

# IN SEARCH OF DICK CHRISTIAN



Max Stewart  
February 2022  
Version 9

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful in particular to the following descendants of Dick Christian and his collateral family:

The late Sally Thornton (née Christian – a descendent of the Christians of Cottesmore and Exton but not of Dick himself) – who kindly allowed me to publish her family tree. It was the local legend that Sally was indeed descended directly from Dick that was the genesis of this short biography.

Martin Slater (Dick's third great grandson) who kindly supplied details of Dick's two 'lost' children that take Dick's total known offspring from 19 to 21. Martin also supplied most of the appended pictures: the Christian family plaque; a table of Dick's forebears going back to 1470; the photo of Dick's son Thomas Christian and his family (Martin's great grandmother is the youngest child sitting at the back); and the engravings of 'Dick setting off from Melton' and 'Dick schooling a horse'

Graham Christian (who is descended from Dick's younger brother Lester Christian via his unmarried daughter Ann Christian who had two children Thomas Sivers Christian [Graham's forebear] and Charles Christian) who pointed out that 1859 edition of 'Silk and Scarlet' (but not later editions – Dick was dead by then) contained a solicitation for further subscriptions for 'Dick Christian's Fund' to alleviate his poverty and provided the copy which is appended. Graham has also rightly pointed out that there is an alternative and equally valid ancestral tree for Dick's father James. Whereas Martin's family tree (*idem*) shows James's parents being John Christian and Elizabeth Mapley, another James (also born in Cottesmore but seven years earlier and who had parents James Christian and Mary Sneath) could also be Dick's father.

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And finally to John Slusar whose website (<http://www.greyhoundderby.com> – see the '1836' links on the 'History of the Aintree Grand National' page – contains some fascinating additional information and pictures, including the remarkable fact that Dick on *Polyanthus* came second by one length to Becher on *The Duke* in the first Grand National – then the 'Liverpool Grand Steeplechase' – of 1836. The favourite 'fell at locked gate'!

## Dick Christian

Ever since horses were invented, there have been individuals – some with skill, pluck and resolve, and some totally batty – who would ride any horse over any country. In the early nineteenth century, in the heyday of the Old Club at Melton Mowbray and of history captured in the paintings of Sir Francis Grant and John Ferneley Sr, there were a few – a very few – really outstanding cross-country riders: riders in a league of their own; riders of whom even the cream of Melton – the Earl of Wilton, Lord Gardner, Mr Little Gilmour, Lord Forester and the others depicted in Grant's 'Melton Breakfast' – were more than a little envious. One already has a full length biography: Thomas Assheton Smith<sup>1</sup> (1776-1858; MFH Quorn, Burton and Tedworth)



who with his inheritance of the Dinorwic slate quarries in Snowdonia became very rich. Another – who wrote an autobiography (much of which still exists, with a very detailed commentary by its editor) was the rich 'Squire' George Osbaldeston (1786 – 1866; MFH Burton, Mr Musters' country, Atherstone, Quorn (twice), Pytchley, Hambleton, Thurlow and Holderness). Yet another we know little about: Thomas Heycock (1796-1862) of Owston, East Norton Hall and latterly Braunston Manor<sup>2</sup>. But perhaps the best of the lot – and the crème de la crème of professional rough riders – was Dick Christian.

Shortly before he died in penury in 1862 at the age of 83, Dick was interviewed twice at length by Henry Hall Dixon, better known by his pen-name<sup>3</sup> of The Druid. The outcome of the first interview was included by Dixon as *Dick Christian's Lecture* in the third edition (1857) of *Post and Paddock*, the first of his hunting and racing books. Dick's reminiscences proved so popular that, eighteen months later, he and Dixon took a gig tour around the Quorn, Cottesmore and Belvoir countries. The result appeared as *Dick Christian Again* (better known as Dick Christian's Second Lecture) in Dixon's second equestrian book *Silk and Scarlet* (1859). The two 'Lectures' are the finest source of (apparently) first-hand

<sup>1</sup> Dick rated Assheton Smith as the best

<sup>2</sup> where Joss Hanbury's great-grandfather Evan Hanbury<sup>2</sup>, MFH Cottesmore 1900-07, later lived

<sup>3</sup> Dixon wrote the legal text *The Law of the Farm* under his own name

information<sup>4</sup> about the long-vanished Melton hunting world. Despite his advanced years, Dick's recollections are extensive and, as far as can be checked, surprisingly accurate. Dixon himself came from a different milieu: Rugby, Trinity College Cambridge and called to the Bar in 1853. But he had a sympathetic ear, was a deft writer and a master of voluminous facts, and he was the ideal person to coax Dick's tales into print. How many of Dick's stories were recorded verbatim and which were local legend cleverly interwoven by Dixon into Dick's narrative will never be known, and it is a measure of Dixon's skill as writer that the result is seamless. Dick springs out of the pages as a colourful and spirited character with a fund of lively reminiscences about the 'old days', extending in his case back to the previous century. Dixon himself was an interesting and somewhat eccentric individual, and a snapshot of his life is included later.

