







A REMARKABLE AND TALENTED FAMILY

THE STANHOPE



ELVASTON IN DERBYSHIRE HAS A FASCINATING HISTORY, TAKING US BACK TO THE NINTH CENTURY WHEN THREE DANES CALLED AELVOLD, EMBOLD AND TORULF SETTLED IN PLEASANT COUNTRY NEAR THE RIVER DERWENT  THEIR HAMLETS BECAME KNOWN AS AELVVOLDESTUNE, EMBOLDESTUNE AND TORULFSTUNE, NAMES WE RECOGNISE TODAY IN THE VILLAGES OF ELVASTON, AMBASTON AND THULSTON  IN 1066 AN ANGLO SAXON CALLED TOCHI OWNED EXTENSIVE LANDS IN THESE THREE HAMLETS  BY 1086 WHEN KING WILLIAM ORDERED THE DOMESDAY SURVEY, TOCHI'S WIDE LANDS HAD BECOME THE POSSESSION OF SIR GEOFFREY ELSELIN, ONE OF FIFTEEN GREAT BARONS WHO HELD LAND IN DERBYSHIRE ON BEHALF OF THE KING 

The Alselins were lords of the manor for many years. They were followed by the Bardolphs and, finally, by the Blounts, who were granted Elvaston by Henry VI during the fifteenth century.

The Stanhopes first came to Elvaston in the mid sixteenth century when Henry VIII granted to Michael Stanhope the lordship of the manors of Shelford in Nottinghamshire and Elvaston in



PHOTO: JOHN WARTON.

The second Sir John Stanhope (d. 1638), son of Sir John Stanhope and his second wife Catherine Trentham, inherited the Elvaston Estate.

Derbyshire. Knighted soon after Edward VI's accession to the throne, Sir Michael was the first of the Stanhopes to make his home at Elvaston and may be regarded as the founder of this notable family. They became powerful landowners, with well over four thousand acres, and between the various family branches owned a number of very fine houses. By the mid eighteenth century they also enjoyed the rare achievement of holding three earldoms within one family.

Sir Michael's grandson, John Stanhope of Shelford and Elvaston, was knighted in 1603. He died in 1610 and his elaborate canopied tomb may still be seen at Elvaston, the oldest Stanhope monument remaining in the church. He married



PHOTO: JOHN WARTON.

The first Sir John Stanhope of Shelford and Elvaston (1558–1610).



The coat of arms of the Stanhope family – the Earls of Harrington.

twice and by his first wife had one son, Philip. The eldest son of his second marriage was John, and it was between these two half-brothers that the great Stanhope estates were divided after Sir John's death. Philip acquired Shelford and Bretby, while John retained Elvaston. Philip Stanhope made his home at Bretby Park. He supported the royalist cause in the civil war, raising a regiment of dragoons for Charles I, and was rewarded with the earldom of Chesterfield. His most notable descendant was the 4th Earl of Chesterfield; a prominent statesman, well-known in the leading literary circles of his day.

Alexander Stanhope, son of the 1st Earl of Chesterfield's second marriage, founded another important family branch. His son, James, rose to be Secretary of State and Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was created Earl of Stanhope and later bought the magnificent house and estate of Chevening in Kent.

Charles, 3rd Earl Stanhope, is noted for his invention of the Stanhope printing press which was the first to be made of iron and in time replaced the old wooden presses.

The 3rd Earl's daughter, Lady Hester, was perhaps the most eccentric of all the Stanhopes. She was private secretary to her uncle, William Pitt, but after his death embarked on a journey to Syria where she *'assumed the dress of a native of that country and devoted herself to astrology in which she was an implicit believer'*. An intrepid horse-woman, well able to wield a sword, and afraid of nobody, Lady Hester steadfastly refused to return to England, and in 1839 *'breathed her last among foreigners and hirelings'*.

