

BICENTENARY OF JOHN ELIOT HOWARD

COUSINS PARTY SEPTEMBER 2007

(Ed: These are the notes which Philip used for his talk – some are verbatim, others pegs on which to hang impromptu remarks! I hope to locate the actual pictures to which he refers)

Most of you have no idea who I am or why I am standing here. I am Philip Howard, one of the many great great grandsons of John Eliot Howard.

I have been asked to introduce this splendid occasion, the Bicentenary of our ancestor, John Eliot Howard, because I just happen to be the senior male descendent. This does not mean that I am the oldest though I may look it.

(Ed. By this he meant the senior male descendant in the male line. Andrew Gerry is the senior male descendant if the female line (via Sarah Maria and Thomas Fox is included)

I would first like to give a very warm welcome to everyone here today, descendants, cousins and other halves.

I am no expert on the history of our family but I would remind you that we have a remarkable history of cousinly events ever since May Fox started the Lords Meade Budget Letter in 1893. This is a family newsletter continuously circulated and updated within the family, currently involving about 18 people.

There have been many cousins' parties over the years. I will just remind you of three of these gatherings as examples:

1. The Centenary Party of the Budget in September 1993 at the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester.
2. Luke Howard's Bicentenary Party at the Science Museum in November 1972.
3. The Cousins' Party at Colwall near Malvern in 2004.

So they seem to be regular features with many taking part. I hope they will continue. I imagine John Eliot would have felt very proud if he had known that we would all meet up in the future to celebrate his life. Which of you is going to get the same treatment in the future?

Now this event would not be happening today unless very competent, willing and energetic cousins had not come forward to organise it. What an imaginative and fun day has been created!

So I want to thank, on your behalf, four people especially:

- Mado Phillips and Bridget Drummond for masterminding this event.
- Richard Lloyd for producing the Family Trees and our badges - he is a real expert on cousinly matters *(Ed: Harriet Faulkner actually produced the badges!)*
- Dr Mark Nesbitt who works here at Kew and has made this Theatre available and will shortly give us a talk on John Eliot's work.

John Eliot – the Person

But before we hear Mark's talk about John Eliot's phenomenal working life, I would like to comment on some other aspects of his life. For this I have gleaned information from:

- Obituaries
- "Memorials of John Eliot Howard" compiled by his wife Maria in 1885
- "A Budget of papers on his Life and Work" compiled and edited by Janet Kirkwood and Crewdson Lloyd. This is an excellent booklet. Richard Lloyd has copies available at a very reasonable cost. *(Ed :they were free, so they were all taken! Much of the detailed content of the Lordsmeade website was derived from it)* The booklet has contributions from several people here today:
 - Maurice King
 - Tony Howard

PHOTO 1 & 2

Born 1807 – 2nd son of Luke Howard & Mariabella Eliot in Plaistow in Essex.

Educated at home except 2 years at Josiah Forster's School

Apprenticed to his Father, Luke, at Stratford (East London) in 1823 into the family firm which was eventually called Howards & Sons by 1857. He studied practical chemistry but became broadly and well educated and well travelled. He also studied botany, spoke French and some German and learnt Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

Of course, his main work was in quinine, as we will hear later, where its production between the 1850s and late 1920s was the only means of combating malaria- a very significant factor in opening up tropical Africa and elsewhere.

PHOTOS 3 & 4

Turning to their family life, John Eliot married Maria, daughter of William Dillworth Crewdson of Kendal in September 1830. He was 22. She was 23. The Crewdsons were a staunch Quaker family already connected with the Howards by marriage as were so many other Quaker families such as Fox, Lloyd, Braithwaite and Wilson. Coming of similar Quaker stock Maria matched her husband in piety, energy and determination. They moved into a substantial house in Tottenham called Lord's Meade after the land on which it was built, opposite Bruce Castle, the Elizabethan Mansion formerly the Manor House for that area. (This same name was later used for a Howard property at Ashmore in Dorset and other members of the family have since used it!) They lived there for the rest of their lives, raising a large family of four sons and five daughters, born between 1831 and 1848, whose names, dates and marriages are set out in the family tree.

Comment on Four Howard daughters marrying Two sets of Lloyd brothers

Two Howard brothers marrying Two Waterhouses – close knit family.

My Parents, Eric and Dodie Howard were 2nd cousins- Joseph Howard Paternal GGF and Alice Howard Maternal GGM

There seems to have been a lot of intermarriages – so there is some surprise at our apparent sanity. It is probably a good thing that the invention of the bicycle, car and jet engine have helped stir up the gene pool in more recent generations

John Eliot was brought up in a Quaker family and had a strong Christian faith. But at the time of what was called the 'Beacon Controversy', he and Maria resigned from being Quakers on October 6th 1836. This was apparently a painful time for them both. They became Plymouth Brethren and John Eliot and his older brother, Robert built Brook Street Chapel in Tottenham, which is still in full running order today. John Eliot regularly led the worship. He wrote many papers on religious matters and in 1865 gave 7 lectures on Scripture and Science. He also wrote poetry.

PHOTO 5

The pharmaceutical company known by 1857 as Howards and Sons was actually started by Luke & William Allen in 1797. They split up in 1807. John Eliot joined his brother, Robert in the firm in 1823 and they gradually took over the running of the company from their Father. Robert on the commercial side, John Eliot on the technical side. It was a very profitable business with world wide sales of various chemicals including quinine and aspirin.

Some of you will know the well known advert for Howards' aspirins 'Not the cheapest but the best'.

John Eliot eventually became a sleeping partner in 1871 by which time a number of other family members were partners.

Howards & Sons eventually consolidated the business on a new 40acre site by 1923 at Ilford in Essex - a move from crowded Stratford. The business was sold to Laporte Industries in 1961.

We are very privileged to have with us today, Tony Howard, who was a Director of Howards & Sons. He has written a most interesting account of the firm in this booklet. He finished his article with this fascinating sentence: "I remember, shortly after WW2 shaking the hand of George Hireson, a works pensioner, who remembered being called upon as a young boy to hold Luke Howard's horse during a visit to the Stratford works." A link in history by 3 people over maybe 160 years.

John Eliot was a man of many parts. He became a FRS in 1874 like his Father before him.

PHOTO 6

He also won the Hanbury Medal in 1883 presented by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society for his work on quinine

Original in pocket

PHOTO 7&8

He was also a good artist.

He and Maria had their Golden Wedding in 1880 and it is recorded that they had 45 grandchildren by this date. Can we imagine that. Knowing their names ... and giving them all regular tips.

In summary, I read of his strong character, straightforward and upright nature but with a fairly hot temper who could be difficult and obstinate when opposed. Anything wrong with that?

He died on 22nd November 1883 at the age of 75 - a wreath of cinchona leaves was laid on his coffin. *(Ed: He and later Maria were buried in Tottenham cemetery; in 2003, members of the family contributed to the cost of having the gravestone renovated)*

An Obituary in the City Press of December 1st 1883 had one particular sentence that helped sum up his life: "No man passed through life less ostentatiously after an honoured life of usefulness, benevolence, humility and sterling integrity."

Now I would like to introduce Dr Mark Nesbitt who will speak to us about John Eliot's work. Mark has been at Kew for about 9 years and is the Curator of 'The Economic Botany Collection'- meaning useful plants.