What is missing from the Lectures is information about Dick himself – his family, where he lived and other details of his personal life outside hunting and horses. Later authors have remedied this deficit. Guy Paget's *The Flying Parson and Dick Christian*<sup>5</sup> (1934) has Dick's first wife (of whom Paget says 'I have been unable to learn anything') producing twenty of his twenty-one children before expiring, a second wife with whom he eloped producing one child, and a third wife – a Belgian tightrope dancer (!) from Sanger's Circus in London producing none and who, after Dick's death, was supported by his children in a cottage in Market Harborough. Jack Brownlow's *Melton Mowbray – Queen of the Shires* (1980), which is the most widely-read account of the development of Melton, also trots out a variant of this tale. The problem for later readers is that these accounts by Paget and Brownlow are largely fictitious...

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## The real Dick Christian

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 1779 in St Nicholas' Parish Church, Cottesmore, James Christian and his wife Jane (née Lester, from Clipsham) had their new-born infant son – their fifth child – baptised<sup>6</sup> by the Reverend William Brereton, Rector of Cottesmore. The child was christened Richard but was for ever afterwards called Dick<sup>7</sup>. He had at least seven brothers and five sisters.

There have been Christians in Cottesmore<sup>8</sup> for over 500 years, and a related branch of the family in nearby Barrow had long owned and farmed land in Barrow,

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<sup>4</sup> few first-hand accounts of life in rural England in Dick's era exist. There is only one of substance: the (slightly earlier) diaries of the Reverend James ('Parson') Woodforde (1740 – 1803)

<sup>5</sup> with co-author Lionel Irvine. One of Major Paget's hunting outfits – minus only his garter straps – was exhibited in Melton's Museum of Hunting

<sup>6</sup> parish records – as opposed to the post-1837 civil registrations – rarely contain birth dates, but as infant mortality was high it was usual for a child to be baptised within a day or two after birth if it was sickly and within around three weeks otherwise. Baptism in church has been assumed where the register does not also contain a subsequent 'received into the church on <date>' entry. It was (and is) acceptable to both the C of E and Church of Rome for midwives to baptise new-born children who were *in extremis*. If this baptism took the correct form and the child survived, it was later 'received' into the church (as above)

<sup>7</sup> except by William, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Lonsdale who, Dick says, always called him Richard

<sup>8</sup> their resident 'squire' would at one time have been Thomas Fanshawe, the late Brian Fanshawe's seventh great-grandfather's great-nephew who lived at Cottesmore Hall! And there is a bell in St

Market Overton and Cottesmore. Barrow House was built by John Christian in 1859, with barns on the south side of the house believed to have been the site of the original Christian's Lodge. Yet another branch of the family lived just over the A1 at Pickworth at a second Christian's Lodge where the Cottesmore meet each year. One of Dick's great-grandmothers<sup>9</sup> was from the Barrow branch. Intriguingly, a circle centred on Horn – the 'lost village' on the Exton estate – and drawn through Oakham, Market Overton, Ryhall, Stamford, Easton-on-the Hill and North Luffenham contains the preponderance of Christian families in Rutland and adjacent counties from the nineteenth century and earlier. It also contains the bulk of Littleddyke families (q.v. later). Exton village itself, however, appears not to have had any Christians resident until a certain Robert Christian moved there in the late 18<sup>th</sup> C (q.v. later).

Dick went to school under parental duress but learned to write<sup>10</sup>. Dick says that "about twelve and a-half...I went to [2<sup>nd</sup> Bt] Sir Horace Mann's racing stables; they were at Barham Downs in Kent". This lasted "two or three years" until a smashed knee while riding twenty miles away at Margate (when a chaise crossed the course) led him to return to Cottesmore. Before his sojourn in Kent he was apprenticed to Hubbard the butcher<sup>11</sup> in Langham, but his obsession with horses prevailed and he went to Sir Gilbert Heathcote (4th Bt) of Normanton Park as a pad-groom to Lady Heathcote, then as a groom and, when Sir Gilbert was MFH Cottesmore (1802–6) as stud groom and whipper-in.

Dick married firstly Juliana Littleddyke<sup>12</sup>, originally of Easton-on-the-Hill, on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1798 at St Peter and St Paul Parish Church, Exton. He was 19, she was 20, and they married in haste<sup>13</sup> as Juliana was heavily pregnant with their first child, Julia, who was baptised on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1799 in Exton. They then moved to Edith Weston where sons Richard (baptised 7<sup>th</sup> September 1800) and James (baptised 29<sup>th</sup> November 1801) were born, and then to North Luffenham for the births of Charles (baptised 9<sup>th</sup> October 1803) and Alfred (baptised 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1806). His wife Juliana died on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1808 and was buried at St John the Baptist Parish Church, North Luffenham.

Sir Gilbert gave up the mastership of the Cottesmore in 1806, and Dick left Sir Gilbert's service in 1809<sup>14</sup> to farm in North Luffenham.

