granddaughter of John Pollexfen. The Mansion house built by John Pollexfen C 1690 must have been neglected and in need of refurbishment.



Wembury, drawing by Edmund Prideaux, 1716.

It was fashionable at the time for ladies to appear pale and delicate. These two sisters were to meet early deaths, perhaps from tuberculosis. Frances died at Pencarrow after child birth, her baby son William was baptised at Wembury in 1758. Elizabeth produced two daughters Barbara bap 1757 and Frances bap 1758 to be shortly followed by Elizabeth's death. Just four years later William was to die, followed by little Barbara later the same year. Was there something in the water at Wembury, or did they all contract TB?

Little Frances survived and was taken in by another of her Mother's sisters Margaret Lady Lucan. A fourth sister Lavinia married William Fellowes of Lincolns Inn. Frances was painted, as a young lady, on more than one occasion, by Sir Joshua Reynolds and her portrait now hangs in the Huntingdon Gallery in California. After rejecting several suitors, Frances married John



Frances Molesworth 1777 by Joshua Reynolds

Jeffreys Pratt following a three week courtship on 31st December 1785. He was known as Viscount Bayham, and later in 1812 became Earl Camden. Included in the family estates was Camden in London. Wembury Manor was retained by the family until Lord Bayham sold it to Thomas Lockyer in 1802, by which time the house had fallen into a ruin, and Thomas Lockyer replaced it with the present smaller house. In 1798 Lord Bayham was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and the family lived there for a while. When not in Ireland they were involved in high society in London.

In the same year that Frances attained the age of 21yrs in 1799 Lord Lucan brought proceedings in Chancery against John Molesworth of Pencarrow. He was implying that the accounts for Frances property including Wembury Manor were not correct. One can imagine that relations between the two

families were not good, and perhaps Lord Lucan expected Frances income to be more than it was. The accounts for Wembury Manor were included in these proceedings, and we are lucky to have copies of the income and expenditure for the years 1762 to 1778. The accounts were prepared by Richard Escott of Goathurst in Somerset. The main income derived from the rent from the tenants of Wembury and the subsequent sale of William Molesworth's belongings. These tenants of leasehold property were:-

James Oak for the Fishery £5 per annum

William Curry for Wembury Mill and share of a meadow £7. 5s pa

Robert Anthony for Wembury Old Barton and Oyster fishery £300 pa

Robert Anthony for Wembury New Barton late Tamlin's £59 pa.

Robert Tamlin for Hercules Tenement £25 pa.

John Callard for Prynns Tenement £20 pa.

William Pope for Willing's Tenement £15 pa.

Joseph Tolcher for Furze Park £3. 3s pa.

George Davies a Public House (Clampit Green) £3 pa.

Grace Avery for Kelly's Orchard £1. 7s pa.

William Bennett for Chop's Cottage £1. 10s pa.

Bartholomew Vogwell for the Passage and Passage House £3 pa.

James Callard for Prynns Cottage 10s pa.

Arthur Curtis for Luke's Cottage 7s. 11d pa.

John Lee for Nicholas' Tenement £1. 1s. 6d pa.

Mr Edwards for Rowse's Tenement £1 pa.

Mr Edwards for Pring's Tenement £1 pa.

Mr Edwards for Warren's Tenement £1 pa.

Mr Edwards for Baker's Tenement £1 pa.

John Corringdon for Curry's Cottage 5s.6d pa.

John Corringdon for Cole's Tenement £1.0s. 2d pa.

John Hensleigh for Tregosse's Tenement 18s.6d pa.

John Hensleigh for Efford's Tenement 10s pa.

Jane Rowse for a cottage 5s. pa.

Jane Rowse for West Wembury Tenement £3.8s.1d pa.

John Willing a Tenement 14s.4d pa.

Richard Elliot Esq a Chief Rent 2s.8d pa.

Francis Avery for a cottage at 6s pa. came into hand and let at £3.10s pa.

