



Abinger Peerages

... from the Abinger & Coldharbour Parish News archive

Although Abinger was a very small rural backwater, there have been a remarkable number of distinguished peers bearing the name in their title.

Lord Macartney

George Macartney was from a Scottish family which moved to Ireland, but retained the Scottish estate. He studied medicine in Dublin, but, while travelling in Europe he met the brother of Charles James Fox, and was introduced to politics, and in 1764 he was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the court of the Empress Catherine of Russia.

In 1767 he entered Parliament as MP for Cockermouth, in 1768 MP for Armagh in the Irish Parliament; and in 1774 for Ayr Burghs, and 1780 for Beralstone in Devon, in Westminster. In 1776 he became Baron Lissanoure, Co. Antrim. He then became Governor-in-Chief and Captain General of Grenada, Grenadines and Tobago. When the French attacked Grenada in 1779, Governor Macartney was taken prisoner, and sent to France. On his release he was appointed Governor of Madras, a post he held for five years.

In 1792 he was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Emperor of China, and in 1794 was elevated to Earl Macartney and Viscount Dervock, in the Irish peerage. In 1796 he became Baron Macartney of Parkhurst (Abinger) in the county of Surrey, in the English peerage. In 1768 he married the Lady Jane Stuart, a direct descent in the female line of the Evelyns of Wotton. He died in 1806, leaving no issue, and the title became extinct.

Lord Abinger

James Scarlett was called to the Bar in 1791. He rapidly gained a name as an advocate, took silk in 1816, and in 1818 entered Parliament, where he strongly supported Sir Samuel Romilly's amendments to the criminal law. In 1827 he became Attorney General, and received a knighthood. In 1834 he was made Chief Baron of the Exchequer, with the title Baron Abinger, Surrey.

He died in 1844, and is buried in the family vault under the yew tree in Abinger Churchyard.

Lord Lugard

Frederick Lugard was one of the builders of the Empire in Africa, where his name is still held in respect. He was born in India, and educated in England. After school he joined the army, and served in several campaigns from 1879 to 1897. He was then appointed Commissioner in Nigeria, later High Commissioner; then from 1907 to 1912 he was Governor of Hong Kong, where he founded Hong Kong University. In 1912 he returned to Africa as Governor (later Governor General) of Nigeria, and after retirement was made Privy Councillor. In 1929 he became Baron Lugard of Abinger. He lived at Little Parkhurst until his death in 1945.

Lord Farrer

Thomas Henry Farrer came of a legal family. Called to the Bar in 1844, he soon abandoned it for the Board of Trade where, as its first sole Permanent Secretary, he was "one of the three pillars of the mid-Victorian Civil Service". After his retirement in 1886 he served for nine years on the LCC, becoming its second vice-chairman. He wrote a number of now unread books in support of his Liberal beliefs in free trade. In 1893 he was created Lord Farrer of Abinger, where he had arrived in 1868. He pulled down what had been the Scarlett's house and commissioned a new Abinger Hall from Alfred Waterhouse (demolished 1959), and built most of the cottages, the school and Post Office in Abinger Hammer. After his death in 1899 his widow erected the Blacksmith Clock in his memory.

Life Peers

Among the first Life Peers to be created was Lord Francis Williams of Abinger, who had been a resident of Abinger, at Griffins, Sutton Lane for some time. He was shortly afterwards followed into the upper chamber by Baroness Wootton of Abinger, who lived at High Barn. Although Wallis Wood is in the parish of Abinger, Baroness Thomas does not include "Abinger" in her title, therefore is not included.

Terence O'Kelly from Abinger & Coldharbour Parish News, July/August 1997