The Stanhopes maintained their loyalty to the crown throughout the civil war. Bretby Park was attacked by Sir John Gell, who also led his troops of Roundheads against Elvaston. They ransacked the manor house in search of arms, destroyed Lady Stanhope's favourite flower garden, and then stormed the church. There they defaced the monuments, damaging the newly erected tomb

of Sir John Stanhope, before entering the family vault where they thrust their swords into the coffins. Sir John's tomb was restored over a century later but still bears marks of the original damage, while on the outside walls of the church the pit marks left by volleys of musket balls are clearly visible.

It was Sir John's son, William, whose distinguished career brought a third earldom to the Stanhope family. Born in about 1690, by 1715 he was colonel of a dragoon regiment and had also entered parliament as the Whig member for Derby. William Stanhope held office as Secretary of State but was evidently more gifted as a diplomat than a politician. He was resident in Madrid both before and after the Spanish war, and this quiet and highly respected man was described by Philip V of Spain as *'the only minister who had never deceived him'*.

In 1742 William Stanhope was created Earl of Harrington and Viscount Petersham. The secondary title is always used by the heir to the earldom.

William Stanhope, 2nd Earl of Harrington, like his father was both soldier and politician. He distinguished himself at the battle of Fontenoy, and in later years enjoyed a series of promotions, attaining the rank of general in 1770. He was something of an eccentric and because of



Catherine Trentham, second wife of the first Sir John Stanhope.

the way he walked was nicknamed 'Peter Shambles'. His wife, Caroline Fitzroy, was one of the great beauties of her day. She was also noted for her spirited, and occasionally wild, behaviour. A contemporary writer recorded that at the coronation of George III Lady Harrington appeared '*covered in all the diamonds she could borrow, hire, or sieze*'.

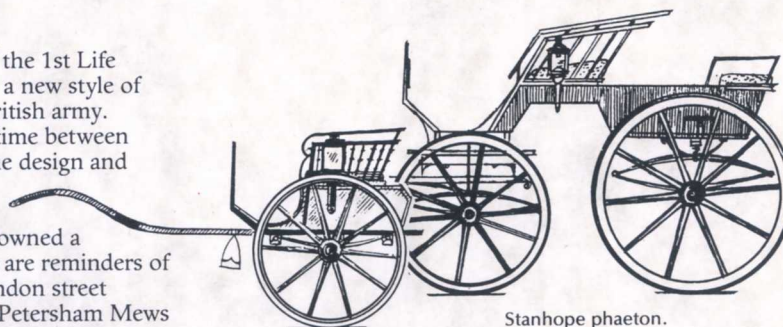
Charles Stanhope, the 3rd Earl, was quite a character and a very popular man. He travelled widely in an army career which took him to Quebec during the American War of Independence, and then to Jamaica. Diplomatic missions found him in Vienna and Berlin, and he was once offered the post of British resident at the Russian court. He declined as, owing to the low rank of the Tzarina's representative at St. James's, he could not hold the full title of ambassador!



William Stanhope, 1st Earl of Harrington, 1690–1756.



By 1792 he was colonel of the 1st Life Guards and at this time introduced a new style of sword which was adopted by the British army. Subsequently, the Earl divided his time between Elvaston, where he was planning the design and rebuilding of the castle, and Harrington House, his grand Kensington home. The Stanhopes owned a large part of Kensington, and there are reminders of the family to the present day in London street names such as Stanhope Gardens, Petersham Mews and Elvaston Place. Another family property was Gawsworth Hall in Cheshire, a half-timbered manor house dating from 1480, which in the early eighteenth century was the object of a duel between Lord Mohun and the Duke of Hamilton. The duel



Stanhope gig.

Stanhope phaeton.

was fought in Hyde Park and both men died as a result. Some years later the Gawsworth estate, at one time amounting to some 50,000 acres, came into the possession of William Stanhope, later 1st Earl of Harrington.

The 3rd Earl's fondness for tea was legendary and tea drinking parties at Harrington House ranked high in social circles, particularly as George III and Queen Charlotte were frequent visitors. Jane, Countess of Harrington, was Lady of the Bedchamber and a great favourite with the queen.

The Earl's retiring appointment was as Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle. He died in 1829, the oldest general in the British army, and his memorial by the great Venetian sculptor, Canova, is the real treasure of Elvaston church.