With a young family to look after, Dick needed another wife: within seven months<sup>15</sup> of his first wife's death, he married secondly on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1808 22-

Nicholas' Church that, before it was recast in 1885, had the inscription "Tho: Christian ... cast me in 1699"

<sup>9</sup> his father's mother's mother Mary Christian (1696 – 1746)

<sup>10</sup> he signed all three of his marriage register entries with his own name and not the illiterate's X

<sup>11</sup> butchery ran in the Hubbard family: one James Hubbard who was born in Langham in 1684 went to London and became a master butcher, chairman of the Butchers' Guild and a Freeman of the City of London

<sup>12</sup> who had (at least) eleven brothers and six sisters

<sup>13</sup> until the Legitimacy Act of 1926, a child born before marriage remained legally a bastard after the marriage, so Dick had an incentive to marry before the birth

<sup>14</sup> Dick told The Druid that he remained in Sir Gilbert's service until 1809, when Sir Gilbert "gave up hounds". Since Sir Gilbert quit the Cottesmore mastership in 1806, there is an as yet unresolved three year discrepancy. This makes sense, however, if Dick actually meant that Sir Gilbert "gave up hunting" in 1809, i.e. the latter carried on hunting for a further three years after 1806 with William, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Lonsdale who was his successor in the mastership. Other Christians worked for the Cottesmore: there are headstones on the right of the SW porch of St Nicholas' Church placed there by Lord Lonsdale for some of his hunt servants; one in particular is memorable: "William Christian 1841 '*Beneath this stone lies a dutiful son; What faults you have seen in him take care and shun*'! This William could conceivably have been Dick's younger brother.

year-old Elizabeth, daughter of William and Mary Redmile of Empingham, at St Peter's Parish Church, Empingham.

The first of Dick and Elizabeth's nine children, Eliza<sup>16</sup>, was baptised on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1809 (buried<sup>17</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> January 1810) and the remainder followed closely: Ann (baptised 12<sup>th</sup> August 1810), a second Eliza (baptised 29<sup>th</sup> September 1811; buried 29<sup>th</sup> November 1811), Emma (baptised 8<sup>th</sup> November 1812; buried 12<sup>th</sup> November 1812), son Redmile (baptised 13<sup>th</sup> February 1814), Mary (born 17<sup>th</sup> April and baptised 26<sup>th</sup> April 1815; buried 30<sup>th</sup> March 1816), William (born 8<sup>th</sup> October and baptised 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1816; buried 19<sup>th</sup> March 1817), Ellen (born 16<sup>th</sup> February and baptised 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1817) and Caroline (baptised 30<sup>th</sup> September 1819; buried 4<sup>th</sup> November 1819).

Dick later impressed on The Druid his pride at having such a large family, but there was a more poignant side. When Dick and Elizabeth married, curate John Ellicott instructed them – in the uncompromisingly direct language of the Book of Common Prayer<sup>18</sup> – that marriage “is not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding; but ... duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained. First, It was ordained for the procreation of children .... Secondly, It was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication...”. With the fearfully high infant mortality then extant and with Elizabeth worn down by all-too-frequent child-bearing, the North Luffenham burial register tells its own pathetic story: 9<sup>th</sup> January 1810 – Eliza, aged 6 months; 30<sup>th</sup> March 1816 – Mary aged 11 months; 19<sup>th</sup> March 1817 – William aged 5 months. Then on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1819 Elizabeth herself and finally on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1819 – Caroline aged 5 weeks. With nine children in ten years, Elizabeth had kept her vows and had died in childbirth.

With his burgeoning family, Dick urgently needed yet another wife, and on 10<sup>th</sup> December married twenty-eight year old Catherine, daughter of John and Ann Cooke of Goadby Marwood in St Mary's Parish Church, Melton, and brought her back to North Luffenham where their first child Gideon was born on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1822 (died September 1908).

Dick and his wife then moved to Melton, although at some time between 1820 and 1822 Dick also worked, with board and lodging included, for Mat Milton, a somewhat shady horse-dealer, the sites of whose yard and of Dick's lodging have yet to be identified, although they were in or on the outskirts of Melton.

Further children followed: Thomas (baptised 10<sup>th</sup> March 1825; died before 1911), John (baptised 9<sup>th</sup> April 1826; died March 1866 in Leicester), Horatio<sup>19</sup> (baptised 30<sup>th</sup> May 1828; died December 1850 in Melton Mowbray), Fredrick (baptised 14<sup>th</sup> May 1830; died December 1864 in Melton Mowbray), Sarah Maria (baptised 18<sup>th</sup> November 1832) and Alfred (baptised 14<sup>th</sup> May 1836; died 5th April 1840).

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<sup>15</sup> this quick remarriage, which today would be thought callous, was then accepted and not unusual

<sup>16</sup> it is often unclear from the manuscript baptismal registers whether ‘Eliza’ or an abbreviation for ‘Elizabeth’ is intended. The abbreviated version of ‘Elizabeth’ is conventionally shown as ‘Eliza:’ (i.e. with a colon appended) but this is not always perceptible in the now-faded registers

<sup>17</sup> unless indicated otherwise, burial dates were recorded until 1837. Then, with the statutory registering of deaths, the date of death was recorded instead. See footnote 27

<sup>18</sup> this 1662 marriage service is still canonically valid. The ‘BCP’, written largely by Thomas Cranmer with psalter by Myles Coverdale, is – like the King James Authorised Bible – a work of matchless felicity and memorable turn of phrase, unlike the present watered-down demotic ‘alternatives’.

<sup>19</sup> the battle of Trafalgar in 1805 – England's greatest naval victory in the Napoleonic Wars – resulted in the death of Admiral Lord (*Horatio*) Nelson

In the early 1840s, Dick and family lived in New City<sup>20</sup>, a row of (at least) ten<sup>21</sup> cottages on Norman Way where Premier Inn and Screwfix are now.

At some point during the next ten years he moved round the corner to Chapel Street, but during 1841-1856, Dick lived away at Rufford Abbey for each hunting season as groom and horse-breaker to Lord Scarborough.

