

OF MANY INTERESTING TOMBSTONES TWO MAY BE CONSIDERED PARTICULARLY SO

The tombstone of Henrietta Havers



In the 18th Century the former Evelyn family mansion, which stood just over the wall from the churchyard in the garden of the present house, was in use as a convent. The burial register for the parish shows the deaths of three members of the convent between 1794 and 1798. One of these was Henrietta Havers who died in 1797 aged 23 and was buried on 3 July of that year. Her headstone, which now stands by the wall at the far end of the churchyard, was discovered in undergrowth and was re-erected in 1992, partly funded by a donation from the Mid-Thorngate Society, a local history group. The nuns left the mansion in 1799 due, it is said, to the “extreme rudeness, crudeness and incivility” they were experiencing from the navigators building the canal nearby. The nuns were the last occupants of the mansion which then stood empty until it was demolished in 1823.

The tombstone of James Thomas Cooper

In the autumn of 1830 a series of riots took place in the countryside, due to poor living conditions, low wages, and the introduction of the threshing machine which was seen as taking away winter work. Demands were made for higher wages and lower tithes, threshing machines and factories destroyed. On 23 November a Captain Hunt was reported to have led a mob of 300 at Fordingbridge which then destroyed the threshing machine factory at Stuckton, visited a number of farms, destroyed threshing machines and demanded money. Hunt then led the men to East Mill, which spun hemp and wove sacks, where they broke windows and machinery. Early next morning a number of the rioters were captured including Hunt who was found to be actually James Thomas Cooper.

On 20 December 1830 a Special Commission formed to try the cases opened at Winchester. Cooper pleaded not guilty. In his defence he stated that on the morning of 23 November he was returning from taking some sheep from the Three Crowns at Whaddon to the King's Head when he met up with the mob and being off his guard had been induced to ride along with them. It was they who called him Mr Hunt, it was not a name he called himself. He called the owners of both inns to confirm his story and was given a good character. Witnesses, however, testified that he had led the mob. Guilty verdicts were returned against him in respect of charges made that day and the following day. On 29 December a petition praying for mercy for James Thomas Cooper was presented to the Court, the grounds put forward were the excellence of his character until this time and his partial insanity resulting from his wife having stolen his savings and run away with another man. On 30 December he was one of three men sentenced to be hanged. The judges held that he had been the ringleader of the mob, that it was not consistent with public safety to spare his life and that he should not hold the smallest hope of the mercy of the Crown. On Saturday 15 January 1831 he was hanged at Winchester prison before all the convicted men and those awaiting trial. His body was later returned to his family and he was buried here on 21 January. He insisted on his story of what had happened right to the end.

