



The Tomes of Long Marston

Audrey Noble*

I had always considered the name Tomes as quite unusual. Imagine my surprise therefore, when standing in the vestry of Grove church, Gomersal, Yorkshire, where my daughter Alison is the Minister, to find my attention drawn to a picture on the wall of the Rev. F. Roger Tomes. He was Minister at Grove, which at that time was a Congregational Church, from 1956-1963. Could Roger Tomes possibly be a descendant of the dental surgeon Sir John Tomes (1815-1895) whose "Tomes Medal" was awarded by the British Dental Association in May 2003 to my late husband, Dr Henry W. Noble? I immediately wanted to trace the Tomes family history. Initially I was surprised to find that in fact there are many Tomes' in the records, and quite a number of different spellings of the name. I already knew a great deal of the history of Sir John Tomes, as he was a well-loved dental hero of my husband.

John was born in 1815 at The Sands, Weston-on-Avon. He was apprenticed to a country surgeon at the age of 20, before going to London in 1836 where he began medical studies at Kings College, later becoming a dental surgeon at Middlesex Hospital. John Tomes can be regarded as the "Father of British Dentistry." He was an inventor of many dental instruments and wrote several books. His aim was to raise dentistry from a trade to a recognised profession, and he played a very important part in the passing of the Dentists Act, 1878. He was the first President of the British Dental Association, formed in 1880, was elected an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1883, and was knighted in 1886. Sir John married Jane Sibley in 1844. Their first son John was born in February 1845 and died aged 2 yrs 11 months, and Charles Sissmore, their second son was born in June 1846. Sir John died on 29th July 1895.

My first step, therefore, was to try to research the ancestry of the Rev. F. Roger Tomes, B.D. M.A. Oxon born in 1928. A phone call to Oxford University was unsuccessful, as he had studied there after the deadline when Oxford could release any details about graduates. However, a member of my daughter's congregation at Grove, which is now a United Reform Church, informed her that she still kept in touch with Roger Tomes and very kindly contacted him on my behalf. Subsequently Roger telephoned my daughter Alison, and after a bit of complicated misunderstanding, eventually the Rev. Tomes and I were corresponding by e-mail. Alas I was to learn very quickly that Roger Tomes was not related to Sir John. Regretfully I thought my idea of an interesting little article for our Newsletter, and adding to the Tomes history, had come to an end.

In the meantime, however, Roger Tomes had been contacted by Major Ian Maxwell Tomes MBE, MC, who has been researching his family and the Tomes pedigree for the past 12 years.

My own research at the Public Record Office at Kew- via the Internet- failed to get me beyond the birth of a granddaughter of Sir John called Amy. Amy was the daughter of Sir Charles Sissmore Tomes (1846-1928), also a distinguished dentist. It has been noted that in May 1897 Charles gave Queen Victoria advice on her false teeth, which she rejected! He

was fortunate however that this did not stop him being given a Knighthood in 1919 for his services to dentistry. Charles published many papers on histology and comparative dental anatomy. He edited and enlarged the second and subsequent editions of his father's book "A System of Dental Surgery", and I am fortunate to have a copy of the Third Edition.

Another source of information was a biography of Sir John Tomes, written for the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography by E. Muriel Cohen, whose late husband Ronald Cohen was also a recipient of the "Tomes Medal", awarded for his outstanding contribution to dentistry. This article clarified my findings and confirmed that a daughter born in 1876 was the only issue of Charles Tomes and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Eno Cook from New York. Amy Evelyn did not marry, and while working for London County Council, was injured in the London "Blitz" on the 18th September 1940. She died of her wounds the same day in the Middlesex Hospital where her grandfather, Sir John had practised for 34 years from 1840-1874. Amy was indeed the end of the direct line of Sir John Tomes.

It is Major Ian Tomes to whom I am now indebted for much of the following information. The Tomes family originated from Long Marston, south west of Stratford-on-Avon and he has traced their pedigree back to 1525.



Coat of Arms of TOMES of Long Marston (granted 1888)

Sir John Tomes' grandfather was also called John Tomes 1765-1834 and born at Marston. He was a banker by profession and Major Tomes has documentation indicating that a serious bank robbery took place at his bank, Oldacre, Tomes and Chattaway in Stratford-on-Avon in 1824. John Tomes married Ann Fisher and they had 9 children. Their eldest son named John, born 1791 at Long Marston, was Sir John Tomes' father. He was a landowner and farmer and married Sarah Baylies in 1808. They had four sons and it appears that their first-born died in infancy and that our John was their second child.

Returning to Sir John Tomes' grandfather John, who married Ann Fisher, their eighth child was Robert Tomes, born in 1807. He was an uncle, therefore, of the dental surgeon Sir John and he was the great great grandfather of Major Ian Maxwell Tomes whose research has enabled me to extend the Tomes family line in a sideways direction.

Both Robert and his elder brother John were born at Long Marston. Robert became a Minister and was Vicar of Coughton Church, Warwickshire from 1830 to 1873. He fathered 12 children, 7 of whom survived to adulthood.

Robert's youngest son Arthur Tomes, born in 1851, was Major Tomes' great grandfather. Arthur joined the Indian Army Medical Service and served in India throughout his entire career. He married Caroline Edith Collins in Calcutta in 1877. The couple had 5 children, two of whom died in infancy in India. He retired as a Lt. Colonel and returned to live in England. Arthur's third child Clement Thurstan Tomes, grandfather to Major Ian Tomes,

was born in India in 1882. Like his father he followed a military career. He served in India, in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and in the First World War was wounded at Meteren & Ypres and awarded the DSO, MC. In World War Two he was awarded the CBE and retired in the rank of Brigadier. His first son John Newall Tomes was born in 1913 and served in the Royal Air Force from 1935-1963. He flew with Bomber Command during the Second World War and was Squadron Commander of 57 Squadron. He retired as Air Commodore and also received a CBE. In 1936 he married Joan Maxwell and their first son Ian Maxwell Tomes was born in 1940 in Edinburgh, Ian went to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and was commissioned in 1960 into the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (which was later absorbed into the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers). He was awarded the MC in Northern Ireland in 1973 and in 1990 the MBE in Ghana before retiring in 1995. Ian married Verena Meyer in Switzerland in 1968. They have 2 sons of whom the eldest, Sacha, is a Major in the Household Cavalry. Although this side of the Tomes family do not have a place in dental history, the men have all led outstanding and distinguished military careers, and the Tomes family line seems set to continue.



Ian Tomes (1989)

It was sad to find that the Tomes genes from Sir John were not handed down beyond Amy Evelyn. A disappointment also, that the Rev. F. Roger Tomes was not of this branch of the family, but I hope that spotting his picture in Grove church, has given our Newsletter readers an interesting story reaching back beyond Sir John Tomes, the renowned dental surgeon, as well as the fascinating military history of his uncle's descendents.

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