Dick died of “natural decay” on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1862 at the age of 83 in his house at Chapel Street, Melton. Catherine later moved to Leicester Street but ended up in the indignity of Thorpe Road Union Workhouse (now St Mary’s hospital) where she died of “paralysis and exhaustion” on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1879 aged 86.

Melton Times merely reported Dick’s death as “on 5<sup>th</sup> Inst. at Melton Mowbray Mr Richard Christian aged 82”: scant valediction for someone who had consistently out-riden the finest steeplechase and foxhunting riders of his day.

Whereas the deaths of Dick and Catherine are well documented, their burial places are currently uncertain. Brownlow (q.v. above) says that Dick was “...buried in the Congregational<sup>22</sup> Burial Ground opposite the house [in Chapel Street] in which he had lived for so long”. The only problem with this is that the burial ground of the Congregational chapel along with those of St Mary’s Parish Church and the Wesleyan chapel were full and had been closed for most new burials some years previously. But a new burial ground – St Mary’s Close – had been established on what is now Norman Way (behind Mill Lane Asset Management Ltd<sup>21</sup> opposite the dead-end of Charlotte Street) in 1842 to cater for both the C of E and Dissenters. It almost backs on to the Congregational chapel burial ground, and the two areas were divided by scrub land behind the present Norman Way Day Centre.

Neither Dick nor his last wife was, apparently, ever formally ‘received’ into the Congregational Chapel<sup>23</sup>. So unless the couple were buried in parishes other than St Mary’s<sup>24</sup> – which seems unlikely since they were married there, had all but one of their children baptised there and both died within that parish – the logical place for them both to be buried was in St Mary’s Close<sup>25</sup>, either as members of the Established Church or as Dissenters. But there are no St Mary’s parish or Congregational chapel

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<sup>20</sup> ‘London’ was in vogue: New City was previously called Little London; at the Scalford Road end of what is now Norman Way on the car park immediately behind the current B&H Midland Services there was (and is) Soho Street; and on the site of a small car park off Norman Way there was Pall Mall. The hamlet of Welby was even ambitiously nicknamed Great City...

<sup>21</sup> there were 22 families living in New City in 1841, so perhaps ‘New City’ also included the houses on the opposite side of what is now Norman Way that are now occupied by Mill Lane Asset Management Ltd who say that they were built c. 1800 so could conceivably be the original houses

<sup>22</sup> this Dissenters Chapel was originally called the Independent Chapel, then the Congregational Chapel (the names are synonymous) and latterly – when the English Presbyterians and most but not all Congregationalists merged – the United Reformed Church

<sup>23</sup> neither the Chapel Street Independent Chapel Meeting Minutes book nor the St Mary’s register of burials makes any mention of either of them. If Dick and Catherine were baptised into the C of E, they would have needed to undergo ‘reception’ into the chapel as a prerequisite for being buried there. But the Minutes make no mention of this

<sup>24</sup> neither is there a record of their burials in Sysonby (which was used as an overflow from St Mary’s), Cottesmore, North Luffenham or Goadby Marwood

<sup>25</sup> the Melton Borough cemetery on Thorpe Road was not opened until 1892, although when St Mary’s Close burial ground was flattened to make the present green space now known as St Mary’s Memorial Park, a number of bodies were exhumed and transferred to Thorpe Road. Melton is littered with small undocumented graveyards: exhumations were needed when the present Morrison’s Superstore (formerly Safeway) was built, when the railway station yard was developed and so on.

burial records for them extant. They could, of course, have joined the Primitive Methodists in Goodricke<sup>26</sup> Street, the Wesleyans in Sage Cross Street or even the Roman Catholics in Sherrard Street – all within a short walk of their house in Chapel Street. And this would not have been unlikely as a surprising number of Melton's population – and 40% of parents – were Dissenters. Unfortunately, the grave plans<sup>27</sup> for the Congregational chapel and for St Mary's Close have long gone. The grave headstones in St Mary's Close have, however, been recorded but there is no mention of Dick or his wife: hardly unexpected as the poor couldn't afford an inscribed headstone and, in Catherine's case, the Workhouse Guardians almost certainly wouldn't pay.

But perhaps the lack of headstone doesn't matter: Dick *has* a permanent memorial – his 'Lectures'.

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## Epilogue

**S**o what? All this looks more suitable for *Amateur Genealogist*. There is, however, a little bit more...

Note firstly that Dick was born in 1779 and his elder brothers James and William in 1775 and 1777 – all in Cottesmore, and that Cottesmore and Exton are just over two miles apart by footpath.