The last entry shows that perhaps the rental income was in need of an increase, and on the death of Francis Avery the opportunity arose to do this. Francis was a stone mason by trade, and had been given the task of building



An example of Francis Avery's wall still in existence today

the walls dividing the Deer Park, in line with the agreement made by Robert Anthony when he took on the tenancy of the Barton. These walls can still be seen today.

A lot of the entries in the expenses appear regularly every year, and there must have been a lot of building and repair work taking place. Jonas Murch seems to be the Land Agent overseeing the work, and also is involved in the sale of live and dead stock on William's death.

We learn that Nicholas Webster was paid £10 pa for being William Molesworth's Hind, so there must have been a certain amount of land retained by William to farm himself, grazing for his horses and perhaps a cow or two for milk.

William and Robert Pope were carpenters, and worked on several properties on the estate including Wembury Mill. William also took care of Wembury Woods and built the hedges there, with help from Arthur Solomon.

A lot of building materials were purchased, lime from Richard Honey and Mr Oliver. Rags and slates were transported by Joseph Parsley on his barge from Kingsbridge to Wembury. Hair was purchased for plastering in the farmhouse. Robert Knight was the thatcher and needed reed for work on the Barton and Tenements. There was a new barn and linhay built in this period as well as repairs to the Mansion house where a lot of lead piping was required. Thomas Staddon was a mason and hellier. Mr Anthony retained horses for fetching and carrying the timber and stones. Jonathan Maddock was the glazier who worked on the Passage House and the public house known as Clampit Green and run by George Davies. John Symons was the local blacksmith.

Most of the rents came in quarterly, and there were heriots received from Mrs Mary Rowse and Mrs Ann Rowse on the death of Mary's husband Josias of West Wembury in 1771. Thomas Richards paid £15.6s per acre for three acres of coppice wood, and Emanuel Board paid 1s per cwt for 8500lbs of bark. During the period Joseph Tolcher took over Furze Park from Francis Avery who had died, and Bartholomew Vogwell took over the Passage House and ferry from Nicholas Woody who had drowned.

There are payments for William's personal expenses Mr Hutchings for a pair of doe skin breeches. Daniel Little for repairing the yacht, and John May blacksmith, for a stove grate for the yacht. Then we have the Surgeon's bill from John Mudge for £19.8s.6d, and expenses on the road and at night of a messenger sent to John Molesworth at Pencarrow, not there, so on to Tetcott. This is later followed by a payment of 2 guineas to Conner Dunning for his opinion about pulling down the Mansion House. Mr Manley was paid to journey to Wembury to weigh the plate. Payment for advertising the sale of live and dead stock, especially mentioned were William's books, and printing of a catalogue, produced by Mr Whitfield.

Little Barbara was to pass away six months later. She died at a Molesworth property in St Breock. Probably she was there with her sister and cousin William. Dr Colwell received £15.15s for care in her last days. There are expenses for Mr Ennis John Molesworth's butler for attending Miss Molesworth's corps and transporting it from St Breock to Wembury. Expenses for a velvet paul, mourning coach and horses and cloaks. Gideon Broad was paid the sum of £4.6s for making three coffins for Miss Molesworth. It was Sampson Avery's job to open and close the vault in Wembury Church.

The sale of household goods at Wembury House made £1075.18s.10d, a bay mare £4.4s, living stock £365.7s.3d and implements £35.4s.10d. 6918lbs of wool made £143.15s.

The estate was retained by the family until sold to Thomas Lockyer in 1802, but from 1778 to 1802 there was no owner in residence, so it was left to Robert Anthony the tenant of the Barton to take advantage of the situation, and with the enclosures, he ended up farming nearly all the land on this side of the parish.



Elizabeth Molesworth (née Smyth) by Joshua Reynolds



John Jeffreys Pratt, Viscount Bayham by Joshua Reynolds