

ART. XII – *The Provenance of Joseph Symson’s Letter Book (1711-20)*¹

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THE letter book of Joseph Symson (1650-1731) of Kendal provides historians with a unique insight into the commercial and family life of an urban patrician between the years 1711 and 1720.² Sadly, the copy book of letters is but a fragment of a much greater whole, for the correspondence spans only a single decade of a long business career that began in 1666 with Symson’s apprenticeship to the mercer Stephen Birkett. The survival of the personal papers of a member of the urban *élite* during this period is so rare, however, that the preservation of the volume must be regarded as nothing short of an archival wonder. In the case of Kendal, no other mercer or alderman has left a record of their activities that can rival that of Joseph Symson and it is unlikely that anything comparable will be discovered to match his documentary legacy.³

Chance inevitably plays a role in selecting which documents survive from the ashes of history. Sometimes, preservation appears to be almost entirely a matter of luck. An example of serendipity is the discovery of the papers of Abraham Dent, an eighteenth-century trader of Kirkby Stephen. Builders stumbled on the Dent manuscripts while repairing the rafters of a house at Sedbusk, where the documents had lain undisturbed for nearly two centuries.⁴ Even in cases as unusual as this, however, survivorship bias operates: not all roofs are equally kind to manuscripts and Dent’s documents would probably have been destroyed if they had been stored in the inferior dwelling of a less affluent proprietor. In any lottery, the more tickets one holds the greater the probability of winning. This is as true of the lottery of archival survival as any other test of chance. In consequence, in order to understand the reasons for the preservation of an historical manuscript, it is necessary to know something of the document’s provenance, since this will invariably provide an indication of why the source in question has escaped destruction when nearly all others of its type have perished.

In the case of Symson’s letter book, a complete chain of ownership cannot be reconstructed, but enough evidence exists to piece together most of the manuscript’s history. The letters were originally written by Symson and his sons in order to provide a record of trade. In consequence, it is reasonable to assume that the volume of correspondence was inherited by Joseph Symson’s son and partner William Symson (1697-1776) along with other records of the business. William’s own son, Joseph Symson II (1730-1806), continued his father’s trade in the house his grandfather had owned at the junction of Highgate and Stricklandgate. There is no reason to suppose, therefore, that the manuscript left the office in which it was written for the first ninety-six years of its existence.⁵ This long period of continuity, however, ended in 1806 when Joseph Symson II died childless at a time when Kendal’s mercers, having lost their legal privileges, were being ousted as middle men in the textile trades by the town’s manufacturers and shopkeepers.

According to the terms of his will, Joseph Symson II’s estate was divided between his brother-in-law Thomas Briggs of Poulton and his cousin Sir Alan Chambre

(1740-1826).⁶ A letter of 1866, written by a member of the Briggs family, states that "William Dickson [of Preston] says that he has somewhere a number of well-written letters from Joseph Symson to his son Robert".⁷ In view of the fact that the letter book contains a great deal of correspondence between Joseph and Robert Symson, it can be deduced that the manuscript passed into the hands of the Dickson family of Preston, along with other items relating to the Symsons including a number of family portraits. It is not known whether Thomas Briggs or Sir Alan Chambre gained ownership of the volume in 1806, but since the Dicksons were the direct descendants of both men, it is likely that the letter book would have come into their possession regardless of who inherited the correspondence.⁸

During the liquidation of Joseph Symson II's estate, many documents of a purely commercial nature were doubtless destroyed. The copy book of letters compiled by his grandfather, however, consisted of more than just routine business correspondence. The volume also contains a significant amount of family information detailing the connections between the Symsons, their kinsfolk, and a number of leading families of the Two Counties, including the Chambres of Kendal. In consequence, the letter book was probably judged a document worth preserving in case the evidence it contained of kinship links was ever needed to settle legal disputes over the ownership or inheritance of property. The importance of the manuscript as a genealogical resource increased further during the nineteenth century as Joseph Symson's descendants formed additional dynastic ties with members of gentry and aristocratic families, as will be seen.⁹

Once Joseph Symson's letter book passed into the hands of the Dickson branch of the family, its survivorship chances were greatly augmented because successive generations of Dicksons were partners in a family law firm in Preston.¹⁰ The existence of a legal practice provided valuable office space to store papers and artefacts relating to the Symsons and the continuity of the family-owned business made the dispersal of these items less likely. At some point during the 1880s, however, the Dicksons surrendered possession of the letter book to the local historians and antiquarians John F. Curwen and Thomas Jennings, even though the firm of solicitors continued to exist and the Dicksons retained an interest in their ancestors. It is known, for example, that members of the Dickson family corresponded with the local Preston historian Stephen Simpson, who compiled pedigrees of various families of Cumbria and Lancashire sharing his surname during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹

The evidence of Curwen's ownership of the letter book is contained in the manuscript itself, which includes the Victorian bookplate of "John de Culwen".¹² During the 1880s, Curwen settled in Kendal, having previously lived in London, but whether he procured the correspondence before or after his arrival is not known. Whatever the circumstances of Curwen's acquisition, however, it is clear that he did not retain ownership of the manuscript for very long, since between 1889 and 1895 five articles containing extracts from it appeared in local newspapers written by Jennings. Moreover, in 1900 Jennings was able to sell the letter book without any apparent reference to Curwen.¹³

Curwen and Jennings valued Symson's letters for the general insights they provided into social life in Kendal prior to industrialisation. Jennings' newspaper articles presented the correspondence as providing curiosities about a past largely

untouched by modernising influences. The first of his short pieces appeared in the *Westmorland Gazette* on 14 December 1889 and took as its subject the inauguration of the town's subscription assembly in 1719. This was followed by two further articles, published on 17 and 18 January 1890 in the *Kendal Mercury and Times* and *The Westmorland Gazette*, which recounted the ordering of a clergyman's MA hood and a visit made by two of Joseph's children to see a ship launched at Milnthorpe.¹⁴ On 3 August 1895, a fourth article appeared in the *Kendal and Country News* that featured a selection of three letters reporting the accession of George I in 1714, the general election of 1715, and the widespread custom practised by Kendal's traders of sending gifts of potted char to their London customers.¹⁵ A fifth article is also known to have been published at around the same time, featuring a letter written in 1714 that describes attempts to raise money for Kendal's charity school and which also reports political events connected with the Hanoverian succession.¹⁶

The publication of seven of the letters in the local press reveals that, though aspects of Joseph Symson's life and career were of interest to the Victorian public, the man and his correspondence were still far from being accepted as a major historical source, even from a local perspective. It is clear that Curwen and Jennings regarded Symson's letters as a source of interesting snippets of information, but there is little evidence that they regarded the manuscript as an historical document of the first rank. Neither scholar attempted to incorporate the Symson letters into a general history of Kendal, or even to integrate the correspondence into a study of the town's textile trade. Curwen and Jennings' attitude to the source partly reflects the fact that economic history, as a serious discipline, was still in its infancy: Arnold Toynbee's *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England* having only been published in 1884. In consequence, though it is significant that Jennings sought to bring Symson to the attention of Kendal's newspaper readers, his articles suggest that interest at this time largely consisted of civic pride in the town's traditions (Symson was twice mayor of Kendal in 1691-2 and 1709-10), coupled with nostalgia for ways of life that were quickly receding from memory.

No less than one-hundred-and-twelve years were to pass before Joseph Symson again made an appearance in a local newspaper.¹⁷ For much of this long interval of time, interest in Symson was confined to a small number of amateur genealogists. The letter book's chances of survival during this period were greatly enhanced by virtue of dynastic accidents. The most important of these connected the Symsons of Kendal with the Earls of Glasgow through the offspring of Joseph Symson's eldest daughter Sarah Symson (1694-1738), who in 1722 married Henry Taylor (1699-1737) of Finsthwaite. Elizabeth Taylor (1766-1829), the granddaughter of this couple, was the wife of Alexander Montgomerie (1744-1802) of Annick Lodge, the younger brother of the Twelfth Earl of Eglinton. The Montgomeries' daughter Elizabeth (d.1822) in turn married David Boyle (1772-1853) of Shewalton, who was appointed Lord Justice General of Scotland in 1841. The link with the Boyles of Kelburn Castle was completed through a grandson of this couple, also named David Boyle (1833-1915), who succeeded as the Seventh Earl of Glasgow in 1890.¹⁸

The link between the Symsons and the Earls of Glasgow was discovered by Colonel Robert Elphinstone Boyle (1837-1924): younger brother of the Seventh Earl and an indefatigable genealogist. During the 1890s, Colonel Boyle began corresponding with Thomas Jennings, who encouraged him to come to Kendal to

search for evidence of the Symsons and Taylors in local records. On his second visit to Kendal in July 1900, Boyle purchased the Joseph Symson letter book from Jennings for the sum of £2 2s. in order to draw on its contents to construct a detailed pedigree of his family.¹⁹ By 1907, Colonel Boyle had also established contact with Stephen Simpson of Preston and the two had exchanged information about Joseph Symson.²⁰

The Boyles were not the only aristocratic family linked dynastically with the Symsons. Joseph Symson's wife Hannah (née King) had a sister who married into the Bickersteth family, from whom Henry Bickersteth (created Baron Langdale in 1836) was descended. The Bickerseths were aware of their connection with the Symsons, as also were two local gentry families: the Lutwidges of Whitehaven and the Wilsons of Dallam Tower. Moreover, the network of family connections was appreciated and exploited by one further descendant of Joseph Symson, who, like Colonel Boyle, was able to trace her ancestry back to the marriage of Sarah Symson to Henry Taylor of Townhead and who was also a skilled amateur genealogist. That individual was Alicia Eliza Clerk (née Taylor): the great-granddaughter of Sarah Symson.²¹