Then, in the dry jargon of genealogists:

*Robert Christian* (b. c. 1776; d. 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1836 in Exton) who on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1800 at St Peter and Paul Parish Church, Exton m. Jane (b. 12<sup>th</sup> April 1772 in Exton), da. of Edward and Elisabeth Preston of Exton and had issue among others:

*Horace Christian* (b. 28<sup>th</sup> December 1805 in Exton; d. 15<sup>th</sup> April 1846 of cardiac inflammation) a farm labourer who in the 1830s worked for George Rudkin of Exton and who on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1832 at St Peter and St Paul Parish Church, Exton m. Eleanor (b. 29<sup>th</sup> January 1809 in Exton) da. of Richard and Ann Young, and had issue among others:

*William Christian* (b. 17<sup>th</sup> May 1840 in Exton, d. 1879) a servant and later farm labourer who on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1861 at St Peter's Parish Church, Barrowden m. Mary Ann (b. 25<sup>th</sup> August 1839 in Barrowden) da. of Thomas and Jane Sharman and had issue among others:

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<sup>26</sup> which for some unfathomable reason Melton Borough Council insist on calling Goodricke Street. In Dick's time it was called Bradley's Row but renamed Goodricke Street after Sir Harry Goodricke (MFH Quorn 1831-3) who built a large cockpit – the New Pit – where Morrisons's car-park is now

<sup>27</sup> from 1837 there were potentially three sources of death registration: the 'births, marriages and deaths' one required by law and held for England and Wales at the General Register Office at Southport, a possible 'burial' entry in the church register, and the position of the grave on the graveyard or cemetery grave plan. Until Rose's Act of 1812, there was little standardisation of C of E register entries, although Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753 regularised the recording of marriages



*George Amos Christian* (b. 26<sup>th</sup> May 1873 in Ryhall; d. 1956) a job-master's groom, later warehouseman and finally domestic coachman, who in 1898 in Loughborough m. 25 year old Annie Jones of Loughborough and had issue among others:

*Alan Christian* (b. 12<sup>th</sup> July 1914 at 3, Southfield Road, Loughborough; d. May 1985) a hosiery machinist and later farmer, who on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1940 at Holy Trinity Parish Church, Loughborough m. 26 year old Mollie Webster of Loughborough and had issue among others:

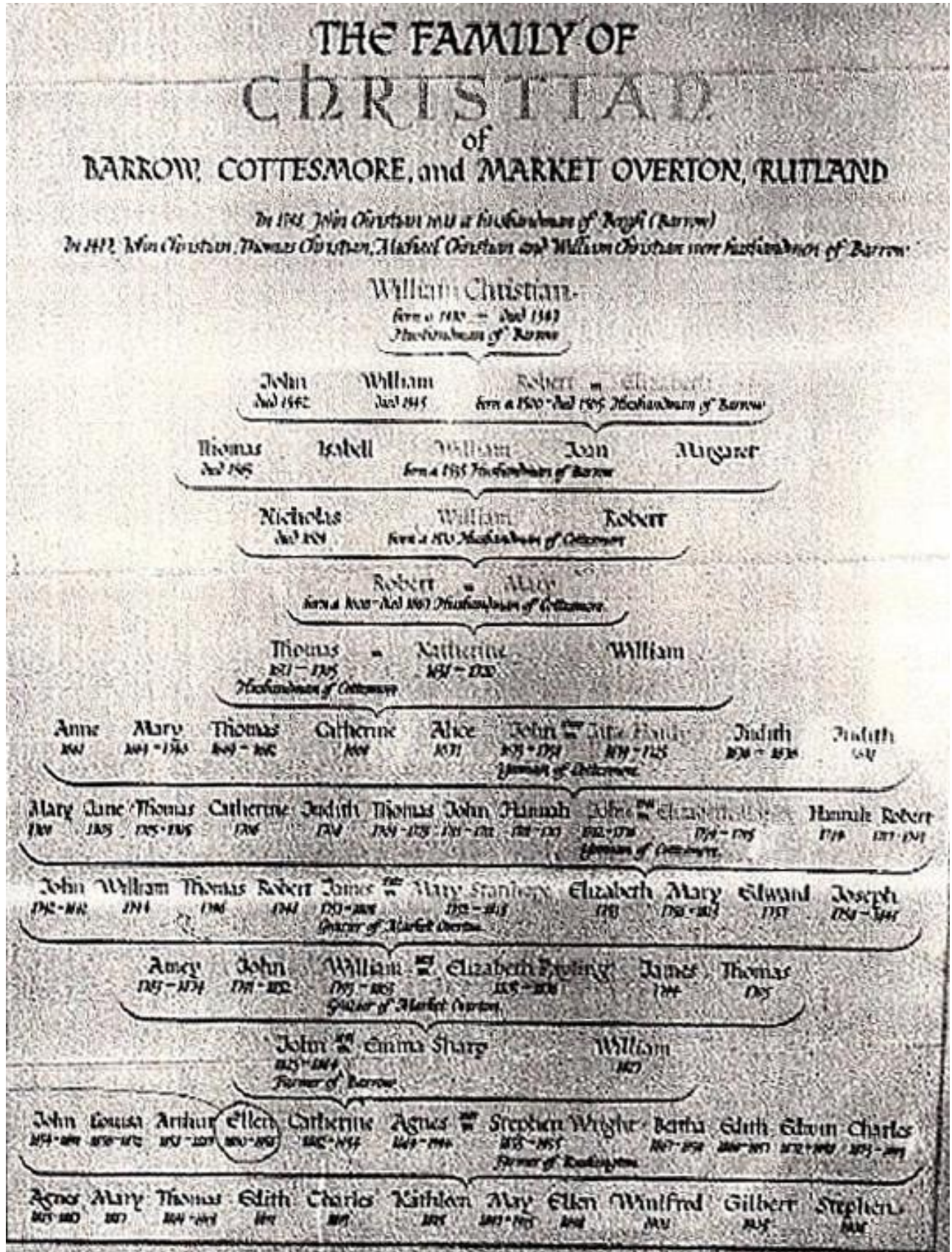
*Sally-Ann Christian* (b. 5<sup>th</sup> March 1953 at Leicester General Hospital) who on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1974 at St Mary's Parish Church, Walton-le-Wolds m. Martin Kenneth Thornton who was then in hunt service at the Quorn Kennels, Barrow-on-Soar and subsequently huntsman of the Duke of Rutland's hounds (the Belvoir Hunt) 1992 – 2006. Sally Thornton was thus not a lineal descendent of Dick Christian but *was* descended from the same extended Christian family which has farmed in and around Lord Gainsborough's Exton estate since the Reformation.

