

DIARIES - WINDOW TO HISTORY

One of the great things about working on a family history is way you discover how those momentous events of "History" affected real people. Bulstrode Whitelocke's papers give us a window to look in and see how the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 affected his family.

Many of the Royalists had had their estates confiscated by the Parliamentarians and over the years these properties had been sold. Bulstrode knew the hazards of purchasing forfeited estates and avoided doing so but he does not appear to have objected when Colonel Edmund Harvey settled the Manor of Fulham on his son, Samuel upon his marriage to Bulstrode's daughter Cecilia. In 1660 the new Bishop of London, Gilbert Sheldon was exploring the possibility of reclaiming the Manor.

Bulstrode counseled his son-in-law that the claim could not be resisted and went with him to see Bishop Sheldon. He explained to the Bishop that Sam had had no part in the purchase of the Manor but that it had been a wedding present from his father. Arrangements were made for the property to be turned over following the birth of the child Cecilia was expecting. There would be no need for soldiers to evict the family as had happened in so many other cases. Bishop Sheldon apparently agreed to the arrangements.

A few weeks later on the Sunday before Christmas a party of soldiers broke into the Manor ransacked the house and evicted young Sam and Cecilia. Within eighteen months the couple and their new baby were dead, their spirit broken by events not of their making. Bulstrode, who had endured a great deal of misfortune in his roller-coaster life wrote in his diary with uncharacteristic bitterness "All their blood lies at the door of that Bishop".