Alicia Eliza Clerk (1814-*c.*1890) was orphaned early in life and was brought up by her uncle Captain Henry Thomas Lutwidge (d.1861) and aunt Mary Lutwidge, née Taylor (d.1857) at Iveing Cottage, Ambleside.²² The Lutwidges were the neighbours of notable Lakeland literary figures, including William Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold.²³ At Iveing Cottage, Alicia was able to indulge her love of poetry by drawing on the resources of a library devoted to literature, philosophy, and art assembled by her uncle's family. The Lutwidges encouraged their niece's interest in high culture by taking her on a series of European tours between 1835 and 1850. No less than nine notebooks compiled by Alicia survive detailing the itinerary followed by the travellers and her responses to the sights and works of art that she encountered in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Holland. In 1853, Alicia married her first cousin Edmund Hugh Clerk (1817-*c.*1900) of Burford, a tiny hamlet lying close to Shepton Mallet. Thereafter, Alicia divided most of her time between Somerset and her beloved Ambleside, eventually inheriting Iveing Cottage on the deaths of her aunt and uncle.²⁴

As a first cousin, Edmund Hugh Clerk possessed a shared ancestry with Alicia that connected both husband and wife with Joseph Symson of Kendal. At some point after her marriage, Alicia developed a fascination for genealogy and she began writing systematically to relatives collecting information about her family pedigree. Her motive for research may have included a pecuniary interest, since the bulk of the material that forms her surviving papers relates to the Rumbold family. In a letter of 1877, Horace Rumbold wrote to Alicia that he was hopeful the pair would soon receive a share of a settlement valued between £50,000 and £60,000 arising from a compensation claim lodged against Sir Salar Jung (1829-83) of Hyderabad by members of the Rumbold family with business interests in India.²⁵ Alicia Clerk's pursuit of genealogy, however, was wide ranging and her efforts at tracing dynastic connections were not confined to a single strand that held out the possibility of financial gain.

Robert Boyle was among Alicia Clerk's correspondents and she was able to supply Boyle with transcripts of original documents as well as written accounts of a number of family oral traditions relating to their mutual ancestors. Alicia's

correspondence with Boyle reveals that she possessed forthright opinions on relations past and present. On discovering that Joseph Symson's father Robert and his brothers were clerics, for example, she commented that "It sounds odd the sons of a Rector being in Trade but as the sons of Peers are now wine and tea merchants it comes round to the old story; besides in Halstead's View it is stated all the old families were wool staplers."²⁶ Over a number of years, Alicia Clerk and her husband corresponded with or visited members of the Briggs and Dickson families and collated information from these sources. It is clear that the Clerks provided Boyle with considerable assistance in compiling the genealogical research now preserved at Kelburn Castle.²⁷

Robert Boyle died unmarried and childless in 1924. For the next sixty years, the location of the letter book is not known with certainty. The most likely scenario is that the manuscript was deposited in the archives of Kelburn Castle along with Colonel Boyle's genealogical papers. It has been established that Mrs Vanda Glasgow (the second wife of the Eighth Earl of Glasgow) oversaw the sale of a quantity of books, furnishings, and other items prior to her death in 1984. If the letter book was among the objects to leave Kelburn, the timing of its disposal is consistent with the volume's subsequent appearance at auction.²⁸ An alternative possibility is that the manuscript came back into the possession of the Briggs and Dicksons or was acquired by the Clerks. If this was the case, however, the letter book has left no trace in either the surviving papers or collective memories of the families. A further hypothesis is that the Symson volume was acquired by Stephen Simpson of Preston and disposed of in the house sale that followed his death, but this remains just a speculation.²⁹ It may never be known with certainty who enjoyed possession of the letter book during the years between 1924 and 1984, but, whoever it was, a debt of gratitude is owed to them for taking care of it.