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## DICK'S FOREBEARS

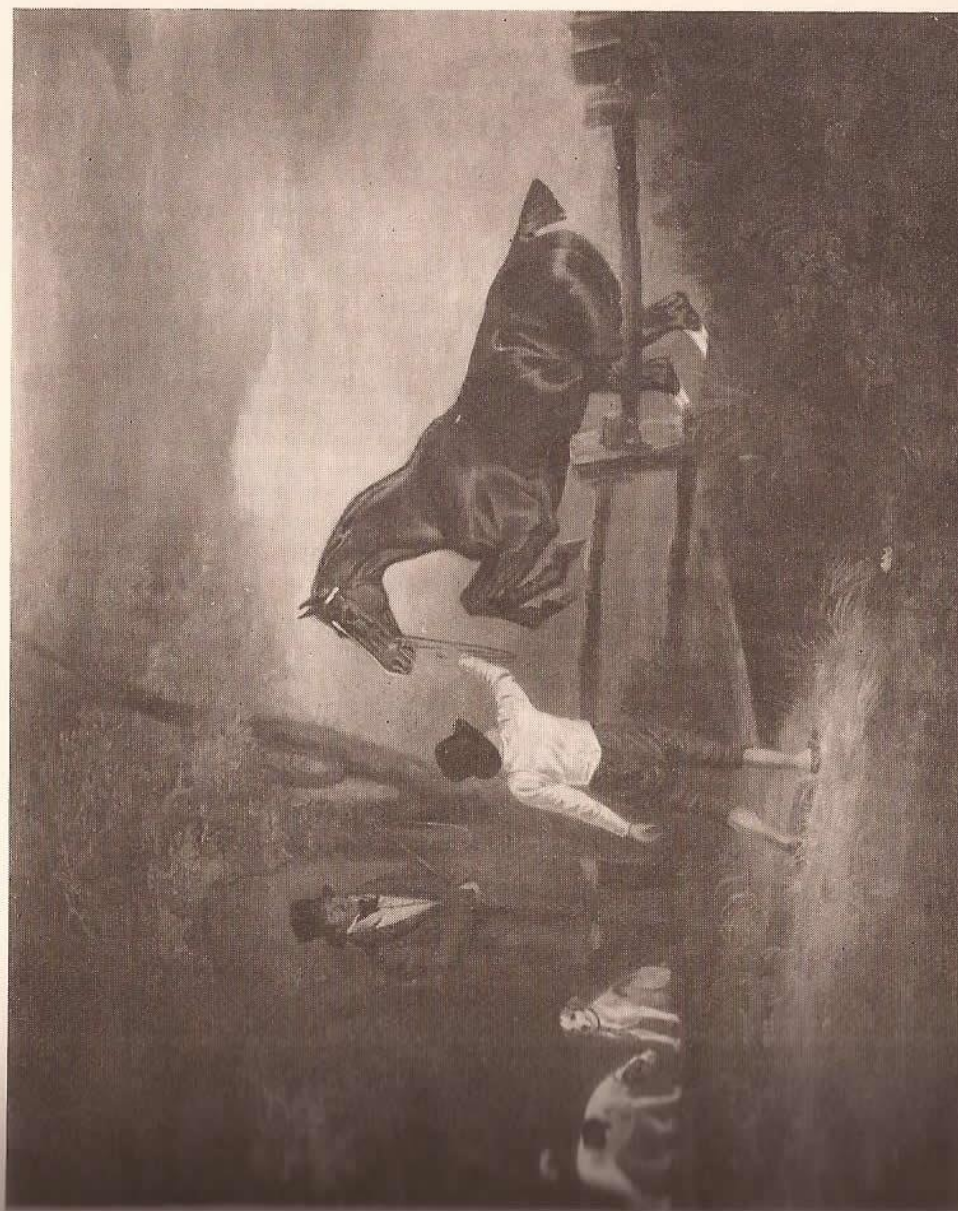
William Christian ('Husbandman of Barrow') b. 1470; d. 1547  
|  
Robert Christian ('Husbandman of Barrow') b. 1500; d. 1565 (m. Elizabeth)  
|  
William Christian ('Husbandman of Barrow') b.c. 1535 (m. Joan)  
|  
William Christian ('Husbandman of Cottesmore') b.c. 1570  
|  
Robert Christian ('Husbandman of Cottesmore') b. 1600; d. 1<sup>st</sup> March 1667 (m. Mary)  
|  
Thomas Christian ('Husbandman of Cottesmore') b.1631; d. April 1705 (m.  
Katherine)  
|  
John Christian ('Yeoman of Cottesmore') b. 16<sup>th</sup> March 1674; d. 19<sup>th</sup> Feb.1738 (m.  
Jane Hardy)  
|  
John Christian ('Yeoman of Cottesmore') b. 13<sup>th</sup> July 1712; d. 7<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1776 (m.15<sup>th</sup>  
Feb. 1741 Elizabeth Mapley, Cottesmore)  
|  
James Christian (of Cottesmore ) b. 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1751; d. 1805 (m. 30<sup>th</sup> June 1771 at  
Clipsham, Rutland Jane Lester)  
|  
**Richard (Dick) Christian (1779-1862)**