Gawsworth Hall, Macclesfield.



The Petersham coat and the Harrington hat – designed by Lord Petersham.

many of his own clothes and his fashions, however odd, were quickly copied. He gave his name to the Petersham overcoat, of which the Prince Regent ordered one for each day of the week, and to the Harrington hat.

Rumour had it that Lord Petersham fell in love with a lady by the name of Brown and from that time brown was to be the colour of his clothes, his carriage, his horses and his servants' livery. When he finally married in 1831, it was to Maria Foote, a Covent Garden actress seventeen years his junior. Their affair had met with the old Earl's great disapproval and had over several years been the gossip of London and Derbyshire.

'Beau' Petersham's youngest brother, Fitzroy, was a completely different character. A keen sportsman and talented engineer, he designed the Stanhope gig, a small two-seater vehicle drawn by one horse, which, by the 1830s, was very popular and used widely in London for journeys between the suburbs and the city. He followed this with a successful design for a larger carriage which became known as the Stanhope phaeton.

Leicester Stanhope, who succeeded his brother as 5th Earl, followed the now familiar pattern of army and political life. In 1823 he went to Missolonghi in Greece where he built a printing press, set up a newspaper, and opened a school. Lord Byron joined him but their political views differed greatly and they did not get on well. However, after Byron's death it was Leicester Stanhope who brought the poet's body and all his papers back to England.

The 5th Earl died in 1862 and was succeeded by his son, Seymour, a boy of sixteen who survived his father by only four years. The title then passed to his cousin, Charles, a man in his late fifties. This 7th Earl of Harrington, Fitzroy Stanhope's son, had inherited some of his father's

Viscount Petersham, the 3rd Earl's eldest son, was almost fifty when he succeeded to the title and had long since earned himself a reputation as a Regency buck. Never seen in public before 6.00 p.m. 'Beau' Petersham was a trendsetter. He attracted the attention and friendship of the Prince Regent who emulated his clothes, his tea drinking and his addiction to snuff. Lord Petersham's sitting-room contained canisters of tea in great variety and an equally wide range of snuff. He owned 365 snuff boxes and used a different one on each day of the year.

Tall and handsome, Lord Petersham was said to resemble Henry IV; a flattery he emphasised by growing a small pointed beard. He designed

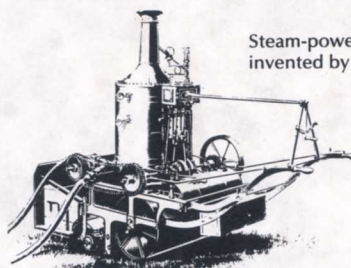


The 9th Earl, Dudley Stanhope – known as 'Old Whiskers'.

creative talent and was addicted to playing and making violins.

The Stanhope talent for invention featured again in the next generation. Charles Stanhope, the 8th Earl, was an amateur engineer and designed, among other things, a steam-powered lawn-mower.

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Steam-powered lawn-mower invented by the 8th Earl.

He was a cavalry officer and in his younger days was 'rarely out of the saddle except when nursing broken bones'. The 8th Earl died tragically, as the result of burns received in an explosion in his own workshop.

The 9th Earl, Dudley Stanhope, was a patriarchal figure with a bushy white beard, affectionately known to younger members of the family as 'Old Whiskers'. A talented wood carver, his work may be seen in Elvaston church in the restored portions of the chancel screen and the cross which surmounts it. He shared his father's love of horses and left instructions in his will that his hounds were to hunt on the first suitable day after he was buried. His huntsman obeyed his wishes and on the day after the funeral the hounds set off in full cry across Elvaston Park. They raced past the golden gates and on into the churchyard where, to the amazement of the small field of followers, they were found to have checked at Lord Harrington's grave. This popular man, once described as 'the best loved man in the Midlands', was succeeded by his grandson, Charles. He was 10th Earl for only two years, dying in 1929 as the result of a fall from his horse. His son, William, is the present 11th Earl of Harrington.