On the afternoon of Wednesday 19 September 1984, the "Commercial letter-book of Joseph Symson, general merchant of Kendal" was auctioned at Christie's for £594. The price realised by lot 271 easily beat the pre-sale estimate of £300-400, justifying the decision to include the manuscript in a session that featured the sale of letters by such eminent historical figures as Elizabeth I, Charles I and II, the Hapsburg rulers Charles V and Philip II, Bismarck, Catherine de Medici, Benjamin Franklin, and Napoleon.³⁰ The successful bid was submitted by Maggs Bros. Ltd., a London firm of rare book dealers who purchased the manuscript on behalf of the Huntington Library, California.³¹

Symson's distinguished company on that September day, and the Huntington's desire to acquire the letters written by the inhabitant of a town situated on the other side of the world, both indicate the extent to which the stock of merchants like Symson rose in the estimation of historians and collectors during the second half of the twentieth century. The value placed on the Symson letter book in 1984 is a reflection, in part, of the success of economic and social history in influencing the historical agenda during the post-war period, particularly through the development of urban history and community studies. Few libraries and archives can afford the luxury of adding items to their collection for which there is little evident demand by researchers. Whereas the Symson correspondence in the 1880s had attracted only the attention of local antiquarians and amateur genealogists, by the 1980s the manuscript was rated as a source likely to be of interest to professional scholarship in

general. Christie's, clearly with an eye for the academic market, described the volume as an "extraordinary interesting letter-book, with its very detailed picture of the fortunes and ramifications of a family business engaged in supplying the American trade as well as dealing directly with London and the manufacturing districts", while Symson himself was declared to have been "evidently a considerable power in the neighbourhood both as an entrepreneur and a money-lender . . . a strong believer of the power of the family in business, keeping up constant connections with his mercantile cousins".³²

The growing appreciation of the riches contained in the papers of inland traders contrasts with the neglect of this type of source in the past. In an unpromising archival environment, few other collections of merchants' correspondence held as many tickets in the survival lottery as Joseph Symson's. In consequence, the vast majority of the ledgers and journals penned by the army of middlemen who turned the wheels of Britain's inland commerce have, like their authors, long since turned to dust. A full understanding of the reason for this letter book's survival, when most others of its kind have disappeared, requires a complete knowledge of the document's history. Some gaps remain in the manuscript's story, but the sections that have been reconstructed in this article indicate that it was not preserved because its author was perceived to have extraordinary qualities that set him apart from his fellow traders. It appears, rather, that survival occurred for three reasons not directly connected with Symson himself. Firstly, during the later eighteenth century and for much of the nineteenth century the manuscript belonged to members of families engaged in business continuously in one location: the mercer's trade in Kendal and the law in Preston. Secondly, during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the antiquarians Curwen and Jennings prized the letter book as a record of social life in Kendal prior to a period of rapid change. Thirdly, Robert Boyle and Alicia Clerk valued the manuscript for the information it contained in constructing pedigrees of the Earls of Glasgow and families related to the Clerks and the Taylors.

Symson cannot be considered as representative of the entire population. On the contrary, he was a prosperous merchant and an articulate member of a clearly defined group of civic governors. The reader of the correspondence, in consequence, views the world through the eyes of an élite man of business. Yet there is nothing in the manuscript's provenance to suggest that Symson's activities differed fundamentally from the thousands of mercers and aldermen located in other provincial towns. Symson was prosperous but not fabulously rich; industrious, but not a great innovator. It is the very typicality of the range of business, family, and social affairs described in the manuscript that, ironically, is of greatest interest to the modern reader. In the final analysis, what distinguishes Joseph Symson from his contemporaries may simply be his good fortune in having descendants with both a strong sense of family identity and the genealogical skills needed to preserve his memory.

APPENDIX

Since the publication of *'An Exact and Industrious Tradesman': the Letter Book of Joseph Symson of Kendal, 1711-20*, some additional information has come to light about several of the individuals featured in the correspondence.³³

Dorothy BELLINGHAM

Dorothy Bellingham was born *c.*1664, according to an ancestral file detailing the pedigree of the Bellingham family deposited with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mention should also be made of the Journal of Thomas Bellingham, June-December 1669 (Thomas was a cousin of Dorothy Bellingham). This small bound volume (9 x 14.8 cm) was purchased by the Bodleian Library at auction in Christie's in 1978. In 1870, the journal was in the possession of Thomas J. Quinn, who was the great-great grandfather of Francis Quinn, the husband of Jane Bellingham (sister of Henry Bellingham). The family home of the Quinns is believed to have been at Castlebellingham, Louth, in Ireland and Henry Bellingham is also believed to be a relative of Dorothy's (possibly even her elder brother born *c.*1657). In addition to Thomas Bellingham's journal, the manuscript includes an account of money laid out for textiles dated *c.*1723 and gardening expenses for an unspecified location dated *c.*1767. The author would be grateful for any information readers may have about this source (International Genealogical Index, AFN:GO2M-Z9; Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms Eng. hist. F. 30).

Mary DRAKE

The identity of Robert Symson's educational patron (letter No. 727) is still unclear, but it is probable that she was related to the Yates family of Preston. The Yates, Shaw, and King families were members of Preston's civic élite and intermarried extensively during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It is possible that Robert benefited from the patronage of the Drakes by virtue of his mother Hannah Symson (*née* King)'s Preston kinsfolk. All of these families were also closely related to the Sharples of Preston: an interesting circumstance in view of the fact that the owner of John and Robert Symson's warehouse in Liverpool was one Mrs. Sharples (Kelburn Archives, REB/28/2b).