(kindly provided by Martin Slater)

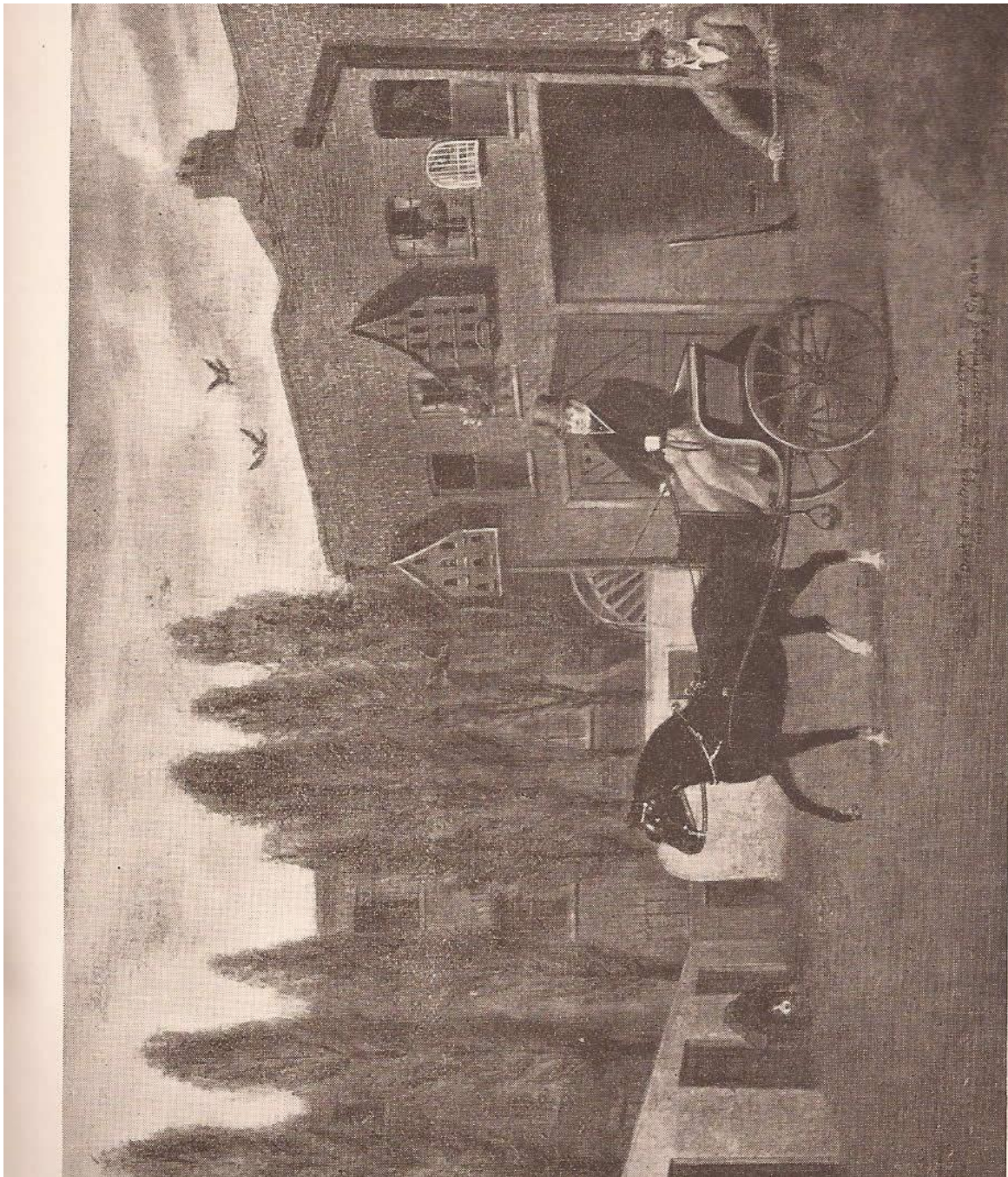


Thomas Christian, Mary and family





*Dick Christian Schooling the Hon. Berkeley Craven's Horse  
From the original painting by John Ferneley in the possession of Messrs. Knoedlers*



Dick sets off from Melton  
From the original painting by G. P. Nightingale in the possession of Major Guy Paget

[See the Acknowledgements for details of this notice]

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## ADVERTISEMENTS.

## DICK CHRISTIANS' FUND. -

As it seemed very hard that a man of Dick Christian's sporting fame should, after having undergone all the toils and dangers of a rough-rider's life, and bringing up nineteen children on very precarious earnings, be dependent, in his eighty-first year, entirely on casual charity, it was proposed by some of his friends, last March, to endeavour to raise a small Fund for him. Since then the following subscriptions have been kindly forwarded or promised for that purpose; but nearly the whole amount has been exhausted by the weekly allowance which it was absolutely necessary to make him out of it. It is hoped that the proposed Fund will not be allowed to fall to the ground, for lack of support; and subscriptions will be received by Mr. George Marriott, High-street, Melton Mowbray, who has kindly undertaken the charge of it.

## LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS;

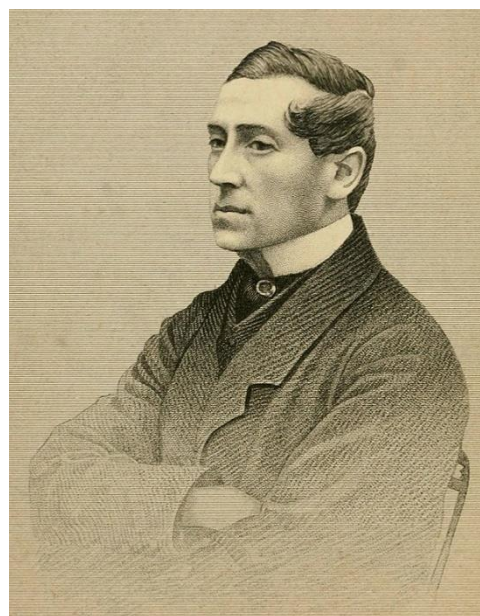
	£	s.	d.
His Grace the Duke of Beaufort	5	0	0
His Grace the Duke of Cleveland	5	0	0
Earl Howe	5	0	0
Earl Fitzwilliam	5	0	0
Earl Spencer	5	0	0
Lord Aveland	5	0	0
Sir Charles Knightley, Bart.	5	0	0
Sir Thomas Whichcote, Bart.	5	0	0
Sir B. Graham, Bart.	5	0	0
James Maxse, Esq.	5	0	0
Henry Wigram, Esq.	5	0	0
H. Maynine, Esq.	3	0	0
Hon. F. Villiers	3	0	0
His Grace the Duke of Rutland	2	0	0
Henry Greene, Esq.	2	0	0
H. Sherbrooke, Esq.	1	10	0
Lord Galway, M.P.	1	0	0
Captain P. Williams	1	0	0
T. Trebeck, Esq.	1	0	0
— Tylen, Esq.	1	0	0
T. C. Dixon, Esq.	1	0	0
A Friend	0	10	0
Mr. John Davis	0	5	0
Mr. Charles Amblin	0	5	0

## HENRY HALL DIXON

Dixon was born on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1822 at Warwick Bridge, near Carlisle. His father Peter Dixon was a wealthy cotton manufacturer and his mother Sarah daughter of General Tredway Clarke who worked for the East India company.

Dixon's paternal grandfather, also a Peter, was a successful merchant and shipowner in Whitehaven, but when the lease of the rundown Longthwaite Cotton Mill<sup>28</sup> at Warwick Bridge came into family through his wife Mary (née Ferguson), he took charge and appointed his eighteen-year-old son, also Peter – HH<sup>29</sup> Dixon's father, to run it.

Drive and a marked single-mindedness ran in the family. Something else ran in the family also – ophthalmia: Dixon's elder brother Peter went blind when young, and Dixon himself has chronic ophthalmia from the age of nine, a complaint that troubled and sometimes incommoded him all his life. He was otherwise exceptionally fit and strong and notably robust.



Dixon was educated at Rugby from 1838-40<sup>30</sup> and Trinity College Cambridge<sup>31</sup> from 1841-1846. He married Caroline Lynes of Northampton on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1847 and entered the legal profession as an articled clerk with Baxters of Doncaster with the aim of becoming a barrister.

He first wrote an article for *Bell's Life* when he was seventeen years old but in Doncaster started contributing on racing to the *Doncaster Gazette* of which he later took over editorship for three years. He wrote his first book, *The Law of the Farm*, in 1858 under his own name, but, like RS Surtees, wrote about racing and hunting under a pseudonym, in his case *The Druid*.

In 1850 he moved to London while still studying for the Bar, was called to the Bar in 1853 and went on circuit at least twice. He wrote for *Punch* and the *Examiner* for a while and was then offered and refused the editorship of *Bell's Life*<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> later known as Warwick Works. It closed in 1872. The family had other mills at Cummersdale, Dalston and Shaddongate and employed some about 8000 people. The Longthwaite Mill building still exists as part of the small Warwick Mill 'business village'

<sup>29</sup> *Hall* was a forename and not part of a double-barrelled surname

<sup>30</sup> he must have had some previous tuition in Latin and Greek and the standard classical authors or he would have been way out of his depth entering Rugby at the age of sixteen.

<sup>31</sup> he wanted to study classics and law at Christ Church Oxford, but his father disliked the prevailing Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement. Cambridge was famous for its mathematical and scientific 'schools' which were not Dixon's strengths

<sup>32</sup> A surprising rejection since the job was worth £1000 pa and he had eleven children to support!



His writing career took off with his regular contributions to *The Sporting Magazine*, and the much of the text of his three most popular books – *Post and Paddock* (1856), *Silk and Scarlet* (1859), and *Scott and Sebright* (1862) appeared in instalments there, a practice then common and used by Dickens among others. His other books – *Field and Fern*<sup>33</sup> (1865), giving an account of the sheep and herds of Scotland, and *Saddle and Sirloin* (1870) doing the same for England entailed a prodigious amount of travelling over often inhospitable countryside in all weathers, but his iron constitution was a match for it apart from when laid up with eye troubles.

He died in Kensington on 16th March 1870.

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<sup>33</sup> Printed in two volumes: North Scotland and South Scotland