Alexander FARINGTON/FARRINGTON, Isobel FARINGTON/FARRINGTON, and Lawrence FARINGTON/FARRINGTON

In addition to Lawrence, the "sprightly youth" of letter No. 191, Alexander Farington of Kendal had another son named Hugh, who, like his father and brother, also entered the church. Hugh Farington studied at St John's College, Cambridge and was rector of Elsdon and lecturer at All Saints in Newcastle from 1715 until his death in 1739. The literary ability of Alexander Farington is alluded to in the diary of the Revd John Thomlinson: "1717. July 30th. Uncle said, when I told him what Charles Richard[son] said of Farrington's catechetic lecture in St. Nicolas, and of people's opinion about his brother supplying him with sermons, that he did not believe that, but he had heard some say that his father left two boxes of sermons, one to him and another to his brother – his father a pretty good preacher" ("The Diary of the Rev. John Thomlinson", in *Six North Country Diaries*, Publications of the Surtees Society, vol. cxviii [Durham, 1910], 69).

Elisha GALE

In view of the notes on the Lutwidge and Taylor families that follow, it is worth commenting that Elisha Gale's son John was involved in the East Indies trade as a

member of the East India Company (“The Medical Casebook of William Brownrigg, M.D., F.R.S. [1712-1800] of the town of Whitehaven in Cumberland” ed. Jean E. Ward and John Yell, Wellcome Institute, *Medical History*, Supplement No. 13 [London, 1993]).

Thomas LUTWIDGE – see TAYLOR

Lasselles/Lascalles MEDCALF/METCALF

Symson’s correspondent is still believed to have been Lascalles Metcalf, a wealthy Quaker merchant of Gracechurch Street, London. Metcalf died in 1740 leaving a legacy of £4,000 to his daughter Elizabeth Russell (d.1769), while his son Lascalles Metcalfe (alive 1772) inherited the residue of his considerable real and personal estate (*English Law Reports: Brown Reports, Volume 3*, *Randall v. Metcalfe* [1772], 3 Brown PC 318, 1 ER1343).

Jacob MORLAND

The letter book describes the involvement of Jacob Morland in the Barbados sugar trade between 1717 and 1720 in partnership with John Moore and William Banks (letters Nos. 1,724 and 2,109). In addition to his trading interests, Morland owned an estate called Cappelthwaite Hall near Killington. Either Jacob Morland, or his son of the same name, contributed to the endowment of a living and a school at Killington. In 1763, Jacob Morland Junior sat for a portrait by George Romney and this painting is currently on loan from the Tate Gallery at Abbot Hall in Kendal. In 1738, Jacob Morland senior’s daughter Mary Morland married Walter Chambre (b.1694), son of Alan Chambre of Kendal (who features in the Joseph Symson letter book). Walter Chambre succeeded his father as Recorder of Kendal the same year as his marriage. A portrait survives of Walter Chambre painted around this time by an unknown artist. The Sir Alan Chambre (1740-1826) mentioned in the present article was the son of Walter and Mary Chambre (Mannix and Co., *History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland* [Kendal, 1851]; private communication from Susan Whyman).

Henry TAYLOR, Sarah TAYLOR (née SYMSON), and John TAYLOR

“*An Exact and Industrious Tradesman*” described how the fortunes of this branch of the Taylor family were revived by John Taylor (1722-1824) after the virtual bankruptcy and death of his father Henry Taylor in 1737. John Taylor’s marriage in Calcutta to the wealthy widow Dorothy Northall, née Rumbold (1739-1801) was not, however, the result of entirely fortuitous circumstances. Moreover, the impecuniousness of Henry Taylor must, to some degree, be offset against the local philanthropy which the Taylors engaged in. Between 1723 and 1725, Henry and Clement Taylor gave land and subscribed funds towards the building of St. Peter’s chapel and school at Finsthwaite. This was by no means their only charitable act in connection with religion. According to family traditions researched by Alicia Clerk, Henry Taylor also extended his patronage to Revd Edmund Law: the curate and schoolmaster of Staveley. Law can hardly be considered a destitute cleric: he was the son of a yeoman farmer and his wife owned a small property at Buck Crag. Nevertheless, in view of the later history of the Law family, his origins must be

considered modest. Alicia Clerk reports that Henry Taylor sponsored the education of Law's son Edmund, who attended school at Cartmel and later Kendal grammar school, before proceeding to enter St John's College, Cambridge, from where he graduated in 1723. Edmund Law became a noted scholar and in 1768 he was appointed Bishop of Carlisle. A number of his sons enjoyed considerable success in their own right; indeed, regarded collectively, the Laws were a phenomenon. George Law and John Law both became Bishops. Edward Law was Attorney General and Speaker of the House of Lords. Ewan Law pursued a military career in India and served as an MP between 1790 and 1802. Thomas Law, a noted financial writer, enjoyed a profitable career with the East India Company between 1773 and 1789; after 1794 he emigrated to the United States and married into the Washington family.

A question that must be asked is whether any of the success of the Laws rubbed off onto the Taylors enabling John Taylor to marry Dorothy Northall, a wealthy widow? Alicia Clerk's relatives believed that the Laws reciprocated the patronage they had earlier received from the Taylors. There is some evidence to suggest that these claims should be taken seriously. The second wife of Dorothy Rumbold's brother, Sir Thomas Rumbold, was Joanna Law daughter of Bishop Edmund Law, thereby linking the Laws with the Taylors.³⁴ This marriage, however, took place in 1772: a full ten years after John Taylor married Dorothy. Nevertheless, the Rumbolds were linked with other families of Cumberland and Westmorland who were connected with the Symsons and Taylors. The first wife of Thomas Lutwidge (merchant of Whitehaven), for example, was Hannah Rumbold (c.1673-1721) and Alicia Clerk was herself descended from this branch of the Lutwidge family.³⁵

These notes can hardly be considered as the last word on relations between the Laws and the Taylors, but the material presented here emphasises many of the themes that lie at the heart of Joseph Symson's letter book. Within the Two Counties, closely knit networks of family association existed that reached out like tentacles across the country and beyond to Asia and the Americas. The family of Edmund Hugh Clerk (Alicia's husband) continued and extended these links. The Clerks themselves were descended from John Clerk of Pennicuick in Scotland and during the eighteenth century members of the family occupied offices in the diplomatic service, Scottish exchequer, and the East India Company (Kelburn Archives, REB 1/66, "Copy of a paper written by the late Mrs. Edmund Clerk, [dated] 1890"; REB/43/23, "Descendants of Robert Rumbold of Burbage, Co. Leicester, Copied from a pedigree lent me by Mr. Edmund Clerk, April 1889"; REB/20/19; Papers of Alicia Eliza Clerk, "Rumbold Papers, including pedigree", "Copy of paper written by E. A. Clerk, 1890", "Interesting papers in connection with the Clerk Family"; Maryland Historical Society, MS 2386, Thomas Law Family Papers, 1791-1834; *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xi [Oxford, 1921], 656-7; Janet Martin, "The Building and Endowment of Finsthwaite Church and School, 1723-5", *CW2*, lxxxiv, 125-39).

Notes and References

¹ The author is grateful to Fergus Boyle, Hamish Boyle, Richard Hall, Rachel Kitchen, Janet Martin, Gill Lindsay, Mary Robertson, David Ryan, John Satchell, Susan Whyman, and Alan Williams for

their assistance during the researching of this article.

- ² Huntington Library, HM 50, 670, "Joseph Symson Letterbook", 14³/₄" x 10". Citations of letter numbers in this article refer to *'An Exact and Industrious Tradesman': the Letter Book of Joseph Symson of Kendal, 1711-1720* ed. S. D. Smith, British Academy, Records of Social and Economic History, new series 34 (Oxford University Press, 2002).
- ³ *'An Exact and Industrious Tradesman'* ed. Smith, xxi-xxii, xxxv.
- ⁴ T. S. Willan, *An Eighteenth-Century Shopkeeper: Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen* (Manchester, 1970).
- ⁵ *'An Exact and Industrious Tradesman'* ed. Smith, lxi, lxxiii. This statement, perhaps, requires qualification since in 1866 the following information about Joseph Symson's residence was recalled by Mary Jane Brigg (a descendant): "It was [on] Stricklandgate; an old fashioned house now pulled down, or greatly altered. I think there was a bookseller's shop on the site. There was a great change effected in this part of the town when a block of old buildings was pulled down in that part of Highgate. I think this was done when my father [William Briggs] was mayor about 1800 or 1801", Mary Jane Briggs to [Alicia Eliza Clerk?], Cheltenham, 22 April 1866, Papers of Alicia Eliza Clerk in the custody of the solicitors Dyne and Drewitt, 65 High Street, Shepton Mallet. A later newspaper article by Thomas Jennings claimed that Joseph Symson's house occupied the site of T. W. L. Hinds chemist, but it is not clear on what source this information is based or if it is consistent with Mary Brigg's account, *Westmorland Gazette*, 14 December 1889.
- ⁶ Lancashire Record Office, WRW K, will of Joseph Symson (1806).
- ⁷ Lancashire Record Office, DDX 1147: ac. 3,930, "Pedigree of Symson of Kendal and Taylor of Townhead"; Papers of Alicia Eliza Clerk, Mary Jane Briggs to [Alicia Eliza Clerk?], Cheltenham, 22 April 1866.
- ⁸ It should be noted that Sir Alan Chambre died unmarried and without progeny in 1826.
- ⁹ The status of the Symson family in Westmorland society is acknowledged in Joseph Nicolson and Richard Burn's *The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland* (2 vols; London, 1777), vol. i, 85. See also *'An Exact and Industrious Tradesman'* ed. Smith, xxiv-xxxv.
- ¹⁰ For references to the firm, see Sir Charles John Holmes, *Self and Partners – Mostly Self. Being the Reminiscences of S. J. Holmes* (London, 1936). Charles Holmes, sometime curator of the National Gallery, married Adele Dickson.
- ¹¹ Lancashire Record Office, DDX 1147: acc. 3,930, Pedigree of the Symson family "copied from a pedigree in the possession of Alan Chambre Dickson of Preston Sol^r, 2 July 1907", signed by Stephen Simpson of Parkside Preston; Stephen Simpson, *Simpsons: Records of an Ancient Yeoman Family of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1544-1922* (Derby and London, 1922). The continued interest of members of the Dickson and Briggs family in the Symsons and other ancestors is also documented in the Papers of Alicia Eliza Clerk.
- ¹² Huntington Library, HM 50,670; Christie's London, *Printed Books and Autograph Letters and Manuscripts, Wednesday 19 September 1984* (London, 1984), 62.
- ¹³ John F. Curwen died in 1932. Had Curwen retained ownership of the manuscript, it is reasonable to suppose that it would have formed part of the collection of books and papers presented to Westmorland County Council in 1937. The Curwen library formed the core of the Westmorland Record Office's local collection when it was established in 1962, information provided by Richard Hall of the Cumbria Record Office, Kendal.
- ¹⁴ *'An Exact and Industrious Tradesman'* ed. Smith, Letters No. 2,019, 632, and 467.
- ¹⁵ Kelburn Archives, REB/1/51, 1/54, and 1/55; REB 20/21. The 1895 article printed letters No. 1,028, 1,054, and 1,058.
- ¹⁶ Papers of Alicia Eliza Clerk, undated press cutting [c.1890]. This feature is headed "Pleasures of an M.P." and reproduced letter No. 935. Material from the newspaper articles was subsequently republished in *The Westmorland Note Book* (Kendal, 1900), n.501 and *Records Relating to the Barony of Kendale* ed. William Farrer and John F. Curwen (3 Vols; Kendal, 1923-4), vol. iii, 203.
- ¹⁷ *The Westmorland Gazette*, 22 March 2002.
- ¹⁸ Kelburn Archives, REB Roll 35, "Pedigree showing the descent of David Boyle from Symsons settled at Kendal, the Taylors of Townhead, Lancashire and the Rumbolds of Burbage, Leicestershire". David Boyle succeeded George Frederick Boyle, Sixth Earl of Glasgow, who was virtually bankrupt with debts of £1 million. The lands at Shewalton were sold to enable the Seventh Earl to repurchase a portion of the Boyle's ancestral estate at auction. See also Robert Boyle, *A Genealogical Account of the Boyles of Kelburn, Earls of Glasgow* (London, 1904).

- ¹⁹ Kelburn Archives, REB/43/34.1, "Family and near relations of Joseph Symson of Kendal as deduced from a copy book kept by him from January 1710[11] to March 1719[20]". An examination of Boyle's handwriting suggests that he was responsible for the pencil notes written into the Joseph Symson letter book and on a scrap of paper preserved with the manuscript at the Huntington Library.
- ²⁰ Kelburn Archives, REB/43/36, "Copy Pedigree of Symson of Kendal and Taylor of Townhead taken from a pedigree drawn up by William Dickson of Preston solicitor, grandson of Mary Briggs née Symson, lent me by Stephen Simpson Esqr. 1907". The pedigree is the same as that in Lancashire Record Office, DDX 1147: acc. 3,930, indicating that Boyle supplied the Dicksons with information based on a document that they had themselves formerly possessed.
- ²¹ Kelburn Archives, REB Bundle 20, "Letters on genealogical subjects from the late Mrs. Edmund Clerk née Alicia Taylor".
- ²² Papers of Alicia Eliza Clerk, "Rumbold Pedigrees and other matters in connection therewith". Alicia's mother Rachel Taylor died a few days after her birth in 1814; her father, Lieutenant Colonel John Bladen Taylor, died in 1820. Henry Thomas Lutwidge was the son of Henry Lutwidge of Holmrook, Cumberland.
- ²³ *The Letters of Matthew Arnold* ed. Cecil Y. Lang (6 vols., Charlottesville and London, 1996-2001), vol. i, 184, 187; *The Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth, 2nd edition, III: The Later Years, Part I, 1821-1828* ed. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1978), 369, 660-661; *Part IV, 1840-1853* (Oxford, 1988), 12, 51-52.
- ²⁴ "Papers of Alicia Eliza Clerk, Rumbold Pedigrees and other matters in connection therewith"; Travel diaries of Alicia Eliza Taylor, 1835-50; "Catalogue of books in the library of the Clerk Iveing Cottage, Ambleside, September 1870". The copied pedigree at the Lancashire Record Office (DDX 1147: acc. 3,930) misleadingly implies that Alicia was married to Edmund Hugh "clerk" of "Bunford" in Somerset. In consequence, the reference to Alicia Clerk in *'An Exact and Industrious Tradesman'* ed. Smith, xi, is incorrect.
- ²⁵ Papers of Alicia Eliza Clerk, Horace Rumbold to Alicia Eliza Clerk, 5 October 1877.
- ²⁶ Kelburn Archives, REB/20/19, Eliza [Alicia] Clerk to Colonel Robert Boyle, 3 January 1890. Presumably "Halstead" is a reference to Holinshed's Chronicle.
- ²⁷ Kelburn Archives, REB/20/20, REB/1/66. The surviving portraits of members of the Symson, Taylor, and Chambre families have notes attached to the back of the canvas written by either Robert Boyle or Alicia Clerk. It is less certain whether the Clerks were also in direct communication with Thomas Jennings at Kendal. Details of some of Jennings' newspaper articles are preserved in Alicia Clerk's papers and a letter from Edmund Clerk in response to the 14 December article was printed in the *Westmorland Gazette*, 11 January 1890. The letter states, however, that Edmund had been sent Jennings' (unsigned) item "by a relative who chanced to pass through Kendal at that time."
- ²⁸ Information supplied by Hamish Boyle, archivist of Kelburn Castle. Two inventories of books and papers at Kelburn are known to have been compiled in 1900 and 1970. At the time of writing, however, neither could be found and inspected. If the Joseph Symson letter book appears in the 1970 inventory, it would validate the hypothesis that the manuscript was preserved at Kelburn for most of the years between 1924 and 1984.
- ²⁹ Information supplied by members of the Dickson family of Garstang and Goosnargh.
- ³⁰ Christie's, *Printed Books*, 62-63. The increase in the letter book's value between 1900 and 1984 was approximately nine times greater than inflation, though it must be emphasised that Jennings' sale of the manuscript to Boyle was a private transaction and not a public auction.
- ³¹ The curator of manuscripts at the Huntington Library, Mary Robertson, describes the acquisition in *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. xlvi (1985), 106-108. Shortly after the accession of the letter book the Huntington replaced the contemporary covers which the sale catalogue describes as "blind-panelled reverse calf (both covers detached and baldy worn)". It should be added that the Huntington Library has preserved the original covers as well as the re-bound manuscript. The poor condition of the original covers provides a clue as to the letter book's location between 1924 and 1984. It suggests, perhaps, that the volume remained undisturbed in one place for a considerable period of time prior to its sale since a private collector would probably have undertaken preservation work.
- ³² Christie's, *Printed Books*, 62-63.
- ³³ The author would like to take the opportunity of correcting some errors in *'An Exact and Industrious Tradesman'* discovered during the preparation of this article. Lady Anne Clifford's tomb lies in the church of St. Lawrence, Appleby, and not in the churchyard of St. Michael's (xxxiii) in the same town. Staveley manages very well without the addition of an "r". In letter No. 1,058, Symson wrote to

Peter Desitter that “The sauce [rather than ‘The same’] we use to eat therewith is vinegar sugar.” While Betty Symson invested in Guinea trade, her elder sister Sarah put her money into a sugar venture organised by John Moore (letters Nos. 1,338 and 1,501). Readers are encouraged to bring additional errors to the attention of the author.

³⁴ At the time of the marriage Sir Thomas Rumbold was Governor of Madras. He was later (unsuccessfully) put on trial for corruption in 1783.

³⁵ *‘An Exact and Industrious Tradesman’* ed. Smith, 721-722, omits reference to this marriage and mentions only Thomas Lutwidge’s second marriage to Lucy Hoghton in 1721. The timing of the Hoghton match is a little unusual since Hannah Lutwidge had been buried the same year. Her tombstone in St. Nicholas’ Church reads: “Near to this Monument lyes the Body of the very Virtuous & Pious Hannah, Wife of Tho’ Lutwidge Mercht. obt. June 6th 1721, Aet. 48, interr’d in the same place with their son Palmer – born June 19 1703 obt April 10 1704”, Papers of Alicia Eliza Clerk, “Rumbold Pedigrees and other matters in connection therewith”.